

Science Year

Mandy Hodgkinson and Lee

Schofield describe how they took

*up the challenge presented by
the Science Year initiative and
devised an exciting and
inclusive programme of science
activities which ran throughout
the last school year.*

Why get involved in Science Week and Science Year? We thought very carefully about our reasons for taking part in Science Year before proceeding as it was going to be a great deal of work for the whole department but, in the end, all our hard work was worthwhile. The science department at Malet Lambert School Language College, Kingston Upon Hull, was undergoing major change as we moved into The Dearing Centre, a purpose-built science block, last autumn. With this in mind, the department was keen to take part in an activity that would raise the profile of science among both staff and students at the school. The activity would need to show everyone that science is exciting and this element would play a key role in all the activities we decided to participate in. Our intention was that Science Week, as the pinnacle of Science Year, could be used as a tool to motivate our staff and students in the study of science.

We chose a theme for our Science Year celebrations to help give the overall event a clear focus. We decided upon Science in the City, because Hull has long had close links to the scientific community. The Science Year events allowed us to set up valuable links with industry and

academia. Also, Science in the City gave organisations in Hull the perfect opportunity to promote themselves locally and we hoped this would motivate them to become involved.

The Science Year activities were led within the school by two members of staff, Mandy Hodgkinson and Lee Schofield (the authors). We were keen that Science Year would provide our students with exciting opportunities in science, but that they would not lead to excessive work for other members of the science department. Activities were provided for the department as a whole and great care was taken to ensure they were well planned and well resourced, resulting in a minimum amount of preparation for the classroom teacher. The care taken in preparation of materials ensured that Science Year events were well received by the teaching and technical staff in our department.

Finally, we intended to use Science Year to enthuse students, involve our department, and remind us all of what

is really important in the education of our students – to make science fun!

Our launch of National Science Week

The Science Week launch in March was the highlight of our Science Year activities. Preparation started earlier in the week when we hijacked a faculty meeting and bribed staff with cakes and biscuits to blow up balloons and cover tables!

The launch day started with a tannoy news report to the school. This poetic report was prepared and delivered by our key stage 3 students. The morning was then spent busily preparing for the afternoon's activities, when we worked hard with the department's technical staff to ensure everything was in place. As lunchtime approached, the afternoon's speakers from The Deep and Smith & Nephew arrived. Visitors for the afternoon were greeted by our head of department, and included representatives from ASE, the LEA, The Institute of Mechanical Engineering and BP. A representative from Smith & Nephew gave a talk to key stage 3 and 4 students on Possible Cures for Baldness, which was also of particular interest to certain members of our science department! The speaker from The Deep presented students with a sneak preview of Hull's latest attraction. During the afternoon our visitors judged pupils' findings for the best method to keep tea warm, and



Mandy Hodgkinson with year 8 pupils who did the Annie's Pantry Science Challenge experiment to find the best method of keeping tea warm.

Timeline of events

One of the first tasks was to write a bid for Science Year money, and we were informed that we had been successful in early September. Our initial planning focused on working out a calendar of activities leading up to Science Week, which would take place in the following March.

September

Science Year and possible uses of the grant money was discussed at our first departmental meeting of the year. The first ASE CD-ROM (*Who am I?*) was trialed at this meeting and some topics were written into our existing schemes of work. The CD was also put onto the school intranet system. A Science Year account was set up to help us to keep track of the money we spent.

October

A drama company visited the school and performed a play about embryonic research and genetic engineering to year 11 students. It was followed up with a debate of the issues surrounding these topics. Some of the Science Year money was used to pay for supply cover, so that we could plan for the Science Week launch in March.

November

A presentation was given at a local hotel, The Cave Castle, about our calendar of events to during Science Year and the launch of Science Week within the Humberside Area. The event was arranged in conjunction with the ASE and the BA. Later in the month, Lord Dearing officially opened The Dearing Centre. A display of Science Year activities was put up in the entrance to the centre to publicise future activities. Intel microscopes arrived in school this month, and their use was encouraged. Our students, from years 9 and 10, took part in a Chemistry Week Quiz at Hull University.

December

In December, time was spent planning for the promotion of Science Year in January. We also decided the format for our event in

March. The Lord Mayor would officially launch Science Week and our main speaker at the event would be from The Deep, the world's first submariium which was due to open in Hull during March 2002. Guest speakers and judges for competitions were phoned, and invitations were sent to guests who included teachers, technicians, classroom assistants, and the management team from the school, local primary teachers and college lecturers, governors, parents, representatives from industry, the science advisor and, most important of all, the students.

January

Science Year and Science Week were promoted at all year group assemblies. A science article was published in our school newsletter, *The Malet Messenger*. A small science club was started enabling students to take part in additional investigations for ASE's *Science Challenge*. Some year 9 students entered the Design an Element competition, run by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

February

The launch event for Science Week was advertised to the whole school. We purchased a digital camera for use by staff and students using Science Year money and money provided by the parent/staff organisation. Year 7 and 11 students produced a *PowerPoint* presentation for the launch.

March

7th March saw the launch of Science in the City, ahead of national Science Week. Other events which took place during Science Week (8-17th March) were daily announcements and quizzes on the school tannoy, an interactive exhibition and quiz, sixty-second science activities and a poetry competition.

'Thank you' letters were written and sent to all who took part in the launch.

April

We evaluated the events that took place during Science Week and recovered from March!

May

There was a poetry competition for students in all key stages, again with the theme Science in the City. Prizes were a lava lamp, BAYs bags and books donated by a friend of the department. Money from Science Year was used for more supply cover to enable us to write this article and to prepare a *PowerPoint* presentation for the ASE Northern Area Meeting at Minsthorpe.

June

We gave a presentation entitled How to Plan a Science Week to Remember at the ASE Northern Area Meeting.

July

At the time of writing... Plan another bid for Science Year money?

observed students using data logging equipment and resources donated by Smith & Nephew during an investigation into setting plaster casts. Some key stage 3 students prepared and filmed news reports on scientific topics of their choice. Elsewhere in the department, students turned detective for the afternoon and investigated the mysterious death of a sewage worker who had been stripped of his flesh! The students took on the role of forensic scientists and investigated water samples collected at the murder scene (see the CD-ROM *Who am I?*). Key stage 4 students took part in an interactive Science Year quiz and explored the Science Year website in our computer suite.

As the school day ended our guests for the evening's events arrived and were escorted into the conference room where they were greeted by a wine reception and interactive science exhibition. Students led our guests around the exhibits (ASE, Annie's Pantry, The Deep and The Institute of Mechanical Engineering) and the police gave an insight into forensic science. The students acted as compares for the evening and introduced

each speaker. The Mayor commenced the proceedings with a *PowerPoint* presentation prepared by years 7 and 11. Year 8 then delivered their results from the Annie's Pantry investigation into keeping tea warm with a piece of drama followed by the two talks.

Finally, Mandy Hodgskinson thanked everyone who had participated in the event for all their hard work and contributions. There was then an opportunity to return to the stands, or the wine reception, before the evening's celebrations drew to a close. The tidying up could wait for another day!

What next?

As a department we have gained much from taking part in Science Year. The profile of science within the school has risen. Malet Lambert School Language College has been mentioned in ASE journals including this one and hence our department has been promoted within the LEA and nationally. More important outcomes are that all members of the department were involved in Science Year and feedback about the initiative was positive – especially about the

food and wine! The students enjoyed the series of events and some are still talking about them. We have found that it is possible to raise standards within the department, for you to focus on the interesting areas of teaching and learning, and enjoy yourself – all at the same time. If staff and students are enjoying themselves, then learning is much easier.

Our thanks go to the ASE for helping to make this event possible and to all of the people who took part. As for next year, we have some ideas which include a fashion show inspired by the work of famous scientists. Why don't you have a go and put in a bid for this coming Science Year? It doesn't have to be hard work and you might even enjoy it. You too could have the perks of good company, a couple of glasses of wine, a free lunch, a digital camera to record the memories – and the students might learn something too. Good luck!

Mandy Hodgskinson and Lee Schofield teach at Malet Lambert School Language College, Kingston Upon Hull.