

CASE STUDY

North Tyneside Learning Trust and the Primary Science Quality Mark Programme

North Tyneside Learning Trust (NTLT) supports its primary schools to take part in the Primary Science Quality Mark (PSQM) programme. During 2019-21, NTLT supported 13 trust schools to take part in PSQM, working with local hub leader Anna Hammill.

PSQM is a yearlong CPD process which helps schools to achieve a quality mark for science, focusing on developing effective, confident science leadership for whole school impact on science teaching and learning. Schools receive PSQM, PSQM GILT or PSQM OUTREACH. The quality mark is valid for three years and can be achieved by all types of schools with primary-aged children, including first, primary, middle and special schools.

PSQM GILT Case Study

APPLETREE GARDENS FIRST SCHOOL, WHITLEY BAY

Appletree Gardens First School is located in Monkseaton, Whitley Bay, not far from the coast. The school has been a member of North Tyneside Learning Trust since 2013. Children can begin their learning journeys early with provision from age two years up to Year Four. The Appletree Promise includes the core values 'Enjoy, achieve, succeed!'. The topic-based curriculum, which uses the school's locality, is designed to appeal to all children and Ofsted (2019) noted that topics are carefully selected, leading to high levels of pupil engagement in lessons. Appletree Gardens were awarded their first PSQM (Silver) in 2016, led by science leader Helen Hyde, who has a passion for science and loves teaching it.



Why PSQM?

Appletree Gardens valued the long-term impact on science teaching and learning that the previous PSQM process had demonstrated. The quality mark was due for renewal and the school had already decided that they wanted to reaccredit; therefore, receiving a bursary from NTLT to help with this was a welcome bonus. In the three years since gaining their first quality mark, the main focus had been on developing the other core subjects. However, during this time the science leader Helen had continued to seek out CPD and to monitor and evaluate science, driving a continuing improvement cycle with the support of the school leadership team. It was agreed with the PSQM hub leader that 'PSQM GILT' was the appropriate quality mark to aim for; this recognises established, effective leadership which is having a sustained impact on improving science teaching and learning across school.

Appletree Gardens First School successfully reaccredited with 'PSQM GILT' in May 2021.



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How has PSQM changed science at Appletree Gardens First School?

As a result of reaccrediting PSQM, science teaching and learning at Appletree Gardens was revitalised, broadened and adapted in response to development needs. The existing shared science principles were collaboratively discussed and updated to include new areas such as identifying key vocabulary and 'sticky knowledge', whilst retaining areas such as using practical investigations to create a sense of wonder. Staff were introduced to new strategies and made good use of interactive online resources such as Explorify. The wider school community had previously worked together to create the school Anniversary Allotment and this was put to good use during lockdowns to develop science skills and support vulnerable children's mental health.

Science experiences were enriched through a wealth of established visits, visitors and themed events; for example, during 'Big Me' week, children's aspirations were raised through careers' workshops, learning about famous scientists and inventors, and dressing up in role as their future self. Pupil 'Eco Warriors' worked with the local council recycling team on environmental issues and Nursery children sold toast as an enterprise initiative, using the proceeds to buy marshmallow tongs for the fire pit, exemplifying the Appletree Promise 'Enjoy, achieve, succeed!'.

"My dad's a scientist. He studies rocks that are over 300 million years old!!" (Year 3 child)

During lockdowns and restrictions, the PSQM process was invaluable in helping to keep science high on the agenda and respond to new needs such as home learning and remote links between stakeholders to develop a community of practice. New strategies for electronic monitoring of teaching and learning were developed. Using the 'Seesaw' learning platform to share science learning with families led to a rise in the number of enthusiastic messages about science from parents. Opportunities to develop children's science capital were grasped; for example, Covid-19 was used as a context for learning just before the first lockdown, with a timely visit from nurses who discussed the importance of washing hands properly.

How has PSQM changed the science leader Helen?

Helen welcomed the opportunity to take part in PSQM again; she knew it would be extra work but, based on her previous experience, it would be rewarding, create a buzz and bring science to the forefront once more. During the PSQM process, she was able to explore and reflect on different styles of leadership when team-teaching, sharing her thorough approach and good knowledge of science. Being part of the PSQM community provided Helen with a host of new ideas, online CPD and resources for current best practice. She strengthened her overview of science across the school, and feels that her impact and status as a middle leader was valued more highly by the school leadership team. A new head teacher is now in post who is impressed by how well Helen knows her subject and her clear plans for future development, which are both direct results of undertaking the PSQM process.



"Due to completing the PSQM I now feel more confident for future 'Deep Dive' or Ofsted inspections and have a clear vision of where I want to take science next." (Helen Hyde, science leader)

Helen's PSQM highlight was looking at the evidence on Seesaw and Twitter when compiling the PSQM portfolio. It gave her a great sense of pride seeing staff and parents working together tirelessly during the pandemic to keep science learning alive for children both in school and at home.

Helen's advice

"PSQM involves the whole school and the science leader needs support from the school leadership team. My advice is to plan regular meetings with SLT to keep them informed and aware of next steps. Be prepared to ask for resources/time and be clear about what you might need to spend money on; I was given a bigger budget which meant we could achieve more."

"If your quality mark needs reaccrediting, it is well worth doing. It keeps the profile of science high and brings interest from the whole school community. For me, going through the process this time felt clearer. I think I led it better, and in a lot more in depth, because I knew what I was doing and where I wanted to go."

