

CRED Focus: Disability

St Michael's Grammar School Lurgan

and

Ceara School Lurgan

Project:

'Our Town: Lurgan'

*"Friendships were made that will be
cherished forever."*

Background Information:

- **Schools:** Ceara School and St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan;
 - Ceara School is a 'controlled' school that caters for the educational, social and emotional needs of children who have severe learning difficulties and/or emotional difficulties and/or physical difficulties and/or medical complications. The schools have worked collaboratively for 3 years but this was the first time a number of the pupils from St Michael's had the experience of working with pupils from Ceara School.
- **CRED Focus:** Disability;
- **Number of Participants:** 33 pupils: KS4 and Post 16 pupils;
- **Duration:** Young people from both schools worked very closely together over a 10 week period during November 2013- January 2014, every Wednesday from 1.30pm-3.30pm. The project was part of the 'Enrichment Programme' that has pupils from St Michael's had to apply and be selected to be part off.
- **Funding Provided by CRED Enhancement Scheme:** £901



Aims and Objectives of the Project

- To address issues around diversity and inclusion by challenging pupil perceptions and attitudes regarding disability;
- To respect and appreciate similarities and differences;
- To promote a visible commitment of acceptance and understanding of others;
- To enhance the potential for building better community relations;
- To consider how people of differing traditions can learn together in a climate of mutual respect.

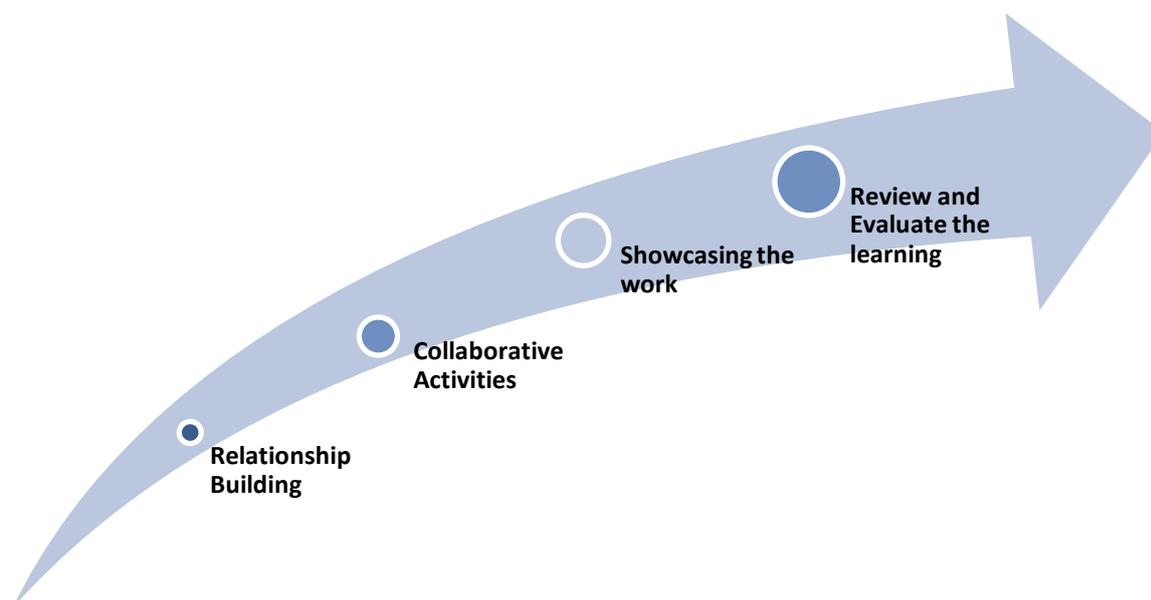
Brief Summary of the Project: 'Our Town'

The project focused on Post 16 aged pupils from St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan working with Key Stage 4 pupils from Ceara School Lurgan on a joint project finding out about the buildings and landmarks in Lurgan town as observed through the pupils' eyes. These buildings and landmarks were reproduced in a variety of art mediums including paint, print, clay and photography.

The 3 key members of staff involved in the project, met beforehand to plan the key activities and were responsible for delivering and facilitating all aspects of the project themselves. Some prior work had been completed in each school before they met together. The pupils took photographs of the buildings in Lurgan that had special meaning to them and selected a number of the photographs to be used during the collaborative work.

It was important there was a clear process in place in order for all participants to get the most from working together.

The Process



Relationship Building

The pupils met together, shared a number of ice breaker sessions, including circle time activities, learning about each other's talents and sharing their favourite music together.

By taking time to do this, any perceived barriers were broken down, any fears or pre-conceived fears were addressed and all participants felt confident and secure to work together.

"I felt very apprehensive and nervous as I have never done anything like this before. After the ice - breaker activities, I had no reason to be nervous."

Pupil, St Michael's GS



Relationship Building Activities- 'sharing talents' and circle time

Collaborative Activities

The pupils worked collaboratively during the ten weeks, sharing their views and stories about the buildings in Lurgan. After the icebreaker/relationship building activities, the pupils were divided into three groups:

- **Clay:** This group looked at and discussed a range of photographs of the main buildings. They used the photographs to determine important aspects of the buildings and then worked together to produce clay representations of each of the buildings.
- **Photographs:** Photographs of the buildings were discussed and used to create a comic strip/wall display with the important photographs and captions displayed.
- **Painting:** The photographs of the buildings were viewed and discussed and then used as a basis for a display which was the pupils drew and painted together.

The groups rotated round after 2/3 weeks so that every-one had a chance to participate in the three activities. Through-out the ten weeks, relationships were developed and barriers regarding inclusion were broken down and perceptions and fears regarding disability were challenged.



Pupils working together

Time to Celebrate

The pupils then met together to plan their final showcase event in Ceara School on the 14th February 2014. Parents/carers, staff and Board of Governors and members of the local community from both schools and representatives from ETI and the SELB were invited to attend a final celebration event to showcase the work of the pupils involved in the project. The principals from both schools spoke at the event and were fully supportive through-out the project.

During this exhibition, pupils from both schools shared their learning and spoke about their very positive experiences of working with each other. (Presentation by pupils in Appendix 1:1 and 1:2) presented a powerpoint of photographs and a DVD presentation of their participation through-out the project. Certificates of participation were presented to all pupils and there was an opportunity to view the work on display and discuss the work with the pupils. Mrs Cheryl Stafford E.T.I. said afterwards:

“The speeches from the young people were so heartfelt and engaged the hearts and minds of us in the audience in a profound way...
all the pupils faces and comments were a testimony to the impact of the work.”

The celebration event provided a further opportunity to engage with members of a different tradition and background as well as to celebrate together the collaborative work of pupils from both schools.



The shared celebration event

Review and Evaluation

Pupils from St Michael's Grammar School completed an on-line evaluation report at the end of the project and pupils from Ceara School talked about their experiences. Informal feedback was also sought from parents, teachers and Board of Governors on the day of the celebration event. The evaluations were extremely positive and all participants clearly articulated the benefits of the project- from a personal point of view and also through working with others. Mr Gerard Adams, Principal of St. Michael's said that they had been inundated with pupils wanting to participate in the project and that they highly valued the link and hoped that it would continue and grow.

"This project was life changing for me. I will never forget the incredible experiences I had with our friends from Ceara School."

Pupil: St Michael's GS

The teachers also evaluated the project and drew up some advice to help other schools when planning and doing a CRED project. (Appendix 2: 'Practical advice from teachers involved in the CRED project').

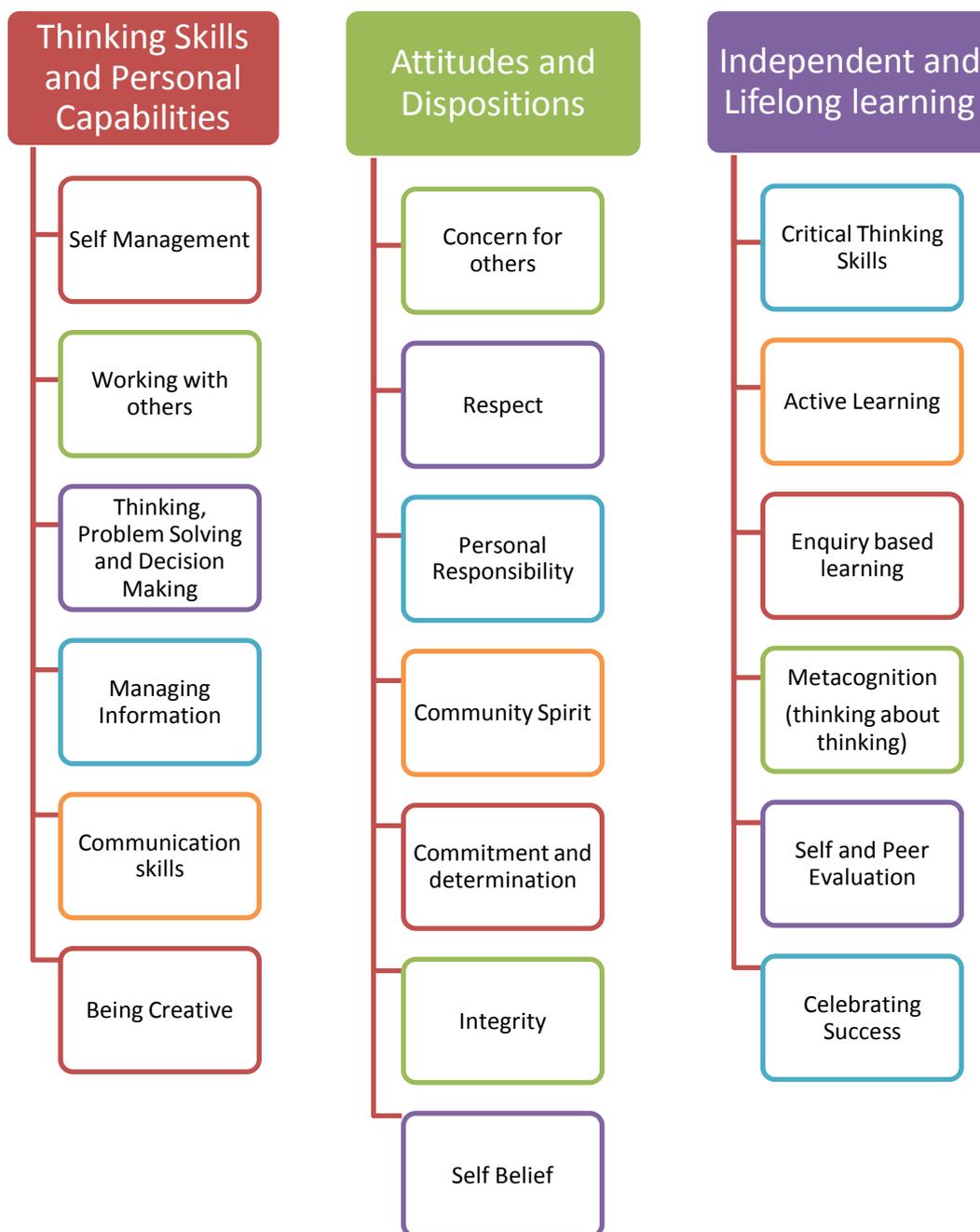
This project has very clearly met the overarching aim of **CRED 'to contribute to improving relations between communities.'**

Outcomes and evidence of addressing the aims of the CRED Policy:

- The collaborative work had very clear links to other curricular areas and in the development of a range of skills, capabilities and dispositions and attitudes;
- The project provided opportunities for the pupils to contribute actively to their own learning through taking personal responsibility, thinking and making decisions and by being part of a group;
- Young people have been able to develop their own self-respect and a respect for others and there was a clear promotion of equality;
- The collaborative activities ensured there were clear opportunities to build relationships with those of different backgrounds;
- Perceptions and attitudes towards disability were challenged;
- Pupils gained a greater knowledge and a better understanding of difference and diversity;
- Through observations and in their evaluations the pupils have clearly indicated that they value and respect difference and have engaged positively with it, in particular disability and religion.

Curricular Links and Benefits

As well as developing a number of curricular areas, including English, Art and Personal Development, the CRED project has promoted key aspects of learning including:



Adapted from 'The Big Picture of the Curriculum at Key Stage 4, CCEA

Conclusion:

This project clearly provided opportunities for the pupils and staff from both schools to develop closer relationships and address issues around disability and to consider how people from different traditions can live and work together in a climate of mutual respect. The project demonstrated a visible commitment to acceptance and understanding of others and has presented an avenue by which both schools can successfully embed CRED.

"Inclusive education at its very best."

**Dr. Cunningham,
Principal, Ceara School**

"Through CRED we have been able to support our pupils in exploring, understanding and respecting similarities and differences. A wonderful experience!"

**Christine Murray, Teacher in Charge of Project,
St. Michael's Grammar School**

"Something I will never forget, life changing, eye opening and a totally uplifting experience."

Pupil: St Michael's Grammar School

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"Please can we do it AGAIN?"

Pupil: Ceara School

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

"This project helped me grow as an individual, I now appreciate things I took for granted."

Pupil: St Michael's Grammar School



**Working together: sharing, supporting
and learning from each other**





"It was an amazing experience, which was very enriching. I felt very welcome at Ceara, it was an experience I will never forget."

Pupil: St Michael's Grammar School

"I loved singing to my new friends and I loved to see them come into my class."

Pupil: Ceara School

"Friendships were made that will be cherished forever."

Appendices

Appendix 1:1 Ceara and St Michael's Celebration: Speech 1

Appendix 1:2 Ceara and St Michael's Celebration Speech: 2

Appendix 2 Practical advice from teachers involved in the CRED project

Appendix 1:1

Ceara and St Michael's Celebration: Speech 1

Good morning, my name is Tara Greene and I am a pupil of St Michael's Grammar School, Lurgan. I would like to begin by thanking you for attending this presentation for our community involvement project 'Our Town' which has been ongoing for the last few months between St. Michael's and Ceara School. I would especially like to thank and welcome our principals, parents and guardians, representatives from the SELB and ETI for taking time out of their busy schedule to attend.

The project 'Our Town' involves pupils from both schools exploring different buildings and artefacts of Lurgan through creative skills using paint, clay and media. This involved us, as pupils, not only working in groups to develop our ideas, but also working independently to collect past and present images of the area we live in. Along the way we found out new things, explored new places and best of all had fun making friends and meeting new people.

Back in September, when I found out about the opportunity to be involved in this project I jumped at the chance and was ecstatic when I found out I was successful in my application. The reason why I was so excited was that I knew working with new people is something I prosper at and find really enjoyable. I realised it was a brilliant chance for me, and my fellow pupils to broaden our horizons and create new experiences of working in a different environment.

I had lots of different expectations, when I firstly began my journey to Ceara, many questions were running through my mind. Will I be able to get along with everyone? And how will I cope in a new environment? However, some were more trivial, as I asked myself was McDonald's a possibility for the trip home?

Once I got there, all my uncertainties and doubts vanished as the warm welcome we received from the Ceara staff and pupils was touching and genuinely encouraging for me as a pupil entering a new environment. We started of our journey on a high, with some X factor material performances from the two Jacks who sang two very contrasting numbers as well as Hannah who sang us some songs by Katy Perry. From this moment, I knew I had already made brilliant connections with Hannah and had made friends and memories I will never forget.

From me personally and also on the behalf our school, I would like to thank the Ceara staff and pupils for their opened armed welcome, we are extremely grateful for the opportunities and experiences they have afforded us. Thank you so much for listening, now my fellow pupil Eimhear will give us an insight into her thoughts and experiences of her own experience at Ceara.

Appendix 1:2

Ceara and St Michael's Celebration Speech: 2

Good morning everyone, my name is Eimhear Bunting and I am also a Year 13 student at St. Michael's Grammar School Lurgan.

On first hearing about this project I immediately decided that I wanted to become involved as it was something that I had heard about from older pupils in the school and it sounded like a fantastic experience and a wonderful opportunity. I also thought that it would be something different to do, to get out of my own school on a Wednesday afternoon and get a break from my own studies. I thought prior to applying for this project that it would be a good way to interact with new people of a similar age but from a different background and way of life than myself. I was delighted to hear that I had been selected to represent my school and participate in what was a brilliant opportunity that helped me to develop new skills, improve on existing skills, meet new people and make new friends.

Before starting this project I honestly did not know what to expect and did not know if this project would be suitable for me but I hoped that I would enjoy it and enjoy my experience in the Ceara environment. On arriving at Ceara School, I was looking forward to meeting new people and out of all the students in Ceara, the first one I saw was my next door neighbour Charlotte – what were the chances? Immediately I felt welcome here and knew right away that I was going to thoroughly enjoy the experience and I was going to make the most of the amazing opportunity that I had been given. Throughout my time at Ceara I realised that the pupils of Ceara were all very unique and had very special talents in different areas.

I realised that despite the students of Ceara going to a different school and coming from a different background that they were not any different to me and my fellow pupils from St Michael's and each of them individually brought a lot of joy and happiness into our lives and all of us loved coming to Ceara each Wednesday afternoon as it was something that we really enjoyed. Everyone from St. Michael's bonded with everyone from Ceara and we all made new bonds and friendships which we will remember and cherish for a long time. Personally, I have really enjoyed this experience and I am very grateful to have been given this opportunity to work with such great people on a great project.

On behalf of everyone from St. Michael's and Ceara I would like to thank you all for coming here this morning and taking time out of your day to attend our 'Our Town' presentation and we hope you enjoyed looking at an overview of our time as much as we enjoyed participating in this project. Also, on behalf of everyone from St. Michael's we would like to thank Mr Adams our principal and Mr McCafferty our vice principal for supporting the project as well as the SELB for funding the project through the CRED Enhancement Scheme. We would also like to thank the staff and pupils of Ceara School for allowing us to come every week and for their unending warm welcome. We really appreciate all that you have done for us as a group and we will never forget the experience here and the incredible welcome which we received. Thank you.

Appendix 2:

Practical advice from teachers involved in the CRED project:

Identify where links can be established. In relation to this project a link was established through the Craigavon Area Learning Community (CALC).

Organise a planning meeting. Opportunity to formally meet each other, tour the schools, exchange contact details and discuss -

- * project ideas
- * pupil numbers
- * transport requirements and costs
- * suitable times that the project could be delivered with minimal disruption
- * necessary resources

Plan the project in May/June for commencement in the first term back to school.

Identify any possible opportunities for funding in advance of the project commencing. In relation to this project we did apply for funding through the CRED enhancement scheme. However, we did not do this until October. It would have been much more beneficial to have submitted the application for funding in May/June.

Document/record all communication and meetings.

Take photos/videos throughout the project.

Adopt a process of plan, do and review.

Plan a 'celebration event' of the project to showcase the work of the pupils. Invite stakeholders connected to the school e.g. Parents, BoGs, representatives from the local community, SELB.

Encourage pupils to complete an evaluation form and provide quotes of their experience.

Recognise the contribution of the pupils involved - certificates, school website/newsletter, local newspaper, display board, Annual Report.

And finally **enjoy the project!!**