

Case Study: Farnham Primary School



Richard Edwards – Headteacher, Farnham Primary School, Artsmark Gold Award

In 2016, we were judged as an outstanding school by Ofsted because of the outcomes consistently achieved by the school. A lot of that, of course, is to do with consistently high attainment in English and maths, and those things are really important. But that, in itself, doesn't tell the whole story – it's the way in which the teachers plan activities that share the values of the arts and cultural world and want children to experience amazing things, whether it's music or dance or artwork or whatever it is. That's why we're doing so well, because we're giving children arts and cultural experiences woven into the curriculum. The reason that this school is performing as well as it is is because of the extremely creative and, yes, 'broad and balanced' curriculum.

Arts and culture is a tremendous vehicle for bringing your community together, both within the school and outside of the school. In the summer, we turned the school into a museum, we called it 'A Night at the Museum' and, again, the children explained the work that they'd been doing over the year. We turned the whole hall into a tremendous art gallery and lots of people came, and that's a tremendous way for children and parents to share the joy of education.

It's very, very powerful for parents to be in school and for their children to see their parents in here working with the teachers in tandem. That is extremely powerful and that's been a big factor in our success, and it's arts and cultural activities: open days, open afternoons and a warm and welcoming atmosphere that makes the difference.

We want to work in a school where there are things of beauty all around that children are drawn towards – whether you are four years old and in the nursery or whether you're eleven and you are, yes, battling with your SATS, you are being nourished by great opportunities and experiences, and that's the key. It's too easy to turn primary

school into an exam factory and that's something that we wouldn't want any of our children to be part of.