

Our South Downs Case study

Upham Primary School, Hampshire

Using a blended curriculum to make the most of the South Downs

Upham Primary is part of a network of small rural primary schools called the OMEGA group. These schools support each other in their curriculum development and teacher-to-teacher networking. Upham has been recognised by Ofsted as an 'outstanding' school for a number of years and works closely with the local community to maintain its high standards. In recent years the school has been moving towards a blended curriculum which aims to engage children through experiential learning. They have been inspired to do this by the Building Learning Power work carried out by Guy Claxton (www.buildinglearningpower.co.uk/what_it_is.html) and informed by the Cambridge Primary Review (www.primaryreview.org.uk).

This approach to the curriculum has enabled the school to bring together a number of subjects into themes linked to the locality of the school. The headteacher, who is also the education visits coordinator (EVC), says: 'The advice given by Hampshire County Council has had to be logical, with clear responsibilities for myself as an EVC. This has enabled me to create a pragmatic but insightful process for my staff, which in turn offers a sense of security for staff who are leading learning-outside-the-classroom activities.'

Farming and food

This case study focuses on the farming and food theme studied by years one and two. Three themes in all are studied, and time-tabled to enable repetition and reinforcement. In the second half of the spring term the theme is 'Contrasting localities.' This involves contrasting Upham Primary and the village with a school in Gosport, and includes a trip to their own local church, an investigation of local arable fields and the role of farming in their community, and a trip to the school in Gosport.

The following half-term the children start a growing and planting theme which again makes links to crops and farming. In the third phase of learning the children revisit growing through their farming theme, with a trip to Manor Farm.

Preparing the theme

Preparation for the farming theme involves using Google earth to look at different types of farming. The children also explore what a farm would have looked like in the Victorian period, which later in the year leads to further study on the Victorians. Manor Farm offers support to teachers with education staff available by phone, guidance for site risk assessments,

A trip to Manor Farm to explore real-life processes



hand-washing facilities, and local expertise. Teachers can make pre-visits and there is information on its website www3.hants.gov.uk/countryside/manorfarm.htm. On the day

of their visit the children take part in pre-booked sessions involving milking the cows and visiting a Victorian farmhouse. They see real examples of living processes to help them with science being taught back at school.

Back at school

Once back at school the children look at clothing, food and fuel to help explore why farms are relevant to them. They make bread and used their experiences on the farm to further their learning.

The school emphasises the fact that they rely on parental contributions for the Manor Farm trip and, with rising transport costs, they are looking at more opportunities to use facilities within walking distance of the school.

For more information about farms that maybe able to support school visits please visit www.growingschools.org.uk.