



INTERNATIONAL  
PRIMARY  
CURRICULUM

INTERNATIONAL PRIMARY CURRICULUM

# Great Learning, Great Teaching, Great Fun

## SS Simon and Jude Primary School, Bolton, England

### Taking the IPC on the move to Academy

**Simon Bramwell is the Executive Principal of SS Simon and Jude Church of England Primary School in Bolton. Here he talks about converting SS Simon and Jude to an Academy:**

#### Curriculum Freedom

There were several reasons why we chose to become an Academy. Curriculum freedom was one of the crucial reasons.

We are a successful school; our Ofsted last year was the best it's ever been and we are in the top 1% of schools in the country for 'value added', but we do think we can achieve more and we believe becoming an Academy will allow us this chance. For us being an Academy is about evolution rather than revolution of our curriculum.

The IPC will continue to be a big part of who we are as a school. The reason we originally selected the IPC – at a point when I took on the leadership of the school when it was in Special Measures – was because Liz (my deputy) and I had both worked with the IB before. We liked its values and its international focus but we weren't happy that it was rigorous enough. We are great believers in the international learning element. Over 27 languages and nationalities are represented in our school. My children need to understand who they are in a global context, and also they may well have to travel abroad for a job, regardless of what the job may be, which then makes international learning very important. So when we looked at other curriculum options, the international learning, the values and the rigour of the IPC gave our children everything they needed to succeed.

The IPC has had a massive impact on us as a school. Initially for the staff, the IPC gave them the structure they needed. Then, as the staff developed, they became

more able and confident to flex the learning tasks within the IPC units to make them their own and, in particular, to suit the needs of the children in their class. That's the beauty of the IPC; it's enabled us to grow with it.

The IPC will continue with us as an Academy, along with Kagan Structures and Assertive Mentoring.

Becoming an Academy has given us a raft of curriculum freedom. For example, we don't teach National Curriculum Music anymore. Instead, all



Enjoying real life learning experiences during the IPC Olympics unit



Collaborative learning during the IPC Fit for Life unit at SS Simon and Jude Primary

our children learn to play a musical instrument and to sing and to read music. Also, we started to teach our children chess this year. We have a specialist chess teacher who comes in for this. In our area, and probably as a wider issue too, children don't tend to play games any more, not games where you sit, take turns, plan and strategise, all of which they are doing with chess. We believe this is impacting positively on their maths learning and they're also really loving it. It's these sorts of things that we are able to do because of being an Academy; pitching the curriculum as we see our children need it, having the freedom to slowly develop a bespoke curriculum model for our children.

However, we are still accountable to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum for Ofsted and to meet standards for Maths, Literacy and also potentially Science so we always have to be mindful of the rigour. Last year over 90% of our children achieved L4 in English and Maths, with nearly 50% achieving L5 and a smattering of L6's, excellent outcomes for a school whose EAL is 60% and for whom 80% of children reside within the most deprived 15% of homes.

We are taking baby steps with our curriculum freedom. As we get more confident we'll take bigger steps. We're always going to be asking ourselves: have the children achieved as well as they were doing, if not better?

### Financial Benefit of Academy Status

Becoming an Academy has benefited us in cash terms too; freeing up a little bit of money. Not significantly,

but enough that it can make a difference, which is paying for another member of staff, more resources and training. It's a by-product but a valuable one. This extra money allows some of my staff to attend more extensive courses and international conferences which is a real incentive for them, and helps with retention and recruitment.

### The Academy Conversion Process

It has, undoubtedly, been a lot of work. 20-30% of my time last year went into our conversion to an Academy and making sure that we were ready to function successfully as an Academy; ensuring that my back office was robust enough to run the school as a business.

### National Support School

Being a National Support School is important for us as it not only provides external income but it also helps me to retain my better staff for longer, as they really enjoy going out to other schools to work with them, to coach and mentor. This is a really important part of who we are as a school. We do have a glass ceiling in school as far as promotion is concerned; I haven't got a TLR for everyone who deserves one. As a consequence, some of my best teachers could look to move on to develop their careers, so allowing them to coach, run staff meetings and work with other schools that need support keeps them interested, motivated and fulfilled in their present job. We also have four of my staff accredited as Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) by the Teaching School in Bolton. Teaching other teachers makes my teachers better at teaching themselves.

### Working as an Academy

We are a strong believer in school-to-school support. We recently supported a school in a neighbouring LA out of Special Measures. This involved working with the school on both hard and soft issues. When a school gets to the point of being in Special Measures, the problem isn't just about the learning; it's about the teacher's confidence too. At this point, the whole school needs to be made well again.

For this process we used our school as a living resource. So my caretaker worked with their caretaker. My office manager worked with their office manager and so on. A Teaching Assistant will spend two whole weeks working with a colleague in our school. It allows staff to see a different way of working and perhaps a different ethos, helping staff under pressure to move to a 'can do' attitude. Teachers also can work with year group partners from our school sharing the trials and tribulations, as well as good practice. Non-threatening school improvement that is quick and effective.

## The IPC

The IPC (along with Kagan Structures and Assertive Mentoring) we carry with us everywhere we go. If we work with another school, we take it with us. It's an excellent solution to the curriculum question.

I have yet to meet a school that didn't struggle with writing a 'creative curriculum'. Making absolutely sure a curriculum has the rigour and meets all the learning needs of children is incredibly difficult. Not only that but schools, when they write their own, they typically start with the National Curriculum as a base. So the question is: what happens in a year's time when the National Curriculum changes? It's so important to start from the learning needs of the children, just as the IPC does. Also, the cost of writing a new curriculum, including providing supply cover and all the expenses, is huge. When we talk about the cost of the IPC as an alternative to writing a curriculum, the cost breakdown in comparison is minimal.

For a school in difficulty or a school just taking on the IPC, if they follow the IPC exactly, then it helps them deliver the learning in a very effective way. And then, as they get better and get more familiar with the IPC, it grows with them. A good school is never satisfied and for them, like ourselves, the IPC can help to keep them growing and developing.

We are currently using the immensely impressive Looking for Learning Toolkit to take our teaching on and ensure that the basics and non-negotiables we established four years ago remain fresh.

As for what comes next, we are now working with the IPC to develop our children's wider personal aspirations and abilities. Its working title is 'The Can



Learning experiences during the IPC Brainstorm unit are displayed for all to share at SS Simon and Jude Primary

Do Curriculum'. We're taking the values out of the IPC, combining and exemplifying them with a range of learning tasks for the children to achieve award badges. Using some of the structures we use in Assertive Mentoring, and with a little bit of inspiration from Chris Quigley's 'Dangerous Curriculum', we will create a way of exposing our children to lots of different experiences and encourage them to express themselves in ways they haven't done before, producing more rounded pupils who have an inner confidence that will tell them that they really 'CAN DO' anything they put their minds to.



Year 5 and 6 students at SS Simon and Jude Primary promote their holiday packages to parents as part of the IPC Holiday unit Exit Point



The **International Primary Curriculum (IPC)** is used extensively at primary level in international and national schools in over 80 countries in the world. As a curriculum for learning, the **IPC** focuses on developing knowledge, skills and understanding of subjects set within child-friendly, relevant, cross-curricular thematic units of work that are both creative and challenging for children of all abilities.

The **IPC** provides teachers with a structured and rigorous yet flexible teaching framework which helps them lead children through an engaging learning process that has clear outcomes for academic, personal and international learning. It helps children look at everything they learn through a local and global perspective, developing adaptable, globally-minded learners prepared for the world of tomorrow that they'll be living and working in.

A cross reference document for the English National Curriculum is available to reassure schools that they are meeting the National Curriculum requirements. This cross reference document identifies the range and skills in all the individual foundation subjects that are covered by the **IPC**, giving teachers reassurance of rigour and coverage and providing evidence for inspections and self-reviews.

The **IPC** is being used by a number of Outstanding schools that have selected Academy status. As well as SS Simon and Jude, this includes Bransgore Primary in Dorset, Ryders Hayes Primary in Walsall, and St Columb Minor School in Cornwall.

The **IPC** is a part of Fieldwork Education which, since 1984, has been helping schools all around the world to develop children's learning.

For more information go to [www.greatlearning.com/ipc](http://www.greatlearning.com/ipc)  
email [info@greatlearning.com](mailto:info@greatlearning.com)  
or call +44(0)20 7531 9696

**GREAT  
LEARNING  
GREAT  
TEACHING  
GREAT  
FUN**