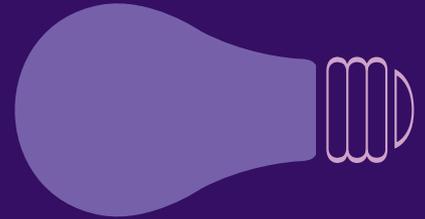
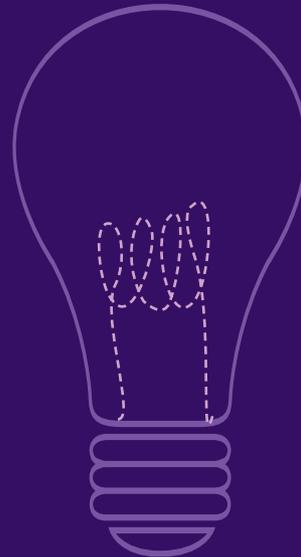
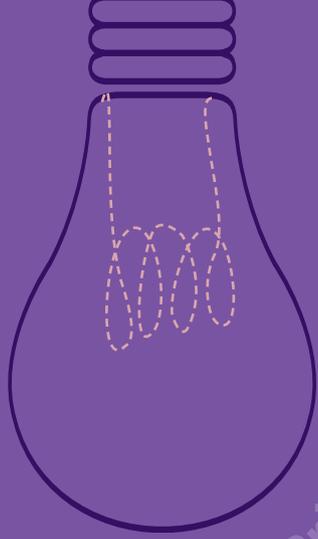


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Developing Creativity for Learning in the Primary School A Practical Guide for School Leaders





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Why is creativity important and why now?

- 1 The publication of *Excellence and Enjoyment: a strategy for primary schools* (DfES 2003) has added momentum to a growing conviction among teachers and school leaders that it is time for a new, more creative approach to curriculum planning and a greater emphasis on creativity for learning:

“Primary education is a critical stage in children’s development – it shapes them for life. As well as giving them the essential tools for learning, primary education is about children experiencing the joy of discovery, solving problems, being creative in writing, art, music, developing their self-confidence as learners and maturing socially and emotionally.”

Excellence and Enjoyment, p.4

The climate for change and the prospects in English schools for more creativity in the curriculum have been described by Ken Robinson, chair of the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE), as “signs of a break in the clouds”. Others, too, have added their support to the case for more creativity in education:

“Across the world, countries are reforming their systems of education to better prepare young people for the increasingly complex and challenging demands of the 21st century. In many countries, creativity is being given priority as never before.”

The Arts Council of England, 2003

“Today’s essential life and work skills include innovation, creative thinking, complex problem-solving, imagining what the future holds and, above all, the ability to cope with choice, uncertainty and the unknown.”

Creative Partnerships in Education (CAPE) UK, 2004

Developing pupils’ creativity is an important aim of the national curriculum, which includes creative thinking in the ‘thinking skills’ of information processing, reasoning, enquiry and evaluation. The National Curriculum Handbook (QCA, 1999) states:

“The curriculum should enable pupils to think creatively and critically, to solve problems and make a difference for the better. It should give them the opportunity to become creative, innovative, enterprising and capable of leadership to equip them for their future lives as workers and citizens.”

Ofsted’s Section 10 inspections also recognise the importance of schools promoting creativity, as well as supporting the aims and principles described in *Excellence and Enjoyment*.

The following extracts from the *Handbook for Inspecting Nursery and Primary Schools*, (Ofsted 2003), confirm this:

- Effective teaching extends pupils intellectually, creatively and physically.
- Look for... practical work, investigations and problem-solving exercises that develop pupils’ skills, creativity and understanding.

- Where a school is very good at enriching the curriculum, it provides a rich and varied programme of experiences for all pupils. They respond positively and achieve very well. Visits by a wide range of enthusiasts or experts are well established and beneficial.
- Give credit for imaginative lessons and learning that is vivid, real and relevant.
- Assessment that enables pupils to play a very strong part in making and recognising improvement in their work is likely to be excellent.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools, David Bell, took the opportunity to reinforce Ofsted's position when writing in the *Times Educational Supplement* in March 2004. In an article entitled 'Richness within reach' the chief inspector expressed a concern that:

"...teachers might believe that the practices described in Excellence and Enjoyment are not what inspectors are looking for, either now or in the future under the arrangements that Ofsted recently announced for consultation. If that is the case, then I see it as part of my job to dispel the myth and restore confidence.

I am convinced that primary teachers really do want to provide a curriculum which motivates and challenges children, which enhances their imagination and involves them in practical experiences in the arts, science, technology and in physical activity, both indoors and outside."

The schools whose work forms the basis of this guide owe much of their success to a belief in a curriculum that develops creativity for learning. Most of them are drawn from the 32 schools that featured in the report *The Curriculum in Successful Primary Schools*, Ofsted 2002:

"The richness of the curriculum in these schools and, in particular, their achievements in the arts, contributed strongly to the development of pupils' imagination and the creative use of media and materials. The growth of pupils' self-confidence, which these achievements inspired helped them to tackle more challenging work and develop a more positive attitude towards school."

The findings in the Ofsted report confirm that:

- thinking and behaving creatively bring vitality to learning, providing the motivation to tackle bigger challenges and, when effective, increasing pupils' confidence and self-esteem
- where creativity has an important place in the curriculum, pupils generally have very positive attitudes towards learning and enjoy coming to school

What is creativity for learning?

3 A good starting point for a definition of creativity for learning is the report *All Our Futures*, DfES 1999. In this report, the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) describes creativity as having four characteristics:

- First, creativity always involves thinking or behaving **imaginatively**.
- Second, overall this activity is **purposeful**: that is, directed to achieving an objective.
- Third, these processes must generate something **original**.
- Fourth, the outcome must be of **value** in relation to the objective.

At a practical level in the classroom, it is helpful to think of creativity in terms of what pupils are actually doing when they are learning in this way. This has the added benefit of ensuring that the focus is on **learning** and the ways in which creativity can improve it and make it more effective.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) describes how to identify pupils' thinking and behaviour in its online resource and publication *Creativity: Find It, Promote It*, 2003.

The characteristics of creativity under each of the following headings are a selection from a fuller description in the above publication.

- **Questioning and challenging**: asking questions such as “why does it happen this way?” “what if we tried it that way?”, responding to tasks or problems in an unusual way, showing independent thinking.
- **Making connections and seeing relationships**: using analogies, making unusual connections, applying knowledge and experience in a new context.
- **Envisaging what might be**: seeing new possibilities, looking at things in different ways, asking “what if?” or “what else?”
- **Exploring ideas, keeping options open**: exploring, experimenting, trying fresh approaches, anticipating and overcoming difficulties.
- **Reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes**: reviewing progress, inviting feedback and acting on it, putting forward constructive comments, ideas, and ways of doing things.

Not only are these the signs of creativity, they are also the hallmarks of **effective learning**, particularly in situations where learners are involved in problem-solving, investigation and enquiry. They are important skills in their own right, but they cannot exist in a vacuum: they need to be developed in the context of the knowledge and skills of the national curriculum. Creativity is by no means confined to the arts, but the arts are very important and can have a strong impact on learning in all subjects.

What are the characteristics of the schools featured in the practical guide?

This guide draws upon Ofsted's report *The Curriculum in Successful Primary Schools*, but examines in more depth what some of the schools that featured in that report are doing now. Three other schools have been included as examples, two of which have demonstrated the positive impact of creativity for learning on standards, and one of which has begun to use aspects of creativity to tackle uneven performance in the core subjects in the last few years.

At the time of the Ofsted report, all 32 of the schools had standards in English and mathematics that placed them in the top 25 per cent compared with similar schools in England. Their Ofsted inspections had also found that the quality and range of the learning opportunities they offered were very good or excellent. Since that time, the schools have maintained high standards through a broad, rich curriculum, apart from a small number of fluctuations resulting from changes in the composition of cohorts.

NCSL was interested to learn how these schools achieved their success. What did the headteachers actually do to ensure high standards in the core subjects through a broad, rich curriculum? Where did they begin and what were the stages of development? These questions formed the basis of a Leading Edge seminar in October 2003 which the headteachers of the schools featured in this guide attended.

The outcomes of the seminar and subsequent visits to a sample of the schools provided the material for the guide.

The seminar revealed an unwavering belief among all of the headteachers in the power of creativity for learning. They are well aware, however, that although designing an imaginative curriculum and developing their pupils' creativity have contributed to their success, this has not, by itself, been sufficient. They know that if creativity for learning is to flourish and pupils are able to realise their full potential, it requires a well-planned curriculum and good teaching. In these respects, the schools in the guide have some important things in common:

- a commitment to laying the foundations of creativity for learning by teaching the basic skills systematically within an agreed framework
- a passion for learning and, in particular, developing creativity for learning across the *whole curriculum*
- a proportion of the curriculum taught through carefully planned and well-structured themes or units of work, in which subjects are linked and contribute to the development of key ideas and skills
- specific events and projects in which creativity for learning plays a prominent part

continued

What are the characteristics of the schools featured in the practical guide?

- 5
- learning which is enriched, wherever possible, by first-hand experience and the skills of other adults from the local community and beyond
 - a strong sense of vision and professional confidence shared by all staff, and an understanding of what creativity for learning means
 - strong, well-established distributed leadership and management, together with an influential headteacher
 - a high priority given to staff development
 - an environment that reflects and promotes the school's commitment to creativity for learning
 - a professional culture in which there is a willingness to take risks and in which innovation and imaginative ideas are shared and celebrated

In all of the schools there is a belief that creativity for learning is not only a way of thinking and behaving, to be valued in its own right, but also a means of improving pupils' learning and raising standards across the whole curriculum. These schools have also built carefully upon the enormous gains made since the 1990s through the national curriculum and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies; they have not been content to stand still.

This guide offers practical steps that you can take to develop creativity for learning in your school. The schools in the guide have found their own ways of creating '**breaks in the clouds**', but what, specifically, have their leaders done to achieve a culture in which creativity for learning can flourish? How do they achieve their vision?



Living the Vision



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LIVING THE VISION

Living the vision This section provides examples, under Learning and teaching, Curriculum development and School organisation and environment, of what leaders have done to foster creativity for learning in their schools. Some of these things, such as whole-school curriculum events, are found in all of the successful schools, whereas others, such as international links, are confined to one or two. In each case, these initiatives contribute strongly to the ethos of the school as well as to the high standards of achievement, but they do so through good teaching and a broad, well-managed curriculum

Living the Vision

The actions of the leaders in these examples have all the hallmarks of good leadership and management. In every case, leaders:

have a clear vision and sense of purpose that they convey to staff, governors and parents, often working through leadership teams where schools are large enough to have them

believe in the importance of convincing governors and parents of the value of any changes that are proposed

are not afraid to put resources firmly behind initiatives that they regard as a priority

analyse learning and standards as the starting point for change and the basis for evaluating success

begin from a position of strength in terms of their own knowledge of the curriculum and the teaching methods that these initiatives are likely to involve

invest in the staff development that changes to the curriculum or approaches to teaching and learning require

What did leaders do? At **Hook Primary School** in Goole, East Riding of Yorkshire, there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs. The leadership team, which includes subject leaders, wanted to improve progression in learning for all pupils through a new approach to assessment that would enable them to evaluate aspects of their own learning. The leadership team believe strongly in the importance of learners reflecting critically on their ideas and actions, a key characteristic of creativity for learning.

The curriculum leaders drew up specific criteria for identifying progress in each subject and, once these had been agreed by all staff, teachers began to share the planning and assessment criteria with the pupils at the start of each unit of work.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? This approach has developed to the point where pupils understand the learning objectives for what they are doing and are able to comment, in their own words, on how well they have achieved them. Where the work is open-ended and pupils are able to follow lines of enquiry, this approach to assessment is particularly effective because it provides pupils with a framework for the key knowledge and skills that they are expected to learn and against which the outcomes of their work will be assessed. As a result, pupils' motivation to learn and improve is very good. The impact on pupils' progress has been very positive, with good value-added scores at Key Stage 2 for the last three years.

For example: A group of Year 3 and Year 4 pupils was given the task of choosing the furnishings and décor for a room of their choice in a modern house. A visit to the local furniture store gave them ideas for room layouts, fabrics and flooring. A budget was decided and the pupils were given the freedom to work independently, but with specific criteria in mind such as fitness for purpose and value for money. The pupils conducted their own investigations into the suitability of floor coverings and fabrics, developed design ideas using ICT, and presented their findings in a variety of ways using a range of media. They assessed their learning against the subject criteria developed by the teachers, set themselves targets for future learning, and were able to reflect critically on what they had achieved by sharing and discussing their work with their peers.

This initiative by the school's leadership team demonstrates the ability of leaders to influence the quality of learning and develop a particular aspect of creativity for learning across the whole school. It requires good knowledge of the principles and processes involved, as well as confidence in the ability of the pupils to use responsibly the assessment tools they are given.

What did leaders do? At **Birchwood Primary School** in Ipswich, standards in the core subjects have been generally good compared with schools nationally, but they have been disappointing when compared with similar schools. In response to these results, the school's leaders decided to focus on improving and extending pupils' thinking skills throughout the school. By focusing on the characteristic of creativity for learning which is concerned with reflecting critically on ideas, actions and outcomes, the headteacher and her deputy planned and led a series of staff development workshops. The staff spent time over this period trying ideas, rejecting and adjusting. As a result of this activity, the school improvement plan was revised and a new approach was adopted that enabled pupils to reflect on their own learning in order to improve their performance.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? Throughout the school, pupils are expected to reflect on their work and, where appropriate, to discuss their thinking with their peers and their teacher. In this way, pupils begin to appreciate the learning process and take more responsibility for it. This results in higher levels of motivation and independent learning. The teachers, too, gain valuable insights into the ways in which their pupils are learning and the problems they are encountering, all of which has a positive impact on assessment for learning in the school.

By Year 2, all pupils are provided with a learning journal in the form of an A4 workbook. The pupils use this book, where appropriate, to describe how they have worked things out. Pupils are also encouraged to annotate their work, showing how they solved problems or how they might improve their work in future. The school uses a child-friendly approach to enable the pupils to comment on their work:



In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, for example, the pupils were asked to find two-fifths of 45. They showed their working on small individual whiteboards. They were given a few minutes to do this before sharing their answers and their working with a partner. The methods of working that the pupils had used, as well as comments on how successful they had been, were then transferred to the learning journals.

What did leaders do? At **Pownall Green Primary School** in Stockport, the leadership team is committed strongly to developing ICT skills and creativity for learning. The headteacher took advantage of an opportunity to employ an ICT technician to work with small groups of children across Key Stage 2 on special projects over a sustained period of time. The technician's role includes the teaching of specific ICT skills and supporting the pupils in using and applying them within their project work.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? Developing creativity for learning through ICT is related closely to pupils' work within specific subjects. In a history project on ancient Greece, for example, Year 6 pupils designed and produced an advertisement promoting an aspect of Greek culture.

Pupils analysed a number of advertisements from glossy magazines to give them ideas about the use of pictures, logos, slogans, company names and other details. The pupils stored all their content or 'assets' for the advertisement on the grey working area around the pages on their screens. They were encouraged to envisage different ways of creating their own advertisement, to explore ideas, and to apply their ICT knowledge and skills in this new context.

Their ICT skills enabled the pupils to refine their ideas by bringing together, organising and re-organising text and images. They dragged information on to the page from the grey working area, editing text size and style and positioning it on the page. The internet was used as a source of information and pictures, which included Greek hotels, vineyards and architecture. Pupils made choices about the most suitable and powerful images, sometimes combining a series of pictures as a background. Finally, the pupils created text frames on top of their pictures and wrote their planned texts.

The outcomes were of a very high standard, in terms both of content and presentation and of the skills that the pupils had learned. The pupils were struck by the professional quality of their work, and this had a strong impact on their confidence and motivation to use ICT.

What did leaders do? At **Berrywood Primary School** in Hampshire, a very large school with a strong tradition of team working and distributed leadership, the teachers were finding it increasingly difficult to stimulate the interest of their pupils and motivate them to learn. This had been highlighted by a dip in the results for English, which the school attributed to difficulties with writing. The school's practice of 'active work sampling' had already shown that pupils performed best in situations that enabled them to think and behave creatively. In Year 1, for example, pupils' writing was of a higher standard when they had been involved in role play, drama and the discussion of ideas beforehand.

The leadership team (head, deputy and key stage co-ordinators) decided to explore the potential of preferred learning styles as a way of improving pupils' motivation and boosting standards. They began by inviting a consultant to work with the team for a day, to look at their own preferred styles of learning as a group of adult learners.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? This initial experience convinced the leadership team that the idea was worth pursuing with the whole staff, and a closure day was used for this purpose. The headteacher describes this as a very enlightening experience for the staff, who have since developed the ability to identify pupils in their own classes with particular preferences for learning. These new insights have resulted in a different approach to the weekly planning of work. Teachers create a range of learning situations that allow pupils the opportunity not only to work for more of the time in situations that suit their own learning styles, but also to experience other ways of learning that they might otherwise avoid.

The planning of whole-school curriculum events, such as creative arts in the environment week, has also been influenced by the new approach to learning. The various workshops that are the mainstay of these events are now designed with a range of learning styles in mind so that they cater more effectively for the needs of all the pupils.

The self-esteem of many pupils has been boosted by their success with activities that they would have avoided previously, and there is a better match between pupils' aptitudes and ability and the tasks that teachers give them.

Learning and Teaching

What are the implications for school leaders?

There are implications in all of this for the way you and your staff design and teach the whole curriculum and for the way that time during the school day is organised:

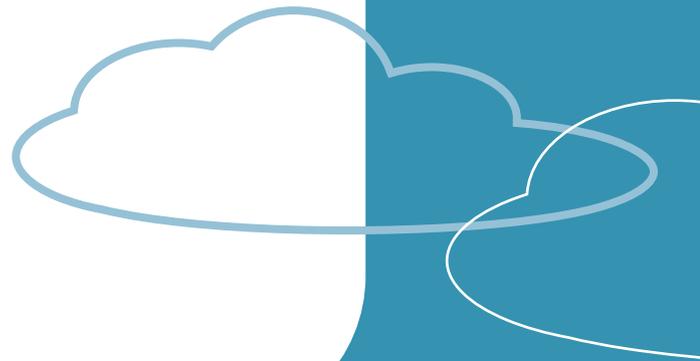
- **Be clear** about how you will improve learning and raise standards by the promotion of pupils' creativity.
- **Focus** on developing learning using the key skills in the national curriculum, with particular emphasis on creativity for learning.
- **Develop** confidence to organise some of your teaching time around learning rather than the other way round: "Pupils' interest varies in length according to personality, age and circumstances. It is folly to interrupt it when it is intense, or to flog it when it has declined." (The Plowden Report, 1967).
- **Take** account of the different ways pupils prefer to learn. Provide a range of contexts for learning over a period of time that will cater for these learning preferences.
- **Build** in choice wherever possible, within clearly defined limits and expectations. Being able to choose can have a strong influence on pupils' attitudes to learning.
- **Develop** ways of involving pupils in reflecting critically on their own learning in order to improve their performance. Help teachers to use these insights to strengthen their assessment for learning.

Curriculum Development

Introduction

You can give more emphasis to creativity for learning in the curriculum by adapting the way you teach specific groups of subjects such as the humanities or literacy and numeracy. This could, for example, involve finding ways in which creativity for learning can play a bigger part in the day-to-day teaching of literacy and numeracy, or planning systematically for pupils to use and apply these skills in a creative way in other subjects.

In these examples, schools changed their approach to teaching and learning across the curriculum as a whole. Sometimes this began in specific classes or year groups, with teachers planning the work collaboratively in small teams; sometimes it involved all classes from the beginning. In each case, the programmes of study provided the framework for planning, but more emphasis was given to the key skills and the five thinking skills, which include creativity, described in the National Curriculum Handbook as essential to effective learning.



What did leaders do? **Michael Faraday Primary School** in Southwark is a large multi-ethnic, multicultural primary school, with 17 different languages spoken by its pupils and their families. The headteacher describes the school as having “lots of creativity but not enough learning”, when she took over in the mid-1990s, and her primary goal became “how to get pupils to opt into learning”. She forged an early partnership with the literacy co-ordinator and steadily built a leadership team around her. With the help of this team, the headteacher worked alongside teachers on improving classroom environments and organisation, the quality of teachers’ planning, the teaching of literacy and mathematics and, above all, re-structuring and enriching the curriculum.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? The school approached creativity for learning through a ‘Visual Paths to Literacy’ project. This is described by the school as a “true collaboration between artists, illustrators, authors, poets and actors, art educators and teachers to improve pupils’ literacy experience”. It involved a three-year research project in partnership with the Tate Galleries in London, through which the power of art as a visual stimulus for learning was used to enhance the development of pupils’ reading, writing and oracy. The leadership of this project came primarily from the literacy co-ordinator, with the strong support of the headteacher.

A project on the Tudors, for example, included the study of a series of Tudor portraits and paintings exhibited in Tate Britain, and contributions to the pupils’ learning from a poet, an actor and an art educator. These stimulated role play and drama, as well as a range of responses through painting, drawing and writing. Other work included the study of letters from Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex and to her portrait painter, Hilliard, and the use of Tudor recipes or ‘recites’ from which the pupils made their own potage. Time was set aside for pupils to work for sustained periods over the day that enabled them to research, reflect, draft, refine and produce final pieces of writing and art of which they could be proud.

Not only did the pupils benefit from working in this way and achieve high standards, but, according to the headteacher, the teachers too had learned new knowledge and skills:

Teachers need help to extend their creative expertise and confidence. This is most effective when true collaboration takes place between teachers and a visiting artist, musician, or other experts in their fields, enabling skills and knowledge to be shared. HEADTEACHER

What did leaders do? At **Boxgrove Primary School** in Surrey, the humanities curriculum has a strong international dimension within which creativity for learning flourishes.

The headteacher's philosophy and vision lie behind the importance that is given to international links. She believes firmly in the need for her pupils to understand how different life is for people living beyond the UK so that they "develop the capacity to think about things beyond themselves. We want them to grow up to be citizens of the world." The potential of this work to develop pupils' creativity further justifies the emphasis it receives.

The headteacher has the enthusiastic support of the governors and parents for the international work. The parents' association contributes generously to the funding that is required to support the work in the school, to help a partner school in Tanzania, and to support a programme of study visits for teachers which includes working in schools in Africa, Denmark and the USA.

Much of the strategic and day-to-day leadership is provided by an experienced teacher who, as well as being the co-ordinator for the early years, is also the co-ordinator for international links. She is described by the headteacher as "a beacon of internationalism" and has strong subject expertise in this field which has an impact throughout the school. Her leadership role includes:

- writing and updating the school's international policy statement and action plan
- working with subject co-ordinators on curriculum planning, and helping teachers incorporate the international dimension in language and literacy work
- leading in-service training, and mentoring and coaching newly qualified teacher
- leading the planning of whole-school events such as World Week and Africa Week

What was the impact on teaching and learning? The international dimension is interwoven with the school's belief in the importance of creativity for learning and with every subject in the curriculum. It is not, by itself, the reason for the school's success, but it does have an impact on teaching and learning in two important ways.

First, the continuing contacts with schools and pupils from other countries stimulates the pupils to ask questions about other people's values and ways of life and to find out more about them through research using books and the internet. The teachers and pupils are more than usually aware of the issues that affect the lives and education of pupils in other countries.

Second, by giving a full week every year to a whole-school event with an international theme, the school successfully combines creativity for learning with the in-depth study of life in other parts of the world. When asked which activity had helped them to learn most during World Week, one group of older pupils said:

We learned most when we were allowed to do our own research. This left no boundaries to what we learnt, and we could learn as much as we wanted about anything in the project. Most of us worked with partners on laptops and PowerPoint so we could have a bit of fun making a slide show.

A time-limited, whole-school event, such as an arts week or a design and construction day, enables everyone to be involved in thinking about and planning for creativity. Useful lessons can be learned from this process and it can inform what the school does next.

The examples that follow are fairly large-scale, but they are all amenable to implementation in, for example, a specific year group or part of the school and to specific aspects of the curriculum as opposed to every subject. Some have acted as catalysts for developing creativity for learning, while others have been implemented as a result of the school's belief in the importance of this way of learning.

What did leaders do? In each case, the headteacher took the initial decision to organise a whole-school event, but it was usually done in close consultation with their leadership teams that included deputy heads and subject or phase leaders. The heads recognised that they needed good arguments to justify the time and effort that would be required; they based their case on the following advantages:

- It provides a good opportunity to put the theory of creativity for learning into action and, at the same time, helps to improve everyone's understanding of what it means and how it works.
- Through the planning and preparation stages, leaders are able to reinforce their beliefs about creativity and how it contributes to pupils' learning.
- It enables the leadership team to demonstrate its preferred model of good planning.
- By working collaboratively in small teams to plan and prepare the events, staff benefit from mutual support and the stimulus of exchanging ideas.
- The advantages of making connections between subjects are exploited.
- An imaginative approach to the use of time provides sustained periods for pupils to work in depth and, where appropriate, follow their own lines of enquiry.
- It creates possibilities for pupils of different ages to work and learn together for some of the time, with positive effects on their personal and social development.

What did the whole-school events consist of? The events themselves took a variety of forms and generally lasted for between one and five days. They included stand-alone units of work on the Ancient Greeks (five days), an Africa week, a 'construction week' and an art-in-the-environment week. Events of this kind are a regular feature in the calendar of these schools, which one describes as "off-timetable days". In most cases they happen once a term.

At **Hook C.E. Primary School** in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the headteacher discussed with the staff her ideas for a whole-school experience based on the Ancient Greeks. The key features of this project were:

- Staff planned the work collectively, using their expertise in different subjects to plan a range of activities at various levels.
- Pupils were vertically grouped throughout the five days of the project, and moved around with their group to take part in a broad range of activities. This enabled older pupils to develop the responsibility to ensure that younger ones took an active and valued part, and to give them the chance to work with good role models.
- Activities were linked carefully with various subjects so that pupils could make connections in their learning, and apply knowledge and skills in new contexts.
- There was a strong emphasis on investigation and enquiry, with opportunities for pupils to make choices about some aspects of the Ancient Greeks they wanted to study.
- Role play and drama were used to help pupils to understand what life was like in Ancient Greece. For example, on one day they dressed in costume and paraded around the school playing field before taking part in the Olympic Games. On another day, a Greek lunch was cooked and eaten in the dining hall.

At **Boxgrove Primary School**, special weeks are held once a term. The senior management team – the head, deputy, and the two key stage co-ordinators – were concerned that the emphasis on covering the content of the national curriculum was putting at risk the creativity that they believed should be at the heart of pupils' learning. They took the lead on the first special event, a science week, setting out their expectations for the content and approaches to teaching and learning, but the staff worked together to plan the detail. Such events have now developed a momentum of their own, and the staff would not be without them.

A good example of a special event in this school was an Africa week. The curriculum during such weeks is enriched by visitors with special knowledge and skills, which in this case included an African drumming and dance group, an African storyteller, and an African artist who brought a large collection of African artefacts. Workshops run by the visitors as well as the staff were held every day and, for much of the week, the pupils worked collaboratively in groups for extended periods on tasks ranging from making films of African legends, making books about particular African countries, and using African instruments to set folk tales to music.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? These whole-school curriculum events improve pupils' motivation and disposition to learn. During the Africa week, for example, some of the pupils were so enthused with learning, they wondered why such special weeks could not become normal practice. There was more energy than usual in the classrooms, with pairs and groups of pupils working dynamically together with a shared sense of purpose.

The curriculum is enriched during these events, through visitors with special skills and experience, workshops for developing particular skills which are then put to immediate use, and opportunities to visit other people and places. It would not be possible to sustain such a level of intensity all of the time, but there is much that teachers and pupils can learn from these events. The open-ended nature of some of the learning, for example, which could be worrying for some teachers, is demonstrably effective at developing a range of skills such as pupils asking and following up their own questions, responding to problems in unusual ways, seeing new possibilities and exploring ideas. In short, the essence of creativity for learning.

Curriculum Development

What are the implications for school leaders?

Curriculum development should be a well-established feature of the work of any school, but schools will be at very different stages as far as creativity for learning is concerned:

- **Be clear** about the freedom you have to design a curriculum that is distinctive to your school's particular needs and circumstances (*see QCA Designing and timetabling the primary curriculum, 2002*).
- **Define** the limits of the changes you envisage: blue-sky or small-scale? You need to decide whether to tackle creativity for learning across the whole curriculum or restrict change initially to a few subjects, aspects or events.
- **Begin** from a position of everyone knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum as it is in the school now.
- **Manage** timetables to allow sustained periods for learning for part of the time, so that pupils can follow lines of enquiry and review, discuss and refine their work.
- **Go for** excellence through depth, by giving some aspects of the curriculum more emphasis than others.
- **Consider** the implications of your plans for medium- and short-term planning, class timetables and the pattern of the school day.
- If the arts are to be an important part of your plans, **allocate** an appropriate amount of curriculum time and a specific budget to them as an entitlement for all pupils.
- **Ensure** that the vision of the curriculum that emerges is one to which you can all aspire.

What did leaders do? At **Holy Trinity Junior School** in Guildford, the head and deputy believed that the best way to help others to understand their vision would be to put them in situations where they could experience this way of learning for themselves, at their own level. They organised a residential conference for all staff with the title “Widening the Vision”.

What did the teachers and teaching assistants do? Taking the theme of a fantasy adventure entitled “The Ring Quest”, the staff worked in groups on a range of tasks: designing and making an ornamental box for a ring, decoding a partially complete ancient scroll and writing the missing part, burying the boxes outside and marking their location on maps so that others could find them, and creating ceremonies. Plenary sessions enabled everyone to reflect on what they had done and, in particular, what they had learned about learning, creativity and curriculum design.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? The conference led to a shift in the school’s approach to teaching and learning, putting much greater emphasis on the linking of subjects and on the development of creativity for learning:

Everybody changed their approach to the curriculum. It became much more cohesive. More connections were made between subjects and it had a huge impact on pupils’ learning. They became brave enough to think for themselves! The teachers too!

It had begun with everyone acknowledging the tensions they were feeling, as teachers, between the freedom and creativity they wanted, and what they perceived as the restrictions of the national curriculum. It ended with

...the ropes well and truly bitten through...and the reality of a unified and cohesive learning experience. The outcomes were of such a high standard that the new approach went down extremely well with parents, governors and Ofsted. HEADTEACHER

Conferences of this kind are not cheap, but the headteacher believes that their power to influence practice makes them good value for money. They enable the leadership to translate its vision for teaching and learning into a tangible experience for staff, reinforcing the values and beliefs about creativity for learning to which it attributes the school’s undoubted success.

A residential conference on this scale is probably more ambitious than many schools would wish, but the principle of teachers as learners could easily be applied to staff conferences and other forms of in-service training. The use of creative people from outside the school, such as artists, writers and drama groups, can provide the stimulus and expertise to enable the staff to experience the excitement of creativity for learning for themselves.

What did leaders do? **South Farnborough Infants School** in Hampshire, which is part of the Graduate Teaching Programme, serves a community that has a high proportion of families with a military background. In some years this results in a high level of pupil mobility, which can have an adverse effect on pupils' progress and attainment. Ensuring consistency in the teaching and pastoral care of the pupils becomes more than usually important in these circumstances. With this in mind, the headteacher and her deputy invest time and resources in a well-structured induction programme for all newly-joined members of staff. There is a strong ethos in the school that values creativity for learning within a framework of carefully planned progression in literacy, mathematics and ICT skills.

Systematic arrangements for the induction of newly-qualified teachers are well established in the great majority of schools, but the way in which this school inducts other teachers who are recruited is unusual. The leadership team does not assume that experienced teachers will automatically absorb the school's ethos and approach to creativity for learning: it is prepared to invest in a programme of induction for even the most experienced of newly-joined staff.

Creative, imaginative people are the lifeblood of teaching and are abundant in our school. HEADTEACHER

What does the school provide? Experienced teachers joining the school are given a buddy, while newly-qualified staff are assigned a mentor and follow a detailed induction programme. The emphasis during induction is on the use of role models of best practice in the classroom and the use of time to enable new staff, irrespective of their previous teaching experience, to observe and discuss the school's values and ethos in action.

What is the impact of the induction? The leadership team believes this induction enables new staff to understand the school's values and ways of working. A careful selection procedure ensures a fairly good match to begin with between teachers' preferred ways of working and those of the school, but the induction leaves new teachers in no doubt about the school's ethos and the way they are expected to work. As a result, there is consistency in the quality of teaching from one class to another, including the approach to creativity for learning, and this helps to minimise the impact of high levels of mobility on pupils' progress and achievement.

What did leaders do? St James's CE Junior School, Barrow-in-Furness, was placed in the special measures category by Ofsted. A new headteacher was appointed. One of her priorities was to change the internal environment of the school to reflect her vision of the learning culture she wanted to achieve.

One initiative, in particular, helped to shape the ethos of the school as it is today, a beacon of excellence and high standards. This involved corporate image building through art and design, and embodied the head's belief in the participation of pupils and staff in decision-making.

A competition was held to design large banners to be hung in the shared areas of the school. The pupils had to base their images and words on the theme "What does our school mean to us?". Among the winners were "Simply the Best" and "On Top of the World". A parent artist transferred the images on to fabric, and the banners were hung in prominent places around the school. Another banner competition was based on the theme "What have you done today to make you feel proud?" The winners, two Year 6 pupils, had chosen and illustrated the words "Reached out with helping hands".

What was the impact on the school and its ethos? There was a strong and positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school and this, in turn, influenced the effort they put into their day-to-day work and increased the level of pride in what they were doing. Standards in all subjects improved dramatically, and the school subsequently achieved Beacon status.

Relationships improved and incidents of vandalism around the buildings, which had been common, almost disappeared. Pupils, once they began to think of the school as "theirs", became eager for responsibility through a variety of roles created to ensure the environment stayed clean and tidy. The school's motto, "Care, Share, Respect", is reflected in tangible ways throughout the building, leaving no one in any doubt about the school's values and aspirations.

It is the direct link between the environment and the school's values that made this initiative so effective. Displays in this school not only include examples of pupils' work of which everyone can be proud and which stimulate thinking and new ideas, but also provide a daily reminder that the school is a community of people who share the same ideals and aspirations.

What did leaders do? At **Michael Faraday Primary School** in London, the diversity of the multi-ethnic community is regarded by the headteacher as a strength:

The reason we do what we do and we are what we are is because of the cultural diversity of our community. It nourishes us all and we make sure the curriculum and pupils' learning are all the richer for it.

The enrichment of the curriculum has been achieved to a large extent by identifying and using the combined skills of people and their cultures in the community, as well as facilities such as theatres, galleries and arts centres in the surrounding area.

The leadership of this work falls largely to subject and aspect co-ordinators who are responsible for finding and liaising with experts and for working with staff to support them with the planning, organisation and teaching of enrichment work.

Enriching the curriculum in this way is not cheap, and the school's leaders have become adept at finding sources of funding to supplement the budget. They need good communication skills to convince local businesses and institutions that their money will be well spent by demonstrating the benefits that it will bring for the pupils.

The school draws heavily on the richness of the many cultures in the local community. The literacy co-ordinator plays a key role in working with parents on two levels: helping those for whom English is not their first language through adult literacy workshops, and enabling parents to contribute to the celebration of festivals and other whole-school events by helping with workshops in, for example, art, dance and music.

What was the impact on teaching and learning? The richness of the curriculum and the strength of the school's links with its community and other sources of inspiration for creativity have transformed the way teachers plan and teach the curriculum. The characteristics of creativity can be found in the work of the staff as well as the pupils.

The school itself has moved from a position of weakness, with low standards and poor attendance, to Beacon status for the curriculum and standards in the core subjects that are well above the national average, and excellent attendance. The pupils here are proud of their school and the things it helps them to achieve. The headteacher has no doubt that the combination of raising standards in English and mathematics, and the school's emphasis on creativity for learning through the arts and literature, has been the key to progress and success.

School Organisation and Environment

What are the implications for school leaders?

In order to use the school as a key resource for developing creativity for learning, take the following into consideration:

- **Take** account of the readiness and capacity of the staff to engage with the nature and scale of change you have in mind.
- **Build** trust and foster mutual respect by valuing each others' ideas and opinions and backing this with action. Even small acts can make a difference.
- **Be imaginative** in the way you help teachers to understand what creativity for learning means and what the principles of good teaching are that promote it.
- **Involve** creative individuals from within and beyond the school. Plan a programme of outside visits and visitors for each class every year.
- **Remember** that the headteacher's leadership is vital in stimulating debate and motivating staff to accept change.
- **Do** as much as you can to create a learning environment in the classrooms and shared spaces that supports and celebrates creativity for learning and reinforces the values and aspirations of the leadership team.
- **Integrate** development into existing systems within the school:
 - Link your plans for the development of creativity for learning to the school improvement plan and invest in it. Set realistic timescales and clear success criteria. Invite enthusiastic members of staff to take a lead in its development but maintain an inclusive and whole-team approach. Monitor progress over time and feed back to staff.
 - Consider using creativity for learning as one of the key objectives for each member of staff in their cycle of performance management. Regard creativity as a priority for everyone's professional development and the induction of new staff. Ensure that appraisers are well informed and supportive of the programme of development.

now?

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WHERE ARE YOU NOW?

Where are you now? In this section, you are encouraged to engage in a process of self-evaluation so that you can determine the extent to which your school fosters creativity for learning. In most schools, creativity for learning will be much more established in some subjects or classes than others.

School improvement is likely to be more effective if all members of staff feel involved in the process of evaluation and planning. Ideally, this participation will include support staff, parents, pupils and members of the wider community. Governors should play an active part in the process too.

This review should apply to the whole school and focus primarily on:

- the quality of learning and teaching
- the depth and breadth of the curriculum
- school organisation and environment

There are practical steps that you can take to help you and your colleagues gain a better understanding of what creativity for learning means and determine how well it is established in your school. These steps focus on the decisions that you need to make and on specific aspects of the school and its learning environment.

Getting started ...

now?

1 Draw up a programme of classroom observations and times for discussion between you and your colleagues. Give each of your discussions a title based on one or more key questions. Spread the observations over as many subjects and year groups as possible, including reception classes, for whom there are specific expectations about creativity in the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA 2000).

2 Invest in professional development related to creativity for learning, including supply cover for observations of teaching and learning, staff meetings and workshops, external courses and conferences, and for time to read books, reports and research papers.

3 Update staff and governors regularly on progress, and discuss what you are learning. This will help to maintain the impetus of the developments you have begun.

Also consider ...

Conducting a survey of children's perceptions of their own creativity, along the lines of the example overleaf.

Collaborating with another school that has similar plans to your own.

Contacting and visiting another school that is known to have strengths in the curriculum and creativity for learning, and use its good practice to deepen knowledge and clarify your ideas.

At **Birchwood Primary School** in Suffolk, as part of a drive to raise standards through a greater emphasis on creativity for learning, the teachers decided to find out what the pupils themselves understood by creativity.

The purpose of the enquiry was twofold: firstly it would give teachers some insights into their pupils' perceptions of their own creativity, and secondly it would suggest ways in which the learning environment might be further improved to promote creativity for learning.

The pupils were approached in two ways. In the Foundation Stage and Years 1, 2 and 3, they discussed the following question with their teacher: "What happens when you are being creative?" In Years 4, 5 and 6, each pupil completed a short questionnaire (see below). Some SEN pupils gave oral answers, which were recorded verbatim by an adult.

Questions given to pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6

- What does being creative mean?
- What kinds of work are you doing when you are being most creative?
- When and where are you when you are most creative?
- Are you at your most creative alone or with other people?
- In what kind of surroundings do you most like to work?
- What kind of teacher helps you to achieve creativity?
- How do you know when you have achieved something really creative?
- Any other comments

The younger pupils responded immediately to their question and talked about designing, making, using their imagination and thinking hard. For example, Jerome (aged 7) defined it as "when you make something out of something else that hasn't been invented yet".

There were similar common threads in the responses by the pupils in Key Stage 2. A higher proportion of pupils in these year groups said that it was possible to be creative in subjects other than art and design and English, although these were still the most frequently mentioned subjects.

Over 90 per cent of the pupils equated using their imagination and thinking and making skills as a part of the creative process. Several of the older pupils wrote about taking risks with their learning and learning from their mistakes. Several Year 5 and Year 6 pupils described creativity as being a complex and exciting activity. The majority linked creativity with physically active learning. They were working with their hands as well as their brains.

In response to the question about where they were the most creative, the majority wrote or spoke about places which were “warm, spacious, light, attractive, colourful and beautiful”. They liked having other people around, but most preferred being able to think quietly and appreciated having time to develop their ideas.

Interestingly, they were evenly divided as to whether they felt that they were most creative individually or collaboratively, reflecting the differences in their preferred learning styles. Sonia said “I am most creative when it’s quiet and I’m alone because there are no distractions”, whereas David’s comment was “I think that I am more creative when I’m with other people because I think that if you put more ideas in you get a better result”. Both were Year 5 pupils.

Without exception, the pupils knew that they were most creative with teachers who: “listen to me and show me how to take my work forward,” “are creative themselves and have unusual ideas.” Many commented on the need for praise and the fact that they felt real pleasure when able to reflect on their own creative work. Georgia simply wrote, “I smile and then it slowly turns to a grin”.

Reviewing learning and teaching Look for examples of creativity for learning in whole-class sessions, small-group work, when pupils are working individually, and in their workbooks and classroom displays. Look, too, beyond the classroom and at other times in the school day. Try to find evidence of pupils who are thinking and behaving creatively. Always consider how and why creativity made a difference to what was learned: the effect it had on achievement, self-esteem and attitudes to learning.

Focus observations on the characteristics of creativity for learning listed on p3. These skills will almost certainly be present in varying degrees from one subject and one classroom to another, although not all at once. They will also be present in extra-curricular activities and whole-school events.

REVIEWING LEARNING AND TEACHING

1 In which subjects is there the strongest evidence that pupils are thinking and behaving creatively? What difference is it making to their achievement and attitudes to learning?

2 Drawing on the examples of creativity for learning that you have found, are some of its characteristics more evident than others and, if so, why?

3 In which subjects does there appear to be the least opportunity for creative thinking and behaviour? Why is this?

4 In which subjects do the pupils have the most opportunity to use their creative skills to solve problems, follow their own lines of enquiry and investigate the things that interest them? Why is this?

5 What are the key characteristics of teaching that are successful in promoting creativity for learning? How do you know?

6 In what ways are pupils able to make links and connections to enhance their learning, eg using their knowledge of local geography to help them find out about the history of the area?

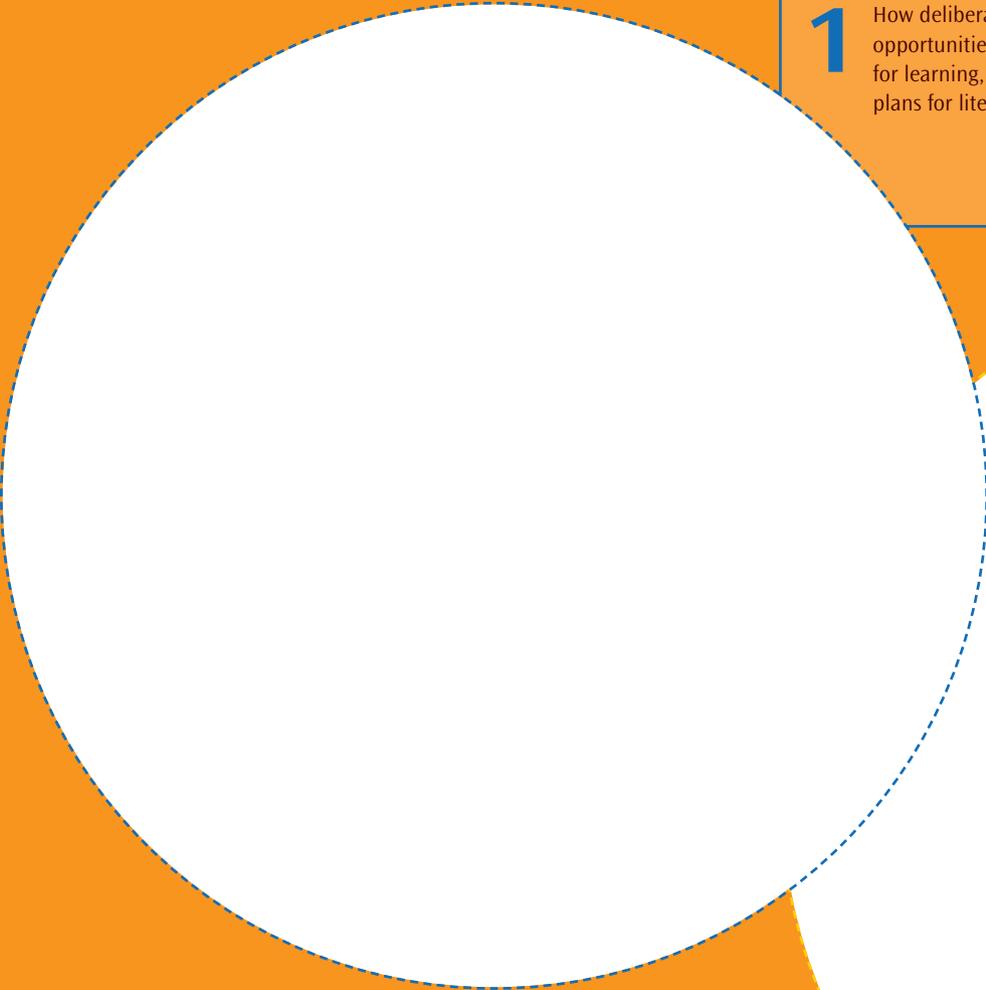
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7 In what ways does homework enable pupils to pursue their own lines of enquiry and be creative?

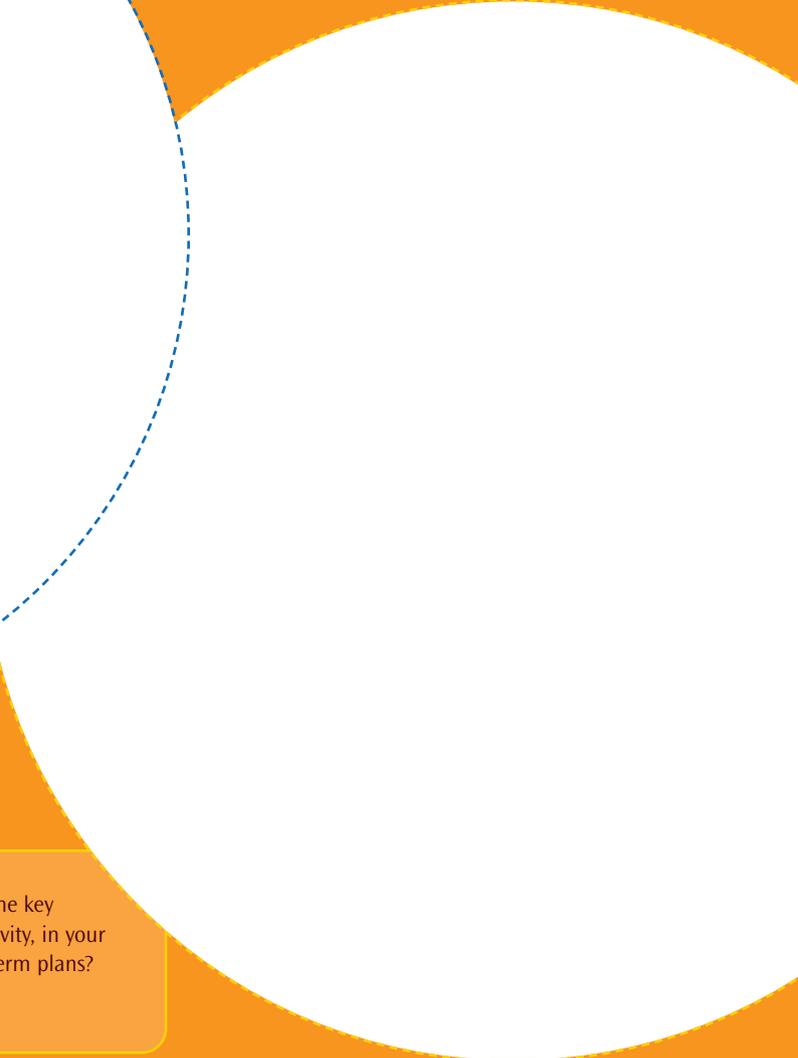
Reviewing the curriculum The schools that contributed to this guide all plan rigorously and make appropriate, well-thought-out links across the curriculum, usually through themes or units of work. These have clear learning objectives and good progression, and include only a limited number of subjects. Long-term planning ensures that the requirements of the national curriculum for each subject are being met. The literacy and numeracy strategies are well established, with varying degrees of adaptation to the use of time and the format of lessons. Opportunities for creativity for learning in English and mathematics are deliberately sought and are planned systematically. The schools give a strong emphasis to the development of the key skills outlined in the National Curriculum Handbook:

- communication
- application of number
- information technology
- working with others
- improving own learning and performance
- problem-solving
- thinking skills, including those associated with creativity

In many cases, thematic work and planning for the development of key skills go hand in hand. This enables pupils not only to learn and apply skills which are subject-specific, but also gives them opportunities to apply skills such as creativity and enquiry across a broader field of learning and make useful connections between subjects.



1 How deliberately do you plan opportunities to foster creativity for learning, including your weekly plans for literacy and numeracy?

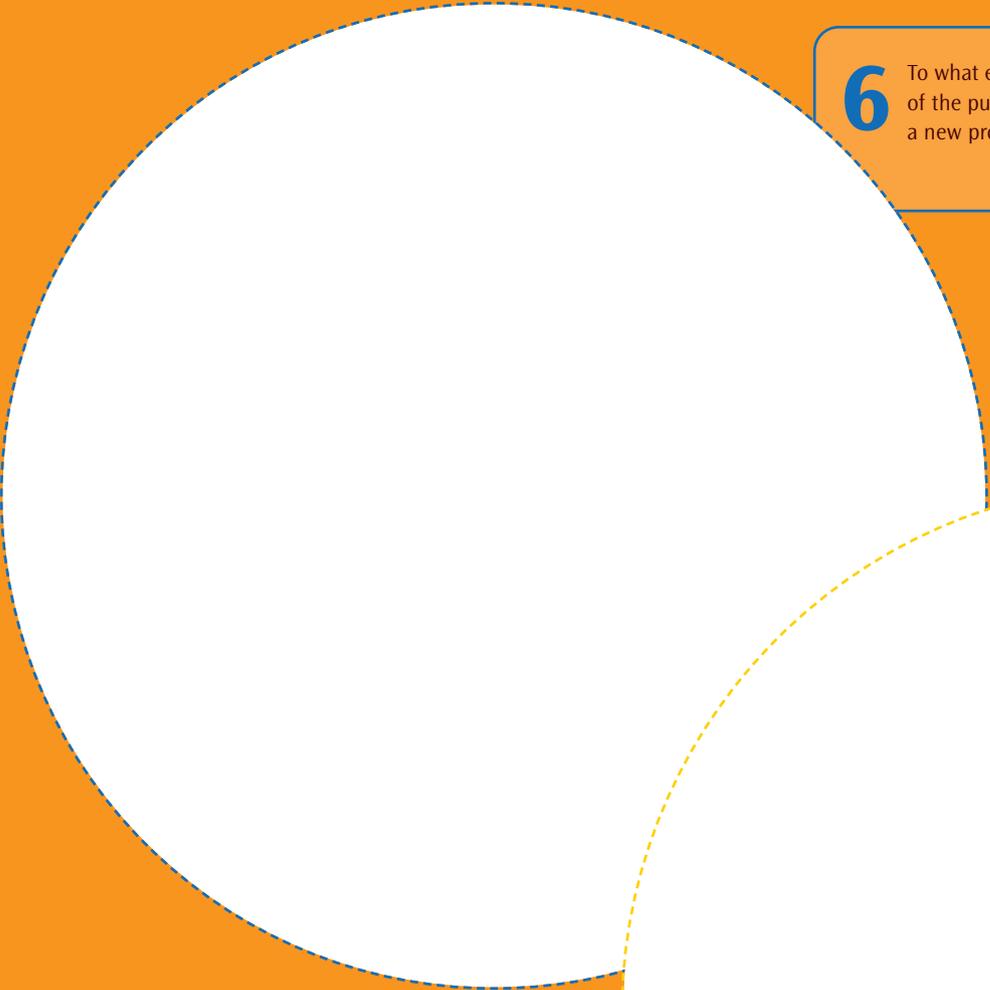


2 How prominent are the key skills, including creativity, in your short- and medium-term plans?

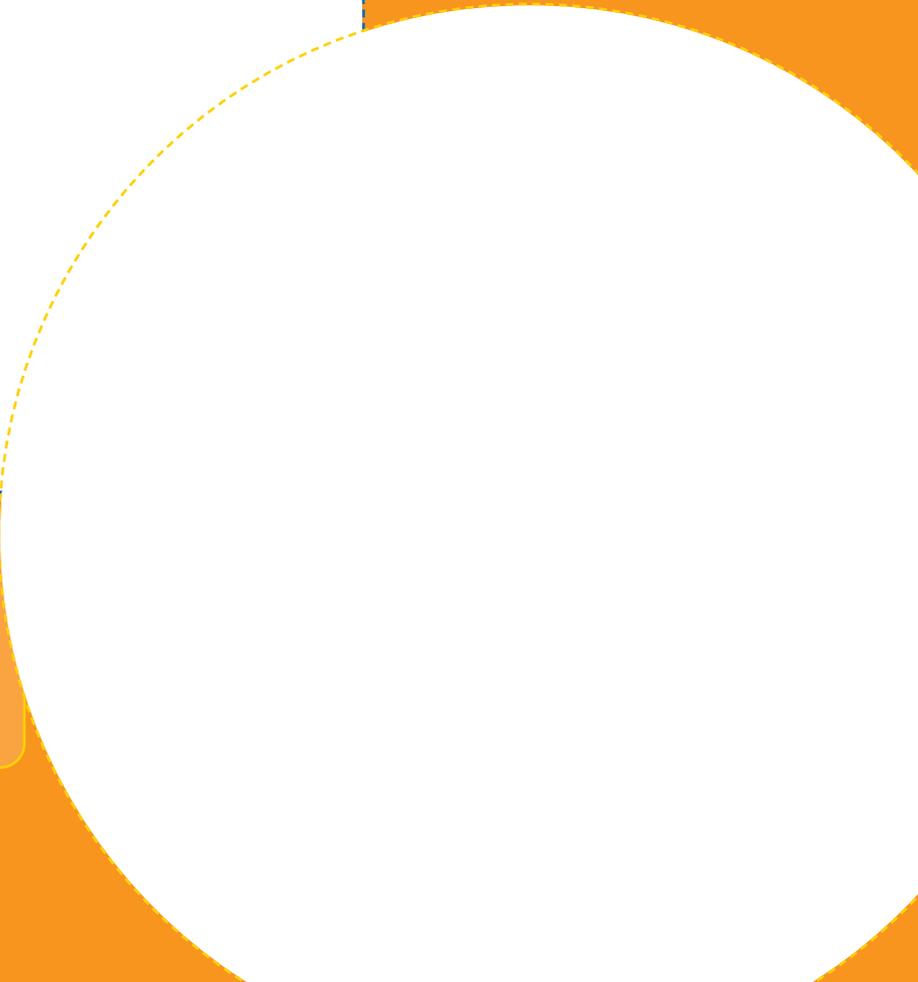
3 How often do timetables allow for sustained periods of work? What scope is there for teachers to organise time around learning, rather than fitting learning into the timetable?

4 How generous is the amount of time allocated to the arts in the whole curriculum?

5 In what ways do visitors, visits, high-quality resources and first-hand experiences enrich the curriculum?



6 To what extent do you seek the views of the pupils when you are planning a new programme of work?



7 How much do you know about the different ways your pupils prefer to learn, and how much account do you take of this when you are planning a unit of work?

Reviewing school organisation and environment The imaginative use of people, including skilled adults who are not qualified teachers, and the school buildings and grounds can do a great deal to support creativity for learning across the curriculum. The imaginative use of budgets and grants available to the school can also help to make things happen.

The learning environment extends beyond the classroom and will include shared spaces, the hall, the reception area and the school grounds. It has great potential to communicate and reinforce the leadership's values and aspirations for the school.

Much can be learned by conducting regular tours of the school with a small team which, on some occasions, might include pupils. Sharing opinions about what is observed during the walk is likely to be most successful in a school climate of mutual respect, honesty and integrity.

REVIEWING SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND ENVIRONMENT

1 What messages does the environment convey about the school's values and expectations?

2 In what ways does the physical environment stimulate learning? How does it reflect what pupils have learned or are in the process of learning?

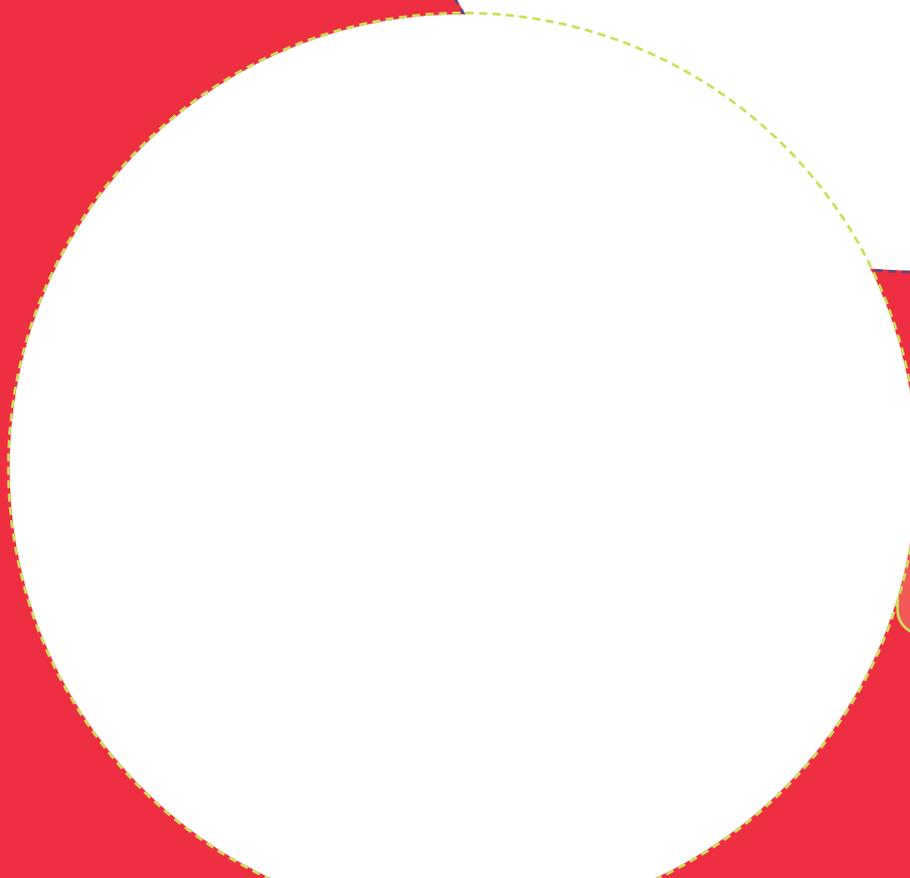
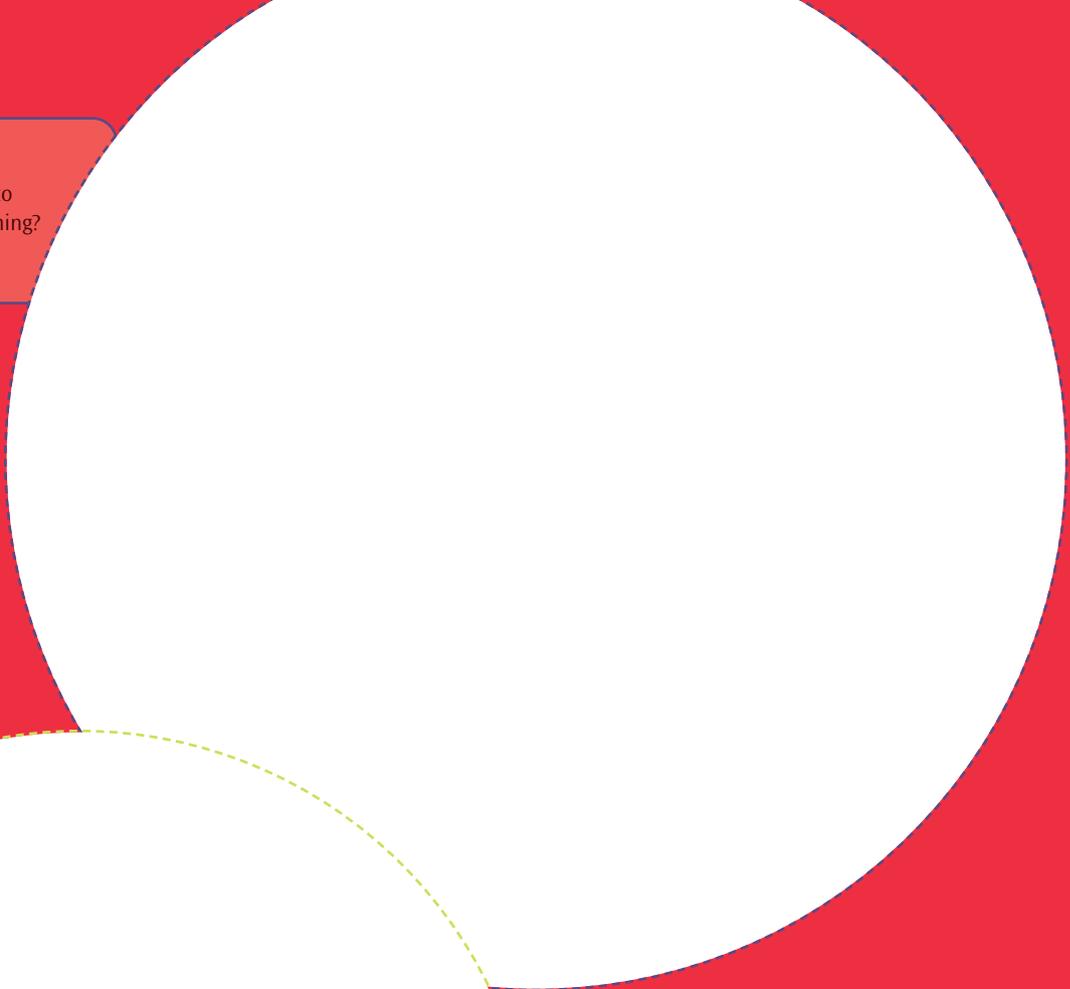
3

How far does the environment acknowledge, and cater for, pupils' preferred learning styles?

4

To what extent do the pupils contribute to the design of the environment in the classrooms and outdoor areas?

5 In what ways might these environments be adapted to promote creativity for learning?



6 How well is creativity for learning supported by high-quality resources, and how are they used to foster creativity in all subjects?

Stages of development in promoting creativity for learning

Following the work you have done to gather evidence under the three headings of learning and teaching, curriculum and school organisation, you and your colleagues should have a better sense of how well creativity for learning is developed in the school and how strong a contribution it is making to standards and the quality of learning.

The following examples are intended to provide a focus for discussion and help you and your staff to clarify where you are now and what you need to do next. The development of creativity for learning is a complex process, but for the purpose of comparison, the following descriptors are intended to make the stages more tangible and accessible.

It is unlikely that all the characteristics of a particular stage of development will match those of your school. What matters is the discussion and analysis that the examples generate and how these are used as a tool for school and staff development.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Learning and teaching

Timetables have a small amount of flexibility to allow pupils to explore ideas or follow their own lines of enquiry, but by and large, opportunities for sustained work of this kind are limited.

Pupils depend on their teachers for knowing what to do for most of the time, although there are a few opportunities to work independently, either in groups or by themselves, in ways characteristic of creativity for learning.

Teachers are not always sure about what they can do to add interest and excitement to their lessons, or what to do with their creative ideas.



Pupils are able to work independently in a few subjects for extended periods of time to develop skills and ideas in depth, some of which are the result of ideas suggested or questions asked by the pupils themselves.

Teachers are clear, in a few subjects, about how and why they are developing creativity for learning with their pupils.



The staff have reviewed **timetables** and the pattern of the school day and, as a result, changes have been made to allow for periods of sustained learning, as appropriate.

There are lots of opportunities for **pupils** to influence, in creative ways, how the school works, from designing outdoor play areas to suggesting rules and procedures for behaviour and conduct around the building.

The **pupils** themselves understand the importance of creativity for learning and how it can make a difference to their attitudes and achievement. They are encouraged, in specific ways, to analyse and evaluate their own learning so that they become more effective, independent thinkers.

Teachers have a good understanding of the importance of creativity for learning. They respond to pupils' creativity in the course of lessons to allow creative thinking to develop in ways not envisaged in their planning.

Curriculum

47

There are examples of teachers **planning** to develop creativity for learning in a minority of subjects and aspects of the curriculum in most year groups.

The curriculum is broad and balanced, but the medium- and short-term **planning** has only a few explicit references to the development and application of key skills, particularly those associated with creativity for learning.

There is some use of outside visitors with specific expertise, but their contributions have only a limited impact on the **enrichment** of the curriculum and pupils' learning.

Teachers **plan** experiences to stimulate and encourage pupils' creativity, but not in all subjects. They provide opportunities within these experiences for pupils to be creative in their thinking and behaviour.

The development of key skills, including creativity, is a key component in the medium- and short-term **planning** for all classes, but is much stronger in the arts and in design and technology than the rest of the curriculum.

The curriculum is **enriched** by a wide range of learning experiences and visitors to the school.

A skills-based approach, with particular attention to creativity for learning and involving pupils in improving their own learning and performance, provides the foundation for the **planning** of all subjects.

Teachers adjust their **planning**, where appropriate, in response to pupils' ideas and contributions.

Imaginative use is made of time to **enrich** the curriculum. This ranges from whole-school learning events lasting for a week or more, to specific days when timetables have few fixed points to allow the learning interests and needs of the pupils to determine the pattern of the day.

School Organisation and Environment

The staff have not discussed, in any formal way, what creativity for learning means, so there is, as yet, no shared **understanding** about how it can improve the quality of learning and raise standards.

There is only isolated evidence, in displays and other features of the school's **environment**, that creativity for learning is regarded as important.



Teachers **understand** the importance of developing key skills, including creativity, and work together on planning and organisation within a culture of trust and mutual respect.

The school's ethos, on which creativity for learning has a strong influence, is reflected by its **environment** and the use of display. Some displays invite pupils to become involved with ideas through questions and suggestions for investigation, but for others, there is no such invitation or stimulus for thinking.



School policies and guidelines refer explicitly to the importance of creativity for learning, and time and money have been invested in helping staff to **understand** its implications for teaching and learning in all subjects.

Involvement with the local community helps the school to develop exciting outside and indoor learning **environments**.

Children are involved in decision-making about the **environment**. They think of the school as theirs, and displays of their work provide a daily reminder that the school is a community of people who share the same ideas and aspirations.

Where do you go from here?

49 This guide has:

- discussed what creativity for learning means and why it is important
- suggested how you can assess the strength of its contribution to learning and achievement in your own school
- described some of the things that successful schools have done to make it work

If the guide has shown you that creativity for learning is not making as strong a contribution to the work of your school as you would like, you will need to decide how and where any changes are going to be made.

Some of the things which the schools featured in the guide are doing may be too ambitious for your school at its current stage of development. Nevertheless, each of the initiatives is amenable to implementation on a smaller scale, in which change would be restricted to small and easily-managed steps, or limited to particular year groups or subjects. Planning and putting into action a special learning event for one day, for example, may be the best place to start, or you may decide to use your next curriculum review to build more emphasis on creativity for learning into your planning for some subjects.

We hope the guide will give you the confidence to make a start on developing creativity for learning in your school, or, if you are already well on the way, encourage you to go further. However ambitious or modest your plans for change, aim to have a curriculum that inspires teachers and develops your pupils' abilities to think, learn and behave creatively.

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