Artsmark case study

The Mead Community Primary School

Context

The Mead has 508 pupils, spread over two sites. The school is recognised by Ofsted as Outstanding (2014) and was designated as a National Teaching School in 2011. It became a Converter Academy in 2012. The Mead is a national lead school for the arts, and has strong partnerships with creative practitioners and cultural organisations. Students from Bath Spa University have been working alongside arts providers at The Mead to observe and learn about high quality arts provision. They have been selected as an Artsmark Good Practice Centre for 2014/15.

'There is a clear focus on developing literacy skills in all other subjects and strong links to areas such as drama are particularly effective. For example, the recent Year 5 production of 'Goldilocks' by Roald Dahl has significantly accelerated pupils' progress and confidence in all aspects of English.' (Ofsted 2013)

Arts provision

The philosophy of The Mead’s arts provision is centred around providing visual, tactile and sensory experiences, in order 'to support the children to become life-long independent learners with the confidence to tackle the unknown. The arts are fundamental to helping our children develop life skills. We believe that the arts stimulate creativity and they form a key part of our curriculum.'

Teaching and learning is undertaken through a thematic approach. All areas of the curriculum are taught under an umbrella topic, often using the arts as a starting point.

The school uses ‘Mantle of the Expert’ techniques across the curriculum. Topics have a real or imagined-real purpose and make use of drama conventions and role-play, with children taking on the role of an expert in different fields (for example as expert archaeologists, when immersed in a unit of learning about Ancient Egypt). In addition, role-play areas are set up outside or inside classrooms and pupils are encouraged to dress up and act out scenarios in character.

Impact

Artsmark has helped to develop and fine-tune the provision for arts education at The Mead. At their most recent Artsmark validation (June 2013), their provision was highly regarded by the validator; ‘The school has an infectious effect on visitors and a real appeal comes from the arts on entering the school. The children enjoy this climate every day and were able to impart so many of the experiences, opportunities and vivid learning they had enjoyed.’ Jayne Stillman, Artsmark Validator