

### Ridgeway Primary and Nursery School

Ridgeway Primary School and Nursery is a large primary school on the outskirts of Croydon, near London in the UK. It is an unlikely place to find an example of civic entrepreneurship but, since 1998 it has defied the UK's national curriculum and not implemented the literacy or numeracy hours required of it. Instead it has followed its own strongly held philosophy that a primary curriculum is only made coherent through making creative links between subjects. The school's vision is to have a creative curriculum that inspires both children and teachers to learn. The school wants to create a real learning community based upon a genuine will to learn that encourages creativity in children and teachers alike. The literacy and numeracy hours did not fit with this philosophy.

Head teacher, Anna House, believes creativity is the thread that runs through everything the school does. She believes in motivating people rather than working through hierarchies and structures. Parents, governors and visitors are used as a creative resource. Teachers work in creative teams along with teaching assistants, each learning from the other. Even the school meals organisers are encouraged to think creatively.

There is a detailed 38 page teaching and learning policy which draws on research into effective teaching and learning to justify the school's policies. The school aims to create a holistic curriculum with certain sustained themes like 'spirituality', 'citizenship', 'water' or 'save the planet' running through it so as to create continuity and embed learning, thus avoiding the danger of short-term, easily forgotten experiences. There are three themes each year. The themes build up to provide a view of the world that fire the children's curiosity. There is detailed planning of the curriculum around these themes. Literacy or numeracy is encouraged because of the child's interest in the theme, rather than as an end in itself. So, for example, the theme of 'shoes' was the context in year 6 for learning about materials and developing different shoe designs. This 'enquiry-based learning' provides scope for individual creativity and the development of thinking skills. The curriculum is enhanced by lunchtime clubs in areas such as chess, drama and even Japanese (run by a parent).

Creative activity is linked to opportunities to think, so as to turn the experience into learning. So, for example, children are encouraged to think about how and why certain types of shading on a drawing create the effect of texture. There is also an emphasis on developing independence and self-direction in learning. Children assess themselves against their own learning targets. In year 1 children are given their own Inventions Book in which to design creative solution to problems. At Key Stage 1 (5-7 years old) there are no set playtimes. Children develop their own portfolios showing achievements in learning. One feature of this is the extensive use of digital photographs to record these achievements. Teachers also enjoy much autonomy. For example, they can choose when, and if, to take a playtime.

The risk faced by the school by not following the national curriculum was high. Ultimately, if there had been persistently poor Ofsted (the UK schools' inspectorate) reports the school may have been closed. But the risk has paid off. Not only has it passed all its Ofsted visits but Ofsted has describes the school as having a 'very high quality curriculum'.

#### *Case questions:*

1. Is this an example of civic entrepreneurship? If so, why?

2. Is this an entrepreneurial response to an educational issue? If so, why?
3. What are the risks posed by this form of action?