

## Reach for the stars: developing a space themed science curriculum - Shoeburyness High School

### Leading space education programme

#### Key actions

At Shoeburyness High School, we saw the abolition of National Curriculum Tests as an opportunity. With the new National Curriculum requirements coinciding with our 'Leading Space School' status, we decided to revamp our year 8 course - the result was our 'Space Academy' course!

All year 8 Science is taught through the space theme:

- Module 1 'The Universe' - The Solar System, Stars & Galaxies
- Module 2 'Humans in Space' - Cells, Reproduction, Inheritance
- Module 3 'Space Travel' - Motion, Light & Sound, Materials
- Module 4 'Planetary Chemistry' - Elements & Compounds, Reactions
- Module 5 'Astrobiology' - Food Chains, Photosynthesis, Evolution
- Module 6 'Reach for the Stars' - careers in Space Science

All year 8 students (300) have benefitted from the Space Academy course, and this will continue into the future. The level of motivation and the student attitudes have been raised (evidenced by the MA research project of a colleague). Students' attainment has increased from previous years - Level 5+ at 81% (2009: 76%; 2008: 74%)

#### Impact on lead and partners schools

- The whole Science Department has been reinvigorated by the Space Academy project - teachers have a sense of ownership of 'our course' and feel very proud of what we have achieved.
- As has been said, students have benefitted from increased motivation and attitudes.
- The teaching style in the new course has been very investigative and exploratory, and having an exciting context has definitely helped students appreciate Science.

#### Impact on specialism

This is predominantly a school project, but sharing of good practice (at South East and National SSAT Science Conferences, as well as at Southend Science Meetings) has widened the impact of the work.

#### Top tips

- Planning a course from scratch is always going to be hard work - I recommend finding a school that is willing to share resources.
- We made sure we decided what our students would enjoy and benefit from, but also what would our team of staff be able to deliver.
- Take the time to plan the course effectively - but don't be afraid to start with a blank sheet of paper.

#### The future

This course will benefit all students into the future!