

<b>Title of example</b>	<b><i>Engaging children and parents in creative teaching and learning.</i></b>
<b>Centre submitting example</b>	St Michael's CE Primary, Alkrington, Middleton Manchester.
<b>Local authority/local area</b>	Rochdale

**Background details to the practice**

St Michael's Church of England Primary School is a church primary school with 209 pupils on roll. At Saint Michael's School we provide a strong and caring Christian ethos which supports the whole life of the school. We aim to provide an engaging and exciting curriculum in which we can help support every child enabling them to achieve their potential. We aim for our pupils to leave school as confident and independent learners who will make a valuable contribution to our society. The school has a dedicated staff and has worked hard to develop our creative curriculum ensuring we provide lots of out of school clubs and trips which engage the children in using skills in the real world.

**About the practice**

Over the past few years, as a whole school we have worked hard implementing our creative curriculum. Within the Foundation Stagewe have really focused on involving the children and parents more in their own learning. We have always encouraged parents to be involved and have a good system where parents share their children's achievements through WOW sheets which we provide. We have always shared our planning with parents and learning logs are used throughout school. We know as practitioners that you don't teach to your best when you are not interested in a subject and children don't learn at their best if not interested in what is being taught.

We have moved our planning away from being as much practitioner led and moved into involving the children and parents. We still have objectives and learning which we are very aware needs covering and as usual have annual overviews of topics and coverage. When we come to our termly planning we have many discussions about interests and things which we know excite the children which often changes class by class. We still start our planning with our Prime Learning Challenge selected with consideration of what we as staff are interested in and things that we feel the children will enjoy. We plan what we need to cover and the types of activities we see happening. These plans can all change as we get the children involved!

We found this when we planned work to encourage some rich and relevant writing towards the end of their Reception year around the concept of little people called the Borrowers. This was something the staff really enjoyed and the results we got from the children were beyond what we could have expected.



At the beginning of a term we introduce the children to our learning challenge (topic) for example **'Who has moved into our classroom?'** We introduce it with a 'WOW' moment. For this topic we set up a series of miniature doors, footprints and a mini tea set to spark excitement and enthusiasm from the outset when they noticed them on entering the classroom.

We then used thought showers with the children to establish what they knew already / ideas they had and what they would like to find out? This is where we find out what is interesting them and often changes our original planning.

A newsletter then goes home to parents that day with our planning on and a series of creative activity suggestions for parents to take part in with their children and send in. We have found this to be a great introduction for parents to then follow on into using learning logs throughout the school. The response we get from parents is fabulous and the children love bringing work in. We give each child time to display their learning to the class which has really developed confidence. The work which comes in is the best introduction to a new topic.



Most children in the class for this topic brought in a miniature room; we even had a Borrower shop and gym! We were then able to make a miniature village which the children used as small world with little figures.

We found our Borrowers topic moved the children's learning on through the children's own ideas. Most of their ideas were not thought of by the practitioners initially. They challenged themselves by wanting to make a miniature garden, which the children worked together, planning paths and good fruit / vegetables to plant for the Borrowers. This moved on again when they felt the Borrowers may struggle to get across the playground from the classroom to the garden so the children worked indoors and outdoors finding ways to transport them across.





The children made cable cars to run down a rope which they worked out needed to be higher at one end, they made lego / duplo cars and trains, they spent time chalking maps and arrows to show them the safe way across.



The children wanted to end the topic with a Borrower teaparty and they planned which foods they could have which could then be left for the Borrowers to enjoy. Throughout this topic the children wrote letters to the Borrowers and brought in letters that the parents had written at home, as they found evidence at home that Borrowers had visited!

The other aspect to engaging and involving parents and children is giving time for them to share what they have done. When the children have brought in things that they have found out and produced from home we ensure they have time to show the class, and also time to walk around, investigate and talk to each other about their work. We also invite parents in after school one evening to see what work has been going on. The interactions between the children and when sharing with adults is great. You can hear real quality conversations and language going on. Lots of vocabulary linked to the topic being used.



All home learning is displayed on our learning wall so that from the outset we can see prior learning and it can be referred to throughout a topic. The children love sharing what they have achieved and found out.



A great part to our Arctic topic was the involvement from parents and children in making an igloo in our classroom from 4 pint milk bottles. We then used this for role play and guided reading. A dad also helped put us in touch with a man who had done research in the Arctic and was able to share recordings of sounds he had such as Inuits singing.



This way of planning has developed a great feeling of real teamwork between practitioners, parents and children.

### **Evidence and evaluation of difference to children and families**

Since working in this creative way, planning and encouraging children and parents to participate in sharing their 'wow' moments and working together developing their creative learning homework has impacted positively in Foundation Stage and for the children and their families.

We feel the quality of teaching has improved as staff are interested in the topics being planned and the enthusiasm we are seeing from the children constantly encourages and challenges staff to provide new learning opportunities.

From the outset of a topic, the first day in school at the beginning of a term we involve the children and parents as discussed and this has made a big impact on parents and children feeling instantly involved. We have seen involvement through resources being brought in and shared and families going on trips with their children linked to the topic we are covering, for example a large percentage of parents took their children on a visit to a castle during the half term in preparation for our medieval topic.

This impacts on the children starting the term with enthusiasm and full of information and learning already which they want to share with us.

We often had feedback previously that parents never found out anything from their children about what they do in school. We have found this has moved on and parents now comment much more that children have gone home 'full of it', being excited and wanting to share what they have done that day. For those parents who find their children don't tend to share, they are happy that through the sharing of planning and involvement in starting a new topic they are aware of what is happening in school and can ask more relevant questions.

<http://www.stmichaelscemidd.rochdale.sch.uk/home>