



The joy of not knowing

Children and staff at Hertford Infant and Nursery School love ‘not knowing’... but why? In the first of a two-part series on the pedagogic tools and strategies that have proved successful in his school, headteacher

Marcelo Staricoff explains how the philosophy of enjoying not knowing has helped turn his students into confident, enthusiastic learners and skilled critical thinkers.



I have always been fascinated by the ability to present learning to children in a way that is perceived by them as being fun and playful, while still maintaining all the required academic content, rigour, depth and progression.

I suppose that the closest one comes to this approach in our education system is in the pedagogy that underpins the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. When I was appointed to my first headship at Hertford Infant and Nursery School in January 2009, I was very keen to develop a whole-school approach to teaching and learning based on

what I now to refer to as 'The Joy of Not Knowing' approach, or the JONK Model™. I wanted to see if we could exploit the pedagogical principles and philosophy of the Early Years throughout the school¹.

When we started to move towards the JONK Model four years ago, the school's combined Average Point Score (APS) was 14.6. Since then, this has risen year on year to 15.6, then to 15.9, then 16.2 and now, as calculated in July 2013, it stands at 16.6. In 2013, the school achieved a score of 17.0+ for the first time – 17.3 in reading. Individually, the standards in reading, writing and maths also show similar increasing upwards trends since 2009. As a significant proportion of our intake traditionally join the school below national expectations, these standards also demonstrate that the children are making excellent progress.

In this time, the school has also become more popular within our local community. The school is now oversubscribed and the 2013-2014 academic year welcomes a new cohort of 60 Reception children made up of first choice preferences for the first time. Attendance has also increased from 91.4 per cent four years ago to 94.1 per cent in 2013.

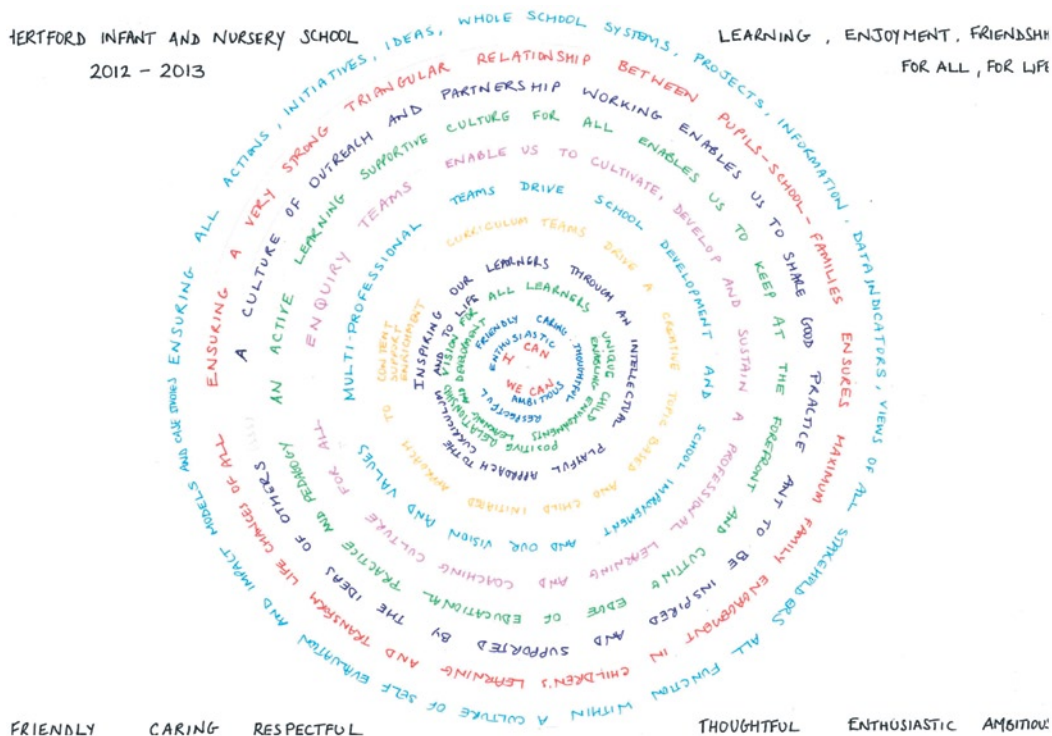
When Ofsted inspected the school in May 2012, it was judged to be outstanding overall and in each of the four areas. The inspectors spoke very positively not just of the rising standards but also of the children's engagement in and enthusiasm for learning and of their high level of self-esteem, which for me are the key components of the JONK approach.

The JONK Model

Embedding the 'Joy of Not Knowing' approach across the school has been and continues to be a fascinating process. The Hertford JONK Model below describes how this process has evolved gradually by introducing initiatives and establishing whole school cultures 'one layer at a time'.

I believe that the success of the JONK approach is mostly due to:

- giving ourselves plenty of time for each layer to be fully embedded before introducing next steps
- working in multi-professional teams
- working as a whole school.



Publication Preview

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full publication

