

**It's not just what you teach,  
it's the way that you teach it !**

- in pursuit of a creative curriculum



## Background context

St. Andrew's school is one of three primary schools situated in the Rheindahlen Military Complex in western Germany. The vast majority of the 280 pupils on roll are from British service families and civilian employees attached to the military community. As most of the family quarters are on the military base, the majority of pupils walk to school accompanied by their parents. Sixty pupils live in quartering areas in neighbouring villages and travel to school by bus. In addition, 64 FS1 children are situated in two separate buildings. Currently 53 children are taught in Stepping Stones, a short walk from the main school. A further 11 children are taught in the Ladybird Nursery in a building a short drive from the school where all-day care is provided by the YWCA.

In addition to the arrangements for FS1 children, pupils are organised into ten classes in the main school building: two in FS2, three in KS1 (1 x Y1 and 2 x Y2) and five in KS2 (1 x Y3, 1 x Y3/4, 1 x Y4, 1 x Y5 and 1 x Y6). Three additional classrooms are used as a Computer Suite, Library and Music Room. The large hall is used for PE, assemblies and lunch-time. Every classroom has an interactive whiteboard. There are extensive school grounds consisting of a large wooded area, adventure playground and general play areas with target walls and playground markings for games.

The school is well organised and attractive with an environment that promotes and celebrates learning.

## Main focus of the curriculum innovation project

Having mapped out the curriculum to ensure links between and across subjects and the community, teachers were asked to focus on the creative delivery of the curriculum encompassing all the initiatives that had been introduced over the last 3 - 4 years.

These initiatives included:

- Peer and Self Evaluation
- Talk for Learning
- Drama Techniques
- Teaching Strategies / Learning Styles
- Interactive use of ICT

The purpose of this project was twofold:

1. To embed and consolidate key initiatives in classroom practice across the curriculum.
2. To encourage teachers to be creative in the way that the curriculum was delivered so as to motivate and inspire children's learning.

## Nature and scope of Project Activity

- Over the course of the year 2005-06, teachers were given the opportunity to explore and experiment with the curriculum in their own year groups within the framework of the curriculum map.
- They were asked to focus on the 'How' of teaching and to deliver the curriculum creatively by drawing on prior initiatives that involved children actively in their own learning. (see above)
- During the summer term '06, lesson observations focused on the 'creative curriculum'. Teachers were given the freedom to select the subject/content of the lesson, but were asked to ensure that the following elements were taken into account:
  - cross-curricular links
  - use of VAK (learning styles)
  - opportunities for Talk for Learning
  - opportunities to Review and Reflect (AfL)
- Lessons were observed by HT and Subject Leader of selected main subject being taught.
- Children were interviewed during and after each lesson to seek feedback on the impact of delivery on their learning.
- Teachers were then invited to share their lessons with the whole staff during a 'Bring and Brag' session and to describe what worked well and why.



Good practice was shared/cascaded and decisions were made about ideas/practice that could be used throughout the school. (see examples on Photo Story - Evacuation Sleepover (Y6), Hariksee Geog. Project (Y1/2)).

## Project Outcomes

### Impact on Children's Learning

- Children were stimulated and fully motivated throughout the lessons.
- Links made between subjects and the use of varied learning styles/techniques enabled children to make connections and therefore learning was more meaningful. E.g. Y5 lesson (Earth, Moon & Sun).
- Children were given opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs/groups in order to share ideas/discuss issues/solve problems.
- Children were actively involved in their own learning, using a variety of learning styles (VAK), drama techniques (hot seating, freeze-frame, thought-tracking, conscience alley and moving pictures) and speaking and listening activities.
- Children were able to generate their own questions and carry out their own research (towards life-long learning).
- Children were given the opportunity to experience learning at first-hand - within school and out in the community.
- Children were given opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their own learning (Review & Reflection Board).
- Children were given the opportunity to evaluate the teaching of the lesson and provide feedback to the teacher on how it could be improved (Y6 RE lesson).

### Impact on Teachers

- Teachers appreciated having the time and opportunity to fully embed and consolidate prior initiatives, without yet more new initiatives being piled on top.
- Teachers' natural flair and creativity flourished - they acknowledged and implemented key initiatives, but delivered the curriculum their way!
- They witnessed at first hand the impact of involving children actively in their own learning, and were further motivated by the children's enthusiasm/love of learning.
- They learned from each other - the 'Bring and Brag' session gave teachers the opportunity to share good practice and cascade ideas for T & L across the whole school.
- Expectations were raised. For example, they realised that children as young as 4 or 5 years (FS2) had the ability to generate their own questions and pursue their own lines of enquiry.

- Teachers realised that the creative delivery of lessons had a positive impact on motivation and the quality of T & L, i.e. what is meant by 'Excellence and Enjoyment'.
- Teachers acknowledged the power of ICT as a tool for teaching, learning and presenting learning outcomes, e.g. Y1/2 used photographs of Hariksee to carry out a Risk Assessment; Y6 used ICT to produce a photo story based on the story of Bernadette.
- Teachers in Y1/2 realised the effectiveness of skills-based planning as opposed to knowledge-based planning (Hariksee project).

## Key lessons to share from the project

- When introducing new initiatives to staff, ensure that there are practical examples for all stages within the school, i.e. FS2, KS1 and KS2. Convince all staff that initiative can work and can be adapted to suit all year groups.
- Allow teachers the freedom to explore, experiment and take risks with the curriculum in their own year groups, e.g. permission to collapse the curriculum for a week during the Y1/2 Hariksee project.
- Provide regular opportunities to share and celebrate good practice across the school, e.g. 'Bring and Brag' session/paired observations.
- Involve parents in cross-curricular projects, e.g. homework DT projects etc. so as to extend learning into the home.
- Allow teachers time to embed, review and refine initiatives so that they become an every-day part of the T & L process.
- Recognise the power/impact of sharing one another's practice and celebrating achievement - after all, school is a learning community for all!

## Next Steps

Work collaboratively between and across other schools through a Learning Network based on 'The development of children's thinking, enquiry and problem-solving skills' by implementing and using the TASC wheel (Thinking Actively in a Social Context).

This will involve:

- Network schools attending a joint inset day based on the TASC wheel.
- Year group teachers from across schools planning a 'Problem-Solving Week' together and sharing practice.
- The development of Learning Walks and Research Lessons within own school and across network schools in order to explore the process of learning.
- Involvement of more able children in a Maths project where they carry out a problem-solving activity and present their findings to other children across all networks.
- See Network Action Plan