

## **Keeping it Real: A Crazy and Fun Curriculum that gets Results (Attainment Progress and so much More)**

***By Azra Butt, Headteacher  
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(Children's participation)

[01:38] (Audience participation, clapping)

Good morning everyone. Children are very much the heart of our curriculum at Eldon. I'm so pleased... I'm going to get tearful now... to be able to bring a small delegation from my school. I hope you agree that even though there's not very many of them that the impact was really quite amazing.

The actual poem itself was inspired. So, Eldon's Impossible Dream was inspired by this book. It's a book that we have adopted at the school. How many of you have come across The Fox and The Ghost King by Michael Morpurgo? It's an absolutely inspirational tale about Leicester City winning the Premiership.

Just like Leicester City, Eldon Primary... everybody at Eldon feels like we've not just won the Premiership, we feel like we've won the World Cup because we've put into practice a phenomenal curriculum that inspires children. It gets them to develop their skills for life and also it enables them to.. what else would you say, children?

[02:59] (Child participation)

Our school's amazing. It makes them feel amazing and it makes them feel on top of the world. Can we give them one more clap?

[03:10] (Audience participation)

They are going to be coming backwards and forwards. They've got a lot that they've prepared. Eldon's tale is a true rags to riches tale.

I'm Azra Butt, the Headteacher, the very proud Headteacher of Eldon Primary School and it's my pleasure to be able to share with you our crazy and fun curriculum. For those of you that would like to know, I've been in primary education for 27 years. It's quite a long time. In that time I started off as a newly qualified teacher in a Catholic primary school in Preston. I was there for 13 years. I became a Key Stage manager and then even did a tiny bit of acting Headship. The school went... the team that were there, it absolutely inspired me to work with such brilliant teachers. We went from a normal community school that was actually falling and all the rest of it and we became a beacon school. So that was a really fantastic start to my career.

I then went on to become a primary national strategy consultant. Do we remember those? My job and remit was to... it was the pilot project for Lancashire, the EAL pilot project, so I worked intensively with ten schools in Preston. I was known as Miss Lancashire for a while which was quite glamorous.

I then went and secured my Deputyship at a school on the border of Blackpool. Jonathan previously was talking about his school, Mayfield Primary School in St. Anne's and I was there for 7 years. Similar story, the school had gone into a category and the Headteacher left very quickly. I was then...I'd only been in the job for a few months. I went from Deputy to Acting Head and the school came out after 9 months and we went straight to good. So that was superb as well.

[05:04] And then after that I finally got my Headship at Eldon Primary School and I've been there for just over 7 years. So, as the poem alludes, Eldon's elder journey has been a tricky one and it's been an eventful one. When I first started 7 or so years ago a local influential Headteacher greeted me by saying "So you've been given the poisoned chalice" and I sort of thought "Right, OK". I did know that the school needed help and that was absolutely fine but what I didn't realise is that the school had three changes of leadership at the top in six years so actually people came and they did a little bit and then they never stayed. So, the school that I inherited actually was very poorly indeed and the children in the community were suffering greatly and that really hurt me a lot.

You can probably imagine there were lots and lots of plates that we needed to spin in the early days and one of those was trying to make sure that the curriculum was inspirational. I'm going to name somebody now: Dame Alison Peacock uses a word called 'irresistible' and I'm going to pinch that word today. So I feel that the curriculum at Eldon is irresistible and everybody just can't wait to get stuck in.

Before we go off to a little group discussion, let me just see where we're at with this. We are going to have a little brain break. My children have been looking forward to this because we're going to do a little bit of role reversal. So you're going to be the children and Isma is going to be our teacher. She's going to teach us a game that we play at school. It's called 'the copying game'.

[06:50] (Child and audience participation)

[07:39] Caught some of you out! Thank you, Isma.

[07:43] (Audience participation)

Watch out for the clapping game because it will reappear in a minute. Some of the other children want to have a little go as well.

So, I've got little question for you to discuss at your tables. What influences your decisions about the curriculum and what barriers do you face? Would you like to have a few minutes just at your tables chatting about that? If you've not introduced yourselves already at your tables please feel free to do so as well. We're going to give you a few minutes just chatting.

[08:16] (Audience participation)

What influences our decisions on the curriculum and what barriers do we face? Just say what you feel.

(Audience participation)

A lack of risk-taking with staff. Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. We've come across that. People want to feel secure. They want to be, as Jonathan mentioned previously, they want a scheme to follow. It's so hard, isn't it, to prise these schemes on these particular .... Anything like that. It's very hard, very difficult. At our school we've got a policy of use lots of different ideas. It doesn't matter where you get them from really. You know, if they fit the bill then you know. Any other barriers that we face or anything else that influenced your curriculum at your school?

[09:05] (Audience participation)

Absolutely. Yes, you have to have, you have to keep one eye on the standards. Now, it could be that you're at the start of your journey at your school, you know, and you probably think "Goodness me, we need to shift standards here". So you are going to play it safe, aren't you? And I'm going to refer back to Jonathan and what he said in his discussion previously. You know, you've got to stick to something sometimes because you need to get that going. At my school, very much. You know, we had to review the behaviour policy. We had to write down the routines step by step. It was a case of we have to follow these to the letter because it wasn't happening before and you're trying to get people to understand the importance of these things.

So yes, depending upon where you are at in your journey I would say I think if, you know, at the start of your journey there's a lot of hard work that needs to happen. I think you've got to start somewhere, haven't you before you start letting go and giving people more opportunities to really become free in what they do and I think we're definitely at that stage now at our school.

Just before I move on, actually, I'm going to share with you a few ideas that we're currently rolling with. So last... was it last month? A couple of months ago I was invited to meet with the Governors of the Bank of England. Now you might be thinking well how did that happen? We were shortlisted for an award, a regional award the Educator Awards and on the back of that I got a call to say "Your school's been shortlisted. The Governors of the Bank of England are in town". This was in Liverpool. "Would you like to come and take part?" and I thought "Absolutely". So I caught the train and went down there and of course we all know how the economy affects our lives and of course they, what their message was that, you know, they were wanting the average person on the street to be able to understand what the economy meant for them and they felt, quite rightly so, that when you are at university and you've got a massive debt that's too late to think about how this is affecting me. So the message was, to high schools in particular, you know, let's try and weave this into the curriculum at high school level. Well of course we're a primary school but I came away from that thinking "Well our children are like sponges. They love anything like this". You know, what can we do at primary level? So watch out everyone. Brace yourselves. You might have heard of the Bristol pound, you might have heard of the Lake District pound but we're about to launch the Eldon pound.

We are putting into plan a way of reproducing the economy in our school. We have got many talented children who do amazing jobs for us so we're going to create the economy in our school. The children are rubbing their hands with glee because they now think they're going to get paid in Eldon money. And they are going to do, but the money is actually going to be transferable. It can be cashed in for something, for some privileges and we've actually met together and we've decided what those privileges are. So watch out, do follow us on Twitter if you're interested in any of that. But you know, that's just one thing that we've picked up that we're going to run with.

Mental health and wellbeing? Everybody knows that these are massive, massive issues. They're constantly on the news and for a school like ours it's absolutely something that we've got to take on board because you know, if we don't do something in the primary sector then further on they're going to, you know, children are going to flounder, parents are going to flounder so we buy in a clinical psychologist; you know, we're not afraid to tackle the subject of mental health. She's been in classes. She's taught the children in terms of what the signs and symptoms are.

Many of the children have got parents who go through these very difficult times. We have regular health and wellbeing weeks. We have it's good to be me days and we are highly explicit in the messages that we give our children and I think one of the keys is being really explicit.

We have... I've made the decision to go down the expert route so we buy in specialist P.E. teachers. I have two on my staff. They love it. The P.E. teachers absolutely love it because they're delivering something that they are absolutely passionate about and I know that the standard that our children are receiving is second to none. We have specialist music in our school, we have an I.C.T. computing manager who lives and breathes computing and with all of these specialist facilities in our school they're getting the best. They're not doing it in isolation, they're doing it with the teaching staff and they have time for planning and it really does make for some magical learning at Eldon.

[14:07] So, our approach or one of our approaches, or the main approach is that we identify our barriers to learning. You must all do this. We try and innovate the curriculum. We try and build these strategies into the curriculum and then we try and engage our parents. Everybody knows that if you've got parents on side you know your job is half done for you and actually children get such a better deal that actually it's going to be sustainable as well.

So, what I'm going to try and do is identify the barriers for learning for our unique setting and I'm going to then try and explain how that actually has influenced our curriculum and I am really proud to say that Eldon's standards are consistently amongst the best in the country. we have been 3%, we've been 5%, we've been 10%, but that's where we hover around in terms of our standards.

You might be wondering what our context is so in 2000.... Sorry, Eldon's context, it is a very tricky one. The school is located in an area of significant deprivation and we serve many families that qualify for the free school meals. The number on roll when I took over the school in 2010 was 125. It had fallen drastically from around 300. Some of you might be thinking well that's a really quick fix and actually there's parts of me that thinks "Yeah, it was a quick fix because it was so low, the only way was actually up".

Mobility was high. It's still quite high. Now you might be thinking well actually, if you're running a really good school, if Eldon's really great why is mobility high? We're based in the inner city and we serve a lot of families that actually move into the area and then unfortunately have got to move out very quickly. So we do lose families just because of safeguarding. We also are situated very close to the university. We get families that fly in from all over the world and they come and do a course at the university. They bring their children. They've either got good English language or they've got no language at all and, you know, that affects our mobility. So although it's better and although our school is full, when those when those gaps are created it means that, you know, there is that mobility.

So the people premium there, that's the over 6 percentage. EAL, we've stayed quite static with 35%. There are twenty different languages that are spoken at our school which is highly diverse and that's one of the magical things that I love about Eldon. It's such a harmonious community. We don't have to go anywhere else to find it. We've got the mix in our school and it's great to be able to learn about each other and that brings a richness to the curriculum as well.

For the special educational needs figure you might be thinking well that looks a little bit suspect and you'll be right for thinking that. When I took over 44%, I was told, had special educational needs or a disability. I very quickly found out that some of those children should not have been on the register. It was down to a barrier in their attendance or actually poor teaching. So we're now at around 23%, 24% and that's what we hover around. And I've mentioned about the location of our school.

Okay, so. One of my very earliest memories... you know, when you start at a new school you want to try and get to know people. You want to get to know the staff, the children and for myself it was the parents that I really needed to win over. I remember walking on to the playground and as you do, you want to try and make friends with parents, don't you? And you say "Oh, you've got a little one there.

Have you got that child's name down at our school?" Well. "No, Mrs. Butt. You might be fresh faced and you've come to Eldon, but we've got no plans of sticking around" and that was often the response that I got. "We're waiting for our child to finish this year and then basically we're off". And so we really needed to win hearts and minds. The families were absolutely fed up. They were leaving in their droves and it just took.... sorry, I'm going to talk about this picture next.

[18:40] This was my very first reception class that I inherited. The standard number of the school was 40 and we received 15 children but the sad reality was half of those families didn't want to be at Eldon. They'd just not got into a local school of their choice so they had appeals left right and centre and so, you know, this is what we had to, this is what we worked with. But 12 months on, when we were HMI it was a different story. We actually managed to secure 30 children. I was glad it was 30 and no more because of the class size room. But we'd started to win hearts and minds and parents started to believe in what was going on in the school and they wanted to give the school a chance and I was grateful for that.

This picture was taken a couple of years ago. It was taken in honour of our 130<sup>th</sup> birthday. You can see the Victorian building in the background and you can see, you know, a magnificent group of children and staff, very proud because we are a place of pride now. I inherited 5 mixed age classes. We're now 8 full classes. We have lowered our school age to 2 so we have vulnerable 2 year olds in our setting. We get the grant for 2 year olds. And as you can see we are now a super team.

I'm going to talk a little bit about quality marks. I've not got it as a bullet point there but just above the awards and things that we've managed to amass since then. HMI in our latest inspection said something to me at the end. She said "When I was researching your school, Mrs. Butt, I looked on your website and you've got a lovely set of quality marks at the bottom and I thought oh here we go; we've got a school that collects badges here". So she said this to me and then she said "But actually, having spent two days in your school, I know why you've got those badges. You know you've actually used them in a very clever way to develop the skills of the staff, to enhance your curriculum because the curriculum at the school is all singing and all dancing".

The behaviour quality mark was the first one that we went for after we'd done all the hard work because I wanted the world to know that actually the behaviour in our school was second to none and then the other quality marks, the science quality mark, that massively notched up the science learning and teaching in our school and it skilled up the subject leaders as well. So that's the way that we've done it at Eldon and it's definitely worked for us.

In terms of the local and regional accolades, we are and have been the primary school of the year locally for three years in a row. We've just been shortlisted again so Wednesday we'll find out how well we do with that and you know, everybody competes with those. I do it because of course I want us to know... it's a check for us. You know, we're submitting things that obviously we introduce every year. It's fresh, it's different. It's keeping us on to the next level, you know, from my perspective but it keeps us on high. It keeps the children and staff on a high. We have the Educate Awards twice, two years in a row now we've got the leadership team of the year and we've got the most inspirational primary school this time around and those are Northwest awards. We've also recently obviously got the outstanding thumbs up which, it's not the be all and the end all, you know; it's not the final destination but actually it gives everybody a massive pat on the back to say "Well done. We think that your school is this" and yes, we're carrying on with the day business because we are passionate and relentless about what we want for our children. They only get one bite of the cherry and it starts in primary. We firmly believe that if we can give them that solid start, you know, the world... it can be anything for them so we're highly passionate and enthusiastic, all of us in our school.

[23:01] Okay, so this is where I ask the children to put their ear muffs on because this is not for their ears. I don't want to give them any ideas. So what were my impressions of Eldon before I started as an associate Headteacher? Today made me question how could a school be so unloved? I couldn't get over the dark walls in the entrance. In fact, in a weird way it summarised Eldon perfectly. Boring, lacklustre, directionless and uninspiring. When I walked around I thought I did really well to dodge bits of food and equipment in the corridors and on the yards. In the classrooms pencils and clothes were left strewn on the floor like a tornado had visited. Small pockets of children occupied huge hanger-like classrooms. Their loud and boisterous personalities filled the room. They were bursting with energy. Sadly untapped potential was a phrase that came to mind.

One thing was for sure this school deserved better, much better care love and attention. Inner city initiatives and strategies may have passed Eldon by but things couldn't get any worse. The only way was up and fortunately I was ready for a challenge.

A typical winter's day in November 2010. John had gone missing. Nobody had seen him since his fall out with his teacher in Year 4. It took 50 minutes, two police officers and four members of staff to find him hiding under a desk in the computer suite. Only three fights at lunchtime today. That was two less than yesterday. Year 1 had to be evacuated yet again due to George's antics. They had missed another valuable thirty minutes of learning time. At the end of the day several children were missing from assembly. Mr Scott had found them in the toilets having a water fight. Can anybody relate to that at all? Yes. Well that's what it was like and that was me in the picture. It was like that for a good 12 months. The first 12 months I didn't let anyone into my school. You know, I had lots of professional friends that wanted to come in. I said "No, you're not coming in yet because I don't know where the children are".

But it got better and we stuck at it. I know my predecessors didn't and they came and went but actually, you know, I was going to dig my heels in and I had a staff team that I'd built up that saw that responsibility as well.

So how did we managed to turn the situation around? By the way these three local heroes, they're from reception class, our modern day heroes. We've got Silas who's Batman in the middle. And I've got Tyler who's Spider-Man on the right and I've got Mason who's Captain America on the left. They keep us in check.

So very quickly what we did in the early days, the first thing the vision and the culture and respect. It was highly imperative that the relationships were right in the school. The teacher and child relationships, the child-child relationships, the parent and teacher relationships.

I remember sitting in my office or actually wandering around school at lunchtime and parents knocking on the school gate saying "My child's been pushed over. What are you going to do about it?" If you ever visit Eldon we were highly exposed from three sides and one of the first things that we did was we had someone... we modified the yards... we had some willow put up and that really transformed us because the children then knew it was their space.

[27:14] We had to develop a culture of high expectations. You know, that for me is the key. If you can aim high and if you can get everybody else to say "Yes we can do this, but actually we can go further" I think, you know, you're much more likely to get there. we quickly revamped the behaviour policy. We got everybody around the table and made sure that we're all singing from the same hymn sheet, followed by our attendance policy and then on to our teaching and learning policies including our curriculum and then we looked at the learning environment. But these were all plates that were being spun at the same time. You know, but that's pretty much the order that we try to do things in.



So what do external visitors say about Eldon's curriculum? I've got a paragraph there that I've lifted from the Ofsted report in 2017 and an inclusion quality mark assessor because we are a flagship school for inclusion. I think we're the only school in Lancashire with that status. They visited us in February. So I'm going to let you have a little read of that, just for a few moments.

So, barriers to learning. The very first barrier to learning that we need to tackle was making sure that the culture and the expectations were just so. So obviously a culture of high expectations. Routines, I actually... when I inherited the school, I'm going to be honest with you, I'm a teacher; you can probably tell I'm a teacher because I've got children with me but when you get a position of being a Headteacher in a school you think "Oh my goodness, maybe this needs help". You know, "Who can I call upon to give me help?" I needed some expert advice and although I am a thinker and I had lots of ideas I couldn't get beyond one stage and that was this culture of just mutual respect because you've just got to work on it. When it was so bad for such a long time it's very difficult to get these relationships right overnight.

So, I actually brought in an Educational Psychologist and I said "Look, you need to come around and walk around the school with me and then we need to see what we're going to do".

[29:25] Julie Glynn, an absolutely phenomenal person. She came into the school and she said "Right, we need some routines. There's no routines in this place". So we sat down with the staff and we actually, literally, line by line, everybody got involved. What is it that the children are going to do the minute they step on our yard? Once they finish from the yard and they walk into your classroom what are the expectations? What do you want them to do? Are they going to hand their coats up first? Are they going to put the book bag away first? When they walk into your classroom what are the expectations?

You can imagine how laborious that was and how tight it was but, you know, we managed to write that down and there were some people who just couldn't be bothered; you know, some people who didn't want to hear that message but actually we needed to stick with it. We talked about topping and tailing, so when children were moving around the school they needed an adult at the front, an adult at the back. You know, making sure that the movement in and around the school was just so and that really, I've got to say, that really helped.

So, one of the trophies that we introduced, and this one ... look, I've brought the silver with me from school today. This is actually... it looks very shiny but it's been well used. It's called 'The Right Place at the Right Time'. I introduced that because the staff, OK, we were going to give this a go but to get the children on board I remember one holiday sitting and ordering a ton of trophies thinking "What are the barriers? What is it that I need children to start appreciating?"

So this one, 'Right Place at the Right Time' you can imagine; children were everywhere, often unsupervised. They had free reign of the school and this was telling them that actually there was a right place and right time for anything and everything. They needed to work within the parameters of our guidelines of the behaviour policy. Children want to please. You know, they just need to know, don't they, what the expectations are and this worked a treat.

We had trophies for looking smart. We had trophies for... sorry, I'm just going to read off... respect. The respect award. Who is it that showed somebody else respect today? The reason why I've needed to look for that is because we don't use those any more. We don't need to use them.

So just in the pictures we've got Kai there in the top right-hand corner and he's clutching a British values trophy. Kai has got a heart of gold. He has attended... each term we publish a list of clubs, free

clubs for the school because we believe in developing the whole child and we link with a school in Northwest Pakistan. This school is quite close to where the Taliban is. You can probably imagine they've got to fight for their education. Kai was very used to going to this club and they did all sorts. They learnt about that school, they learnt about the area, they would fundraise for the school and one term we noticed it's not on the list. What's going to happen with this school now? He actually came and found me and said "Mrs Butt, I've got a problem". He's only in Year 2 at the moment. He said "I've got a problem, Mrs Butt. Where's the school? It's not on the clubs list. Who is going to look after these children? Who is going to make sure that everybody remembers them?" We thought that fantastic and phenomenal, you know, to know and to want to know about children in a different place and to really care about these children was absolutely amazing.

The bottom picture we've got Sienna who is giving you a cheeky little grin and a cheeky look there. She's only in Year 1. Now you might be sitting there thinking this is child labour, but our children take a lot of pride for helping me run the school and that's how I sell it to them. I'll start in September, I'll set my stall out and I'll say "Right, we've got all of these jobs that need to happen. Who's going to be there?" They fill out application forms, they have interviews. I get them trained for their food hygiene. It costs me £10 per child but it doesn't matter. You know, we do everything seriously at our school. It's never lip service. If we're going to do something we're going to do it really well.

[33:52] So Sienna is really proud. She's making sure that at lunch time we're all doing the right thing there. We just talked about responsibilities and shared ownership. So we have head boy, head girl, school council, play leaders, the general ones. We have gem ambassadors which we're going to share with you a little bit later on. We have... what other roles do we have, children? Come on.

(Audience participation)

We talked about school council, eco Council, play leaders. Yes. Ambassadors. We have ambassadors for everything, actually. But the consistency message is massive so we don't start it and finish it or start it and not see it through. We make sure that we run through it throughout the year and they get tons of rewards and now they're going to get paid for it as well.

So, the very first barrier to learning; absolutely massive, this. In your skills your children might think coming to school on time and every day is, you know, the normal thing. But at Eldon it was not like that at all. It was parents we needed to speak to, it was children we needed to get on board. And now, I've got to say, everybody knows what our target is. Everybody knows what their own attendance is. Everybody knows what our cumulative attendances from September to the present day. We have these discussions in classrooms. We have lots of bribery and corruption in classrooms as well, which you'll get to hear about in just a moment, but everybody is on board and they all know that actually if we're not in school we're not going to benefit from this really exciting curriculum and actually it's got easier and easier as the curriculum has got better.

So, would you like to hear a typical conversation that might go on on the yard that children might be having? Would you like to listen in? OK.

[35:52] (Children's participation)

[37:26] (Audience participation)

So this year our target is 97% and we are very close to achieving it with 96.6% and that's the highest it's ever been whilst I've been Headteacher at the school.



So I've mentioned and Isme mentioned the 100% wrist bands. Why wait at the end of the term when they've earned it? Why not give it to them at the start of the term? Because then they need to keep that and we are encouraging them to keep hold of it. We're actually educating the children that today you're 100% and actually if you don't come tomorrow you're not 100%. You might think that's mean, but in our school we expect the children to be mature about it and they do; they take it on the chin. The 100% wrist bands we've only introduced this year and next year, what we will do, is make sure that every child has got that opportunity at the start of the term because, you know, they do have medical appointments and sometimes they fall ill and it's not their fault then, is it, that they're not 100%. But we're aiming for the 100% because that's what we want. They know the target is 97% but we're going to aim for the 100%.

[38:36] Right, speaking and listening; a massive barrier to learning for our children. Our children... we have 2 year olds in our nursery. Our 2 year olds have no language. They come in not being able to speak. When the children leave in Year 6 their standards are either in line or above national and so that makes the massive progress in our school.

We do things like talk homework which you probably do in your school. Talk for writing. But we have something called 'The Voice of Eldon'. If you ring our school you will hear not one voice but two voices because this year, when we had the competition in February the school couldn't decide. You can probably imagine the inspiration for the voice came from the television program and the children do watch that program. A couple of years ago we put in place a radio station and so the two things came hand in hand and it just made sense for us to use the radio station to have this competition for the voice so that children needed to listen in their classrooms and vote accordingly.

So, I'm going to invite now Eva who's going to tell you a little bit about the Voice of Eldon.

[39:50] (Child participation)

[40:49] (Audience participation, clapping)

You can imagine being ... What year were you, Year 4? Were you Year 4 at the time when you ran that confidence club? A Year 4 child running a club for other children who maybe aren't as confident. Wow. Oh my goodness, I'd better speed up. I've just been given the 10 minute card. Oh, OK. So, Isme, would you like to come out next? Isme's going to tell you about our radio station.

[41:22] (Child participation)

[42:01] (Audience participation, clapping)

So, developing skills for learning. Everybody, we're all on this quest, aren't we, to try and get out children independent. A couple of years ago when the rebels went we thought "What are we going to do now?" So we thought we need to focus back on the learning, we need to think about progress in each lesson. We need to think about progress over time and the way that we did that was devise our own attitude ladder and on this ladder that you can see we've got lots of statements about keeping focused, about trying to remember things, about asking questions and the way that it works is that each child has got a peg and depending on what the target is, the teacher just moves it up and down the ladder.

[42:53] (Child participation)

[43:20] (Audience participation, clapping)

OK. The gem project. Has anybody heard of Dr. Tom Robson? Well he graced our school about 4 years ago and we've never looked back. So we are a gem school. The children really enjoy collecting gems and giving them out. I'm going to ask Eva to come and tell you a little bit more and then the children are going to come out and tell you a little bit more as well.

[43:46] (Child participation)

[44:19] (Audience participation)

[42:27] (Child participation)

[44:33] Give her the bag. She can have the bag as well.

[44:36] (Audience participation)

[44:38] (Child participation)

[45:00] Anybody at all? Helped someone? Made them feel great?

[45:04] (Audience participation)

[45:25] (Child participation)

[45:57] (Audience participation)

[46:04] (Child participation)

What of the radical learning at our school and maybe in your schools developing life experiences and ambitions. We take part in something called 'Super Learning Days' and you can have them any time of the year, any day of the week. They actually originate from the University of the First Age. Although we're not an official University of the First Age school we pinched lots of vehicles to deliver learning in our school. So, again I'm going to invite the children because they're going to share with you their experiences of their Super Learning Days.

[46:50] (Children's participation)

[47:48] (Audience participation)

In September we invested in 4D immersive room is a little bit like Dr. Who's tardis. You walk in and it will transport you anywhere, anywhere in the world. I remember the inset day that we had in September. The teachers.. I am a Muslim and what I did was downloaded a YouTube video of Medena, the Mosque in India and the teachers felt like they were walking with pilgrims in Medena because, you know, we've got several projectors; we've got an interactive screen, we've got lights, we've got sound and it feels like you are there. So, if you want to, come and have a look at what it feels like. You come and visit us, do look into it because it is a remarkable way of hooking children in their learning. If you've got a topic of Ancient Egypt or, I don't know, the Amazon forest, you can transport them there. It's amazing. You don't have to be there for long; 5 minutes and they've got enough information then to take that with them and do something with it.

We're also very fortunate to have our own minibus so we're out and about a lot and if you know children, they love trips, don't they?

OK, so trying to engage parents and developing their aspirations. A very early memory when I was trying to get to know the school and trying to understand why the school was in the state it was at, I spoke to parents and what I found out was that parents were highly ambitious for their children at Eldon. They just didn't really know how to help them. They wanted them to better themselves.

From Year 2, so 2011, I opened the door and I invited volunteers. A lot of them. We had some parents that came in and before we knew it they enrolled themselves into courses and then ended up with jobs at the school. So it's great to be able to see that cycle because we're not just about the children and the adults at Eldon. We're about the community and that's something that we're really passionate about.

We've got the friends of Eldon that help us run the school in many different ways and forms. Adult Learning, the best carrot that you can dangle in front of the parents to get them in, say they can work with the child. It works every time for us. I've just put in the diary for next year several adult child courses and you know, I know that the take up is going to be great.

[50:28] We are actually... the inclusion quality mark, we became a centre of excellence fairly quickly and then we got our flagship status and that includes the environment actually; it's testimony to what we do at Eldon.

OK. About eighteen months ago the governors made a really bold and brave decision. They decided to purchase a house. Well you might think what's a house got to do with anything. You might think where have you got the money from. You might think what did the parents think or what did the children think. The idea of buying a house came into my mind about 2 years before when we were celebrating our 130<sup>th</sup> birthday. We had lots of ex-pupils that came to visit and some of these older people were 70, 80 years old and they spoke very passionately about their time at Eldon and actually there was an add-on for them. They actually remember developing life skills. They used to leave the school and actually go somewhere else to develop, I don't know, cooking skills, cleaning skills and such things like that. I'm going to be honest, that's where the idea originally came from but it's much more than that for us.

Our families, we are aspirational for them. When you do home visits you often see the conditions that people live in and actually you think people need to think there's something better than this because unless you show them you just don't know. So actually the house that we have, the children have run a project called 'Make a House a Home' and they have been involved with thinking about what it is that they need to do to get this house up and running. So they have designed rooms. We run regular 'Come Dine With Me' sessions where the children are experimenting with food and they're inviting their parents into the home, you know, and then we use the house as a context for learning. We're really passionate about making learning very explicit. So when you've got the home or a house and you can link that learning with the house, I feel that the children are much more likely to join up the dots and their much more likely then for that learning to be understood.

Eldon forest. If you come to our school we have no greenery at all. There is no grass, it's all artificial. This was a piece of land that we owned, sort of 10 minutes' walk away and the university used to use it as a car park but no longer so we decided to go down the outdoor learning route. We buy in a specialist forest schools lead and she works with the teachers. They have prime time together where they look at the curriculum objectives and they think "Right, how can we achieve these through the

outdoors” so we've got a whole program of forest schools that works really, really well. We've done it for a couple of years and I'm really pleased with the way that the children learn through the outdoors.

That top picture there is just... it's the Nativity in the forest. We managed to get another local school involved and the children actually acted out the Nativity and we managed to get a real-life lamb as well. Was it you, Isme, that was going to say a little bit about that?

[53:44] (Child participation)

[54:23] (Audience participation clapping)

You're not going to believe this next bit. In 2015 we actually found a time capsule in our school. The builders were doing a mini extension and they came across a jar. They initially took it off-site and didn't tell me about it, which I was not happy with. But then, once they came clean, we looked at this jar. Some people thought it was an old flask that somebody had left behind. It was discovered behind one of the date stones but actually it was a time capsule, 130 years old. It had all of that, on the right hand side, that picture; all of those newspapers which were newspapers of the day that the foundation stones were laid dated 24<sup>th</sup> April 1886. We had some Victorian coins, a penny lilac stamp. I quickly went on to the Internet see how much that stuff was worth. It wasn't worth very much which is why I'm still doing this. But actually what I'm trying to say is that our history influences our curriculum and actually the children love learning about Eldon's history.

This is a lovely timeline that was developed as a result of the find. We went on a whole trip, a whole journey of going to the archives, looking at what documents there were about the school. You know, did anybody tell anybody that there was a time capsule hidden or did we just stumble upon it? There wasn't any... there was nothing written about it in any of the documents that I saw and then we ended up burying our own time capsule. It is absolutely huge. It's in the entrance; when you walk into our school you can't miss it and it says 'open in a hundred years' time'. So we weren't going to leave it to chance.

Just going to show you a few pictures of our school. This is a superb learning environment in our, what's called the 'quiet place'. Initially we put it in because children needed time out. They don't need time out anymore. We just use it for meditation, relaxation, the quiet times. That's our library and you can see the blinds are based on the Fox and the Ghost King. On the right hand side that's just our entrance. We're shouting our awards from the rooftops. We've just had those banners made.

Very quickly, curriculum. Extra-curriculum activities: every week we have twenty plus activities that are run for free for the children. We passionately believe that children deserve every opportunity to expand their horizons and we encourage them to do different things. You know, if they don't normally go to a particular club then we encourage them to do that.

[57:09] We actually almost own the local newspaper, we are in it a lot. I'm really proud to say that we're in a running for a national award. We've been shortlisted for the TES Inspirational Primary School of the Year award so that is next Friday in London. So we're looking forward to that as well.

Oh and now we've got a little clip.

[57:35] (Film)

And that's it. Thank you very much for listening.

## Moving to Outstanding 2019

Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019

Friends House, Euston, London

Full details at: <https://ukheadsup.com/events/m2o2019/>

(The conference sells out every year so sign up for priority ticket access on the website)