



CASE STUDY REPORT

Implementing an integrated curriculum

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This study was originally published in 2009 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to improve pupil learning and enjoyment of the curriculum by implementing an integrated curriculum model that allows for more creative teaching and learning.

Aims: The main aim of this development work was to improve pupil learning by allowing them to pursue areas of interest within the curriculum framework, and to enhance opportunities for personalised learning.

Methods: The participants in this development work were the headteacher, middle leader, subject leader, teachers, and pupils. They worked together to create an integrated curriculum model to improve pupil learning and enjoyment. Methods used included a working party to explore integrated curriculum models, a broad framework of skills incorporating all foundation subjects, periodic teacher assessment, observation outcomes, pupil consultation data, and year group planning meetings.

Findings: The main findings are that the integrated curriculum has been adopted by all teachers, resulting in increased job satisfaction, improved collaboration, and increased enthusiasm and learning in all curriculum areas.

Implications: The findings suggest that an integrated curriculum can lead to increased enjoyment and understanding of the curriculum, improved collaboration between teachers, increased job satisfaction, and improved assessment for learning.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Junior education; Creativity

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

- To open up possibilities for cross curricular learning.
- To implement opportunities for more creative teaching and learning.
- To give teachers more flexibility in their use of curriculum time.
- To make the creative curriculum more accessible to all learners.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- Subject leader

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- Creativity

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

The main aspect of pupil learning we were trying to improve upon was enjoyment, and understanding of cross curricular links.

We wanted to allow pupils – and teachers – the flexibility to pursue areas of interest within the curriculum framework, and to enhance opportunities for personalised learning.

What were your success criteria?

Pupils will show, through their work and discussions, that they have gained more in terms of understanding and enjoyment of the curriculum than previously.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupils' work

Describe the CPD approaches you used

A working party, consisting of the Deputy Head and two curriculum leaders (creative and humanities), was set up to explore integrated curriculum models implemented by other authorities. From that we decided on a model that would work for our school, incorporating existing practice and making links between existing subject plans. A broad framework of skills was drawn up, incorporating all foundation subjects and Science, with suggestions for possible ICT links. Allowances were made for an interim transition.

Who provided you with support?

- Senior management

How were you supported?

Support was available to curriculum co-ordinators through the working party, and staff were allocated time to restructure curriculum plans as necessary. There was no real need for support from outside agencies.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Although as yet we have no hard data that shows impact, Ofsted commented positively on the new integrated curriculum and their questioning of pupils showed improved enthusiasm and learning in all curriculum areas.

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Pupils have commented that they now feel they have greater ownership of their learning.

Teachers feel that generally the pupils in their classes are more motivated because they are encouraged to pursue lines of enquiry that interest them, within the broad framework.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

The move to teaching through topics that link different subjects together is helping to enliven pupils' learning and contributes to their good personal development.

Ofsted May 2008

Pupils enjoy the increased opportunities they now have to apply their literacy and ICT skills in other subjects.

Ofsted May 2008

Children are more motivated and able to pursue ideas that interest them within a topic.

Year 4 teacher

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Logs or interviews
- Observation outcomes
- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Awaiting NC Test results but there is certainly evidence of children making greater use of links between different subject areas. Skills based assessment methods are currently being developed for foundation subjects such as Geography.

What has been the impact on teaching?

- Teaching has become more creative and teachers have taken more responsibility for the content of their planning, often working collaboratively to share good practice.
- There is improved collaboration within year groups, with regular fortnightly year group meetings (to be weekly from Sept 09) and informal conversations about teaching and learning. These conversations

have become more significant with the integrated curriculum.

- There is increased job satisfaction because of the freedom to use professional judgement.
- Assessment for learning has developed because the teacher is deciding what to do next on the basis of current learning.
- Some teachers have taken advantage of the greater flexibility to incorporate elements of Literacy, for example, within the creative curriculum. The literacy coordinator is looking at resources and making links between the literacy framework and topics.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

Having flexibility to plan content with success.

Y6 teacher April 2008

think my teaching has improved with the introduction of the integrated curriculum. I have adopted a more creative approach in subjects such as History, often linking subject areas within a planned lesson.

Y4 teacher, July 2008

I have been given the freedom to plan according to the needs of my class and not to follow an overly prescribed curriculum.

Year 3 teacher, 2008-9

The children have commented on how they are enjoying their lessons and that they are having fun.

Year 6 teacher 2008-9

Planning to teach specific skills and not focus on teaching facts and figures has given me opportunities to use my professional judgement in a way that I did not feel I could before the integrated curriculum was introduced.

Year 6 teacher 2008-9

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Improvements in curriculum documentation
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

All teachers have encompassed the new planning framework, and this is monitored termly.

Planning shows that teachers have been able to follow own interests within the curriculum framework, and to differentiate according to the needs of the pupils within their classes.

Lesson observations by curriculum co-ordinators have shown a more creative approach to teaching the foundation subjects.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

There has been more involvement from middle leaders, of both the Arts and Humanities areas, who have planned and monitored the integrated curriculum.

The integrated curriculum has been adopted by every teacher in the school.

Planning has become more shared within year groups, and the new planning format is now consistent across the school.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

Middle leaders now have a greater role in school improvement planning, and curriculum planning and monitoring.

Year group plans demonstrate greater involvement by each teacher in planning a core element of teaching for each class.

Improved documentation in terms of: 1) teacher's weekly planning and 2) monitoring sheets showing teachers' coverage of key skills within the National Curriculum framework.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

An engaging and exciting curriculum with enthusiastic teachers and pupils.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

- Integrated/Creative Curriculum webs produced by local authorities such as Bexley.
- QCA curriculum units.
- National Curriculum programmes of study
- QCA units of work for cross referencing
- International Curriculum.

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Year group planning meetings to agree core content, and share expertise. (With 4 classes in each tier, planning is often better done at year group level rather than in a whole staff meeting.)

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

- Start with an overview of the skills and knowledge required in each subject area, according to the National Curriculum frameworks.
- Identify the areas where links can be made between subjects/skills.
- Look at existing topics within school and identify matches between existing good practice/resources and new topic areas.
- Explore ways in which timetabling could be altered to free up time for more creative teaching.
- Organise planning meetings for all teachers to share ideas and ensure coverage of all necessary skills and subject knowledge.
- Monitor planning regularly to ensure all required areas are still covered through integrated curriculum.
- Be prepared to review and adjust as creative curriculum is put into practice.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

We will be organising a whole school evaluation of successes/areas for development/difficulties following the first year of implementation. Any information gained will be discussed at staff meeting level, and used to inform the next stage of curriculum planning and monitoring.

We will be monitoring the teaching of Science carefully to ensure that core content is not lost within the creative

approach.

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- Example of Year 6 integrated planning
- Example of Year 6 weekly plan
- Example of Year 5 Term 1 integrated planning
- Example of Year 4 weekly plan
- Example of Year 4 Term 1 integrated planning
- Blank children's questionnaire
- Summary of outcomes of children's questionnaire
- E.g. pupil's cross curricular work (download, unzip, open ppt)
- Integrated curriculum guidance for subject leaders
- Integrated Curriculum Subject Leader Monitoring and Review

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About 'What Works Well'

This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

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