

Lancashire Education Awards



Case Study

Establishment name:	Whitefield Infant School and Nursery
Lead contact name	Mrs Erica Mason
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Project title	Unlocking potential and inspiring life-long learners through a creative, meaningful curriculum

Award gained

Award category	X
Innovate <i>A project that demonstrates practice that is new or ground breaking, which successfully engaged and enthused learners.</i>	
Achieve <i>A project had measurable impact on raising outcomes for pupils.</i>	
Invest <i>A project that has had a positive impact upon an aspect of the wider school community.</i>	
Collaborate <i>A project that involved work across more than one school or work with other agencies.</i>	
Include <i>A project in provision for pupils with Special Education Needs and Disabilities</i>	
Inspire <i>A project that demonstrates embedded exceptional provision of an aspect of the curriculum. Practice will have been developed and refined over time.</i>	X

Project summary (maximum 200 words)

At Whitefield, we believe that the arts provide our children with a variety of engaging and exciting opportunities that enable them to develop positively in their learning, both academically as well as socially, emotionally and culturally and provides a platform to develop language and literacy. The arts is threaded through our curriculum, with opportunities, linked to learning in core and foundation subjects. Giving children quality experiences of the arts in and outside the classroom impacts greatly upon the standards of attainment achieved by our children, as it provides them with an abundance of first-hand learning opportunities on which to build their language, vocabulary and understanding of the world around them. We offer an extensive range of arts opportunities for our children; including a variety of education visits, creative practitioner visits and performances, as well links with other schools through cluster work and diversity projects, on a local and international level. We also have an artist and musician in residence that work in school on a weekly basis. Having a creative approach to our curriculum and using the arts as a vehicle for teaching and learning, has enabled us to unlock the potential of many children and dig deeper and find many beautiful 'diamonds', that would not have the opportunity to be discovered. Children have the chance to succeed in many ways, developing a life-long passion for learning, which is, we feel, what school years are all about.

How did you identify the need for this project? What were you hoping to achieve?

Children are starting school with skills typically well below those expected for their age across all areas of learning; Literacy and Understanding the World being the lowest, due to the children's lack of life experiences and EAL barriers. The school is in the highest area of social deprivation, with poor health and high unemployment. Children are starting school with very limited language and vocabulary and first hand learning experiences are minimal. Our curriculum needed to inspire our children and approach learning in a meaningful, creative way to begin to overcome some of these barriers to learning and unlock the potential of our children to give them the best possible starting points

Who led the project?

Mrs Alison Wilkinson/SLT

What steps/actions did you take?

- Develop a progressive, language-rich curriculum, rich in first-hand learning opportunities across our school, which offers challenge and enables innovative ways to teach.
- Use budget planning to facilitate an 'enrichment' calendar, looking at how and where creative practitioners (artists, musicians, poets, authors, actors etc.) could further inspire our curriculum and add meaning for our children.
- Develop outdoor spaces to provide a quality 'classroom under the sky', which could be used daily to bring learning to life and become an integral part for teaching and learning, developing children knowledge and understanding of the world.
- staff working alongside creative practitioners to develop their own CPD and inform their own creative practice.
- Running e-twinning projects during the last few years with school across Europe, working on creative projects together, facilitated by Skype.
- involving parents in many creative workshops, supporting and developing community links.
- sharing our practice with many visiting schools across Lancashire and further afield, supporting them in their journey to raise standards in their own schools.
- staff visiting schools National and Internationally to inform their own teaching and bringing fresh, creative ideas into school to inform our own SIP.

What was the impact of the project and how was this measured/assessed?

Children are starting our school well below age-related expectations in many areas of the curriculum. By the time the children leave our school, they are working at and above national expectations. The children make rapid progress during their time with us, as a result of the creative approach to our curriculum and the gaps we are able to narrow by giving the children first-hand learning experiences, they would not otherwise encounter. This promotes language and vocabulary development, which the children using in their daily learning to reach what is expected of them nationally. We have excellent behaviour for learning across our school as children are highly engaged and focused, evidenced daily in our classrooms.

What are the next steps? How will you follow up this work?

We will continue to be creative with our funding to enable this approach to continue and ensure the opportunities our children are exposed to are sustainable over time. We will continue to review our curriculum, ensuring it is meaningful and meeting the needs of different cohorts and will remain reflective on the experiences we provide. We have also applied to become part of an international Erasmus project, which will have a STEAM focus (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics). In the modern and developing world in which science and technology is everywhere, developing 21st century skills and keeping pace with scientific and technological innovations are becoming more and more critical for young generations. To compete and succeed in such a knowledge-based and highly technological society, students need to develop their thinking, criticizing, creating, designing and solving capacities. We will work with other counties across Europe to develop these skills in our children and through our curriculum, being the Arts specialist with the project. Our staff will host training for the school internationally and staff will visit the other counties within our project to develop their own CPD.

Do you have any other advice for establishments that might be considering a similar project?

We have always let the needs of our children lead our curriculum and the national expectations have been woven through, rather than letting the curriculum dictate what our children need - this is key to meeting the needs of the children in our school effectively and enabling them to shine. A creative approach to the curriculum, underpinned by quality teaching and learning of key skills allows all children to make excellent progress from their starting points.