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## **ARCTIC BOUND ... TEN EDINBURGH PUPILS' SELECTED FOR LIFE CHANGING EXPEDITION**

Ten pupils from the north of Edinburgh have been selected by the Scottish charity, The Polar Academy to participate in a life-changing expedition to Arctic Greenland next March.

The 5 boys' and 5 girls' have been selected from both Broughton High School and Fettes College in Edinburgh. The 3 girls and 2 boys from Broughton High School are part of the FetLor Youth Club that provides services within the north of Edinburgh. Aged between 14 and 17, all of the participants now face seven months of intensive physical training to ensure they are fully equipped for the 10-day, 100km expedition through one of the world's most stunning and inhospitable natural environments.

An additional 9 pupils, 4 from Broughton High and 5 from Fettes College have been offered places in The Polar Academy Leadership programme. They will benefit from much of the same training and skills development as the expedition team.

The Arctic bound pupils will face temperatures below -20C and need to ski and haul their own 45kg sledges as they navigate across sea ice, camp in remote mountain passes and conduct field studies to support school projects related to the national curriculum. This will include taking ice samples and measuring movement in glaciers to contribute to scientific understanding of the impact on the Arctic of pollution and global climate change. The pupils' will be supported on the expedition by Mathieson and his fellow expert guides; Nigel Williams and Jess Ridgway (both from Glenmore Lodge by Aviemore) and Dr Wild.

Departing Scotland on 21 March 2017, it will be the third expedition in three years to be led by charity founder and expedition leader Craig Mathieson. Designated in 2013 as Scotland's first Explorer in Residence by the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS), in the same year 47 year-old Mathieson founded The Polar Academy with the vision to 'inspire Scotland's youth through exploration.'

A veteran of several successful expeditions to the North Pole and South Pole, Mathieson is emphatic that the latest expedition to Greenland will prove positively life-changing for the participants. He said: "Supported by its founding partners, Tiso Group and Bergans of Norway, The Polar Academy selects pupils whose ability to achieve in life is currently hindered by a crushing lack of self confidence and esteem.

"Kids are kids and regardless of their social background it's important to recognise that they can acutely lack self-confidence and esteem. The success of the previous two expeditions to Greenland with pupils from North Lanarkshire and Edinburgh has demonstrated how ordinary kids can achieve the extraordinary and develop huge amounts of self-confidence and belief.

"The training is tough and relentless but I am proud that each pupil has already made the first step to positively transforming his or her life. You can see the potential in these kids that The Polar Academy will help to unlock. Now preparations for a journey through the Arctic wilderness begin in earnest!"

Lena Ascherman, a 14 year-old pupil at Broughton High School is one of the ten pupils selected for the expedition. She commented: "I feel quite privileged because so many pupils

went for selection and I'm proud of myself that by being chosen I've already achieved something. The coming months are going to be a challenge for sure but both physically and emotionally I think the training will be good for me. I'm not very outdoorsy but now I can imagine myself being in Greenland. I'm really looking forward to what is an amazing opportunity."

Fellow school pupil, 15 year-old Anna Ziemons McLean, added: "I'm really excited to be involved. It seemed like almost everyone in the school applied in the hope of being chosen. The selection process was tough, especially when asked to tie knots under water! I know the physical training is going to be really challenging but I'm really going to work hard and hopefully I'll see the Northern Lights when in Greenland."

James Mackman, a 14 year-old pupil at Fettes College, said: "I was over the moon and on cloud nine when told I'd been selected for the expedition team. I think the training is going to be quite hard and challenging but I know it will all be worth it."

The pupils don't pay for their involvement in The Polar Academy. As a charity, it must annually fundraise over £170,000 to operate. Chris Tiso, CEO of Tiso Group has been impressed by the change in pupils who have previously experienced The Polar Academy. "Over the past two years I've been amazed how shy teenagers have returned from Greenland bursting with pride, brimming with newly discovered self-confidence and eager to relate their personal experiences to their peer-groups in schools throughout Scotland.

"Their personal stories inspire thousands of other kids across Scotland to realise that with focus, sustained effort and determination, dreams are attainable."

In addition to considerable support from founding partners Tiso Group and Bergans of Norway, the charity is also helped by the likes of Cornhill Building Services, Baillie Gifford and by private donations.

[www.thepolaracademy.org](http://www.thepolaracademy.org)  
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