

Open Futures Handbook

Introducing *Open Futures* into your school



askit growit cookit filmit



Welcome to Open Futures

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to *Open Futures*. The involvement and commitment of schools such as yours is cause for genuine celebration and represents an encouraging indication of how much our programme has progressed since the original pilot.

Open Futures began in 2005. The principles underpinning the programme have long been of great personal concern to me and to my Trust. Its purpose is to help children learn practical skills, discover personal interests and develop values that make them excited about learning and what they can achieve in the future.

The purpose of this programme is to provide a skills and enquiry-based curriculum to link learning and life in a meaningful and practical way. My Trust, our dedicated staff and our professional partners have been developing *Open Futures* since 2005 in collaboration with over sixty excellent pilot schools situated in different parts of the country, each with individual needs and in diverse contexts. I am very grateful for all their hard work, enthusiasm and inspiration, which has helped to shape *Open Futures* into the effective and relevant programme it is today. Their feedback has given us the confidence to create a wide-ranging network of *Open Futures* schools, of which I am so pleased you have agreed to be a part.

Above all, what the past five years have confirmed is that *Open Futures* can be a catalyst for positive change within schools, for teachers, children and the wider school community. By working together we can help encourage a passion for learning that is so essential for children's development and their future achievement.

I wish you every success and hope that you will find *Open Futures* to be the catalyst for change that our pilot schools have found it to be.

With all my best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lady Hamlyn". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lady Hamlyn
Chair of Trustees – The Helen Hamlyn Trust

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Introduction

This handbook has been created to support you in setting up, developing and running the *Open Futures* programme.



At the *Open Futures* Trust we are passionate about children’s learning. We want to enable children to be aspirational in their approach to learning and to life. We have developed the *Open Futures* programme, thanks to The Helen Hamlyn Trust, in close collaboration with over sixty schools in the UK and with four years of rigorous independent evaluation by Newcastle University. The exchange of films with schools in India, participating in the programme via *filmit*, has provided a means for communication between different cultures: helping children to learn about each others cultures, while engaging them in new ways of seeing and understanding their own.

This handbook draws together significant learning from all of the *Open Futures* schools. It aims to offer senior leaders guidance and suggestions on ways to establish and integrate the *Open Futures* skills and enquiry-based curriculum development programme both across their curriculum and their school, in a way that is tailored to their particular needs and ambitions.

“ Open Futures is seen as a flexible curriculum development model that allows for individual interpretation and ownership by each school, meaning that any changes made are likely to last longer and generate a wider range of outcome gains.”

Open Futures Evaluation: Summary of Findings

Open Futures provides a strategic framework and practical support to senior leaders to achieve their vision. The purpose of this handbook is to help involve the whole school community in the planning and implementation of the programme. This handbook provides an insight into how the programme works. It introduces our strand partners and the impact that can be achieved through the training they provide. It also explains how the *Open Futures* online community can extend this training by offering facilities for networking with other schools, getting advice from our strand experts and sharing best practice.



On the *Open Futures* website there are a number of case studies from a range of *Open Futures* schools that provide some colour and practical illustrations of the type of activities and themes explored by the programme (see page 30 for further details).

1 What is Open Futures?

Open Futures is a skills and enquiry-based curriculum development programme created to help primary school children to learn practical skills, discover personal interests and develop values that contribute to their education, as well as enhancing their adult relationships and working lives.



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Open Futures supports the National Curriculum by providing inspirational contexts for learning that produce tangible results. The approach builds on the belief that creative reflection is essential to deep learning – whether of skills ('know how') or of facts ('know what'). The practices of creative reflection and enquiry define the *Open Futures* curriculum. Consisting of four strands – *askit*, *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit* – the programme introduces schools and children to a new way of learning and teaching, embracing skills-based education, in a way that fosters the spirit of discovery and curiosity. It aims to build a different culture in the classroom and outside, where teachers and children collaborate in Enquiry-based Learning and, therefore, develop more personalised skills and values. The aim being to nurture positive, independent individuals who are going to be able to make a valuable contribution to society.

Open Futures was also developed in response to concerns about children's health and well-being and to promote the importance of cultural understanding in a rapidly changing world.

Open Futures professional partners

Open Futures brings together a number of highly respected organisations and individuals to work in partnership with you to establish and develop *Open Futures* in your school. Our partners provide training across the four specific strands that enable children to:

- Make choices and effective decisions (*askit*, supported by SAPERE)
- Grow their own fruit and vegetables (*growit*, supported by the Royal Horticultural Society)
- Cook for themselves (*cookit*, supported by Focus on Food)
- Work with new media to produce films and share ideas with others. (*filmit* has been developed by international, interactive designers Andy Cameron and Andy Huntington. *filmit* is supported by educational film advisers.)

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Professor David Leat, Director of the Research Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne advises on enquiry within the curriculum.

It is the combination and range of expertise and skills that our partners bring to the project that makes *Open Futures* effective, authentic and unique. The learning experiences they enable teachers to bring to young children inspire, challenge, stimulate and empower them as willing learners.



Open Futures and schools

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The vision

Central to the *Open Futures* programme is the belief that it is essential to reach children at the earliest stages of their education. These formative years play a crucial role in later educational development and are vital in developing positive dispositions towards learning, providing the skills to manage future adult relationships and gaining the personal confidence to achieve success in their working lives.

At the heart of the *Open Futures* programme is its desire to help provide children with some of life's core skills: those that are practical and personal, as well as academic. The opportunities for learning created through the four strands are fresh, varied and engaging to children. Through this variety of opportunity, the strands help improve self-esteem and confidence. *Open Futures* introduces children to new interests, encourages them to think for themselves and, most importantly, helps them become informed and active

learners, who are excited about learning and what they can achieve in the future. They also learn to have genuine respect for themselves and others, for different cultures and the environment.

Open Futures and the curriculum

The primary curriculum has been the subject of debate for many decades, developing and changing as a result of the many and varied range of influences which bear down on it. Not least are differing political and professional values and the vast collection of research that has attempted to persuade and influence the organisation and management of the curriculum.

Since 2003, the vision for children’s services, proposed and encouraged through *Every Child Matters* has had a major impact on the curriculum that has developed in both primary and secondary phases of education.

Well documented reviews have encouraged primary schools not only to support the body of content enshrined in the National Curriculum, but also to recognise their capacity to contribute to the wider well-being of their pupils, as well as the needs of their local communities. These values, in some shape or form, remain uppermost in the thinking of many primary schools and, as such, encourage a curriculum that aims to ensure that children are well prepared for the world and the society in which they live.

Against this background, *Open Futures* aligns well with developing educational agendas and offers headteachers and governors a strategic framework within which both their own and the government’s vision for children and communities can be achieved. Its strength lies in its flexibility, providing every school with a programme and training which can be developed to meet the individual circumstances and needs of schools, be it to make the curriculum more creative or to extend aspects already well developed, such as Healthy Schools and Sustainable Schools.

“ In every school that has worked with the programme, Open Futures has supported their vision for ‘new, relevant and different ways of engaging with and being excited by learning, in order to raise aspirations and self-confidence in learning ”

Open Futures Evaluation Report (2009)





In particular *Open Futures*:

- Supports children in the development of appropriate skills, dispositions, attitudes and confidence to become enquiring, active and independent learners;
- Provides a rich and broad curriculum both in and outside school;
- Increases pupil motivation and interest in learning, thereby improving attendance and behaviour;
- Supports the school in developing a culture of skills and enquiry-based teaching so that the whole school becomes a 'community of enquiry';
- Supports the raising of attainment levels at key stages 1 and 2 in literacy, numeracy, science and ICT;
- Helps develop inclusive and enterprising schools, which forge stronger teaching and learning links with their local communities;
- Involves and supports parents in strategies to promote healthy eating, including encouraging young children to grow their own vegetables and fruit and to prepare and cook food for themselves;
- Helps children to make a positive contribution to society and to understand and appreciate the value of cultural diversity;
- Provides early support for young children and their families, seeking to establish secure foundations for later personal development and success.



Schools that become part of *Open Futures* generally do so because they wish to:

- Renew and refresh their curriculum, adding contexts for learning which are currently not part of the National Curriculum;
- Support their pupils in learning for life and learning how to learn;
- Engage their pupils in first-hand, practical experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, with an emphasis on skills and enquiry-based learning;
- Recognise the importance of skills as well as content, emphasising what pupils can do as well as what they know and understand;
- Encourage experts from the local community to become actively engaged with pupils' learning in school.

Learning and teaching across the primary curriculum

In recent years, many schools across the country have started to plan their curriculum with a greater emphasis on the skills that they want their pupils to learn and develop across the key stages. At the same time, recent proposals to encourage schools to align their curriculum more closely to the needs of their pupils and their communities has given many teachers the confidence to be innovative and creative in their responses to the National Curriculum and other significant frameworks which shape the primary curriculum. *Open Futures* embraces this reality, providing a creative skills and enquiry-based framework that values skills, knowledge and understanding and allows teachers to structure learning creatively according to their unique circumstances.

It is important to stress that the emphasis on skills and enquiry in no way replaces or undermines the importance of the acquisition of knowledge in primary school learning. In fact, it is specifically designed to complement that methodology. In responding to the subject requirements of the National Curriculum, schools are able to create interesting, innovative contexts for learning, which help pupils to acquire new knowledge and understanding and to develop and practise a wide range of skills.

Developing enquiry in the primary curriculum

The challenge

There has also been a tendency for the educational culture to place more value on student answers than on their questions. It is well established that far too often much formal learning in schools is based on pre-determined answers, and that students' own questions are hugely outweighed in the classroom by teachers' questions.

Open Futures champions the pedagogy of skills and enquiry and, in doing so, signals the importance that it places on fostering children's natural sense of curiosity and investigation. That emphasis is increasingly mirrored in the National Curriculum, which now recognises that skills and enquiry go hand in hand. Indeed, taken independently, skills on their own are arguably of little use. What children really need is a context in which to see their value and to practise and develop them.

- *Inquiry* is a process that has the aim of augmenting knowledge, resolving doubt or solving a problem.
- *Enquiry* is a mode of learning that is stimulated by a desire to know or to need to know something.

Enquiry-based Learning and teaching starts from the belief that:

- Effective teaching builds on what children already know and gives them the tools to move their thinking forward;
- Learning happens naturally by discovery and problem-solving, which requires pupils to hypothesise, ask questions, discuss lines of enquiry and find solutions;
- The natural desire to know, explore and to wonder is what defines children and developing that intuition is central to any pupil's development;
- Teachers should help pupils to grasp the fundamental principles of a subject and the connections between ideas within and across subjects.





“ Knowledge, understanding, tools, skills and strategies are the essential components of teaching and learning through enquiry. An enquiry-based curriculum provides opportunities to introduce, practise, share and evaluate each of these components and their relationship with each other.

Effective enquirers use each component to exploit the others to their full extent. Thus enquiry makes sense of skills by providing them with a context and a framework.”

– Dr. David Leat and Rachel Lofthouse, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Whilst such an enquiry-based approach to learning and teaching builds on children’s natural curiosity and on teachers’ nurturing instincts, its success depends on more than just valuing these qualities and espousing an ethos or spirit of enquiry. The *Open Futures* programme recognises that practical, as well as principled, steps need to be taken if the approach is to have maximum effect. *Open Futures* has published an ‘enquiry’ book, entitled **Enquiry-based Learning and Open Futures**, written to support teachers and schools in structuring such steps.

Open Futures and the skills and enquiry-based approach

The use of Philosophy for Children through the *askit* strand is an important pedagogy for the programme. It helps children to develop their own questions, reasoning, hypotheses and communication skills, which move them forwards in their thinking. *askit* can be applied in practice across the other *Open Futures* curriculum strands, as well as informing other subjects and wider approaches to teaching and learning in the school.

askit stimulates and motivates pupils to have more ownership and control of their learning in the life-enhancing, contexts provided through *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit*. The strands provide opportunities for pupils to make connections between the activities they are engaged in and the contexts in which they are learning. *askit* provides them with the skills to apply the wide range of knowledge and understanding which is so fundamental to their progress and development during the primary phase of education.

All of the *Open Futures* strands provide rich contexts for learning that are acknowledged universally for their intrinsic value across a wide range of personal and interpersonal outcomes. However *askit* acts as an enveloping influence, informing and improving pupils progress in the other strands. The pedagogical framework provided by *askit* cultivates the desire and confidence to question and investigate, helping *Open Futures* to generate the sense of curiosity that is so fundamental to the programme. This emphasis on creative and critical thinking is not new, but *askit* places a further emphasis on caring and collaborative thinking. It is this that marks it out as a special, holistic approach to personal development.

Once children have developed the will to think together and the skills to think confidently for themselves, they can bring this spirit of enquiry to almost any classroom.

Open Futures evaluation reports

Summary of Findings

The Research Centre for Learning and Teaching at Newcastle upon Tyne University was commissioned by the Helen Hamlyn Trust in September 2006 to conduct a formative evaluation of the *Open Futures* programme. Since then, under the direction of Professor David Leat, it has produced half yearly evaluation reports, which have been instrumental in informing the ongoing development and national dissemination of the programme.

Evaluations by teachers, parents, children and trainers have been consistently very positive, confirming that the programme provides an experiential curriculum with tangible products that have meaning for pupils and enable the school to explore a skills and enquiry-based curriculum. In particular:

1. *Open Futures* activities are seen by adults and children alike as being highly enjoyable, providing a long list of benefits, such as improved knowledge, understanding and skills, improved relationships, improved confidence and motivation, and improved behaviour. Ongoing assessment has consistently found that pupils are positively impacted by *Open Futures*, with positive 'affective' and 'practical' outcomes. An analysis of responses shows that adults tend to focus more on the former, whilst children focus more on the latter. The programme has also been seen to provide an excellent foundation for schools to develop home-school and community links, both of which have indirect impact on the pupils.
2. Across all the strands teachers have placed great value on the *Open Futures* 'package' of training and resources. The evaluations have shown that the packages have been highly effective and efficient in getting teachers and teaching assistants started. Where staff lack expertise, the training and resources have provided a very structured model of practical activity which helps build teacher confidence. The model also assists the development of whole school implementation plans.



3. *Open Futures* is seen as a flexible curriculum development model that allows for individual interpretation and ownership by each school. This means that any changes made are likely to last longer and generate a wider range of outcome gains. This stands in contrast to more prescriptive models, which have been proven not to last even when they generate short term gains in test scores. The evaluation also highlights the potential for *Open Futures* in general and enquiry-based learning (in the form of *askit/Philosophy for Children*) in particular to underpin a social and emotional curriculum and citizenship education.



4. *Open Futures* provides considerable synergy with a wide range of educational and government initiatives, and delivers against the core recommendations of the Cambridge Primary Review.

Open Futures is considered to be a timely initiative that addresses many education policy priorities, including those represented by the *Every Child Matters* agenda. It also delivers against a substantial number of the recommendations made by recent Primary Reviews.

The following quote from one head teacher exemplifies the positive impact of *Open Futures*

“ (It impacts) in so many ways! The project has brought a real sense of excitement and purpose to the children – they love taking part, particularly in growing and cooking and some high quality written work has been produced.

As a Healthy School in the process of working at Sustainable Schools the project has moved us further along the path of healthy eating – the children are much more prepared to try fruit and vegetables they might not have eaten, and when recipes go home we know the message is spreading there too from parental responses.

We are becoming (as a school, as a whole and as individuals) much more aware of recycling through composting and the use of water butts. A great deal of incidental learning is taking place particularly in science (parts of a plant, micro organisms, soil types), maths and speaking and listening.

The children are working well as part of a team and learning about co-operation, sharing and taking turns. Hopefully when the ICT element fully kicks in (we have only just received the equipment) this will be further enhanced, and there will be a development in planning and forward thinking skills.

I would also like the project to help us to encourage the children to take some degree of control over what they learn. There is a ‘Ripple Effect’ – children are taking ideas from the project home, there are more children cooking at home with parents.”

A more detailed summary can be found at www.openfutures.com/about-open-futures/evaluation

3 **askit, growit, cookit, filmit**

The four curriculum strands



askit has been developed for *Open Futures* by SAPERE, the UK Charity for Philosophy for Children, also known as *P4C*. *P4C* is an approach to teaching and learning, which has developed over 30 years and is now practised in 60 countries worldwide. Research has clearly established it as an effective way of improving a wide range of learning outcomes, including behaviour, collaboration and writing with any age group, any ability and in any subject. It aims to build 'Communities of Enquiry', where pupils develop the 'Four Cs': creative, critical, caring and collaborative thinking skills. *askit* fosters pupils' ability to question, discuss and develop opinions, informing and enriching their learning in *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit* by equipping them with the skills to explore options and make decisions effectively as a team. It engages children with their learning and, by offering them the chance to explore important new concepts, helps to improve thinking, appreciate points of view and develop a rational approach to critical judgement. The strand contributes particularly well towards literacy, citizenship, RE, PSHE, science and the humanities.



growit gives teachers the skills, confidence and techniques to teach children how to create and maintain a productive, edible garden. Teachers are taught how to use proper tools with children and develop an appreciation of plants, vegetables and the seasons as they work together. Children who sow, grow and tend their own fruit and vegetables have demonstrated a greater desire to taste and eat their produce. Once ready for harvesting, produce can be cooked and prepared as part of the *cookit* strand, giving children the wonderful experience of eating what they have grown when it is fresh and full of flavour. Through cooking at school, children explore their own and other cultures, learn about seasonality and the role of food in celebrations and festivals. Schools do not need a large garden area to take part in *growit*. The techniques employed can be adapted to growing in a traditional style allotment, raised beds, classroom patios or containers. Indeed, many of the *Open Futures* schools have exploited some truly unexpected places to create their garden, all of which are now flourishing and providing a steady stream of food for the kitchen.



cookit engages children with preparing their produce for the table, thereby providing a good culinary understanding of how the fruit and vegetables they grow in school relate to their own physical development and well-being. Again, teachers are trained to use proper equipment with even very young children and introduce chef's techniques for slicing foods such as tomatoes and onions. Having prepared delicious dishes from the produce available, children have the added pleasure of sitting down and enjoying a meal together.

As pupils grow and cook, they are also combining these new skills with other forms of learning: maths – measuring out the beds before digging; science – looking at the insects and invertebrates they dig up; health – planning what to grow in the garden; global citizenship – cooking recipes from different parts of the world; geography – where does basil come from? history – how did tomatoes arrive in the UK? literacy – expanding their vocabulary as they discuss the gardens and the recipes they are going to cook... growing and cooking can involve the whole curriculum.



filmit helps schoolchildren across the UK and India to communicate with each other, sharing educational and cultural experiences using video – a form that they are more familiar with as consumers rather than as producers. *filmit* has shown itself to be a catalyst for learning and has been developed by schools to complement many areas of the curriculum as children use it to explore, shape and articulate their ideas through the process of making films. *filmit* is also an internet-video system that helps children document and share ongoing project work. It requires a broadband computer and a digital camera – and the software needed to capture, edit and upload project video clips to the *filmit* website. By combining video production with internet sharing, *filmit* is innovative, exciting and relevant for children. For teachers, it offers a way to work with new technologies to find new forms of literacy and new ways to document their pupils' work. Video is a medium that a majority of pupils are familiar with. Those that aren't are rapidly drawn towards it, not least because of the way it presents a new and exciting form of communication, allowing them to share their excitement about their experiences.

The Open Futures training programme

Developing a staff training programme is key to establishing *Open Futures* successfully in your school, while helping to ensure its long-term stability. Highly skilled trainers accredited by our partners in all four strands provide hands-on developmental training. All training is designed to help teachers and teaching assistants acquire the skills, expertise and confidence to develop particular strand knowledge and to work with children in their schools. All schools are different and have different levels of experience, and *Open Futures* recognises this. We will therefore help to tailor training appropriately for your circumstances.

Training for *askit* and enquiry

It is recommended that the first step should be training in managing enquiry across the curriculum and in delivering the *askit* strand.

askit training and support consists of a number of interlinked activities:

- *askit* level 1 training for the whole staff or, if more appropriate, for individual teachers. This training is validated and facilitated by SAPERE trainers experienced in delivering *askit*;
- Ongoing online support from *askit* experts and SAPERE membership for one year;
- Additional in-school and online support from your personal *Open Futures* curriculum consultant;
- *askit* level 1 handbooks, other *askit* resources and extended access to additional online teaching resources and training materials.

It is also possible for schools that already have experience in *P4C* to have *P4C* to *askit* conversion training. This training introduces the *Open Futures* approach to enquiry-based learning and teaching and helps ensure whole school engagement with the programme.



Training for *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit*

Training in each of these strands usually takes place on-site and is provided by the RHS, Focus on Food and accredited trainers from the *filmit* team. Training in these strands can be taken individually or at the same time.

This strand specific training and support includes:

- An initial planning session, followed by three days of training (agreed with your trainer);
- A range of strand-specific resources, as well as extended access to additional teaching resources and training materials;
- Ongoing online support from *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit* experts;
- Additional in-school and online support from your *Open Futures* curriculum consultant.

For more information about these and other training options, contact the *Open Futures* team.

The Open Futures online community

The online community is a vital part of the *Open Futures* programme. It provides an ongoing service to schools giving access to trainers and experts, a library of resources and conversations to support good practice and share exciting ideas.

What is the online community?

The online community is a private website designed and built specifically for *Open Futures* schools. It is populated with experts from *Open Futures* and each of the *Open Futures* strands, all of whom are ready to help you and your staff. While it is an online space, it is also a direct communication tool to help you talk with *Open Futures* staff easily. It is a place where headteachers, teachers and support staff can ask and find answers to their questions and concerns, as well as access teaching resources and other useful information. Our curriculum advisors, our *askit*, *growit*, *cookit* and *filmit* experts are always happy to help. Staff from different schools can use the online community to share ideas with each other and deepen their practice and understanding of the programme.

The online community includes:

- A resources library
- Columns written by a variety of *Open Futures* experts
- News and in-depth features
- Conference and training information
- Case studies
- The 'learn and share' forum

Resources library

This is a personal library containing downloadable versions of all the *Open Futures* resources and the documentation given during training. Learning and teaching resources can be accessed from any computer, in school or at home,



enabling staff to plan from home and share items with colleagues.

Columns

Experts from all four of the strands and our curriculum team write personal columns about their area of knowledge, sharing insights they have gained from working closely with schools. Columns include seasonal advice, planning ideas and examples of good practice from within the *Open Futures* community, as well as news and ideas from the wider education world. They

combine text, images, films and links to other useful web pages with lively discussion related to the topic.

News and articles

The *Open Futures* team regularly publishes news, updates, in-depth features and advice. This gives *Open Futures* schools an ear to the ground on the latest developments within the wider education world, along with a commentary on education policy, practice and announcements. There is also up to date information about potential sources of funding and how to apply.

Conferences and training

This section announces forthcoming conferences, giving details of the key note speakers, workshops and seminars. It includes biographies and background information for all sessions and it allows you to decide which conference workshops you wish to enroll on. After the conference it provides opportunities to download presentations and handouts with additional materials from the workshops to support putting into practice what you have learnt. You can also find out about advanced *Open Futures* training opportunities for staff and new courses as they become available.

Case studies

This section brings you real examples of how *Open Futures* has been adopted and shaped in different schools. They range from implementation of the programme across the whole school to specific curriculum applications and practical classroom solutions. These clear, concise stories demonstrate useful ideas and techniques together with the impact and benefits schools have enjoyed.

Learn and share forum

The heart of the online community is the 'learn and share' forum – the meeting place for all members the *Open Futures* community. It allows every staff member to talk to experts and to like-minded people in other schools who share similar interests or concerns.

In the learn and share forum, anyone can ask questions, make comments, exchange useful information, share experiences or give their own advice on any topic relating to anyone or more of the strands or wider classroom practice. Contributions can be a simple sentence, a paragraph or a page and can include pictures if that helps to explain something more easily.

Learn and share links directly with other sections of the online community. For example:

- In the resources library you can comment or ask a question about any resource. You can write a review, suggest ways in which it can be adapted or upload photos of your class using it;
- In a column you can 'ask the expert' a further question in response to their article;
- You can add your reaction to news items and read the reactions of others;
- After a conference you can ask further questions or carry on networking and sharing conversations with the other delegates that you met;
- After reading a case study you can make contact with the school spotlighted or ask their staff questions.

My Open Futures

An individual login is available to every staff member in your school giving personalised access to the online community. Each person has their own 'My Open Futures' homepage, which is already set up to reflect their school's location and the strands it is working with. It can be customised to suit an individual's own preferences, interests and areas of activity. For example:

- You might like reading a particular person's column and want that on your homepage;
- You may want quick access to particular discussions on the forum;
- You can have all of your favourite or most used resources easily available.

Every time you login, the 'My Open Futures' page will inform you if someone has replied to one of your questions or comments and will bring you up to date with latest news or information.

Even if you feel you have nothing to ask, it is a great place to keep up with what other people and other schools are doing and get some inspiration or practical ideas. You might even have the perfect answer to their question!

Come and join in

The *Open Futures* online community offers different things to different people and your experience of it will largely depend on how you choose to use it. We have designed it to be easy to use, so you don't need have to be a member of the Facebook generation in order to take part and get the most from it. It is there to help, to be an extension of the training and support that *Open Futures* provides and to establish a community of supportive colleagues. Come and have a look, take some time to see what it can offer and then, when you are ready, join in.

Getting started: first steps, infrastructure and curriculum thinking

We recognise that schools are highly individual, with different needs and different goals. In this chapter we set out the key steps that have proved successful for other schools in setting up *Open Futures* for the first time. These are included as a practical guide, not as a rigid template for how the programme should be implemented.

Gaining the support of the whole school community

Getting any new initiative started means gaining the commitment, interest and enthusiasm of everyone who contributes to the work of the school – school managers and leaders, teachers, school support staff, parents and governors. Fundamentally, however, it is the pupils' engagement and interest that will be essential to making the new initiative a success in your school. Everyone will need to understand, contribute to, engage with and support the vision, aims and objectives of the programme.

Much will be gained by giving time and energy to the process of consultation and planning with the key stakeholders. In the schools where *Open Futures* has been successful, the following steps have been taken prior to the start of the initiative:

- Consultation with the Governing Body on the new initiative, (with an outline of how it links to the overall vision and aims of the school), to engage their backing and commitment;
- Securing the support and commitment of the Senior Management Team;
- The review and, where appropriate, amendment of the School Development Plan to take account of the new initiative;
- Identifying ways to increase the impact of *Open Futures* by linking programme planning to other whole school initiatives where there might be beneficial connections to be made.

- Whole staff awareness-raising of the potential changes that *Open Futures* might bring to some aspects of teaching and learning;
- Sharing and discussing the idea with pupils to ensure that their views are taken into account and they have a stake in how it is developed;
- Consultation with parents on the new approaches that *Open Futures* will offer, with a particular focus on encouraging them to play a supportive and active role in school and at home;
- Identification of links to external services and support structures.

Setting up a management structure

Early work with the *Open Futures* pilot schools has demonstrated the potential of the *Open Futures* programme to influence and shape all aspects of the primary curriculum and the teaching pedagogy across the whole school. As such, headteachers and senior managers have recognised the importance of a management structure, which embraces whole curriculum planning, as well as the management of the individual strands.

During the first phase of the *Open Futures* initiative, the following features of school management and organisation have proved effective in supporting the development and long-term success of the programme:

Appointment of an *Open Futures* School Co-ordinator

Identifying an *Open Futures* School Coordinator is vital in ensuring that the initiative receives full school-wide support as it develops. This role is best undertaken by an experienced teacher, who can take an overview of the project within the Senior Management Team as well as supporting those who are planning and implementing the individual strands. Such support will include helping others in their wider curriculum planning, assessment approaches and forging links across the strands and with other whole-school initiatives.

Champions

A 'Champion' is a lead teacher who is an enthusiast and takes responsibility for developing an individual strand of the *Open Futures* programme with the

pupils. With relevant external help they will support, encourage and help to train others as they roll-out the strand across the school.

For some of the strands, the champion will have related expertise, though it is by no means essential. For *filmit* and *growit*, in particular, interest and enthusiasm are as important, if not more so, than experience.

In the existing *Open Futures* schools, great support has been provided by teaching assistants and other staff who have volunteered to be champions, guided by skilled and experienced class teachers.

Teaching assistants

Small group work is the basis of much of the *Open Futures* programme. teaching assistants, available to work flexibly alongside class teachers, allow learning opportunities to be delivered effectively and safely while ensuring that *Open Futures* is firmly embedded in teachers' curriculum planning.

Many of the current *Open Futures* schools quickly recognised the importance of giving teachers and teaching assistants the time to plan the *Open Futures* activities jointly and of involving teachers in at least one of the small group sessions during the week. It is also an important opportunity for teachers to see surprising new strengths and abilities appear in their pupils and the teaching assistants.

The management group – An *Open Futures* Development Team

This vital part of the *Open Futures* programme has proved an effective catalyst for change, managing and supporting an action plan to ensure that *Open Futures* is developed coherently and progressively throughout the school. As previously stated, a significant strength of the *Open Futures* programme is its capacity to enhance curriculum planning right across the school and for the different elements of the programme to link and interact with one another. As such it is important that the strands of *Open Futures* are not planned in isolation, either from each other or from other parts of the primary curriculum.

Development Teams are made up of 6 to 8 people and include diverse individuals. Some are directly involved in and accountable for the

development of *Open Futures* in their schools – the headteacher, school *Open Futures* Coordinator, teachers, teaching assistants and other staff. Others are volunteers who offer expertise and experience associated with the *Open Futures* curriculum strands. They may be governors, local business and trades people or health professionals. They act in the role of 'adults other than teachers', bringing relevance and specialist skills to the project. Some schools are also finding opportunities to include their pupils in the Development Team.

The Development Team brings together representatives of all the people with a vested interest in the programme's success. Reflecting its importance, the team's remit is broad, but clearly defined:

- It supports, promotes, communicates and steers the development of *Open Futures* during the initial set-up phase and beyond;
- It works with the headteacher to ensure that all of the *Open Futures* strands are coordinated and planned as a coherent programme, which will ultimately inform the learning of all pupils within the school and across the whole curriculum;
- It promotes and discusses the work of *Open Futures* within the local community;
- It attracts adults other than teachers to support and participate in delivering the *Open Futures* curriculum strands;
- It establishes strategies to ensure the sustainability of *Open Futures* in the school, including a comprehensive and coherent staff development programme.

In a small school, it is likely that the Development Team will comprise the entire staff as each individual teacher or teaching assistant is likely to undertake several roles within the school management structure. In larger schools, the team may be made up of key staff; teachers and teaching assistants who can play a decisive role in supporting and implementing the *Open Futures* programme with and on behalf of the headteacher and Senior Management Team.

Deciding on where to begin

There are many curriculum starting points and organisational models in the current *Open Futures* schools, all of which work for the schools concerned. The flexibility of the programme ensures that individual schools can choose the most appropriate key stage or year group to begin with that is right for them. In making their decisions, current schools have been influenced by one or more of the following factors:

- The expertise, experience and commitment of teachers and other staff to develop and deliver the programme;
- The potential links with the planned curriculum and the aims and vision of the school;
- The capacity of the strands (or individual strand) to support the progress of particular groups of pupils;
- The potential of the strands (or strand) to deliver key aspects of the primary curriculum;
- The capacity of the *Open Futures* programme to enrich the curriculum and motivate and enthuse the pupils.

In some schools, all four strands have been developed with the same year group, enabling links across the activities to be established gradually. In other schools, headteachers have decided to spread the strands across key stages and year groups in order to concentrate on an individual strand.

In all cases, in making the decision on where to start, it has been important for headteachers and governors to be clear about:

- The aims and purpose of adopting the *Open Futures* programme;
- Its contribution to the ethos and character of the school;
- Its potential to influence learning and teaching across the whole curriculum.

Gaining support from the wider community

Many of the existing *Open Futures* schools are benefiting from the commitment and support of partners in the local community, be that parents who regularly help to run strands of *Open Futures*, or local businesses who contribute to the *Open Futures* School Development Team or provide their expertise and support in other practical ways.



There are many opportunities for adults other than teachers to make a positive contribution to the delivery of all of the strands of *Open Futures*.

askit

askit enables pupils to become more actively engaged with the local community. Pupils could be invited to consultations with think-tanks or company consultations on products for children. Parents can also become involved. Taking part in philosophy groups, sometimes hosted by the children could extend their children's learning at school. Some schools have started philosophy groups specifically for parents. In this way *askit* can be a valuable process for developing community cohesion.

growit

In this strand, support from the wider community has included adults helping in the school garden to build raised beds, prepare neglected and over-grown areas for cultivation, or even water plants during the school holidays.

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There is also, of course, a particular opening for those with the specialist 'growing skills' and knowledge to help schools ensure that gardening and growing fruit and vegetables becomes a major part of the school curriculum. For those who simply wish to be involved, there are opportunities to work alongside teachers and support staff with small groups of pupils in the garden, or to accompany school trips to local garden centres and RHS Gardens. Some people have even invited teachers and pupils to work with them on their allotment.

cookit

Members of the local community can support *cookit* in their local school by working with groups of pupils during the cooking sessions, or just by helping to set up or clear away at the end of the session. Those with specialist cooking skills can provide demonstrations and tastings for pupils as well as helping children to demonstrate their skills by cooking for visitors to the school. Most exciting of all for pupils are invitations to local restaurants, both to experience different foods and to see professional chefs at work.

filmit

Adults who have expertise or an interest in the area of digital media, particularly video, are, of course, particularly beneficial to *filmit* sessions. Helping others in the school get to grips with the technology is a key first step and, beyond that, there are opportunities to help pupils and

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teachers make and edit short films. Volunteers can also help to set-up school film clubs and are able to log-on to the *filmit* website with visitor passwords to join discussions about the content and the execution of the films, helping children reflect on their own and others films.



There are ways in which local media companies can offer their expertise by arranging visits to their premises or by conducting presentations in schools on film-making skills that are used professionally.

By enabling parents and grandparents to access the *filmit* website to see the films that the children have made, many schools are promoting valuable links with their communities, encouraging them to be more closely involved in their children's learning.



6 Sustaining Open Futures

Open Futures is intended to be a long-term investment that pupils enjoy throughout the course of their time at school. We hope that it will become a permanent feature of the curriculum, acting as a catalyst for change in the way learning is planned and organised in primary schools.

The following ten measures for ensuring the legacy of *Open Futures* draw on the experiences of current *Open Futures* schools.

1 Link *Open Futures* with the school's aims, objectives, development plan and performance management

The *Open Futures* learning programme is not prescriptive. There is no blue-print for what it should look like in any particular school. Instead, the initiative provides

“a powerful set of tools and resources for schools to transform their futures.”

Open Futures Evaluation Report (2008)

It is therefore important to align *Open Futures* with the school's overall aims and objectives, as well as the priorities and developments that headteachers and governors have already articulated in planning and performance management documents. Doing so allows *Open Futures* to become a natural part of the way that your school meets the needs of its pupils, raises standards in line with expectations and assures the commitment of its entire staff.

2 Establish an *Open Futures* Development Team

In the current *Open Futures* schools, the Development Team has been the catalyst for change, managing the action plan to ensure that *Open Futures* is developed coherently and progressively. In schools where the *Open Futures* programme is established, Development Team meetings are now part of the annual calendar. Most importantly, teams identify and make constructive links to other initiatives. This group also takes responsibility for ensuring

that programme planning matches school aims and objectives and is regularly monitored and assessed. Reports are provided to the Governing Body along with a termly action plan.

3 Ensure that the Governing Body has a central role in monitoring and assessing the impact of *Open Futures*

Appointing an *Open Futures* Governor ensures that the progress of the initiative is regularly discussed at meetings, and encourages the Governing Body to offer active moral and practical support including funding and management decision-making.

In one pilot school, reporting the recent progress of *Open Futures* to the Governing Body resulted in the decision to award a management point for its development across the school, with the expectation that these actions now form part of the teacher's performance management.

4 Plan through the *Every Child Matters* framework

Evaluation reports comment on the capacity of the *Open Futures* programme to support all five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*. This recognition offers *Open Futures* schools a clear framework for planning and developing the different strands across the curriculum and across age ranges.

The links are very clear: participating schools in the programme acknowledge the impact of both *growit* and *cookit* on the health agenda, as well as on pupils' enjoyment and achievement. Potential is emerging for these two strands to support economic well-being by getting pupils involved in enterprise activities. Similarly, in some schools, *filmit* and *askit* are now firm drivers of Enjoying and Achieving, particularly because of their contribution to progress in literacy, ICT, citizenship and PSHE. *filmit* facilitates cultural exchange between schools in different parts of the UK and India, addressing cultural learning and global citizenship.

With this approach, headteachers can be confident that the time committed to the *Open Futures* programme offers learning that matches National Curriculum priorities and supports high quality learning and teaching in their schools. At the time of writing, it is not clear how *Every Child Matters*

will feature in the new Government's thinking. However, it seems unlikely that many schools will wish to relinquish their support for its five outcomes. New government initiatives may offer schools alternative frameworks within which to site their planning.

5 Develop a training programme for all staff

Developing a staff training programme is key to integrating *Open Futures* properly in your school, helping to ensure its long-term stability and success.

Involving all staff with the development and implementation of *Open Futures* means that it is much more likely to become a defining part of school life. Establishing a coherent staff development programme will ensure that the initiative is understood right across the school and everyone will play their part in supporting it, thus minimising the impact when experienced staff inevitably choose to move on.

The hands-on training sessions provided by our partner accredited trainers have been highly successful in *Open Futures* schools and have enabled teachers and teaching assistants to develop their skills, expertise and confidence in both practical and curriculum terms.

Details of the *Open Futures* training programme and how to access training in all four strands can be found on page 26 or via the online community.

Open Futures is committed to supporting schools, their teachers and other staff beyond the initial training phase. Advanced training and development days can contribute to the progression of *Open Futures* in your school and the skills progression of staff and pupils. The programme is continuously evolving and new training, accreditation and CPD opportunities will regularly be made available through the online community.

For those teachers who would like to participate in a Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Educational Studies, credits can be used towards a full MA (Education). *Open Futures* has developed courses with a number of universities, which can be taught locally, with an emphasis on skills and enquiry-based learning in the context of *Open Futures*. The focus of study is school-based action research related to the *Open Futures* learning programme. This is an excellent opportunity for individual teachers who

wish to progress, and supports the development of a skills and enquiry-based curriculum within your school.

More information on this and other opportunities for accreditation can be obtained from the *Open Futures* online community.

6 Coordinate different but related projects and initiatives

Many of the *Open Futures* schools speak of the benefits of linking the initiative with other projects, so that they complement and enhance one another and provide a sharper focus for planning. This ensures that time is not wasted, developments are cohesive and consistent and important cross-curricular learning takes place.



Successful examples include links made between *Open Futures* and:

- Working With Others Project www.workingwithothers.org
- Eco Schools www.eco-schools.org.uk
- Healthy Schools www.healthyschools.gov.uk
- Growing Schools www.growingschools.org.uk
- Sustainable Schools www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainableschools
- Let's Get Cooking www.letsgetcooking.org.uk
- Creative Partnerships www.creative-partnerships.com
- Fairtrade Schools www.fairtradeschools.org.uk
- Reggio Emilia schools www.reggioemiliaapproach.net
- Learning through Landscapes www.ltl.org.uk
- Local community activities
- Music, dance and drama projects

7 Embed creativity

In recent years, there has been a growing and welcome recognition of the importance of creativity in the curriculum. Learning opportunities that encourage and promote these important processes are increasingly seen as a key component of a broad and balanced curriculum.

All four strands of *Open Futures* contribute directly to this aim. They establish links between the strands and other areas of the curriculum, including arts and humanities, maths and science.

For example, exciting projects are emerging in art and design, with older children designing and making planters for *growit* and using the garden as inspiration for photography, printing and poetry. *growit* produce is appearing in school festivals and summer fairs and there are new recipes supporting specific cultural religious celebrations inspired through *filmit* India and the World Cup in South Africa 2010. Drama and music are making constructive connections with *filmit*, and *cookit* is proving to be an interesting context for modern foreign languages.

8 Develop the school grounds

In the pilot schools, the external environment has been fundamentally transformed through *Open Futures*, helping to provide opportunities for learning outdoors.

Some schools have found it useful to start from a vision and forward plan for their outdoor space and its use as an alternative 'classroom', recognising the potential of learning in a different and stimulating environment. As well as the kitchen garden, schools have developed wildlife areas, planted orchards, and established 'quiet gardens' where children are able to just sit and think. Importantly, pupils are taking responsibility for the development, management, care and maintenance of their school environment.



9 Plan a whole school curriculum that looks ahead to the secondary phase and emphasises coherence, age 3 to 19

Working with their secondary partners, primary schools are already seeing the significance of their work with *Open Futures* for secondary curriculum planning, particularly in the areas of design technology and environmental science. Together, they are beginning to consider the issues of continuity, progression and transition.

It is already clear that opportunities exist to promote cross-phase initiatives that use the philosophy and approach of *Open Futures* to ensure the continued impact of the programme as pupils move on to secondary school. In the future, *Open Futures* will engage further with the secondary phase and the progression of the programme for 11 to 14 year olds.

10 Plan for sustainability

The importance of good financial planning to ensure the sustainability of the programme cannot be over-estimated. Wherever the school, it is important to understand the real costs of the programme, whilst recognising the benefits that it brings to learning and teaching in the school.

Some of the pilot schools have adapted their budgets to take account of future needs. They are able to do so secure in the knowledge that their *Open Futures* work is not a simple addition to their budgets, but a significant part of the school's ethos and curriculum and responds to the needs of their pupils and staff. Schools are also examining other sources of funding, as well as seeking the support of their local community, in taking *Open Futures* forward.



“filmit has become an invaluable way in which our children self assess and evaluate their learning.

We are constantly using it within the taught curriculum and in child initiated independent learning as a learning tool. We use it a lot as a stimulus for raising questions, which challenge thinking and encourage debate. It has been used for evaluating team working and roles within a team, time management, speaking confidently, using body language for effective listening, raising questions about gender and task preference, practising and improving performance in PE, evaluating subject specific skills and learning skills in DT, just to name a few! ”

Jenny Dixon, Armathwaite Community School



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