teach EARLY YEARS AWARDS 2026







Meet the winners

8 CATEGORIES

Celebrating the very best in educational resources for Early Years

LANGUAGE & LITERACY

CPD

CREATIVE PLAY

FULL PROGRAMMES

WELLBEING & INCLUSION

PICTURE BOOKS

EARLY EXPLORATION

OUTDOOR PLAY & LEARNING

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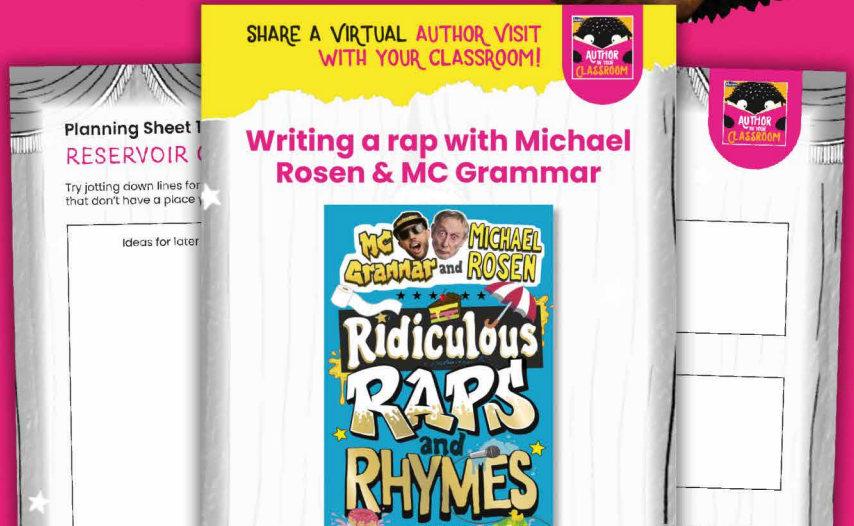
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Scan to get your free Author In Your Classroom resource pack

Welcome...

to the *Teach Early Years Awards* 2026!

We've done the hard work so you don't have to – hand-picking, testing and ranking resources that really **make a difference in settings**.

Expect a mix of the tried-and-true and the brand new.

What do they all have in common?

✔ They work.
✔ They save you time.
✔ They make teaching that little bit easier.

Of course, every setting is different – what works brilliantly in one might need tweaking in another. But we hope these winners give you a taste of what's possible, and plenty of inspiration to make your teaching even more rewarding.

HOW IT WORKED

1 **ENTRIES OPENED**
Companies submitted their best resources

2 **SHORTLISTS CREATED**
We grouped the standouts by category

3 **EXPERT JUDGING**
Educators put every entry through its paces

4 **WINNERS CHOSEN**
Winner & two highly commended per category

WHAT JUDGES ASSESSED

Judges carefully evaluated each resource against key criteria (below) to recognise outstanding quality, impact and innovation...

- **Suitability & adaptability**
- **Educational impact**
- **Originality & innovation**
- **Value for money**
- **Ease of use & accessibility**
- **Durability**
- **Environmental impact**

CATEGORIES & JUDGES

LANGUAGE & LITERACY
Supporting kids' language, fine motor & reading skills


Dr June O'Sullivan MBE, CEO at LEYF

CPD
Training & tools supporting staff growth & development


Ben White, EY specialist with 20+ years' experience

CREATIVE PLAY
Resources for role play, messy play, construction & art


Kayte Cooling-Smith, multi-award-winning childminder

FULL PROGRAMMES
Complete programmes for whole-setting delivery


Daniel Saturley, Early Years Advisory teacher

WELLBEING & INCLUSION
Support wellbeing, PSED and inclusive practice


Ursula Krystek-Walton, early years head, Thrive Childcare

PICTURE BOOKS
The best picture books to spark imagination & delight readers


Kate Heap, English consultant, author & book reviewer

EARLY EXPLORATION
Resources for maths, science & discovering the world


Sue Cowley, teacher, writer & presenter

OUTDOOR PLAY & LEARNING
Support physical development, active play & exploration


Jamel C Campbell, educator, consultant & author

StoryTalk

Collins

Support early language development and communication

Story Talk is a research-informed, evidence-based language programme for EYFS and KS1 that comprises of an online subscription delivering resources and training plus wordless picture books to support rich adult-child interactions.

The Story Talk programme

The **Story Talk** subscription provides the resources and training required to implement the programme including guidance and support for staff and ways to engage families.







12 engaging stories

Lively, wordless picture books are at the heart of the programme and build vocabulary, language and communication through quality interactions between adults and children.

teach EARLY YEARS AWARDS 2026 HIGHLY COMMENDED

Find out more at collins.co.uk/StoryTalk

HIGHLY COMMENDED



Story Talk

(Collins)

Created by early reading specialist Charlotte Raby, this programme comprises a comprehensive online training subscription and 12 wordless large format picture books. The training helps you implement techniques to improve oracy for pupils who may be below expected levels, have SEND needs or are new to speaking English.

"A great resource to promote children's language and literacy skills through building a love for stories"



Ready Steady Literacy EYFS

(Literacy Counts)

Ready Steady Literacy brings together three evidence-informed programmes – Ready Steady Phonics, Ready Steady Handwrite and Ready Steady Write – to provide one coherent journey for Early Years. Each programme strengthens the next, ensuring children build secure foundations in reading and writing.

"A great tool for teachers to use to support children with elements of reading, writing and language development"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

CLICKER (Crick Software Ltd)

POLYLINO (ILT Education UK)

STORY SAPLINGS (Literacy Tree)

WINNER

Say A Poem

(Ruth Miskin Training)

This video resource helps you make poetry a joyful and regular part of classroom life. Over 100 short, memorable new poems are showcased in 5–10 minute videos that pupils can join in with immediately. Children get a daily opportunity to practise oracy through poems that are rich in vocabulary, rooted in familiar experiences and short enough to learn, perform and enjoy. Each video is carefully structured, so children hear the poem six times and join in three times. Professional actors introduce and model the poem and at least four children perform in each video, modelling voice, expression and enjoyment in a way that feels achievable.

> "We loved this! A great way for children to learn about rhyme, rhythm, new sounds and develop links to the real world"
>
> **Dr June O'Sullivan MBE**



WINNER

Early Years Development Programme

(Down Syndrome UK)

This flexible, online programme is created and delivered by experts in working with children with Down syndrome. Designed for SENCOs, portage, Early Years teachers and nursery managers, the programme equips staff with training, resources and ongoing support to effectively support children with Down syndrome. Access to the programme includes live ongoing support with downloadable practical guidance that fits around your schedule and promotes development in your pupil.

> “Packed with strategies that can be applied to any classroom using resources that are more than likely available in school”
>
> **Ben White**

CATEGORY FINALISTS

EYFS PRINTABLE RESOURCES, PLANNING AND PEDAGOGY
(Little Owls Resources)

PURPOSEFUL PROVISION BOOK
(NurseryNook)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (CORE MEMBERSHIP)
(The National College)

HIGHLY COMMENDED



Movement and Storytelling (MAST)

(Nottingham Trent University)

This whole-class approach develops language, vocabulary and fundamental movement skills, based on repeated engagement with a picture book. It was developed over ten years with early years practitioners, sports scientists and developmental psychologists.

“It supports many of the challenges faced in schools at present – SEND, EAL and school readiness”



Siren Films Early Years Video Library

(Siren Films)

Search through over 500 video clips by area of child development, specific theories, areas of play, learning strategies, age or setting. Additional information, prompts and questions provide support and guidance for planning training.

“I can instantly see how I would feed these into CPD for Early Years staff with little preparation”

HIGHLY COMMENDED



Gem Column Tray

(tickit®)

Featuring 25 translucent cylinders and a plywood tray with storage holes, this resource is perfect for stacking, spatial exploration, fine motor development and measurement practice. Build towers, create repeating patterns or arrange them into imaginative small-world scenes.

"A beautifully considered resource which supports creativity alongside maths and sensory exploration"



World Kitchen – Sensory Play Stones

(Yellow Door)

Serve up a feast of flavours with these tactile fruit and vegetable stones from around the globe. Ideal for the home corner, mud kitchen or a role-play market stall, these realistic food stones will spark curiosity and inspire imaginative play.

"Durable and versatile, these thoughtfully made play stones can be used across both indoor and outdoor provision"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

CONNETIX 30 PIECE LIGHT ROCKET PACK (Connetix)

CHILDREN'S DOCTOR COSTUME (GSC Ltd)

SENSORY NOOK (Profile Education Ltd)

WINNER

Nesting Doll's House

(Polydron)

This versatile, open-ended small world play resource is designed to inspire creativity, storytelling and imaginative exploration through the design of unique homes and living spaces. Children can use the multi-functional wooden pieces to build and personalise their own doll's house environments – arranging rooms and figures in a variety of different configurations. The open-ended nature of the set encourages children to experiment, redesign and continuously adapt their creations, supporting creativity, problem-solving and sustained engagement.

> "This allows children to bring their own experiences, relationships and imagination into their play, making it genuinely open-ended"
>
> **Kayte Cooling-Smith**

twinkl phonics

Unforgettable stories, *proven progress*

Complete DfE-validated Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) Programme.

'You're not just reading off a script. Twinkl Phonics allows your personality and creativity to come out.'

Jessica Orriell
EYFS and Phonics Leader,
Thackley Primary School, Bradford

Discover our phonics programme

twinkl.co.uk/l/ks5ay

Fully decodable books, digital & printed

Digital assessment powered by Phonics Tracker

Built-in SEND support and KS2 intervention

36-week Level 1 pre-phonics curriculum



Approved Phonics Teaching Programme | Department for Education

HIGHLY COMMENDED



THE BIG 3 and ME

(Human Values Foundation)

In The BIG 3 + ME programme, young children practise and embed 'The BIG 3' skills of self-awareness, self-regulation and building relationships through stories, rituals, meditation, songs, reflection and critical thinking. There are 24 lesson kits, suitable for nursery and Reception children.

"The repeated routines give practitioners something that can easily become part of everyday classroom life"



Little Link

(Speech & Language Link)

Little Link is a language and communication enrichment programme for children aged 2-5. Developed by speech and language therapists, support is developmentally appropriate and grounded in clinical expertise. Use it to support diverse needs, including children with SEN and EAL, with adaptation guidance available.

"The way it helps practitioners use language-supportive strategies in everyday provision is a particular strength"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

ARC PATHWAY
(Arc Pathway)

NELI PRESCHOOL
(OxEd)

GETTING READY FOR READING BY SOUNDS-WRITE
(Sounds-Write)

WINNER

Twinkl Phonics

(Twinkl)

This complete, systematic synthetic phonics programme is designed to develop confident, lifelong readers. For learners in Early Years, its comprehensive Level 1 pre-phonics curriculum develops the listening, speaking and phonological awareness skills that provide strong foundations and underpin reading success. Ready-to-teach lessons, comprehensive planning, physical classroom resources and professional development pathways including live and on-demand training make implementation straightforward, while reducing teacher workload and ensuring consistency across classrooms.

> "The resources are excellent, including carefully matched books, online resources and plenty of supporting resources to enhance teaching"
>
> **Daniel Saturley**

LittleLink

Highly Commended for Supporting Early Years Communication

We're delighted that Little Link was Highly Commended by TeachCo in the Early Years Full Programmes Category

A complete **language learning** adventure!

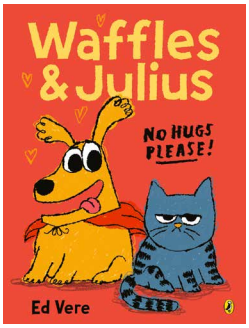


Discover why Little Link was highly commended and see how it could support your setting.

Recognised for its clear focus on speech, language and communication, Little Link brings together therapist-developed assessment, practitioner training, language enrichment activities, progress tracking and specialist support in one comprehensive programme.

Designed specifically for children aged 2-5, it helps early years practitioners identify needs early, build their expertise and embed language-supportive strategies into everyday practice, giving every child the best possible start.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

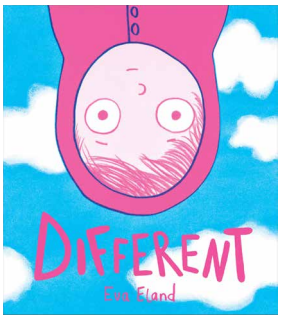


Waffles and Julius: No Hugs Please by Ed Vere

(Penguin Random House)

Waffles is a dog who loves a hug. Julius is a cat who doesn't. Waffles would like to hug Julius, and sets about persuading him. Use this book to explore and discuss consent in a light-hearted way.

"Funny yet loaded with meaning, there is plenty of opportunity for discussion and inference"



Different by Eva Eland

(Andersen Press)

One morning, Mia wakes up feeling different. She tries to be like everyone else, but nothing feels right. Mia feels alone, until one day, someone finally sees her. Show kids the power of finding someone who feels a bit different too.

"With a subtle exploration of neurodiversity, *Different* helps children develop empathy and understanding"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

CATCH THAT PESKY THOUGHT! BY MATT BAWLER AND GIZEM GOZDE UCAR (Bloomsbury Publishing Limited)

TREE AND ME BY ALISON JAY (Old Barn Books Ltd)

FRED THE VERY DEMANDING DEER BY PÉPÉ SMIT (Scallywag Press)

WINNER

Mama's Special Wonton Soup by Wai Mei Wong and Xin Yue Zhu

(Lantana Publishing)

This gentle, reflective picture book celebrates community, kindness and cultural heritage through the universal language of food. Set in a peaceful village in southern China, it follows a young girl as she collects ingredients for her mother's wonton soup. Along the way, neighbours each contribute something from their own harvest, transforming a simple errand into a moving story about generosity, gratitude and sharing.

> "Mandarin greetings and wonderful details of village life create a warm, immersive reading experience – a book that will last"
>
> **Kate Heap**

Celebrating Award-winning designs

From creating calming spaces where children can take a moment for themselves to encouraging movement, exploration and imaginative outdoor play, these designs help early years settings create environments where every child has opportunities to thrive.



WINNER | Wellbeing & Inclusion

Gonge Nordic Carousel

The joy of spinning, the power of sensory play.

Winner of the Teach Early Years Awards 2026 in the Wellbeing & Inclusion category, the Original Gonge Nordic Carousel brings movement and sensory exploration into everyday play.

teach EARLY YEARS AWARDS 2026 WINNER

DISCOVER THE ORIGINAL GONGE NORDIC CAROUSEL

SCAN ME



FINALIST | Creative Play

Sensory Nook

A space for calm, curiosity, and discovery.

Every child needs space to explore at their own pace. The Sensory Nook helps create a dedicated area within your setting for quieter moments, sensory exploration and independent play.



DISCOVER THE SENSORY NOOK

SCAN ME

FINALIST | Outdoor Play & Learning

Winther Circleline Kids Stroller

A fun ride for big imaginations.

Whether taking a favourite toy for a walk or acting out familiar everyday experiences, children turn simple activities into imaginative adventures while encouraging role play, social interaction and active movement.



DISCOVER THE WINTHER CIRCLELINE KIDS STROLLER

SCAN ME

Profile Education | Play with purpose

www.profile-education.co.uk

HIGHLY COMMENDED



The Kingdom of Colourful Feelings

(Colourful Kingdom)

Kids need more than occasional lessons to develop emotional literacy. This collection, featuring a book, strategy cards, discussion prompts and activities, helps feelings become part of everyday conversations, play and relationships.

"The range of adult training materials and resources associated with the story is really impressive"



Widgit Online

(Widgit Software)

Create personalised visual resources using Widgit Symbols – simple illustrations of everyday objects, concepts and ideas that support children's speech, language and understanding. Create visual timetables, emotional regulation tools, first/then boards, communication boards and social stories tailored to individual children.

"Very user-friendly – the system is self-explanatory and easy to follow. A great option for all settings!"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

LITTLELINK ID
(LittleLink ID)

FLIP: FOUNDATIONS FOR LEARNING INTERVENTION PROGRAMME
(Mactivity Enterprises Ltd)

SNOOZEMAT® STATION
(One for Fun Ltd)

WINNER

Gonge Nordic Carousel

(Profile Education Ltd)

The Gonge Nordic Carousel offers an innovative alternative to traditional spinning play equipment, bringing active, inclusive play to early years settings. Designed for individual or cooperative play, it encourages turn-taking, communication and teamwork and the movement required to propel the carousel encourages children to develop balance, core stability, body awareness and coordination. Rotational play provides valuable vestibular input and for some children with SEND, this type of movement can support self-regulation, improve focus and provide calming or alerting sensory experiences.

> "This beautifully made piece of kit is great for children to use when they feel themselves becoming overwhelmed"
>
> **Ursula Krystek-Walton**

EARLY EXPLORATION



WINNER

XL Polydron Busy Board

(Polydron)

This versatile, hands-on early exploration resource supports sensory development, fine motor skills and early learning through open-ended, interactive play. It offers a wide range of tactile and functional elements that encourage curiosity, concentration and independent exploration. Children are invited to twist, turn, slide, fasten and manipulate components, helping to develop the strength, coordination and control needed for everyday physical skills. Use it attached to the wall, or create an activity cube.

CATEGORY FINALISTS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC LITTLE KIDS MAGAZINE
(Creature & Co.)

EYFS A CELEBRATION OF SEEDS CHALLENGE, KEW ENDEAVOUR
(Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew)

TTS GLOW SEQUENCING CUBES
(TTS)

> “I really liked the open-ended nature of this resource and the range of ways you can put it together”
>
> **Sue Cowley**

HIGHLY COMMENDED



50 Fantastic Ideas for STEM Activities by Sandra Beale

(Toddler and Early Years STEM)

A book full of easy activities which lay the foundation for scientific enquiry, creative thinking and problem-solving. Every idea is low-cost, practical and adaptable.

“Offers a range of versatile activities to help explore science topics. A good value resource”



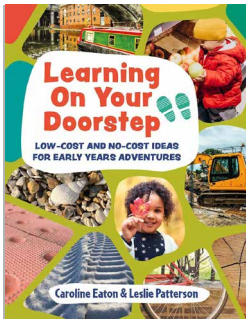
Bug Hotel 10-Frame

(Yellow Door)

This interactive bug hotel with chalkboard roof is perfect for helping children develop a secure understanding of numbers to ten through nature-inspired play. Kids will enjoy counting, pattern-making and exploring number bonds by arranging the bugs in various ways.

“I like the natural materials and themes and the links to both science and maths”

HIGHLY COMMENDED



Learning On Your Doorstep by Caroline Eaton & Leslie Patterson

(Bloomsbury Publishing Limited)

How local outings can boost development and support learning, with details on how to prepare, language prompts and ways to carry on learning back at your setting.

"If you ever experience moments where you're short of ideas, this book is a great prompt"



SiliShapes® Hands & Feet Set

(tickit®)

Make movement and sensory play exciting with this set of ten pairs of textured silicone hand and foot shapes. Featuring five different textures, each pair of hands matches a pair of feet with the same tactile surface, encouraging children to explore, compare and describe.

"Helps with coordination and spatial awareness and encourages physical development"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

EYFS TOWER 3 (Playtime by Fawns)

WINTHER CIRCLELINE KIDS STROLLER (Profile Education Ltd)

WINNER

Giant Polydron Class Set Natural Colours

(Polydron)

This versatile, large-scale construction resource supports creativity, collaboration and early mathematical understanding through open-ended play. It provides an engaging way for children to explore 2D and 3D shapes using triangles and squares. With 80 chunky, easy-to-handle pieces in natural colours, children can confidently build large, ambitious structures together. Made from 100% recycled plastic, the set offers a durable, high-quality resource designed for repeated use in busy early years environments. Simple connection design ensures children can independently join pieces together, supporting confidence and sustained engagement.

> "Versatile, robust and open-ended – an holistic resource that can be used to create many learning outcomes"
>
> **Jamel C Campbell**

Interested in entering next year...?

Nominations will be open in May 2027

