

## Creative Curriculum Co-Leaders Report:

### Visit to Bealings Primary School, Woodbridge Suffolk Focus: Mantle of the Expert pedagogy

#### Participants:

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#### Context of the School

Bealings is a very successful rural school, with 4 classes and a teaching Head. The school is situated in what could be described as a 'chocolate box' picture location, utilising all of the available space for learning. The children come from a wide variety of social backgrounds. Although not ethnically diverse they have some EAL children.

[www.bealings.org.uk](http://www.bealings.org.uk)

#### Vision and Values

The Headteacher is a charismatic and inspirational leader. He believes all children have the capacity and the right to a high quality, enquiry based education. His vision allows for children to achieve their potential and the provision at Bealings does not put limits on the extent to which children can learn. The Headteacher leads by example, through his whole school interactions as well as his own planning and class teaching. He has used an external consultant to coach staff in Mantle of the Expert. One of the staff is now an AST for Mantle of the Expert. The Headteacher feels that this enquiry based learning through Mantle of the Expert has attributed to the school's success. The school is judged to be 'unique and outstanding' by Ofsted.

[www.mantleoftheexpert.com](http://www.mantleoftheexpert.com)

The staff believe that in our ever-changing world, the children need to know 'how' to learn, not 'what' to learn in a content driven curriculum, so that they can be creative problem solvers through experiential learning.

The children learn through imaginary contexts, through taking on roles (mantles) and problem solving in role, then when removed from that role the metacognitive element occurs - talking about what has happened during the role play (the constructivist element).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMcfrLYDm2U>

#### Teaching staff

Initially, not all staff bought into this way of working. One member of staff has been there for 15 yrs and developed with the school, another started as a newly qualified teacher. There were some differences between the style of delivery from class teachers, all of which was appropriate for the age of their pupils. The staff are all referred to by their Christian names.

### Pupil Voice - Beyond School Council

The day began with a school meeting that is held every week. A Year 6 child chairs it and the minutes are kept by another. The chair and minute take changes for each meeting and are voted for at the end of the meeting. Every child is able to make any comment, suggestion or raise an issue. The discussion ensued about whether it was right to catch butterflies or not, even if you let them go afterwards. The reception children were very involved in this debate, as they had kept caterpillars that were about to emerge from their chrysalises. After several comments were made it was decided that they should vote and the democratic decision not to catch butterflies in the first place was made. There were other issues brought up, such as the lack of a friendship bench on the field and about Michael Jackson dying the night before. Nobody was ridiculed for what was perceived as a silly statement, every contribution was valued. The Headteacher explained it was through this forum that the children decided they wanted to keep chickens, and later we were shown a large chicken run on the field. He ensures that this forum doesn't only have empty suggestions, but that there is a budget linked to this as well.

### Planning and Observation

We observed three Mantle of the Expert sessions and learned about the way in which these lessons were planned. It is highly planned by the teacher and is developmental as the topic progresses with the children's learning. The teachers have a good understanding of the skills to be learned and will extend the children's thinking through careful questioning. The children's own questions will also lead the direction of the planning. The class takes on the role of a company, for example The Diamond Demolition Company, and they are given a problem from a fictitious client. In role, they discuss and solve problems and conflicts. Out of role they discuss what has happened. This is better exemplified by an example where Yr 3 and 4 were Events R Us. They were to re-enact the 1969 Moon landing. Initially, they had carried out research around this using ICT. They discussed, out of role, how they would approach this drama and were then asked to go into role as the 3 astronauts that were in the moon landing mission. The drama was paused in a freeze frame concentrating on feelings and facial expressions to show how they felt the moment that Neil Armstrong was about to take his first step out of the spacecraft. Out of role they discussed their feelings about the moon landing. The children then went into the garden where this learning was then transposed into a piece of diary writing in their journals.

### Learning Environment

The classrooms were fairly informal each with a large sofa and carpet area maximising all of the learning space. The children were active and used the whole space in the room as well as the outside areas on the veranda, on the field or in the garden. On the walls there was often ongoing and developmental work that was used for recording purposes. It had the feel of being creative by the elements of design that were incorporated into the space; a totem pole, a carving created from one of Merlin's fabled trees by a local artist and the entrance to the school which had been designed by the

children using the Art Nouveau signs from the Paris metro as a stimulus from their Year 6 trip, made by a 'friend of the school' in metal work. The children's work and experiences from their school journey was recorded in vivid and creative learning journals.

They use all of their available space including a large field on which they have built an actual size Iron Age thatched roundhouse. They will be turning this into a sustainable living area with solar panels. There is a large shed which is being used and developed as an art studio. The dining hall, which has wooden dining room tables and chairs donated by parents is decorated in the style of a French Café and is used as a community music café in the evening.

### Transposable Knowledge/Practice/Reflection

- Vision and core values must be central to the Leader/s
- Pupil voice and decision making, £ being linked to this.
- Use of all available space
- Strong pedagogy
- Developing core skills
- Community involvement
- No ceiling set on children's learning potential
- 'Constructive' approach. Building on what children know and focusing on strengths
- Highly planned, cleverly orchestrated experiential learning using National Curriculum Skills
- Focus on progression
- Staff know and understand the National Curriculum
- High level of questioning to challenge thinking
- High level of AfL
- Value all contributions
- Strong emphasis on understanding the world through the experiences of different cultures
- Core skills are taught and any evidence of under attainment is addressed with appropriate and targeted support
- Data is used to highlight progress and attainment across the school is high
- Staff who believe in the children
- Staff well-being 'up'
- Community links promoted ie use of Mobile Skateboard Park
- Teachers and teaching assistants are at the top of their game or challenging themselves