

## One teacher's reflections:

### What If Learning

#### The Research Project – Our Story

#### The Bishop Harvey Goodwin School

'Does the consistent use of the WiL curriculum lead to raised standards of teaching and learning in our church school?'

Teacher's name: Sally Davies

Year Group: 3

Class size: 28

What were your reasons for taking part in the project?

After attending some local CPD, sampling several lessons across KS1 and completing a small case study on WiL through Canterbury Christ Church, my personal interest in this approach grew as we were already working on a values led curriculum and I wanted to develop the approach further to raise the profile of our Christian Values and ensure the children gained further, quality, values explicit learning across our school through core subjects.

How often have you taught a lesson with a WiL element?

This has been dependent on the suitability of the value to the subjects I have taught and where they have more naturally fit. Some values such as 'Generosity' were taught on a weekly basis through Maths and 'Forgiveness, Truthfulness and Creativity' through literacy however some such as 'Compassion' were stand-alone lessons in RE and Geography. 'Humility' fit in well with our Music and Reading during one half term so was taught weekly through these. Wisdom was easily developed in the teachings of Buddha in RE. Each termly, whole school value has been taught in a different way to make the links smooth rather than forced, which I found was the best approach in my class.

How have you identified a value that can be a focus for a WiL lesson?

As a school, we have overarching Values that are set on a three year cycle with our core values being revisited every year. Therefore the values were already set for the half term by the RE leader. Sometimes lessons have naturally lent themselves to core values outside the cycle and these have been allowed to develop naturally and have on occasion arisen without being planned for such as 'Respect' in elements of our Roman topic and more recently 'Creativity' has featured again during our Volcanoes topic.

1. Has WiL has an impact on content of lessons?

Yes, very much so. Planning has had a strong WiL focus and the content of the lessons have been developed to allow dual learning and time planned in to reflect, change the learning environment, learning outdoors, experiential learning or change the starting

point of lessons. The learning outcomes have been increased because of this and the children have begun to think a little deeper about their own outcomes and look for learning beyond the usual objectives. It has made the learning experience much richer in my own classroom as the children have begun to apply their knowledge and practise of the Christian values without me making it explicit, which I have been really proud of. WiL has been really easy to link with the National Curriculum and much more so with the new coverage, as in many cases the NC is very prescriptive and WiL has allowed us flexibility in the approach to make lessons have a balance of fact based whilst being values rich which I know my children need and appreciate.

WiL has allowed my teaching to develop and will continue to do so as there have been a number of occasions this year, whilst getting to know the new curriculum, where I have taught a lesson and then on reflection afterwards thought that I could have catered for WiL more fully within these and therefore will develop further next time I teach those lessons. It has made me think more deeply about the lessons I have planned and have definite points to develop in the future. The lessons that I have planned to develop WiL this year have been hugely successful with a number perhaps not being as successful as I had hoped, sometimes, because I have not perfectly pitched the learning but this is an area I need to develop for next year. On the whole, when the value learnt itself well to the curriculum then lessons were easy to plan, I only found it trickier when the value perhaps wasn't as easy to develop within the topic I was teaching that half term.

Each lesson had a different form; sometimes I moved around the classroom and the groupings, whilst other times we did more whole class or outdoors sessions to begin with, I used more talk trios and more purposeful writing opportunities such as writing a letter to dad in 'Into the Forest' to tell him that we could forgive him and the children showed real empathy to his character which gave a different perspective, and more depth, rather than just writing to dad to ask when he was coming back. I have used lots of drama throughout the year such as; to develop understanding of the characters emotions, to show humility whilst singing, reading aloud together and developing empathy for others. My questioning within lessons has definitely heightened as I have been much more aware of drawing understanding and developing themes from the children without me always being explicit but trying to target my questions so that they can draw the learning for themselves. This has led to much more discussion and reflection which has not always been easy with the time constraints of the NC and timetable, but valuable time I have allowed, or planned for to ensure we can explore the reasons behind our learning with more depth and being able to allow the thinking time necessary for the children in my class to formulate ideas and be able to ask questions too. This has led to me becoming more reflective and tweaking lessons more frequently as we go to allow for some spontaneity from the children, to ask more searching questions that allow time to explore and to allow them to control some of the direction.

This doesn't always come naturally to me but I have allowed myself to be led by the children more often.

Overall, the children in my class are enthusiastic learners and are always engaged and keen to acquire more knowledge. In WiL sessions, on the whole, they have continued this enthusiasm and as some of the strategies are not too far different from how I usually teach, their enthusiasm has always remained. It is difficult to define whether they have become more self-sufficient learners solely due to WiL as we do have other strategies in school such as independent learning sessions and an already established values led learning that has been developed over the past five years but I do feel that WiL contributes to this strongly and this class I have taught for the past two years are hugely more self-sufficient learners. There are exceptions to this though as some children find it more difficult to think on a deeper level, especially those who just like a clear cut answer or whom are still very egocentric and these are the children I have spent a little more time with or paired with higher order thinking children to support their values based development. I have had many instances when the children who do particularly love the WiL approach will comment and make links to their wider learning outside of WiL based lessons as the Values have become embedded within their whole being, the way they behave, question others, the comments they make to each other demonstrate that they are submerged in the language and live this out more naturally now. One child after our Humility sessions was overheard to say to another, "You just need to be more humble XXX as we are all going to the same place so it doesn't matter who is first in the line!" A number of the children ask quite searching questions such as (during work on the 'Into the Forest' book) "What if the dad didn't want to be forgiven?" and in their feedback have always said that they would like more time to explore some lessons further.

What has gone particularly well and why?

Generally in their feedback, the children have requested further learning outdoors and have particularly enjoyed sessions/projects when we have created something for others such as at Christmas we made huge advent calendars during Generosity to give to the other class to open each day and they had to do generous deeds from this daily which created a real buzz around our unit as children frequently asked each other what the deed was, looked out to see if they could find evidence of the deed occurring and congratulated those who carried them out. This project was particularly successful as it stemmed from maths but naturally spread into other lessons. The feedback from the children during one of these lessons was; could they do this for other people, classes or community so their generosity could spread further than our unit. We talked about perhaps doing this for the local church and for the younger children next year. WiL has definitely brought a depth of learning to the children's experiences and when the

lessons/projects have been really successful it has created a buzz around the learning and led to more quality work and depth of thought.



Forgiveness Drama in a Writing lesson.



Character in a story – Compassion  
In a writing lesson



The path to Wisdom in Maths.



Focussing on Trust in a Writing session.



Appreciating Creation. Into the Forest topic.



Humility in Maths.



Humility in Reading aloud and taking turns.



Generosity advent calendar making with Kindness deeds



#### Quotes from children

"It would be more fun if we had longer lessons." Bethany Y3

"I chose Lola to go to Nursery because I knew she would like it." Denis Y3 (During Generosity in Maths)

"It is fun when we learn outside", Izzie Y3

"It makes me want to do more writing." Louisa Y3

"I liked pretending to be other people." Lewis Y3

#### What are the challenges?

The main challenges were that because we have a Christian Value each half term already set and on occasion this resulted in some more tedious links which led to less enthusiasm from me as it didn't always flow so naturally. However, if we had let it become more free-flow then the importance may have lessened as we leant further towards the NC requirements. I do feel that having the set Value did help to keep me focussed but sometimes it didn't sit within the curriculum topics as naturally as I had

hoped. Opportunities for WiL are identifiable in all NC subjects without a doubt, some more evident than others and it was truly helpful to talk with other teachers to draw upon their ideas and knowledge, particularly this year when topics are new, books were visited for the first time and I had not taught many elements of the content before. This will become easier next year now the NC is clear and my knowledge of it has deepened. I feel that WiL has to be a balanced approach and the teacher has to be flexible in their approach as sometimes it works well to do a weekly subject focus, sometimes a whole week learning in all subjects, some stand-alone lessons and sometimes a few lessons is enough to develop a particular strand. I think that flexibility is the key to successful WiL in my own classroom for the future as it should feel like a natural approach and when it becomes to feel habitual or a top down approach there is a danger of it becoming 'just another thing we have to do', rather than something we should believe, value and strengthen our children's learning.

A challenge the teachers came across in our school was with the statutory assessments and this in when our Y6 ceased involvement in our project as it was felt the pressures of the KS2 SATs were too great. This is an area we need to look at for future development.

Can we begin to answer our research question?

This is a really complex area to find hard evidence to back up what we believe as we cannot state reliably that WiL has had an impact on core subject assessment with hard data. Firstly, due to the changing of how children are assessed so we have no prior assessment to compare to as we are now onto a different system. I doubt that Maths and English results would change that dramatically due to WiL as WiL is developing the more spiritual dimension of the child which hopefully in turn will raise their achievement but from only a year's project the evidence of formal impact is minimal. As a school we track spiritual development but unfortunately not in the year groups that took part in WiL. The process of WiL and its impact will become clearer in the future when it has been established throughout school for a longer period.

Lesson observations unfortunately did not happen as staff were being observed regularly in Maths as this took precedent in the school's needs therefore the ability to release staff from classes to observe each other was difficult and funding was unavailable from school to allow these to happen. As we has already begun the WiL journey in the past I had already observed a number of teachers and it was felt that perhaps it was a little too soon to revisit this again. Attached is a brief summary of feedback to teachers from our previous sample sessions.

In summary, it is truly challenging to find hard evidence of progress in assessed subjects that shows the impact of WiL but we do know from the buzz in school during some WiL projects, the pride the children have had and shared about their learning and how animatedly/passionately that teachers have spoken about their children's learning that

the pupils learning has been strongly enhanced by the WiL approach and it is something we are keen to continue in our school.

What next for you as a practitioner?

For me, I will continue to develop this in my own classroom and unit, drawing upon what I have learned from this year and improving for next year. I will be better equipped for next years WiL and each half term value based on my knowledge base from this year. I know my children enjoy this approach and I enjoy providing WiL style lessons for them also watching them develop and learn with more depth than in more basic lessons.

...and for the school?

I feel that this approach should be developed throughout the school and is valuable for our intake of children particularly. I see this being set as part of our teaching and learning policy and as RE coordinator an area that I will continue to develop with staff as the next stage of development of our Values based learning. I see WiL being placed on our long term planning grids so it becomes a requirement for all teaching at some points within the year and then in the future we will see more clearly the impact on learning perhaps more specifically in our spiritual development assessments.

### Some samples of planning

<p>To understand the coherence of God’s world.</p> <p>To appreciate creation and value their own creativity.</p> <p>Reshape – introduce the topic amongst the trees.</p>	<p>First Literacy Session of topic ‘Into the Forest’</p> <p>Introduce the fact that we are doing ‘What if learning?’ – Creativity.</p> <p>Take children outside to the trees. Children take a <u>viewfinder</u> and look closely at the different parts of the tree. Lie down and look through the branches to see if there are any shapes? What can you see?</p> <p><u>Blindfold</u> some children and their partner to lead them to a tree to feel then take away feel other trees and decide which they originally touched.</p> <p>Focus on the gift of the tree. Discuss God’s gift of the tree to us. What questions do they have about trees?</p> <p>Look at <u>images</u> on desks to explore the things that trees provide. <u>True/false statements</u> to sort. (add to class book)</p> <p>Children work in trios to create a <u>collage tree</u> with the gifts that trees provide in <u>leaf shapes</u> surrounding it.</p>	<p>Review learning.</p> <p>How have we been Creative today?</p> <p>What did we learn to appreciate?</p> <p>Why?</p>
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<p>Reshaping practise Changing the room layout more creatively so have table and chairs with table cloth as in the book to change learning approach</p> <p>Towards love and forgiveness – Can they think about how the mum and boy was feeling towards the father for being absent at breakfast?</p> <p>To know verbs, adverbs, nouns, adjectives</p> <p>To use a wider range of conjunctions; so, although, while, however</p> <p>To know the features of a letter.</p>	<p>Warm up – Read the simple text in pairs and colour verbs, adverbs and nouns in indicated colours.</p> <p>Look at the image of Mum and the boy having breakfast – display on IWB.</p> <p>Discuss the scene at breakfast – Where has dad gone? What are Mum and the boy thinking? How do they feel about dad? Do they react with care and love to find forgiveness or anger and resentment that he isn't there?</p> <p>Set up the class so there is a dining table set up as if in the story (What if? reshaping). Freeze frame the scene in pairs showing emotions of the characters.</p> <p>Some children voice their thoughts in role. Swap pairs in to say what they think and they would react being aware of love and forgiveness as positive approach. Complete thought bubbles in pairs onto book image. What are they thinking and not saying? What are they saying? Complete a thought and speech bubble for each character bearing love and forgiveness in mind. Hold up thought, feelings and speech bubbles (should be in RE box!) to the characters and photograph.</p> <p>In mixed ability pairs – role play the conversation between Mum and the boy. Where has dad gone? How will they react? Show love? Show forgiveness? Empathy?</p> <p>Next part of session is Lit based word work/features of letter.</p>	<p>Pink and green post-its in trios at tables. What was good what could be improved? Wil feedback</p> <p>Check features of letters are correct.</p>
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<p><u>RE session based on the wisdom of Buddha</u></p>		
<p>To learn from the wisdom of Buddha. I can ask important questions about Buddhist life and compare my ideas with those of other people. Reshaping – grouped and paired work</p>		
<p>Provide each pair with the story of Angulimala – how did the Buddha change people's lives? How was Angulimala suffering? How did the Buddha's wisdom change this? What did Angulimala learn from Buddha's wisdom? What can we learn from Buddha's wisdom in this story?</p>		
<p>Discuss in small groups: If a holy man told you to give up your favourite things, pastimes you enjoy, games etc. what would be the good and bad thing about that decision?</p>		
<p>Explore what it means to be attached to 'things' and the feelings and attachments you have about them. How could not being attached make you appreciate the 'thing' even more? Which things would be hardest to give up and why? What would you gain? Feedback to whole class and discuss. In table groups record the hardest things for them to give up and why in branching spidergram. Add to class journal. Which things in life would be wiser to keep close and those wisest to give away if you had to?</p>		
<p><b>Beliefs, teachings and sources</b></p> <p>I can describe how wisdom is taught in the story of Angulimala.</p> <p><b>Values and Commitments</b></p> <p>I can link the</p>	<p><u>What can we learn about wisdom from Buddhist stories?</u> <b>Focus – Christian values of Wisdom</b> Share story <b>The Wisdom of Queen Tender-hearted</b> – story will need edited slightly to fit age/maturity of pupils!!</p> <p>Who showed wisdom? Who did not? How? Why? At what cost? Take questions from class about story. Can they add to the board display?</p> <p>Decide on message/moral to aim for such as - <a href="#">You must be wise enough to admit mistakes, smart enough to profit from them, and strong enough to correct them.</a> Greed causes suffering, wisdom sets you free. Being wise means you react with thought. The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook. You already have everything you need to become wise.</p>	<p>Ch will be able to identify wisdom within the story and make links to Christian values. They will describe what we can learn from the story. They will be able to reflect on a time that they really wanted their own way and it ended in suffering.</p>



<p>Christian value of Wisdom that is important to me and Buddhists with the way I think and behave.</p> <p>I can write a story to teach others to make wise choices.</p>	<p>Show range of quotes and discuss their meanings.</p> <p><b>Cross-Curricular Writing</b> - Write a short story about 'The child who wanted everything' or 'Greed around the world' can they create a story with a moral.</p> <p>Discuss ideas for stories to illustrate how being greedy makes others suffer and how using our wisdom can relieve some of this link to - world starvation, poverty, children 'wanting'. Expecting too much.</p> <p>Plan out flow of the short story in mixed pairs on given grid.</p> <p>Characters, place, what the characters problem is and how they act wrongly, who helps them put it right, what they learned.</p>	<p>How would they make wiser choices next time?</p>
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Some feedback given to staff after first time observations during introduction of WiL

<p>What went well</p> <p>WiL lessons are happening throughout school</p> <p>Teachers are open minded to this approach</p> <p>You are all trying to make the links where they naturally fit</p> <p>Even Better If..</p> <p>Take one value at a time to weave into session or group of session, don't force it and make tedious links, think about changing the layout of the classroom too, How can this change to suit what you are doing? Get the ch to feedback after the session to say how they felt about the lesson, what they thought was successful or is an area to develop.</p>
<p>Your PE session was great and I saw lovely elements of Values learning. Thank you. Perseverance fit well with our whole school approach of bounce-back-ability so was a good area to focus on at present.</p> <p>Think about - Sometimes our explicit Values don't fit what we want to teach as the right way to live, so make the links that come naturally to the session you have in mind.</p> <p>Next step – Might you try another session in PE with the focus being on giving support to one another to achieve a common goal or showing compassion to each other when team working?</p>
<p>Appreciation and gratitude of the world around us in Science – a fab theme to focus on and getting out doors too. This looked like it just made sense to appreciate natural materials so therefore would you do this naturally without planning it next time?</p> <p>Think about - Has this heightened your awareness of naturally linking your teaching to Christianity/God?</p> <p>Next step – In your unit talk about other areas in your curriculum that you could link appreciation and gratitude to create other lessons that support this such as celebrations, mother's day, children in need etc</p>
<p>Writing</p> <p>Loved the theme of serving others, hospitality and selflessness. Could the children make links to all the areas you had thought about? Thank you for the lesson plan. Your comments about taking the factual learning to a deeper level and the children showing empathy rather than just learning the facts really brought the meaning of the lesson home.</p> <p>Think about -Would you stick with a range of Christian links if you did this lesson again or would you refine it to one area?</p> <p>Next step – you said how you would try a different area of curriculum. Go for it and let me know how you got on. What about doing something similar to year one and linking appreciation and gratitude to something coming up at Christmas or children in need?</p>
<p>Science</p> <p>Appreciation was the theme as we looked at mapping of constellations and what was beyond the stars – wonder.</p> <p>Think about – brought depth to lesson. Could we look at compassion towards others whilst working in groups/appreciating what others can bring to a group in I.Learning?</p> <p>Next step - linking something to Christmas perhaps perseverance of the magi in the nativity story.</p>
<p>Literacy</p> <p>A really interesting lesson and the Christian essence had given it depth. Liked how you looked at the whole</p>

character rather than just his more obvious traits.

Think about – Did you link lots of values? Were there particular Christian ways of living that would have been more explicit than others? Did Alex Rider have an element of his character that we could learn from and transfer into our own lives?

Next steps – Think about your next character description session and what we can encourage the children to learn *from* the character. How did they demonstrate a ‘Christian way of living’? Did they show humility, compassion, service, truth...? This may have been what you did. Could you perhaps take the most prominent ‘Christian way of living’ from this lesson into another curriculum area to reinforce this?

FS Writing

Friendship was a very accessible value to link for your age range. A gorgeous lesson. Thank you for your samples of work.

Think about – taking friendship further into appreciation and thankfulness perhaps how God created us and that we are thankful for those around us. How deep could they really go?

Next steps – appreciation; try another session in PE perhaps appreciating our friends to support us in team tasks, help us dress, show us care.