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## Developing a relevant curriculum: Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School

**URN:** 101794

**Local authority:** Croydon

**Date published:** 9 April 2013

**Reference:** 130132

### Brief description

This example explains how Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School has refocused the curriculum to prepare pupils for the future through two main strands – enterprise, and education for sustainable development and global learning. This new approach has engaged teachers, pupils and parents and carers and underpins the school's recent success.

### Overview – the school's message

'When I arrived at Good Shepherd, the curriculum needed a complete review. However, my priority was to address poor behaviour and low attainment across Key Stage 2. As behaviour improved so did the children's attitude towards learning. So as soon as the school came out of special measures, curriculum development was the priority.

Now the children are well prepared for life in an ever-changing and globalised world. The curriculum is more relevant. It teaches children to think creatively and critically, to be self-aware and to appreciate diversity. Teachers are committed to empowering the children to make a difference not just within the school or at home, but in other communities across the world. The global dimension is strongly embedded in the school's catholic ethos and values. As a result, Key Stage 2 outcomes have improved and progress is now significantly above national averages. I believe this is because the curriculum is effective in meeting the needs of all the pupils.'



*Anne-Marie Strachan, Headteacher*

## The good practice in detail

Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School, once in special measures, has improved significantly and is now good. Pupils' achievement and behaviour have improved year on year and achievement is now above national average.

The curriculum was developed with support from the school's professional partner, Michelle Lewis. While led by the headteacher and the senior leadership team, responsibilities were distributed and all teachers had the freedom to build for success and ensure a whole-school approach.

The review introduced two main strands: enterprise; and education for sustainable development and global learning. The global learning element provides opportunities to see what life is like beyond New Addington while allowing pupils to explore global issues. The enterprise thread develops life skills and positive attitudes. It takes the children's concepts and provides them with the platform to test ideas and make them tangible. It also promotes a risk-taking attitude and encourages children to make decisions, and work collaboratively. Good opportunities are provided for children to develop leadership skills.

'High standards in literacy and numeracy were a given, but our key aim was to future proof the children', says Michelle Lewis. 'We focused on behaviour and respect and we wanted to build the pupils' life skills so that they will be successful in a world we do not yet know. Preparing pupils for the future involves a lot more than their success at Key Stages 2 and 4. The curriculum was designed to develop key transferrable skills for the future and for employment, give pupils pride in their work, in their school and their community, and at the same time meet the demands of the National Curriculum.'

### Improving enterprise skills

Developing enterprise skills to ensure that pupils understand the value of money and develop entrepreneurial skills starts in the nursery class. Zoe Newnham, the nursery teacher, describes their enterprise project where the children produce and sell art work: 'Our [enterprise project](#) helps nursery children to understand the value of money, where it comes from and how they can raise money. This particular project was guided by the children. They used a thinking web to decide what to buy and decided to make a canvas with their hand prints which they would sell to parents and carers. Each child brought in a one pound coin. The children took the money to the pound shop and returned with their purchases. They made the art work and displayed their canvasses in the school. The parents and carers purchased them using only pound coins. The children understand the concepts more easily with strong visuals.'



Older children raise money by baking and selling cakes and biscuits, and by organising events such as the Christmas disco and sponsored runs.

Tosin, a year 6 pupil says: 'Teachers help us to learn how we can manage money and how we can make a profit so that we can send enough money to others across the world. We calculate the costs of ingredients and the cost of the cakes to work out how much to charge and how much money we will make.'

## Education for Sustainable Development and Global Learning (ESDGL)

The school has effective partnerships with schools in Uganda, Ghana and the Czech Republic. New links are currently being developed in Australia, South America and Spain. All year groups are involved and the children communicate with pupils in other schools. They compare and contrast their experiences, such as weather, water, food and the school day. These activities enrich the literacy (writing), mathematics, science, geography and history curriculum. Parents, carers and pupils share their diverse cultures which helps them gain a better understanding of their place in the community.



While the school is most advanced in its development of the social dimensions of sustainable development, the environmental aspects are also developing. Pupils are involved in recycling, outdoor learning, cycling proficiency and cycling to school, and cooking as part the 'healthy school'. The school also shares major resources such as minibuses with other partners.

Deputy Headteacher Leonie Fernandes says: 'It's been a journey to ensure we make the curriculum relevant to pupils so that they understand their learning is related to real life. Global learning gives pupils access to the big picture and cross-curricular links reinforce learning. So maths is often linked to fundraising and the pupils can then decide how to use the profit from the events; and letter writing is about events such as a protest against the closure of a local hospital.'

### Combining the two

Enterprise skills are often combined with ESDGL. For example, plants grown in the school gardens are made into chutney and sold. There is a major sale of clothing and sponsored



runs involve training beforehand to raise fitness levels. And money raised from selling cakes and chutney and from sponsored events is used to provide resources for partner schools.

Producing chutney may seem relatively straightforward but courgettes and tomatoes grown at school give many pupils their first experience of growing a food crop. Crops are harvested and chutney prepared to provide opportunities for cooking and food hygiene. Numeracy skills are used to

calculate costs and profit. The project is shared across the whole school through colourful displays designed by the pupils as well as through produce sales.

### Key strengths of the process

Some of the key features of this successful process are:

- clear direction set by the headteacher and senior team and supported by all teachers

- freedom for teachers to build for success within the overall aims
- high expectations of the pupils
- pupils take a pride in themselves, their school and their community.

For Anne-Marie Strachan and her team the new curriculum has been successful because it:

- prepares pupils for their place in a changing world
- is inclusive, motivating and engaging
- develops key skills for the future including problem solving, critical thinking, perseverance and resilience
- ensures activities have a clear purpose and develop important life skills
- relates to the children's own experience while extending it beyond their homes
- encourages pupils to value diversity; and to be proud of their own culture and that of others.



'We provide a supportive environment which encourages the children to test their ideas, work in partnership with others and develop leadership skills' says Anne-Marie Strachan. 'By providing a relevant and meaningful curriculum we are ensuring that our children are better prepared for the future.'

## The school's background

**Good Shepherd** is a smaller than average catholic primary school in New Addington near Croydon. Most pupils are from minority ethnic heritages and the largest group is Black African. Over half the pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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