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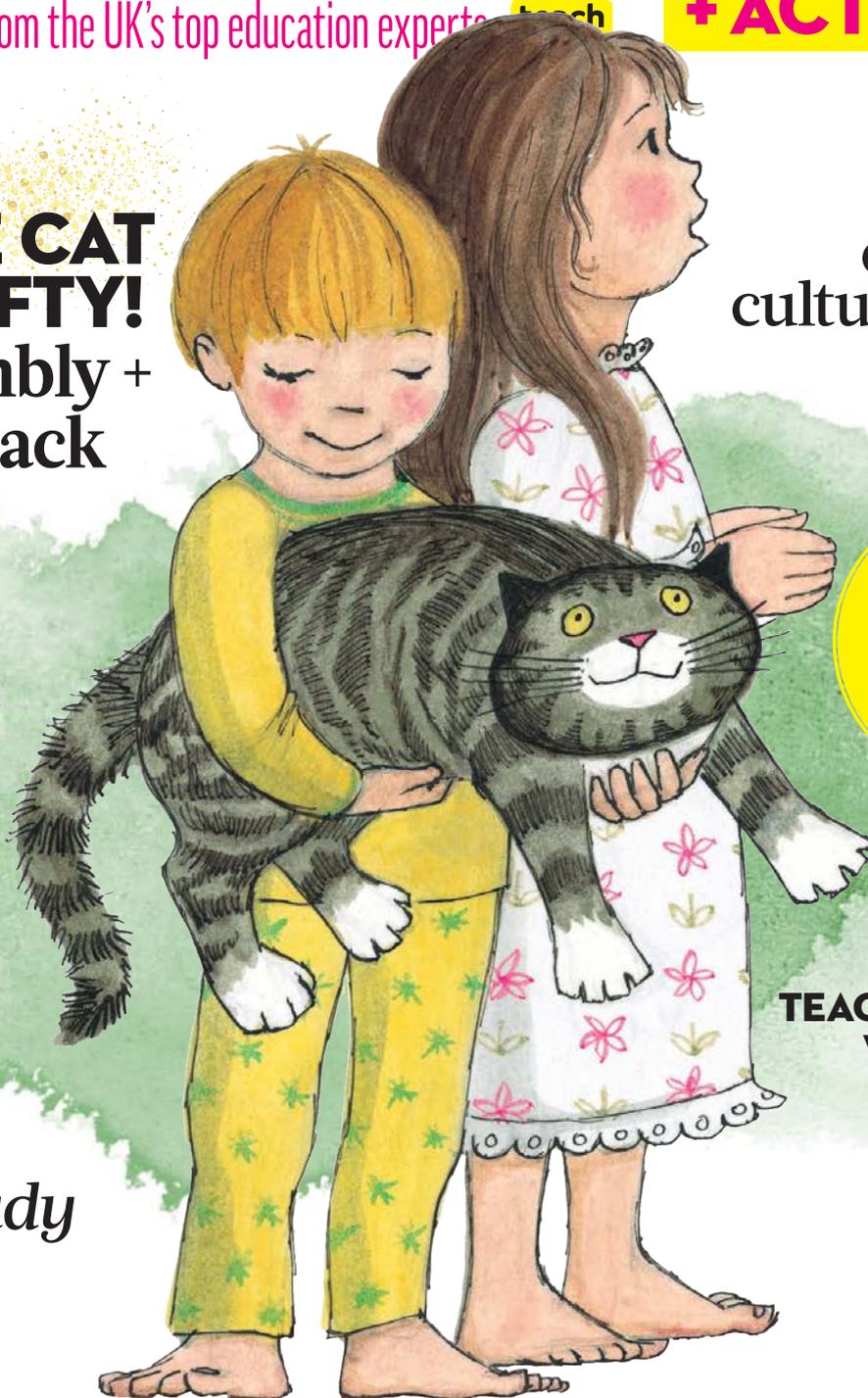
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# Hello!



**W**hether you feel like you're still finding your feet or are back into the swing of daily classroom life, the ever-changing world of education marches on. The newly revealed Early Career Framework promises quality support and provision for new teachers but expert mentors will be vital to its success. Find out more about what it means for your school on p30.

If you teach in Early Years, you'll be busy preparing for the new Development Matters guidance. The good news is that it has a much stronger focus on the professional judgement of staff over progress data – hurrah – but are you ready for the change? Read more on p32.

Alongside our special maths section (p76), we're also zooming in on behaviour this issue – a perennial topic of interest for teachers. Robbie Burns suggests three simple strategies for improving your classroom culture (p52); Paul Dix explores how to be an emotionally consistent teacher and the impact this has on children (p13); and headteacher Karen Jones talks about ditching punishments for meaningful consequences at her school (p45).

We've also made room this issue for three giants of the literary world. Michael Morpurgo talks about getting back to nature on p58; Jonny Walker shows you how to use Michael Rosen's YouTube videos to inspire disgusting poems (p86); and we celebrate Mog the cat's 50th birthday on p69 with exclusive primary resources. She's still an enduring favourite – especially with my two-year-old!

Until next time,

*Elaine*

Elaine Bennett, Editor

 @editorteach

*Don't miss our  
next issue, on sale  
2nd July*

## POWERED BY...



**THAHMINA BEGUM** knows it sounds naive, but wants her staff to be excited about coming into work every day

*“I know it doesn't sound inspirational or poetic, but it remains true”*

p11



**STEPHEN KILGOUR** asks if Early Years staff are ready for the new Development Matters non-statutory guidance

*“Don't think the changes to assessment need to mean a move away from play”*

p32



**MICHAEL MORPURGO** on giving all children the chance to get up close and personal with nature by staying at the farm

*“Reading is the pathway to so much that is worthwhile and enriching in life”*

p58



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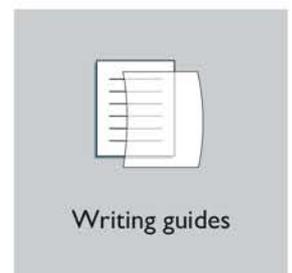
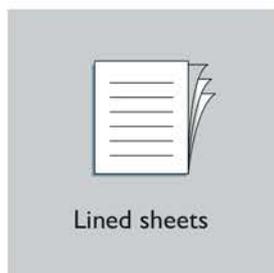
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**We're all ears!**

We want to make sure our magazine is a brilliant resource for teachers and are always striving to improve. We love hearing from real teachers about what they liked and what they would change. Got feedback about this issue? Contact us via the details in the yellow box below – we'd love to hear from you!

**teach  
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**We want to hear from you!**

Get in touch with your rants, comments, photos and ideas.



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# Breaktime

News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research



## *Saving libraries*

The National Literacy Trust has recently launched a nationwide review of primary school library provision. The project will look at how Covid-19 has impacted libraries and imagines the future of library provision in the primary sector. Even before the pandemic, school libraries were under pressure, with one in ten primary schools not having a library at all, and schools in more disadvantaged communities less likely to have good library provision. If you would like your say about the provision and impact of primary school libraries pre-, during and post-Covid, fill out the form at [tinyurl.com/tp-libraries](https://tinyurl.com/tp-libraries)

## 3 INSTANT LESSONS... (You're welcome)



### FOOTIE FANS

Use free football-focused lesson plans and video tutorials from The Virgin Media Football Academy to support pupils to bounce back after a year of lost physical education. The lessons focus on key football skills as well as nutrition and mental wellbeing. Register at [tinyurl.com/tp-football](https://tinyurl.com/tp-football)



### SAFE VIEWING

The British Board of Film Classification has launched a new KS1 resource in partnership with the PSHE Association to teach pupils about how to make safe viewing choices. Enter a drawing competition and get lesson plans, slides and handouts at [cbbfc.co.uk](https://cbbfc.co.uk)



### PHONICS FUN

Red Squirrel Phonics can be used as a standalone solution or to complement Letters and Sounds and other phonics programmes. It features 70 decodable readers plus teachers' books including guided reading lesson plans, activity sheets and assessment. Download free samples at [bit.ly/redsqurrelphonics](https://bit.ly/redsqurrelphonics)

## →→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**

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prompts from the imagination of teacher and author Hayley Scott – perfect for short daily writing-for-pleasure sessions in any classroom. It's a fantastic way to re-engage reluctant writers. Why not try them today, with a free 14-day trial? Visit [plazoom.com/collections/write-now](https://plazoom.com/collections/write-now)



Q & A

## 35 hours of CPD

A new study from the Education Policy Institute has shown that providing teachers with a right to high-quality CPD would boost pupil attainment and earnings, and may tackle teacher retention problems.

There's currently no formal entitlement to high-quality support offered by the government, with teachers in England currently participating in less CPD than their international counterparts. The new report finds that a policy of 35 hours a year of high-quality CPD for teachers would lead to significant benefits for pupils, improving their lifetime earnings by over £6,000. It could also improve retention, with up to 12,000 extra teachers remaining in the profession a year.

The government is currently exploring plans for improving the CPD offer for teachers as part of its long-term plan to tackle learning loss due to Covid. Read the full report at [tinyurl.com/tp-epi-cpd](https://tinyurl.com/tp-epi-cpd)



Photo © Ed Miller

## Konnie Huq Presenter and author

### What was primary school like for you?

I really enjoyed it. Back then there weren't as many clubs, events and out-of-school activities, let alone iPads, games consoles and tech, so school was a social and fun thing in my eyes.

### Why is reading a focus for you?

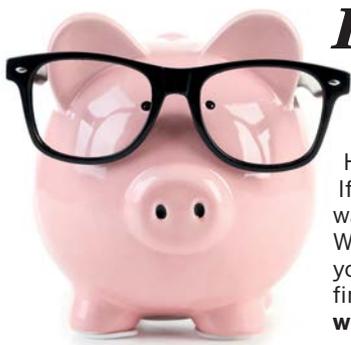
Reading and literacy is so important for young people. If you don't get into it young, it's likely you never will, shutting off doors and opportunities to escape to whole new worlds. Once you are literate and find the right books for you, reading becomes a pleasure and not a chore. If you never get there, there is so much you miss out on. Studies show that the more young people read, the better they do in life. Reading also develops empathy, ultimately leading to a better world.

### What role has reading played in your life during the pandemic?

I've had the opportunity to read more with my kids which has been lovely and is also really important, especially if they need encouraging. The pandemic has enabled some parents to have more time with their kids and reading is a perfect lockdown activity.

**Konnie Huq is taking part in Hay Festival's Programme for Schools (24th-28th May) which features free daily events for pupils in KS1-4. For the full line-up and to register visit [hayfestival.org](https://hayfestival.org)**

## Retirement planning



When you think about your retirement, what kind of lifestyle do you imagine? Teachers are in a unique financial situation and there's so much to consider. However, a little bit of planning goes a long way. If you're looking for advice about pension schemes and want to make informed decisions about your finances, Wesleyan Financial Services can help you to review your pension savings and support you to achieve your financial goals. Book a no-obligation appointment at [wesleyan.co.uk/teachersretirements](https://wesleyan.co.uk/teachersretirements)

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\*Pearson

## Look ahead | Book ahead

### GET WALKING

Join the Brake Kids Walk with Shaun the Sheep on 16th June to promote road safety. Get a free pack at [brake.org.uk/kidswalk](https://brake.org.uk/kidswalk)



### HEALTHY CHOICES

14th-18th June is Healthy Eating Week, and this year's theme is 'find your healthier you'. Register at [nutrition.org.uk/healthy/living/hew](https://nutrition.org.uk/healthy/living/hew)



# Are you looking for resources to support you in teaching for mastery?



## SCHOOL JAM

### Discover School Jam

School Jam is a Reception and KS1 maths practice app that allows teachers to simply send home weekly fun, easy-to-use maths activities. Perfectly aligned to the White Rose Maths small-steps and Power Maths lessons, it can help build maths confidence, foster parental engagement and optimise children's progress.



## MATHS Flex

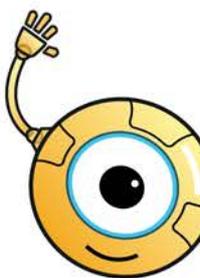
### Discover Maths Flex

A new maths practice service for KS2 that combines powerful AI with the White Rose Maths\* small-steps approach as the basis for setting highly personalised, individual practice. The AI constantly adapts to the pupil's own strengths and weaknesses helping you to manage the wide range of abilities in your class whilst cutting down the time required to set practice.



### Discover Power Maths

Recommended by the DfE\*\*, Power Maths is a whole-class mastery programme designed to spark curiosity and excitement and help you nurture confidence in maths. Perfectly aligned to the White Rose Maths progressions and schemes of learning, it's written specifically for UK classrooms by leading mastery experts.



Learn more about these mastery resources at:  
[www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/TPmastery](http://www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/TPmastery)

\*Maths Flex follows the White Rose Maths scheme of work but is not endorsed by White Rose Maths.

\*\*Power Maths KS1 and KS2 have been judged by the DfE panel to meet the core criteria for a high-quality textbook.

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And the reason they're winning is because their students are winning. Enthusiastic, excited teachers mean enthusiastic, excited students. We're a constant in the lives of our students – lives which, beyond the safety of school, could include any number of injustices and uncertainties that no child should encounter. But we know that when they enter those school gates, they leave behind all of that for seven hours and we can provide them with a certainty that is safe, fulfilling and happy. Pupils need us to be this way. We have to smile widely as they approach us; model empathy and kindness; laugh at their silliness; let our eyes widen in excitement as we talk about our subject. We should be loud in our expectations and theatrically feign disappointment when they fall short of what we expect. We should be excited to be there for them, doing what we love.

You might scoff at my rose-tinted naive vision for my school. You might think that I don't know a lot. However, what I do know is that this year, I've been excited and enthusiastic about coming to work and I bet if I asked my staff, a good number of them would say the same. And if I had a wand to take away the social stigma of admitting school is fun, I bet loads of our pupils would say the same too. I don't say 'all', because that would be naive, but 'all' is the mission.

During lockdown, like many of us who work in schools, I really, really missed my students. Every time I walked into our almost empty school building, I thought of all the little things I could no longer do. I missed standing at the school gate and replying with an upbeat "Good morning!" 60 times a minute as a flurry of bright-eyed children passed me by. I missed greeting students at the classroom door and asking how their weekend was. I missed marching down busy corridors, repeating "To the left, to the left!" and strongly fighting the urge to break into a Beyonce number.

Now that we're slowly returning to semi-normality or, dare I say it, the 'new normal', our students need to return to that constant again – that enthusiastic, excited teacher who's happy to be there to teach them. **TP**

*Thahmina Begum has worked as a secondary teacher and leader for the past ten years.*



## PUPILS NEED ENTHUSIASTIC TEACHERS

It might sound naive, but I want my staff to be excited about coming into work, says headteacher **Thahmina Begum**

[@misstbegum](https://twitter.com/misstbegum)

[tbeeblogs.wordpress.com](https://tbeeblogs.wordpress.com)

When I became headteacher in 2019, the no-nonsense, rather swearsy CEO of our trust, Simon Elliott, asked me what my vision was for my school. I hate a question that uses the word 'vision' because I feel pressured to say something that's inspirational, so I panicked in response and stared at him blankly.

I knew what I wanted for my school, but I thought it would sound naive and silly if I said it out loud. But ever-wise Simon was onto me: "Come on, hurry the fuck up, what is your vision?". Hastily I said, "I want enthusiastic, excited teachers who look forward to coming to work. I know it

sounds stupid...". Simon stopped me and wrote it down on my board and left the room. He's dramatic like that.

It's still written on that board, mainly because he's six foot something and I can't reach the top of the board to save my life, but I no longer care if it sounds stupid. I know it doesn't sound inspirational or poetic or remotely groundbreaking, but it remains true. I want enthusiastic teachers – enthusiastic to learn their subject, no matter how many years they've been teaching it; excited to teach what they love. I want teachers who look forward to coming to school because they get to do what they love.

If any headteacher can create that climate in their school, they're winning.



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# 6 WAYS to be an emotionally consistent teacher

Calm, smiling adults and predictable responses lay the foundations for a climate that works for everyone, says **Paul Dix**

## 1 | REFINE ROUTINES

Predictability makes classrooms feel safe and routines are central to this. In lessons, refining routines so they can be triggered quickly and executed deftly is a driver of productivity. Without refined routines there is too much improvisation and too much chance of some children losing their way, day after day. However, remember that there's a world of difference between teaching positive routines using gentle reinforcement that pupils enjoy and drilling children with micromanaged compliance routines. The latter is more about exerting authority than improving teaching and learning.

## 2 | BE THE UNPROVOKABLE ADULT

If you wear your heart on your sleeve you undermine the emotional security you should be nurturing. The direct connection between a child's behaviour and your own emotional state is obvious. The temptation for any child is to see how they can provoke you. If you lay out a buffet of adult emotions by saying something like, "Jasmin, if you interrupt me one more time I'm going to explode!", don't be surprised if some children want to try everything on the table. The connection between your emotion and their poor behaviour is one that you need to break. Instead, make the connection between their behaviour and the standards you expect in your lesson.

## 3 | CO-REGULATE

Self-regulating is difficult, complicated and, for some children, an unrealistic expectation. Putting the punishment away and shifting to support mode is a key skill of an emotionally consistent teacher. This might be as subtle as gently mirroring physical tension during a conversation or as obvious as lying down next to a child who has taken to the floor in distress. In moments of crisis, threats of punishment are futile. What children need are adults who have a flexible, responsive and adaptable plan.



Paul Dix is a teacher, leader and teacher trainer. He is the author of *After the Adults Change: Achievable Behaviour Nirvana* (£16.99, Independent Thinking Press).

## 4 | NURTURE FROM THE FIRST STEP

Nurture starts at the school gate and the classroom door. We may need to adapt meet-and-greet routines for our socially distanced times – think air high fives, elbow bumps or salutes – but the principles still apply. Accept that on some days you won't feel like it, but for many young people it is the only positive adult greeting they ever get. The quickest way to kill enthusiasm for meet-and-greets is to force adults to greet children in a certain way. No grown-up needs that level of micromanagement. The point of it is to make children feel safe, not to make adults feel awkward.

## 5 | THE FIRST BEATS

After an emotionally regulating meet-and-greet come the first beats of your lesson. As the pupils enter the room, identify – often loudly, sometimes subtly – the behaviour you want to see and acknowledge it. Bury children in positive affirmations and acknowledgements and the climate of the lesson will begin to take shape. The fastest way to get a class of children to settle is to praise the behaviour you want to encourage.

## 6 | DON'T DO 'RULES DAY'

The 'rules lesson' is ubiquitous in many schools. The idea is to lay out the boundaries from the start so that everyone understands how to behave immediately. Sounds easy, right? However, consistency can't be established in a single lesson any more than how to behave can be taught in a single lesson. Your students need high expectations, tight routines and essential rules drip-fed over time. Delivering it all at once is as realistic as delivering the entire science curriculum in a double lesson. Break down the rules lesson into smaller pieces and scatter them throughout your teaching in the first two or three weeks.

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# WE MUSTN'T FORGET THE CREATIVE ARTS

They encourage our pupils to communicate and express themselves and help children to support their own wellbeing

When Covid came along the educational world dramatically shifted online. As ever, schools rose to the challenge to ensure learning continued and pupils were supported as well as possible during this time. There's no doubt that the education profession has shown nothing but flexibility and innovation in its quest for some semblance of normality for pupils.

However, we're now back in the classrooms and working towards a new normal; one in which creativity and the arts mustn't be forgotten. As we work together to support pupils whose gaps in learning have increased, coupled with those who will always need our extra support and care, the role of creativity is essential to the recovery of our curriculum and, importantly, the social development of our pupils. The same way we wrestled with the challenges of remote learning and the need to ensure we maintained academic continuity for our pupils, we now need to address areas of personal developments – and creativity is key.

As adults we've become familiar with and used to the restrictions on our daily lives. We can rationalise; use technology to escape; communicate with our peers in order to discuss our feelings and moods. However, it's vital that we consider the experiences of primary-age pupils. How might the world seem at the moment to them? How might it have felt not to have seen loved ones and to be constantly faced with images and language in the media focusing on the impact of the pandemic? For our youngest children, the confusion caused by trying to comprehend such enormous concepts is staggering.

The creative arts enable communication and expression. They allow

a safe space for children to explore and express their emotions, while knowing that the outcome won't be judged. By removing the idea of right and wrong, correct and incorrect, art becomes an activity without failure; one which brings success without risk. Understandably, arts may slip down the list of priorities when you're trying to close gaps in learning in prime areas like phonics, numeracy, literacy and, importantly, making sure that this cohort of Y6 pupils are prepared for the rigour of secondary education. Having said that though, by utilising certain aspects of creative arts, we can help pupils to approach these academic challenges with a sense of calm and give them strategies to support their own wellbeing and mental health.

Drama is a great tool to use in classrooms. It creates opportunities for roleplay and hot seating, which help to develop empathy. Taking on an acting role while you're teaching supports whole-class engagement and can have a huge impact on the team dynamic of a class. Allowing children to speak through or on behalf of a character helps them to consider other people's feelings, share their own emotions and, importantly, work with other pupils in a safe space. Furthermore, linking drama to creative writing allows children to write about the experiences of others; experiences which may seem even more memorable at the moment due to the fact that children's lives have been so curtailed by national restrictions during the pandemic.

Dance and movement can also be really important. Allowing children to respond freely to music gives them an opportunity to explore their creativity. Listening to a piece of instrumental music and discussing the feelings and atmosphere it evokes can lead to some very powerful work. Encourage groups of pupils to create a piece of movement to either accompany the music or, for older pupils, work with the tonal qualities of the piece to create work that is born from the atmosphere it creates. Again, it's not about right or wrong; it's simply an opportunity for children to work together to explore their feelings and develop teamwork, collaboration and communication skills.

You might feel that you're 'not very musical.' It's a fear that worries many teachers. However, not being able to play an instrument isn't a concern when you're exploring the wider forms and structures of music. Listening to music and responding in a range of forms develops creative thinking and, again, supports children in being able to explain and present their work. Clapping, stamping, clicking and humming should all take their place centre-stage in your post-pandemic orchestra.

Whatever you do, providing opportunities for expression across all year groups enables pupils to develop skills that will, no doubt, support them in school, but also in their future lives. As the great bard said, "All the world's a stage". **TP**

*Dan Edwards is principal of a large primary school in Leicester.*

 @danedwards\_77

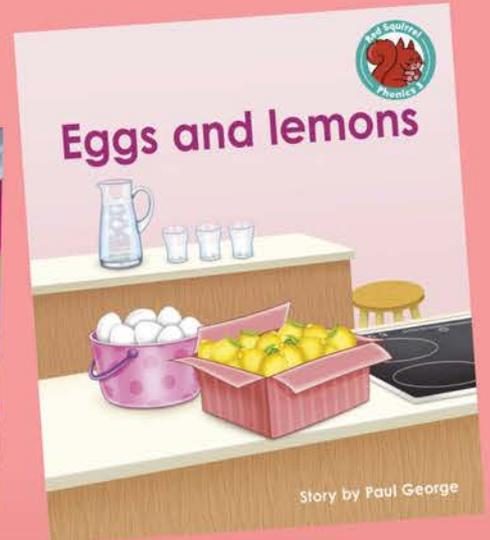
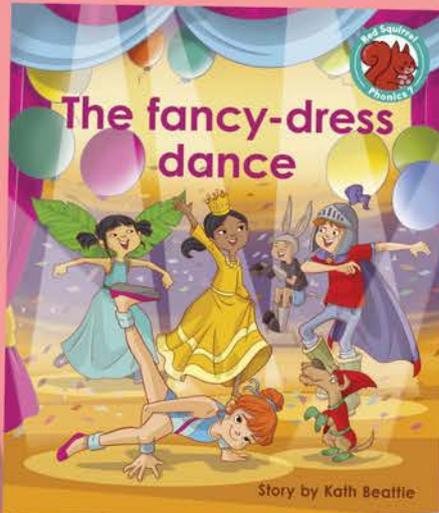
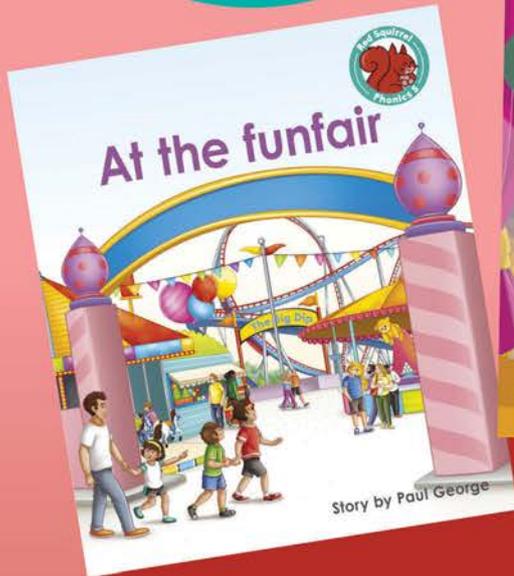
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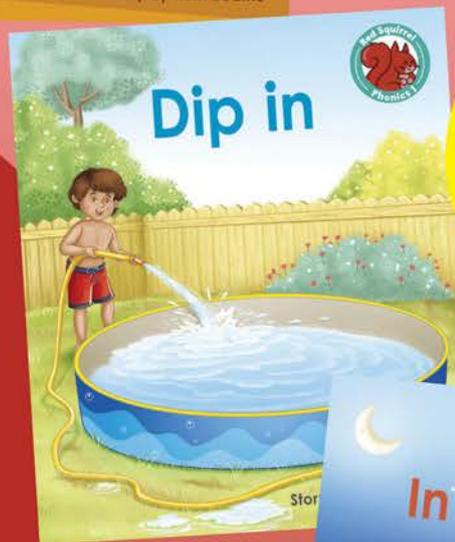


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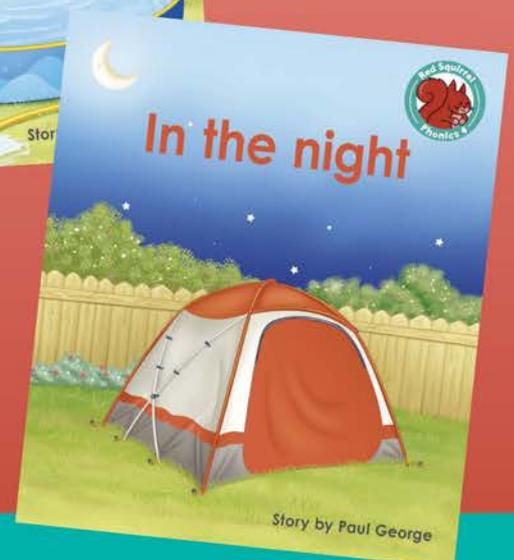
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# How I do it

Practise new vocabulary and building sentences by jumping through literal hoops

**MADELEINE FOX**

**L**anguage is very abstract. In early language development, children – particularly those with communication difficulties – can find putting words together in the right order difficult. ‘Jumping’ a short phrase is a great starting point for these children. This activity is a great way to practise new vocabulary during topic work or for children learning a new language. It’s also a useful way to introduce component parts of a sentence in a physical way.



If you’re thinking about new fruit vocabulary, for example, give children the chance to first handle and taste some fruit while you introduce the different names. Next, place a hoop on the ground. Alongside it present a range of fruit (alongside symbol and word cards) for children to select from. Now, in turn, ask each pupil to place a piece of fruit in the hoop. Starting from the left-hand side of the hoop, jump into it with the fruit and say its name.



Place two more hoops alongside the first. In the first hoop place the word “I”; in the middle hoop place the word “like” (include symbols as well). Invite children to choose a piece of fruit to put in the third hoop, then ‘jump’ the phrase from left to right: “I like bananas!”. Other pupils can clap the phrase. Repeat until everyone has had a turn.



Next, use photographs or written names of children in the class instead of “I”. Ask, “What does Amy like? Who can remember?” Repeat the activity until every child has had their picture used: “Amy likes bananas!”. The additional ‘s’ needed on words like “bananas” can also be a discussion point, if relevant to your class.



Now add another hoop to contain a describing word. Discuss with the children where it should go – before or after the object? Use colour cards, colour vocabulary or other adjectives such as ‘soft’, ‘hard’, ‘fresh’ and ‘juicy’, depending on the work you’re doing in class. Where possible, present objects, symbols and pictures alongside the words. Jump through the new sentence structure (“I like juicy apples”) and encourage spectators to jump on the spot or clap along. Use spare slips of paper and extra hoops to extend the sentences.



Ask children to practise individually or in pairs. Remember to use real objects where possible, supported by pictures, words and symbols to make it multi-sensory. For children who are planning a sentence for writing, add full stops or other punctuation to hoops. If you’re focusing on component parts of a sentence, colour code hoops and remind children through questioning: “What goes in the blue hoop?”. Repeat the activity back in the classroom with small desk-sized hoops and a bank of objects, pictures, symbols and words. This can now lead to composing a visual phrase or sentence ready for writing.



Madeleine Fox is an educational writer and former SEN teacher.

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**UNDERCOVER TEACHER**

*Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest*

*“Thank you cards from SLT are no replacement for proper wellbeing initiatives”*

**W**hen my school embarked on a process of improving staff wellbeing, the feedback was almost unanimous: we wanted more flexibility in our working hours. What we quickly learnt was that our leaders had a very different idea of staff wellbeing to our own.

As teachers, our working lives are mapped out for us. From the moment that first bell rings in the morning to the last bell in the afternoon, there's always somewhere you need to be. After that, there's any number of meetings. The only flexibility comes in the form of how much of your own time you are willing to give up on top of this, and which section of your weekends and holidays you are prepared to sacrifice.

My school sought to further entrench this inflexibility some years back with a formal letter stating that any requests for unpaid leave on the grounds of celebration or holiday would be turned down, and that any staff with relatives intending to get married should inform them of the term dates so they can plan their wedding accordingly. In short, if you're taking time off on a school day you're either ill, looking after sick children or you have a relative who has recently died. This leaves very little room for any joyful events that happen to take place on the wrong date.

So when the opportunity arose to have our say on what would make the biggest difference to our wellbeing, for many of us the outcome seemed fairly obvious. The school appeared to be taking this process seriously. We embarked on three voluntary open meetings where ideas could be raised and discussed, then two full staff meetings where these ideas were clarified and developed. There were then another two meetings within our Key Stages. It all seemed like a democratic process with the aim of driving real change.

The overwhelming recommendation to the leadership team was that staff wanted the opportunity to take unpaid leave, regardless of the reason. Policies similar to this were in place in a number of other local schools, where a limited number of days could be

taken with no questions asked, so it didn't seem an unreasonable request. After the year we've all had, many staff felt on the brink of personal crisis. Everyone was worn out after given their all to hold the school together through the pandemic. This wellbeing process felt like our reward. However, the result demonstrated that we'd all been wasting our time. It seems we were wrong to suggest more flexible working practises. In fact, it appears the thing that will improve staff wellbeing in the school will be thank you cards informing us that SLT has noticed us going 'above and beyond' expectations – something we've all been doing for quite some time.

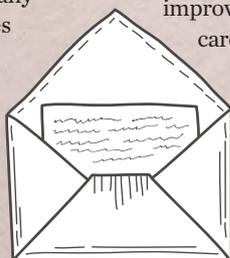
After the hours of work that had gone into this process, the result was that we were completely ignored. On receiving this news, the overwhelming feeling from colleagues was of having been insulted. Private conversations took place where we discussed exactly where these cards should be placed – and it wasn't anywhere on display.

It put me in mind of clapping for the NHS: a nice gesture that became perceived as hollow when not coupled with real improvements for these workers. Just like NHS staff, school workers are not charitable volunteers who have bravely stepped into the front line. We are paid professionals and real people who do a difficult job and deserve

decent working conditions.

Staff morale within the school is lower now than when we started this consultation. So to my school (and any others that feel established problems can be solved with the flimsiest of gestures), here is my thank you letter to you:

*Dear headteacher, thank you for showing us the value of our opinions. Thank you for showing us our value as employees. And finally, thank you for showing us that, no matter how many opportunities you offer us to talk about it, nothing will ever really change. Yours faithfully, disgruntled undercover teacher. TP*



*“The overwhelming feeling from colleagues was of having been insulted”*

*The writer is a primary teacher in England.*

*Each issue we ask a contributor to pen a note they would love to send*

## A letter to... *parents about trusting teachers*

As cheesy as it sounds, try to see yourself and your child's teacher as a team



As a teacher?' a teacher will often jokingly reply: "The parents!"

As a parent, I get it. We carefully nurture these precious little things we created and then all of a sudden we have to hand them over to another adult we don't even know for a big chunk of the day. We're left out on the playground to gather tiny reluctant snippets of info from our kids while the teacher is privy to all that's going on. The teachers know their levels, what's expected of them, the embarrassing facts that kids love to share ("My mummy has a hairy tuppence" was the best one I was ever told in the classroom!). As a parent, it's quite hard. How much would you love to be a fly on the wall just for a day?

I think the thing that is most difficult is that there needs to be an element of trust, but we don't get masses of time to build that. We just have to have it. Between teachers and the adults responsible for each child, there are multiple forms of communication. Parents' evenings, notes sent home in schoolbags, reading record scribbles, "Can I have a quick word?" chats on the playground, as well

I have heard it said (many a time in staffrooms across the various schools I've worked in) that when asked 'What's the most difficult thing about being

as emails. Some of these can get lost in translation or be misunderstood, and I have at times seen frustration build on both sides. Playground chatter between parents can swing between hugely helpful to massively confusing, depending on how and when the information is passed over.

When I worked with children with additional learning challenges, I sometimes found their parents had grown up with similar challenges, or their own fear of school and education was clearly apparent. It reminded me that everyone comes with their own story, and the best way to build trust is to move forward with patience and understanding, while ensuring that the child is always put first. Which is why, if there is something big happening at home or in your child's life, it is really useful for the teacher to know this. If someone who usually lives in the child's house has moved out or they've experienced the death of someone close, or anything at all that might affect their world, then please pass that information on to the school if you feel you can. If a teacher knows a child is going through something particularly difficult outside school, they can help to support in many different ways.

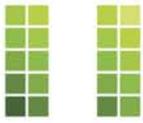
When it comes to communicating, there are definitely challenges on both sides. As a teacher, you are trying to carefully get across as much information as is needed without bombarding parents with stuff that isn't necessary for them

to know. It's a fine balance, as some parents wish they knew more, and others are begging to be told less. Teachers are often trying to encourage parents to become involved with their child's learning, knowing their support is vital to a child's success in education, but are also aware that too much pressure won't help anyone. So, if at any point as a parent, you are finding it all hugely confusing, then please reach out to the teachers. Ask to talk to them or write them a note. Perhaps, before you go, make a list of all the things you want to talk to them about. It's totally natural that some people feel intimidated in a school setting, so to save yourself any anxiety, scribble down your thoughts and questions first to make sure you cover everything you wish to know.

During my time as a teaching assistant I supported many different teachers in the classroom and, despite their differing styles and personalities, I know we all had one thing in common: we were fiercely protective of all the children in that class and wanted to get the absolute best out of every single one of them. As a parent, it's nice to remind ourselves of this and, as cheesy as it sounds, try to see ourselves and our children's teacher as a team working towards the same goal.

*From Daisy*

*Daisy Upton is the author of Five Minute Mum: Time For School, available now in Penguin paperback.*



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When it comes to hatching a recovery plan, some children will make rapid progress while others will be harder to crack...

# Colin Dowland

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A metaphor was delivered to school recently. It was on one of those rare sunny spring mornings, so there was a touch of pathetic fallacy about it too, along with quite a bit of personification and a touch of allegory. And it was all wrapped up with layers of Covid recovery curriculum and decorated with a ribbon of corny, religious overtones.

Our metaphor was delivered by a seriously-bearded young man, who for the sake of further literary symbolism, we shall call Godfrey. Having descended from 'the north' in a pristine white van, Godfrey unloaded his precious delivery and carried it into school in what were in fact two large boxes of metaphors and a slightly incongruous Tesco carrier bag full of slightly forced analogies.

On a special table in the entrance hall, Godfrey set up a small box with glass-panelled sides (which in the metaphor represents laptop screens – stay with me) and then set up a larger box (symbolising the school) which had a see-through panel in the side (representing a 'Covid catch-up assessment window').

And then, as if enacting an ancient religious ceremony, Godfrey opened a padded container and took out the main protagonists of this story and put them gently, one by one, into the glass-panelled box. When Godfrey had driven off, we stood for a long while, peering into the glass box, with its integral fan heater set at 37.7 degrees and realised we had been put in charge of looking after something rather special. No, not Gavin's pet tarantula or the original plans of Boris's new briefing room. Inside the lidded, glass-panelled box were ten, light brown, perfectly formed hen's eggs.

After the initial cluck of excitement from the children at the arrival of the long-awaited clutch of eggs, an air of sulphurous disappointment hung around the entrance hall for the next 48 hours. The ten new arrivals on roll simply lay there in their box, all ellipsoidal and motionless, just being egg. To be honest, they were pretty boring. The children, desperate for something interesting to do after being off school so long, soon lost interest.

However, on the metaphorical third day, when we arrived at school in the morning,



seven of those boring eggs had been cracked apart and lay there at odd angles scattered around their glass box. It looked like a scene from the Humpty Dumpty Massacre.

But in between these jagged-edged half shells, shuffling unsteadily on pairs of tiny orange feet were seven photogenically perfect, fluffy, iridescent yellow chicks, chirping loudly with the joy of new life.

And during the next night, two of the three remaining slow developers (stick with the metaphor here) eventually hatched out and by the fourth day, nine pristine, persistently pecking chicks were transferred to the larger brooder box, complete with a bright lamplight and viewing window for the children to look inside and watch them develop, socialise and grow.

Over the next week, with my office right beside the entrance hall, a chorus of 'oohs' and 'ahhs' drifted through my door about every fifteen minutes as each class visited the brooder box. The excited children gave the creatures their daily diet of chick crumbs (in the metaphor let's call this literacy), topped up their water bowl (let's call this maths) and changed their bedding every day (the recovery curriculum underpinning everything), while the lamplight kept them

warm and safe (that's the nurturing staff, I'm sure you realised) to ensure that they grew, flourished and had a bright future.

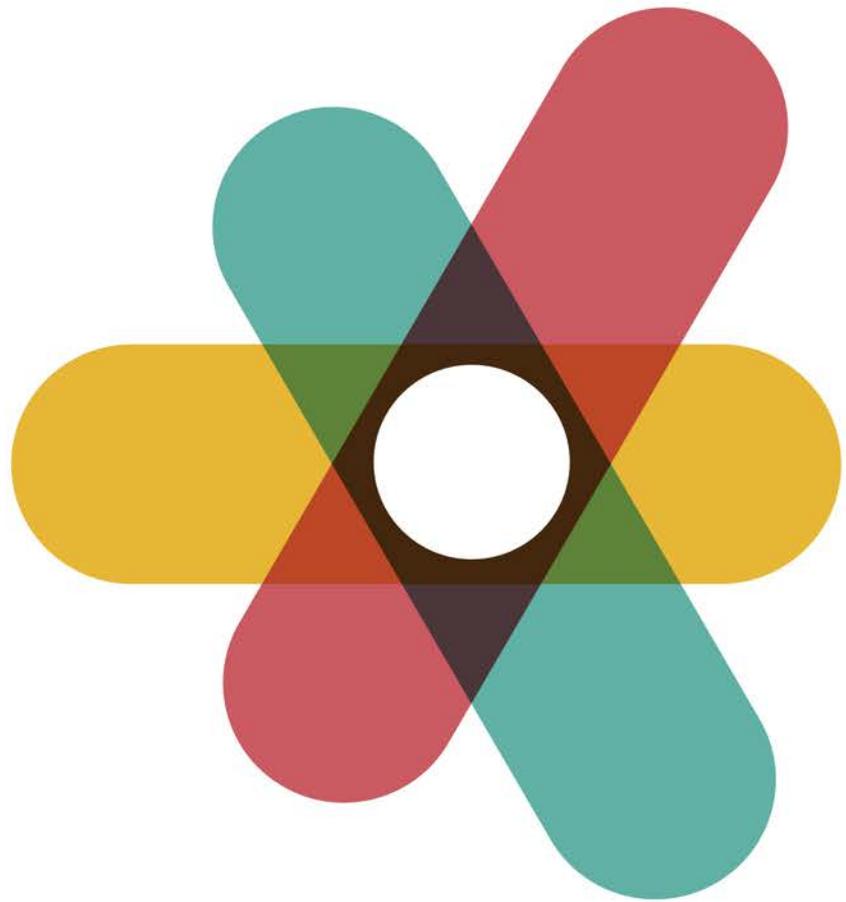
I know the metaphor is getting rather over-egged, but let's crack on.

The children have now hatched out from behind their glass panelled laptop screens and been brought back into the warm brooder box that we call school. And having escaped the battery farm boredom of home learning into the sunny, free-range open spaces of the school yard, we have some serious educational husbandry to do.

Like in our special delivery from Godfrey, most of our hatchlings will make rapid progress, develop well and will soon be fully flying. Some will be later to emerge from their shells and need some extra nourishment as they start to fledge. Others, like our unhatched number ten (I didn't forget), will be harder to crack. But we will keep them in the incubator.

And as long as those eggheads from Ofsted are kept well away from the coop, we won't need to ruffle any feathers. But I'm not counting my chickens.. **TP**

*Colin Dowland is a primary headteacher in north London.*



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# LET'S TAKE FRIENDSHIPS SERIOUSLY

Unhappy, distracted pupils make teachers' jobs harder. We must try and help those children who find making friends difficult...

**W**hen pupils arrive at school, that day's lessons are the last thing on their minds. Instead, their first thoughts are more likely to be: 'Where are my friends? What will we play at breaktime? Will I have someone to sit with at lunch?'

Having a circle of friends who they can be themselves with is the most important factor in making kids want to go to school, according to research. However, your experience probably already tells you that some classes have more meanness, exclusion and cliquiness than others, and teaching distracted, unhappy children only makes your job harder.

So it may help to be armed with some of the social science research on children's social relationships. When researchers ask school children which peers they like the most in the class and which they like the least, studies find startlingly consistent results. The children who get the most likes and fewest dislikes are the 15% classed as 'popular'. Then there is the 'accepted' band, about 45%. They have a group of good friends, but they are not as sought after as the popular children. Few people intensely dislike them either. This is the solid core of the class.

For the rest of the classroom, it's not so easy. Studies have found that roughly 20% are 'controversial' children. Some

of their classmates really like these kids, but some intensely dislike them, maybe because they are hyperactive, unpredictable or disruptive. Then there is the 'invisible' 10%, children who social scientists term 'neglected'. These children are ignored by their peers, possibly because they are socially anxious or lack confidence.

The final piece of the puzzle is the final 10%, described as 'rejected' children. These are kids who are disliked by a lot of their classmates, have no friends, and few people want to risk being seen with them. Children may fall into this group if they have learning or communication issues which mean they don't pick up on social cues very well, or have missed out on learning social skills at home. They can try to cope by either giving in and trying to disappear or by becoming aggressive. Read Newcomb, Bukowski, and Pattee's 1993 research on children's peer relations for more on this.

So why do these bands form? And how does it help for teachers to recognise them? The answer is that as part of our survival mechanism, the needs of the group always come first. As child psychologist Dr Michael Thompson explains in his book *Mom, They're Teasing Me*: "Any class is a drama that requires different characters. The hierarchy and the roles are 'assigned' by the universal forces at work in the group. Many different roles are needed in group life, and the scripts are given to children based on their temperaments and their

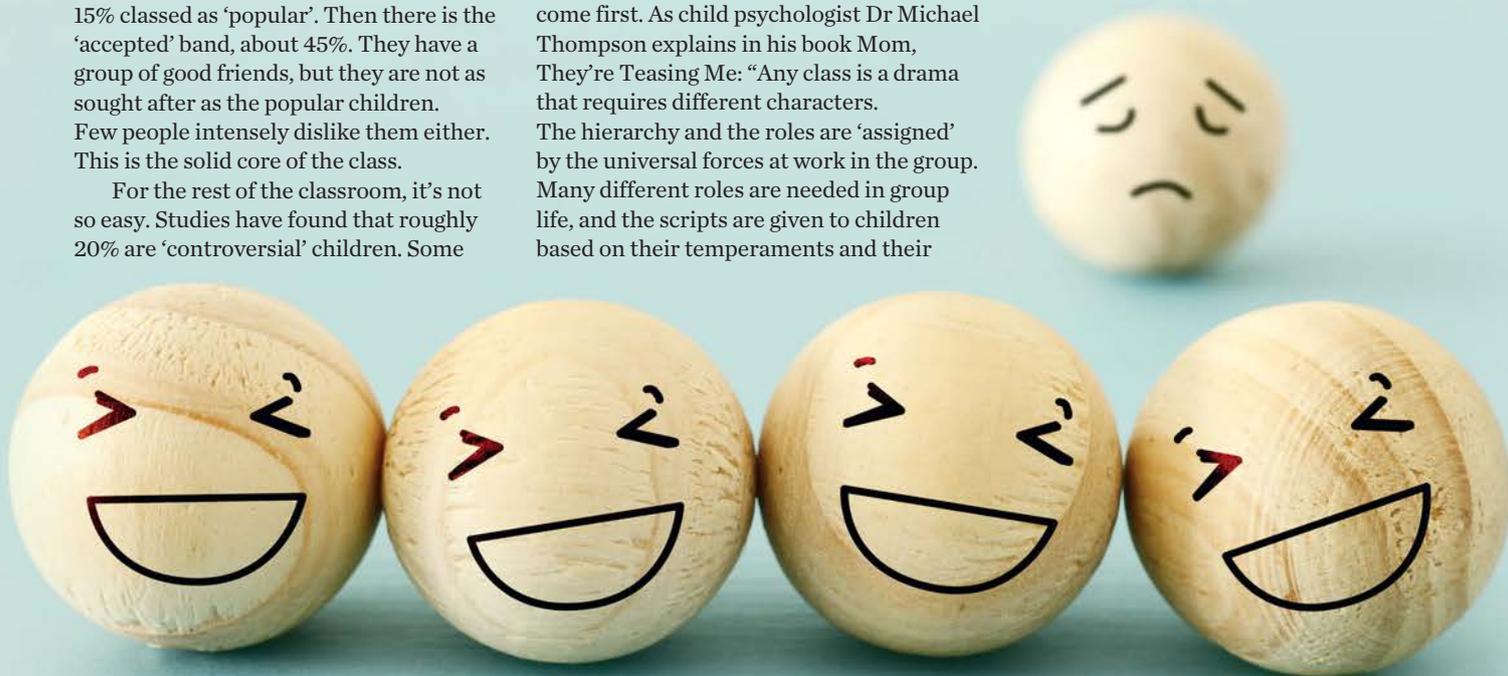
willingness to play the role."

I believe that when we recognise how classrooms fit together, we have a better chance of helping those scraping along the bottom. After all, when a child struggles with maths, we take steps to make sure that this deficit doesn't cause them too many long-term problems. We may take them aside and show them how they can get better. The same can be done with social skills by showing children how to decode social cues and look for how their behaviour is viewed by others.

You can also help blur the lines between the bands. For instance, it's probably already obvious who the 'rejected' children are in your classroom. They consistently don't have friends and almost always end up sitting on their own. But studies have found that when teachers change around seating plans, or give children the chance to do non-competitive, non-academic activities where they can chat, like small crafting circles, the least popular children are more liked by the end of the year. It gives young people opportunities to get to know each other outside the pigeonholes they have put each other into.

It's just one of the many things I suggest teachers can do to encourage a more harmonious classroom. By looking out for the different roles that children assume in the classroom, the good news is that we can help to break down the hierarchies that cause children so much stress and upset. **TP**

*Tanith Carey is the author of [The Friendship Maze: How to Help Your Child Navigate their Way to Positive, Happier Friendships](#) (£10.99, Summersdale).*

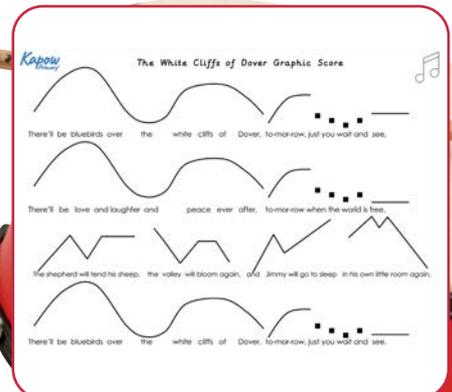
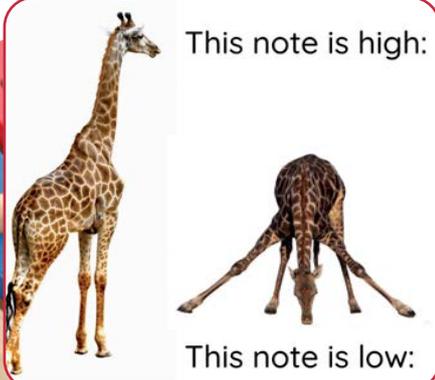


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SCAN ME

# On the SAME PAGE

How to align your school's vision for technology with the reality of what actually happens in your classrooms

DR FIONA AUBREY-SMITH

One of the unintended consequences of remote schooling during the pandemic has been the leaps made with technology.

As a teacher you'll have seen a range of different approaches *within* your own school. One of the opportunities ahead now is to unpick the variance across your own team – to understand why different teachers do different things with the same technology. Importantly, you can then use this understanding to bring greater alignment between your school vision for technology and the realities of practice. This might be about increasing consistency across your school or identifying and building on the different strengths across your team. I recently published a doctoral thesis ([tinyurl.com/tp-aubreysmith](https://tinyurl.com/tp-aubreysmith)) which unpacks the relationship between teachers' pedagogical beliefs and uses of technology. Here are some of the headline findings.

**Teachers who talk about their awareness of the importance of technology in children's lives don't necessarily incorporate it meaningfully into their practice.** But this difference is not about their relationship with the technology itself. It's about what they believe teaching and learning should look like and what they perceive technology offers or threatens in relation to that. For example, I worked with a group of teachers who all recorded their teaching inputs in order for children to access them independently. Some teachers used these within lessons to differentiate inputs for groups, encourage capable children to self-pace and enable children who were struggling to rewatch. Those teachers then forensically targeted their time on specific children and misconceptions or stretch. Other teachers replaced their live input with children individually or collectively

watching the same recorded input – arguably negating the use of the technology.

**Educators' use of technology amplifies their existing pedagogical beliefs.** In other words, while our practices may change when we use technology, our pedagogical beliefs don't. This is important because language and behaviours adopted by a teacher and their learners may not change even when technology is used – which sometimes conflicts with the intentions of adopting the technology in the first place. For example, many teachers' language throughout an online activity revolves around instruction ('First do this, then click that, then insert that...'). Even if you think you're encouraging independent learning, your language still tells children that you are the owner of the process. However, other teachers use more facilitative language ('What happens if you click that? How could we work out how to...?'). For technology to encourage children's independence, our language must do so too.

**Teachers working within the same school, supporting the same vision and using the same technology, can have different pedagogical beliefs – even if it might not look that way on the surface.** For example, a simple wireless keyboard and mouse enables a teacher to sit wherever they wish and still use the interactive whiteboard during an input. Some teachers choose to sit among the children whereas other teachers choose to maintain the 'front of class' position, conveying a more authoritative stance. These are significant and revealing choices which infer underlying pedagogical messages being conveyed to the children. This means that technology can't be thought of as transferable across classes. Its use is socially constructed (dependent on the class, lesson or teacher). This is an important point to bear in mind when thinking about rolling

out projects or sharing best practice.

**Because teachers have different pedagogical approaches, pupils will experience learning differently even when engaging with the same technology.** Therefore, your learners may not be experiencing in practice what your school vision intends them to. This is really important to consider when cascading practice across a school or trust. As we all know, it's not what we intend to do that makes a difference to children's learning, but what pupils *actually* experience.

In conclusion, if we want to understand how technology use is experienced by teachers and learners (and what difference it is making) we need to look at their behaviours, language and relationships, not the technology. The impact will be seen in how those involved conceive the idea of what it means to be a teacher or learner. **TP**

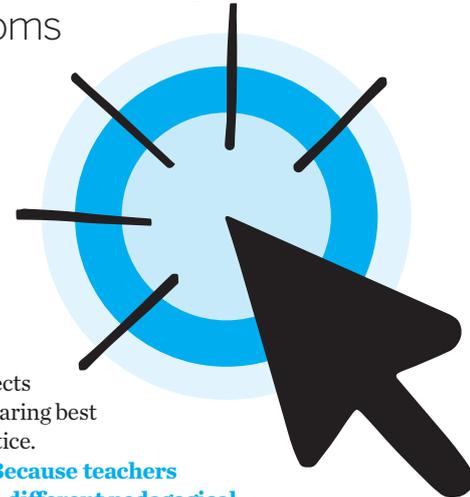
*If your school would like to be involved in further research exploring and unpacking how and why different teachers use the same technologies in different ways, email [fionaaubreysmith@googlemail.com](mailto:fionaaubreysmith@googlemail.com)*



*Dr Fiona Aubrey-Smith is director of One Life Learning and specialises in strategic education research and consultancy.*

 @fionaas

 [onelifelarning.co.uk](http://onelifelarning.co.uk)



# Guiding light

The recently revealed Early Career Framework promises quality support and provision for teachers, but expert mentors are vital...

HAILI HUGHES

**S**peak to anybody who has left the profession after a few years and, more often than not, they will cite a lack of support as one of the reasons they felt unable to continue as a teacher. Mentoring matters – and a well-designed mentoring programme facilitated by a knowledgeable, enthusiastic mentor makes a massive difference to an early career teacher’s feelings of success.

This is why the Early Career Framework (ECF) is one of the most exciting developments in education for many years as it promises a quality of support and provision for all early career teachers, which will no doubt help to reverse some of the worrying figures that see one in five teachers leave schools within two years.

## Improved package

The ECF has improved the support package for new teachers by extending their funded training entitlement to a structured two-year package of high quality professional development. As part of the government’s drive to recruit and retain teachers, the framework aims to increase the resources and improve the opportunities that are open to early career teachers by providing a comprehensive entitlement to what new teachers will need to learn about and how to learn about it during those first crucial years. It contains sections on behaviour management, pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and professional behaviours, and is underpinned by academic research.

In addition to the training

materials and opportunities, new teachers will also be entitled to 5% of their time away from their classrooms to focus on their professional development, for which schools will receive funding. But perhaps most significant is the allocation of a dedicated mentor to advise, support and guide the new teacher, who will also receive training and professional development in order to help them fulfil their role successfully.

I was lucky enough to be invited to one of the Department for Education’s round tables when the policy was being refined and formulated, and I was inspired by the hard work, research and dedication which had gone into its creation. What became clear during this experience was how important mentors are in supporting new teachers and that, more so than ever before, school leaders need to acknowledge this and give them the necessary time to dedicate themselves fully to the role. The framework is clear and thorough and should complement the Teachers’ Mentoring in Schools Standards that NQTs have to evidence; they are not an extra job as they align so closely and support early career teachers in finding ways of meeting them.

## Successful mentors

Mentors need to have certain qualities that can help their mentees to develop and flourish. Kerry and Mayes (1995) define some of these as:

- the ability to nurture and be a role model

- encourage and counsel
- focus on the mentee’s professional development
- sustain a caring relationship over time

This is where the ECF comes into its own, as these essential qualities of a successful mentor are made explicit in the very nature of the recommendations of what new teachers should learn. What is great about the standards in the ECF is that the ‘Learn that’ and ‘Learn how to’ criteria are all based on evidence-informed research. Presently, it seems like there is a cultural and philosophical gulf between teachers and educational researchers, but this needn’t be the case.

It is important that teachers explore what research has to offer them, and the framework gives specific links for books and articles they can access to get them started.

Instructional coaching suits the ECF perfectly as it is based around the idea of a teacher working with another trained expert to help them learn, adopt new teaching practices and provide feedback, while combining teaching and content expertise. Coaching is a cycle, with student engagement and learning at the centre of it. There needs to be time



*“NQTs are the lifeblood of a school with their dynamic and vibrant ideas, but they are also some of the most vulnerable”*

for planning and observations, as well as time to enact change and reflect at the end of it.

**Listening ear**

If you have never been a mentor before, becoming one can seem quite a daunting task: it is a great responsibility and can take up a large amount of time and energy when done correctly. You may meet with your mentee formally once a week, but you will need to be available at all times to offer support and guidance or to answer any questions your NQT may have. There are also times when you will need to offer a supportive listening ear or

help in formulating action plans to develop them professionally.

A mentor needs to have the experience to draw on to be able to advise a new teacher, and they need to be an expert in their field so that they can model best practice and impart their wisdom to those who are new to the profession.

They also need to embody the resilience that new teachers need if they wish to remain in education because they have weathered many storms and possess the tenacity required

to enjoy a long career as a teacher. This is why it is so important that mentors are experienced teachers who have much to offer those entering the world of education. Even if you have been a mentor previously, the new ECF offers something wholly different from what has guided the practice of mentors previously.

NQTs are the lifeblood of a school with their dynamic and vibrant ideas, but they are also some of the most vulnerable. We need to understand that they are



**WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?**

I interviewed over 100 NQTs about their experiences of being mentored. Here's what they said:

*“A mentor should not ask you to do something they wouldn't be prepared to do themselves. Equally, they should prompt you with questions that make you think, rather than just give you the answers.”*

*“Someone with time – everyone is busy, but if the mentor has dedicated and demarcated time to mentor, then as the mentee this helps you not to feel guilty for using up more of their precious time.”*

*“This sounds cheesy but a good mentor acts like your mini cheerleader! This doesn't mean that they unequivocally praise you, but they give you that little boost to build your confidence.”*

not the finished product and that our strategic support will shape them into the teachers they will become. We owe it to them and future generations of students to offer them the support, guidance and professional development opportunities they need in order to feel enthused, valued and motivated to stay in the profession for many years to come. **TP**



*Haili Hughes is an English teacher and a former head of department*

*and senior leader who has mentored new teachers and ITT students for over ten years. She is the author of Mentoring in Schools (£16.99, Crown House Publishing).*

 @hugheshaili

 [theinkedscholar.blogspot.com](http://theinkedscholar.blogspot.com)

# Use your JUDGEMENT

The new Development Matters focuses on the professional opinion of EY staff over progress data – are you ready for the change?

STEPHEN KILGOUR

**T**he new Development Matters (DM) launches in September 2021, alongside the updated statutory EYFS Framework. Although non-statutory, many primary teachers plan to use the new DM. One of the clearest messages in the new guidance is that we should no longer be collecting and analysing detailed progress data about each child in Reception. This is a big change which requires some careful planning ahead of September.

This school year has been incredibly challenging for us all, so it's completely understandable if you are feeling unprepared for these changes, but don't fret. Here's what you can do now to start getting ready.

## Professional judgement

We've all been using the current DM since 2012 and it's provided considerable structure and direction. It's fair to say that for some of us, marking off statements and assessing against 'age-bands' has felt like a comfort blanket. Also, if you qualified since 2012, the current DM is the only style of assessment in practice you've known. The significant changes to the guidance have caused plenty of debate, as well as anxiety about what new systems will look like.

The new DM is underpinned by child-centred assessment and based on a belief in the professional judgement of the EY workforce.

This is a positive development, but after nine years of very structured systems it can feel daunting. This is because it means all those working within Reception need to have a solid understanding of child development and feel confident to rely on their own judgement.

Although change can cause concern, this is an opportunity to ensure that our planning and assessment practices are genuinely child-centred. I welcome the new guidance which I feel places more trust in Reception teachers and their own professional judgement. Ofsted has also made it clear that it will no longer be requesting data during inspection visits. This should reduce the number of times SLT needs to request data to prepare for Ofsted and allow everyone to use their time more purposefully.

## Learning stories

So what does this mean for September? As always, it is going to be imperative that we get to know our children as well as we can. Without gathering data, a good approach is to think about telling the 'learning story' of each child:

- Where was the child on their learning journey when you first met them?
- What progress have they made since you became their teacher?
- What have you done to facilitate this learning?
- How would you describe this learning if you were speaking to a parent or fellow teacher?

Every child's learning story is of importance and needs to be considered. We should meet every child where they are on their learning journey and use our skills to further their understanding. Focusing on each child's learning story will help you to identify the children in your class who may be causing concern in certain areas. This might be the only thing that you 'track', asking questions like, "Who am I concerned about?" and "What am I going to do about it?".

## Curriculum & knowledge

The changes have sparked some fervent debate around what an Early Years curriculum needs to look like. I think there's a risk that some teachers will spend many hours producing 'progression documents' to replace the previous guidance and tick lists. This is clearly not the

right approach and undermines the importance placed on professional judgement.

There has been some suggestion that child-led learning is hindered by the notion of a curriculum in the EYFS. It's my belief that if we didn't know what we wanted our children to learn then we'd be pretty redundant as educators. We make hundreds of decisions a day about what the children in our care need to know next. We do not base this on guess work; we are qualified to do this. Therefore, a much better approach is to look at our pupils and consider the following:



## “Please don’t think that the changes to assessment need to mean a move away from play in your class”

- What skills do they need to know?
- How can families and the community provide resources and support?
- What is relevant to children’s lives?
- How can we combine all this with the skills they learn?

However, we can’t ignore the importance of understanding child development and how the new DM relies on this. For example, you may have a curriculum aim that the children in your class will be able to write their full name independently by the end of the school year. In one class there will be a wide range of ability, including:

- Children who can already do this
- Children who can write their name, but the letters are mostly back to front
- Children who are unable to form letters but like to make marks
- Children who are completely disengaged with the mark making process and unwilling to use a writing tool

Whoever is working with these children needs to know what the most appropriate next step is for each child. If the practitioners in your class are inexperienced or unfamiliar with what progression looks like in this area, then it would be helpful to produce a short piece of guidance that they can follow.

### Professional development

Developing professional judgement in yourself,

and helping other teachers and support staff, needs to be continual and not something to simply tick off the list. As you prepare for the new DM, try and put in place regular, ongoing discussions with any adult who works with the children in your class. Conversations should centre around what progress looks like. Share examples of progression as they come up throughout the school day. There are also some great video resources (try [sirenfilms.co.uk](http://sirenfilms.co.uk)) which can be used for discussion starters.

The sessions should encourage honest self-reflection. Where do we feel most confident about child development and where do we feel less confident? How can we support each other? If you work in a single form school, or have limited support in class, try to establish a dialogue with

other teaching staff around the progress of your children.

### Everyone on board

It’s essential that your school’s SLT understands what the changes to the new DM mean. Nothing would be more frustrating than requests from SLT for ‘progress data’ in October half term – a crushing blow to using your own professional judgement. So make sure everyone is on board this school year and understands the implications of a more child-centred approach, underpinned by professional judgement.

Please don’t think that the changes to assessment need to mean a move away from play in your class. The new DM is very different and it’s important to have faith in your convictions, but it doesn’t mean everything needs to change. The beginning of the new school year may well be challenging, but the joy of a less data-heavy life will soon start to pay off. Good luck! **TP**

### USEFUL RESOURCES

Read the new Development Matters document: [tinyurl.com/tp-devmatters](http://tinyurl.com/tp-devmatters)

Headteacher Julian Grenier gives advice for working with the revised EYFS: [tinyurl.com/tp-revisedEYFS](http://tinyurl.com/tp-revisedEYFS)

Listen to a podcast from Foundation Stage Forum and Tapestry which looks at what is at the heart of the new DM and busts some data myths: [tinyurl.com/tp-dmpodcast](http://tinyurl.com/tp-dmpodcast)

Helen Edwards, director of the Foundation Stage Forum, writes about recording learning, not tracking progress: [tinyurl.com/tp-helen](http://tinyurl.com/tp-helen)

Read guidance on meeting EYFS statutory responsibilities: [birthto5matters.org.uk](http://birthto5matters.org.uk)



*Stephen Kilgour is a former deputy head of a special school and is now*

*additional needs advisor and outreach teacher for Tapestry and the Foundation Stage Forum.*

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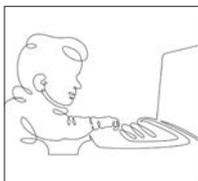
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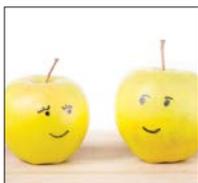
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## Online Therapy For SEN Pupils

Covid disrupted the provision of SEN support, but could digital options ensure children get the help they need?

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## Focus on TA Training

Good TAs are a vital asset, but we shouldn't rely on goodwill to make the role a success.

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## Is Your School Attachment Aware?

Explicitly putting the relational approach at the heart of all you do is vital, says Karen Pilling.

Read it at [tinyurl.com/tprelational](https://tinyurl.com/tprelational)

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Should all children with a diagnosis go on your SEN register? Not necessarily, says **Sara Alston**...

The SEND code of Practice (CoP) does not mention a SEN register. It states that 'every school is required to identify and address the SEN of the pupils that they support' and record when they decide a child has special educational needs in the school records. This is commonly known as the SEN register. Whatever we call the record, there are questions about how we identify when children have SEN. There's no single clear answer. This reflects that children do not necessarily fit easily into categories. However, this leads to inconsistency between schools and confusion for staff which is further exacerbated by differences in services available in different areas.

The CoP tells us that 'a pupil has SEN where their learning difficulty or disability calls for special educational provision, namely provision different from or additional to that normally available to pupils of the same age.' However, there are groups of pupils who require different or additional provision who do not necessarily have SEN. These may include pupil premium, children with English as an additional language, looked after and previously looked after children, pupils open to social care and students with disabilities and medical needs. There may be children within these groups who also have SEN, but to imply or assume that all pupil premium or EAL children have SEN is neither helpful nor appropriate.

Any child with an education, health and care plan is identified as having SEN and should be recorded as such on the school records. The question for most schools is about the children at SEN Support (K Code) level and when they need to be

recorded as having SEN and included on the SEN register.

## Four areas of need

The CoP identifies four areas of need: communication and interaction; cognition and learning; social, emotional and mental health; physical and sensory needs. If a child requires provision 'different from or additional to' that of their peers in any of these areas to access learning or engage in school, they should be identified with SEN. Consequently, there will be children identified with SEN who are achieving at age-related expectations as they need additional or different support for reasons beyond cognition and learning. Children with SEMH or physical and sensory needs who are achieving academically still need to be included on the SEN register.

There is a view that any child with a diagnosis should be on the SEN register but this misses the point of 'different from or additional to'. Quality-first teaching (QFT) includes a high level of differentiation. The needs of many children with a diagnosis of ASD, dyslexia or ADHD can and should be met through QFT. The definition of SEN should be needs-led and based on providing provision to meet children's needs and if this can be done without additional SEN provision, there's no need for a child to be on the SEN register.

Equally, there will be many

children who will not have a diagnosis, but require support and provision that is ‘different from or additional to’ the rest of their cohort. Often the provision of this support can form a basis of a later diagnosis.

### Using interventions

At your school you might use the rule that any child receiving an intervention should be included on the SEN register. This needs to be looked at differently. An intervention may be part of the support you provide to a child on the SEN register, but the fact they are receiving intervention support is not a reason to place them on the register. It undermines

*“The assumption of SEN can leave children’s true needs unmet”*

the importance of differentiation as integral to outstanding teaching.

A significant number of interventions, such as wobble cushions, visual timetables and word banks, for example, can and should be part of QFT. Furthermore, there are many reasons for children to attend intervention groups, both long- and short-term, other than SEN. Many pupils need short boosters to support their learning without having SEN. A child who is a ‘daily reader’, because there’s no one at home able to hear them read, should not necessarily be on the SEN register, despite receiving a long-term daily one-to-one intervention.

### Outside agencies

Another rule of thumb used by some schools is that a child should be on the SEN register if an outside agency is involved. This can lead to a catch-22 situation. Often outside agencies will only become involved if the child is on the SEN

register. Equally, given the difficulties in many areas of accessing outside agency support, this can contribute to the postcode lottery for accessing SEN support.

In areas where support is only provided for EHCP and statutory work, if outside agency involvement is the criteria for inclusion on the SEN register we deny support to children at SEN Support level.

Moreover, outside agency involvement can be short-term for specific issues, such as speech difficulties in Reception, for example, which are not impacting on the child’s learning, progress or social interactions. In these cases it’s questionable if the child needs inclusion on the SEN register.

### Low attainment

The CoP is clear that ‘slow progress and low attainment do not necessarily mean that a child has SEN’. So not achieving age-related expectations should not automatically lead to placement on the SEN register. We need to consider the reasons for underachievement and respond to them, but SEN is only one possible reason. The assumption of SEN can leave children’s true needs unmet. Equally, assumptions about children from particular backgrounds can leave children with their SEN needs unmet.

The issue of SEN identification is complex and needs to focus on an individual’s needs, including their ability to engage in and access learning and the social and physical environments of school. We need to focus on the child’s need for provision ‘different from or additional to’ that provided to their peers. This should guide their placement on the SEN register.

However, more important than placing a child on the SEN register is the provision and support we provide to them. Being on the register does not make a difference; how we respond to a child’s needs through high quality provision and inclusive practice does. Your SEN register should be dynamic and frequently reviewed, focusing on the needs of children with SEN at all levels. **TP**



*Sara Alston is an independent consultant, trainer and practising SENCo. Her new book, co-authored with Daniel Sobel, is called **The Inclusive***

*Classroom: A New Approach to Differentiation (Bloomsbury).*

 @seainclusion

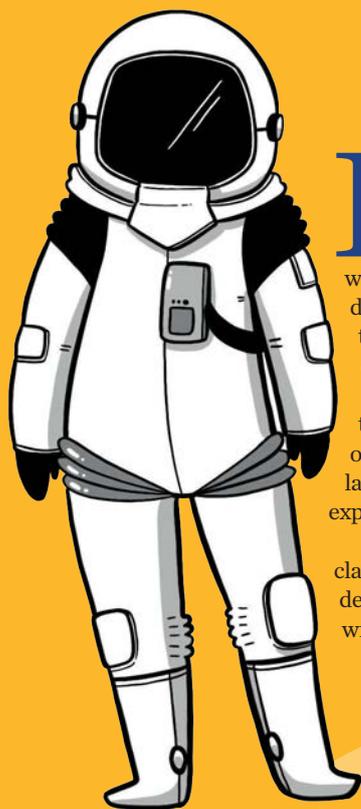
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# AUTHOR IN YOUR CLASSROOM



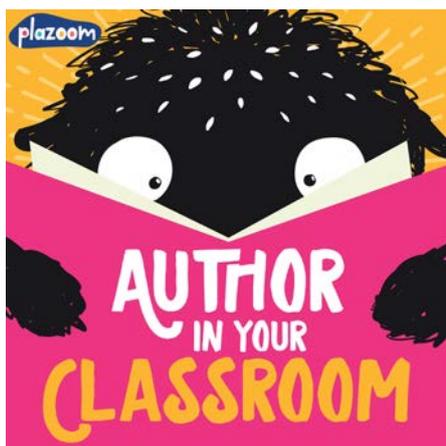
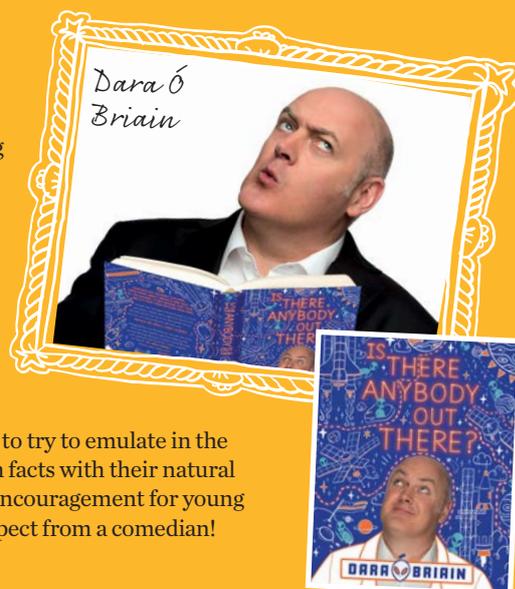
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**F**ancy a virtual visit from a real author? Luckily for you, Dara Ó Briain, author of *Is There Anybody Out There?*, is ready and waiting to share his thoughts, ideas and inspirations with your budding wordsmiths, via our free literacy podcast. The experience doesn't end there either; we've created some amazing free teaching resources to download at [plazoom.com](http://plazoom.com), so you can continue your reading adventure in the classroom.

Many non-fiction texts for children use humour to engage their young readers. As well as being full of fascinating information, lots of factual books are laugh-out-loud funny – humour can be a key way of explaining ideas and keeping a reader interested.

This type of writing is a wonderful thing for young writers to try to emulate in the classroom, bringing together the interest many pupils have in facts with their natural desire to have fun. In this episode, Dara is full of advice and encouragement for young writers, delivered in a very warm and funny way, as you'd expect from a comedian!

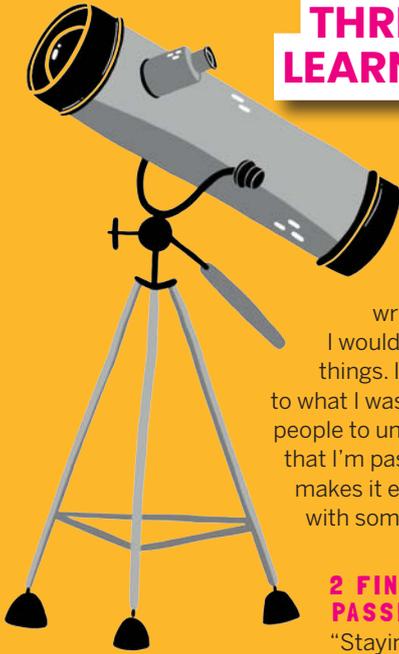


## HOW TO USE THE PODCAST

- ✓ Search for 'Author in your Classroom' podcast wherever you listen to podcasts
- ✓ Play it in your classroom in one go, or in shorter chunks
- ✓ Pause the podcast to talk about the points being raised, using our teaching notes



## THREE THINGS KIDS WILL LEARN FROM THE PODCAST



### 1 ON BEING SILLY

"As you do lots of writing in school you find your voice and the way you enjoy writing. Even when I was writing essays in primary school I would put in a few jokes and silly things. It added a bit of colour to what I was writing about. I like people to understand the things that I'm passionate about and it makes it easier if you soften it with some silliness."

### 2 FINDING YOUR PASSION

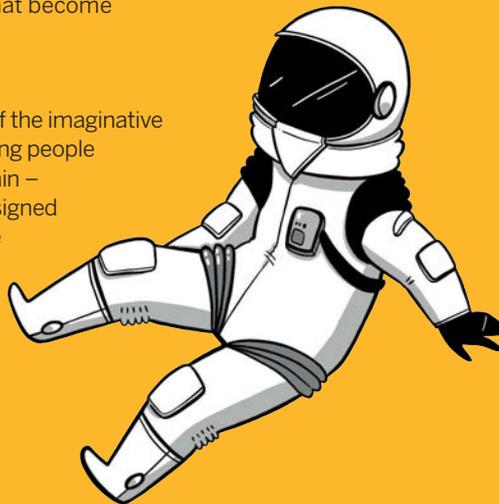
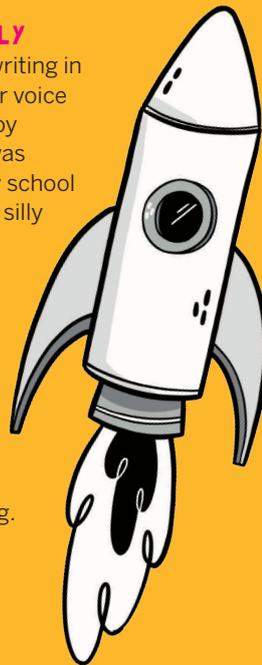
"Staying curious is everything.

It's a big world and there are lots of things out there. That doesn't mean you're going to be curious about everything – a lot of the joy of life is finding the thing that you have a passion for; the thing that is most exciting to you. It's part of the great mixture of humanity that we all find tiny parts of the world that become our universe."

### 3 BEING PRO-GAMING

"The reason I'm pro-gaming is because of the imaginative worlds you can construct. A common thing people say is that gaming's not good for your brain – it's stunting your imagination. Yes, it's designed to be addictive and you're in a happy little state where you're rewarded all the time, but the flipside of it is it can be an amazing place to tell stories and create worlds."

**LISTEN TO DARA'S ANSWERS IN FULL BY DOWNLOADING THE PODCAST.**



## How to download the resources



To accompany the podcast, teaching experts at Plazoom have created free resources that you can use to develop your pupils' writing. The teaching pack includes teacher notes, book extracts, a PowerPoint, planning sheets and beautifully designed elements for a working wall display.

In this teaching sequence, children will have the chance to learn how to bring fascinating information and humour together so each complements the other. Extracts from the podcast are suggested to introduce each section of the teaching sequence, providing an excellent way to connect the things children are learning with the work of an accomplished author.

**DOWNLOAD THEM AT [TINYURL.COM/TP-DARA](https://tinyurl.com/tp-dara)**

## PREVIOUS EPISODES

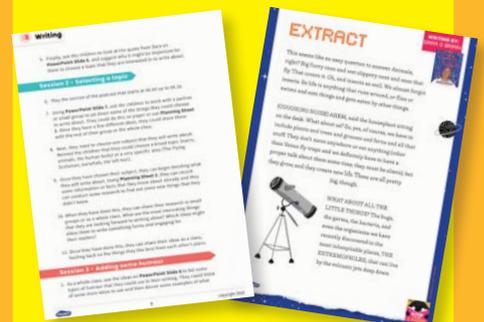
Author photo © Adrian Pope



**BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH**, poet and author of *Windrush Child*, had great advice for children struggling to find their voice. Download the teaching resources to help pupils learn about how to write stories featuring a powerful voice, whether their own or that of an historical character.



**DERMOT O'LEARY**, presenter, DJ and author of the wildly popular *Toto the Ninja Cat* series, talked about how good research can inspire truly outstanding stories. Download our accompanying resources to help pupils learn about how in-depth planning can help them to write their own wonderful stories.

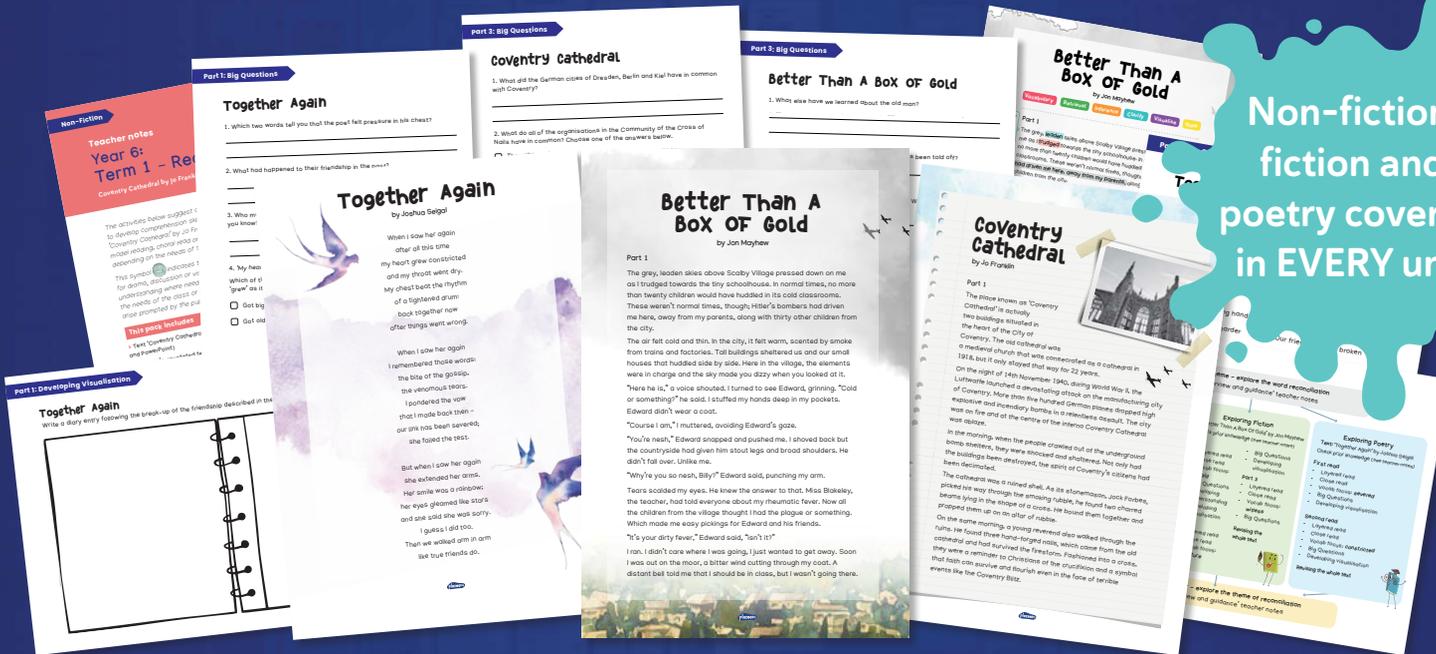


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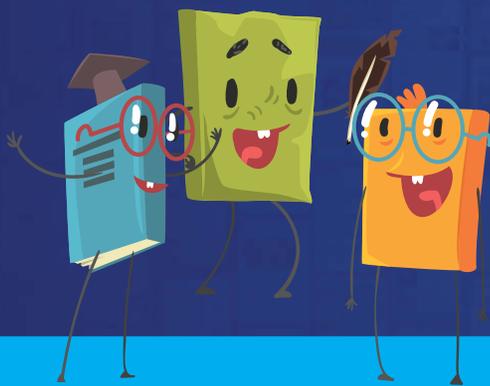
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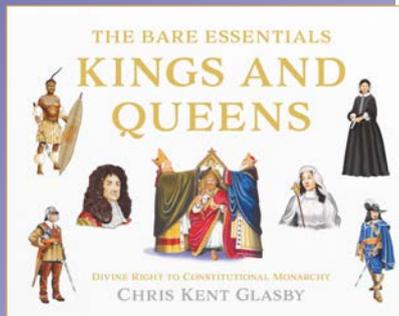
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# Make the end of Year 6 SPECIAL

It's been a chaotic year but Y6 leavers still deserve the best ending to their primary school journey that we can give them...

**SOPHIE BARTLETT**

**A**t the end of March 2020 I gathered my Y6 pupils together in the hall (those remaining, anyway, after numbers began to dwindle with various self-isolations) for a chat. I promised I wouldn't let them leave school without the goodbye they deserved, albeit inwardly telling myself I would see them again in a few weeks anyway. Oh, how little did I know!

Weeks turned into months and before I knew it, I was sending out virtual 'silly SATs' papers and organising for the local secondary's head of Y7 to visit our Y6s in a socially distanced meeting on our field. A year on, we may be in a similar position but this time we're wiser and more prepared. Here are some ways to make the last months of Y6 special, despite the circumstances.

## Silly SATs

There are many reasons to be glad SATs are cancelled this year. However, SATs week is often seen as a sort of 'rite of passage' for many Y6 children. Some schools may want to continue to use this as an assessment point, although I'd personally wait until later in the year to coincide with the assessment timings of the rest of the school and allow for full curriculum coverage (rather than having to cram it all in before May – who's missed that?!).

There are ways to still make what would have been SATs week an event in the Y6 calendar, depending on your context, of course. If conducted sensibly, it could be a good experience for children to sit tests in exam conditions – after all, there is something about this practice that seems to make Y6 children feel more mature than the rest of the school. Alternatively, you could mark the actual week itself with 'silly SATs': quizzes and questions based on other aspects of the curriculum that the children might prefer to the real thing!

## Put on a show

A Y6 production might not be as untenable as it was last year. This obviously depends on

your bubble sizes, but as a small school we are lucky enough to be able to go ahead. Our plan is to practise our play both outdoors and in the hall (you can almost count on it raining on our chosen performance dates), with the hope that parents and guardians will be seated in households in a socially distanced manner on the playground. We're planning to put in extra dates so that everyone will have a chance to attend – now let's just hope that the technology holds up outside the school building...

## Connect with secondaries

With primary schools sending their children to a variety of secondary schools, and with secondaries accepting children from a wide range of primaries, the risk of mixing bubbles during transition days is high. Virtual visits can only achieve so much. However, luckily one of our local secondaries is aware that more is needed. Each department has set an 'assignment' for Y6 children to complete across the summer

term. These are entirely optional, but it gives pupils a chance to create a connection with their secondary school and experience what content they may be covering when they reach Y7.

Arguably the main differences from Y6 to Y7 are the regular changes in teachers and classrooms. Depending on your school environment, this is something you could give the children an experience of before they leave. Teacher Emily Weston – experienced in all things transition – recommends trialling a 'secondary week'. This involves different members of staff teaching a subject of their choice; even better if this involves classroom changes too. Read more at [tinyurl.com/tp-smooth](https://tinyurl.com/tp-smooth).

## Replace residential

I know of schools with residentials booked since last year who are holding out hope they can still go ahead – fingers crossed! For the rest of us, it's still possible to create an exciting and bonding experience for the children in a different way. Try an 'experience week' with different trips, visitors or events and a passport for the children to stamp each day. It won't replace a trip away, but will still create something unique for Y6 to mark the end of an era.

There are many ways you can still make the end of Y6 special for this cohort – and make it special we must. These children have missed out on half a year of school and deserve the best ending to their primary school journey that we can give them. **TP**



*Sophie Bartlett is a Y5/6 teacher in an English primary school.*

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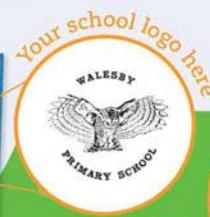
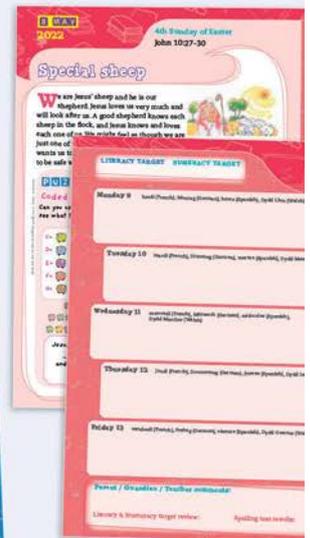
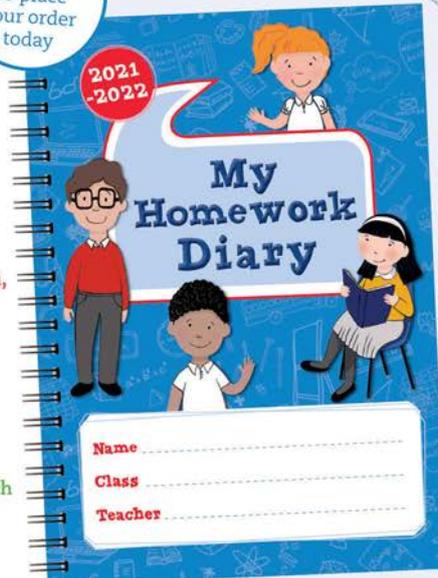
- Multiplication tables
- Modern European languages
- Beating bullying
- Be a good friend
- Internet safety "Stay switched on"
- Telling the time

### Catholic pages:

- Prayer pages
- The Rosary
- Going to Mass
- Our life in the Church

### Anglican pages:

- Teach us to pray using your hand or a labyrinth
- The Bible
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# Face the CONSEQUENCES

How we changed our behaviour management culture so it no longer focuses on punishment

KAREN JONES

As I walked down the corridor to my new office, I stepped over three Y5 boys sitting in the corridor. Although their heads were down, every so often they would look up and catch their friend's eye and let out a stifled giggle. A voice from the room at the end of the corridor barked: "You're there for a punishment, not a reward!"

This was a pattern of behaviour at my school. The same children were always sitting in the corridors outside the headteacher's office. The appendices of the behaviour policy decorated the doors and walls around school – a comprehensive list of 'offences' and corresponding punishments, neatly boxed and categorised. Children were able to recite the choice of punishments that were on offer depending on their behaviour.

It did not work. There was no impact. The same children missed breaks and lunches. The same pupils sat outside the headteacher's office. The same children got text messages home to tell their parents that they had hurt another child. Something desperately needed to change.

## Basic needs

As a Church of England school, it was important for us to reflect on our ethos and values. A behaviour approach had to truly represent what we believed in. Fortunately, both I and my new deputy passionately believed in inclusion. As qualified SENCOs, we could see that we needed to get the provision right, first and foremost, by ensuring that children's basic needs were being met. We started to take an in-depth look at our behaviour approach and policy.

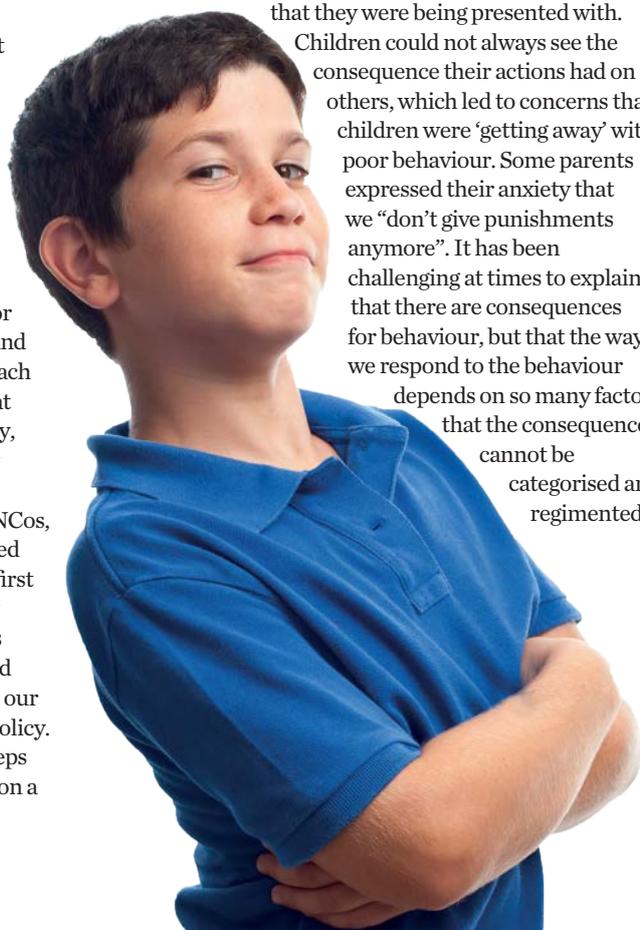
We attended Essex Steps training, which is focused on a

'therapeutic management of behaviour' model. This gave us a good foundation to start discussing and sharing with staff. From this, we used further approaches from Paul Dix's *When the Adults Change* book and website ([whentheadultschange.com](http://whentheadultschange.com)). Gradually we started to shape and mould a new way of approaching behaviour.

Now, instead of punishment, we talk to the children about consequence. Consequences are fluid and relate directly (where possible) to the original behaviour. For example, if a child damages property, rather than miss their lunch they will either repair the damage or speak to the caretaker about the cost of repair, then have a restorative conversation with a member of the leadership team.

It hasn't all been plain sailing. Some staff were at a loss as to what consequences to issue. There were no longer posters with neat boxes available to categorise the behaviours that they were being presented with.

Children could not always see the consequence their actions had on others, which led to concerns that children were 'getting away' with poor behaviour. Some parents expressed their anxiety that we "don't give punishments anymore". It has been challenging at times to explain that there are consequences for behaviour, but that the way we respond to the behaviour depends on so many factors that the consequence cannot be categorised and regimented.



This article first featured in our sister title *The Headteacher*. Find out more at [primaryleaders.com](http://primaryleaders.com)

Every child is different, every reaction is different and therefore our response must be personalised, differentiated and have an impact.

## Remarkable changes

We are now more than 18 months into our new therapeutic approach to behaviour management and already we can see remarkable changes. The school feels different. You can feel our ethos, you can see our core Christian values being lived. We still have a way to go – there will still be resistance – but we have the evidence to show that it is working. We have had successes with the most challenging behaviour; children who were at risk of exclusion in other schools are now thriving in our care.

We certainly do still have children who present with a range of behavioural needs, but our staff know that these behaviours are a form of communication and that before we respond with disciplinary action, we need to take time to understand what is really being said. **TP**



*Karen Jones is headteacher of Great Clacton CofE Junior in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex.*

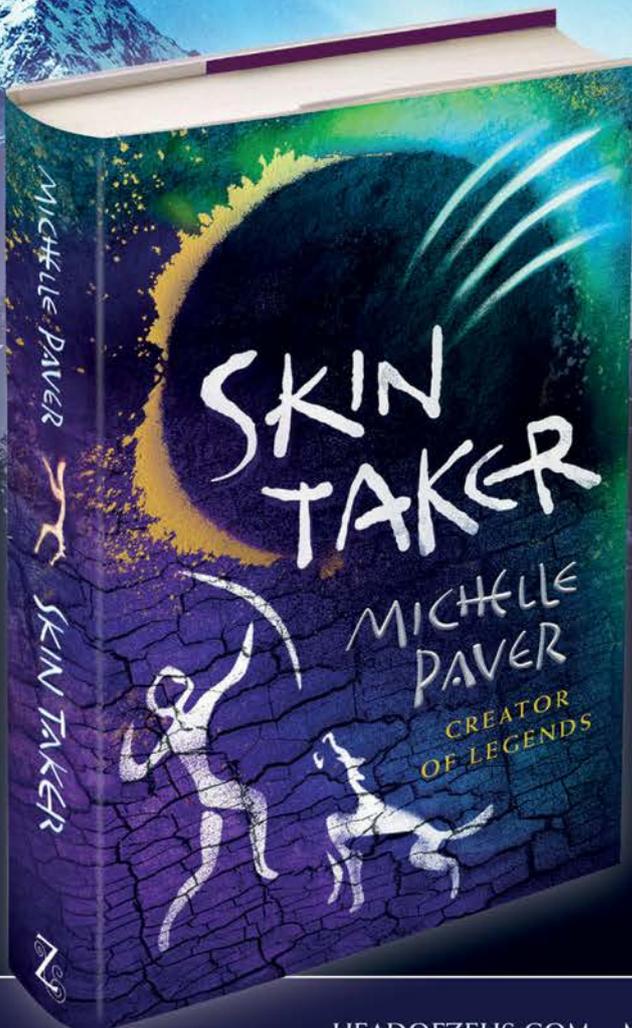


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Use the LEAF programme to learn about ecosystems and help pupils connect with the nature on their doorsteps

### [ THE TREND ]

## RECONNECTING WITH NATURE

Eco-Schools England at Keep Britain Tidy, supported by sustainable children's clothing company Frugi, is launching outdoor education programme and award, Learning About Forests (LEAF). This coincides with an increased national focus on replanting, with the Northern Forest project aiming to plant 50 million trees, which will benefit the pupils of today.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

While the focus of the LEAF programme is forest-based ecosystems, the skills and knowledge acquired can be applied to any natural environment. Schools located in urban areas are especially welcome to take part in the programme to help pupils reconnect with nature.

Like Eco-Schools, the LEAF programme is led by pupils as they work through the 'Forest Cycle' for their chosen theme: climate, biodiversity, restoration, water, community or production. Through planning, leading and monitoring, young people will change behaviours and raise awareness of the importance of native trees and ecosystems. Schools are also asked to use the LEAF programme as a means to green the curriculum and help staff who are not experts in outdoor education feel more confident delivering lessons outside.

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Now in its 21st year, the LEAF programme operates in 28 countries, including South Africa and Mexico, to help raise awareness of forest ecosystems and their importance. From ancient woodland and local parks to school grounds and backyards, the LEAF programme helps young people connect with the nature on their doorstep. Forests are a vital stabilising force for the climate. They regulate ecosystems, protect biodiversity, play an integral part in the carbon cycle, support livelihoods and supply goods and services that can drive sustainable growth. Increasing and maintaining forests is therefore seen as an essential part of the solution to climate change. Through the LEAF programme over 84,000 trees have been planted to date.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

The LEAF programme and award are free to schools, youth groups and registered homeschoolers. To register to take part in the LEAF programme, head over to the Eco-Schools England website where you will also be able to download a LEAF teaching guide with everything your school needs to get started and apply for the award. The current LEAF Award application window will be open from 1st June until 30th July. A new round of the LEAF programme will recommence in September 2021 and run until July 2022.

### Discover More...

Find out more about the international LEAF and Eco-Schools programmes, managed by Keep Britain Tidy, at [eco-schools.org.uk](https://eco-schools.org.uk) or email [eco-schools@keepbritain.tidy.org](mailto:eco-schools@keepbritain.tidy.org)



## GET INVOLVED

Existing Eco-Schools can work through the LEAF programme to apply for the LEAF Award as a standalone accreditation. They can also use their LEAF programme actions as topic evidence when applying for their Eco-Schools Green Flag.

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# Make your MARK

Use the Quality Mark process to reflect on and celebrate the areas your school excels in...

MATTHEW LANE

**W**e decided to apply for an RE Quality Mark at my school as the culmination of a two-year curriculum change programme that saw RE transformed into 'religion and worldviews'. We believed our research-informed curriculum was an example of best practice and external accreditation was a way to give validity to our view.

Quality marks are a great way for schools to show the areas they excel in. For religious education, schools can apply for the RE Quality Mark (REQM) which celebrates outstanding practice in the study of religion and worldviews, especially those schools that provide their learners with authentic experiences and contribute to whole-school outcomes.

Started in 2012, the REQM is supported by the RE Council of England and Wales to recognise and celebrate the quality of RE nationally. Schools undertaking the award measure their effectiveness in learning, curriculum, teaching and leadership.

## Why bother?

For staff, the award was a chance to share their favourite examples of best practice with the wider school community. In what has been an exceptionally busy year, it was a welcome opportunity to pause, reflect and celebrate what we'd achieved together. The staff voice survey was a purposeful way to collect views and the

results have informed our next CPD cycle.

Children were also involved and enjoyed the chance to speak with me about their learning and what they enjoyed the most about it. The best comment I received was from a child who said they would like "more RE than one hour per week as we always have more to talk about than the lesson allows for." Students were very pleased to learn that their work was being used as evidence and would be shared with people outside of our school.

## The process

The assessment process was straightforward. After applying via the REQM website, we downloaded an evidence form and a pupil voice proforma. The evidence form provides 29 areas for reflection, with each delineated into bronze, silver and gold descriptors. There's also space to write short summaries after each section. If you know your curriculum well, it takes about 90 minutes to draft.

The evidence form is the start of the story you tell the assessor. I included hyperlinks to evidence such as book scans and our curriculum documentation.

If you're going for the gold award, like we were, it's worth putting in extra time and effort to capture and celebrate everything

you would like the assessor to see.

For the pupil voice aspect I spoke with children from all ten classes in my school. I spent longer than the ten minutes I'd planned for with each group because they all had so much to say. I collected staff voices via an online survey. This isn't required by REQM but was helpful in my evidencing for the leadership section. I also sat down with my headteacher and RE governor. This was a great opportunity to explain to my school's leaders the finer details about RE and show our successes in the subject.

The final assessment involved a 45 minute video call with our appointed assessor. They also spent 15 minutes with our headteacher. Our assessor was wonderful – they were full of praise for the school and asked pertinent questions to draw out all the details. I'd describe it as a conversation with a critical friend, helping you to celebrate your school, learning and pupils.

## Final thoughts

I'd highly recommend applying for a Quality Mark. The process offered us a chance to reflect and celebrate what we offer. The REQM team is supportive and we were in communication with our assessor before the final event to ensure they would have all the evidence they needed. Our school has now been added to the national register of REQM holders and we received an icon to include on our website and letterheads. The assessor's report, included in the feedback, provides us with great evidence for future inspections. Overall, it's a great way for schools to celebrate and promote their learning. **TP**



*Matthew Lane is religion and worldviews lead at Hethersett CEVC Primary in Norwich. The school was awarded a Gold RE Quality Mark in its final assessment.*

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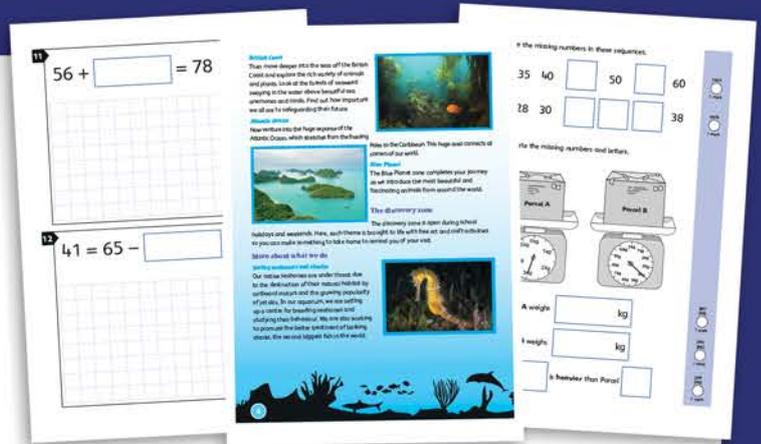
	Year 2		Year 6	
	Paper	Length	Paper	Length
Monday	<b>Paper 1, GAPS:</b> Grammar, punctuation and vocabulary	20 minutes	<b>Paper 1, GAPS:</b> Grammar, punctuation and vocabulary	30 minutes
	<b>Paper 2, GAPS:</b> Spelling	15-20 minutes	<b>Paper 2, GAPS:</b> Spelling	15-20 minutes
Tuesday	<b>Paper 1, NTS Reading:</b> Combined reading prompt and answer booklet	30 minutes	<b>Paper 1, NTS Reading:</b> Reading paper with accompanying reading booklet	60 minutes
Wednesday	<b>Paper 2, NTS Reading:</b> Reading booklet and answer booklet	40 minutes	<b>Paper 1, NTS Maths:</b> Arithmetic	30 minutes
			<b>Paper 2, NTS Maths:</b> Reasoning	40 minutes
Thursday	<b>Paper 1, NTS Maths:</b> Arithmetic	20 minutes	<b>Paper 3, NTS Maths:</b> Reasoning	40 minutes
	<b>Paper 2, NTS Maths:</b> Reasoning	35 minutes		
Friday	Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning Survey and Strategies	20 minutes	Wellbeing and Attitudes to Learning Survey and Strategies	20 minutes



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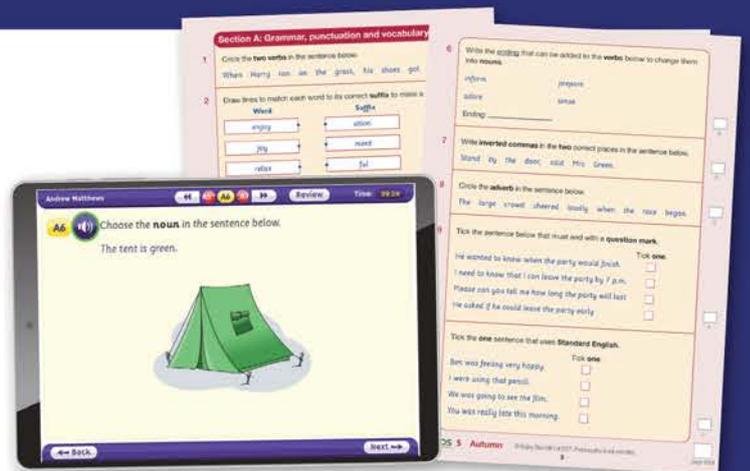
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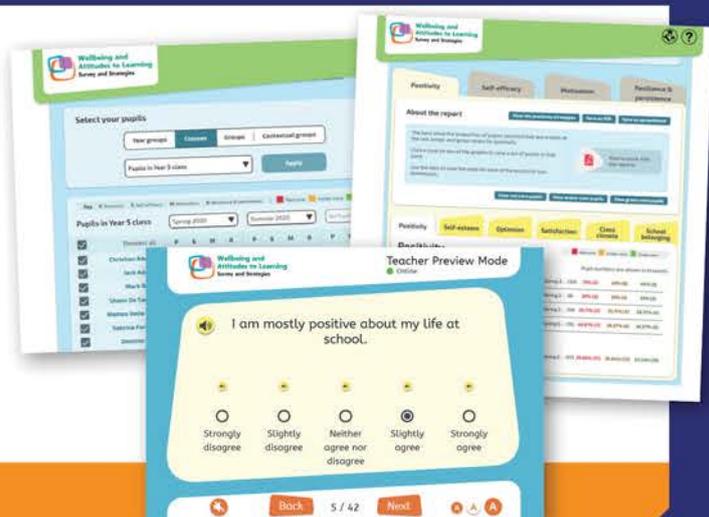
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# Improve your classroom CULTURE

These three strategies are simple to implement  
and easy for children to remember...

**ROBBIE BURNS**

**R**ecently I've been focusing on helping my colleagues to embed three key strategies for developing classroom culture across our three-form entry primary academy. The strategies originated in the work of Doug Lemov in his seminal book *Teach Like a Champion*, which studied the practices of top performing teachers across the USA. I chose them to implement in my school because I knew they would ensure there was a consistent approach to procedures, routines and learning behaviours that all children could easily remember and recognise as they progressed through school.

## Strategy 1: Threshold

### In a nutshell

Greet children at the door, setting expectations before they enter the classroom.

### How to do it

There are three steps to this strategy. Firstly, expect pupils to stop and say hello to you before they enter the classroom. Secondly, welcome each student by name, making eye contact. Finally, state your expectation of what children do once they enter the classroom.

At first glance, this is a really simple strategy, but done well it sends deep messages to children about what it means to be in lessons with you. When you stand at the door with a warm and positive demeanour, this says something about your classroom. It says, 'In this room, I am in charge. I really want you to be part of it in every way and thoroughly enjoy all the learning that will take place within it, but I am in charge.' This doesn't mean you're a dictator or a military sergeant, but instead an adult who cares deeply about pupils, their learning and what will take place in your classroom.

When done successfully, this strategy says to students that you care about the development of their character. Simply saying 'hello' while looking you in the eye is an important part of being polite. It indicates to children that, even though you value their presence, you won't let them into your classroom environment unless they're ready to learn. This strategy sends the message that you, the teacher, set the culture of the room and you want children to participate in the right way. But first, they must say hello and recognise how they ought to behave in the school environment.

## Strategy 2: Do now

### In a nutshell

This is an independent task, done in silence, that helps children to review prior learning.

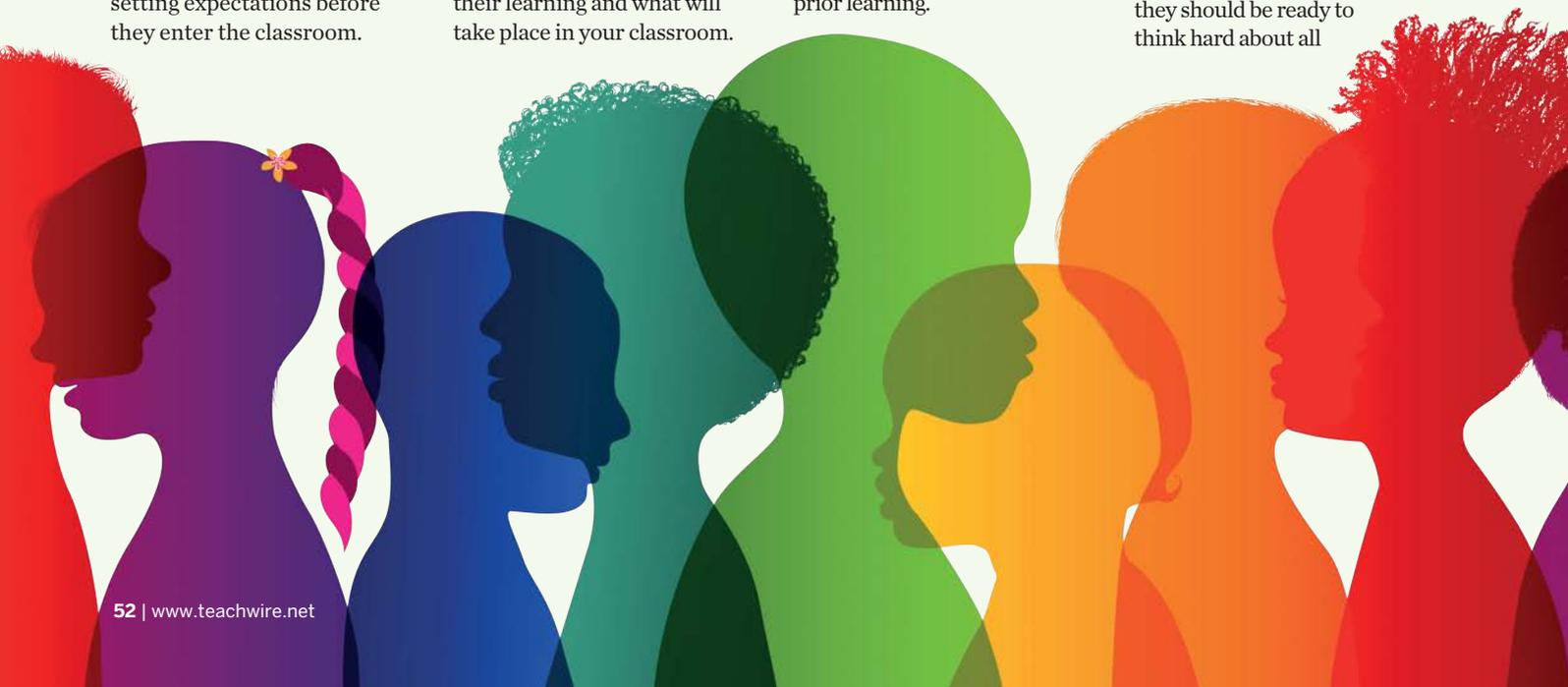
### How to do it

This strategy relies on four separate steps. First, gather data on student understanding from prior learning. Secondly, create a task that includes questions and activities from this area. Thirdly, expect children to complete the task silently and independently. Finally, review pupils' work and get them to self-mark.

At my school we do this task during the first ten minutes of the day, while students settle, put their things away and get ready for structured lessons.

It includes retrieval practice from all subjects to reinforce the interconnectedness of the curriculum.

When done well, this strategy sends a message to students that every single moment in the classroom matters. As soon as they're ready to learn they need to get going, because that is what this place is for. It shows children that what they learnt yesterday, last week and last month matters to their learning today, and that they should be ready to think hard about all



the other things they've learnt. Make it clear that you expect pupils' best efforts and that this task will give them the chance to check what they've learnt and how well they've learnt it.

### Strategy 3: STAR sitting

#### In a nutshell

Teach students to sit up straight, track the speaker, ask and answer questions and respect those around them ('STAR' for short).

#### How to do it

Teach what you mean by STAR sitting by modelling it. Make it clear when you expect it to happen, and reteach the strategy as needed. I've often sat through CPD sessions on 'active listening' or 'active speaking'. I've walked past lots of posters with nice pictures of these things. Quite often though, the initiative fades away within weeks. I even remember asking a student, "What does active listening mean?" and he shrugged and said, "I don't know."

The difference between STAR sitting and other strategies that try to address the same issue is that 'STAR' as an acronym is memorable and easy to refer back to again and again and again. Although it doesn't encompass every element of learning behaviours, it's actionable enough to be a consistent element of all classrooms and helps to instil a strong culture in a meaningful

way. It provides a clear way to talk to teachers about learning behaviours and support them to develop it further in their own practice. It's punchy and quick to understand and, therefore, conducive to great instructional coaching.

You can also break it down. When you want students to look at a particular person in the classroom or at the board, you can simply say "Track the board" or "Track James" and expect all students to look in that direction, allowing you to note their engagement in the lesson.

### How I led this change

#### Explain why it matters

This sounds basic but I think it's important. When I rolled out these strategies in my school, I didn't want them to sound gimmicky. Instead, I wanted them to be deeply embedded in our shared understanding of classroom culture. Because they're easily actionable, it makes it more effective than talking about vague behaviour management techniques.

#### Explain the 'what' and 'how' really clearly

In our first sessions on classroom culture, I explained what the three strategies were and the steps staff needed to take to do them well.

After this I modelled them as clearly and purposefully as I could, showing how I would do it in my classroom, even though this felt awkward and strange at first.

#### Show videos of others doing the strategies

To further embed these strategies, and help staff see that I wasn't the only one who thought this was a good idea, I showed them videos of others doing the strategies in a range of contexts. This was helpful for colleagues teaching a diverse age range to see how it might manifest itself within their classroom.

#### Script the roll-out

Teachers wrote down exactly what they were going to say and do at each moment. To help colleagues think deeper, I asked them to, for example, think about what they'd do if a student 'wasn't ready' to enter the room, and how they would reset expectations with them.

#### Balance practice with monitoring

I was keen to give staff space to try the three strategies, get it wrong, try again and refine them further. After a few weeks we monitored the impact through developmental drop-ins. It was great to see the work being done across the school.

#### Use instructional coaching

After the developmental drop-in, we did some instructional coaching. This involved taking notes on how staff were doing (how long it took pupils to settle, what teachers said at the door, and so on). We then supported colleagues to reflect deeply on how they could improve what they were doing. Many staff benefitted from seeing their classroom from a different angle.

If I was to lead this process again, there are a few things I'd do differently. Next time I'd include more space for deliberate practice in staff meetings. While we did script, reflect and consider various aspects of how we would implement these strategies, I don't think I went far enough in giving colleagues the space to practise, get feedback and then move forward with structured support. I'm hoping that now children are back in the classroom we'll be able to think more deeply about the strategies we set out at the beginning of the year. There have been great leaps forward in this area, but there is still much for all of us to learn. **TP**



*Robbie Burns is assistant vice principal for teaching and learning at Bede Academy, an all-through school in Blyth, Northumberland.*

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# Social NETWORK

Spending your day sorting out social media scraps? Here's how to have impactful classroom conversations about kids' online worlds

**RUBBI BHOGAL-WOOD**

**A**s I walked down the corridor to begin our first session on social media safety, the headteacher ushered me into his office to update me on a social media incident that happened just that morning. A pupil – someone entirely unsuspecting and with exemplary behaviour – had been caught posting abusive messages to her classmates in a desperate attempt to be part of the ‘in’ crowd on a social media chat channel.

The child was ten years old. The minimum age limit for Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram is 13. However, that doesn't stop children opening accounts anyway, either with or without parental permission.

A lot of the reasons why tweens and early teens are keen to open social media accounts before the age limits aren't too dissimilar to the reasons that we as adults want to have them. They want to feel connected to their friends and family, be in the know with the latest goings on, use their channels to explore their creativity and express their emotions and feelings. What I hear from senior leaders, though, is that the majority of their pupils are being gifted mobile phones from parents without any ongoing discussion about how to engage with social media, both as a content creator and as a consumer of content. This reluctance to have regular conversations about social media in the home is now leading to a daily onslaught of social media based behavioural issues that senior leaders are spending huge amounts of time policing and resolving.

In school, safeguarding around internet or digital safety is addressed in PSHE classes and the majority of students are clued up on what not to do, but I'd urge primary leaders to invest in conversations to open up and challenge the social media narrative from the perspective of the child. Move beyond the ‘don'ts’ and explore online channels, features and behaviours from a young person's point of view.

You may find this daunting, and that's understandable. You might not be an active social media user or you might have very limited exposure to popular channels. For example, I often meet teachers who haven't even heard of the gaming and chat channels Twitch and Discord that their pupils use on a daily basis. However, as their teacher and role model you have a wonderful opportunity to help guide children through this digital world. Just as you inspire them to view the world through your knowledge of words, history, people and places, you have the same chance to connect and share through the strong cultural capital that is social media. Your ethics and values are not separated between digital and analogue.

Sometimes children are resistant in wanting to discuss their online behaviour because they feel their teacher ‘won't get it’. Thankfully, there are plenty of resources and advisors out there who can help you to get social media savvy on how each channel works. Plus, as a trusted adult in their life, you are perfectly placed to help pupils think critically and interrogate information presented on their social

media channels. Here are three tips for meaningful and impactful social media discussions:

## 1 Make it weekly

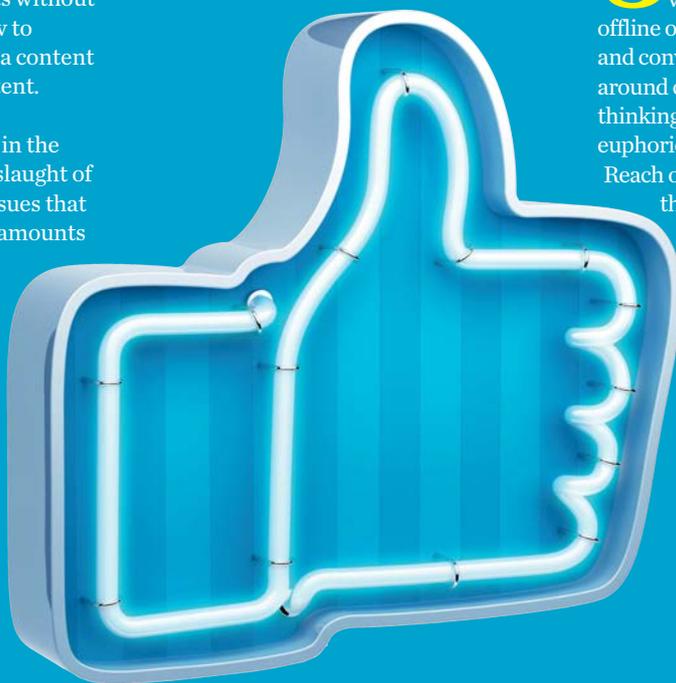
Children tell me they ‘switch off’ when they are presented with the downsides to social media, both at school and at home. Ignite their interest by introducing a weekly ‘social chat’ to discuss their experiences. Create a social media discussion box then invite students to write down and post their topic or dilemma of choice, anonymously if they prefer.

## 2 Let kids lead

I often hear from children that their parents “just don't get it”. Reduce that gap by empowering children to host termly social media know-how sessions for their parents, either digitally or in-person. Topics can range from introductory ‘how to’ sessions on popular channels to the creation of content and building a family digital pledge.

## 3 Call in the experts

Young people often see the online world as a natural extension of the offline one in terms of their engagement and conversations. However, behaviour around comments, sharing, trust and critical thinking sometimes get sidelined for the euphoric feeling of being ‘liked’ or included. Reach out to industry educators and invite them to talk to your pupils. They are expert at working with young people to challenge the narrative around social media in ways that make them positively reassess it. **TP**

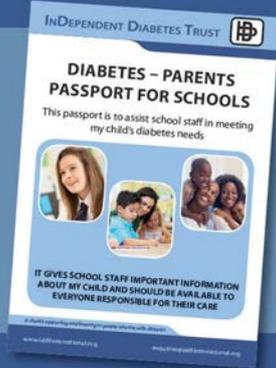
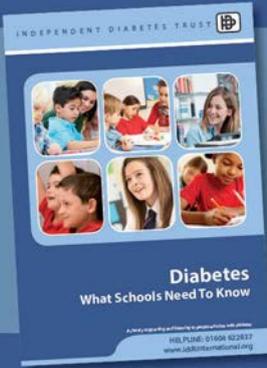


*Rubbi Bhogal-Wood is a social media educator and founder of Wild & Form Digital.*

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Hari's World works hard to raise as much awareness as possible for children, and adults through the **85 Hazards** portrayed in the **Hari's World four book series**, always with the aim of teaching children to **'Play Safe ... Not Sorry'**. Hari's World is kindly supporting **Children with Cancer UK** to help save even more young lives by funding vital research into childhood cancer.

So why not join with many others and take up the **Hari's World 'Caring and Sharing Challenge'** at [www.harisworld.com](http://www.harisworld.com) and claim your reward of a **Hari Book Mark** and a **pack of 18 colourful Hari Book Labels**. With every entry Hari's World will donate £4 to **Children with Cancer UK**, the leading National Charity dedicated to research into childhood cancer.

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# 3 TEACHERS SHARE THEIR BEST EVER LESSON

## KS2 MATHS

Watch **Lucie Hoy-Green**, a teacher at Churchill CEVC Primary in Bristol, discuss her 'decide, assess, back it up' maths lesson. 'DAB' is an idea that can be used in a variety of subjects as it supports reasoning and explanations. It's a scaffolding technique that gives children the confidence to both orally rehearse and evidence their explanation clearly.



## EYFS SCIENCE

**Danielle Sargeant**, a teacher at Cobholm Primary Academy in Great Yarmouth,

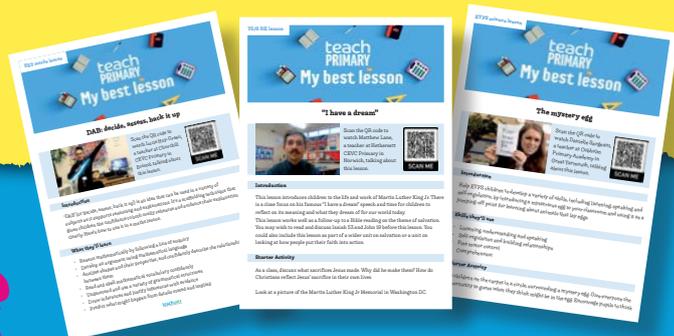


explains how to help EYFS children develop a variety of skills including listening, speaking and self-regulation by introducing a mysterious egg to your classroom. Use this idea as a jumping-off point for learning about animals that lay eggs.



## UKS2 RE

Teacher **Matthew Lane** from Hethersett CEVC Primary in Norwich shows you how to introduce children to the life and work of Martin Luther King Jr. In this lesson there is a close focus on his famous "I have a dream" speech and time for children to reflect on its meaning and what they dream of for our world today.



## HOW TO WATCH THE VIDEOS

Scan the QR code to go straight to the videos or visit [tinyurl.com/tp-bestlesson](http://tinyurl.com/tp-bestlesson)

## FREE DOWNLOADS

Feeling inspired? Get free PDF lesson plans for each of the lessons talked about at [tinyurl.com/tp-bestlesson](http://tinyurl.com/tp-bestlesson)

## INSIDE THIS SECTION



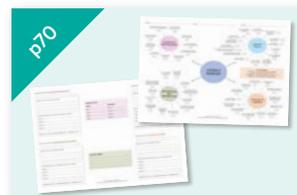
**Celebrate Empathy Day** with these diverse titles which encourage pupils to feel compassion for others



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Plazoom's Grammar Burst resources packs are designed to help teachers tackle tricky topics with a series of five mini lessons that build to a creative and purposeful extended writing task, enabling children to put their learning into action. Try them for yourself with a free 14-day trial at [plazoom.com/collections/grammar-burst](http://plazoom.com/collections/grammar-burst)



# Meet the AUTHOR

**Michael Morpurgo** on giving all children the chance to get up close and personal with nature

I've been a very lucky man. When I was a young I was a primary teacher at Wickhambreaux Primary in Kent. It was there, reading to the class in our mobile classroom from 3pm to 3.30pm each afternoon and trying to encourage my Y6 class to enjoy stories, that I discovered I liked to tell my own. I liked teaching anyway, but this was the half hour of the day I most enjoyed, because they seemed to like it too. That was how I became a writer, by telling my tales to 35 Y6 children. I found my voice as a storyteller and writer quite by luck.

50 years on I'm still telling my stories, still trying to encourage children to a love of reading, because I know that reading is the pathway to so much that is worthwhile and enriching in life. I want to encourage them also to find their voice as writers. I've been into hundreds of schools over the years. The most common question I am asked is: "Where do you get your ideas from?" I tell them that it's from the world about me. I try to live an interesting life, go places, meet people. I remember, I look, I listen, I feel, I care. I drink the world in, and from time to time – often – I come across an idea that I love so much, that it dreams itself into my mind and becomes the seedcorn of a new story.

## Love of nature

My new book, *The Birthday Duck*, grew out of my life as a teacher. After a few years at the coal face, Clare, my wife and also a teacher, and I decided to set up a charity we called Farms for City Children. It was Clare's idea really. She remembered how as a child that it was her holidays in the deep countryside of Devon that had given her the best memories of her life. Wandering the fields, watching the buzzards soaring, the herons lifting off the river, the fleeting glimpse of a kingfisher or an otter, scuffling in her wellies through leaves, digging potatoes, seeing lambs and calves born, grooming horses, leaning into the wind at the top of a hill – all these and more had left in her a deep and abiding love of nature and of the countryside.

And I too, a city boy, had made the same sort of childhood discoveries on the Essex coast – seen hares in the fields, watched the seagulls flying over the sea wall, smelt the salt sea air, found hedgehogs and slowworms and frogs. We knew, the two of us, how beneficial these times had been to us, and felt as teachers that all children, especially those who live far from the countryside, in towns and cities, should have the same opportunities we had. We knew as teachers that there were many



*“Reading is the pathway to so much that is worthwhile and enriching in life”*

children who rarely, if ever, came this close to nature. We felt that this was their world; that it belonged to them as much as to anyone.

But we didn't want them simply to come out for a day, take a few photos and fill in an information pack on the countryside. We thought no, let them live in it for a week, tramp the fields, work alongside their teachers and real farmers, helping out on the farm, in the vegetable garden, in looking after the land. Let them discover a totally new world of open spaces, huge skies, fresh air and fresh food. How good would that be for their self-worth, their wellbeing, their understanding of the world about them, and their

mental health?

So that's what we did. In 1976 the first children came down to Nethercott House in Devon, from an estate in Birmingham, all in their wellies and overalls. And so began, for Clare and for me, a whole new life of teaching, where the classroom was now a farm of 300 acres, with cows, sheep, pigs, horses, donkeys, hens, geese and ducks.

### **Unforgettable week**

Since 1976 over 100,000 children have come down from their schools with their teachers – winter, spring, summer and autumn, about 35 at a time – and lived and

### **VISIT THE FARM**

If you would like to take your pupils to any of Michael Morpurgo's three Farms for City Children, visit [farmsforcitychildren.org](http://farmsforcitychildren.org) to find out more.

worked for a whole week on one of the three farms the charity now runs: Nethercott in Devon, where we started, Treginnis in Wales by the sea near St David's, and Wick Court on the river Severn in Gloucestershire. Each different, each beautiful, but each providing for children and teachers a week they never forget.

And all these years I've been scribbling my stories, many of them now set in the countryside around us here in Devon, including *War Horse*, *Private Peaceful* and many others set on the farm itself, including my *Mudpuddle Farm* books, and now *The Birthday Duck*. If I'm honest, the idea for the new book came from one of the teachers who brought children down to the farm, also from Birmingham. He told me of a school trip he'd been running to Dudley Zoo, during which, unbeknown to him, a small boy had decided he liked a penguin in the zoo so much that he thought he'd like to take it home with him. So he'd picked it up and put it in his duffel bag. This was not discovered until they were on their way back down the motorway back to school on the bus. No, honestly!

So, I thought, we take the children to market during their week with us, don't we? And they love to see the animals there, especially the poultry, and I knew they didn't like to see them cooped up in cages. A story was growing in my head, and in time became *The Birthday Duck*. I hope you and the children enjoy the story and Sam Usher's wonderful illustrations of Nethercott. **TP**



*Michael Morpurgo is the author of **The Birthday Duck** (£12.99, HarperCollins Children's Books).*

[michaelmorpurgo.com](http://michaelmorpurgo.com)

# A sense OF PLACE

Use these simple strategies to give children the tools they need to create powerful settings for their stories

SUE DRURY

Story settings can go a long way towards establishing the atmosphere of a narrative and giving it a sense of tangible reality for the reader, yet they are often under-emphasised when it comes to teaching story writing.

As with all good writing, an engaging story starts with a good plan. As well as outlining the characters, overall plot, important events and so on, it's essential that this contains detailed information about any settings. Encourage your pupils to form a clear picture in their heads of these locations and note down key words and rich descriptions. Try getting them to close their eyes and sit in silence while they create vivid pictures with their minds that they can then convert into words. What's more, urge them to focus on the little things as well as the big backdrops; after all, details often make a memorable difference.

One of the first things to encourage your pupils to do is to engage all their senses when writing the setting. The temptation is

often just to describe what can be seen, yet sounds and smells can often connect more powerfully with people than what merely meets their eyes. Even the sense of touch, like the chilling caress of a sudden breeze, can add to the atmosphere.

## Show not tell

There are few hard and fast rules governing how to write a setting description but 'show not tell' has to be one of them. Although this is more straightforward when describing characters and actions, it can be applied to settings in the way that the protagonists interact with their surroundings. Even so, this does not totally negate the need for precise and evocative vocabulary.

As much as we like to encourage pupils to use their very best words, it's possible to have too much of a good thing. Encourage children to focus on the things that really contribute to the establishment of a convincing setting and actually matter to the progress of the plot.

## Historical settings

Different fiction genres place different demands on the writer when it comes to setting the scene. Take historical novels for example.

- ✦ the joy of these stories is that they can also function as a sort of informal history lesson, providing a fascinating insight into how people used to live. That is why it is so important to help your pupils make the settings as realistic as possible and include details that have a chance of informing as well as entertaining. Of course, not all stories are set in



### SCIENCE FICTION INSPIRATION

This KS2 story writing inspiration pack from literary resources website Plazoom will help children develop quality writing around a science fiction theme. It features pictures, short example texts and a story planner workbook to help pupils on their way. Get it at [tinyurl.com/tp-sf](http://tinyurl.com/tp-sf)

the real world. Although science fiction and fantasy give writers more scope for letting their imaginations run free, they do need to have some form of containment – otherwise the reader will be just too bamboozled to read very far. That is when planning becomes particularly important.

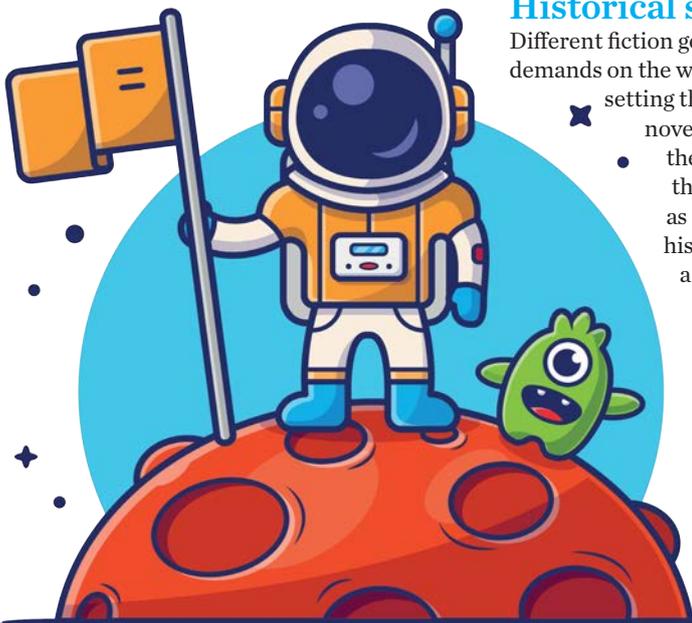
Once your pupils are happy with their plans, they still need to weave all the details into a coherent tale. Never underestimate how difficult this might be for children. You might even find it necessary to provide more structured writing frames for when they ultimately start composing their stories. Nevertheless, with a good setting firmly embedded in their minds, at least they won't be starting with a blank canvas. **TP**



*Sue Drury is literacy lead at Plazoom, the expert literacy resources website. Find more advice at the below website.*

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# 5 BOOKS THAT PROMOTE empathy

Use these diverse titles to encourage compassion and help pupils gain insights into the lives of others



## 1 Once Upon a Dragon's Fire

BY BEATRICE BLUE  
(FRANCES LINCOLN)



- Characters Sylas and Freya instinctively know how to comfort the lonely dragon. He needs lots of stories. Make a big dragon and create a 'dragon story shelf' in the classroom. Everyone can choose books for the shelf that they would like to read to the dragon.
- Freya and Sylas are also very sensitive to the needs of the dragon. They want to share stories that don't hurt

- his feelings, so they make up their own. Write your own stories for a dragon and create a story book.
- In the story, the children's empathy is strengthened by meeting the dragon and they need to help the villagers to understand the dragon too. Imagine you are Freya or Sylas and create a magazine or podcast all about the dragon that could be shared with the village.

### What's the story?

Rumours abound about a fearsome dragon and the village is terrified of him. But it takes two children with open hearts and minds to visit the dragon and recognise what he needs to combat his sorrow and loneliness. And the warmth the dragon feels when someone starts to care helps save the village from a terrible storm. This is a gorgeous picturebook about understanding others and the empathetic power of stories.

### Try this...

- Discuss how rumours can cause terrible harm. Talk about how misunderstandings can spread.



Illustration © Beatrice Blue

## What is Empathy Day?

Founded by EmpathyLab, Empathy Day helps children learn about empathy's importance, and have inspiring empathy experiences. The strategy is based on research showing that empathy is learnable and that identifying with book characters builds real-life understanding of others. The books highlighted here are a selection from the

Read for Empathy Collection 2021.

### When is Empathy Day?

Empathy Day is on 10th June, with a countdown week running from 3rd-9th June.

### How can I get involved?

This year's Empathy Day theme is 'walking in someone else's shoes'.

Resources include:

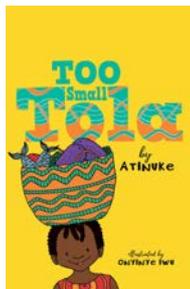
- Free toolkit – email [primary@empathylab.uk](mailto:primary@empathylab.uk)
- Family activities pack
- Empathy Day Live – taking place on 10th June, this will

see children's authors go on Empathy Walks and demonstrate unique empathy-building games. Stream it into your classrooms live, or rewatch it at a later date

- Empathy Shorts – brand-new 500 word stories from leading children's authors
- Empathy Read Alouds – hear authors and illustrators reading empathy boosting stories and poems
- Illustrators' Gallery – pictures by leading illustrators spreading the empathy message

**Find out more at [empathylab.uk](http://empathylab.uk) and follow Empathy Lab on Twitter @empathylabuk**

# 2



## Too Small Tola

BY ATINUKE,  
ILLUSTRATED  
BY ONYINYE IWU  
(WALKER BOOKS)

then write emotion words on the board.

■ Tola and her siblings must fetch all the water they need for the day before they go to school. Water is precious. In groups, imagine you are a member of Tola's family and plan how to use the water carefully for the day ahead to ensure it doesn't run out. How do pupils feel about some people having water on tap and others having to

queue for it every day?

- Explore the beautiful Nigerian fabrics that Mr Abdul uses to make clothes. Ask children to copy their favourite design onto a piece of paper or design their own.
- The residents of Tola's apartment celebrate Easter and Ramadan. Research these festivals, share these experiences and present findings to classmates.

### What's the story?

Tola is the smallest member of the family and her abilities are often doubted by her siblings. However, ever surprising, Tola demonstrates that being small need not hold anyone back. This book is great for expanding children's world views, with insights into Tola's Nigerian life, in which people with different religious beliefs live together. It will also help children recognise some of the universal themes and challenges of childhood – a fantastic early reader.

### Try this...

■ Step into Tola's shoes. What would it feel like to be Tola, always being told you're too small? Discuss in pairs



# 3

## Windrush Child

BY BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH (SCHOLASTIC)



■ What would happen if Leonard joined your school? How would the class make him feel welcome? What would you want him to know about life at your school? What advice would you give to Leonard to help him settle in?

■ Listen to the Benjamin Zephaniah episode of the Author in your Classroom podcast to hear him talking about this book and his writing process. If you could ask him about his life, what would you want to know?

### What's the story?

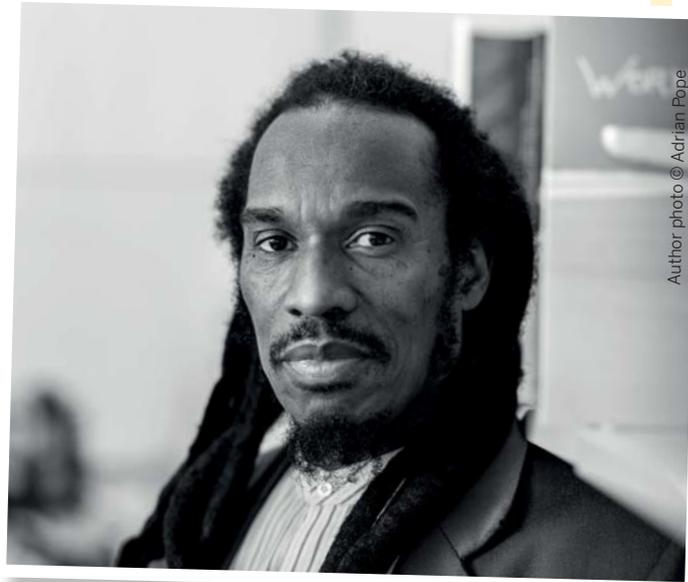
Leonard has an idyllic childhood in Jamaica. However, at the age of ten he boards a ship with his mother to journey to England. Once there, he's reunited with his father who has already been working in England for several years. Leonard and his parents are part of the Windrush generation. As well as getting used to the cold weather and cramped living conditions, Leonard has to deal with daily

prejudice and racism. The story follows Leonard up until 2018, when he is denied citizenship by the country that is his home.

### Try this...

■ Imagine you are Leonard leaving home in order to live in another country. List three things that you would look forward to and three things you would worry about.

■ Listen to the poem Windrush by Denniston Stewart ([tinyurl.com/tp-windrushpoem](http://tinyurl.com/tp-windrushpoem)). Discuss how the experiences of the narrator compare to the experiences of Leonard and his family.

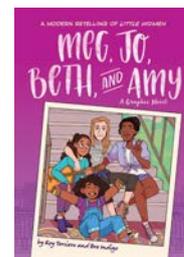


Illustrations: Eva Eland

# 4

## Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy

BY BRE INDIGO AND REY TERCIERO (LITTLE, BROWN YOUNG READERS US)



### What's the story?

This graphic novel reimagines the story of Louisa May Alcott's Little Women and shifts its location to modern-day Brooklyn. With their father away at war, it's up to the March sisters to occupy themselves while their mother works to make ends meet. Letters and emails from each of the girls split up the chapters and provide insight into each character's world. With sensitive portrayals of illness, blended families, sexuality, class, and race, the text shines a light on a range of experiences, prompting readers to question what it might feel like to be in the characters' position and reflect on their own lives.

### Try this...

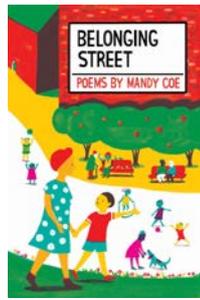
■ Which March sister do you most relate to? Write a diary extract about one of your favourite scenes in the book from their perspective. What might they be thinking?

■ One of the central themes of the text is family. People live in lots of different types of families. Can you illustrate your family or the people you live with in a similar style? How could you represent everyone's personality, hobbies and interests? How does your family compare to that of the March family?

■ The text touches on some complex themes, ending with the girls at a Women's March. Explore one of the more complex issues depicted in the graphic novel. Use websites such as CBBC's Newsround to provide a child-friendly view of current affairs.

# 5 Belonging Street

BY MANDY COE  
(OTTER-BARRY BOOKS)



- Find out what your school is already doing to protect the environment and if there is more that can be done. Present ideas to the headteacher or school council.
- Read and discuss the poem Take The Leap. Ask

children to think about a time they did something that scared them. How did they feel before, during and after? What would they say to friends who are feeling scared? Can being scared sometimes be a good thing?

## What's the story?

Belonging Street is a wide-ranging collection of poems, all based on a loose theme of belonging. Poet and illustrator Mandy Coe has written about the natural world and why we are responsible for protecting it, the importance of family life and the power of connection. The poems create wonderful discussion opportunities, as well as chances for students to write and be creative, and encourage empathy with our planet and its inhabitants.

## Try this...

- Read the poem Coming Home To You. Discuss what 'home' means. Does it mean the same to everyone? If you had to summarise home in five words, what would they be?
- Explore the poem Hearing The Earth, Feeling The Earth. In groups discuss how you can help to care for the planet. Make posters for the classroom showing why it's important to look after the world and what people can do to help.



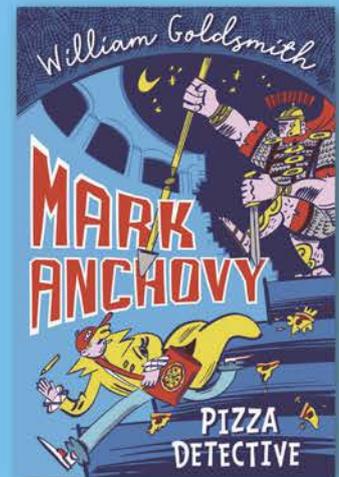
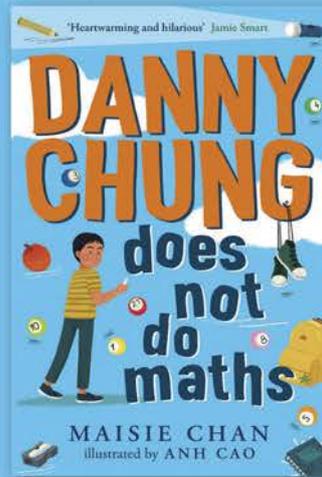
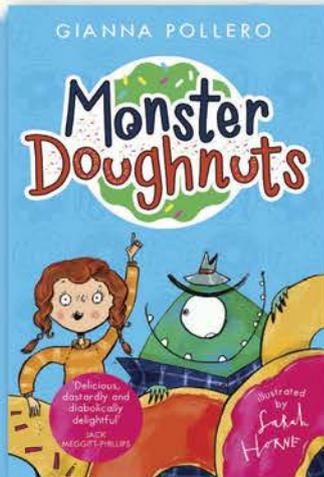
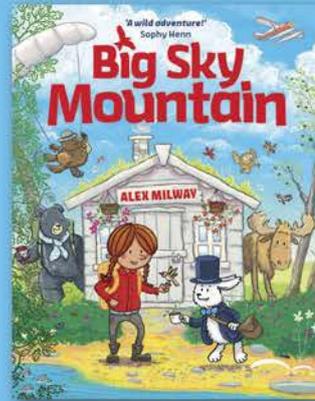
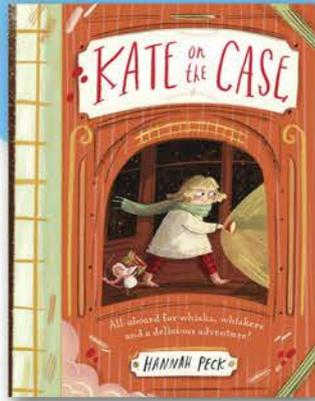
Illustration © Mandy Coe



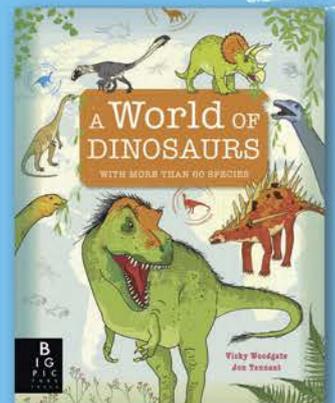
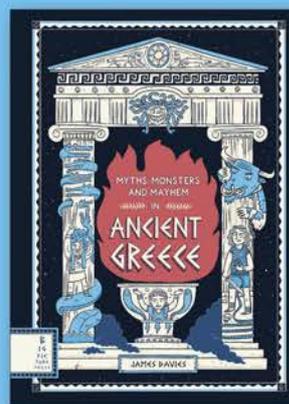
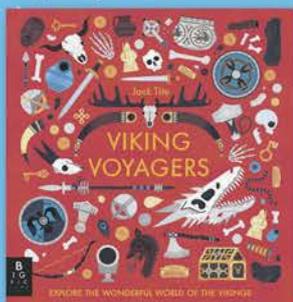
Thank you to contributors Jon Biddle (Moorlands Primary Academy), Richard Charlesworth (Springwell School) and Sarah Mears (EmpathyLab co-founder)

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# One poem a DAY

Want to introduce pupils to the rich language of nearly 2,000 different poems? Start by reading just one a day...

TRE CHRISTOPHER & PET HENSHAW

There are oodles of benefits to sharing poetry with your class. It's a fabulous way of introducing pupils to new vocabulary and helping children to explore imagery and figurative language. It's within poetry that elements such as metaphor and simile really come to life. Imagine all of the extra language pupils would be exposed to if you read aloud one poem every day. That would be nearly 2,000 poems during a child's primary school journey.

Poetry can really support emerging readers. Often, developing readers are not as intimidated when reading poetry because many poems are short and sweet. This can be so supportive for older pupils who struggle with reading. Many reluctant readers often find it easier to engage with poetry books. However, children are less likely to have a poetry book as a library book and many will have never been read poetry at home.

*“Poetry can deepen children’s imagination, challenge them to think differently about the world and help foster compassion”*

Reading one poem a day in class is a non-threatening way to introduce children to poems and inspire in them a love of words and language. This lays excellent foundations for the teaching of poetry as a formal English unit. Children who have daily experience of verse will be excited rather than daunted to learn about the mechanics of poetry and write their own examples. Whole-class sharing can inspire less confident readers to dip into poetry collections independently. The performance element is also great for bringing a classroom alive with activity. This can have a huge impact on comprehension. Reading poetry aloud also supports the oracy agenda

and helps build children's confidence and self-esteem.

Reading poetry is also important to development in writing. It encourages children to play with language and words. When reading poetry, pupils hear how words can be moved and stretched to rhyme and use the models they have read in their own writing. They'll also learn about word economy and the importance of 'never wasting a word'. Children can

also be encouraged to 'magpie' words and phrases they love from the poems they hear. Jot them down in a writer's journal to be recycled and re-imagined in your own writing at a later date.

Most importantly, poetry can deepen children's imagination, challenge them to think differently about the world and help foster compassion, a sense of identity and empathy – some of the most important elements of primary education.

## Give it a go

Reading a poem a day does not require any planning, preparation or marking – simply choose a poem (there are many 365

poem anthologies available) and read it to your class. Very quickly this responsibility can be handed over to the children to manage so they choose their own poems to read to the class on a rota basis.

## Which poems?

Try linking the poems you read to a particular topic or theme such as pirates, dragons or the second world war. Alternatively, focus on a poetic form such as haiku for a week or so. Use daily poems to introduce a topic or lesson, explore thoughts and feelings linked to PHSE, link to world events or read a poem simply for enjoyment, without the need for analysis or in-depth discussion. You may want to focus on a particular poet or simply choose a random poem each day. There is no right or wrong way to do it.

## Supporting resources

Find poetry book recommendations to get you started at [booksfortopics.com/poetry](http://booksfortopics.com/poetry). There are lots of free teaching resources, recommended poetry books and ideas at [nationalpoetryday.co.uk](http://nationalpoetryday.co.uk). We have set up a completely free project to support teachers with daily poetry reading. As part of the project, teachers receive three hours of online poetry training. Classes are invited to vote on their favourite poem of the week every Friday to help children build their repertoire of favourite poems and begin to develop their own poetry identity. Display these favourites on the door or elsewhere in the school for other classes to see. Find out more at [dandelionlearning.co.uk/poem-a-day-project](http://dandelionlearning.co.uk/poem-a-day-project) TP



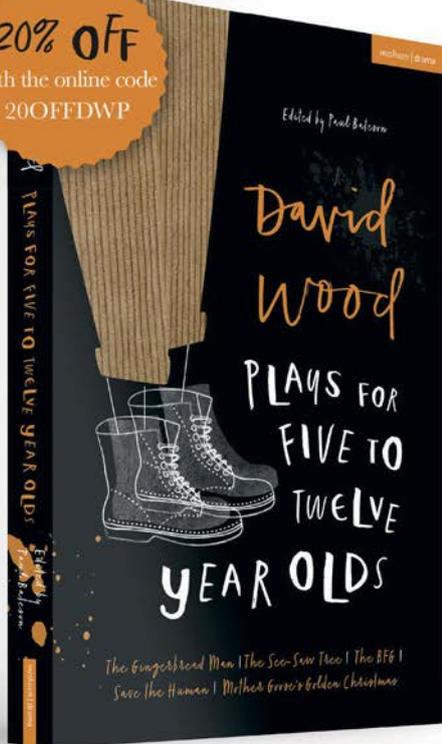
Tre Christopher & Pet Henshaw are the founders of Dandelion Learning and provide English training and support. Free online training for setting up

writing journals is available at their website.

 @treandpet

 [dandelionlearning.co.uk](http://dandelionlearning.co.uk)

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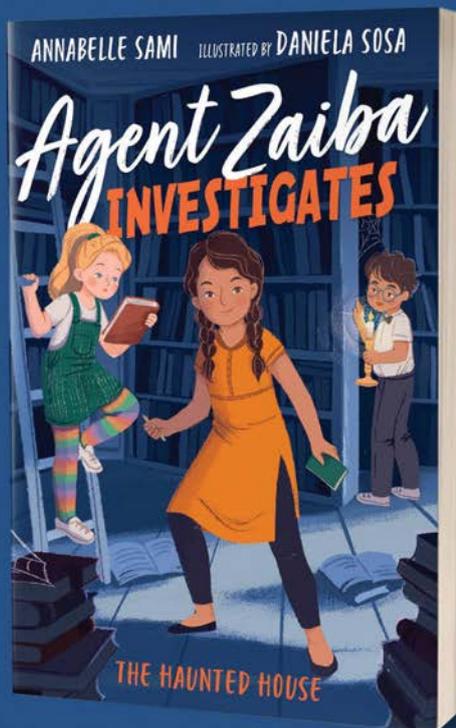
— Mia Bano, *Letter Press Project*

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The Haunted House  
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# Happy birthday MOG THE CAT!

Judith Kerr's feline friend is celebrating her 50th anniversary so celebrate with a special assembly and teaching resources

Mog the Forgetful Cat by Judith Kerr is turning 50! Explore this classic story with your class by using our free assembly plan and teaching pack for EYFS and KS1. The assembly focuses on reading and talking about the book, followed by a discussion about pupils' own naughty pets.

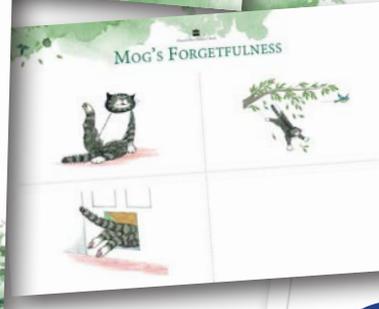
The lesson activities involve thinking about the concepts of forgetting and remembering – set up your own picture trail so children can practise using their memories. Pupils will also think about the importance of pets, partake in some role play about Mog's bad day and fill in a My Pet booklet which will become the basis of their own animal-themed short story.

## YOUR PROJECT PACK INCLUDES:

- Assembly plan and PowerPoint
- Memory trail resources
- Activity sheets
- Teacher notes

## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Enjoy a shared reading experience
- Link the stories to their own experiences
- Offer explanations as to why certain events may have taken place
- Retell stories with which they're familiar
- Develop their understanding of story structure
- Sequence sentences and ideas to form short stories
- Discuss the positive impact of pets on health and mental wellbeing



Download your resources from [plazoom.com/mog-resources](https://www.plazoom.com/mog-resources)

plazoom

# How to use LITERACY PASSPORTS

Help pupils to access literacy teaching and improve their attitude to learning by working on specific emotional and academic skills

RICHARD EVANS

In my experience, teaching literacy (or any given school subject) in isolation without pupils also gaining a good handle on their own emotional literacy – what makes them and others tick; how they can adapt themselves for the betterment of both – has limited long-term benefit. I've started issuing pupils with a 'literacy passport': an A3 tool designed to promote pupils' confidence and resilience, their skills of organisation and presentation, and their attitude to their learning – all through improved understanding of themselves.

Take a look (right) and decide if my literacy passport's questions chime with what you also sense are the more immediate needs of your pupils – the one struggling not just with their literacy. If they do, download a copy of the passport, review each question and decide if you wish to change or delete any, to better suit your pupil. If 50 questions are too many, remove some and keep those of most value. If there are more age-appropriate questions you can ask, adapt them to suit. The passport is a template, to do with what you will.

Next, arrange a one-on-one meeting with your target pupil. Equip them with a highlighter and invite them to decorate the passport, discussing questions as you go. It's now your turn to listen and be the learner, and your pupil's turn to be the teacher. Given time, space and a little cajoling if necessary, they'll

tell you what it is that prevents them from learning.

## Using the passport

Ask your pupil to circle one question per section – the need they say they would most like to work on – and ask them to transfer it to each of the four 'What is my need in ...' sections on the second page. One question at a time, discuss in detail the section entitled 'What I can do to meet this need?'. Dig deep for the underlying reasons why this need isn't being met and help your pupil come up with strategies they can practise to start to change this situation.

For example, for a shy non-contributor in class, can they tell you what it feels like to put their hand up? Are

those feelings akin to others they've had in life? How have they dealt with those? Can you share what it felt like for you when you were a child, or feels like now? By both sharing your thoughts, you may then be able to establish ideas together about what might help break the cycle. For example, your pupil may agree to putting their hand up once a week, at a time when they feel most comfortable, or jotting down answers on a pad of paper instead. Regardless, it must be their 'how to', tailored to their needs, at a pace they're happy with. It may take several weeks to make even a small amount of progress but the key is, with your help, they're trying. And with trying, and honest appraisal, comes learning.

Continue to meet once a week to discuss and fill in the 'Feelings about my efforts to meet my needs' section. Listen carefully and reserve any judgement. In fact, even where effort appears minimal and feelings are negative, encourage your pupil to record them. A 'proud of myself' is no more important than a 'disappointed I forgot' or even a 'don't really care'. Remind pupils that it's normal to make a slow start or forget or feel apathetic. But still encourage them to discuss ideas that would help them to make better efforts next week for what is, after all, their chosen need.

For example, can your pupil set aside five minutes at the end of a piece of work to check it?

The form is titled 'LITERACY PASSPORT' in a central blue circle. It is divided into four main sections, each with a central colored circle and surrounding questions:

- CONFIDENCE AND RESILIENCE** (Pink circle): Questions include 'Do I talk to teachers about my work if I don't understand it?', 'Do I contribute to small group work?', 'Am I involved in any clubs at school?', 'Do I work well with other pupils?', 'Do I share my successes with my form tutor?', 'Do I work through problems independently?', 'Do I put my hand up in class?', 'Do I start tasks promptly?', 'Do I take opportunities presented to me at school?', 'Do I find it easy to make friends?'.
- LITERACY SKILLS** (Blue circle): Questions include 'Do I use ambitious vocabulary?', 'Can I use a dictionary with ease?', 'Do I understand how to use a thesaurus?', 'Do I know the alphabet off by heart?', 'Do I read my sentences to ensure they make sense?', 'Can I read and understand a basic text?', 'Can I explain a statement, command, question and exclamation?', 'Do I use exclamation marks and question marks correctly?', 'Do I use capital letters correctly?', 'Do I use basic tenses correctly?', 'Can I spell most basic words?', 'Do I use full stops correctly?', 'Do I use commas correctly?', 'Do I use paragraphs correctly?', 'Can I explain the common parts of speech?'.
- ORGANISATION AND PRESENTATION** (Green circle): Questions include 'Do I complete homework on time?', 'Do I look after worksheets for school?', 'Am I prepared for each lesson with the right equipment and books?', 'Do I revise for tests at school?', 'How often do I attend school?', 'Do I switch off my electronic devices an hour before going to sleep?', 'Am I on time for lessons?', 'Do I get enough sleep at night?', 'Do I dress neatly and appropriately for school?', 'Do I take time to eat a good breakfast?', 'How well do I look after my planner?', 'Do I follow the school's presentation guidelines?'.
- ATTITUDE TO LEARNING** (Orange circle): Questions include 'Do I help others with their learning?', 'Do I pay attention in class?', 'Am I polite to all staff at school?', 'How well do I reflect on my teachers' comments?', 'Am I comfortable making mistakes?', 'How well do I act on those reflections to improve my work?', 'Do I ask for help when I'm stuck?', 'How well do I act on instructions in class?', 'Do I check my work thoroughly when I finish tasks?', 'Do I put my best effort into my homework?', 'Do I put my best effort into my schoolwork?', 'Do I avoid calling out in class?', 'How well do I behave in class?'.

A 'KEY TO MARKING' box explains the scoring system: 1 (Leave blank if your answer is: never/not at all/barely), 2 (Highlight 1, sometimes/a little/hot very well), 3 (Highlight 1 and 2, most of the time/quite a lot/quite well), 4 (Highlight 1, 2 and 3, always/very much/very well).

At the bottom, it says 'LITERACY PASSPORT - PUPIL SIZE' and 'From Independent Thinking an Emotional Literacy © Richard Evans, 2020'.

**Free online resources**

Download this literacy passport for free from [tinyurl.com/tp-passport](http://tinyurl.com/tp-passport)

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT  TEACHWIRE.NET

Can they put down technology an hour before bed? Ask pupils to record the efforts (or otherwise) that they've made, the impact, and the feelings they've experienced as a result.

### Accessing teaching

To access literacy teaching so that it sticks and has longevity, it helps if struggling pupils are also feeling more confident and resilient, are reasonably organised, and are able to show a good attitude to their learning. Their attention to these three sections on the passport will automatically help them to make inroads in literacy, as well as in other disciplines in class. Accessing literacy teaching is also, of course, about practice: just by discussing, reading and recording thoughts on the passport each week, pupils will be practising key literacy skills. Furthermore, as part of the literacy skills section, pupils will be developing one such skill at a time.

Find resources, work with other teachers and model good examples to help your pupil develop key skills, ranging from remembering the alphabet to using ambitious vocabulary. In each case, dig deep together to

find the root of the blockage and possible solutions: is the middle bit the confusing bit of the alphabet? And if so, would pictorial cues or mnemonics or rhyme and repetition help make it clearer? As with all of their other chosen needs, reassure pupils that you will be happy to support them as they think up and practise ways, tailored to them, to improve and grow confidence in this area of personal need.

### Finding time

After week four of your meetings, discuss with your pupil whether their needs are 'not met', 'partly met' or 'met'. Resist the urge to gloss over difficulties or obstacles your pupil may be experiencing. An unmet or partly met need is okay: it's the process, more than the evaluation, that is of most use to them. Make these decisions together and have your pupil include any unmet or partly met needs in the section entitled 'My next needs'. Complete the list by turning to the front of the passport for pupils to find and circle their next most pressing needs. You have now completed one round of the passport and are ready for

## “Dig deep together to find the root of the blockage and possible solutions”

the next, whenever your schedule permits.

This whole process isn't casually slipped in alongside an average classroom teacher's job, or that of a TA, mentor, head of year or LSA. No matter your role, if you work in a school, you'll be short of time. And this is clearly a process that necessitates time. But if you believe in the approach – teaching emotional literacy in order that pupils may access reading and writing literacy (and all the other subject skills besides) – then you are the who: the person best placed to identify the pupil, secure the time, listen and cajole, aid and support, listen again, and take your pupil through the process.

Afterwards, instead of just being able to identify nouns and adjectives, pupils should also be able to do the vital things that can lead to so much more than just

doing well at school: making friends; getting a good night's sleep; finding ways to improve a myriad of behavioural issues. By listening and showing them how, these difficulties don't need to be an unwelcome companion on pupils' journeys through school and beyond. **TP**



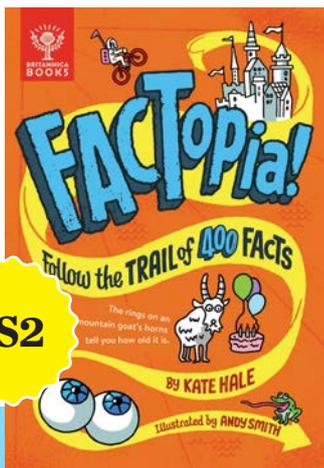
*Richard Evans is a secondary teacher with a particular interest in helping*

*pupils who struggle with literacy. Editable versions of the literacy passport and other passports, including a reading one, are available for download when you buy *Independent Thinking on Emotional Literacy* (£9.99, Independent Thinking Press).*

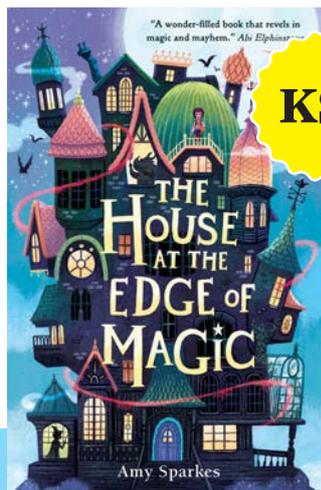
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# Book CLUB

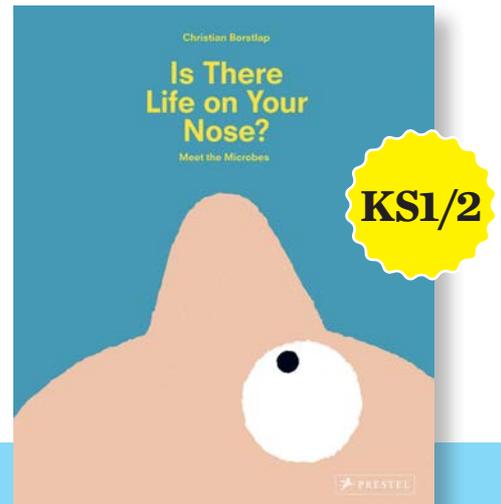
We review five brand new titles that your class will love



**FACTopia!**  
by Kate Hale  
(£9.99, Britannica Books)



**The House at the Edge of Magic**  
by Amy Sparkes  
(£6.99, Walker Books)



**Is There Life on Your Nose?**  
by Christian Borstlap  
(£12.99, Prestel)

Did you know that a group of giraffes is called a tower? Or that the Eiffel Tower needs 54,000kg of fresh paint every seven years? Welcome to the wonderland of crazily connected facts that is FACTopia. Pupils can choose their own path through this dazzling world of information, following a trail from dinosaurs to chickens to breakfast black holes. And there's not just one way to read the book: sometimes the path branches, giving children the choice to jump to a totally different, but still connected, part of the book. In a world of misinformation, it's great to know that the 400 facts in this book have been verified by Encyclopaedia Britannica. With more than 300 witty illustrations and photos, and topics from space and dinosaurs to volcanoes and pharaohs covered, there should be something here for everyone. Where will students' curiosity take them? Try creating your own fact trails in class, based around your favourite facts.

Fans of *The Worst Witch* and the *Chrestomanci* series will enjoy this debut middle grade adventure by picturebook author Amy Sparkes. In a comedy-fantasy world of Dickensian proportions, Nine is an orphan pickpocket desperate to escape the Nest of a Thousand Treasures, the Faginesque cellar in which she is trapped. Her wish is granted when an ornament that she steals transforms into a magical house containing a colourful cast of crazy, cosmic characters. Nine and her new friends embark on a madcap odyssey to release the house from its curse and unlock the freedom she longs for. This is an entertaining and exciting story, perfect for reading aloud to your class and enticing readers who are ready for more challenging chapter books. It's buzzing with rich and riotous descriptions of magic gone wrong and fantastical characters that children will love.

**Recommended by ReadForGood.org**

Germs, microbes, bacteria – in our current pandemic predicament these words are fraught with fear and uncertainty. But they're not all bad. In fact, most of them make life and nature possible. Christian Borstlap's playful, boldly coloured illustrations and cheerful text will help children understand that microbes are everywhere – in our noses and tummies, in the food we eat, in the air we breathe. From microbes that help recycle plastic to yeast that makes bread taste good, this book shows the incredible diversity of these tiny beings and how they affect our daily lives. Borstlap uses both science and humour to demystify a potentially scary subject, and closes with double-page spreads that are packed with information to satisfy your most curious readers. This book leaves lots of room for discussion and will get pupils looking at the world from a new perspective.

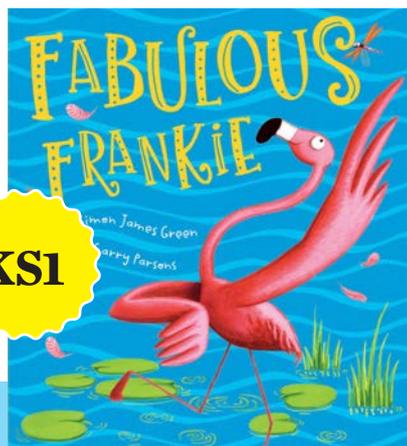
→→→ **RECOMMENDED**

## RESOURCES

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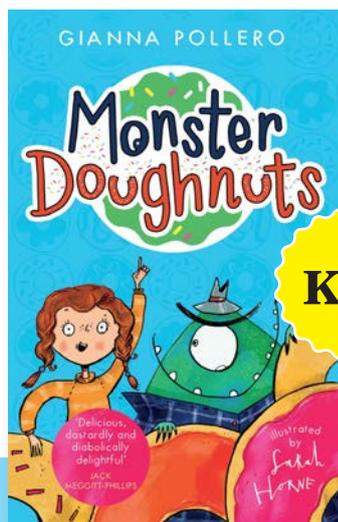
Share Nat Luurtsema's hilarious novel, *Opie Jones Talks to Animals*, with your UKS2 class – then use the lessons in this resource pack to investigate some of the book's main themes. Children will deepen their experience of the text and interrogate it to extend understanding, infer meanings and summarise what they've learnt. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-opie](http://tinyurl.com/tp-opie)



KS1

***Fabulous Frankie***  
by **Simon James Green**  
(£6.99, Scholastic)

With his bright pink feathers, long legs and elegant neck, all Frankie the flamingo has ever wanted to be is fabulous, but how on earth can he stand out from the crowd when all the other flamingos in his flock look equally amazing? It takes Frankie's friends to help him realise that the most important thing of all is to be yourself. Author Simon James Green has established himself as a leading LGBTQ+ children's author. His middle-grade debut, *Life of Riley*, was shortlisted for this year's Blue Peter Book Awards. This funny, feel-good story is perfect for reminding children that it is what's on the inside that matters. Summon up your most theatrical Craig Revel Horwood reading voice and have fun making pupils giggle with Frankie's various dramatic entrances. This title makes the perfect pairing with the author's debut picturebook, *Llama Glamarama* – another title that encourages children to celebrate differences.



KS2

***Monster Doughnuts***  
by **Gianna Pollero**  
(£6.99, Piccadilly Press)

What do you get if you mix monsters, cake, a smidge of world annihilation and a teaspoon of explosive baking powder? The answer is *Monster Doughnuts*, a deliciously funny title that LKS2 pupils will swallow up. Ten-year-old Grace likes cakes as much as the next kid, but they are also her secret weapon. She's a monster hunter who owns a bakery, and everyone knows how much monsters love a sweet treat. When Grace's monster scanning machine alerts her to doughnut-loving, people-eating cyclops Mr Harris, she realises she's about to face her biggest challenge yet. This is the first in a new series for KS2 children from author Gianna Pollero, who works at an academy trust in Kent. Illustrator Sarah Horne's funny, inky illustrations complement the action nicely. A sneak peek of the next title in the series is included at the back of the book. The monster profiles, also included at the back, would make a great jumping-off point for a piece of creative writing.

## Meet the author

**GIANNA POLLERO ON DREAMING UP MONSTERS AND ROAD-TESTING HER IDEAS ON PUPILS**



Did you have fun writing the monsters?

I had so much fun! The main monster character,

Mr Harris, was originally my daughter's idea and I grew the whole story around him. The other, smaller monsters were based on things children would be familiar with and might find amusing. For example, Sock Stealers are responsible for the many odd socks we all seem to have!

Has working at an academy trust influenced your writing?

I wrote the first book before I worked for Valley Invicta Academies Trust. However, working for the trust definitely helped the editing process and the writing of the next two books. I've been lucky enough to visit several classes across the trust's primary schools to talk to the children about creative writing and run some fun workshops. It's invaluable to get an insight into what makes children tick and how you can encourage them to think about using their imagination and creativity in their writing.

How would you like teachers to use the book?

The book has strong characters and two totally different worlds (our world and Monster World) so could be used as part of character and world-building exercises in creative writing. There's a monster glossary at the back of the book and examples of monster profiles throughout (in a Top Trumps style). In the workshops I've run, these sections have proved very helpful in getting children to come up with their own monsters. Because the chapters are short they can be helpful in encouraging reluctant readers in one-to-one sessions.

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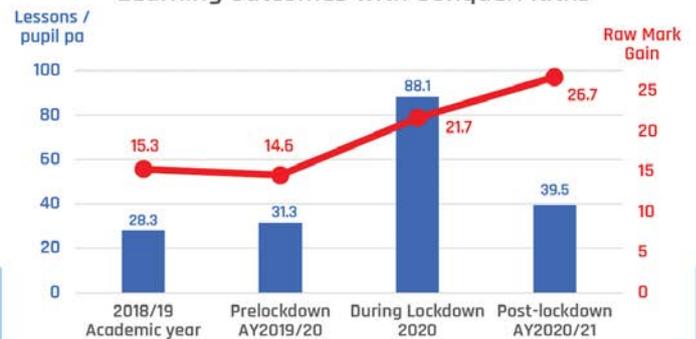
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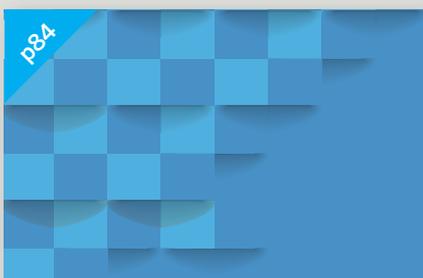
## INSIDE THIS SECTION



These three educational maths games will actually improve pupils' understanding



Simple, playful tasks from Mike Askew to help children feel less anxious about offering up answers in maths lessons



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# What is MATHS ANXIETY?

It can have far-reaching effects, says **Marie Thompson**, but there are simple changes you can make that will have a really positive impact

“I ‘m rubbish at it!’ is a frequently given response when I ask my adult learners how they feel about maths. Many of them report a lack of enjoyment in their lessons, and far too easily utter the phrase “I’m no good at maths” in a way that would never be socially acceptable to say with regards to reading and writing. These early experiences and attitudes towards maths have followed them into adulthood and, even though they have returned to education in order to pursue a career in the classroom, they often display apprehension – at best – towards maths-related activities. Could it be that these learners simply don’t like maths, and never have, or is there something more to it?

The term ‘maths anxiety’ has been around for about 50 years now, and yet there is still surprisingly little understanding and training given to it in schools. The Maths Anxiety Trust defines it as a “negative emotional reaction to mathematics, leading to varying degrees of helplessness, panic and mental disorganisation that arises [...] when faced with a mathematical problem.” Recent surveys have indicated that 23% of parents have a child who is experiencing maths anxiety and 20% of adults in Britain also experience anxiety when faced with a maths problem (Maths Anxiety Trust). Research has repeatedly shown that maths anxiety can have a long-standing negative impact on stress levels, self-esteem, management of finances and social mobility.

### Know the symptoms

Over the years, I can think of several pupils who have displayed the characteristics of maths anxiety (see panel, top right) in my maths lessons. So why, after nine years of teaching in primary schools (five of which were spent as a maths subject leader) was the first time I heard of this phenomenon when I returned to university to study for a masters in developmental psychology?

It’s not like these pupils weren’t supported – they participated in intervention groups, I discussed their progress with them and their parents, and tried to ensure my pedagogy was appropriate for both enjoyment and achievement. It’s not like all of these pupils will have even been experiencing anxiety. However, I feel sure that if I had participated in some training on maths anxiety there are pupils I would have identified as having this and therefore supported far more efficiently.

*“There appears to be a higher incidence of maths anxiety among average and higher ability pupils”*



Risk factors for pupils experiencing maths anxiety include adults passing on their own anxiety, not experiencing success, and negative experiences (such as public embarrassment or receiving a poor mark). Time pressures on tasks, and poor quality or inconsistent teaching (such as different methods being used between staff members or between home and school) are other potential causes of maths anxiety, as are negative thinking patterns and attitudes towards maths, and fears around embarrassment, failure or being judged.

Maths anxiety does not discriminate between ages, genders, maths ability or complexity of maths work.

It's definitely not something that just affects lower ability pupils. In fact, there appears to be a higher incidence of maths anxiety among average and higher ability pupils – something that is possibly attributable to the risk factors of embarrassment or fear of failure.

**Simple changes**

The good news is that there are some simple changes we can all try and make, at both a whole-school and classroom

**CHARACTERISTICS OF MATHS ANXIETY**

Maths anxiety elicits a fight or flight physiological response, although sufferers themselves may not actually be aware they are experiencing it. While we can't observe the thoughts of our pupils, we can observe their behaviours. Potential characteristics of maths anxiety include avoidant, defiant or 'lazy' behaviours, and underachievement or poor achievement, among others.

level, which will undoubtedly have a positive impact. More importantly, they are all examples of good practice anyway, regardless of the pupil or subject. Bringing awareness of these factors at a whole-school level is the obvious first step. Reflecting on policies and individual pedagogy is the second.

One change I made to my own practice was to use more 'low threshold, high ceiling' activities to consolidate learning or explore new concepts ([nrich.org](http://nrich.org) has some good activities and articles relating to this). Tasks that are perceived as a 'low threat' by pupils, due to their simple, accessible nature, allow all children to engage, while the 'high ceiling' allows pupils to explore the topic as far as they are able to. Pace can be set by the pupil themselves and progressing through the activity is self-motivating. Everybody working on the same activity reduces that 'comparison' and 'ranking' ethos that can take place among children.

Another good tool is introducing the 'feelings' aspect of learning – teaching and encouraging pupils to talk about how they feel at different points in their learning and why. This is something that can be achieved with pupils of all ages through resources such as reflective prompts. Whatever the adjustments made, we need to start looking at the psychology behind maths anxiety and not just focus on maths 'skills'.

**Underlying issues**

As teachers, we have so many plates spinning at once that

it's easy to see why tackling the underlying issues of maths anxiety might keep getting lost. We can now also add to this the current pressures around making up for 'lost learning' due to the pandemic, and the need to support pupil mental health and wellbeing in a more rounded sense. It would be very easy to focus on the measurable outcomes of 'progress and attainment' but the problem here is that we have a cycle of maths anxiety that needs breaking; adults who have maths anxiety can pass this on to the children around them.

Pupils who go through schools with maths anxiety, either short-term or long-term, become the adults who go back into the classroom to support the next generation, and also have children themselves. When we put this into the context of the far-reaching effects of maths anxiety, such as poor social mobility, economic outcomes and low self-esteem, the issue becomes greater than the teaching of maths skills. We can keep kicking the 'maths anxiety can' down the road, but the cycle isn't going to break itself. **TP**



*Marie Thompson is a qualified teacher and now works in the post-19 education*

*sector. Watch Marie's maths anxiety webinar via video CPD website [The National College](http://TheNationalCollege.co.uk).*

 [thenationalcollege.co.uk/webinars/maths-anxiety-primary](http://thenationalcollege.co.uk/webinars/maths-anxiety-primary)

# Purposeful PLAYING

Three maths games that will actually improve pupils' understanding

SHANNEN DOHERTY

**B**efore I kick off, I want to make it clear that I *love* fun. I think teaching should be enjoyable and I think children should enjoy learning. However, fun needn't be the driving force behind your curriculum – not everything needs to be gamified. However, having said that, I do believe that there are some truly excellent games to improve understanding in primary mathematics.

While I will always believe that direct instruction is key when teaching (especially in maths where concepts can be so easily confused), games can provide a certain kind of practice that can be useful in maths lessons. I'm not talking about the old days when we would use dice to have children generate their own numbers and make it seem like they were playing a game. That can get in the bin as far as I am concerned! If I see games in maths lessons, I want to see purposeful and fun activities that deepen understanding and secure concepts. I remember one awful game I invented for a lesson on ordering four-digit numbers that involved 30 children

running around the hall like headless chickens with slips of paper and resulted in very little learning. To avoid that scenario, have a go at these ideas.

## Battle frames

Think about the game Battleships, but with ten frames and counters. This game is ideal for developing that vital number sense we need to nail in EYFS and Y1. It requires children to visualise numbers.

## How to play

Give each child a ten frame (or two if you're playing with numbers to 20) and some counters. Pupils must represent a number using counters on the ten frame, then their partner has to guess the number by asking questions such as:

- Is there one full row/column?
- Is there an odd number of empty boxes?
- Is the ten frame full?

Pupils' questions will get better and better as they get used to playing.

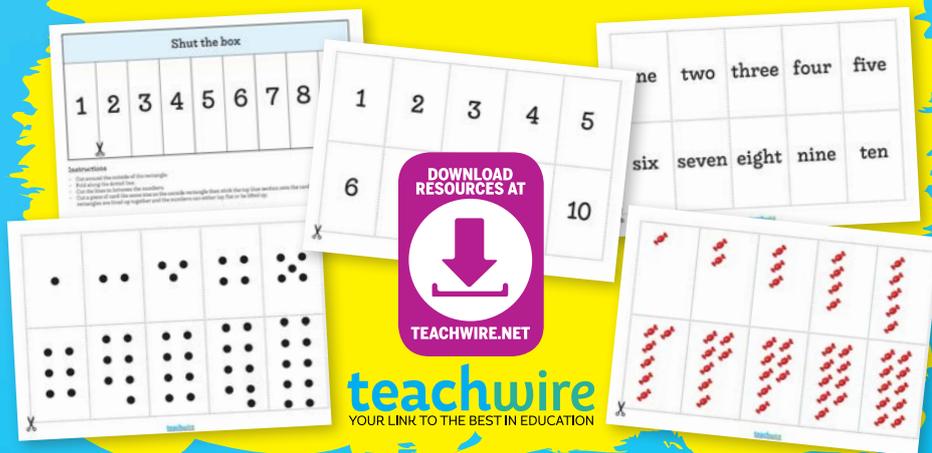
They'll start to realise which questions really help uncover a number's structure. For example, if a child replies 'yes' to the question 'Is the left column full?', then their partner knows the number must be five or more. Likewise, if they answer no, then the number must be between zero and four.

When starting off, I suggest you keep to a filling rule such as 'We keep the ten frame vertical and fill in the left column first, from the top down.' This means children have a chance of guessing the numbers. Then you can move on



**FREE RESOURCES!**

Download the game resources mentioned here at <https://www.teachwire.net/teaching-resources/maths-games-ks1>



*Five things to consider when playing games in class*

**Is everyone joining in?**

Are you playing a game as a whole class? Do the children take it in turns? What are the other children doing when it's not their turn? Whole-class games can be great fun and build a team spirit but if 29 children are sat doing nothing for the majority of the game, is it a good use of lesson time? Could you play in small groups or pairs instead?

**Who is facilitating the game?**

If children are playing in small groups or pairs, is someone there to ensure they are actually deepening their understanding, rather than confusing it? How do you know the children are getting it right? Consider mixed-ability groupings and smart deployment of adults in class.

**Do you need lots of resources?**

Can your game be played off the cuff for a five-minute filler or does it involve a lot of prep? Having game packs resourced and ready to go is the best move. If a game requires a resource, get it laminated and set up so it can be used and tidied up ready for next time without a lot of fuss or preparation.

**Is there a clear purpose?**

Are the children practising something important in this game? I always veer towards games that encourage number sense and mental calculation. Anything that develops fluency is a winner for me.

**Can it be used for assessment?**

Games aren't just educational for children. Playing a game with a group of pupils can be an excellent assessment tool for teaching staff. Consider it a low-stakes assessment. Children feel less pressure and you can get a good idea of their understanding based on how they're playing.



*Shannen Doherty is a Y2 teacher, senior leader and author of 100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Maths (£14.99, Bloomsbury)*

 @misssdoherty

 [misssdohertysthoughts.wordpress.com](https://misssdohertysthoughts.wordpress.com)

to having no filling rules and seeing how children change their questioning tactics.

**Shut the box**

This game is brilliantly simple but has many hidden mathematical depths. It provides ample opportunity for rich mathematical talk, which is something we need to encourage in every maths lesson.

**How to play**

Create a resource from paper that features numbered flaps from one to nine (**resource 1**). Begin the game with all the flaps open. The aim of the game is to roll a dice and shut the box by closing all the flaps.

Keep it simple to begin with: for example, if pupils roll a two and four, they can shut the corresponding flaps. Next, move on to using the sum of the dice. So, for example, if you roll a two and four, shut the six flap (2+4=6). Likewise, if you roll an eight, shut flaps that add up to that number (1+2+5, for example). Kieran Mackle has made a superb video about this game ([tinyurl.com/tp-shut](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-shut)) where he demonstrates different scenarios.

The conversations that can be had while playing this game open up a dialogue around number, which enables you to pick apart a child's understanding, as well as their ability to subitise and calculate mentally.

This game can be played early on in primary school, in intervention groups or even as a fun filler further up into KS2.

**Subitising snap**

We've all played snap, but have you tried subitising snap? Subitising is the ability to instantaneously recognise the number of objects in a group without counting them. It's a vital part of early number sense development. This game is a fun, but purposeful, way of practising.

**How to play**

Create a pack of subitising snap cards made up of digits, dots, pictures of objects and dice patterns for the numbers one to ten (**resource 2**). Children can play in pairs or small groups. Deal all of the cards, then one by one, ask players to reveal a card and place it in the middle of the group. When there are two cards representing the same number, players should shout "Snap!". The first to shout it wins that round and puts those cards to the side. The winner is the player who wins the most rounds.

This game forces children to use their subitising skills because to win snap you need to be speedy. They will become more used to recognising numbers shown in different representations, which will lead to better fluency later on.

These three games are just a few examples of meaningful and educational games that can be played in maths. Ultimately, if you're using games then you need to be sure about their purpose and if that is the best method to practise a concept. **TP**

NEW

# Number BLOCKS

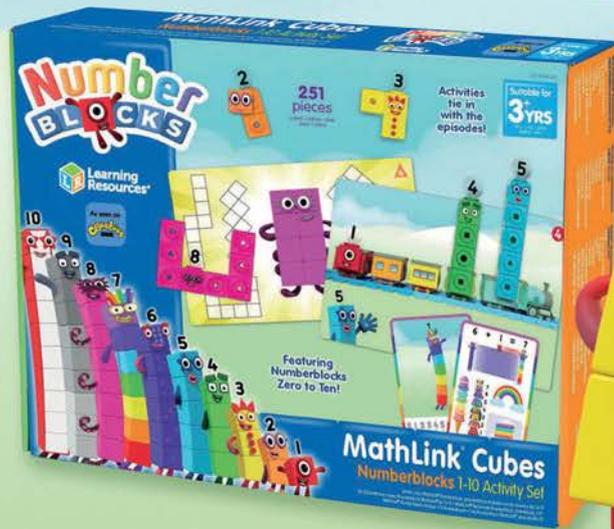
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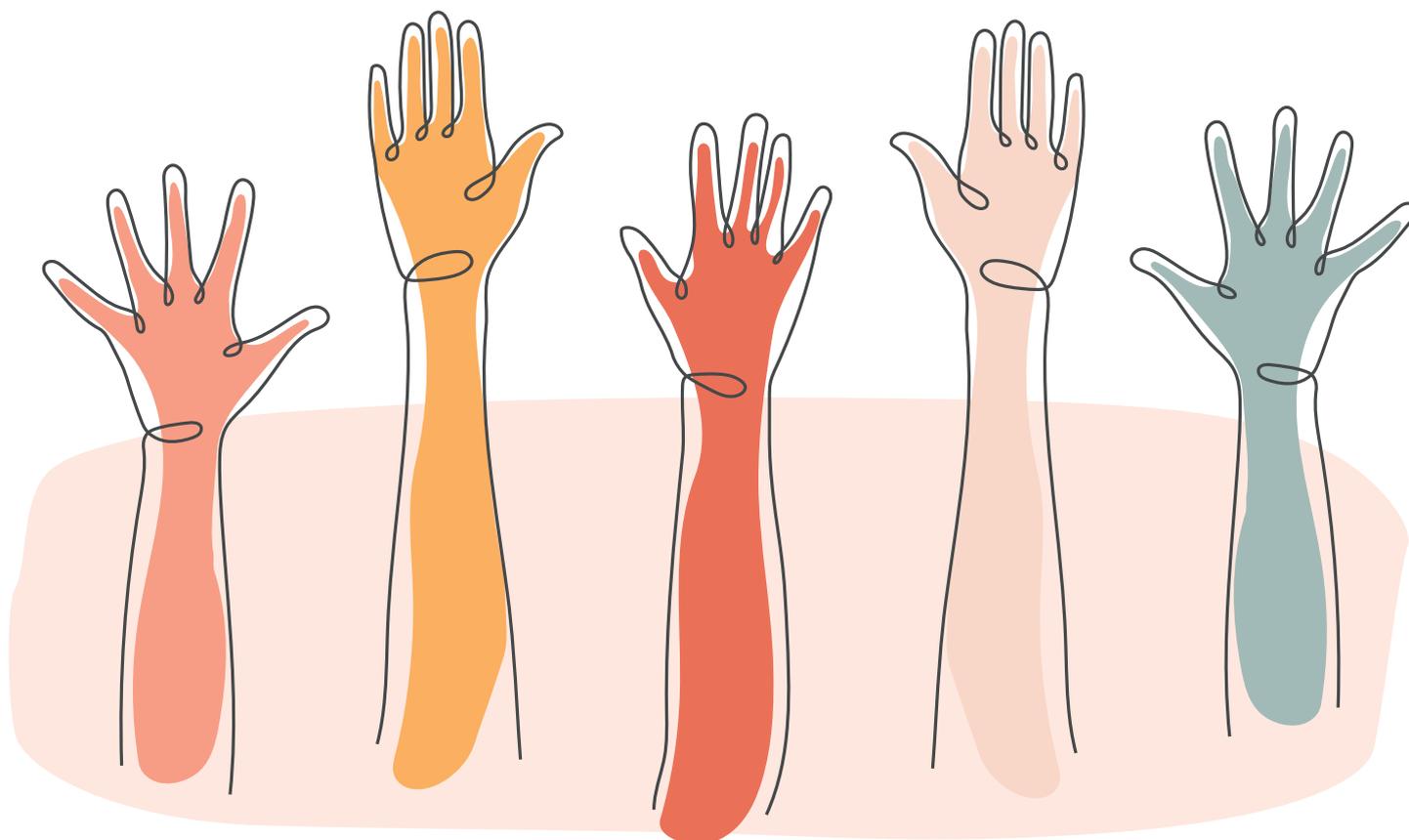
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# Taking RISKS

Use these simple, playful tasks to help children feel less anxious about offering up answers in maths lessons

MIKE ASKEW



**D**r Robyn Jackson, an American maths educator, observes that promises (whether articulated or not) are at the heart of teaching. She suggests ten promises ([tinyurl.com/tp-promise](https://tinyurl.com/tp-promise)) that are worth making to the children in our classes. In the shadow of Covid, I find the following suggestion of hers particularly pertinent:

*I promise to provide you with a physically and psychologically safe learning environment.*

While much attention is being paid to making classrooms physically safe, it's equally important for mathematics lessons to be psychologically

safe. I think, however, we sometimes underestimate how 'at risk' children can feel in maths lessons. While a range of opinions on a story might be welcomed in an English lesson, the sense that mathematical offerings are going to be judged on whether or not they are correct can make children anxious about being called on.

Outside school, much of our learning about risk-taking happens through play, both structured and unstructured. Here I offer a few simple, playful maths tasks that may help children feel less anxious about making offerings in class, and help rebuild confidence.

*“Assigning competence can have a powerful impact on both confidence and attainment”*

## What's my rule?

Choose a mental calculation strategy that you think is within the current level of competency of the class and that could usefully be practised. For example:

- Adding ten
- Doubling
- Rounding up the nearest multiple of ten

Tell the class that you're thinking of a secret rule to apply to numbers, but that you're not going to tell them what it is. They have to figure it out by giving you numbers and seeing which result you give them, based on applying your secret rule. Go round the class asking for numbers, recording the pairs of numbers as a table



on the board. For example, if your secret rule is 'add five', you might record:

In	Out
3	8
7	12
57	62

Explain that if anyone thinks they know what the rule is, they should indicate this by putting a thumb against their chest. As well as getting children to offer you further numbers to act on, select pupils with their thumbs up and give them a number to which they have to apply what they think the rule is. If they are correct, add the pair of numbers to the table.

Once many children have thumbs up, invite them to offer numbers to apply the rule to that they think will help everyone figure it out. Eventually, ask pupils to turn to a neighbour and agree on what they think the rule is. Can they explain what helped them figure it out? This can be made more challenging by having a simple two-step rule, for example:

- Double and add one
- Add one and double
- Multiply by ten and add two

## Above the line

Choose a way of sorting numbers that children should be familiar with. For example:

- Greater than 50 but less than 100
- Even or odd
- Multiples of five

As for 'What's my rule?', explain that you have secretly chosen a rule for sorting numbers. Draw a horizontal line on the board – children give you numbers and if they fit your rule, write it above the line. If they don't, write them below the line. Take suggestions, recording the numbers above or below the line as appropriate.

Again, once anyone thinks they know what the rule is, they should indicate this with a 'silent' thumb. When you choose 'thumbs up' children, tell them that you want them to give you a number and they must predict whether it will go above or below the line. Again, as this progresses, invite those who appear to know what they rule is to offer numbers that they think will help anyone still not sure of the rule.

One of the things that often happens when I first play this in class is that, as it progresses, children begin to assume that they have to provide numbers that are 'correct', in the sense of going *above* the line. It helps to talk about how you can't be 'wrong' in offering a number, and how, often, the numbers *below* the line can be more helpful in checking what the rule is than those above it.

Again, this can be made more challenging by having two criteria for sorting, or a slightly less obvious criterion, for example:

- One more than a multiple of three
- A multiple of five between 60 and 120
- A whole number (it can take quite a while before someone suggests a fraction)

## Can you make...?

Children each need a set of 0-9 digit cards. Ask pupils to mix up their cards and randomly set aside five of them. Set various challenges for making numbers that the children have to use their remaining cards to show solutions to, for example:

- A two-digit number between 50 and 100
- An even number less than 75
- A three-digit number with a fewer number of tens than number of ones
- A multiple of three greater than 36
- A number that is a multiple of five and has ten as a factor

This can be developed into having to make a pair of numbers (still from the five remaining cards) that satisfy certain conditions. For example:

- Make two two-digit numbers that when added together have an even answer

- Make two two-digit numbers that sum to more than 70
- Make two two-digit numbers that have a difference of more than 20
- Make a two-digit number and a one-digit number that when multiplied together have a product less than 50
- Make a two-digit number and a one-digit number that when you divide the larger number by the smaller, there will be no remainder

These challenges are helpful for bringing children's attention to the power of reasoning over working out actual answers. For example, in looking for two two-digit numbers with a difference of more than 20, children might reason that if they make a number in the 50s, then 20 less than that number is going to be in the 30s, so any number in the 20s or below will satisfy the condition.

Listening out for children's reasoning and inviting them to share it with the class is a great opportunity for 'assigning competence', an idea that I'm grateful to Dr Ruth Trundle for bringing to my attention. Assigning competence is a strategy for raising the status of children who are not the most confident in lessons by sharing something they've said or done with the class and showing how everyone can learn from this. The work of Ruth and her colleagues ([tinyurl.com/tp-competence](http://tinyurl.com/tp-competence)) demonstrates that assigning competence, done subtly and with a focus on highlighting a child's thinking rather than them personally, can have a powerful impact on both confidence and attainment. I'm not going to make any promises that assigning competence is going to make everyone love mathematics, but I recommend you give it a try. **TP**



**Mike Askew** is adjunct professor of education at Monash University, Melbourne.

 @mikeaskew26

# 4 REASONS TO TRY... Maths-Whizz

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## At a glance

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encourage cooperative learning and develop extended language.

## 2 CATCH-UP FOR ALL

Mini-Maths caters for all abilities, allowing children to work to their current level of understanding, from initial play with the counters, spinners and chalkboards to developing fine motor and pre-writing skills. Multiplication, division, addition, whole-part models and place value are also covered, alongside lots more. The resources

## 3 CURRICULUM-BASED LEARNING

Mini-Maths comes with a comprehensive learning manual and access to videos from education consultants and teacher training tutors to assist practitioners and teachers with example learning activities. Mini-Maths is compatible with the whole school Versa-Tile Maths System, offering maths learning progression

from lower foundation to the start of secondary school.

## 4 DURABLE AND AFFORDABLE

Our resources are made from natural, durable UK-grown wood from our own sustainable woodland management projects. No plastic, resins or rubber from far away lands, and no nasty, harmful, toxic chemical treatments on the wood – just natural, beautiful and durable.

### Contact:

Email [queries@outdoorclassrooms.co.uk](mailto:queries@outdoorclassrooms.co.uk)  
Visit [outdoorclassrooms.co.uk](http://outdoorclassrooms.co.uk)  
Watch at [tinyurl.com/tp-minimaths](http://tinyurl.com/tp-minimaths)



## At a glance

- **Mini-Maths resources are both indoor and outdoor provision friendly.**
- **This is a multi-ability, adaptable, flexible and wide-ranging natural maths resource.**
- **Mini-Maths allows children of all abilities to have fun and catch up with their maths learning.**

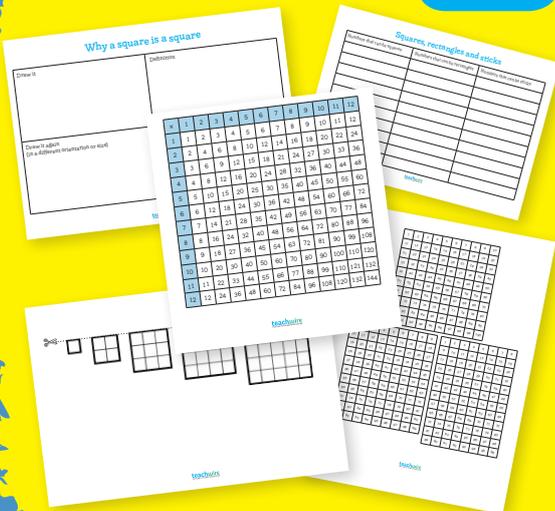
# How to teach SQUARE NUMBERS

Use these ideas to allow pupils to experience the concept of square numbers, thus strengthening their understanding...

JOHN BEE

## FREE RESOURCES!

Download all the resources mentioned here from [teachwire.net/teaching-resources/square-numbers](https://www.teachwire.net/teaching-resources/square-numbers)



Teaching for conceptual understanding requires children to understand *how* and *why* a concept works, rather than passively accepting abstract rules a teacher presents to them. Teaching children that a square number is a number multiplied by itself is the final generalisation. Lots of teaching, learning and construction of a concept must come before. Deepening concepts and starting with 'why' is a powerful way to develop and strengthen understanding.

The following activities

are designed to help you start with the concept of square numbers and take small steps to develop, strengthen and deepen understanding. They use a concrete, pictorial, abstract approach to allow pupils to experience the concept, thus making it more secure and memorable.

### Activity one

As this concept focuses on square numbers which are linked to square shapes and properties of shapes, it may be worth starting with a discussion on the properties

of a square. Hand out a 2x2 table (**Resource 1**) with the following titles in each of the four boxes and ask pupils to fill it in as a starting point, thinking about why a square is a square:

- Draw it
- Definition
- Draw it again in a different orientation or size
- Non-example

understanding, while exposing the structure of the concept as a calculating area.

Alternatively, provide children with a multiplication grid (**Resource 2**) and invite them to draw squares, starting from one in the top left-hand corner and increasing in size each time. The bottom right-hand number identifies the square number (see illustration below).

### Activity two

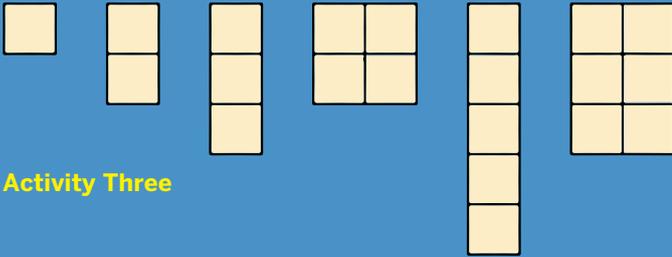
Using squared paper, invite children to draw squares ranging from 1x1 to 12x12 in size. Ask pupils to calculate the area of the shapes. Explain that this is a square number. This visual representation deepens pupils'

### Activity three

Next, play 'square, rectangle or stick'. Ask children to draw a 1x1 square on squared paper. Now, add one extra 1x1 square and see if you can create a square, rectangle or stick (see illustration, above right). Keep adding on extra

×	1	2	3	4	5
1	1	2	3	4	5
2	2	4	6	8	10
3	3	6	9	12	15
4	4	8	12	16	20
5	5	10	15	20	25

Activity Two



**Activity Three**

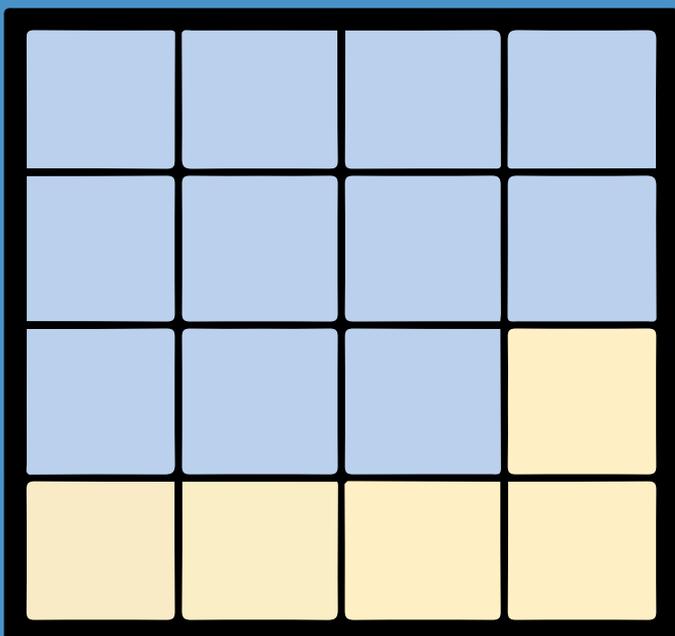
1x1 squares. Make a note on a worksheet (**Resource 3**) of how many 1x1 squares you need to create squares, rectangles and sticks. Pupils should notice that squares can only be made from 1, 4, 9, 16, 25 (etc) squares. Alternatively, ask children to cut out squares and manipulate them on their desk to investigate this activity in a more concrete way.

**Activity four**

Explore the structure of square numbers and allow children to look for patterns by giving pupils three grids: 0-100 in rows of ten; 0-99 in rows of nine; 0-96 in rows of eight (**resource 4**). Ask children to shade in the square numbers. What do they notice? The numbers go from no real pattern in the 10x10 grid to being lined up in columns in the 8x8 grid and subsequent grids after that. Draw more grids, getting shorter by one each time.

**Activity five**

Making links and connections



Activity Five

in mathematics is important for children to be able to reason and explain. Linking prime numbers and square numbers allows for rich discussions and the strengthening of both concepts. After teaching or revising what prime numbers are, pose this question: can you make a square number by adding two prime numbers together?

Give children visual representations of square numbers with the number of squares visible inside each square to 12x12 (**resource 5**). Ask them to cut them out. Show children how two prime numbers add together to make a square number, such as  $11 + 5 = 16$ . Show this by colouring in the squares, like below.

**Activity six**

Now children have had time to explore the concept in depth and secure their understanding of square numbers, consider an investigation to apply their understanding. Try posing this

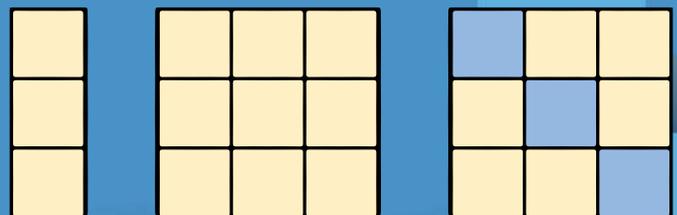
question: which numbers can be made by adding two square numbers together? Cut out visual representations of squares to 12x12 to help. Children who are confident can do it abstractly and systematically. For example,  $1 + 4 = 5$ ;  $1 + 9 = 10$ ;  $1 + 16 = 17$ .

**Activity seven**

This activity can be done with counters, cubes, pencil and paper or abstract notations: think of a number, square it, subtract your starting number. Is the number you're left with odd or even? What do pupils notice? The number is always even.

- For example:
- Think of a number: 3
  - Square it: 9
  - Subtract the starting number:  $9 - 3 = 6$

In the example below, the blue squares show the number of parts subtracted from the square.



**Activity Seven**

So, why is a square number a square number? Using the approaches in the activities above allows children to reason, make links, look for patterns, hypothesise and arrive at the generalisation that a square number is a number which is multiplied by itself. This is the end point; the generalisation; the rule. Children will have been on a conceptual journey of discovery to arrive at this end point, rather than it being one of many abstract mathematical rules. **TP**



*John Bee is head of KS2 and maths leader at a primary school.*

 @mrbeeteach

 mrbeeteach.com

English



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Explore how writers can embed their truths and experiences in their writing
- Play with concepts of true, false and exaggeration
- Anecdotal storytelling techniques
- Poetry performance ideas, especially when performing to camera
- Watch and respond to the poetry of Michael Rosen

# Explore truth and lies with Michael Rosen



What's the worst thing you've ever tasted? Use exaggeration to write funny poems, says **Jonny Walker**

@jonnywalker\_edu [jonnywalker.carrd.co](http://jonnywalker.carrd.co)

Children benefit enormously from being able to write from their experience in a poetry classroom – putting things that matter to them down on paper, in curious and well-considered ways. But they often ask whether their poem needs to be true. In this short lesson, children will explore what truth can look like in their creative writing. There are lots of shades of ambiguity between complete truths and complete lies, and poetry can allow children to play with that interesting space between the poles.



## START HERE

Authentic writing from children often grows from good conversation. The exchange of stories and anecdotes around a theme can support everybody to generate their own ideas. Certain themes are universal components of our social lives. Food is a great example. Ask the children to tell stories to each other about the best and worst things that they've ever tasted. Did they taste the bad stuff on purpose or accidentally? Let some children share with the whole class if they like. Let pupils know that poets 'harness' experiences like this. Watch Michael Rosen's poem story *Fridge* from his YouTube channel ([tinyurl.com/tp-fridge](http://tinyurl.com/tp-fridge)).



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | PRETTY MUCH TRUE

Ask the children to talk together about whether they thought Michael Rosen's *Fridge* poem was true or not. Take their responses and ask them whether a poem can be somewhere between 'totally true' and 'totally false'.

Play the video again. This time, ask the children to consider which bits they think happened, and which bits might be lies or exaggerations. Explain about 'exaggeration' and 'embellishment' – two great words which can explain how a truth might be stretched and become 'a bit less true'. The point here is to let children see that there

is a space between truth and lies, and that good writing can happen there – most fiction, in fact. Do children think Michael actually took a big swig of the oil or is it an exaggeration to make it a more entertaining poem story?

### 2 | THE SPACE BETWEEN

Return to the anecdotes that children were sharing about the worst things that they've tasted. Encourage pupils to share with the whole class if they would like, and ask follow-up questions which encourage children to give more specific detail about things they mentioned. The details make it interesting. If they say they were eating at a table, ask them who they



**“Encourage pupils to begin writing down the story of how they tasted the disgusting thing”**

were with. If they say they ate a biscuit, get them to state which kind.

Encourage pupils to begin writing down the story of how they tasted the disgusting thing. Up to the point that they put it into their mouth, ask them to make it as true as possible. When it gets to describing the taste, and their reactions, encourage them to experiment with exaggeration, like in *Fridge*. How bad was the taste? What was their reaction? Did their lips fall off? Did they weep for hours to their nan? Did they drink a litre of yoghurt to take the taste away?

Encourage children to write and then share these embellished ‘pretty much true’ poems with each other as small performances. Expect children’s laughter as a marker of some effective exaggeration.

### 3 | TRUE OR FALSE?

Another writing and performing exercise is the ‘true or false’ poem. Because so many of Michael Rosen’s poems are grounded in autobiography, and because his rebellious sense of humour is so well-known, he is very well placed to dupe us with cheeky falsehoods. Michael’s true or false videos on his YouTube channel are a great showcase of this ([tinyurl.com/tp-truefalse](https://www.youtube.com/tp-truefalse)).

Ask children whether it’s easy to spot if someone is telling the truth. How certain can we be? Can someone start with a truth and hide a lie inside it? Can someone start with a lie and hide a truth inside it? Michael’s poem *Rats* is my favourite, in which he earnestly describes watching a man use a toasting fork to impale and barbeque a rat on the platform of New Cross Gate train station. Share the video ([tinyurl.com/tp-rats](https://tinyurl.com/tp-rats)) with pupils – prepare to be revolted! What do the children think? Is it true or false? Notice that Michael seems very undisturbed by what happens. How do Michael’s words make it feel believable? How does he speak to us, through the camera?

Watch some of Michael’s other true or false videos to get a feel for how they work. Encourage children to create their own stories like this, told as anecdotal free verse poems. Focus this activity on speaking and performing more than writing. To prompt children, if they need it, begin with “I saw something a bit odd last weekend...”.

*Jonny Walker is a teacher-writer, currently teaching poetry in primary schools across east London. He is the author of Michael Rosen’s Poetry Videos: How To Get Kids Writing And Performing Poems Too, written with Michael Rosen.*

## EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Collate a class collection of anecdotes around different topical themes, such as ‘worst thing we have tasted’, ‘times I felt out of place’ or ‘making and breaking friendships’. All of these encourage children’s understanding of writing as a social process.
- After creating their true or false anecdotes, encourage children to record their poem story performances using iPads or cameras so that they can watch them back together. Explore how our body language can communicate the truth (or falsity) of the words we speak.
- Other true or false poems on Michael Rosen’s channel include *Cows* and *Cucumber*. Both involve peculiar things occurring in mundane settings. Explore what happens when we combine the settings of one writing style with the style of another. Do horror stories and scary poems need to take place in haunted houses and graveyards? Do fairy tales need to take place in forests? Empower children to blend genres and play freely with different conventions.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Can something be true and false at the same time?
- How can we have fun playing with stories that are somewhere between true and false?
- What does this video make you think about?
- Do poems all need to rhyme and have a rhythm?



### WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Identify key moments within a text
- Use drama techniques to explore a story
- Create role play that includes narration, and which balances dialogue with action
- Evaluate drama critically but empathetically

# Act out the fable of the tortoise & the hare



Use drama techniques to explore this well-known tale, thinking about sequence, characters and themes, says **Tom Kirkham**

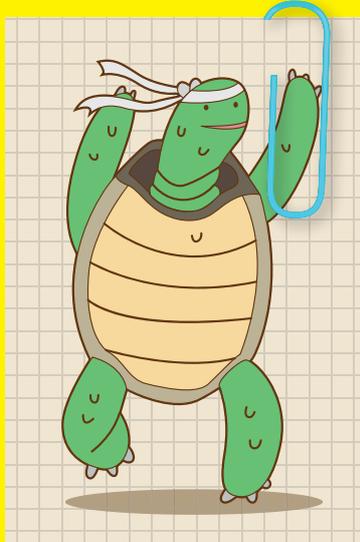
@musicalsco [theschoolmusicalscompany.com](http://theschoolmusicalscompany.com)

Drama provides pupils with a fun, practical and meaningful way of exploring the world. For young children, stories in particular help them to learn important lessons from the actions of others. In this lesson, which is based on the fable of the tortoise and the hare, children will undertake practical activities in small groups, demonstrating an awareness of story sequence, characters, themes and drama techniques. They'll also learn to critique each other's performances in a productive and sensitive way.



## START HERE

Read or play the class the story of The Hare And The Tortoise. This is freely available online, including on the BBC Teach website at [tinyurl.com/tp-hare](http://tinyurl.com/tp-hare). Discuss the main sequence of events. How do the class feel about the actions of each of the main characters in the story? Is there a moral to the tale? What other lessons might we learn from it? Other than the hare and the tortoise, what other animals feature in the story? Could there be additional animals added to a dramatisation?



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | TERRIFIC TABLEAUX

Divide the class into small groups of four to six children. Explain to them that you would like them to decide on the five or six key moments from the story – the events which drive the story forwards and without which it wouldn't really make sense.

Introduce the word 'tableau', explaining to pupils that it is another word for a freeze frame or still image. Tell children that an effective tableau can convey lots of meaning, just like a picture in a comic can.

Discuss the importance of body language, facial expressions and positioning

in order to convey meaning. Ask the groups to work on five or six tableau in the order that they appear in the story, with each child playing one (or more) of the characters from the story. Add some extra animal characters into parts of the story if needed.

### 2 | ADD A NARRATOR

Introduce the idea of narration, in which one or more people (who may or may not also be a character within the drama) tell the story while others act it out. Ask children to choose a narrator who will tell the story while others in the group try moving from one tableau to the next when the narrator gets to that part of the story. Give

**“Ask each character to say one line during the tableau that helps to move the story forwards”**



## EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Introduce the drama technique of hot seating. This involves a character from a play or piece of drama being asked questions by the other members of the group, to which they respond in character. Let each child undertake hot seating, practising a voice and body language for their character.
- Write a short victory speech for the tortoise, thanking the audience for being there and for supporting him/her along the way. Deliver the speech to an audience.
- Write a short speech in which the hare congratulates the tortoise and accepts defeat. Deliver the speech to an audience.
- Using some of the lines from your piece of drama, create a simple comic of six pictures, each with a line beneath that conveys the key points of the story.

the feel and atmosphere of the piece, how well the story was conveyed and the effectiveness of the characters

### 3 MAP THE COURSE

Give each group a large piece of paper. Ask pupils to draw out the course that the hare and the tortoise raced on. This will vary depending on which version of the story you read, but it could include any or all of the following, among others:

- Start line and road
- Trees and fields
- Pond or stream
- Barn or houses
- Finish line

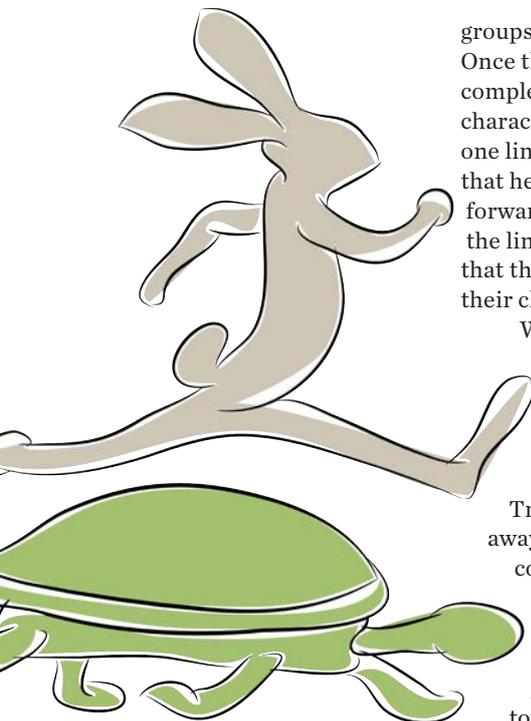
Ask each child to do a simple drawing of their character on a small piece of paper or card. Using these illustrated characters, ask children to dramatise the story on their map, once again making use of a narrator and simple spoken lines for the characters.

*Tom Kirkham is the publishing director of The School Musicals Company and a qualified teacher of English and drama.*

groups time to practise. Once they have successfully completed this, ask each character in the group to say one line during each tableau that helps to move the story forwards. Ask them to deliver the line in a voice and manner that they think works well for their character.

Watch the performances, asking the audience to think of one thing they liked when watching, or that they thought worked really well.

Try to steer pupils away from any personal comments about individuals (such as “Olly was amazing” or “Izzy was too quiet”), guiding them instead towards comments about



## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Why was the hare so confident that he/she would win the race?
- What qualities did the tortoise show, both to undertake the race and to win it?
- What can we learn from this story that we might apply to our own behaviour?



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Use a variety of weather phrases in French and respond to the question *quel temps fait-il?*
- Use prepositions to talk about the weather in different parts of France
  - Extend sentences with conjunctions
  - Speak more confidently in French through the creation of a weather report role play

# Become a French weather reporter



*Quel temps fait-il?* Use weather vocab, prepositions and conjunctions in **Ellie Chettle Cully's** lesson

[@eccmfl](#) [myprimarylanguagesclassroom.com](http://myprimarylanguagesclassroom.com)

Talking about the weather may seem like a very simple part of everyday life in the UK, but in MFL lessons this familiar subject matter provides children with a great opportunity to work on their spontaneous speaking skills. As the lesson progresses, children will move from simple phrases to full-sentence constructions, extending them with conjunctions and describing location using prepositions. Above all, this lesson gives children a real purpose for speaking: the creation of a spoken TV weather report.

## START HERE

Explain how to ask what the weather is like in French (*quel temps fait-il?*) and some possible responses, such as: *Il fait chaud* (hot); *Il fait froid* (cold); *Il pleut* (rainy); *Il neige* (snowy); *Il y a du vent* (windy); *Il y a du soleil* (sunny); *Il y a des nuages* (cloudy). Download the simple flashcards at [teachwire.net/teaching-resources/weather-vocabulary](http://teachwire.net/teaching-resources/weather-vocabulary), each with a symbol representing the above weather phrases. Show pupils a card and say a phrase at the same time. If the phrase matches the image the children should repeat it back to you. If it's incorrect, they should put their finger on their lips and remain silent. Keep score to make it competitive.



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | HIDE THE CARD

Show the children a simple map of France with a few key towns marked. See if they recognise any – often they are good at picking out towns like Marseille and Lyon that have successful football teams. Explain that in order to say that you are in a particular town, you need to use the preposition *à* in French – children may already be aware of this from talking about where they live (*j'habite à...*).

Before the session, create a selection of handwritten word cards showing the phrase *à + town* e.g. *à Paris* (in Paris). Split the class into two teams and ask one member of the first team to leave the classroom.

Ask a member of the opposing team to choose a card and show the phrase to their rivals before hiding it somewhere in the classroom. The searcher must then come back into the classroom and their teammates can guide them to the card's hiding place by chanting the phrase more loudly as they get closer or more quietly when they move away. If the searcher correctly locates the card, they get a point for their team.

### 2 | TRAPDOOR GRID

Start to get the children putting together information about weather and locations by playing a game of *la trappe* (trapdoor). Show the children how they can build a sentence using a weather-themed grid



**“Ask children to present *la météo* (the weather report) to the rest of the class”**

(download it from [teachwire.net/teaching-resources/weather-vocabulary](https://www.teachwire.net/teaching-resources/weather-vocabulary)).

Pupils can keep it simple with a town and the weather (e.g. à Paris, il fait chaud), or extend with the conjunctions *et* (and) or *mais* (but). Children must use the grid to secretly write a sentence that their partner must guess, phrase by phrase. If they guess the phrase option correctly, they can move on to the next block. If they make a mistake, they fall down the trapdoor and must go back to the beginning and start again.

### 3 WEATHER REPORTS

Using a simple map and weather symbols, either on paper or on your interactive whiteboard, ask children to work in pairs to create a short report, detailing the weather in a variety of different towns and cities in France. Ask children to present *la météo* (the weather report) to the rest of the class. This activity also works really well as a listening activity. Ask one child to speak their report to a partner, who must then place the correct symbols next to the relevant towns.

Extend the activity by teaching children the four simple compass points and their attendant preposition: *dans le nord* (in the north); *dans le sud* (in the south); *dans l'est* (in the east); *dans l'ouest* (in the west). Give pupils opportunities to incorporate these into their weather reports too.

*Ellie Chettle Cully is a qualified primary teacher and primary languages specialist.*

## EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Ask children to write up their weather reports. These make a great display, especially if you can attach a QR code to each piece which, once scanned, brings up an audio or video recording of the pupil presenting their weather report.
- French is spoken in nearly 30 different countries worldwide, and the contrasts in weather are enormous. Focus on a country with a very different climate to that of France, such as Canada or a Caribbean island like Guadeloupe. Ask children to prepare a weather report for one of these countries or, alternatively, ask them to compare and contrast the weather in different parts of the francophone world in French.

## Free online resources

Download resources for this lesson plan, including the worksheet for the weather trapdoor game, at [teachwire.net/teaching-resources/weather-vocabulary](https://www.teachwire.net/teaching-resources/weather-vocabulary)

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT



TEACHWIRE.NET

### Trapdoor La météo

À Paris	il fait froid	et	à Paris	il
À Lyon	il fait chaud	mais	à Lyon	il fait chaud
À Marseille	il pleut		à Marseille	il pleut
À Nantes	il neige		à Nantes	il neige
À Calais	il y a du vent		à Calais	il y a du vent
À Bordeaux	il y a du soleil		à Bordeaux	il y a du soleil
	il y a des nuages			il y a des nuages



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## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- **Quel temps fait-il ? (What is the weather like?)**
- **Can you extend your sentence with a conjunction?**
- **What do you think the weather in the north of France might be like? What about the south? How do you know?**

# Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration to your classroom...



1

## Diabetes support

The InDependent Diabetes Trust offers support and information to people with diabetes, their families and health professionals on the issues that are important to them. Its helpline offers a friendly, understanding ear when the going gets tough. IDDT supplies information packs to parents and teachers so they understand the needs of children with diabetes in school and provides much-needed aid to children with diabetes in developing countries. Diabetes can cause serious long-term complications and a cure is still elusive, so IDDT funds essential research. As a registered charity IDDT relies entirely on voluntary donations. For more information or to join, visit [iddtinternational.org](http://iddtinternational.org)



## Walk with Shaun

On Wednesday 16th June, thousands of kids will put their best feet forward to promote road safety and the health and planet-saving benefits of walking. The Brake Kids Walk with Shaun the Sheep is a great way for schools to fundraise to help Brake support families that have been affected by road death and serious injury. Register now for your free pack, including posters, lesson plans and activities featuring Shaun the Sheep at [brake.org.uk/kidswalk](http://brake.org.uk/kidswalk)

3



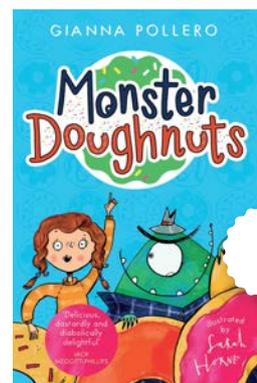
## Reliable tech

When it comes to remote learning, you need reliable technology that's quick and simple to use. The Samsung Chromebook 4 and Chromebook 4+ are designed to help teachers and students work productively. The built-in Google ecosystem helps to simplify and enhance learning, offering greater possibilities in and out of the classroom. The all-new solidity design helps protect the devices from the rough and tumble of daily life.

The Samsung Chromebook 4 Series offers outstanding performance at an affordable price. Call **0333 344 1916** or email [samsungexperiencestores@prs-and.com](mailto:samsungexperiencestores@prs-and.com)

## Exciting lessons

Kapow Primary's schemes of work provide teachers with fresh and inspiring lessons that ensure pupils' progression of skills and knowledge in art and design, design and technology, computing, languages, music, and RSE and PSHE throughout KS1 and 2, as well as EYFS for computing and music. Created by subject specialists, the schemes of work contain over 800 lessons, explanatory teacher videos and resources with built-in CPD that cover the full curriculum and help specialists and non-specialists alike deliver exciting lessons with confidence. Visit [kapowprimary.com](http://kapowprimary.com)



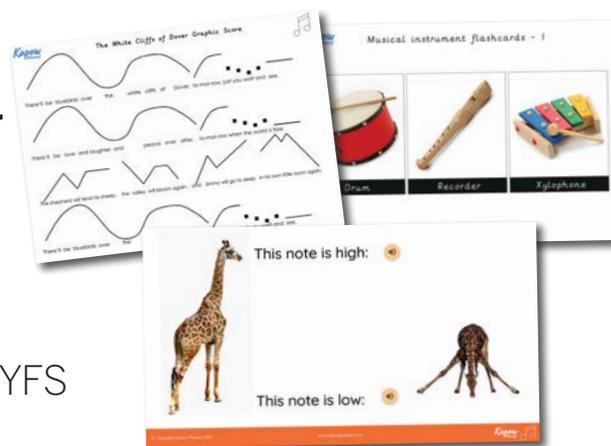
## Deliciously funny

Discover Monster Doughnuts – the deliciously funny new series from sparkling new talent Gianna Pollero, illustrated by the award-winning Sarah Horne. The series is perfect for seven to ten-year-old fans of Pamela Butchart and Andy Stanton and is a rip-roaring adventure of monstrous proportions. Grace is a monster hunter who owns a bakery – and everyone knows how much monsters love any kind of sweet treat. Just don't tell them about the secret exploding baking powder inside the doughnuts and cookies! Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-monster](http://tinyurl.com/tp-monster)

MUSIC 

# Kapow Primary music scheme of work

Complete national curriculum coverage from EYFS to KS2 via hundreds of lesson plans and videos



## AT A GLANCE

- A comprehensive music package that contains planned lessons, resources and additional support
- Inclusive music content ranging from EYFS to KS2
- Additional supplementary teacher skills videos to support delivery from non-specialists
- Curriculum overview broken down into easily trackable units of work

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



Authored by music specialists, Kapow Primary's music resources and supporting materials make teaching music straightforward, accessible and, dare I say it, fun – for specialists and non-specialists alike.

The Kapow Primary team is composed of educational experts and former teachers and this clearly shows in the quality of the resources they create. The primary music package is centred around a fully supported scheme of learning that spans from EYFS to the end of KS2. Each lesson comes complete with learning objectives and success criteria, along with clear practical instructions for facilitating music learning, including what to have ready. The planning is so detailed that even the key vocabulary is listed and defined. It's these details that make Kapow Primary resources stand out.

Looking at the curriculum overview, it's clear that the sequential nature of the learning is designed to expose pupils to a variety of types of music from various cultures. Units consist of three main focuses: performing, listening and composing. The mapping is clear, easy to follow and boasts complete logic.

What is striking is the intricacy of how the skills are introduced and the opportunities that Kapow Primary has built in to allow teachers to assess and track understanding and progress. Each unit and lesson has instructions on how to check for

understanding, meaning that non-specialists can easily help learners overcome misconceptions, something that is hugely empowering. What is reassuring is that the curriculum content is being fully reviewed to ensure that it meets the new non-statutory guidance for music, meaning that teachers can rely on Kapow Primary to ensure that the content will cover everything

Kapow Primary has designed the interface to be fully user-friendly. Each lesson features downloadable resources and these are supplemented by various support resources that are accessible via a simple click. National curriculum links, as well as linked units, are all clearly visible. For a specialist or non-specialist, the lessons massively reduce workload and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of delivering the music curriculum.

Alongside the main scheme of learning, there are also additional music videos for teachers so you can model and show learners how to apply musical skills. The videos link to a wide range of musicians from diverse backgrounds, giving an additional element of discovery to the package.

Exciting additions that are on the way include full knowledge organisers and additional assessment materials. One of the big positives of this package is that Kapow Primary's reactive adaptability allows teachers to continually develop too.

## teach PRIMARY

### VERDICT

- ✓ Full bank of music resources for specialists or non-specialists
- ✓ Easy-to-follow plans and exceptional detail throughout
- ✓ User-friendly interface that makes resources quickly accessible
- ✓ Sustained quality in terms of content
- ✓ Teacher videos save workload and increase effectiveness

### UPGRADE IF...

You want a comprehensive package to deliver music from start to finish. Perfect if you don't have music specialists in school but still want to provide effective exposure to the subject.

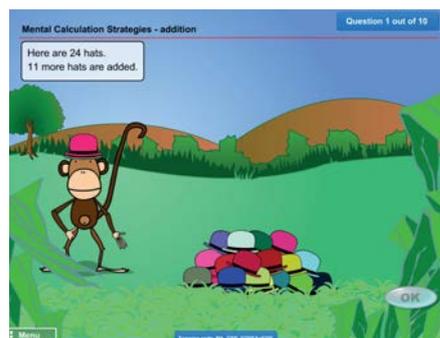
From £185+VAT, [kapowprimary.com](http://kapowprimary.com)



MATHS →

# Maths-Whizz

Award-winning virtual maths tutor designed for home, school and remote learning



## AT A GLANCE

- Provides maths tutoring to supplement classroom learning
- Fully online, allowing for easy access at any time
- Engages students by providing relevant content based on their educational needs
- Motivates students through immediate feedback and guided instruction

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



The Maths-Whizz Suite is a fully online offering from maths specialist solutions company, Whizz Education. Aimed at students aged five to 13, it provides teachers, learners and parents with extra support when it comes to maths.

At its centre is the Maths-Whizz Suite, made up of three core elements that work together to drive maths progress: an award-winning, AI-driven tutor; in-depth assessment and reporting tools; and a bank of high-quality resources. This three-pronged support boasts high success with proven results. Maths-Whizz claims that research demonstrates that students who learn with the Maths-Whizz Tutor for 60 minutes a week increase their 'maths age' by, on average, 18 months in the first year.

The courses and activities available cover 98% of the curriculum, so what children learn at home will help them to thrive at school. This is what makes Maths-Whizz so valuable – it isn't trying to replace what is taught in schools; it's designed to supplement it.

Once you're immersed in Maths-Whizz you quickly lose track of how long you've been engaging with the activities for. This is testament to their clever design. With endless customisation options that can be unlocked through learning, the educational games guide the user through an interactive

world of learning built just for them.

Maths-Whizz is designed on the premise that children are unique, so their learning plan should be too. It uses powerful AI technology to build a completely personalised plan, then continues to tailor it as pupils complete lessons. It's like having a teacher constantly checking for understanding. Maths-Whizz is so confident in its tutoring capabilities that it guarantees children will make progress. If they don't, you get your money back.

Teachers are empowered by an in-depth interface that gives clear information about each child's individual progress. As a supplement to what is happening in the classroom, you can adapt teaching to fit the needs of a class or even individual students. Reports can be run and printed so you can give feedback on progress quickly and efficiently. With a parent account, families can instantly understand their child's level of ability, monitor their progress and give encouragement with virtual messages, certificates and rewards.

The magic of Maths-Whizz is that students can learn anywhere, on any device. It's compatible with iPads and popular tablets, so students can engage with learning anywhere they have an internet connection.

## teach PRIMARY

### VERDICT

- ✓ Offers engaging and interesting maths content
- ✓ Works brilliantly as a supplementary resource outside of lessons
- ✓ Exceptional functionality and usability
- ✓ Well-designed content that keeps cognitive load low
- ✓ Intuitive tracking and monitoring to ensure learners are making good progress in maths

### UPGRADE IF...

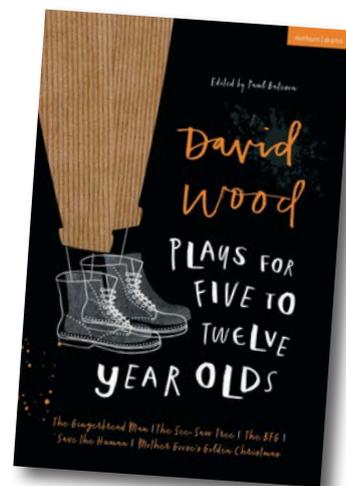
You want a platform that helps learners through individualised activity setting to fill gaps in knowledge. Consider if you have students who have gaps in knowledge from school closures.

Enquire for pricing at [whizz.com](https://whizz.com)

LITERACY 

# David Wood Plays for 5-12-Year-Olds

A selection of David Wood's plays, paired with the information and materials needed to use them in class



## AT A GLANCE

- Five riveting plays from children's dramatist David Wood, full of substance and fun
- Beautifully written with strong, fast-moving storylines that will entertain, educate and trigger imaginations
- Ready-to-go plays with teaching notes to help you every step of the way
- Suitable for KS1-3 play productions, drama groups and clubs

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



The plays in this collection are *The Gingerbread Man*, *The See-Saw Tree*, *The BFG*, *Save the Human* and *Mother Goose's Golden Christmas*. They include themes that appeal to children such as fantasy, magic, humour, animals, injustice and young protagonists. The plays are based on stories that are already very strong in their own right but these have been expertly adapted with an inherent freedom to be produced and performed in lots of different ways.

As you would expect from a master of children's theatre, the plays flow with fun, brim over with energy and score ten out of ten on the engagement scale. They are full of what David Wood calls 'suddenlies': they are designed to keep the children performing on their toes and the audience on the edge of their seats, wondering what will happen next.

The book is a creative collaboration and cleverly put together so you have all the information and materials you need for putting on a play with confidence. Teaching notes are provided before each play, written by experienced primary-level drama teacher Paul Bateson. These notes signpost the intended age range, cast numbers and running time, alongside key details and top tips about the characters.

Inside the book you'll find cast lists with lead roles, dual roles and

opportunities for extension or ensemble. There are also suggestions for costumes and props, advice for staging, music, sound effects and lighting, plus further considerations are factored in for extra support. The cross-curricular lesson plans hit the spot because they don't overcomplicate things and offer brilliant notes on activities to engage and develop, with main tasks that are appealing and achievable.

Putting on a school play isn't for the faint-hearted. It requires nerves of steel, creativity and a can-do mindset, along with plenty of guidance and support. The book gives you the latter in abundance. Wherever you stand on the teaching timeline, this book will suit novice directors, seasoned campaigners and all those in between.

As any primary teacher knows, putting on a play is exhausting, but the payback is the sheer joy and electricity you get when children perform it to their families. David Wood plays are here to help you experience the real magic of a school production and why they are actually quite addictive.

The music from the plays is available via Concord Theatricals but isn't essential to the success of the show. If you want to put on something special then you've got to learn from the best and David Wood plays are definitely in a league of their own.

teach  
PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ Spirited and fun plays to increase self-confidence and self-achievement
- ✓ Emotionally involving stories that make children care and hold their interest
- ✓ Plays that respect children and offer them meaningful cultural experiences
- ✓ Foster curiosity, investigation, discovery, anticipation, persistence and initiation
- ✓ An all-in-one playmaking resource with added stardust

## UPGRADE IF...

You want to make children laugh, cry and open their minds to new ideas and the power of theatrical storytelling.

£19.99, [bloomsbury.com](https://www.bloomsbury.com). Teach Primary readers can get 20% off using online code 200FFDWP (valid until 30/6/21)

TIME →

# EasyRead Time Teacher Classroom Set

Use these teacher and student resources to help your pupils learn to tell the time



## AT A GLANCE

- Thoughtfully designed resources
- Wipeable teacher and pupil versions of practice clocks with movable hands
- Provides easy steps for accurate time-telling
- Double-sided for analogue and 24-hour/digital work
- Working wall clocks and watches also available

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



When, as an adult, you glance up at the clock, it's easy to forget how much information you are taking in all at once. You forget how automatically you understand the different rules and conventions that apply to each hand. You instinctively know when each of the points around the face means a number from one to 12 and when it means a multiple of five up to 60.

It's easy to see why children sometimes struggle to interpret a clock. Years of subconscious practice has made it easy for us adults. For a child – who might still be getting to grips with the number system, let alone the concepts of halves and quarters – it is an absolute minefield.

That is why these resources from EasyRead Time Teacher are so invaluable. Their clear design makes sense of all those things pupils have to remember when they are learning to tell the time. As their skills increase, of course, they will not need to rely so much on the visual cues and will read clocks as instinctively as the rest of us. At the beginning, however, these resources are a great way of boosting confidence. They are like the rookie time-teller's equivalent of stabilisers on a bike.

I was particularly impressed with the way the 'past' and 'to' sides of

the clock are colour-coded and how the hour sections are a segment, rather than a point on the circumference. In my experience, the position of the small hand causes pupils all sorts of trouble. And, once they've got their heads around that, it seems they inevitably forget some other aspect. It's like a whack-a-mole of misconceptions. So, thank goodness for EasyRead Time Teacher.

These attractive, thoughtfully designed resources offer a simple way to help pupils learn how to tell the time. The classroom set comprises a wall clock, teacher demo board and a pack of student practice clocks. The large teacher board comes complete with wipeable space on which to write. The smaller versions are perfect for giving pupils hands-on practice. They are also double-sided for analogue clock work and digital/24-hour time telling. What's more, they come with simple printed steps to tell the pupils what to do.

Of course, other time teaching resources are available, but this is the best designed, most effective version I have seen. They make reading a clock straightforward and logical. And about time too.

teach  
PRIMARY

## VERDICT

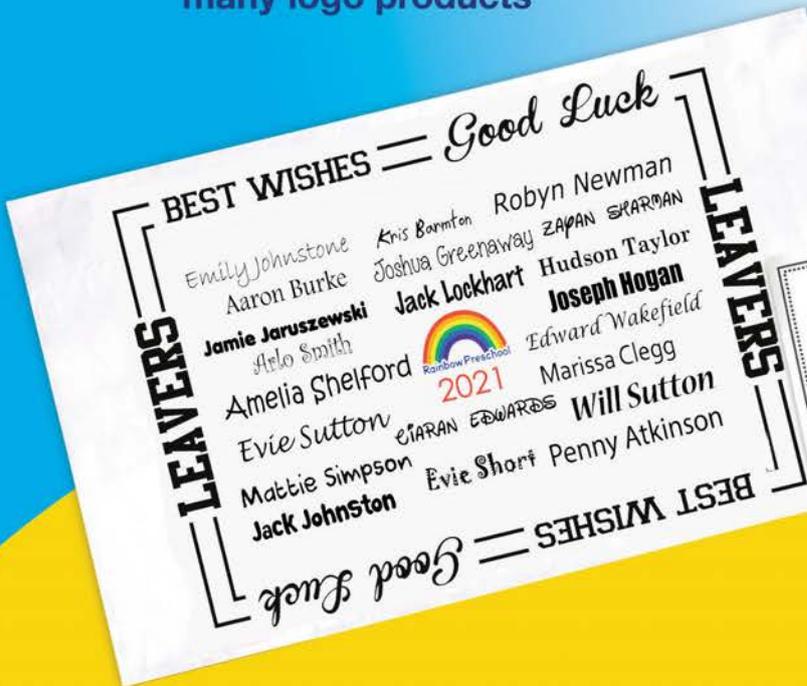
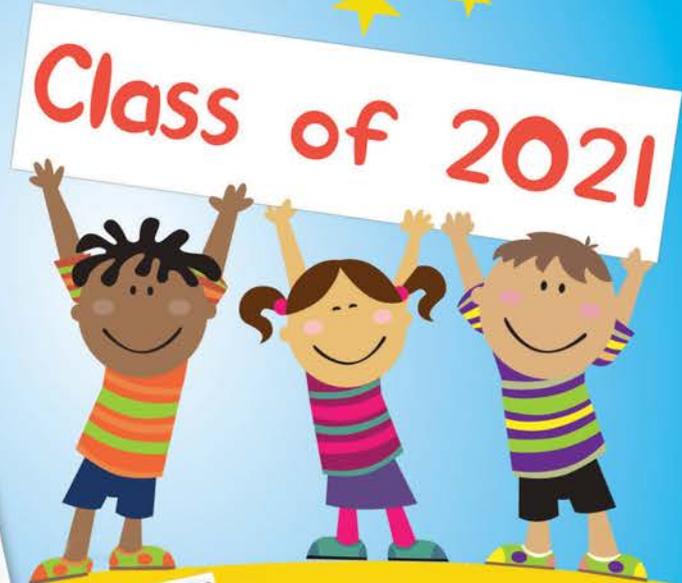
- ✓ Breaks time-telling into simple steps
- ✓ Thoughtfully designed and easy-to-use resources
- ✓ Effortlessly addresses possible areas of confusion
- ✓ Games and working clocks also available

## UPGRADE IF...

You want a simple, clear, hands-on method of teaching children how to tell the time.

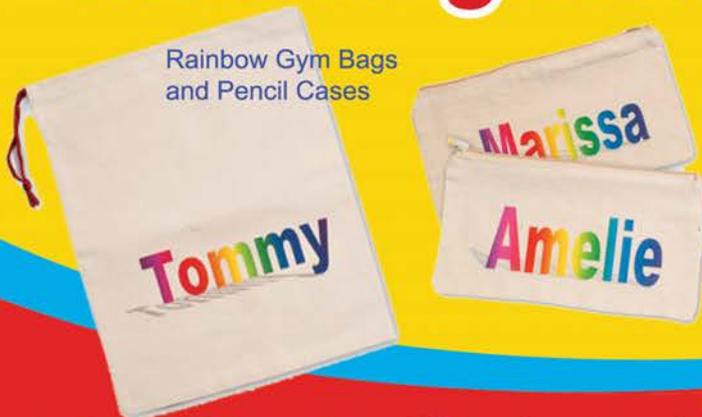
Classroom sets from £85, [easyreadtimeteacher.com](http://easyreadtimeteacher.com)

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# DAY in the LIFE



A one-day diary from first alarm to lights out



**GEMMA BAGNALL**  
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TEACHER AND RE LEAD  
IN WORCESTERSHIRE.

@missbprimary

## WAKING UP

My alarm goes off at 5.50am. I go for a quick 20-minute walk by the river to wake myself up before getting ready for work.



## MY MORNING

I get to school by 7.30am. We have hundreds of picturebooks in my class and I select some for the children to engage with when they come in. I love finding ones linked to things we've been enjoying this week.



## MY AFTERNOON

This term we've been building a pizza shop from cable reels and wheel trims, travelling back in time in cardboard boxes, painting with petals, exploring the Amazon rainforest and baking some 'delicious' treats entirely from mud!



## LUNCHTIME

I eat my lunch with my TA in our classroom, fork in one hand and marking highlighter in the other. We sit, chat and regularly cry with laughter during our breaks.



## MY EVENING

I leave school between 5pm and 6pm but often end up taking work home in some capacity. I go for socially distanced walks with friends before heading home to cook.



## BEDTIME

I love to read, draw and play the piano in the evening. I tend to head to bed about 10.30pm with a good book or sketchpad.

## QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

- ❖ **Career plan B?** As a child I wanted to be a pathologist or forensic detective. I'm a keen writer and would love to write and publish a children's novel.
- ❖ **Must-listen?** I've recently discovered the joys of Wanderlust YouTube playlists. Whack one on while you're cooking or working and let your mind wander with the music.
- ❖ **Must-read?** I finally got around to reading Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine by Gail Honeyman this month and totally understand the hype – what a fascinating and powerful character Eleanor is!
- ❖ **Twitter hero?** Sarah Watkins (@mini\_lebowski) is an inspiring teacher and Early Years expert, full of great ideas. After realising we lived close to each other we now put the world to rights on riverside walks.



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Enable teachers to teach through differentiation and formative assessment



Kitt has been designed for adventures! Support blended learning between home and school.

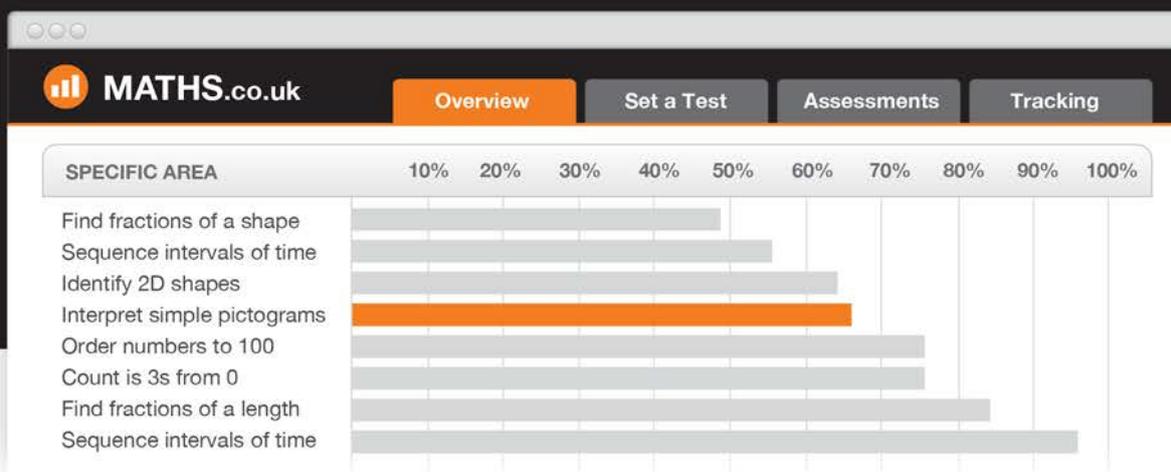
visit [tts-group.co.uk/meet\\_kitt](https://www.tts-group.co.uk/meet_kitt)

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