

“Launching” space initiatives in partnership schools with the use of rockets! - Tewkesbury School

Leading space education programme

Key actions

The activity is to engage pupils from a number of primary and secondary partnership schools to take part in a rocket competition. The project followed this format:

Launch challenge before Summer half term (to all of year 8) in all schools. Set all students in the year group a challenge of producing something over the half term break to reflect the theme of “Get me into Space”. Their response to this could be as open as you like, i.e. they could build a rocket (the obvious one!); they could produce a piece of artwork, a video, etc. I provided all the information needed in a leaflet, all the partnership schools needed to do was hand the leaflets out and promote the challenge.

- All entries judged after half term by all schools. Top entries to go through to next round to form 3-4 teams consisting of a maximum of 4 pupils.
- Next round – each school issued with a number of *free* fuel powered rocket kits (paid for from Leading space education programme funding) that they will get to practice building, testing, modifying and generally play around with for several weeks at their own schools. The pupils will need to meet in some extracurricular club to this or whatever fits in with your requirements (start a “space” club?).
- Final event – All teams to come to Tewkesbury school on a day near the end of the summer term (mutually agreeable date to be agreed between schools). Two competitions to take place. Fire off their practice rockets first (that they have built in their own schools) – which ever gets the most “air time” will win this competition. The second competition will require all teams to build a new rocket from scratch on the day (all will be given an identical kit).
- Other “Space” related activities arranged throughout the day including possibly inspirational “space” related people being involved in launching the event and assisting the pupils (and local industry representatives involved in space technology).
- Space related prizes to be awarded to winning teams

A large number of students were involved – all year 8 pupils from three secondary schools and all year 6 from one primary school in the first stage of the competition. Approximately forty students involved in the second round of the competition

The final event has not yet taken place at time of writing (it has had to be postponed until after the summer break) therefore difficult to evaluate. However, there has been a very positive and enthusiastic reaction to both stages of the competition.

Impact on lead and partners schools

The main benefit of this challenge is that contacts and relations have been built between the schools that can be built on in future years. It has hoped that the activity will become an annual event as all of the complications of developing such an event have been “ironed out”. These relations will also lead to opportunities of developing other initiatives in future.

By involving a number of other schools and getting them engaged in the Leading space education programme has also helped to spread the aims of the initiative to a much wider community with a large number of pupils being inspired by space and STEM related activities.

Impact on specialism

It goes without saying that further increasing the extra-curricular “technology” related activities naturally promotes the specialist ethos. It also strengthens school partnerships and community involvement. It is also hoped that by doing this on an annual basis that this will raise the profile the school being a “space” school that will help us to further develop “space” related business and HEI links.

Top tips

The main barriers encountered were to get partnership schools to commit to being involved. However, this has been overcome by making things as easy as possible. For example, by making what they need to do as clear as possible, provided information leaflets to hand out to students, providing kits and equipment to carry out the activities (using the available funding) and by constant communication (building relationships). Getting necessary key dates sorted out as early as possible is also recommended!

The future

All of the resources to carry out the activity are now already created for future years. There is also now some expertise in each of the schools. It is intended to develop this in future years by starting the project earlier and getting more involvement from external organisations such as the UKRA and local industry.