



24 May 2013

FAO Liz Stockley
Head Teacher
Little Hadham Primary School
Stortford Road
Little Hadham
Hertfordshire SG11 2DX

Report on visit by Dr Judy Silver to Little Hadham Primary School for the purpose of accreditation as a Thinking School on

21st May 2013

This report is constructed according to the six key components of Edward De Bono's 'Thinking Hats' programme.

White Hat (factual information)

Little Hadham Primary School is a small Primary in the Borough of Hertfordshire. Built on the same site in 1861 to serve the village of Little Hadham, the school has been extended over the generations to accommodate its current role of 125 children aged from age 3 - 11, mostly White British with two children currently on the SEN register. The school is a single form entry with an Early Years Foundation Unit.

The last Ofsted inspection in 2009 achieved mainly 'Good' with Outstanding features for the EYFS as well as children's enjoyment of learning. An interim assessment in 2012 confirmed the school's status and deferred a full inspection in accordance with current inspection practices in respect of good schools.

Liz Stockley, Head Teacher, who for the past three years has ably led her enthusiastic staff on the journey towards becoming a Thinking School, submitted a comprehensive and well-signposted portfolio of evidence to demonstrate how Little Hadham Primary has met the criteria required by the University of Exeter for accreditation.

The portfolio demonstrates that the Thinking School project is fully endorsed by the Chair of Governors and the whole Board. Similarly, parent questionnaires illustrate the high level of support from parents in all aspects of the school's many activities and projects. Some good examples of students' work were included as evidence of students' thinking and provision for Gifted and Talented is well documented. Teacher questionnaires suggest that staff feel more confident in some tools than others but that they enjoy using a cognitive approach in their intervention. The school has been awarded a number of National Awards and offers many extra-curricular activities and clubs. It is also well supported by an active and enthusiastic Parents' Association and Little Hadham's local community.

Little Hadham Primary has introduced a number of thinking approaches into their repertoire, particularly Six Hat Thinking (De Bono). Thinking Maps (Hyerle); Philosophy for Children and some aspects of Bloom's work are also applied. Techniques such as think-pair-share and PMI have also been found to be highly effective.

Over the course of my evaluation visit to school I visited all the classrooms; had the opportunity to speak with most members of staff and Teaching Assistants; parents and parent-helpers; the Chair and a member of the Board of Governors. I also had the opportunity to meet with some lively and curious representatives from each student Year group which was the highlight of my visit.

The day of my visit coincided with Day 2 of a week-long project entitled 'Mantle of the Expert' across all the classrooms, drawing upon the work of Dorothy Heathcote. Each Year group was assigned a different project constructed to solve a 'real-life' situation such as, solving local issues facing the local Council concerned with conservation, preservation, and tourism; creating a water sports park; or ski resort. Year Six were to present their class teacher (project manager) a business plan on Day 3, and even the Early Years Foundation Unit were busy discussing ways of constructing a stable model of a giraffe, similar to those seen in Colchester Zoo.

In these student-led assignments, students were required to organise themselves into teams to address different aspects of the assignment each requiring different skills sets. These teams included such skill sets as designers, architects, PR and advertising, and budgeting and accounting. This complex activity required teaching staff to steer - but not direct - students' ideas towards solving problems as they arise between the different teams, thus ensuring good cooperation and compromise between disciplines. The goal

for this child-led activity is to allow children to explore aspects of their own abilities and creativity.

Red Hat (emotional reactions)

From the moment I arrived in the playground I was offered a warm welcome by staff and children alike. Liz Stockley's passion for including thinking skills and creativity into the curriculum is reflected in her staff's commitment. This is a happy school and wherever I went I saw activity - children reading in a quiet corner with a volunteer or busy researching on a computer. Children, parents and staff are proud of their school.

One teacher who was sent on a training day to Little Hadham by another local Primary was so enthused by Liz Stockley's workshop she transferred here so that she could be part of Little Hadham's development. Other teachers have been here a long time but equally can see how questioning and Thinking Hats thinking particularly has had a real impact on children's learning, and allowed the teacher to become more specifically focussed on the point she wishes to make in her intervention.

Parents told me that they selected Little Hadham because of its good reputation and happy atmosphere, as well as its many extra-curricular activities. At the commencement of all projects, parents are informed so that if anyone wishes to make an active contribution they are welcomed. For example, I was particularly interested in the 'Imagineering' club. This is a national charity, and the club itself is run at Little Hadham by a local grandfather. Cheerleading is another club which is run by one of the parents.

Yellow Hat (positive aspects)

The comments above indicate many of the positive features of the school.

Over the course of the day, I had the opportunity to speak informally to both students and their teachers about the Mantle of the Expert project which was clearly being enjoyed by everyone. In all the classroom activities I observed good communication and collaboration between members of individual teams and also between teams, and everybody seemed fully absorbed in the challenges of the task in hand. Speaking to teaching staff it was clear that they found the project allowed them not only to explore aspects of their own teaching practice as facilitators, but recognise children's talents and abilities not always recognised in regular curricular activities. Similarly, being able to

choose which team they wanted to join, children were able to select a skill set outside their comfort zone, thus challenging their abilities further.

Plenty of interesting examples of students' work are displayed on walls in classrooms and common parts. I was particularly impressed with the art and poetry.

In my meeting with the children, they told me that they thought Little Hadham was a good school and that children were very kind to each other. They told me about the Buddy system and the duties of the School Council. Year Six students thought that the Six Hats and learning

to ask the right questions would help them with their work when they went on to Secondary school because they knew the work would be much harder there.

It was observed that activities in the classroom are well differentiated. The number of SEN children is currently very low, and Gifted and Talented children are well catered for here, reflecting Liz Stockley's interest and expertise in this area.

Black Hat (challenges)

I did not identify any significant barriers to Little Hadham Primary becoming a Thinking School. However, the comments made in this section highlight some challenges that the school might want to reflect on in the light of my evaluation.

Thinking Hats has been used very successfully across all classrooms and children and staff can see the benefits of thinking in this way. Similarly questioning and reflecting have been helpful and clearly having an impact on the quality of children's thinking. However, although Bubble Maps and Double Bubbles have been well used, it may now be time to both revisit their use and introduce further maps from the Thinking Map repertoire. These would be particularly useful in planning for literacy.

Green Hat (possible ways forward)

The major question for any successful school is to ask themselves - what now? What challenges can we set ourselves?

In regard to the tools being applied, it would seem that this year would be well spent consolidating and extending what has already been learnt.

Higher degrees might also be of interest to some members of staff and this was discussed when we met. Professor Bob Burden would be very happy to advise on this.

The network of accredited schools across the UK represents an active group of like-minded professionals, and it might benefit Little Hadham to exchange visits with other accredited schools in the network. We are happy to advise you on this. It might also be interesting to work with local secondary schools to explore how the project has had an impact on children's development when they go on to the secondary level.

I understand that parents are kept well informed of the school's many activities. Parent workshops are also a wonderful way to enhance parental help for their children's learning.

Blue Hat (general overview)

In summary, Little Hadham Primary School provides a good example of how a cognitive approach to learning can complement other pedagogical approaches in seeking to meet the educational needs of students, whilst at the same time enhancing a values-led approach to education. In doing so, it fully warrants accreditation as a Thinking School and is afforded that status by Exeter University's Cognitive Education Development Unit until May 2016.

Judy Silver, PhD, MSc

(Endorsed by Emeritus Professor Robert Burden, Director, CEDU).

