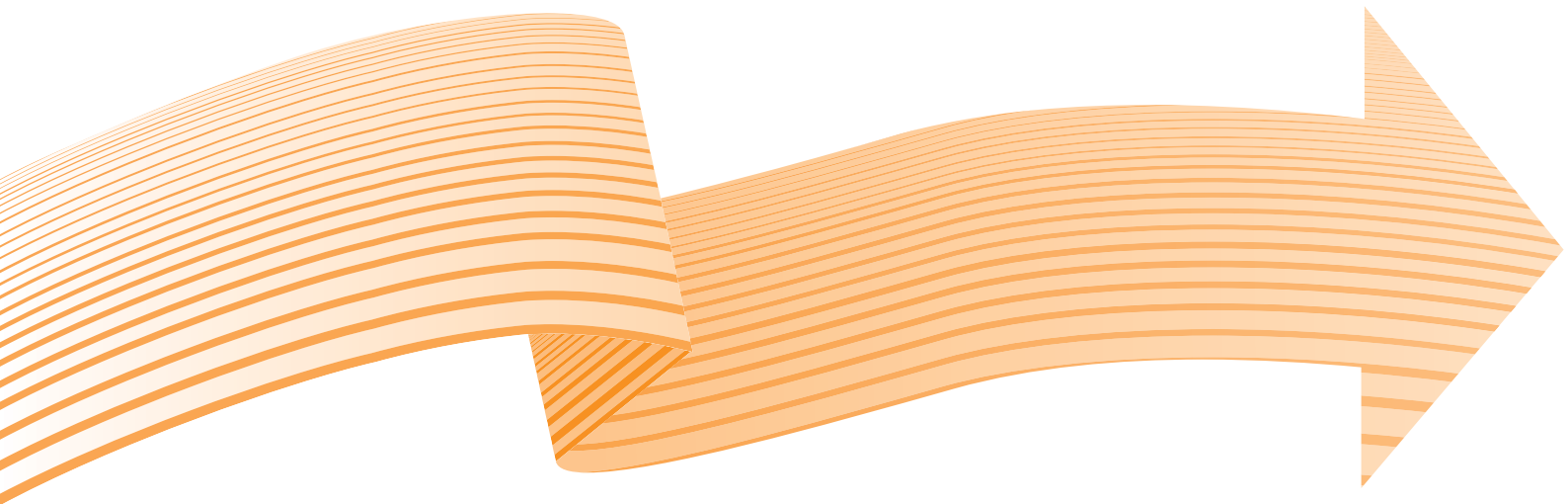




**TOWARDS CREATIVE AND
CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

A research project
by CapeUK

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reports from the front line....

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In 2010, CapeUK was commissioned to research how four primary schools developed creativity in learning. At the time, creativity was seen as a central strand in the imminent 'new primary curriculum', built on the work of the Rose Review and was therefore of immediate interest to the education community. However, during the course of the research, a new Government was elected and the 'new' primary curriculum was shelved.

At the time of writing it is not clear how the next Primary Curriculum will be shaped, except that it will have 'a relentless focus on the basics' and will be 'a minimum national entitlement organised around subject disciplines'.*

However, there is also a strong message that schools will have 'more freedom from unnecessary prescription and bureaucracy' and that changes will 'give teachers more flexibility than the proposed new primary curriculum offered'.*

The holding position is that the current National Curriculum remains in place until 2012 and this 'provides flexibility for schools to adapt the curriculum to their needs'. Which is true – the values, aims and purposes of the current curriculum are wide ranging and visionary.

Does this make our report a historical document? We think not.

It looks likely that there will be two years of learning and teaching ahead of us before the next new curriculum will be in place and practitioners at the 'front line' will need to try and influence the shape of that new curriculum from the basis of best practice.

Good learning is rooted in being proactive, excited and challenged by the process, fascinated by the content and motivated by the outcome of the work. This lies at the heart of creativity and drives cultural development - and good teaching builds on this. Whatever shape the curriculum takes, this will always be a key driver in the learner / teacher relationship. All schools will need to think this through - good and outstanding schools will always think it through, reframing their curriculum and pedagogy to keep learning alive and exciting for their pupils and staff.

*Department for Education, National Curriculum [online]. Available: <http://www.education.gov.uk/curriculum> [accessed 9 June 2010]

Introduction:

The way the tide has been flowing

The 'new' primary curriculum emphasised the significance of creativity and cultural access and development. It saw this as an entitlement for all and prescribed ways to encourage pupils' and teachers' understanding of creativity in the classroom. This report was, and still is, designed to offer specific advice on thinking and action for primary schools at this time of national change.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) published 'Learning: creative approaches that raise standards' in January 2010.

Key findings included:

Inspectors found that the term 'creativity' was subject to a variety of interpretations and applications. Teachers were seen to promote creative learning most purposefully and effectively when encouraging pupils to question and challenge, make connections and see relationships, speculate, keep options open while pursuing a line of enquiry, and reflect critically on ideas, actions and results.

The report recommended that all schools should:

- From the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, ensure that pupils are actively encouraged to ask questions, hypothesise and share their ideas, and that these skills extend into their writing.
- In curriculum planning, balance opportunities for creative ways of learning with secure coverage of national curriculum subjects and skills.
- Provide continuing professional development to ensure that teachers and support staff have the knowledge, skills and confidence to encourage pupils to be independent and creative learners, and to monitor and assess the effectiveness with which they develop these capabilities.
- Ensure that all pupils develop skills in technology to support independent and creative learning.
- Support and sustain partnerships that have the potential to develop pupils of all abilities as confident and creative learners.

It is clear that creative and cultural development has increasingly been seen as a key element in a drive to improve educational achievement and attainment.

This report draws on the particular experiences of four primary schools in Leeds, West Yorkshire, working with CapeUK. Education Leeds has established a Curriculum Innovation Group and this has been proactive in developing thinking and sharing good practice about creative and cultural development.

It is about engaging the learners. We feel it is really important that the children are part of that process and they are helping us to shape the future curriculum. We organised a primary conference held at two venues in Leeds and invited two pupils from all the schools in the city. The conferences attracted approximately one hundred representatives who looked at what it is like to be a learner, their aspirations and what the pupils wish schools and learning to be like in the future.

(Pauline Lawson, Head teacher Bramhope Primary School)

In the summer of 2009, Education Leeds held two conferences for children to find out how they feel about learning and to support primary schools with their curriculum review. The children identified what they most enjoyed at school: being creative; being active; being practical; first hand experiences; using technology; interactive lessons.

They also indicated what helped them learn:

- Talking to others: discussions, partner work, knowing the objective.
- Understanding what they need to do and seeing an example.
- Working together with partners or groups.
- Breaking ideas down into small steps.
- Being allowed to practice, being given praise and encouragement.
- Challenge: starting simple, getting harder.
- Making it fun.

The children who attended the conferences also identified what they felt were their responsibilities as learners, as well as what they knew they had to do to succeed. The findings from the conferences have been gathered together and circulated, thus posing a question to all primary schools in Leeds as to the extent to which they meet the challenge of adopting creative approaches to curriculum development identified by the pupil voice.

The four schools invited to be part of this report all responded enthusiastically. Bramhope Primary School is located in a rural village on the outskirts of Leeds. Cookridge Primary School has a new building and an increasingly diverse school population. Over the years housing development has swallowed Cookridge village. Little London Community Primary School is in the centre of Leeds, currently 36 languages are spoken amongst the children who attend and there are seven faith groups in the school. Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary is overlooked by the Leeds - Bradford Ring Road and has a mixed catchment area. The schools are all in very different locations and bear no architectural similarity. They have distinctly different demographic profiles.

Nevertheless all four schools have made a commitment in the last few years to embed creative and cultural development at the heart of their practice. They have all engaged with CapeUK as part of the Creative Partnerships programme as either Enquiry Schools or Change Schools.

Interviews with Head teachers, senior managers, a range of class room teachers and support staff, as well as pupils and parents revealed considerable insight into the process of change and development that has occurred. Evidence drawn from official school documentation supports their story.

Despite the independent and individual nature of each school, it is striking to note the extent of common messages emerging from their approach to the planning process, curriculum development, learning and teaching. This should give confidence to other schools whose journey towards fully embracing creative and cultural development is at an earlier stage.

Fostering creative and cultural development

We see this creative approach as been relevant to every single aspect of life in this school. It is not just what happens in the classroom when you have got thirty children sitting in front of you. (Stuart Tomlinson, Head teacher, Cookridge Primary School)

We had to find a way of engaging children. Because in those early days when we spoke to every child in the school and asked why they came to school, not a single child knew. That was quite worrying for us. We had "To meet my friends" and "Because my mum is at work." There didn't seem to be any concept about what school was about. So obviously we started off by lots of talk, lots of talk with the children in assemblies and lots of talk with the staff. (Jill Wood, Head teacher Little London Community Primary School)

Well I had to start small and I had to take staff with me because obviously everyone has got to buy into this. I was fortunate enough to take over a good school with good staff and great children. I didn't have a particular issue about standards. The school was a very structured, very formal learning environment where nothing could interrupt literacy or numeracy. The mornings were literacy and numeracy and the afternoons were predominantly science and it was a very narrow curriculum that the children had. (Lesley West, Head teacher Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary School)

We concentrate on what we are doing well. In the focus weeks where we link subjects, children and staff are excited by the learning. However we still explicitly teach the basic skills and regularly revise them. As a school we feel it is important to maintain this balance. (Pauline Lawson, Headteacher Bramhope Primary School)

In every case the decision to create more opportunity for creativity was a result of explicitly putting the children's interests at the heart of the process. All the leadership teams in the schools were able to articulate a common vision of what creative and cultural development looked like in terms of children's experiences.

In order to help the school develop a culture of creativity, the leadership teams of the all the schools have developed a twofold approach. On the one hand they have looked to develop the resources available to them from within their current pool of staff expertise, and on the other they have looked to develop external partnerships.

Internal staff development

Internal staff development in the schools has taken many forms, but is still exemplified by the four precepts enumerated by Judith Little, twenty years ago.

- **Teachers talk to each other about teaching**

Definitely I think you have to have a whole school philosophy. You have to agree with the ethos that you're working from, in order to promote that in your classroom and get the continuity throughout the school. We want the children to get the same message in every class.
(Julia Thubron, Class teacher, Bramhope Primary School)

- **Teachers observe each other teach**

We are doing something at the moment called 'Lesson Study'. The teacher and a peer group plan a lesson together. One member of staff delivers it. Three other teachers observe and focus on three children in particular. So one member of staff will be focusing on each child. Afterwards they have a discussion on the quality of learning that took place, the progress, what was the barriers to the learning, the teaching technique and really unpicking what went on, what was good, why, what worked and then moving it forward. You do it with a teacher every half term, again those four members of staff planning together but a different teacher teaching the lesson. Observation takes place with three other children and again unpicking it.
(Sarah Alderson, Assistant Head teacher, Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary School)

- **Teachers plan, organise, monitor and evaluate their teaching together**

In staff meetings we look through a range of books from the whole school and you can see the consistency. We all brought examples of work from higher, middle and lower ability children; their books, their profiles, and evidence of their work. We looked at each other's planning and how topics are taught throughout the different years. There is definitely a consistency that came through in terms of the way children are allowed to have not a free rein, but a choice, over how they want to respond to question.
(Julia Thubron, Class teacher, Bramhope Primary School)

- **Teachers teach each other**

We wanted to include more drama in our lessons. Some of the staff were very comfortable with drama and other staff were less so. So we asked all staff who felt comfortable to share a drama technique and virtually everybody did something and they were quite happy to share. They prepared a five minute piece showed a technique they have used in the classroom. That is much more powerful than going on a course because staff are saying this works with my children. Staff are able to come back to you and say you know when you did that? How did that work? Can you lend me the book for this?
(Pauline Lawson, Head teacher Bramhope Primary School)

Another significant common feature of staff development within each of the schools is the extent to which all support staff, whether Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA) or Nursery Nurses are included in planning and development.

We are part of the subject teams and obviously we'll have meetings together to discuss the planning and any changes or improvement. Because it is forever evolving and changing, you are not just writing a plan and then just sticking to it rigidly, no matter what. Depending year on year with the children that are involved, different cohorts of children have different needs. Yes we are involved. There are four of us in Food Technology that work together and share ideas.

(Adele Whitely, Nursery Nurse Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary School).

The support staff interviewed were particularly articulate about the improvements and changes that they had noticed. Some of these staff had often been at the school far longer than many teachers. In the case of Cookridge Primary School they also represented a particularly valuable resource in terms of the 'localised curriculum' that the school is developing.

External staff development

All four schools have seized opportunities to engage with external agencies or individuals who have provided impetus for change and development. More significantly they have found ways to cascade the learning from external sources; both by ensuring a broad range of staff have been given opportunity for professional development and by also being rigorous in the use of staff meetings and training days to focus on curriculum planning and teaching and learning.

I was in a small group listening to Brian Male speak about curriculum development. He worked for the QCA at that point and he has been instrumental in supporting the Rose review. That for me was the starting point because I hadn't long been a Head Teacher here. When you want to come in and make wholesale change you have to think about how you are going to do that. I heard Brian Male speak and I was so inspired by him that I helped get a group of schools together and we booked him for a day. We could choose three teachers to go. Two I chose were very formal teachers who believed in teaching things in hour chunks and the other was quite a creative teacher. They all came back as inspired as I had been. So our starting point was then for us all to work together. Myself, the Deputy Head and these three teachers together put on a training day. They led this training day with the purpose of creating a more flexible use of time and broadening the curriculum for our children. That was really powerful.

(Lesley West, Head teacher Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary School)

The engagement with Creative Partnerships, which as it happens all the four schools decided quite independently to undertake, is also proving a significant element in developing creative approaches to learning. The traditional Arts in Schools project, which is often product led, can be quite a passive experience for children. In contrast, Creative Partnerships seeks to establish longer term relationships between pupils teachers and external practitioners, the fruits of which can be widely disseminated within the school and have a higher degree of sustainability.

In their application form to join Creative Partnerships, all schools were asked what they would hope to gain from working with a partner. For Bramhope, ideal external partners are described as “Creative people who will develop our thinking, challenge our practice, be a critical friend as well as a fellow professional. Bring different skills and approaches to the table; provide support in observing and tracking pupils’ thinking and practice. Someone to be part of our whole school team.” For Cookridge, “It is this lasting effect on teaching staff that we would hope to gain from an external partner, whom we hope would develop our work in new ways.”

It is significant to note that neither of these aspirations explicitly mentions ‘The Arts.’ The Creative Partnership projects being undertaken in the schools at present range from enquiries into how an environmental project can be used to develop thinking skills and reflection, to how radio can enhance the personalised curriculum or how digital video can enhance personalised learning, and in the Change School the project question is ‘How can we raise the aspirations of our pupils by immersing them in a creative curriculum?’

Our two Creative Practitioners did a fantastic morning on drama and story telling through drama but also linking it to ICT. What was so empowering was that all staff teaching and non-teaching staff were so engaged with it. ‘Yes I can do that with my children and I can see the benefit that would have on the pupils in my class.’ So it was very much all of us touching base again with what creativity is and that it is not just the old ‘paint pictures, sing a song.’
(Jill Wood, Head teacher, Little London Community Primary School)

As a result of the cohesive approaches taken by school leadership in mapping out the journey, the staff teams in all four schools demonstrate enthusiasm and dedication. They model the creative behaviour they expect from the children.

All staff members feel supported. All management teams have expressed confidence in their current staff, and have given permission for exploration and experiment.

I think the support from the other staff is a huge factor. It was great to come here and to sit down with Sarah Harridge the Deputy Head. She talked us through the new curriculum and said that ‘these are the objectives we would like you to cover.’ Sarah said to Claire (the other year one teacher) think how you would like to teach this.’ So we did that together. Then we came back and we discussed it as a team.
(Emma Wales, NQT, Little London Community Primary School)

What is taught and how is it learned?

In terms of the organisation of the curriculum, the guiding principle that informs creative and cultural development is to seek ways to enable pupils to have more time and greater flexibility to explore topic areas. It is striking how all four schools were unanimous and consistent in articulating this aim. Whilst each school has developed and refined its own strategies to achieve this, given their particular circumstances, the direction of travel has been consistent.

The importance of planning is critical. Every school has given time to deeply considered planning exercises whereby a coherent curriculum has emerged. This has involved deep consideration by the teaching teams of links within and between areas of learning. The staff have thus come to own the content of the curriculum themselves rather than feel it is imposed on them. Across all the schools planning is however informed by the imperative to engage the children in their learning, to draw them into the co-construction of learning.

I think what we are beginning to realise is that we still can't have people working in isolation. It isn't just about individual knowledge and understanding. I think that is one of the lessons we are beginning to learn an awful lot more about. So it is much more of a collaborative approach between those areas of learning but also it involves the children an awful lot more. We have got to have an approach that really generates their collaborative skills and their problem solving skills as well.

(Robin Llewellyn, Assistant Head, Cookridge Primary School)

We are allowing greater time in order to make much more meaningful links between subjects. We allow staff and children to take longer to do that. That is really the most significant development. It is trying to move away from 'This half term is four weeks long so we will do Vikings in four weeks but last year we made it last eight weeks because the half term was eight weeks'. So it is really looking at what the key skills are that we want the children to address and then being more flexible with the curriculum content, not being restricted. I don't think we are restricted but that is what a lot of teachers say, not here hopefully but... In general, we still are trying to do too much, but I think that is for us to work through.

(Pauline Lawson, Head teacher Bramhope Primary School)

Another significant feature of the creative and cultural development being promoted in all the schools is an emphasis in the curriculum on the 'local' as a starting point.

Cookridge Primary School, in referring to its curriculum as a 'localised curriculum', seeks to discover how it can use local resources to develop a creative thematic curriculum that is fully inclusive of its diverse community. The school seeks to build participation and social cohesion as part of its social role in its particular location.

It's like when you drop a stone in a pond it ripples. We're doing about Cookridge then Leeds then Yorkshire then the British Isles then Europe then the world.

(Junaid, Year 6 Cookridge Primary School)

Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary School is particularly keen that the immediate environment of the school is fully exploited as a place to learn. The school has developed an orchard, become involved with an external partner Garden Organic and used staff training opportunities to develop class plots in which to grow fruit and vegetables. The school wants pupils to have a little bit of Primrose Hill for which they are responsible. This initiative forms part of a cultural entitlement, also involving visits to organisations and events in Leeds, devised to ensure that pupils develop a relationship with where they live.

I think our orchard is very good with our apple trees and our raspberries. And pears.

Yes and everything that is grown in the school from the plots as well we eat it in the dining room. It is home grown.

(Megan and Sophie, Year 6 Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary)

Bramhope Primary School, building on its initial success with the Stephen Lawrence Award¹, is relating the local to the international through specific links with a school in Barcelona. This ensures in a predominantly white school the focus is on celebrating and learning from cultural and ethnic diversity.

For Little London Community Primary School, the development of an 'immersive curriculum' that fully engaged the learners who attended the school was a pressing concern. Creativity is seen as an opportunity for children to have a chance to become so immersed in learning that it is accommodated, assimilated and becomes part of their life rather than an additional item.

If people want to get a real impression of what we are doing, talk to the children. I think once visitors from outside start talking to the children then they see the difference. Because sometimes they might all be sat with their heads down like you see in many classrooms or they might be busying themselves in groups of projects. I'm sure you see that in many classrooms. It is when you actually sit down and talk to them about the learning and what they are doing that you get a different conversation than perhaps you would at some other schools. There are some things that have remained a constant, like 'What we are learning about today, our objectives?' Children are still very clear at the beginning of that session or that day or that couple of days what they are setting out to achieve in that time. These might be the success criteria, your steps to success, this might be what you need your checklist along the way. So there are still all those elements that were in our teaching say five years ago. That rigour is still there today. The task is how best give those learning opportunities to the children, rather than just standing there and talking at them. I think it is very empowering.

(Sarah Harridge, Deputy Head, Little London Community Primary School)

The emphasis on creative and cultural development within the schools has also led to different teaching and learning approaches being adopted. The emphasis has been on creating opportunity for more detailed creative engagement with topics or themes.

¹The Stephen Lawrence Award is unique to Leeds. It is designed to:

- Acknowledge and celebrate existing good practice in promoting race equality and achievement in schools.
- Encourage all schools to place a commitment to racial equality at the centre of their curriculum, policy and practice.
- Provide a focus for race equality initiatives in schools across the city.
- Provide an opportunity for schools to share effective practice.

For Pudsey Primrose Hill, the initial success of a focus week promoted much greater confidence in undertaking a more flexible approach to the curriculum. These weeks provide a focal point for different elements of the curriculum to be seen as related.

We started with a focus week on food because it started in the September and that was traditional Harvest time. We had parents involved in coming and helping us cook food, we went out to the shops and bought things we were going to make. All the literacy and the numeracy was done through this theme of food. It was a resounding success and it was really important that it was a success because actually then all staff can see that you can still get good results. It looked like children really having fun in their learning. It looked as though parents were involved in this. At the end of every focus week now I ask the parents what they thought and the responses that I get from it are just brilliant. Children saying it was the best week of their life, you know those sorts of things come through. The quality of the work that children produced whether they were writing instructions for making a menu, whether they were writing a recipe or a persuasive text for someone to buy that particular meal in a restaurant, staff could see that actually having a real purpose and context for learning could actually raise standards. It wasn't just about having fun it was about raising standards. The other thing is, it wasn't done to address this issue at all, when we have a focus week our attendance is fantastic. When you have a visit out your attendance is fantastic and what you want to do is have children of engaging learning and enjoying school as much as possible and they come. So that first week we were just 'gosh, everyone is here. It was just brilliant. That was how we started. So we still do focus weeks - we do more of them now. We started off at one a term and now do one at least every half term.

(Lesley West, Head teacher Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary School)

For both Bramhope and Pudsey Primrose Hill, the development of Learning Logs has also been a significant innovation. They have been used both as revision of current work to demonstrate understanding, and also as research for future topics.

Learning Logs should be a personal reflective journal for the child to record their knowledge and understanding in whichever way they feel is most helpful. Children can use pictures, writing, diagrams, labels, bullet points, mind maps or whatever style they wish to choose to present their work.

They are an opportunity for children to extend and consolidate their learning in the classroom. They encourage children to be creative and independent. They encourage children to be actively engaged in their own learning and take a pride in their work. Learning Logs encourage a partnership between home and school.

As Learning Logs are personalised, there is no right or wrong way to approach a task. Learning logs are 'inclusive' and cater for all abilities and learning styles.

They are child-directed, rather than teacher-directed and so give children ownership. Children can be as creative and imaginative as they like. Learning Logs can be a useful revision tool. Learning Logs are an assessment tool for teachers.

Bramhope ask each child to formulate two questions in relation to a topic that they would like to research. After discussion with the teacher they selects one. This is an important quality control device; it helps ensure that there is some rigour to the process. The children understand that the quality of the question has to lead to meaningful research.

At Pudsey the Learning Logs were initially introduced to improve engagement with homework. The pupils were given objectives relating to work done in school already in the week, and were invited to demonstrate that they had understood that objective. Now each week children have two objectives, with one that tends to be more open-ended and exploratory.

The use of approaches to learning such as focus weeks and Learning Logs has prompted considerable revision in both schools of approaches to pedagogy in general. Increasingly the teachers are aligning themselves with the pupils in what Bramhope have come to call a Learning Challenge.

This movement is reflected throughout all four schools in an increased emphasis on the teacher's role as a facilitator of learning. It represents a change of mindset that affects the whole curriculum. It places techniques of learning and teaching that have informed creative and cultural development for many years at the heart of pedagogy.

The big difference to notice, when you have successfully developed a creative curriculum, is more the pedagogical change. It is a change of mindset and how you want learning to take place in the classroom. It is teaching in a creative way that is crucial, it's not necessarily the curriculum itself. It is the involvement of everybody whether it's the parent, the child or the teacher, the teaching assistants. By the time these children leave year six they are going to be quite scary sort of learners. They are going to be questioners, they are going to be critical, and they are going to be reflective. They are going to want to involve different people in their learning. They are going to want to present things in different ways and they will have not only an appreciation of their own skills but also an appreciation of others. There will be a willingness to take risks. In discussions with our staff they are realising it's not about the year of the arts or the year of humanities or the year of science, design and technology it's about how you enable learning to take place. It is not just about the topic it is about how you teach English and mathematics as well. We have a lot more problem solving within mathematics, we have a lot more appreciation within literacy. It's about how we can do both subjects to support topic learning.

Robin Llewellyn, Assistant Head, Cookridge Primary School]

Little London Community Primary School has embarked on a partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University (Faculty of Education) to promote action research in their classrooms with both children and staff. The staff has considered what has been brought from the partnership into their practice, in particular the importance of developing different ways for children to present their findings.

By presenting their findings to the rest of their class during this action plan phase children might decide 'I am going to work alone, or I am going to work with a partner, or I might work in a small group if I have got people with a similar question'. The brain gym work that we have done earlier helps them know how other children in their class learn. The idea is when they do present everybody else takes a piece of that learning. So we have all become learners and we have all become teachers as well.

[Jill Wood, Head teacher Little London Community Primary School]

Outcomes and achievements to date...

The schools selected for this report are not comparable with each other. They all have different traditions; the nature of their pupil intake is different. However they represent a broad cross section of primary schools. It would be difficult for the Head teacher of any primary school in the country to look at these schools and not detect points of comparison.

The pace of change in each of the schools has been different. They all began to make changes about the same time, five or six years ago.

Bramhope has moved incrementally. They have identified key priorities and stuck to them. Prioritising the development of ICT has led to the creation of an online Learning Platform. Currently all staff use it as a communication tool to share and prepare teaching and learning materials. It is scheduled to roll out for use by pupils that, because of its interactive potential, will enhance creative and cultural development beyond predictable limits.

In contrast, Little London decided that they needed to make speedy and radical change to their curriculum. Their particular circumstances as an inner city school determined this. The effect has been transformative.

On balance all the evidence points to the considerable potential benefit of developing a strong creative and cultural dimension to curricula and learning and teaching. Innovative approaches have also brought collateral benefits.

Some of the schools have found previously marginal parental engagement has been radically improved by the enthusiasm of the children in taking their work home. Performances, focus weeks and Learning Logs have all played their part in drawing parents into the school's orbit. This has improved parent teacher dialogue, and has helped promote the concept of a learning journey being undertaken by pupils in company with their family and other members of their community. At Pudsey Primrose Hill the particular example of children, parents and staff developing a gardening club together is striking. This makes ecologically aware use of the school's environment, builds family and social capital and clearly links to the Science curriculum.

There is significant evidence that teachers have responded well to the opportunity for greater freedom of choice in the way they have been able to approach their teaching. Staff teams, including teachers and support staff have relished the opportunity to rethink together their approach. Teachers also have enjoyed working with external partners, from Creative Partnerships for example.

The project idea is great as everyone gets so much out of it. It's so good to plan with someone. I really look forward to it as there are so many ideas. It all fits together with the school and the Creative Curriculum. Everyone feeds off each other.

(Rob Crowther, Class teacher, Little London Community Primary School)

Experienced teachers joining the schools have drawn favourable comparisons with previous schools. Newly qualified teachers have developed confidence to move away from highly structured and overly didactic teaching methods. All teachers interviewed have taken up the challenge to balance subject knowledge and understanding with promotion of thinking skills, reflection and a love of learning amongst the children.

In all these schools the evidence points to a positive effect on pupil achievement, attendance and attitude to learning that has arisen out of a commitment by the whole school to engage with creative and cultural development.

It's easy to learn because of the way that they teach, but it is not easy things we learn.

Sophie, (Year 6, Pudsey Primrose Hill Primary School)

Summary

Key Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

Increased emphasis on creative and cultural development seen by all the schools as part of raising standards by engaging children in learning and as learners.

The move towards a curriculum that offered more opportunity for creative and cultural development is a decision to which the whole school should become committed and in which everyone is engaged.

All staff feel supported by a programme of staff development, designed to share expertise already in the school and to disseminate information and expertise gained externally.

School leadership gives sufficient time to allow staff to discuss and plan, and gives permission for experiment and exploration.

All the schools are working with long-term external partnerships, through CapeUK and the Creative Partnerships and through other initiatives.

Curriculum content and learning and teaching strategies are both organised to give children more time and greater flexibility to explore areas of learning and engage with key skills.

Teachers model the learning behaviour they expect from pupils, through engaging alongside the children, promoting questioning listening and reflection.

Recommendations

Schools should be required explicitly to articulate their approach to creative and cultural development in their curriculum statement.

In addition to their curriculum statement, all schools should articulate a complementary teaching and learning strategy that indicates how it will help children's creative and cultural development flourish.



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