



CHANGING PLACES

INVOLVING SCHOOLS IN THE ECONOMIC REGENERATION OF CASTLEFORD, AIREDALE & FRYSTON Pilot Project at Oyster Park Junior School

To conclude ...

This project is not yet complete. To date we have completed two phases of the project, the first was the development of a new environmental geography teaching unit based on the school grounds, the second was work with artist Natasha Carsberg on developing ideas and plans for changing a specific locality within the grounds. The third phase is now progressing and involves the children and their teachers in raising money to implement the recently completed design ideas. The children will continue to be actively involved in helping to make their ideas a reality and when this final phase comes to fruition they expect this area of the grounds to be enjoyed by members of their school community for many years to come.

What made the project successful?

- Close collaboration with the class teacher and her willingness to work on completing aspects of our work at other times through the week.
- The enthusiasm of both the class teacher, learning assistant and children;
- The fact that the children felt they were getting something special – perhaps one of the most important aspects of bringing other people/ other expertise into a classroom.
- That the additional teacher (advisory teacher) had the time to reflect, develop some additional ideas and bring expertise from a variety of different contexts.
- Having someone to share ideas with and some time to re-think the project as it developed.
- Four days in school where the practitioner and class teacher could work with the children together on the project, plus additional planning time.
- The support of the head teacher.
- The 8 point plan for developing the grounds – it gave structure and shape and allowed the children to see more clearly what we were trying to achieve.

What was less successful?

- Looking back my memories of the later sessions are much hazier than of the earlier ones – a number of genuine reasons for this – illness, planned activities not taking place because the ICT room was being re-vamped. We did however have quite a few planned activities that we had been unable to fit into the first three weeks – which we completed towards the end of the project.

- Though we had planned a sequence of activities for the half term I'm not entirely sure that we were clear enough about how they all fitted together. (We had no established model to work from – no QCA unit and we felt we were travelling new ground.) As the project progressed I felt that our haziness may have transferred to the children and that they were not always sure of 'the bigger picture'. However, the final evaluation showed that the children had a much better grasp of what we had been trying to achieve than I had given them credit for. I feel the 8 point plan helped greatly and would help other teachers in the future to structure a similar piece of work for their pupils.

What did the children gain from the project?

- **Working with adults from outside the school.** The children gave very positive feedback about working with other adults. Children talked about the benefits at the evaluation session in July 2005 and on the video clip following their work with Natasha Carsberg.
- **Geography** - Improved spatial and environmental awareness including significant development of understanding of the school grounds & local area and increased understanding of using and interpreting maps & plans. Emotional mapping made a significant impact on the children.
- **Citizenship** – the project has been clearly linked to how we can consult with others, share ideas, work together for the common good and influence the change process. In our opinion it has brought significant benefits to the children involved.
- **Art & Design** - lots of opportunity for cutting, constructing, creating (important life skills that are much neglected in the present primary curriculum), focus on creating sculpture and designing 'spaces';
- **Speaking & listening** – the project provided excellent opportunities for pupils to increase their confidence. We found that the children needed a significant amount of support to develop their speaking and listening skills but we felt that this was one of the project's most successful outcomes. Children presented their ideas to the whole school and at a special event that was put on for parents/ carers and other adult members of the local community (this was also attended by LA advisory teacher, governors and a member of the Castleford Five Towns Team).
- **Personal aspirations**, the importance of seeing that it is possible to choose a career as an artist or, indeed as an architect or planner, and that it is possible to be an active and empowered citizen within a community.



Our overall conclusion was that this project has been of significant value to the children involved. Even though many of the skills they have developed are not easily measured, we feel it will have a long term impact on their lives and empower them as future citizens.

I would welcome any comments or feedback linked to this project report. Please e-mail Wendy North at wnorth@wakefield.gov.uk

**Wendy North
Advisory Teacher for Humanities
Wakefield Education Advisory Service
07 February 2006**