

‘LOVING LAUGHING’ ETWINNING PROJECT CASE STUDY

**TITLE: “LEARNING THE LANGUAGE OF
LAUGHTER”**



Image © Leicester Comedy Festival

Learning the language of laughter

Kyle walks up to the whiteboard at the front of the classroom and turns around to face his fans. A sea of toothy grins beams back at him. Their teacher ushers quiet in the classroom. Chatter subsides. Silence descends. Suspense builds. Without further ado, Kyle tells the class his favourite joke:

“What do you call an exploding monkey? A ba-BOOM!”

Since Kyle’s school joined up with 28 other schools across Europe for ‘Loving Laughing’, an eTwinning project that helps children develop their understanding of the wider world through telling and listening to jokes, a touch of comedy has entered the curriculum and the sound of laughter rings around the classroom. Judging by the ba-booming reception Kyle’s joke receives from his classmates, it’s there to stay.

“We wanted our students to enjoy working with students in other countries. Sharing their jokes with their peers around the world makes their faces light up”, says Hannah Boydon, project founder and Deputy headteacher at Mayflower Primary School in Leicestershire.

The [Loving Laughing project Twinspace](#) (click ‘show more’ to see student project videos), an online space that facilitates collaboration between all of the schools involved, has quickly become a multilingual hub for creative, funny and occasionally confounding videos of students across Europe sharing the jokes that make them laugh the most.

Intercultural chuckling

“Many of our students speak languages other than English at home with their families”, explains Hannah, “so it was lovely to see them come in to class bubbling with jokes in Gujarati, Memon, Arabic and Hindi to share with others. Examining the similarities, differences and shared humour of the jokes was an affirmative experience for everyone. For our multilingual students, it really illuminated the value of their languages within the wider school community. Everyone learned more about what makes people laugh in different languages and cultures, and it was great to get the students’ families involved too.”

The Twinspace hosts jokes told by children in ten different languages, including Greek, Turkish, Polish, Spanish, French and English. Students quickly discovered that 'funny' rarely translates smoothly, if at all, from one language to another; however this drove them to understand more about how languages work. As Hannah further explained, "in terms of language learning, the project has been challenging but rewarding for our students. Finding out that the essence of a good joke often lies in the meanings of words really motivated the students to take an interest in learning more than one language."

Sharing jokes brings everyone together

Kate Keaveny is a teacher and Special Educational Needs Coordinator at All Saints Church of England Primary School in Coalville, Leicestershire. For Kate, giving students of all abilities the chance to feel empowered by their school work is very important. Their participation in Loving Laughing reinforced this by championing and promoting inclusivity:

"I teach some students who struggle with reading and with writing, but the beauty of joke telling and of Loving Laughing is that anybody, without even picking up a book or a pen, can learn how to tell a joke."

The work-at-your-own-pace structure of the eTwinning project gave Kate the flexibility to run activities in a way that her students sometimes need:

"The structure of jokes didn't come naturally to every child. So we made a special effort to break the ideas down for those particular students so that they could still be a part of the project."

This approach has helped everyone discover the joys of joke telling together. Comments left on the project Twinspace by students at the school reflect the fun they had in taking part, with the spirit of collaboration underpinning it all:

"I liked telling silly jokes and I liked making people laugh. I liked listening to other people's jokes. It was really exciting and I wish we could do it again" wrote Paige, aged six.

A fun way to embed communication skills

Developing students' speaking and listening skills is a crucial focus of the curriculum and a top priority at Braunstone Frith Primary, another of the Leicestershire-based schools involved in Loving Laughing.

Edward Booth, who coordinates cross-curricular speaking and listening development at the school, saw getting involved with the project as a practical and fun way to work on these skills with his Year Five students. He challenged them to stage, film, edit and star in their very own sock puppet stand-up comedy shorts and share them with the other schools involved.

"Using sock puppets prompted our students to be creative. I ran a lesson where we worked on tone of voice and different delivery styles for their imagined characters. Students then spent time working in groups making the puppets, followed by a lesson on filming and editing. So on top of the English language skills, our work covered arts and crafts, performing arts and digital literacy skills too. We gave the students the creative reins, and they responded with energy, enthusiasm and effort."

The videos the students shared on the Twinspace expressed their humour as well as how far they had come in terms of working and building on their communication skills.

A model for success

The success of Loving Laughing is cemented by the fact it won the 2016 UK National eTwinning Quality Label award for 'child-centred teaching'. In addition to this accolade, the project's focus on inter-school collaboration took on a new dimension when students from all three Leicestershire-based schools were invited to attend a joke-telling workshop at De Montfort University, led by professional comedians from the TV channel Dave at Dave's Leicester Comedy Festival.

Due to its success in building language, communication and team-working skills, students and teachers from all three schools are keen to continue the project and make Loving Laughing even bigger, better and funnier in 2017.

As one student named Connor put it, "making people smile is important...we saw that jokes make people laugh whatever the language they use."



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