

Creativity at

Lent Rise Combined School



Creativity - A Chance to Review

Lent Rise Combined School, like most primary schools, had never dispensed with creativity. But when the school was invited to take part in Sir Jim Rose's review of the primary curriculum, it was a good opportunity for the school to reconsider what a creative curriculum meant. Says head teacher Brenda Bigland, "It made us rethink. Were we offering breadth and balance, were we fully engaging our young learners, were we creating truly memorable and inspiring learning experiences?"

Every subject area in the school was asked to think how it could combine different areas of the curriculum, engage different learning styles, provide a platform for personalised learning, and give opportunities for learners to think for themselves, be independent, and take responsibility. As a result, creativity at Lent Rise has come to mean both a process and an objective, "Creativity is really just one aspect of an innovative, engaging and aspirational curriculum," says Brenda.

Brenda gives an example of how a creative approach combining business enterprise and literacy can give rise to ambition and aspiration. The children had been reading and enjoying *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and been given the chance to create their own golden tickets. One pupil, Evan, designed a golden ticket that had the prize of being head teacher of Lent Rise for the day. "And, of course," says Brenda, "we had to make this come true." Evan did indeed become head teacher for the day – working in the office, meeting governors, parents, and the school's caretaker. It was a truly memorable learning experience and an example of how Lent Rise sees an imaginative approach as an important attribute of teaching.



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ICT is a key enabler for these memorable and inspirational learning moments, as IT co-ordinator and assistant head teacher Jill Watson explains, "ICT permeates almost every aspect of our teaching and learning. For example, early years children love exploring and enjoying nursery rhymes as part of their

literacy work. But *Little Miss Muffet* suddenly becomes especially memorable and engaging when real spiders are examined under digital microscopes or placed on visualisers and shared via the digital projector. Imagine the excitement in the classroom!"

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A Creative Curriculum

The process of establishing links between different subject areas took place across all year groups, with appropriate use of technology also featuring heavily in these plans. In Early Years for example, an opportunity has been shaped to combine elements from the six areas of Learning and Development so that, for example, interactive white boards, Bee Bots and dance mats directly support Communication, Language and Literacy (CLL), Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy (PSRN) and Creative Development (CD). At the

other end of the age range in Year 6, poetry work for literacy is enhanced by making links with history and drama and the use of ICT to research, word process and digitally record an original advertisement for Lent Rise Radio.

The creative curriculum at Lent Rise is also innovative with time and focus. The summer term, for example, now sees one week devoted to a Business Enterprise Week where all the children in the school work in teams to plan, design, cost and create a product to be sold on the school's Gala Day. But before any product can begin to be

produced, the teams are required to make a pitch for a funding loan from head teacher Mrs Bigland – the Bank of Bigland! Once the pitch is successful, the products then have to be carefully costed and marketed. The children know they have to not only repay the Bigland bank loan but also make a profit. The opportunities for ICT are rich; children use spreadsheets to forecast sales returns and profit margins, use a range of software to design, and use publishing tools to produce posters and leaflets to promote the product to their target market. High-quality TV and radio adverts, all produced using digital ICT, form the final part of the marketing campaigns.

And the result? Engagement, enthusiasm, active learning and memorable learning experiences – for everyone involved.

Remember that Charlie and the Chocolate Factory prize? It was the culmination of a complete and coherent scheme of learning for Year Two literacy that brought together drama, art, RE, science and music, and made full use of ICT. Pupils used digital video cameras to record a news report about the last golden ticket, an MP3 player to add sounds to a story which they role-played, and held video conferences to learn more about Roald Dahl.



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Creativity –Anytime, Anywhere

Interestingly, the use of video conferencing has become a regular and valued ICT tool at Lent Rise with children, from the age of four, becoming adept and confident with the use of the technology. Every class now holds six video conferences a year. For example, each Christmas period, pupils video conference with the ‘real’ Father Christmas. And a video conference with astronauts as NASA continues the drive to create memorable and inspirational learning experiences.

But to support Lent Rise’s approach to creativity, information and communications technology needs to work easily and effectively across a variety of learning settings.

For example, digital devices have become part and parcel of everyday life at Lent Rise wherever the learning is taking place. Portable MP3 recorders are both accessible and affordable and make it easy for young children to record thoughts, observations and experiences. Digital cameras, for both still and video capture, have a very similar role. Says Jill, “These tools allow the children to continue and consolidate their learning beyond the moment because they are able later to reflect and evaluate. They support inclusivity and they allow us to

recognise and celebrate achievement.” It’s no surprise then to see the school’s class set of MP3 recorders in regular use in science, literacy, or music. And no surprise to see digital cameras on nature walks, in PE or art – in fact, across the entire curriculum and the entire school site. With a wireless network that extends beyond the school to the top of the school field, creative learning supported by ICT is possible anywhere on the school grounds, “With wireless access we can take digital microscopes and cameras outside and our eco-garden becomes an outdoor classroom,” comments Jill.

Back inside the school, voting technologies have also become increasingly useful with children not only being asked to respond to questions but also using the software to create their own tests in, for example, science. Digital animation has also become a much-loved part of the creative curriculum – so much so that for one week each year it becomes the focus for creativity and team working.

At the foundation of this embedded use of ICT are two things: the school’s network and the school’s learning platform. The network, both wired and wireless permits storage, data communication and facilitates the management of fixed and mobile PCs. The learning platform builds on this and has become the hub of many educational experiences. Learning



materials, for both children and parents can be easily shared, learning challenges can be easily set and creative activities easily enabled. One such activity, *The Never Ending Story*, is a continuously evolving work of collaborative fiction that engages the children enormously.

Creativity – Reflections

Reflecting on these recent experiences, head teacher Brenda Bigland is clear that careful research, seeking advice, and talking with colleagues from within and beyond the school have all been important steps in the school's learning journey. These are reflections that apply equally to the use of ICT. Says, Brenda, "Don't think that you necessarily need to change what you're doing. Tweak, refine and improve and, importantly, learn how to use ICT to make learning more enjoyable and therefore even more effective for the whole school community."

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Brenda Bigland, head teacher, *Lent Rise Combined School*

For more ideas of how technology can inspire creatively across the curriculum



RM, 183 Milton Park,
Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4SE.
Telephone: 08450 700300

visit www.rm.com/schoolpriorities/creativity