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Creative Teaching & Learning

# Empowering children to reimagine the future

The Institute of Imagination is a charity that helps to build children's creativity and widen their horizons. TeachingTimes hears from four schools that have benefited from its programmes.



*Creating and balancing sculptures at William Ford Junior School in Dagenham*

David Huntingford, head teacher at the William Ford Junior School in Dagenham, is a big fan of The Institute of Imagination and has seen its impact first hand. 'Working with the iOi has given a purpose to our learning through critical thinking and creativity,' he said. 'Teachers now have the confidence for

creative approaches to the curriculum and demonstrate how creative thinking can help cross curricular learning.'

The Institute of Imagination (iOi) was launched in 2011 and since then over 140,000 children have taken part in projects. Most of the children were aged 5-11, mostly in London and in mainstream and special schools. However, the charity also works with children in care, virtual schools, youth centres and community groups.

Each half term there is a choice of live workshops, led by experts, which incorporate science, technology, the arts. They also incorporate skills valued by employers such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity and the ability to work with others. iOi sends a toolkit containing all the resources a class will need, plus lesson plans, presentations and extension material, free of charge. There are currently two themes running, with a new theme Wild Eco Builders launching in the autumn, with a workshop Wild Cities, co-created with and supported by the LEGO Group.

The iOi Schools Programme currently has 2 themes, Imagine Me Imagine You, and Save Make Reinvent. These sit in our main categories of People - exploring neuroscience and the way humans work, and Planet - introducing sustainability to the classroom. Read about the workshops you can sign up for below!

## People

## Planet

**Imagine Me Imagine You**

Imagine Me Imagine You explores the neuroscience of the brain to celebrate our differences, connecting the magic of what makes me, me, and what makes you, you. This theme will focus on creativity, resilience and self-regulation skills that help to support our wellbeing.

What workshops can I expect?

- **'Balancing Me' Sculptures** - Build and create sculptures using balance, gravity and mass, out of everyday objects to explore the neuroscience of the brain celebrating our unique secret code.  
**Curriculum Links:** PSHE, Science & Physics, Art & Design  
**Skills & Competences:** Thinking and working creatively, problem solving, curiosity, resilience, self-awareness
- **Laughing Automata Machines** - Invent and build Laughing Automata Machines, exploring the neuroscience of laughter with simple mechanical elements such as levers, cams and linkages, to activate our brain's 'feel-good' transmitters.  
**Curriculum Links:** Science, DT, Art & Design, PSHE  
**Skills & Competences:** Mechanics, engineering, design, cooperation, creativity, persistence, self-regulation, inventiveness
- **Coding Emotions** - Explore the neuroscience of our emotions and facial expressions by collaboratively inventing, designing, and engineering with digital tools.  
**Curriculum Links:** Science, PSHE, Computing, Art & Design  
**Skills & Competences:** Innovation, programming & coding, design, creativity, teamwork, self-regulation, resilience

**Save Make Reinvent**

A playful and engaging way to introduce sustainability and the circular economy into the classroom. We look at how we can take used materials to empower children to apply their imagination to Save Make and Reinvent someone's waste into another person's treasure.

What workshops can I expect?

- **Natural Inks** - Using scraps from fruit, veg and other ingredients from your own school kitchen we will extract natural inks and use these to paint pictures and explore colour.  
**Curriculum Links:** Arts, Science, Sustainability, Natural Environment  
**Skills & Competences:** Thinking and working creatively, curiosity & tinkering
- **Junk Bots** - Build your own junk bot using recyclable material and hobby motors  
**Curriculum Links:** Science, Arts & Design, Sustainability, Electronics  
**Skills & Competences:** Engineering, designing, prototyping, problem solving, tinkering, creativity, inventiveness, self-awareness
- **Digital Storytelling** - Explore stop frame animation with us and bring your storytelling to life! You will need access to tablets between groups to take part in this!  
**Curriculum Links:** Sustainability, Computing, Arts & Design, Literacy  
**Skills & Competences:** Working with Digital Technology, self-directed learning, designing, collaboration, teamwork, innovation, creativity

Examples of recent iOi workshops

## The benefits of working with iOi

**It offers an imaginative curriculum of activity that relates to real world learning**

**Everything is provided: resources, lesson plans, teacher training so it saves schools time and money**

**The workshops focus on STEAM (Science, Tech, Engineering, Arts, Maths)**

**Pupils get new experiences and a chance to build essential skills; creative thinking, problem solving, resilience and aspiration**

**The workshops are broadcast live into schools**

**Children get hands on experience led by an expert**

**The programme is free of charge for state schools**

David Huntingford feels that it opens up a different mindset in pupils and teachers: 'We have really seen pupil engagement increase following our participation in the iOi Schools Programme, and teacher confidence in giving more autonomy to the pupils. It was enjoyable to deliver and to receive. Our staff surveys show that school morale has increased.'

TeachingTimes talked to teachers in three primary schools about the impact of The Institute of Imagination.

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