

Space across the curriculum - Alexandra Park School

Leading space education programme

Key actions

The focus of the project was encourage departments to think about how their curriculum area could impact 'Space' as well as the impact 'Space' has on them. As coordinator my goals were simple: to have everybody across year 9 thinking and discussing Space in the correct context.

To achieve this we would need to tap into their youthful enthusiasm of space as well as their ambitions as life-long learners. We had to provide them with the two scarce commodities in school: Time and money. To this end, with the permission of the head, we set aside an inset day for high profile lectures (wow factor), time to plan collaboratively and money to cover any costs incurred as well as reassurance to let go of current of their current KS3 curriculum.

- Year 9 then had a high profile week of Space related lessons in all subject areas.
- Impact on students (yours or partners). The whole of year 9 (216 students) participated
- Feedback was positive on the whole. Only 2 out of approx 50 year teaching staff showed concern about the project.
- 80% of students enjoyed the lesson activities but were overall less impressed with guest speakers. That said our primary partners really enjoyed the guest speakers.
- 90% of students had found a new aspect of space they had not previously considered.
- The 19 Astronomy students gained huge kudos.
- Students are becoming versed in expecting an annual cross curricular STEM project.

Impact on lead and partners schools

The foci for planning a scheme of work (SOW) for space week were.

1. Collaborative planning
2. Developing outstanding lessons and looking at aspects of an outstanding lesson

The model of this year cross curricular project has now been taken forward to next year.

Impact on specialism

The project has helped to raise the profile of the specialism amongst staff and students and more importantly has demonstrated that science extends beyond the science labs. It was also used to demonstrate that science is very dependent on skills gained in other curriculum areas. The project drew interest from our primary partners who have participated in rocket launches, lectures from guest speaker and a visit from an indoor planetarium.

Top tips

The barriers to hosting an event like this are many and will vary from school to school. To break down barriers we ensure that we did the following;

- Firstly we engaged SLT and got agreement on freeing up an inset day and supporting the initiative.
- Secondly we mapped the progression of the project clearly so that there were no surprises for staff. We made it a standing item on curriculum meetings.

- Next we raised the profile of space through newsletters, loans of personal planetariums, launch of astronomy clubs and high profile rocket launches.
- We met with anxious staff and encouraged them to relax their KS3 curriculum and highlighted the benefits.
- On inset day we talked up the project, showed inspirational videos on participation and booked in top speakers. We allocated time for planning and made funding available to support departments on their projects.
- We then reviewed SOW and discussed projects well in advance of our Space week.
- To minimise the adverse reactions from students we mapped out events for them too, assemblies focused on participation and humour was used to promote the importance of space.

The future

SOW will be reused year on year with year 9. Curriculum leaders have documented their participation in department evaluations and put up displays of the work this year.

Future developments are that we plan to expand a cross curricular project to each year group

Contact at school

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Images from the programme



Modern foreign languages



Citizenship - poverty versus space



Art - meteor impact and the fossils of modern times



Maths - scale



Astronomy students at UK Ministerial launch with Tim Peake



Students rewarded with visiting planetarium