Establishment name: Banks Methodist School
Lancashire no. 08/076
Contact name: Mrs Jean Morris
Email: head@banks.lancsngfl.ac.uk
Telephone no. 01704 227323
Award granted: Innovative Practice
Project title: ‘The arts’ festival enhances commitment to the live arts, creativity and every child matters’

Project summary

- Banks Methodist is committed to the live arts - it is an essential component in developing the ‘whole child’. As a very small school, every child has an opportunity and is encouraged to involve him or herself in the arts and creativity.
- In 2005 we initiated a "Creativity Afternoon" every Thursday afternoon with an ‘army’ of grown ups from the community willing to share their ‘gifts’ and skills with the children on a pre-planned programme of activities for which the school earned a 'Learning Excellence' Award. Children throughout the year get a ‘taste’ of various activities and develop skills across a wide range of activities including cross stitch, knitting, baking, ICT, quelling, horticulture, modern technology, textiles, card/book making, photography, etc. culminating in a triannual ‘Arts Festival’ or annual competition.
- The Arts' Festival '08 was our second event of this nature. The triannual Arts Festival has become a much anticipated and celebrated event in the Banks Methodist calendar.
- The week long event aims to bring a wide range of cultural experiences to pupils, parents and the wider BMS community.
- Poetry, literature, the visual arts, music and drama are explored in many forms in a mixture of performance and workshop based events.

Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?
The Arts Festival bears out our desire to meet the aims of the ECM agenda by:
- providing opportunities to learn and to grow and to be happy in the process;
- providing unique opportunities to be committed, to be creative and to be happy in the process.

Aspect of Every Child Matters addressed:
- Be healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being
What were you hoping to achieve?

- improve the quantity, range and type of arts provision available to children;
- continue to raise the profile of arts' education;
- recognition, promotion and dissemination of good practice;
- provide additional arts opportunities for the children with a range of arts experiences;
- enhance partnerships between schools and the arts sector;
- promote the relationship between the arts and other curriculum areas;
- increase support and recognition for the arts;
- improve engagement with the arts among staff in the school;
- help bring the arts closer to the centre of school agenda;
- further engage with the school’s multi-cultural links through the Jinja School, Uganda;
- promote pride and self-esteem among pupils;
- provide professional development opportunities for staff;
- enable school to develop new external partnerships with artists and arts organisations;
- continue to raise the profile of the school in the local community;
- achieve positive change in the provision and profile of the arts in areas that go beyond the scope of the school’s normal curriculum;

How did you identify the need for this practice?

“We want schools to continue to focus on raising standards while not being afraid to combine that with making learning fun. Our goal is for every primary school to combine excellence in teaching with enjoyment of learning.”

Charles Clarke, Sec of State for Education 2003

The Arts play prominent roles in life at Banks Methodist and are much enjoyed by staff and pupils throughout the school year.

Music, art, ceramics, DT, drama and dance are all taught as part of the curriculum. Concerts, drama productions, art exhibitions and dance shows are an integral part of the BMS experience.

Our own pupils are encouraged to perform from an early age and thus develop self-confidence and pleasure in their achievements. Visiting musicians, theatre workshops and artists add to the breadth of the curriculum, as do visits to concerts, the panto, museums and the theatre.

It is our aim to introduce our pupils to as many as The Arts as we can, in the hope of encouraging a lifelong enthusiasm.

The school’s vision would be enhanced by the Arts Festival cultivating the creative talents of our children which is central to our task as educators.
The Arts Festival supports many of our aims and objectives:

- to accept people as they are;
- to affirm their individuality, their present gifts and future promise;
- to encourage them as they mature.

I believe education in the arts also helps us to find the right balance in our lives between the practical and the creative.

**What did you do?**

**2003**

OFSTED ‘Creativity Afternoon’ initiative ‘seeded’;

**2003 Summer Term**

- staff meetings; sought volunteers; CRB clearance;
- induction training and meetings with volunteers;
- detailed plans and preparations made; resources acquired;
- Gov’s commitment of £1k;

**2004 Autumn Term** – Thursday ‘Creativity Afternoon’ started

**2005 Summer Term**

- 1st Arts’ Festival; project included in H/T’s PM targets;

**2005 Spring Term** – Healthy School Award.

- Creativity initiative reviewed and revised;

**2006 Summer Term** - Art Competition ‘Summer’ sponsored by ‘Artemis Framing’

**2006**

- Blackburn Diocese ‘Church School Award’
- Mediamix ‘Community Heroes Award’
- ‘Chairman’s Challenge Award’ for School Council Community Project; further review, revision and refining of initiative.

**2007**

- Creativity Afternoon refined into ‘modules’ of 7 or 8 weeks.
- Summer Term 1st Scarecrow Competition sponsored by Banks Pharmacy
- Sept ‘07 OFSTED Inspection

**2008 Summer Term**– 2nd Scarecrow Competition

- sponsored by Banks WI and Banks Pharmacy.
- 2nd Arts’ Festival sponsored by Southport Soroptomists;
- project included in H/T’s PM targets

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

**Teaching and Support Staff**

Through Staff Meetings and informal discussion the concept of an Arts Festival grew out of the school's commitment to the live arts and the innovation of the Creativity Afternoon. Senior staff designed the programme to compliment the requirements of the curriculum through our various schemes and policies. An audit of staff interest and skills revealed a wide range of talents that could easily be exploited; many had an interest in the arts through their leisure activities thus a ‘network’ of interested and/or willing parties has been established. It also provided cheap human resources!

**The local community**

An audit of skills and interests of parents, friends and Chapel members highlighted
the variety of talent open to development. Willing parties were CRB’d and an induction programme initiated to give volunteers an insight into working with children and the school's rules and routines. The School Council's Community Project took the children out into the homes of the elderly finding motivation in their stories and personal interests. The children's school productions and performances were taken out to local care and nursing homes where they sang and entertained residents. Many of the children attend the local Sunday School and involve themselves in performances and activities each week and at regular Holiday Clubs.

**The wider community**

By motivating the local community, outside groups and associations were drawn in e.g. wool and textiles through the local Banks WI; cross stitch through another local group; card making; quilling; etc. The school's links with the Jinja Methodist School and the Minister’s Chairmanship of the ACTS charity [African Christian Teachers Society] engaged the children in African culture; links with Medicine & Chernobyl Special Aid Group through Mrs. Dixon's Chairmanship of the local charity, directed the school to Russian and other European cultures.

Visitors from the LA Music Service, local Brass Bands and musical groups, live performers, visiting artists, drama groups were encouraged into school to widen the motivation, interest and appeal. The Friends’ Association organise monthly Car Washes in the warmer months and local crafts people take ‘tables’ in the Tea Room to sell their wares e.g cards, cakes, preserves, textiles, etc. that reflects a community interested in the arts and crafts.

The Scarecrow Convention and ‘Summer’ Art Competitions

Ensuing summer term arts events attracted interest throughout the village – we were pleaded with to repeat the Scarecrow Festival and received £150 from Banks WI to sponsor it! The local pharmacy also put up sponsorship for the events and a picture framing business from Formby – 25 miles away – agreed to frame the winning entries in the Art Competition. Bishop Rawstorne College Jazz Band played at the Summer Fair and stole the show – many past pupils are band members!

The Arts’ Festival

This took it to another dimension! We researched groups and performers from the North West with whom the children would engage offering opportunities outside the school’s wildest dreams! e.g. Bizi Lizi – a star of children’s TV ‘Smarteenies’ who captivated the whole school for a day; similarly, ‘Bangdrum’ African Dance and Drumming brought something very special so much so we have used them twice to build on skills and motivation; a potter widened the children’s access to ceramics; a nationally acclaimed cartoonist brought the children closer to the links between literacy and art.

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

In the first year Creativity Afternoon ran every Thursday with the children in mixed
age groups working around a ‘carousel’ of 7 or 8 activities, moving on every half term.

Teaching staff realised an inequitable share in time spent on individual activities was occurring in working to a half termly rotation. Hence, the programme has evolved where each group now works on a four week 'module' with a break in between the changeover. This also relieves the demand on the willing volunteers.

Each child now has a ‘Creativity Folder’ in which any photographic evidence is kept. Additionally, each child now completes a differentiated worksheet to record the activity, with comments, that goes in the folder. Each child is building up a ‘portfolio’ of activities covered. This also enables class teachers to monitor progress and achievement.

Similarly, more thought and structure was brought to the 2nd Arts Festival where we looked to build on skills developed during the years the Creativity Afternoon has run looking to enhance and offer opportunities normally outside the realms of the routine curriculum but condensed into an intense week of activity focusing on the value of the arts for the children and introducing some diversity.

Having embraced the ECM agenda we also looked at activities that would include its objectives

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

The Arts Festival bears out our aim to address the ECM agenda:

**Be Healthy**

It has provided an invaluable opportunity to learn and to grow and to be happy in the process. e.g. through the African Dance and Drumming days; SEN, vulnerable or children with behavioural issues appear to engage in learning in a non-threatening and calm environment e.g. willow weaving, pot throwing; children’s speaking and listening skills are enhanced so that they are not afraid to talk about issues that worry them, in a quiet safe environment.

**Stay safe**

It has provided a unique opportunity to be committed, to be creative and to be happy in the process. e.g. a ‘Craftastic’ day with Bizi Lizi and her talk to the whole school on the development of her career through TV and beyond; Don Whiting was able to share his interests and skills as a Fletcher, maker of stick chairs, seating, beesom brooms and pole-lathe turner. It has provided a unique opportunity for the school community to work together in a collaborative way.
Enjoy and achieve

The children responded with enthusiasm and enjoyment in their achievements in creating different artworks e.g. cartoons, cards, picture frames, decorated boxes, pots, masks, structures, dance storyboards. Parents were invited to see the artwork and watch the African dance performances.

Make a positive contribution

We link with our wider community whenever possible, performing publicly for families and friends; displaying our work for the wider community to enjoy, allowing our pupils to make a positive contribution to the community they live in.

Achieve economic well-being

We encourage the children to recycle and reuse to produce useful artefacts and make them aware of how resources are used in various cultures; that the tried and tested skills of the craftsman are still valuable and worthwhile today; that skills and talents usefully exploited today can lead to further benefits in the future.

The school has sustained richness in the curriculum and the arts and creativity is popular with adults and children alike. Pupils have experienced a wide range of activities such as drawing cartoons, story boards, card and picture frames, the potter's wheel, African art and mask making, willow weaving, dance, drama, singing, story telling and drumming; encouraging teachers, parents, governors and local volunteers to come into school to assist in these activities at the same time enriching the curriculum further.

Many parents informed the school how successful the event was and how valuable they considered the investment in a whole week of art and craft activities.

The children were asked to review the activities; the majority were very positive, one asked, "Can we do it again next week?"

What are the next stages in the development process?

Review the school's further development in creativity and look to planning the Arts’ Festival 2011; how it might be improved further; sponsorship, etc.

Promote further the children’s engagement with the arts e.g. to enter national and local art & craft competitions where it has been very successful in recent years. Whenever possible, the children experience the live arts with visiting speakers and performers, whole school/ Key Stage visits to the theatre; Two weekly Art Clubs after school activity; whole school performances at Christmas; Harvest, Carol, Easter & Leavers’ Services in Chapel; Strawberry Tea Entertainment; taking school performances out into the community.
Encourage the children to involve themselves in numerous Chapel groups and community activities both in school and holiday time.

It has been suggested that we consider organising an 'Arts' Weekend' when whole families can come on site and take part in activities together.

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

I believe a project like this can work in other schools. It might be more challenging in large schools and would probably need to be spread over a fortnight or distributed a little more thinly depending on resources.

However, our success is built on the school’s links with the community - which is not unique and its commitment to the arts.

Long term planning is essential to secure the craftspeople required and resource the event adequately.

**Any other comments:**

- leadership in preparing and running the Festival must come from the various members of staff who have been involved in organising the Arts Festival;
- many artistes come from the wider school community and have shared their time and their talents so generously in order to enrich this unique learning opportunity for the pupils;
- the Arts Festival must provide a clear indication that there is a close link between the vision to which you aspire and the reality in which it finds its expression.
- "When you step through our doors you will see that our delightful, traditional and distinctive Church school has an open and friendly atmosphere where staff and children work together in a secure and academic environment.
- Each child at Banks is given the opportunity to realise their full potential through a well-planned curriculum based on sound teaching where Christian values underpin all our activities. And we never forget that learning can be fun too!
- The children enjoy excellent facilities, the school having been extensively remodelled in 2003 to establish a new staff/resources room, ICT suite and Library.
- Our small class sizes ensure each child receives the maximum attention of the teacher every day. We have a very strong sense of community. Everyone is valued and made to feel special.
- The school aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice being a Methodist Foundation school. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils."
- Please feel welcome to come and visit us in the near future!