

Learning Outside the Classroom (LOTC)

Professional Study Group

72 attendees came to the Learning Outside the Classroom PSG in 16/17

The majority of Lower, Primary and Middle schools in Central Bedfordshire subscribe to the Central Bedfordshire Professional Study Group programme. The meetings are usually 1.5 hrs long and are mostly held after school to avoid schools the costs of supply cover. The foci of the meetings are varied in order to support school staff as widely as possible. Each meeting is led by an 'expert' leader / facilitator and has its own agenda and learning outcomes.

The first LOTC meeting of AY16/17 focussed on making outside to inside links in the context of linking art and literacy. The second focussed on using the outdoors to make links between art, maths and the real world. The third suggested outdoor activities to be used with EYFS and KS1 pupils to support their phonics learning. This was repeated twice.

Across the 5 meetings 53% of attendees rated the session attended as outstanding, and 47% as good. The general feeling was that people left with 'lovely creative ideas to inspire and excite children' and that attending would impact on pupils by increasing their engagement & enthusiasm resulting in greater understanding and improved outcomes.

A number of staff attended more than one of the sessions and were able to feedback what they had used in school as a result of attendance. This included making 'magic pencils' from natural materials found outside and then writing with them, creating shapes with sticks which were then analysed (edges, vertices, angles etc) and considering fractions through shapes.

'Children more engaged. Some children's behaviour seemed to improve outdoors'

'Resources are cheap and easy to source which is very helpful'

At the meetings themselves, attendees have immediately been able to identify how they would use the information/skills gained. 'I will adapt activities to use with my year 2 class'. 'I will be using 'magic pencil' to inspire story writing', 'I will work on shape and sequence outside', 'Use the variety of different activities during outdoor phonics both adult-led and child-initiated'. 'I will use the ideas in literacy- to link with art'.

PSG attendance enables the cascading of new ideas and approaches to other staff back at school. Our attendees have told us about the sharing they have done at school (with TAs, class teachers, partner teacher, early yrs team, intervention nurture team etc), extending the reach of the good practice shared.

'I have shared my practical maths books with all teachers (in the school) which show evidence of learning outside'.

'Ideas from the different sessions have inspired me to go outside more and more giving children opportunities to explore and develop their learning in creative ways. Behaviour has been excellent with expectations high and the children are focused when outside.'

'Children used mathematical language and English terminology throughout the lessons (outside) which fully embedded the ideas.'

'I have made 3D shapes with year 1, year 2 have created shapes outside and filled in halves and quarters. All have gone very well with all children engaged and having success in their learning'.

'Loved it ! Very inspiring'

'Really useful practical ideas to take back – easy to plan and deliver'