

The Morris Federation – Education Case Study

Education Case Study:	Dancing For Fun - at the British Schools Museum
Name:	Barry Goodman
Age ranges, location & date(s) taught:	
6- 11 years British Schools Museum, Queen Street, Hitchin, Herts. 25.10.2022	
Funding (if any)	
Venue provided free by the Museum; admission fee for each participating child (adults free, and expected to be present throughout the session).	
How and why did you start?	
A local folk-dancing friend had been running “Dancing for Fun” sessions at the British Schools Museum in the spring and autumn half terms, but decided to take a step down and find someone else to run the events. I had led the Hertfordshire School’s Folk Dance Festival for many years, and was happy to step into my friend’s shoes, as I have always taught folk dance and Morris in the schools where I taught, and felt that I had something to offer.	
What were your goals and how well were they achieved?	
<p>To introduce children of Primary School age to a range of folk dance, to make it fun and achievable, and to celebrate the success of the children taking part.</p> <p>We had a relatively small, but very enthusiastic group of children participating (16 in all). Starting with folk dance in pairs, the children were taught some simple moves, and were then asked to make up a move of their own to be included in the dance. These were shared with the group and incorporated in the dances. The same process was done with groups of four, again with creative elements from the children. The next activity was Maypole dancing. As this was only a short “taster” session, we taught the children a simple “single plait”, walking the pattern slowly at first to demonstrate the plait, and then unplaiting by walking the pattern in the opposite direction. We made sure that children who needed assistance had an adult nearby, and the safety rules were emphasised repeatedly (“keep the ribbons high!”). When the children danced the single plait to recorded music, we inserted a pause after every pass, so that they could adjust for the next move. Although this affected the flow of the dance, it proved to be quite effective, giving all the children time to get to the right place for each under or over pass, and producing a plait on the Maypole, which was, of course, applauded and celebrated by all the parents and adult helpers! However, the plait was rather uneven, and in hindsight we would have had more success attempting double plait rather than single plait!</p> <p>Following a break, during which drinks and biscuits were consumed, we started the final session on Border-style Morris. The children were placed into sets (six in each set on this occasion) and handed sticks (about 50 cm long), with strict instructions on how to hold and use the sticks safely. The single-step was taught and incorporated into figures (foot-up, foot-down), with music to assist with phrasing. A simple chorus was taught, involving low-level stick clashing to a memorable rhythm. We then combined the chorus with the figures, again with music. Further figures (side by side and star) were taught, and the whole dance practised and performed, with music, again to the delight of the assembled parents. Finally, after congratulating the children on their Morris dancing and collecting the sticks, the children were encouraged to talk about the things they had learned during the session, and then all the children, parents and helpers joined in a grand circle dance to complete the day’s activities.</p>	
At the end of the teaching, was the teaching passed on, or was there any other type of continuation?	
The workshops are held twice a year, and we have found that some children return more than once, having enjoyed previous sessions. We would like to get local schools involved, but have yet to find a suitable way of doing this.	

Health and Safety
All adult helpers involved in the sessions have been DBS checked, and parents are expected to stay for the session to supervise their children if necessary (e.g. toileting). Clear instructions are given and reinforced during each activity, for example, the importance of holding maypole ribbons high, so that children can pass under them safely, and the safe use of Morris sticks (holding on shoulder at all times when not clashing, watching carefully during sticking sequences, the correct way to tap sticks together).
Curriculum Links
N/A
Special Needs Provision
Adult helpers provide support where children are having difficulties in understanding instructions or executing the moves. In general, the activities are adjusted to meet the ability level of the majority of the children, with special provision and support for those who require it.
Lessons learned & advice to others
Single plait is too difficult to get right in a short time – I'll teach double plait in the maypole session next time, as it allows more time and space to make a successful plait! Defining the age-range for the session is important – the activities need to be challenging enough for the older participants, but able to be simplified and adapted to suit younger children. It's very important to have a group of adult helpers to support children where necessary, while insisting on parents being present helps to involve them in the activities, which in turn acts as support for the children participating. For help with the folk dance element, see my resource, Creative Folk Dance for Primary Schools on the EFDSS website





Declaration

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