UK (Innovation Unit)

Cramlington Learning Village

This secondary school for students aged 11 to 18 has large flexible learning spaces, where students can work independently. These areas include "zones" for discussion, research, experimentation, art exhibitions, etc. Science is taught in half-day blocks in order to allow students to take an enquiry approach. In some subjects, pairs of teachers run the lessons with about 60 students per class. The curriculum includes learning-to-learn classes and trans-disciplinary units every week, during which students pursue projects on- and off-site the school campus. Teachers have daily 20-minute talks with students, which the parents can attend.

Main Focus of Innovation: ORGANISATION

Other Keywords: learningspace, techonology-rich

General Information

Name of the ILE: Cramlington Learning Village

Location/Address: Northumberland NE236BN

Website: http://www.cchsonline.co.uk/

ILE submitted by: Innovation Unit

Rationale

Why do you suggest that it should be included in the project? How does it respond to 21st century learning challenges?

Cramlington Learning Village is innovating radically in its pedagogy, its timetable, and its learning spaces, creating a flexible, enquiry-led learning environment that provides a workable model for transforming education.

Learning Aims / Intended Learning Outcomes of the ILE

What are the core learning aims and which knowledge, skills or attitudes are to be acquired? (These may include outcomes related to learners' social, interpersonal, or meta-cognitive development)

Cramlington's goal is for all of its students to be independent thinkers, independent learners, and independent enquirers. To this end, it uses enquiry-based learning to give students the opportunity to 'think like' scientists, historians, musicians, etc. This is scaffolded by a range of tools, including the 'Five Rs' (characteristics of successful learners: 'responsible, resilient, resourceful, reflective, and reasoning').

Learners

Which group(s) of learners is it aiming at? Who is eligible to take part? How many learners are there? What are their ages?

Cramlington serves 2300 learners aged 11-18, and is non-selective.

Facilitators

Who are the teachers/facilitators? Who are the leaders? What are their professional backgrounds? What are their roles?

In addition to designing and delivering 'blended pedagogy', teachers serve as 'learning guides', having daily 20-minute talks with students (parents are also invited), so that a particular student will have one of these talks at least once every six weeks.

Organization of the ILE

How is learning organised? How do learners and facilitators interact? What kind of pedagogy do they follow? What curriculum is used?

Cramlington has radically reconfigured its use of time and space. There are several key elements to this:

Flexible Learning Spaces

Before Cramlington built new spaces for its 11 and 12-year olds, several Cramlington teachers visited schools in Australia to see how they utilised space, and decided to organise the new build into large enquiry spaces, where students could work independently. The 'Junior Learning Village' (JLV), built for these new students, is built around a sheltered 'village street' which hosts art exhibitions and 'village fairs', and can be used for day-to-day learning. The JLV also features a 'knowledge café', which is both a learning resource centre and school canteen.

Cramlington recently opened a new science building: the Open Learning Science Plaza and adjacent Biodome, where students can move freely through different 'zones' designed for discussion, research, or experimentation.

Flexible Timetable

Science is taught to year seven and eight students in half-day blocks in the Open Learning Science Plaza, allowing students to take an 'enquiry approach' to science and learn to 'think like scientists'.

For a number of weeks in the year, the regular timetable is suspended throughout the school, for example during two 'immersion weeks' in the summer students can pursue extended enquiry projects both in and out of school, working with adults other than teachers and working in much greater depth than is provided by even a half-day block.

Two teachers, 60 students

Rather than accepting the standard UK arrangement of one teacher in a classroom with 30 students, in some subjects (Humanities, Trans Disciplinary Units, learning to learn) Cramlington gives two teachers responsibility for 60 students – this adds further flexibility to the timetable, and allows teachers to split the groups in any way that suits their needs, and run cross-disciplinary sessions (for example, a science and media teacher are paired during an enquiry as part of the Trans Disciplinary Unit course in year eight). This set-up also allows teachers in humanities much greater flexibility, with no extra cost to the school.

Blended pedagogy

Learning is carefully divided between enquiry and instruction – the school differentiates between the following categories, making sure the curriculum includes space for all three: 'done FOR me, done WITH me, and done BY me'.

Learning to Learn and TDU

Within Cramlington, two particularly exciting projects are exploring innovative pedagogy: the Learning to Learn curriculum (year seven) and the 'Trans Disciplinary Units' (TDU) in year eight – extended enquiry projects that students carry out in groups, developing their own 'sub-questions' from broad 'rich questions' such as 'How great is Great Britain'. These projects require students to use a range of disciplines across science, humanities, and the arts, and are scaffolded in order to develop the students' research and critical thinking skills, and information fluency. As part of the TDU, which was developed as part of the nationwide 'Learning Futures' project, the scheduled school day breaks early every Wednesday for 'Project Wednesday', during which students (in year nine) pursue their enquiries on- or off-site, drawing down support from staff, adult 'experts other than teachers', and their peers.

In September year nine students will begin a new course, 'Project' Humanities, which is designed to build on and further develop skills from the TDU course in year eight. Students will learn through a series of group and individual projects with increasing autonomy over how and where they learn. This course in turn provides a link to a core 'I Citizen' course in year 10/11 where students learn in large groups of up to 60 in open learning plazas (social spaces at break and lunchtime) on structured and unstructured enquiries gaining a GCSE qualification in 'Project-based learning'

Learning Context

In which context does learning take place? What does the physical learning environment look like? Are community resources used to facilitate learning and how?

Learning takes place primarily in the flexible spaces within the Learning Village, except when students go off-site on Project Wednesdays, and during 'immersion weeks'. This innovation is still in development and under review for the coming academic year. (2010-11)

Cramlington is 'ICT-rich' but not 'ICT-dominant'. ICT is available in a variety of spaces, rather than in specific 'ICT suites', so that the students can access what they require, when they require it.

History of ILE

Who initiated it? For what reasons was it started and with what purpose? Have these changed since?

In 2008, Cramlington was reorganised, shifting from teaching 13-18-year-olds to 11-18-year-olds, thus adding two new year groups. Led by Headteacher Derek Wise, the school radically re-evaluated its practice, asking WHAT they wanted their students to learn, HOW their students learned most effectively, and WHERE was most conducive for learning to take place. This led to a redesigned curriculum – which became more enquiry-led and negotiated between students and teachers, a redesigned timetable – which allowed longer stretches of time for in-depth work, as well as periodic opportunities to collapse it completely, and redesigned spaces – allowing for much more flexible use.

Funding of the ILE

How is it funded?

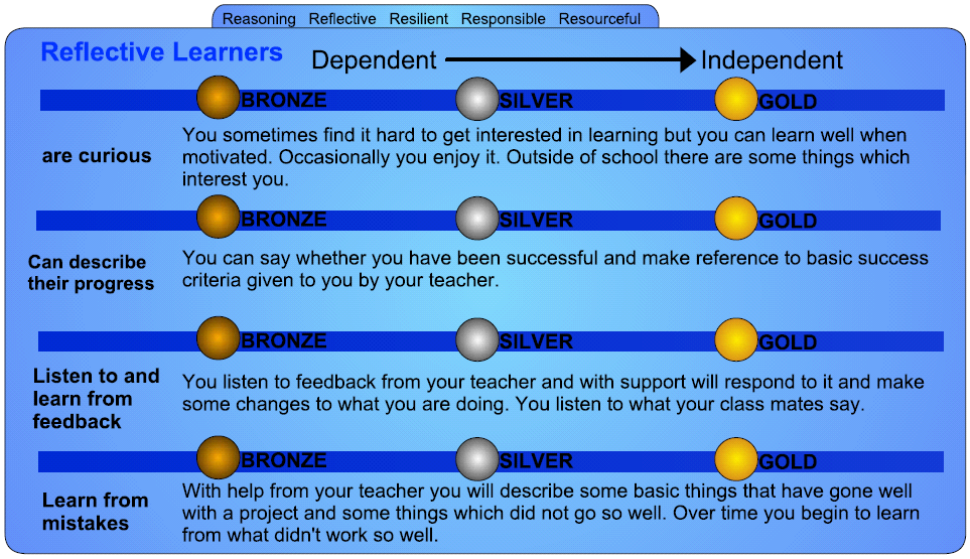
Cramlington is a state-funded school, and the majority of its money comes from the Northumberland Local Authority. In addition, it is receiving grants from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (through its participation in Learning Futures), and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT).

Cramlington also raises income through an annual Conference on learning that it hosts.

Learning Outcomes

What are the learning outcomes achieved by the ILE, including academic, social, interpersonal and meta-cognitive outcomes? How is learning assessed?

Cramlington tracks students' progress on the 'five Rs' using a 'bronze, silver, gold' medal system that tracks students' progress in developing these characteristics, and helps them work out effective ways to do so (see below).



Nationally, Cramlington was judged by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) to be 'outstanding' in its most recent report (February 2009). The report highlighted the 'exceptionally well developed culture of learning that permeates the whole school', and particularly highlighted the school's learning spaces, which 'are used very effectively to enable students and staff to work in more flexible and varied ways than typically found in a secondary school, with more time to work at length and in depth on enquiry-based activities.' A more recent report focusing specifically on science (April 2010) observes that 'Teachers clearly expect students to be active learners and to work as scientists. The strong belief that science should be based on scientific enquiry is a key factor in the success of teaching.'

Documentation describing or evaluating the ILE

Is there documentation on this learning environment? Is there a website? Films? Research reports or evaluations? Other forms of documentation? (please supply references or links)

Website: http://www.cchsonline.co.uk/