

Mantle of the Expert

As part of our preparation for the new curriculum we have started to use 'Mantle of the Expert' as another approach to teaching and learning.

Mantle of the expert is an education approach that uses imaginary contexts to generate purposeful and engaging activities for learning. The teacher plans a fictional context where the pupils take on the responsibilities of an expert team. As the team, they are commissioned by a client to work on an assignment, which has been planned to generate tasks and activities that will involve them in studying and developing wide areas of the curriculum as well as developing their reading, writing, problem solving and inquiry skills.

From the beginning pupils are aware they are involved in a fiction and Mantle of the Expert is not a simulation invented by the teacher to trick them into thinking what is going on is real. Consciously going in and coming out of the fiction is an important dimension of the Mantle approach and much like imaginative play, the pupils are always aware that the fiction is something that can stop and start as and when they or the teacher decides. The teachers introduce tasks to the pupils as if they are the expert team e.g. writing a report to the museum or planning how to create an exhibition, the teacher would then stop the story and come out of the fiction in order to teach them directly the knowledge and skills they will need to complete the task. Once the tasks are complete, the teacher will restart the story and the pupils can then see how their work has an effect inside the context. It is this process of going in and coming out of the fiction that defines Mantle of the Expert as a teaching and learning approach.

Where possible the teachers will try and link the Mantle to the class topic but sometimes it could be a stand-alone fictional context. The following are examples of Mantle tasks teachers have completed with their classes across our schools.

Dinosaur Hospital – they developed their expert roles by designing the hospital, transport, treatment and preparing the animals to be released

Baby dragon – they had to help save a baby dragon who had hurt his leg. They capture and repair the dragon's leg and help to find his mother.

Dinosaur Island – they were scientists who found a new species. They had to record, name, draw and discover all they could about the new dinosaur.

Glastonbury – they had to create a music band to perform on a stage. They wrote the lyrics, made the instruments, decided on a name and publicity to promote their band.

Chocolate bar – Mr Willy Wonka had tasked them with designing a new chocolate bar. They had to create the wrapper, decide on the ingredients, name, slogan and advertise the new chocolate bar.

Coal mine – They had to improve the working conditions for Victorian children who worked down the coal pit.