

Case study - Ashton Under Hill School

Type: Primary School **Location:** Worcestershire **Website:** <http://www.ashton.worcs.sch.uk/>

This was our first year taking part in *No Pens Day Wednesday* - we thoroughly enjoyed the experience and would definitely take part in the project again! The students and the teachers loved participating in a day dedicated to communication. Prior to signing up for *No Pens Wednesday*, we had held a team development day about the importance of listening skills, so it was lovely to incorporate some of the ideas discussed previously in a practical setting. Furthermore, the goals and ideals of *No Pens Day Wednesday* are also intrinsically linked to our School Development Plan – it is our aim to give our students the tools to become successful learners, and we believe that strong communication skills are a vital part of this.

We started the day with an assembly to make everyone aware of the structure and the layout of the day. The resources and ideas provided by The Communication Trust were very helpful in doing this and it was very easy to supplement them with our own materials in order to make the assembly as relevant as possible to our school.

After this, the pupils went off to their lessons, where each teacher had chosen to take advantage of the 'no pens' format in a different and innovative way. For example, Year 1 were looking at the story of *The Gingerbread Man*. Whereas ordinarily they might have been asked to write down the story in their own words, on *No Pens Day Wednesday* they were given pictures of the *Gingerbread Man* and were told to retell the story orally. The children were then given the opportunity to make their own salt dough gingerbread men. However, they had to follow verbal instructions, meaning that they had to listen very carefully and commit each word to memory - this really emphasised the importance of effective listening to the students!

Other teachers put different spins on the 'no pens' format, with Year 2 designing and making their own 'Angry Birds' (characters from a video game that many of them had played and enjoyed) from pompoms and clay. Year 3's Maths lesson was transformed too, as the students took on the role of shopkeepers and customers in order to look at how financial transactions work.

Even though each year group focused on different and distinct areas, we made sure that there was one point in the day where students in each class were separated into groups. Although most pupils have plenty of experience of listening to and taking instructions from their teacher, they generally have less experience of listening to each other within a formal setting. It was lovely to see students not just putting forward their own ideas, but really listening to the arguments of those around them and taking the ideas of their peers on board.

If other schools are thinking about taking part in *No Pens Day Wednesday*, we would urge them to do so - it was so easy to download all of the documents and materials from the website and the whole system is very accessible and user friendly!

Juliet Shiels, Teaching Assistant

