### Case Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Establishment name:</th>
<th>The Breck Primary School</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Award granted:</td>
<td>Innovative Practice</td>
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<td>Project title:</td>
<td>The Creative Lab</td>
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### Project summary

- This project was about being brave and trying a new approach to teaching mixed age group children in KS1. Creativity had been taught very successfully for several years through small blocks of work and the school team knew that this was a successful approach in engaging all learners, but more specifically “reluctant” learners.

- The school suffers from 2 demographic issues – no natural catchment and a large pupil admission number of 35. Despite being popular and oversubscribed, this did not quell the angst of many KS1 parents when faced with their children being taught in mixed age groups and split registration groups.

- Through evaluation and analysis the project was conceptualised through “talent” spotting of outstanding practitioners in school, it was further encouraged by the release of a classroom.

- The classroom practitioners were given an empty classroom, the fluid learning environment allowed a blank canvas for creativity generated from the children to flourish, the end result being a stunning environment.

- The impact on learning has stunned the whole school community in a very short space of time, the feedback from all stakeholders is overwhelmingly positive.

### Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?

- The whole staff team have reflected and evaluated current outstanding practise in school focusing on learning outcomes. We have considered internal and external inhibitors to learning for all pupils. Having evaluated, over a period of time, the breadth of curriculum through innovative practice, evaluating creative work that has taken place through small termly blocks of time (weeks, fortnights) we made a conscious decision to enhance provision for pupils who would have normally been in a mixed aged class.
• Encouraging and engaging an outstanding team to be risk takers with curriculum delivery.
• Embracing the talent of the staff.

What were you hoping to achieve?

• A better way of delivering the KS1 curriculum to all pupils, a more creative and inclusive approach to learning.
• Dissipate the angst of split classes for parents, carers and children, taking into consideration parental feedback through parent and community forums and parental questionnaires.
• Trying to strike a balance between class sizes and government guidelines in a school with an intake of 35 pupils each year, plus appeals in this oversubscribed school.
• Taking risks, we know all pupils in our school make expected progress or more, what can we do to further impact on standards for all, especially those in more vulnerable groups and the 'unseen' child?

How did you identify the need for this practice?

• RaiseonLine data through discussions with the School Adviser and Governors.
• The necessity to remove any real and/or perceived barriers to learning identified by parents and staff.
• The differential between FSM and non-FSM is too great at the end of KS1 and KS2 both in teacher assessment and statutory tests.
• The results of our annual parental questionnaires identified the concerns parents had when their children were in mixed aged classes and not taught as a cohort.
• The unpredictability of numbers in Reception and KS1 in any academic year.
• Talent spotting within the school staff team and embracing that talent and allowing it to flourish.
• The children in our school want to learn, this is enabling our pupils to 'dig deep' to critical thinkers and learners.

Briefly describe the main characteristics of the school?

This is a slightly larger than average-sized primary school with 277 on roll. The proportion of pupils supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average (2 pupils with statements and 10 pupils at school action). The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is below average (10%). Most pupils are of White British heritage. Inward mobility in KS2 is still above average in some year groups. Although a high demographic location, the majority of pupils travel to The Breck, very often passing three or four more local primary schools.

What did you do?

• Spring term 2014, whole staff school development planning. Reviewed all aspects of having mixed age classes in key stage 1.
• Reviewed: data, standards, pupil progress pupil and parental feedback from autumn term 2013, staff and governor feedback.
• Through a rigorous appraisal system and end of year reviews we focused on staff strength and areas for development that could further enhance learning outcomes across the school.
• Outstanding schools are led by leaders who are risk takers, knowing systems were in place across the school to ensure standards continued to improve a decision was made to trial the Creative Lab initially for one term.
• Whole staff team reviewed the new national curriculum and together planned the focus for the Creative Lab.
• Dina Fielding, teacher, was given the titles of Rainforest, Arctic & Antarctica and The Desert as suggestions for the year's titles, with no set time limit on how long a topic should run for.
• Staff discussed curriculum coverage from Reception to Year 2.
• Staff discussed the measurability and impact and unknown outcomes in the knowledge that we had an outstanding practitioner who knows her craft and an outstanding teaching assistant who impacts on standards throughout school.
• Children would go into the Lab for a week at a time, each group building on and creating an environment that would develop weekly.
• Staff & S.L.T. knew that breadth of learning being offered across all areas was taking place.

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

- The Creative Lab has become a talking point in school.
- All children and the whole school community have become immersed in the project.
- The whole staff team are reflecting on their practice.
- Visitors to school, all stakeholders, staff through our Teaching School Alliance and students through ITT are discussing the value of the project, the learning, the impact on critical thinking. The feedback is extremely positive.
- Prospective parents visiting school through Open Events see the project as an aid to break down barriers and misconceptions about large class sizes and mixed aged groups.

### How has the progress of the project been monitored and evaluated?

- The measurable impact is shown through the feedback from staff who know their pupils and each pupil’s areas for development.
- Staff communicate effectively with Dina and Joanne who run the Creative Lab. Both members of staff share outcomes with each child’s class teacher; they share work produced on display or in books or videoed on an iPad.
- There is a noticeable difference for many pupils in their willingness to speak and share information in their own classes.
- Pupils are being given a context, they confidently talk about Antarctica or the Rainforest, they share information, and facts they have found out with confidence and write about those things confidently.
From the onset of the trial we were aware that we would need to measure the impact but were unsure what if any there would be. However we can already see, daily, that all pupils are engaged in the learning process, developing as independent learners, critical thinkers, risk takers, questioning, asking, sharing, 'digging deep' in their thinking and learning.

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

- Outcomes are interesting, not necessarily what we expected. Greater use of ICT, independent use of touch screen computers and laptops by reception and years 1 & 2 children.
- Planning developed to encourage child-led topics within the overarching theme.
- The development of planning, listening to the input of pupils, often going 'off plan' yet achieving excellent learning outcomes.
- Emphasis on speaking and listening, art and music whist maintaining rigour across the core subjects.
- Differentiation facilitating work that is challenging and effective for all learners.

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

- Pupil feedback is phenomenal, children are so enthusiastic, motivated, engaged and responsive. Pupils undertake additional work at home due to engagement and interest.
- Parental feedback is positive. The sensory learning environment has impacted on some children massively; their academic work and confidence at speaking in class vastly improving.
- Positive parental verbal and written feedback.
- Staff given the impetus to develop areas further within their own classrooms.

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

- Look at measurable outcomes to assess and level against age-appropriate targets.
- We will benchmark and measure progress against speaking and listening targets linked to the new curriculum.
- Work produced in the Lab is levelled, we will compare and moderate writing levels against work undertaken and completed in class.

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

- For headteachers and senior leadership teams to talent-spot within their own schools.
- To be as aspirational for their staff as they are for their pupils, the payback is outstanding.