### Project summary

The staff felt that teaching QCA units as a 'stand-alone' had become stale and wanted a fresh approach. A number of children were disengaged from their learning, which was making behaviour management more difficult. The fragmentation of the curriculum was the aspect that staff wanted to change.

We decided to adopt a thematic approach, as recommended in 'Excellence and Enjoyment', as we felt this would benefit staff and pupils. The staff felt enthusiastic about adopting such an approach and we felt that this would filter down to pupils.

In January 2007, we began to plan a 'new' curriculum, to be implemented in September 2007. Throughout the first year, we monitored the successes of the approach and developed areas of weakness.

At the time, teachers were implementing the Renewed Framework for English and commented that the holistic approach would be enriched if the English curriculum was developed in a thematic way as well. In July 2008, staff evaluated the curriculum and worked as a whole school to refine where necessary to ensure continuity and progression. We also linked all the Units of work in English to our themes, which is proving to be very successful.

### Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?

Cross-curricular approach - The Skills Based Curriculum

### Aspect of Every Child Matters addressed:

- [ ] Be healthy
- [ ] Stay Safe
- [X] Enjoy and achieve
- [ ] Make a positive contribution
- [X] Achieve economic well-being

### What were you hoping to achieve?

A curriculum that was inclusive, interesting and would be a great motivator for pupils. We wanted to encourage flexibility and fluidity to the curriculum, raising
standards and pupil interest at the same time. We wanted to ensure that the curriculum met the needs and interests of all pupils. We wanted staff to be creative in their thinking and feel more ownership of the curriculum.

How did you identify the need for this practice?

Whilst watching a video clip from 'Excellence and Enjoyment', staff saw the potential richness of a thematic approach. We initially linked a couple of subjects together, such as Geography and Art, but teachers felt passionately that the skills based approach would engage all our learners.

What did you do?

Spring/Summer Term 2007
We decided to base the curriculum upon themes and skills, putting together a document that linked the skills for each year group with a curriculum area. Individual members of staff then developed these in line with meeting the needs of their own class. We met as a staff to ensure full coverage of all National Curriculum Subjects so that we were ready to 'launch' the new curriculum in September.

2008/9
Teachers taught from the plans that had been created and we constantly monitored and evaluated as we went. Teachers found that on occasions, they had planned too much, due to special events in school at key times of years. At this time, we were implementing the Renewed Literacy Framework. A number of staff found links between some of the English work and the themes. This was fed back to staff and we recognised the motivational aspects of this, especially with reluctant learners. For example, work on the theme of 'Space' was enriched by a unit of English based upon 'War of the Worlds'. The impact of this was powerfully felt by staff who had adopted this approach and we decided to tie English work to all themes if possible in September 2008.

In the Summer term of 2008, the staff worked together and produced a coherent set of Curriculum overviews which encompass a skills-based approach. We are looking to further develop this as, currently, the area of Music is still taught as a 'stand-alone'. This is largely due to the confidence of the staff, but we hope to move this forward in the next two years.

Which members of the establishment and/or wider community have been involved and what was their role?

- The initiative has been led by the Headteacher and teaching staff, who have worked as a cohesive unit towards a shared goal.
- Governors have been involved in the planning process and curriculum overviews have been discussed at Curriculum Committee meetings. The governors share the vision of the headteacher in terms of a thematic approach and have supported work in this area.
- Support staff are involved on a daily basis and are represented at Staff Meetings that have been connected with the planning of this subject.
- Parents are kept informed through newsletters, parents evenings etc.
Feedback from parents is very positive and they support our ethos.

**How has the practice been modified or improved during development?**

We redesigned the plans after a year and a considered review and evaluation procedure. We have added the teaching of English through the themes and are looking to reinvent the ICT and Art curriculum in this area in the coming year.

**What has been the impact of the project on pupils’ learning, achievement or enjoyment and how has this been measured?**

Pupils are more readily engaged in their learning. Lesson observations and frequent 'drop ins' have shown a school where Excellence and Enjoyment is being achieved. The teachers have noticed improved behaviour, particularly in the afternoon sessions, as pupils are much more motivated and engaged in their learning.

**What are the next stages in the development process?**

We are going to adapt the plans in the coming year as we have got new staff with the skills to drive the curricula in ICT and Art forwards. This will obviously be achieved within the same framework that we are currently using.

**What aspects of this practice may be useful for other establishments to consider?**

We found that at key times of year, such as leading up to Christmas, we planned too much and only completed half of the plans as other priorities took over. When redesigning the curriculum, we made allowances for this and planned 'mini units' around such times.