

Peptalk

Developing the Innovative Curriculum

What are you trying to achieve for your learners through the curriculum?

- Pupils will be supported by a flexible curriculum, offering opportunities to develop critical personal, social and emotional skills and develop the knowledge and understanding required to be active and responsible citizens.

The Children's Plan Dec 2007.

- The national curriculum describes some of what must be taught, not how; there are many choices to be made
- Ofsted is mostly concerned about outcomes, not compliance

"Excellence and Enjoyment"
(The Primary Strategy DCSF 2003)

Monitoring and evaluation of impact

- ✓ Monitoring and evaluation are effective when the focus is on developing teaching and learning.
- ✓ Improvements in pupil attainment should be visible and include changes in pupil attitude and learning behaviours.
- ✓ Impact is often hard to measure. There are specific pupil outcomes in relation to the subjects and skills introduced. Most frequently mentioned outcomes may be increased enthusiasm, motivation and a personal buzz.

Remodelling the curriculum

Key points for leaders

- ✓ Ofsted does not seek to prescribe the curriculum but focuses rather on the quality of pupil outcomes. There is a licence to innovate.
- ✓ Leaders must inspire but also empower. Remodelling requires whole-school commitment and participation.
- ✓ The support of all stakeholders must be sought through the most appropriate means. Enthusiastic pupils can be the best ambassadors.
- ✓ At all stages, structures and time for reflection should be built in.

Transforming Learning

Key points for leaders

- ✓ Learning should be REAL (Relevant, Engaging, Active, Learning)
- ✓ Every child has access to working at their own level and pace as an individual or in a smaller group
- ✓ Children know where they are and what they have to do to improve
- ✓ Learning mentors may help children focus their learning through a continuing 'learning dialogue'
- ✓ Time should be available for children, groups or classes to follow a line of interest

The Children's Plan (Dec 2007) proposes;

- greater personalisation, supported by a more flexible and engaging curriculum
- that young people also need to develop the ability to think and act creatively and be innovative. As the Roberts Review *Nurturing Creativity in Young People* noted, creativity will be key to young people achieving economic wellbeing in adult life

Innovation takes many forms:

- blocked work
- themed weeks
- project based learning
- creative curriculum
- skills curriculum
- putting children in charge of learning

Putting creativity at the centre of the school

Why is creativity so important?

Creativity prepares pupils for life: an important aim of the national curriculum.

Creativity improves pupils' self-esteem, motivation and achievement.

Creativity enriches pupils' lives.

Expanding curriculum opportunities

Key points for leaders

- ✓ Time for planning is essential.
- ✓ Key staff may need to be trained in collaborative leadership skills and facilitation.
- ✓ Dialogue, modelling and coaching can support staff in transferring to new approaches. Monitoring can track progress and impact.

Teachers as learners

Key points for leaders

- ✓ Enabling teachers to recapture a sense of themselves as learners is an essential first step. This may mean taking the teachers out of their comfort zones.
- ✓ Modelling new practice by school leaders communicates a powerful message to staff and will promote more confidence in their willingness to try something new.
- ✓ Measures and monitoring strategy must be congruent with vision and aims. This helps to maintain focus and direction.

Enlisting parental support

- ✓ Schools making adaptations to the curriculum need to explain to parents the reasons behind the changes, particularly where activity days might be interpreted as being solely for fun.
- ✓ Schools need to convince parents that the focus is still learning but in a different format
- ✓ Parental involvement in activities and evaluations

If we want young people to have enquiring minds and to think for themselves – then we need to:

- Find out from our pupils what interests and excites them, what they are keen to learn and respond to in our curriculum plan.
- Present problems to the children, rather than solutions, and facilitate the pupils finding out for themselves. These problems need to be real or realistic so the children care about finding solutions.
- Scaffold approaches for effective research
- Build in experiences that challenge the pupils to think, ie throw in unexpected information that challenges the status quo, etc.

The schools illustrated overleaf have organised learning to enable them to achieve their aims for learners.



A good starting point for defining creativity is:

'All our futures: Creativity, culture and education', the National Advisory Committee's report (DfEE, 1999).'

This report states that we are all, or can be, creative to a lesser or greater degree if we are given the opportunity. The definition of creativity in the report is broken down into four characteristics:

1. Creativity always involves thinking or behaving imaginatively
2. Overall, this imaginative activity is purposeful: that is, it is directed to achieving an objective.
3. These processes must generate something original.
4. The outcome must be of value in relation to the objective.

Useful Links:

- <http://www.kent-eps.org.uk/lpsa2/summary.pdf> - Leuven
- http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/ask/primary/ask_pri_ast_blp.cfm - BLP
- http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/ask/primary/ask_pri_tasc.cfm - TASC

TASC at East Stour

At East Stour Primary School TASC was introduced to all Key Stage 2 classes through a day where the TASC wheel was used to support writing.

Children explored the beginning of an engaging picture book up to the point of dilemma in the story. Their task was to continue the story, solving the problem whilst continuing the style of writing.

Some children's initial reservations about spending a whole day on writing were quickly dispelled when they became so engrossed they did not want to stop for break or lunch!

Year 5/6 used 'The Boat' by Helen Ward and Ian Andrews. They had to solve the problem of how the boy helped the old man who lived on a hill that was being cut off by rising flood waters. This book was chosen to allow children to make links between literacy and their learning in geography which had been about floods.

During the 'Identify' segment the text was analysed and children prioritised the features of the author's writing. These became the success criteria for evaluating

the finished stories. Children rose to the challenge and teachers were pleased to see hidden talents emerging.

TASC has now become a regular feature in Literacy Lessons, especially during the latter part of units to support children when writing the final outcome for a unit. The wheel is used over several days, firstly 'gathering and organising' what the children have learnt about the genre and 'identifying' expectations for the writing. Children then work in groups to 'generate' ideas for their writing and are given a real purpose for writing through agreeing the audience for the 'communicate' segment of the wheel.

Children find the scaffold of the wheel reassuring and are becoming more independent and analytical about their own writing.



Hadlow School Topic Learning Whole School Approach

A complete review of the curriculum in 2005 led us to develop a whole school approach. To make learning more meaningful and relevant, the school decided on topics in both Key Stages. These encompassed National Curriculum objectives in Foundation subjects and a wide range of skills which we felt would engage and interest the pupils.

Literacy, maths and science, when appropriate, are also linked to these topics so all aspects of learning are connected.

To ensure full coverage of objectives and to avoid repetition, topics are arranged in cycles in each Key Stage so the whole school is often doing linked topics. This gives us opportunities to carry out whole school focus events when visitors and visits can benefit all pupils. It also enables us to participate in a range of community projects which enhances pupils' learning and enjoyment. A few of these projects are listed below.

Hadlow Recalled: The school was actively involved in the village activities to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the end of World War 2. This included Margeurite Patten, OBE, talking to Key Stage 2 about rationing and being a wartime cookery writer, veteran speakers, wartime music show performed by Hadlow Dramatic Society, whole school street party and wartime poster competition. PTA and pupils also ran an old fashioned sweet stall at the village event with sweets having been made by the pupils. We linked this with topics of Britain in the Past in Key Stage 2 and Life in the Past in Key Stage 1.

Save Hadlow Tower: An ongoing project that children have been engaged with over the last few years. The whole school created posters and visited the tower to support this campaign. Recently Year 5 pupils wrote speeches which they

delivered at a local meeting giving their arguments to save the tower. This has given the children the opportunity to write for a real purpose and see the impact it can make. It resulted in positive press coverage, pupils earning great respect from members of the community and future involvement in the development of the tower.

Tour de France: The whole school was engaged in a Bike Week to celebrate this event coming through Hadlow. Pupils' involvement was high as they engaged in activities ranging from designing cycle obstacle courses, riding bikes to school, designing posters and conducting surveys. All curriculum areas were covered during that week and fitted well with Healthy Lifestyles topics.

All topics are started with a mind mapping session when children note the things they already know and what they want to find out. Topic learning webs are then created to ensure key objectives and skills are covered as well as the pupils' own investigations. A class review at the end of each topic ensures that objectives have been met and pupils' questions answered. This approach has had a very positive impact on pupils' learning with the school working as a whole and as part of the community in which they live.

The Chiddingstone Primary School 'Imagine Club' link with Poland

The Chiddingstone Primary School 'Imagine Club' link with Poland has proved to be highly successful. To date, 82 children and 12 teachers have made the return journey and more than 600 children have been involved in activities directly related to the programme.

John Gordon-Reid, founder of the club (and also a school governor) was asked by his colleague in Poland to start a simple link based around Penpals. After some discussion it was agreed that John would facilitate an Imagine Day (a day of workshops and activities) at the school in Poland and this then led to the request to Margaret Cooke (headteacher of Chiddingstone) for the 'loan' of a handful of pupils. Margaret felt it was better to be inclusive and ambitious and stipulated an 'all or nothing' situation and so it was the first visit was arranged by John in which all the Year 5 pupils spent 3 nights in Poznan.

"It did take some effort to get it all moving as well as consideration as to how to maximise benefit to both schools. There were natural parental concerns as well as official red-tape to be negotiated" said John.

Margaret Cooke comments: "The link has proved exciting and worthwhile. It has given a great platform for some really engaging cross curricular activity including ICT, mathematics, literacy, PSHE and much more". The prospect of the visit and the excitement of hosting the return visitors is a great motivator for the children, as well as a galvanising agent for the parents and even a community exercise for the village.

The children return from the trip with a totally different mindset and brimming with personal confidence. The teachers have also benefited greatly despite the fact that there is only one common language. A lot has been learned about the teaching of MFL through lesson observation of the teaching of English."

There are costs involved with running the programme. However the benefits easily outweigh the cost. The children have developed their own economic awareness by formulating individual money making schemes to find 33% of the cost. These have included such diverse activities as musical concerts, a pet hotel, car washing and a computer helpdesk. The British Council have kindly donated an amount of money towards the organisational cost and the cost of teacher travel. Polish teachers are expected to cover their own trip costs! However with careful use of resources the project moves forward with only self generating top up funding.

John has now brought a third school (a rural Polish school) into the project and expects the project will continue, thanks to the vision and boldness of Chiddingstone School.



An Ambassadorial Workshop with Miss Rudd (centre Chiddingstone teacher), Laura and a Polish parent acting as translator

Hythe Bay University

On Friday mornings, we now have Hythe Bay University, which is a morning of life skills based courses for all children from Years 2 to 6. Each course runs for six weeks and ends with a Graduation Ceremony where the children present their coursework and gain a certificate to add to their Life Skills Portfolio.

Adults run courses that interest them and, in September, the University opened offering twenty two different courses such as First Aid, Family History Research, Italian, Cookery, Healthy Lifestyles, PE, Drama, Hair and Beauty Therapy, Art, Architecture, Media Studies and Business Studies - to name but a few.

Each cohort designs its own six week curriculum with the course tutor and includes life skills activities, learning about how we learn, contributions to the community and culminates in a presentation on Graduation Day.

The first term's course was very much a trial run and we were forced to reflect regularly on how to motivate certain children, how to improve writing, the culture of learning to learn, the language

of learning and also aspects of practical organisation.

In the second term, children and teachers became familiar with routines and became more creative. Already, we are moving forward for next term by involving schools, colleges and businesses from the local community to deliver courses. We hope to include, in 2008, courses such as basic car mechanics, painting and decorating, sound engineering, carpentry, plumbing, hairdressing and reflexology.

We believe that the University will have a long term impact on motivating children to learn and have a direct impact on standards and achievement, helping children to develop a life long love of learning alongside developing key life skills that will enable them to play a full part in the life of our community for years to come.



Queenborough children involved in 'My Kind of Town'

Queenborough children were actively involved in the Sheppey Bridge Project some time ago, and more recently have been engaged in developing 'My Kind of Town.' Queenborough children are used to learning through first hand experiences and are regularly given opportunity to develop opinions and make decisions.

The staff of Queenborough First School have always known that their children learn best when the curriculum is delivered in such a way that subjects are sensibly linked, work has real purpose and the audience is really interested.

Recent curriculum development has included very successful 'Themed' weeks with each year group learning through an agreed topic for in-depth cross curricular study. The impact of these opportunities was considerable with achievements in reading, writing and maths all improving alongside higher levels of self motivation and engagement. Excitement and enjoyment radiates from all learners.

Queenborough First School responded enthusiastically to the opportunity provided by the Community Project Officer for Queenborough and Rushenden Regeneration. 'This is your chance to shape the future of your community and tell us your views and ideas about the new development proposed' the children were told, and so began a two year ongoing project.

During that period Channel 4's Time Team were researching the site of Queenborough Castle project which, although taking place during the Summer holidays, fascinated the children. When school resumed the children became involved in designing the CASE STUDY new Queenborough library and a green area which are both on the original castle site.

One outcome of the regeneration work was a 36 piece 3D model of Queenborough measuring 36 x 36 metres. Year 4 children made miniature roads,

factories, churches and houses and positioned them on the map they had created to reflect the emerging 'master plan'. Their model was used at Regeneration Public Consultation meetings on many occasions.

One of the highlights of recent learning was when the teachers and Year 4 children presented their huge model to David Miliband at The Thames Gateway Forum which was held at the Excel Centre in London's Docklands. 'It's local environment in action' explained the school's Acting Deputy Headteacher ' they can see where they live, learn about local geography and history, and involve elements of art and design technology'. Apart from literacy and numeracy learning opportunities, another outcome was evident when the children were far from over-awed by other exhibitors, TV crews, reporters and aides whilst at the Excel exhibition. They urged any visitor to come and look at their 'Town' and when asked what difference they thought regeneration would make they were quite clear - ' Jobs for us in the future!'

One Year 4 child recalled a very special visit to the London Excel Centre writing 'I showed a lady around our model. I showed her the school, Queenborough Castle and the Town Hall. She told me she was helping to build the real building. It was special to me to meet someone so important. She asked me what I wanted to happen in Rushenden and Queenborough. I said I wanted to have some better places for the children and she said she would mention it at her meeting. I gave her a pencil, some mint and a leaflet. I felt grown up.'



Arriving at the London Excel Centre to see our town model 36m x 36m in front of us.