

Creative Classrooms

Curiosity and engagement

CURIOSITY AND ENGAGEMENT

At Benton Dene Special School access to the creative arts is seen as an entitlement and creativity oozes out of every learning environment. There is a strong belief that engagement in the creative arts increases student achievement across all subject areas, as well as social and adaptive skills.

The school provides broad and varied learning experiences which help students to acquire personal qualities, attitudes, skills knowledge and understanding necessary for personal fulfilment and cultural awareness.

Background context

A school for students with moderate learning difficulties and autism. Nearly two years ago they reorganised the curriculum structure to better meet the wider needs of their students. They developed five main areas: core subjects, humanities, the arts, challenge and development and learning for life.

A key move was to create the non class-based role of the art and DT, and music and drama subject leaders for PPA cover in Key Stage 2. This meant that the quality of the arts provision was raised as it was being delivered by specialist teachers. Curriculum reorganisation allowed subject specialists to work together on a joint arts project in the form of a theatrical show across several classes.

CREATING A THEATRICAL SHOW

A project over two terms that became the springboard for curriculum development.

Stage 1 - In the first year it relied more on structure and content provided by staff for example teachers deciding upon *The Enormous Crocodile* as the key theme.

Stage 2 - By the second year, students had begun to understand the full cycle of the planning to performance process and took more ownership of this. Teachers provided the theme of *Jack and the Bean Stalk* but the pupils decided all the details of 'what happened' and how' at the top of the beanstalk.

Stage 3 - This year students have chosen and developed their own magic carpet story. In response to their choice staff have been able to edit the structure of the planning, co-create a performance cycle and also adjust areas of the wider arts curriculum to both support key skills and focus more on skills that may not be covered during the show. Careful attention is being given to the coverage and progression of key skills. This supports students' understanding of how a skill learnt in one situation, can be applied in other situations.

The project began life as a theatrical show, where sets and costumes were be created by classes in art and DT lessons, and the drama and music was simultaneously created in the other lessons. The idea was that the design content was tailored to each class and even individual students; for example allowing a child who doesn't like to be on stage to be involved in set creation or management and one who loves the stage to have main parts.