

Olney First School

Focus of inquiry - Creativity

- A whole - school cross-curricular approach to develop creativity in teaching and learning.
- To develop pupil voice.

Who is involved?

SIG Coordinator: Elaine Cox

SIG members: Steve Dunning
Sue Haughton
Allison Turner
Janet Woolley

Pupils Involved: All of Foundation, Years 1, 2 and 3.

Background

Further to our previous inquiry - looking at ways to improve creativity in maths, we decided as a staff, to extend this to the rest of the curriculum.

By linking subjects together this would give us more flexibility and freedom in the delivery of the timetable and our teaching approach.

Through careful planning and the creation of a positive and stimulating environment, we aim to:

- present children with exciting learning opportunities
- encourage children to think and take risks
- encourage children to discover their own talents

The effect that we hope this will have on staff, is that:

- it will encourage staff to work together as a team in the planning and approaches to teaching
- it will encourage enthusiasm and excitement in the delivery of a lesson/subject
- it will free-up time in the timetable to provide quality teaching time.

The effect we hope to have on our children and school is to:

- increase self-confidence and motivation
- foster curiosity
- encourage independent thinking
- improve and raise achievement across the curriculum

- bring more enjoyment to the curriculum, and prepare pupils for the “real world”.

Where is the inquiry being promoted?

Throughout the year, we have held specialist subject weeks where creativity has been the focus of learning.

At the start of the new school year, the whole school devoted two days to introduce the work of Trevor Hawes, where each class took on the name of a chosen animal, which would be their identity for the following year. The idea behind this, being to work together as a team and be associated by their peers with this image.

We also carried out a range of creative activities including mind-mapping, PMI, problem solving and brain gym to develop self-awareness and different ways of thinking.

During the Autumn Term, we held an African Week, as part of our community links with our local church, and Sierra Leone. During this week, visitors were invited into school to demonstrate African dances, clothes, food and cooking, art and crafts, tell African stories and teach African songs. The children had the opportunity to make African instruments to accompany African music.

In September, we continued a whole school project on “The Golden Tapestry”. This is a tapestry which is put together with many others to create a display which is travelling the country before reaching its final destination in Australia for the Commonwealth Games.

Our contribution was a scene representing Olney in February. It consisted of stitching and collage, and included materials common to all the other tapestries created around the commonwealth. Every child in the school helped to create it along with a large number of enthusiastic parent helpers. It has recently been displayed in Middleton Hall, Milton Keynes.

In February, the school celebrated “Book Week”, where we hosted Dennis Bond, an author; and Ian Beck an illustrator. The children worked alongside these visitors to produce mini-books and reviews. Parents were also invited into school to share books with the children.

Work was also inspired by resources from The British Film Industry. As a finale, the whole school, including staff dressed up as their favourite book character.

During March, we held a “Maths and Science Week”, when the whole school took part in a range of activities and this article appeared in the local press.

"What an exciting few days!

We have just had our annual maths and science week. Every child in the school took part in the challenge - to build a moving wheeled vehicle. The children could work in groups or individually and had to design and construct their own vehicle which was then judged in one of 4 categories:

- The vehicle that travelled the furthest.*
- The most imaginative design*
- The biggest vehicle*
- Other vehicles that didn't quite fit the 3 other categories!*

However all vehicles had to be capable of travelling across the hall floor when released down a ramp!

The children had great fun making their vehicles and learnt a lot about constructing a moving model and working cooperatively.

The finished vehicles were an amazing sight and surely the school must have nurtured many future engineers and designers or at least another Clive Sinclair!

Also during the week children got the opportunity to take part in a variety of other activities such as pond dipping, designing a board game, making electric circuits, magnet games, visiting maths and science websites and using CD ROMs. David Shakespeare came to talk to year 1 and they had a fun time investigating ice.

We were also fortunate to have a visit on Tuesday by the Energy Bus. The children were told about renewable energy sources and shown how wind turbines and solar panels work. The star of the show though had to be the solar powered bicycle - great idea unless the clouds suddenly came over as you soar up Spring Lane!

The activities culminated with an award ceremony for the winning vehicles."

(The Phone Box, May Issue 2005).

Two "Creativity Days" were held in May which focused on Art and Design. A wide variety of activities were arranged including murals, mosaics, animal collage, masks, finger puppets, life-size aquariums, modroc, finger knitting, clay modelling. A number of visiting artists led workshops.

Children worked in cross phase groups and visited four workshops over the two days. There was a display of work produced, whilst the swimming pool is now permanently brightened by a "fishy" mural!

All children have recently produced an "original" piece of art work which will be professionally mounted and framed for an exhibition later on this term.

Further activities have been arranged for later on this term, which will include a "Yoga Week".

Pupil Voice

This is a new initiative this year, that we would like to develop further to include the whole school age range.

At present, a Healthy Schools Task Force has been set up. This includes a pupil from each Year 3 class, a parent, a teacher, a teacher/governor and the school nurse. Meetings are held monthly. This is where children suggest ideas and improvements as ways forward.

After talking to the children about playtime activities, the children suggested ways that playtime could be improved, and how they would help. It was suggested that a "Friendship stop" was purchased, along with tabards and caps for playground buddies to wear. This has now been up and running for half a term.

This is being monitored by the distribution of a questionnaire, which has yet to be analysed by the children at the next meeting.

Before the end of term, it is intended that questionnaires on "Creativity" be completed by staff, and cross-section of children from each class.

All children have taken part in the recent competition, to design a logo for the PSLN website.

Learning Walks

Staff have recently taken part in learning walks with two other schools in PSLN - Castlethorpe Lower School and Greenleys First School, where the focus has been to share ideas and practices in creativity. This will be continued next term.

It was felt that this gave opportunities to reflect on own practices and to see own school objectively.

How this has changed teaching and learning relationships in the classroom?

Teachers have been asked to complete a questionnaire about their views on creativity, and what impact it has had on the teaching and learning in their classroom. Results have yet to be analysed, but it is envisaged that they will have noticed increased self-confidence and well-motivated and enthusiastic pupils.

How this has changed management and decision making in the school?

Further to our work on creativity in a number of subjects, it was decided to review and develop a more cross-curricular approach to our planning as a whole. We therefore devoted an INSET day in the Spring Term where the staff carefully considered each topic of work to see where it best fitted in the curriculum, and how they could make better use of cross-curricular links.

Planning is being developed to show these changes and improvements, and will be put in place for September.

Future plans

- to teach more creatively using a cross-curricular approach
- to analyse and act on the results from pupils and teachers questionnaires
- to set up a school council incorporating children from all age groups
- to begin learning walks with children, initially in our school, and then in other network schools in PSLN