

## **Brookfields Primary: A School with a Mission**

The school is located in the Ladywood constituency of Birmingham, one of England's most deprived. Local efforts to improve the community have been considerable. However, there remains a marked contrast with the central business district, sparkling shops and galleries and museums, gateways to cultural capital and opportunity. Despite the challenging circumstances, Brookfields is a striking example of a school with a purpose. It is a school that works to create opportunity for all.

There are 400 pupils on roll. Two thirds of these pupils are from a disadvantaged background. Most pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Half of all pupils speak English and an Additional Language.

Attainment of pupils at the school is consistently close to national averages, despite very low starting points for many children. Disadvantaged pupils do well at the school. Low attaining pupils make very good progress.

An online search about the school shows endless photos of children working to create an outdoor learning environment that any school would be proud of, with willow tunnels, digging, cultivating and more. Teachers, senior leaders, governors and pupils talk with confidence about a clear direction, shared aims and values: 'if Open Futures didn't link well with what we wanted to achieve, we wouldn't do it'. There is a strong sense of school community in the classrooms and corridors.

This sense of direction is not just about what happens within school. The school uses Open Futures as a vehicle for what it wants to achieve outside of the school gates too. For example, through their work with the community homeless shelter using the Cookit strand, or opportunities for further discussion in the classroom through the Askit strand.

The school's most recent Ofsted report, in late 2013 tells the story of a good school. The narrative in the report comes to life when visiting. 'Outstanding attitudes to learning' are visible all around the school.

The introduction of Open Futures has coincided with positive outcomes in respect of SMSC, pupil wellbeing and attendance. Punctuality has also improved. One senior leader said 'pupils are aware of the opportunities available to them'.

The Open Futures Programme provides the school with excellent opportunities to work towards long term goals but also to adapt to unexpected changes in society. This is best illustrated through the use of the Cookit strand for parental engagement. Filmit has been used to help children stay safe online and Askit for discussions in the classroom about the topic 'Refugees welcome'.

Further, the Askit strand provides excellent opportunities for working to deepen children's language, a key issue for communities with high deprivation and poor home language.

The Askit approach works well in the school with its high mobility (something possibly accentuated by current social policy) as it helps to sustain a strong school community.

The school works hard on class building, where Askit is used to develop positive relationships and values such as respect and mutual cooperation. Teachers described Askit as 'time to think'.

Open Futures has also created opportunities for developing and growing leaders at Brookfields School. It has also been a key platform for staff development. This means that staff development is clearly focused on pupil need. Furthermore, TAs are included in professional development opportunities as well as teachers. The school has adopted model good practice in maximising the impact of teaching assistants, ensuring they have opportunities to take part in staff meetings, training sessions and more.

Brookfields Primary School is able to achieve these things because of its unrelenting focus on pupil need. Whether it is curriculum design, enrichment, community building, tackling disadvantage or staff development, the focus on pupil need is clear. The Open Futures programme, with its core principles and adaptability fit perfectly with this clarity of vision.

**Independent Assessment** 

Marc Rowland, Deputy Director, National Education Trust, December 2015