



Key drivers for successful implementation of Open Futures

- the Trusts' vision for Open Futures
- the working relationships which were established with and between the schools
- the expertise of the Open Futures curriculum team and the expert partners
- the creativity of teachers, senior leadership teams and school communities.

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The evidence gathered through the formative and summative evaluations, 2005–2013, showed that the Open Futures approach exemplified the three elements of successful school change identified by Fullan: being embedded in school structures; having a critical mass of school staff trained and committed; and having a procedure for continued support (Fullan, 2007:102).

Schools that embraced Open Futures reported a positive impact on pupils' attendance, behaviour and attainment. Independent evaluation showed that teachers reported strong improvements in pupils in speaking and listening, science and technology, and in their emotional well-being, motivation, self-confidence, writing skills, numeracy and life skills.

Teaching benefits

Open Futures is attractive to teachers who are aware of the enormous diversity of needs presented by a class of children over a school year. The diversity of Open Futures translates into a wide variety of impacts and effects for individual children: providing new experiences;

improving engagement and motivation; learning specific skills and knowledge; contributing to pupils achievement and social development. In sum, this evidences different ways to be a successful learner, providing the foundations for a 'multidimensional' (Boaler, 2008) school ethos, where the variety of ways to learn and succeed boosts confidence and, eventually, performance. Being outdoors or cooking in a kitchen classroom provided spaces for different conversations and different behaviours to the classroom.

"When I put my hands in the soil, I feel calm." Pupil

Connecting schools to the wider community

Open Futures always had relationships in mind. Ultimately, learning and teaching are all about relationships in whatever context they are taking place. By building relationships between children, teachers, parents/carers, governors and the local community, children can improve their sense of belonging and broader responsibility within the community. Open Futures was a vehicle for developing enterprise within schools and for connecting the schools to the wider community through community projects.

It brought mums, dads, carers and grandparents into school, whether it was to build the kitchen, to attend the film Oscars or to visit a Spanish café. People with poor experiences of school and education - some families were fourth-generation unemployed - were able to grow a different kind of relationship with the school and their children's learning. Local businesses got involved, community projects popped up. 'Knitting and nattering' brought the elderly from a nearby tower block into school to share stories with children from very diverse cultural backgrounds. Suni and Shia Muslim women formed a cookery club to find healthier ways of cooking traditional foods. Schools invited parents and carers in to engage in practical activities. Schools created opportunities to teach parents and carers how they teach the children how to cook. They came up with projects to nurture positive role models, getting dads cooking with their children and sharing a meal. Children started a campaign and got members of the community to help to clean up a dangerously neglected area which a lot of the children had to walk through on their way to school.

Particularly moving were the unexpected, unmeasurable outcomes. A nursery class had made pizzas. Afterwards, a member of staff commented that it was the first time they had seen one of the parents speak to their child when picking them up from school. The fact that the child walked out with a pizza in their hand catalysed the interest of the parent.

A Teaching Assistant in a school located in a challenging part of Manchester had a passion for cooking. He invented 'Come Dine with Dads' to encourage parental engagement and space for Dads to be positive role models with their children. They would have 40 children and Dads who would pick food from the gardens together, prepare and cook a meal to share. He even introduced a bit of family-friendly philosophy to encourage communication.

Children in one small village asked the village shop owner if she would please start to stock Avocados, having developed a taste for guacamole!

"Not just another strategy but a vehicle to impact on our community."
Headteacher