

# Local Da Vinci-inspired project inspires new 'code' of practice

BY ROISIN MCMANUS

SCORES of schoolteachers gathered at St Mary's University College yesterday for the launch of an exciting initiative in learning - the 'Leonardo Project'.

Lecturers at St Mary's University College are at the forefront of the very significant curricular development, particularly in the areas of science and art.

They have designed an innovative approach to learning and teaching in primary schools which brings science and art together.

The project, named after the artist Leonardo da Vinci, stimulates creativity and counters the current tendency for learners to see subjects as wholly separate from each other.

The project does this whilst also encompassing exciting developments based on the common ground between the curricular subjects of Art and Design and Science and Technology.

It is planned that children will develop a range of skills through active observation and investigation and will exercise their creativity throughout the programme.

In addition, the programme will develop pupils' knowledge

and understanding, while encouraging them to become independent learners, and provide valuable opportunities for literacy development.

The project is funded by a grant of £200,000 from NESTA (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) and represents their largest funding to date in the North of Ireland.

It was awarded after a successful pilot scheme which was undertaken by the team from St Mary's over the past two years,

involving four schools in the North.

Head of the Art Department at St Mary's, Deirdre Robson, said that the project is very exciting.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for St Mary's and for Northern Ireland," said Deirdre. "The project is attracting interest not just here but across the UK."

"It is really significant that this project has come out of West Belfast and it is a unique approach to learning," she added.



**SHOW AND TELL:** Acky the long-eared owl brings science subjects to life



**NEW LEARNING:** Patrica Nevines from the T.A.C.T. Wildlife Centre explains an owl's feeding habits to the St Mary's University College Leonardo Project



**HANDS-ON:** Arts Advisor, Carolyn Davies sketches various butterflies using a digital microscope at the St Mary's University College Leonardo Project