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# teach PRIMARY

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4

EXPERT POETRY  
PACKS FROM

plazoom



## DOES SPELLING REALLY MATTER?

**BEN LEVINSON, OBE**

‘Why we  
abandoned  
formal  
feedback’

*The power of  
positivity*

‘OH YEAH!’ MATHS MOMENTS

## Cracking chronology in KS1 history

**6 WAYS TO  
FEEL GOOD  
THIS TERM**

**GARETH  
SOUTHGATE:  
LEADERSHIP  
LESSONS**



**METACOGNITION**

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**SEND**

INVOLVING PARENTS

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ISSUE: 15.6  
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# Hello!



**W**elcome back! I hope you enjoyed your summer holidays and are feeling refreshed and excited for the coming school year. It's an exciting start for me too, as I'm delighted to take the helm of Teach Primary as the new editor. I'm looking forward to helping bring you all the best articles, opinion and resources, straight from expert educators.

In this issue, we start the new academic year off with a bang! We're celebrating foundation subjects history, geography and RE from p90, including how to use timelines in KS1 history and an exclusive extract from Mark Enser's new book *Powerful Geography*.

We've covered the core curriculum too; over on p49 Mike Askew shares practical suggestions for how positive emotions can help pupils learn maths, while on p85 Zahara Chowdhury addresses the future of literacy in the classroom, asking "Does spelling still matter?".

This year will hopefully be more settled than last, but just in case, on p42 Jordan Coombes explores how leadership lessons from Gareth Southgate can apply to our own tumultuous classroom experiences, and on p113 we round up 50 modern reads to get your pupils excited about books, no matter their taste.

As always, we also have a selection of innovative, ready-to-use lesson plans, classroom ideas and quick wins for you to try out.

I hope your first month back is a great one, and I look forward to joining you on your teaching journey.

Until next time,

*Charley*

Charley Rogers, editor  
 @TeachPrimaryEd1

*Don't miss our  
 next issue, on sale  
 8th October*

## POWERED BY...



**BEN LEVINSON, OBE**  
 talks about why his school ditched formal feedback in favour of a more casual, whole-team approach

*"So much of what we've done is based on trust, which comes from open and honest communication"*

p29



**HANNAH MOLONEY**  
 believes there's one way out of the SEND crisis, and it's simpler than you think

*"The SENCO role is a vast, diverse and morally compelling job"*

p31



**CATHY PROLE**  
 on how we can make sure tech doesn't impede pupils' sustained reading ability

*"It's amazing how children's enthusiasm for reading grows when we encourage groups of pupils to talk about books"*

p82

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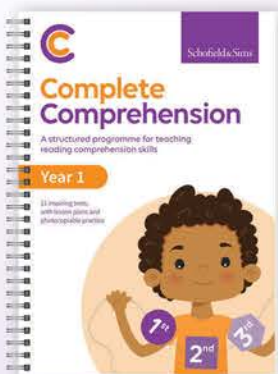
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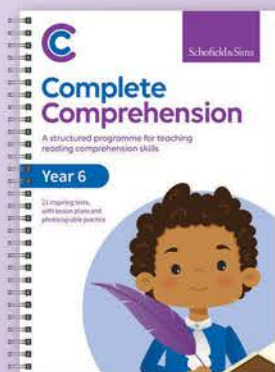
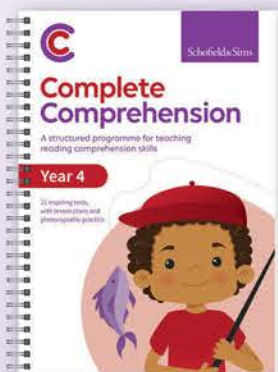


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Detailed **lesson plans** help to cut down planning time.

A **Language toolkit** facilitates the pre-teaching of important or unusual vocabulary.

Lions, Lions, Lions, by Laura Lodge

Unit 1

## Lions, Lions, Lions, by Laura Lodge

This is a text about the king of the jungle, the lion. It tells the reader lots of facts about how lions live.

Lions (*Panthera leo*) are the second biggest members of the 'big cat' family. Known for their ferocious roar, lions are known as the kings of the beast. Sadly, the number of lions in the world is declining and they are vulnerable to extinction.

### How do lions behave?

Lions live in prides, which are groups of between 10 and 15 lions. They communicate by roaring and their roars can be heard up to 5 miles away! When a lion is born, it is called a cub. Female cubs will stay with the same pride their whole lives, but male cubs are forced to leave when they are about 2 years old. They then form their own pride at males who look for a bigger pride to join. Lions spend most of their day sleeping – sometimes for up to 20 hours. They usually live until they are about 12 years old in the wild but a lion called Zenda lived in captivity until she was 25!

### What do lions look like?

Lions are known for their sandy fur, sharp teeth and claws, and furry tufts at the ends of their tails. Males are noticeable due to their long manes which get darker as a lion gets older. The length of an adult lion can be up to 3.5m from nose to tail and they can weigh up to 250kg!

### Where do lions live?

Lions live in grasslands (or savannah) that have acacia trees for shade. Thousands of years ago, lions lived in many parts of the world, however they now only live in some parts of Africa and West India. Many live in protected areas such as national parks where people are working to conserve their numbers.

### What do lions eat?

Lions are carnivores, which means they eat meat. They are skilled hunters and the females work together to catch medium-sized animals such as zebras, buffalo and wildebeest. They can run up to 81km/h, which is very helpful for catching their dinner! They are also scavengers, which means they eat animals that have already died, either from illness or by being killed by other predators. Did you know, lions need to eat up to 7kg of meat every day?

Lions, Lions, Lions, by Laura Lodge

Unit 1

Each unit includes a photocopiable set of **Target-skill questions** and **Mix it up! questions**.

The **text passages** are arranged in themed pairs and link to a wide range of cross-curricular topics.

**Child-friendly graphics and logos** help pupils to recognise each comprehension skill.

## Complete Comprehension

### Key Stage 2 Skills

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**Word meaning**

Read around the target word to see how it is being used in the text.



**Retrieval**

Touch the answer in the text before you fish it out.



**Summarising**

Find and talk about the text's main points.



**Inference**

Use clues from the text and your own ideas to work out the answer.



**Prediction**

Decide what is most likely to happen next in the text.



**Relationship**

Talk about the structure of the text.



**Word choice**

Talk about the effect of words and groups of words used in the text.



**Comparison**

Compare the events, characters and structure of the text.

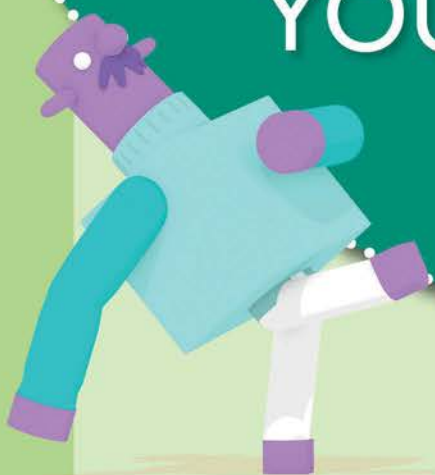
**Remember**

- Read the whole question carefully.
- Find the key words in the question.
- Look for key words from the question in the text.
- Check that your answer matches the question.

Visit [www.schofieldandsims.co.uk/completenesscomprehension](http://www.schofieldandsims.co.uk/completenesscomprehension)  
to download a **FREE sample unit** for each year group.



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Don't forget to follow us on Twitter @biniteducation for all our updates, competitions and to share what your school is doing.





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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  
PRIMARY**

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

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



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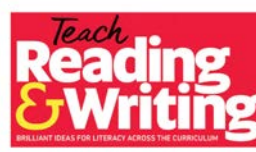
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We've rounded up 50 of the best modern children's reads, from picturebooks to tales that will keep any UKS2 reader happy. Check out reviews, and pick up some fun suggestions on incorporating the stories into your lessons.

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# Jolly Phonics

Enjoy getting amazing results  
across the primary years.



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# Breaktime

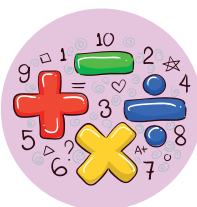
News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research



## Come fly with me

Youth charity Jon Egging Trust (JET) has launched a free education resource hub in partnership with the Royal Airforce Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows. Aimed at teachers and youth leaders, JET Inspired brings to life elements of JET's face-to-face confidence-building programmes through the exciting lens of the Red Arrows, with a focus on teamwork, leadership, communication and resilience. Developed in response to Covid-19 as a way to grant wider access to JET's unique education programmes, the digital hub is available at [tinyurl.com/tp-JETinspired](https://tinyurl.com/tp-JETinspired)

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



### MATHS PLANS

The NCETM has released a term-by-term framework to support teaching primary maths in 2021/22. It provides coherent curriculum sequencing, and draws together DfE guidance with high-quality resources. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-NCETM](https://tinyurl.com/tp-NCETM)



### INTO THE WILD

In honour of opening up the Great Debate to primary schools in 2021, animal welfare charity RSPCA has released its own lesson plan. Written with educators, the plan encourages teachers and students to host their own debates and discuss the roles animals play in our lives. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-RSPCA](https://tinyurl.com/tp-RSPCA)



### HAPPY CLAPPY NATIVITY

'A Happy Clappy Nativity' is the newest musical from Edgy Productions for KS1 and LKS2. As the title suggests, it's a nativity full of happiness... and clappiness! The traditional Christmas story told through an engaging script and eight delightful clap-along songs. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-HappyClappy](https://tinyurl.com/tp-HappyClappy)

## →→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



### Better writing, from the start

Looking for some autumnal inspiration? This adorable model text – part of Plazoom's Real Writing curriculum – is the perfect way to get children in Year 1 started on their own seasonal narratives; and teach them about compound words and questions marks at the same time! Try it for yourself, plus two other resources of your choice, with a 14-day free trial at [bit.ly/TPautumn](https://bit.ly/TPautumn)





## Q &amp; A

## Active School Hero

Joe Danquah, PE teacher from Byker Primary School in Newcastle, has been awarded the title of England's Active School Hero 2021. Joe has been recognised for outstanding contributions to getting people moving, along with eight other regional winners. In recognition of their dedication, winners will receive professional development training from the Youth Sport Trust, and Joe's school will gain access to exclusive Nike opportunities and experiences to further inspire students to be active. Joe said: "This year has been an incredibly tough one for everyone, and I know all of the other regional winners deserved to win this award too!"



## Dr Linda Papadopoulos

Psychologist and author

### What was primary school like for you?

It was great – I grew up (and did my primary years) in Canada and there was a big emphasis on sports – lots of time spent outdoors with friends but also they really emphasised community engagement. Looking back I think they were trying to foster not only a sense of connection but also underscore the importance of balance; it wasn't all about academics, school was a place you went to be with friends and learn about yourself as well as the world around you.

### How do you see children in KS2 using your new book?

I hope with enthusiasm! We really spent a lot of time thinking about how to make each section as engaging as possible with a real emphasis on experiential real-world learning. We were also aware that we wanted to spark important conversations between parents and kids and so I really hope that it's one of those books where kids feel inspired to share with their parents what they've learned.

### What did you learn while working with parenting expert Nadim Saad?

That he really cares. This book was very much a labour of love for Nadim, and comes from a genuine place of wanting to help and give back. Having said that he, like myself, is a bit of a nerd(!) so a lot of time was spent making sure that the advice is grounded in research.

Dr Linda's first children's book, **Happy Confident Life Skills Journal** (The Happy Confident Company, £11.99), written in collaboration with parenting expert Nadim Saad, is on sale now.

## Fight the injustice of childhood cancer

Join the Mini Superhero Challenge this September, as part of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. Every penny you raise will help Children with Cancer UK – the leading national charity dedicated to specialist childhood cancer research – fund vital childhood cancer research. The charity funds life-saving investigations to determine the causes, find cures and develop better treatments for children and young people with cancer. Apply today at [superhero.childrenwithcancer.org.uk](https://superhero.childrenwithcancer.org.uk)



**76%** OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS THINK SPELLING TESTS ARE AN INEFFECTIVE WAY TO TEACH SPELLING\*

\*Source: Survey of 1,362 UK primary teachers carried out by Jane Considine at the launch of her new book, *The Spelling Book: Transforming the Teaching of Spelling*

## Look ahead | Book ahead

### CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY

Christmas Jumper Day is on 10th December. Rock up to school in your swankiest sweater to raise money for Save the Children. [savethechildren.org.uk/christmas-jumper-day](https://savethechildren.org.uk/christmas-jumper-day)



### BIKE TO SCHOOL WEEK

Walking and cycling charity Sustrans is celebrating Bike to School week from 27 September – 1 October. Find out how to get your school involved at [tinyurl.com/tp-sustrans](https://tinyurl.com/tp-sustrans)



WEAR IT  
PINK

BREAST  
CANCER  
NOW The research  
& care charity

WEAR PINK, RAISE MONEY AND HELP  
MAKE LIFE-CHANGING BREAST CANCER  
RESEARCH AND CARE HAPPEN.

22.10.21

WE'VE NEVER NEEDED YOUR SUPPORT MORE

Put on that pink top, proudly drape that pink feather boa around your neck or pull up those pink socks. Join thousands of schools to wear it pink!

Register today to get your fundraising pack at

[wearitpink.org/schools](https://wearitpink.org/schools)



Information accurate at time of print 21.05.21

Breast Cancer Now is a company limited by guarantee registered in England (9347608) and a charity registered in England and Wales (1160558), Scotland (SC045584) and the Isle of Man (1200).





# 6 TIPS to embrace your own wellbeing

Prevention is better than cure so why not commit to some good health habits this term, says **Sarah Watkins**...

## 1 | GREEN TIME

Getting outside boosts the immune system, lowers blood pressure, and reduces the body's main stress hormone, cortisol. Aim to get out of the school building for at least one lunch break per week. Consider parking a short distance from school and walking in now and then. Consciously focus on what you can hear and see while walking, to banish thoughts of work. Green time improves concentration and focus so see this as investing in your school as well as yourself!

## 2 | FLEXIBLE WORKING

Teachers tend to hold stress in their shoulders, putting a strain on the head, neck and upper back. Do you get frequent headaches? Hunched shoulders could be the cause. To restore them to their normal relaxed state, roll your shoulders up, back, then down, then reverse the movement, rolling forward. Repeat this ten times daily. Some basic yoga stretches can also help general aches and pains. Use the wall in your classroom to limber up and prevent back pain. Get down on all fours facing away from the wall and then put one knee where the wall meets the floor, with your leg and foot flat against the wall. Bring your other knee up and forwards with your foot flat on the ground. Try to sit up straight but don't force it. Repeat this twice a day. Child's pose is also great for stretching the hips, thighs, ankles and back muscles. Kneel on a mat and rest your stomach and forehead on the mat, with your arms outstretched in front of you, palms towards the floor. Relax your shoulders, breathe deeply and try not to snore!

## 3 | BEAUTY SLEEP

To prevent school worries racing through your mind in the early hours, write a to-do list before bed, as well as writing three things you are grateful for. It's been found that this type of gratitude can reduce depression and illness, and improve happiness.



Sarah Watkins has taught every year group and was previously head of school. She is an SLE (English) and currently teaches Reception.

## 4 | VOICE PROTECTION

Teachers are vulnerable to voice problems, and women are particularly at risk because their vocal chords vibrate faster. Staying hydrated is essential so aim to drink at least six glasses of water a day. Throat clearing brings your vocal chords together forcefully and can be harmful. As an alternative, the NHS suggests sipping water, or doing a low pitched 'mmm' then swallowing.

## 5 | SUPER DIET

Sneak 'superfoods' into your own diet. Prepare homemade soup with veg such as spinach, kale, carrots, onions, sweet potatoes and squash to boost your intake of fibre, calcium and vitamins A, C and K. Nuts and seeds make a great snack as they have high levels of minerals and healthy fats. Keep frozen berries in the freezer and mix them with breakfast oats in the morning – a great quick breakfast. You can also blitz frozen berries with orange juice before you leave the house, and pop into a lidded cup so that you get your daily dose of antioxidants.

## 6 | MENTAL SUSTENANCE

Try to be present and in the moment at least once a day. Focus on your breathing for a few minutes before you get out of bed. For example, practise 4-7-8 breathing: inhale through your nose for a count of 4, then hold your breath for a count of 7, then exhale through your mouth for a count of 8. Ensure that your mind is not filled with work thoughts 24/7 and make time to see friends and family. Aim to do something non-work related that you enjoy at least once a week. Be kind to yourself and, above all, remember that you can't help others if you're not at your best.



# Exciting decodable books

## Develop fluent readers of all ages



### B e g i n n e r R e a d e r s



### C a t c h - u p R e a d e r s

- Step-by-step phonics
- Engaging illustrations and stories
- Appropriate for different age-groups
- Ideal for struggling readers
- Complement any phonics programme







# 7 NEWS STORIES

*you might have missed*

## COVID WARRIORS

Specialist primary educators at the Southampton University's research laboratory Lifelab have developed an education programme to help primary-age children understand Coronavirus. The Covid-19 Warriors programme teaches children about how they can protect themselves, using a series of 12 lessons. Each lesson is centred around puppet characters inspired by designs from children at Mount Pleasant Junior School and Maytree Infant school. The package uses a series of films to accompany lessons plans that are aligned to the curriculum, and tackles topics including public health guidance, vaccines, testing and the supporting mental health during the pandemic. Find resources at [tinyurl.com/tp-Lifelab](https://tinyurl.com/tp-Lifelab)

## LEFT BEHIND

1.5 million children and young people are at risk of being left behind, as they struggle to speak and understand language, says children's communication charity I CAN. A new survey, Speaking Up for the Covid Generation, found that due to missed school time throughout the pandemic, 67% of primary school teachers surveyed across England, Scotland and Wales believe the children they teach are behind with their speaking and/or understanding. Jane Harris, chief executive of I CAN, said: "We need to put in place emergency support so that the Covid generation do not suffer long-term." See the full survey at [tinyurl.com/tp-CovidGen](https://tinyurl.com/tp-CovidGen)

## BIG BEACH CLEAN

Get your class involved in real-world climate change action, while teaching them about the plastics problem and ocean life. The Marine Conservation Society's Big Beach Clean is taking place from 17–26 Sept, and the charity has also produced a pack of lessons and resources for primary and secondary ages, focusing on marine litter. Schools by the coast can take part in a beach clean and help gather data for the Marine Conservation Society using the charity's survey form. Inland, the Source to Sea Litter Quest is a great way to illustrate how far pollution travels to make it to the ocean. Sign your school up at [tinyurl.com/tp-BigBeachClean](https://tinyurl.com/tp-BigBeachClean)

## JUST ONE TREE

The international non-uniform day encouraging children to donate £1 to plant a tree, is back this October. Running on 1 Oct in Scotland and 15 Oct in England, JUST ONE Tree Day sees a tree planted for every £1 donated, with over 150,000 children from eight countries taking part since its launch in 2019. The day aims to highlight to children and young people how their individual actions can make a difference in the fight against climate change and the biodiversity crises. JUST ONE Tree founder, Amanda Bronkhorst said: "School participation is doubly important because not only do they raise funds, the forest planted on their behalf helps compensate for a school's environmental impact." Sign up at [tinyurl.com/tp-JustOneTree](https://tinyurl.com/tp-JustOneTree)



## GOVERNMENT 'FAILURE'

A new report from the Institute for Government (IfG) has described the government's 'refusal' to make Coronavirus contingency plans for primary and secondary schools, a 'failure'. Based on interviews with government insiders and education experts, the report exposes how decisions were taken during the most disruptive period in children's education since the Second World War. The worst part of the government's response, say those interviewed for the report, was 'the failure to make contingency plans in the summer and autumn of 2020 when it was already obvious that fresh school closures and exam cancellations might be needed'. Download the full report at [tinyurl.com/tp-ifcpandemic](https://tinyurl.com/tp-ifcpandemic)

## RELATABLE ROLE MODELS

Scaling Up: Developing and extending career-related learning in primary schools – a new survey from the Primary Futures programme – shows the positive impact of meeting relatable role models on the motivation, confidence, and attainment of primary-aged children. This is the largest study of its kind, and surveyed 370 primary schools across 114 local authorities, collating responses from around 10,000 children. Key findings include: 82% of children became more motivated in core subjects of maths, English and science upon meeting positive role models; 88% of pupils reporting understanding how doing well at school is helpful in later life; and particular benefits for disadvantaged children. Find out more at [tinyurl.com/tp-scalingup](https://tinyurl.com/tp-scalingup)

## READING IS MAGIC

Back by popular demand, the Reading is Magic festival returns for 2021. Launched by Bath Children's Literature Festival during lockdown in 2020, the digital festival was a huge success, watched by around 150,000 children and young people in more than 65 countries. Running from Monday 27 Sept – Friday 1 Oct this year, the astonishing line-up includes Cressida Cowell, Michael Rosen, Rob Biddulph and more. Author-illustrator Kristina Stephenson said: "Sharing is at the heart of the Reading is Magic Festival and sharing stories has never been more important." See the full programme at [tinyurl.com/tp-readingmagic](https://tinyurl.com/tp-readingmagic)

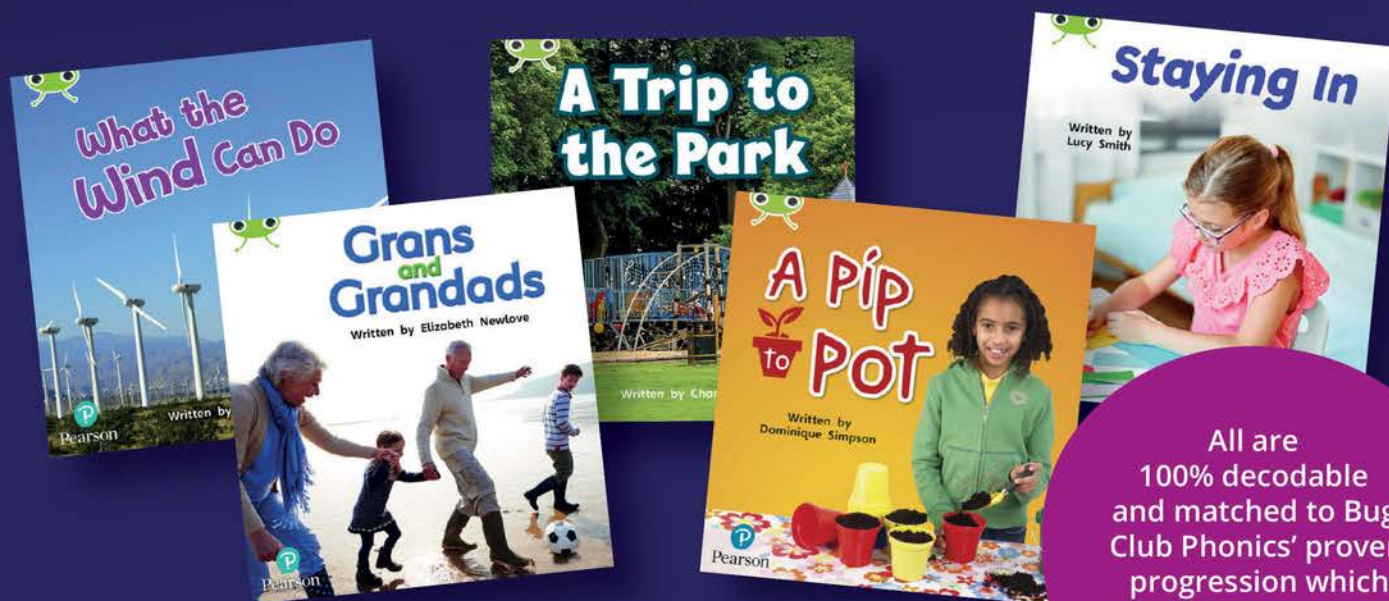


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# WOKE, BUT NOT TOO WOKE?

Inclusivity, or ‘wokeness’ as it’s come to be known, isn’t political correctness gone mad, it’s an essential move for our children

To see how ‘wokeness’ is perceived in education, you only have to open the newspaper to see that the term ‘white privilege’ has recently been condemned. The claim – and this is as much as I can agree on – is that there is an ‘opposite reality [to privilege] for the white working class across society’.

But surely this is a question of semantics? Isn’t it more important to make sure we’re not entering a class war, and pitting one group against another? Using terms like ‘white privilege’ isn’t the reason why so many white working-class children are failing. It’s a systemic problem, including underfunded schools, economic inequality, and the lack of opportunities for social mobility.

## Understanding communities

So, what’s even more important is that we come up with initiatives and programmes that help future generations. For this to work, it’s important to listen to the community, such as teachers and parents, but also to ask children what they need. We need to understand the context that is breeding such inequalities, and let communities know that their voices are being heard. We’re all complex and layered humans, and there are nuances to navigate. For example, in Tower Hamlets where we’re based, there is a majority British-Bangladeshi and white working-class population. Things like living in an intergenerational home, or having parents who have little or no formal education are real issues that our children have to deal with. When we asked parents what they were worried about, it was the same common theme – they were worried about losing their children to a world they didn’t understand.

There needs to be a positive change in the conversations communities are having around diversity and inclusion.

It has to make a difference to families and have reach beyond the school gates, it can’t just be up to teachers. This is where here at You Be You we saw an opportunity to take parents and carers from all backgrounds on a journey with us through our You Be You activity kits; One that helps communities understand what we mean by diversity and inclusion, but also supports them to address it in a sensitive and empowering way.

Importantly, this doesn’t centre around having digital access – digital poverty in our community is a real obstacle – rather, the focus is on spending quality bonding time away from the screen through activities like journaling, reading and art. The idea is that it equips families with the language they need to tackle sensitive and often difficult conversations. A perfect example is the recent racist controversy after the Euro finals. How do you have those conversations and make sure that children are getting the right message around race, confidence and resilience? These moments are important opportunities for us to move away from semantics around ‘wokeness’.

Instead, we should harness the power from these discussions to create a positive change. Surely that argument can’t be deemed as too woke? We want to empower

young children to believe that they can achieve anything irrespective of their skin colour.

## Real-world wokeness

It’s really important that we don’t define our pupils by gender, race, religion, sexuality, class or ability. For instance, recently, St Paul’s Girls School renamed their ‘head girl’ position to ‘head of school’. This may seem like a superficial change, but the reasons behind it are key. And no, this isn’t ‘political correctness gone mad’. All the stereotypes that come with these narrow categorisations have wider societal implications. By changing the title from ‘head girl’ to ‘head of school’, staff are saying to their pupils, ‘We recognise you, and you can achieve anything regardless of your gender’. It’s not boxing girls into certain roles, or qualifying success with terms like ‘girl boss’ – you’re a boss, period. This is so important when we think about a healthy, diverse workforce for the future. Even in our pilot project, we’ve heard comments from children such as “Boys will have more important jobs as they have bigger brains.” Statements like these may seem inane, but it’s essential to dismantle them as soon as you notice them, so they don’t have the opportunity to entrench further.

Importantly, when you’re talking about making sure to teach about stereotypes at school, and embedding this into school policy, make sure to take families on the journey with you. Not only does this let families feel heard, but it allows you as the teacher to understand their concerns, and have the opportunity to allay some of those fears. More often than not, parents want the same as you – for their children to have all options open to them. **TP**

*Bilkis Miah is CEO and co-founder of You Be You, an award-winning organisation working with schools and parents to break down gender stereotypes through fun lessons, videos and home activity boxes.*





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

# A letter to...

## *a teacher of a child with autism*

Routine, consistency and clear instructions are all key to helping children with autism shine, says **Mel Yates-Boothby**...



**F**rom personal experience, the journey of an autism diagnosis for a child is often very long and very stressful for families. My son was left unsupported for

several years, by both by the NHS due to patient caseloads when his paediatrician retired, and by changes within the psychology services he was under. His Y3 teacher wasn't readily equipped on how to support children with autism, and let their frustration show, reacting negatively each time he asked what to do, which put him off ever asking for help again and taught him to mask his drifting focus instead. There are so many different ways in which autism can manifest, and teachers are often left to try and understand them without training. But as professionals, the care of our children is of the utmost importance, so with some extra information, we can help give our pupils what they need.

### 1. ROUTINE

Within the first week, quickly establish predictable and practical daily routines and clear expectations for behaviour. This also applies to deployment of support staff. Routines are the biggest building blocks as they provide the foundations of feeling safe, belonging and trust.

### 2. TIMETABLE

Use a daily visual timetable, including a separate 'now and next' board if required, to give prior, individual, visual warning of transitions. Have clear procedures for the most difficult transitions, which are likely to be the start and end of the day, to and from unstructured play, and during lessons such as PE or to other classrooms that you visit less frequently. Try to pre-warn of any changes to routines, including changing where the child will sit.

### 3. RULES AND PRAISE

Agree a whole-class charter or set of rules, with five positively worded behaviours that you expect, and be prepared to offer praise as soon as you see children following them. My first and most important rule is always, 'We follow instructions fast'. It is better to start off positively by offering proximal praise rather than giving negative statements, eg 'Well done for following instructions fast' to a peer, rather than 'why aren't you tidying up like your friends?' (That is unless you relish an honest response such as 'Because tidying up is boring').

### 4. CLEAR INSTRUCTIONS

When you give instructions, make sure that they are clear and not long and waffly. Try to use the child's name, to ensure that they are tuned into listening to you, then give them time to process the instruction. Do not give a sequence of instructions

because they will literally only follow the last bit they heard.

### 5. EYE CONTACT

Children with autism often do not give very good eye contact. Please, do not try to insist that they do so, as this can be intimidating and increase anxiety. It is possible to teach active listening without it. I taught my son how to look at someone's face so that they knew he was listening, by looking at their nose or watching their lips move.

Remember this, too: If parents start collecting their child later and later, it may be because they are feeling vulnerable. As a parent of a child who finds self-regulation challenging, they are likely to feel that other parents are judging them and their parenting skills. Many 'end-of-day' conversations focus on behaviour, and when teachers speak to the same parents every day it is easy for others to assume that their child keeps misbehaving. Always praise at the door in front of parents and pass on behavioural difficulties privately away from other parents' prying eyes and ears.

Starting school or moving to a new class is mentally exhausting! Remember to be patient and kind to yourself and the child, as the first few weeks is not only challenging but the best chance to form a positive relationship with the child and their parents. You've got this!

*From Mel*

*Mel Yates-Boothby is an autism mommy and advocate, primary school senior leader and Early Years specialist teacher.*





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“  
*Lots of subject knowledge clearly explained in the context of 'real teaching'.*  
”

TEACHER ON PHONICS IN A RICH READING CURRICULUM, 2020

“  
*It was very thorough, really well structured, pacey, with a good balance of information and interaction to keep us engaged and involved.*  
”

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# How I do it

Get back to basics with a circle time session to help young children develop their language and social skills

MADELEINE FOX

# 1

A stimulating opening to your circle time session makes it special – jingle some bells, play some exciting music or sing a song. I like the following, to the tune of Frère Jacques: “Make a circle, make a circle, everyone, everyone; Come and make a circle, come and make a circle, everyone, everyone.”



The benefits of a structured ‘circle time’ session as a vehicle for teaching and learning with young children cannot be underestimated – especially after a year of very little social contact for many. As we return to some normality, now is the perfect time to help children catch up on vital language and social skills. Circle time activities can also be a great way to work with small targeted groups. The speaking and listening skills pupils learn can then be taken into playtime, helping children to build friendships through positive relationships.

To introduce the concept of good sitting, sing a song that encourages children to copy your actions: “Everybody clap hands, clap hands, clap hands; Everybody clap hands just like me.” Repeat with different actions then finish with “Everybody sit down...”. Model good sitting with your hands still in your lap. Extend the activity by inviting individuals to lead this game. This is a good way to show the contrast between activity and stillness.

# 2



Some children find it difficult to look at the person speaking to them. Help them practise by using a puppet or toy to ‘look’ at each child in turn. Explain that pupils need to look back and wave or say hello. Respond by making the toy wave back. Next ‘pass a look’ around the circle from child to child in the same way. If you’re exploring emotions, you can try passing round a frown or an angry face in the same way.

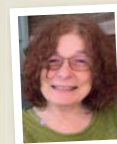
# 3

# 4

Next, pass a sound round the circle in the form of a shaker or bell. Give each child a turn and listen to each sound until it fades away.

Encourage good listening by making large paper ears and attaching them to paper headbands to wear during circle time. With their ears on, ask children to close their eyes and listen for one minute – what can they hear?

Rolling a ball around the circle is a great way to practise turn-taking. As simple as it is, children really love this game. Using a puppet or similar, state that you’re looking for “good lookers”. State who you’re rolling the ball to and encourage them to respond with a verbal “thank you”. Now, they can choose who to roll the ball to, stating “I am rolling the ball to...”. Continue the game until everyone has had a turn. Extend this by asking the holder of the ball to share something they have enjoyed doing in school today. This is a lovely positive way to share experiences.



Madeleine Fox is an educational writer and former SEN teacher.

# 5

Back to school  
starts here...

**BE PSHE Ready!**





# Do your research

Educational fads can do more harm than good, so make sure you understand the subject before blind implementation...

 @adamboxer1  [achemicalorthodoxy.wordpress.com](https://achemicalorthodoxy.wordpress.com)



Way back in the pre-Covid past, I attended a big, glitzy conference in London. One of the presenters put a list of 10 different study strategies up on the big screen – highlighting, mnemonics, retrieval practice, etc – and said that he had tried each one with his Year 12 class in order to develop their metacognition. Queue many oohs, many ahhs, and the scribbling of a thousand pens as senior and middle leaders planned how they could use this to teach metacognition and achieve the EEF's promised 'seven months' additional progress'.

As I saw it, there were only two snags in this otherwise faultless 'research-to-classroom' conveyor belt. First, the source of the presenter's list of 10 study strategies. It had been pulled from Dunlosky's Strengthening the Student Toolbox, an article exploring popular study habits, which notably doesn't present the strategies as 'interesting things to try out', but as a clear hierarchy from 'effective at improving retention' to 'ineffective at improving retention'. So whilst 'practice testing' is effective at improving retention and should be implemented by teachers, 'highlighting' or 'keyword mnemonics' are not effective, and should not be implemented. In the name of metacognition, our presenter had literally wasted his students' time with strategies that would not be effective.

## Think carefully

Secondly, very little information was given about the subject he was teaching or the actual content that the students were trying out. As the EEF's clear warning lays out, thinking of metacognition as a 'general skill that can be separated from subject knowledge' is 'perhaps the most common misconception'. Metacognition isn't something you can just impose on your school or department; it needs to be carefully thought through in terms of how it relates to what students are learning on a particular day or in a particular lesson.

Sadly, our profession has a long history of taking ideas, running with them, and allowing them to pervade our school system. Often, this is despite a non-existent



evidence base (cf brain gym or learning styles), but sometimes there is an evidence base, we just implement it in a way that is not true to that base. Metacognition is a good example of this, where the research exists, but the implementation is often at odds with it. Such cases are often called 'lethal mutations' – where a good idea becomes mutated into something that might not literally be lethal, but is at the very least a waste of your and your students' time.

Despite the profession's recent – broadly positive and constructive – moves to evidence-based practice, there are a couple of areas where the risk of lethal mutation looms large. One example is the now ubiquitous Dual Coding Theory, which normally involves colourful posters or documents festooned with icons from the Noun Project. This risks not just wasting teachers' time, but convincing us that explaining complex ideas is easy if we add icons, or that signalling our curriculum via a fake tube map helps students who have never stepped foot on the Underground to appreciate the links between subjects.

## Developing strategy

Which brings us to curriculum.

Ofsted's recent focus on the substance of education is – to my mind – to be welcomed, but there are already some mutated implementations floating around online.

For example, while one of the architects of the new education inspection framework has stated that there is no need for a new curriculum intent statement, I have seen dozens of middle leaders being asked to produce one. I have seen teachers asked to prepare scheme-of-work planning documents which mash together intent statements, mastery criteria, success criteria, differentiation over time, literacy across the curriculum, numeracy across the curriculum, transferable skills across the school... all in an attempt to satisfy a framework that asks for none of the above.

Even within Dunlosky's article, practice testing – or retrieval practice – is in the lethal mutation danger zone. While a five-minute mini-quiz at the beginning of a lesson might technically count as retrieval practice, if it isn't a sustained strategy that cuts across all aspects of your teaching and homework, all you serve to do by asking your students questions on content from six months ago is to frustrate them when they inevitably can't remember it.

Sadly, I come with many problems but no solutions. It isn't feasible for every teacher to become an expert in all the research underpinning certain ideas, and when presenters at conferences are getting it so badly wrong, is it any wonder that everybody else does too? **TP**

*Adam Boxer is head of science at a school in north London and a Y7 science teacher for Oak National Academy.*





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## UNDERCOVER TEACHER

*Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest*

# "Defending the indefensible: I don't like my class"

**A**t the end of the last year, I was forced to admit something I've never felt before, something almost unthinkable and certainly unutterable for a primary school teacher: I don't like my class. I'm pleased they are going and I won't miss them.

In eight years of teaching, I have had a wide range of classes with different academic, emotional and behavioural needs, and while I have had my complaints about each and every one of them, I have always felt a sense of both pride and sadness at the end of the year and maintained an interest in their lives thereon in.

So what was so unlikable about this class? Is it really their fault?

First of all, they were collectively extremely quiet: they give nothing back. I tried to inspire them and was met with ambivalence; they had no opinions on the state of the wider world and did not wish to develop any either. They voted (by a landslide) the class clown as their school councillor because they thought it was funny; they refused to seriously audition for the school play (all the key roles going to children in the other class); and they worked their way through four separate lunchtime assistants, to whom they showed no respect.

None of these things are great, but the truth is I look at the list of annoyances and misdemeanours and objectively I don't see any good reasons why I was quite so ready to see them go. On closer inspection, the class was made up of perfectly normal, academically bright, sometimes-likable children with a natural tendency towards quietness and no serious behaviour issues; children who had been through a huge amount throughout the year with the pandemic; children who deserve fondness from their teacher. Yet I was unable to make a meaningful connection with them.

Maybe this is just a new form of 'teacher guilt' so in an attempt to ease my conscience, I have looked for reasons beyond my control for why I feel this way...

First of all, the split year made 2020/21 feel like the longest year of my career: the spring term's potentially draining mix of teaching key-workers' children while simultaneously providing remote learning felt like a

year on its own. The restrictions and implementation of covid-safe policies made the other two terms restrictive and unenjoyable.

These new rules removed a lot of the joy from school for the children. They have been trapped in their classrooms facing week-upon-week of 'standard' lessons with a narrowed curriculum to ensure their competence in maths and English. Their outside time has been strictly timetabled to keep bubbles away from each other, and they have spent an increased portion of their time staring at screens as they face interminably boring online assemblies.

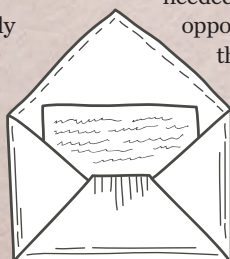
We also did not get the great start to the year we needed. As a Y6 teacher, I would usually have the opportunity to form bonds with the children while on the school residential at the end of September. The build-up of trust from a week living together cannot be underestimated, allowing us to face the harder parts of Y6 with collective solidarity. Yet for my class, missing this trip was presented as part of their 'sacrifice' for the greater good.

Then comes the fact that we didn't face the toughest task of Y6, the SATs. Again, we were denied the opportunity to face a hurdle together and overcome it. We experienced a year without high points or moments to celebrate our achievements.

Finally, the pandemic has also introduced a range of new ways for parents to be in contact, and closed the door to a number of others. Previously, parents would be expected to make the effort to come and see

you; complaints needed to be worth it. What's more, many of the opportunities for parent interaction came around positive events such as Sports Day, school plays and open evenings. Remote teaching opened us up to endless emails, welfare calls and video chats where the petty complaints of every child seeking attention from their parents has ensured we know exactly what they have to say about us.

Which begs the question, if I was so ready to be rid of my class, what does my class think of me? Would it make me feel better or worse to know the feeling is mutual? The general feedback from the parents is that I've done a great job. Perhaps this is just another way to tap into my teacher's guilt! **TP**



***"We experienced a year without high points or moments to celebrate our achievements"***

*The writer is a primary teacher in England.*





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## WHAT WE'VE LEARNED FROM THE NEW DEVELOPMENT MATTERS

 @Tillybrownie

**A**s an early adopter of the new Development Matters (DM), we sat down as an EYFS team in September 2020, ready to tweak some documents and be ready to go about assessment in our usual way. Fortunately, the new DM guidance had other things in mind, and it has been a chance to really excavate why we do what we do and the impact of that.

Previously, even though we knew that the majority of children were developing well through our curriculum, we still evidenced this progress for every child, over multiple observations and multiple hours; evidencing and deciding if they were at the beginning of 40-60 months or developing. This meant that we struggled to support the rapid progress of those who started the year off track, as we were too busy trying to evidence the majority who were on it. There were a variety of reasons for this struggle, but the main one was teacher time.

What these pupils really needed was more time interacting in a small group and, often, with adult facilitation. They needed

more time to take part in Speech and Language interventions, bucket time and one-to-one phonics. Each term, we would make a rigorous intervention plan but, before you knew it, observations would get in the way and we would not manage as much as we had hoped. Sadly, the reality of this was that not all children caught up and so some started Year 1 off track.

The new DM alleviates this for a couple of reasons. Firstly, we have moved to an assessment system which simply states if a child is on track (for example, within the Reception descriptors) or not. If they are on track, great, if they aren't, we can offer support. This looks different for every child, as every child is different, but the teachers now have time to invest in getting to know the child, to fully understand what they are struggling with and put appropriate measures in place. This enables key pupils to make the rapid progress they need to meet the good level of development (GLD) criteria, setting them up for more success through the rest of school.

Secondly, we have more teacher time due to the removal of the exceeding

descriptor. Initially, I questioned this. What if these children didn't do as well? However, in reality, pupils still have access to the same curriculum, teaching and opportunities that enabled previous children to exceed. The only real change is that the teacher does not need to put in the extra time to evidence it, thereby allowing them to have more detailed conversations with these children, and to think more deeply about how they can ensure challenge throughout the provision and within the curriculum.

Lastly, as an EYFS lead, I can spend less time worrying about our evidence and more time developing our staff. The stripped-back nature of the new guidance makes teachers' breadth and depth of understanding of child development vitally important. Birth to three is a broad window and therefore understanding the milestones within that are key to ensuring that pupils are making progress in the setting.

The most common concern that other leaders have flagged to me is, 'how will I know that children are making progress within Reception, if they start on track?' There are two key things here. The first is to train your staff to really understand the granular steps to children's progress, be that in gross motor skills or reading. The second is to trust that they will challenge pupils and move them onto the next step when they are ready, adapting their provision to enable this. How will you know if staff are doing this? I would say by going into the setting, observing what the children are doing, talking to the children and speaking to the teachers. As with so much in schools, it is only by seeing and experiencing it that we can really gain an understanding of anything.

It seems to me that time is the greatest luxury in early years. Time lets us refine and tweak our curriculum to ensure that it is broad, balanced and based in the needs of our community. It lets us truly engage with the children around us and ensure that their interests are being built upon. It lets us work closely with children who are struggling with a certain area of learning enabling them to master key milestones, and, ultimately, time lets us do the job we all went into the early years to do. **TP**

*Tilly Browne is the primary headteacher at Reach Academy Feltham, originally joining in 2015. She was also curriculum lead at Oak National Academy during the pandemic, leading on primary English, humanities, science and understanding the world.*





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# WHY WE AXED FORMAL FEEDBACK

A more relaxed, whole-team approach to observation works much better than stressful monitoring, says **Ben Levinson...**

**T**hroughout lockdown at Kensington Primary School, we've dealt with various challenges that are no doubt familiar to most schools – teacher workload, wellbeing, and remote teaching being some of the biggest (as reflected in new research by Pearson). And we've found that while we can't control external factors, having a supportive and trusting culture in school is key to getting over hurdles together. Some of the key principles we've used to help foster this culture are:

## Humans are fundamentally good

All people are born with the capacity for growth and development. Of course, the balance between nature and nurture is complex, but with the right support, everyone can play a positive role in society. And this is no different for our Kensington team. Absolutely everyone here wants to do their very best. Sometimes they miss the mark because they're tired, or stressed, or anxious, or overwhelmed, etc, but my job as a headteacher is to help them maximise their potential.

## Mad isn't always bad

As humans, we all experience the full gamut of emotions. And that is totally OK – it's an important part of what makes us, us. Added to that are the myriad factors that influence our emotions – personally, hunger affects me in an extreme way!

At Kensington, we endeavour to be aware of all this. So, when a team member reacts in an unusual way – for example, if they're angry or distressed – we try to step back from the specific reaction, identify the emotion for what it is (or what it's caused by) and then provide the appropriate support and guidance. Often, a bit of time to breathe and reflect is enough. When it isn't, work together to find solutions. All of this creates a more positive, calm environment, where issues are less likely to escalate.

## Intrinsic motivation

This supportive route has opened up lots of very interesting conversations at Kensington. We abandoned formal observations a long time ago. But after realising that the monitoring systems we used not only didn't improve the quality of teaching and learning, but, arguably,

detracted from it, we also decided to get rid of the formal monitoring we had in place. Instead, we've developed a system where we work together, providing a supportive, reflective environment with a 'we're all in this together' vibe, creating the best possible learning experiences for our children. We've embraced more collaboration, more conversation, and less direction and control. Rather than 'checking up' and 'feeding back', we spend time together in lessons, looking at the learning and then discussing what we saw. Which children were finding it hard and why? Who could have done with more challenge? Did that way of modelling work? Why? Why not? It's a small tweak but it works.

The quality of teaching and learning is better than ever, as evidenced by a wide range of metrics – from speaking to children and staff, to awards, visitor feedback, and our own reflections of what goes on in the classroom. We have also overhauled our performance management systems to give staff control over their own development, rather than setting punitive targets. Everyone now identifies areas they want to develop, and then works towards their goals in their own way, supported by the team. Some have chosen to improve their knowledge of phonics teaching, others want to improve their use of assessment for learning, and others want to develop skills in having those challenging conversations with colleagues. Whatever it is, it's driven by individuals for their own development.

## Good to talk

So much of what we've done is based on trust, which comes from open and honest communication. We support a variety of mechanisms for people to communicate at school, including our Kensington Matters focus groups, team meetings, and staff surveys. But most important are the relationships we've fostered together.

Ultimately, all this means everyone has a voice, and ensures that what we're building is truly based on the team. Everyone has a clarity of purpose and the knowledge that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It has been a testing 16 months, but we've managed to build resilience to deal with the challenges through support and understanding. Now, we're emerging stronger, more united, and more able to provide the best possible education to our pupils. **TP**

*Ben Levinson OBE is headteacher at Kensington Primary School. He is a founding member of the Well Schools movement, part of the Department for Education's expert advisory group on school staff wellbeing, and a TeachActive ambassador.*







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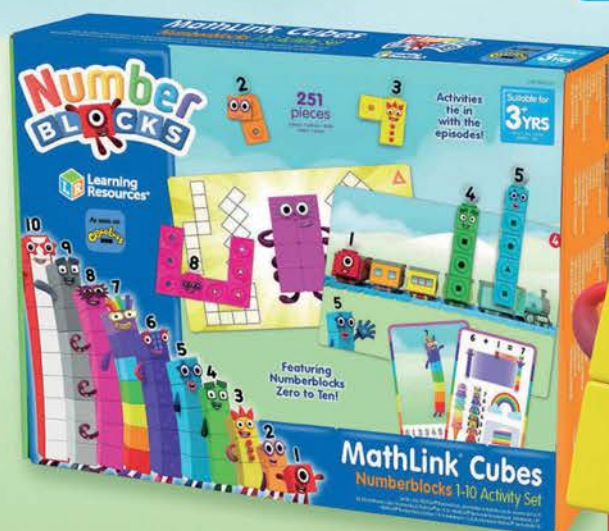
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There's only one way out of the SEND crisis...  
and it's simpler than you think

# Hannah Moloney

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**“N**o thanks, I don't want to be the SENCO. And in any case, I don't even know what our SENCO actually does...”

That was me ten years ago. Needless to say, a couple of months later I did become the school SENCO (and loved it, FYI). For anyone who has not had the privilege of being a SENCO, it really is one of the most rewarding jobs in school. But it is also true to say that there are very challenging barriers to being 'a good one', and with the SEND crisis in full-swing, I really believe that removing them will enable our nation's SENCOs to get us out of it.

The SENCO is the 'key protagonist' in the functioning of the SEND Code of Practice (2015); the lynchpin between parents, teachers, local authorities, other schools and specialists within the field.

They are expected to be leaders, trainers, managers, bookkeepers, communicators, advocates, counsellors and inspirers. This is in addition to their teaching role, and not to mention whilst achieving a master's-level qualification within three years. Suffice to say, the SENCO role is a vast, diverse and morally compelling job and of the thousands of SENCOs who have taken our SENCO Workforce Surveys, 71% agree.

The real problem is we very rarely have enough time to do it.

## Counting the seconds

I know that all teachers complain about their workload, but the SENCO role is arguably the most time poor of them all. For my own part, I once had just seventeen minutes a year per child on the SEND register (24 seconds a week!). And this is a whole lot better than the 2.5% of primary SENCOs out there who don't have any additional time at all to do the role!

Together with nasen and Bath Spa University, I have studied SENCO time allocations over the last three years. Encouragingly, SENCO time allocation



much more challenging and more costly, and positive outcomes dwindle. The whole system rests precariously upon the shoulders of SENCOs – no wonder only 26% of us agree that the job is manageable for one person. This makes it a hugely important role but an isolating one, too.

## Fancy a cuppa?

No (wo)man is an island – the majority of SENCOs are women – and yet so few SENCOs have a team to delegate to and work alongside. In fact, in 2018, 28% of SENCOs

had no team at all, and 49%

had no one to call upon outside of their setting either. And whilst the SEND Code of Practice states SENCOs should have administrative support, only 15% last year did!

The Code of Practice also expresses that SENCOs will be much more effective if they are on the school's leadership team. Whilst just over two thirds of primary SENCOs are on their school's SLT (a much better picture than at secondary), 30% said they still don't receive additional pay for taking on this fundamental and highly skilled role.

So what can you do to help? If you're a teacher, consider how you can better support your SENCO to complete their role. Corridor conversations are great but follow up with an email or a reminder: the SENCO's brain is generally frazzled and their to-do list is long. If you're on the leadership team, a headteacher, a business manager or a governor, how can you free up your SENCO to be more effective in their role? Millions of children's lives depend on it. **TP**

*Hannah Moloney is a SENCO, SEND Researcher and co-author of the National SENCO Workforce Survey: time to review 2018-2020 (nasen and Bath Spa University, July 2021) View the report at [bathspa.ac.uk/projects/senco-workload/](https://bathspa.ac.uk/projects/senco-workload/)*

## *“The SENCO role is a vast, diverse and morally compelling job”*

does seem to be gradually improving, but not fast enough. Back in 2018, we reported that the most common time allocation for primary SENCOs was between 0.5-1 day a week, but that overall, a staggering 86% of respondents said that they didn't have enough time to ensure children at SEN Support could access what they need.

Even with a higher level of need, 77% of SENCOs stated they didn't have enough time to ensure that their children with an EHCP were accessing the support to which they are legally entitled. Although better by 2020, the proportion of SENCOs without sufficient time to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND remained too high at 81% and 71% for those at SEN Support and those with EHC plans respectively.

If the SENCO doesn't have enough time to do their job, it's simple: children suffer. And, as we know, when children are suffering, teaching and parenting becomes





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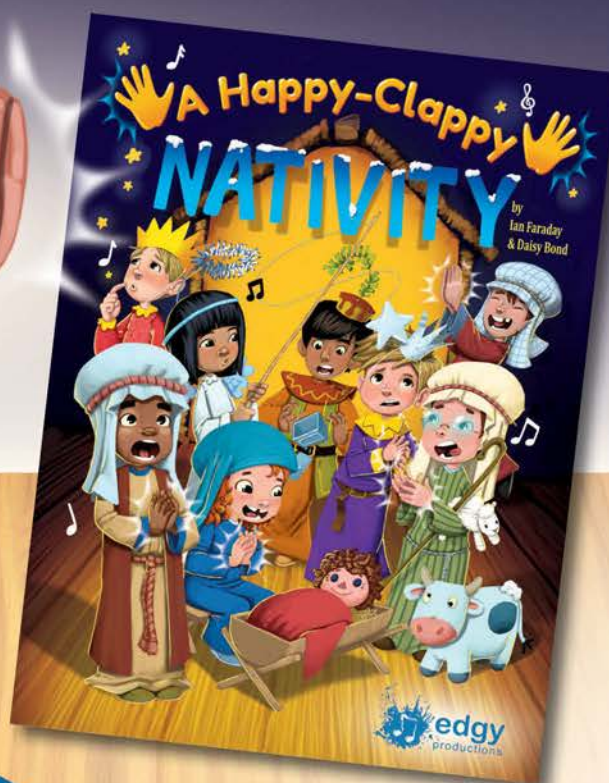
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of modern festivities, the central message is that to give and share is far more fulfilling and rewarding than to have and receive. Short, optional nativity scenes often feature, but even if you choose to omit these, the storylines remain thought-provoking and celebratory of everything we hold dear about the season of goodwill.

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### 5 BRINGING EVERYONE TOGETHER... AT LAST!

After the 18 months we've just been through, with restrictions on performing and singing in schools thankfully now being eased, Christmas 2021 will be the perfect time to bring the community together. And what better way can you think of to celebrate this than with the reviving of the school Christmas musical? Check out what we have to offer by visiting [www.edgyproductions.com](http://www.edgyproductions.com) – we'd love to help you end your year on a high!

## KEY POINTS

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# Turning children from ANSWER MACHINES TO PATTERN SPOTTERS

Using question sequencing in maths can help bring out more of those 'Oh yeah!' moments, says **Gareth Metcalfe**...

**W**e all love those 'Oh yeah!' moments in a maths classroom when a child's face lights up as they make a new discovery. When they notice a pattern and want to explore it further, or when they go off and create their own thought-provoking questions. These moments are precious and uplifting, encapsulating the joy of being a mathematician.

I used to look forward to the end of a sequence of lessons, once children had mastered the basics, when these moments were more likely to happen. Then the rich mathematical learning could really take place! But what if children could experience more of these moments in day-to-day lessons? Could there be more space for reasoning whilst learning new concepts or practising calculations?

## Notice relationships?

My eyes were opened to this new possibility by Craig Barton's brilliant book, *Reflect, Expect, Check, Explain*, which shows the power of sequences of questions for stimulating mathematical reasoning. As my Pilates teacher says, 'experience trumps everything.'

So let's start by answering this little sequence of questions

- A.  $\frac{1}{10}$  of 40 =
- B.  $\frac{1}{5}$  of 40 =
- C.  $\frac{2}{5}$  of 40 =
- D.  $\frac{4}{10}$  of 40 =

Which relationships did you notice?<sup>1</sup> Did you anticipate these relationships, or were any of them a surprise? For example, the answer to question C and question D is 16. Why is the answer the same for both questions? That's because  $\frac{2}{5}$  and  $\frac{4}{10}$  are equivalent. But did you notice that before you calculated the answers? I didn't!

On one level, this sequence of questions allows children to practise the skill of finding fractions of quantities. But there's also scope for making predictions and explaining relationships. To deepen, children can have a go at extending the sequence. For example, can they write two other fraction of quantity questions with an answer of 16? It's not easy!

## Find the pattern

I try to show children how to approach these sets of questions. I train them to look for the similarities and differences between the question they are answering and the one before. I explicitly

model the thinking behind making predictions (these predictions do not have to be correct). I show how we can explain the relationships that we find, sometimes using sentence stems to scaffold learning. Then we explore how sequences can be extended to show our understanding of the mathematical patterns.

Time for another example. Have a go at this sequence:

- A.  $28 \div 7 = \underline{\quad}$
- B.  $28 \div 7 = \underline{\quad} + 1$
- C.  $28 \div 7 = \underline{\quad} \div 1$
- D.  $28 \div 7 = \underline{\quad} - 2$
- E.  $28 \div 7 = \underline{\quad} \times 2$

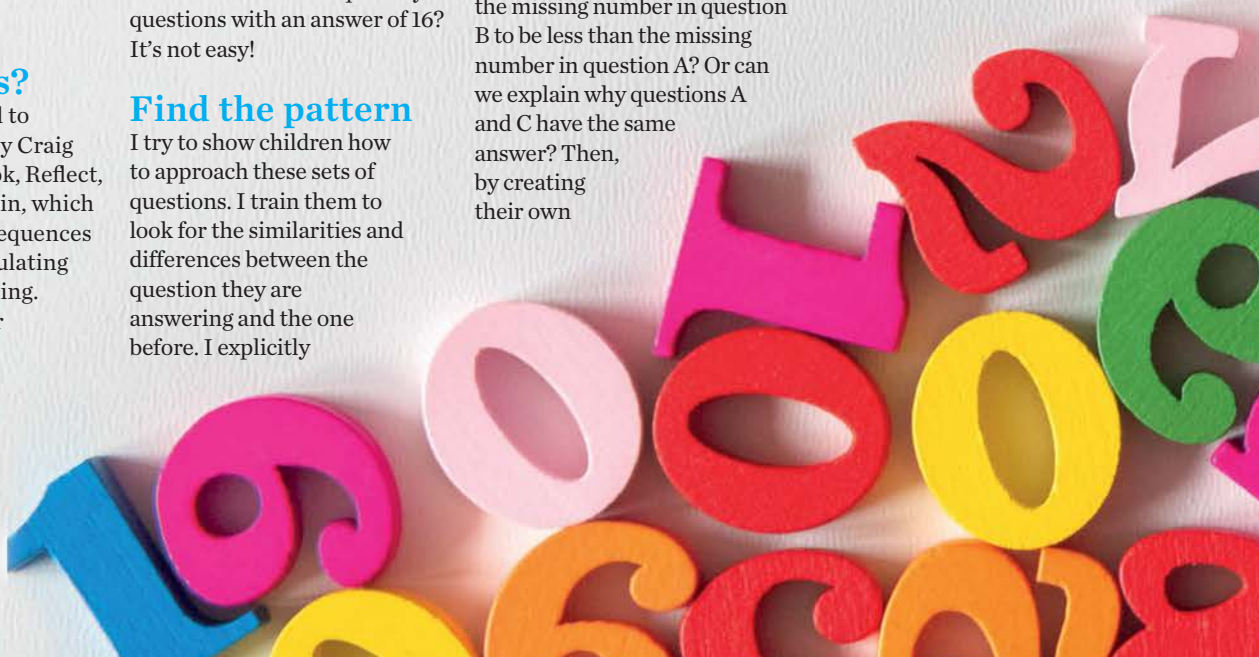
Once you have completed the sequence, check the answers<sup>2</sup> and think about the observations that children might make (or that you can lead them towards). Would children expect the missing number in question B to be less than the missing number in question A? Or can we explain why questions A and C have the same answer? Then, by creating their own

sequences of questions, children can show their understanding in a way that's unique to them. You might even get some fantastic questions that you can use in your next lesson.

## Keep it simple

The key principle in creating a sequence is to limit the number of differences between the questions. If only one thing changes from one question to the next, children can directly see the effect of each change. This is like running a science experiment, where only one variable is adjusted. In contrast, if lots of things change from one question to the next, children will simply answer each question in isolation.

When I used to teach the order of operations to my Y6 class, I would teach the children the basic rules.





# “The key principle in creating a sequence is to limit the number of differences between the questions”

For example, rather than carrying out calculations from left to right, we do the bracketed calculations first, then we do the division/multiplication, and finally we carry out the addition/subtraction. I used to give the children a range of unrelated questions to work through. Now, I use sequences of questions like the one below. The questions, without being harder in themselves, take us a little deeper. Have a go!

- A.  $20 - 5 \times 2 =$
- B.  $20 - (5 \times 2) =$
- C.  $(20 - 5) \times 2 =$
- D.  $(5 - 2) \times 20 =$
- E.  $5 - 2 \times 20 =$

Before reading on, make sure you check your answers!<sup>3</sup>

For simplicity, I use the same numbers and operators for all the questions. Also, I try to minimise the difficulty of the calculations, as I want children’s limited attention to be

directed towards spotting those key similarities and differences. For example, the answers to questions A and B are the same because the brackets in question B do not affect the order of the operations. However, the position of the brackets in question C does change the answer. Why? Because the brackets here tell us to carry out the subtraction first.

I sometimes like to throw in a curveball too. Here, the answer to question E is a negative number. For this sequence, an effective extension task is to ask children to find the largest and the smallest possible answer using the same numbers and symbols. It takes a bit of thinking...

It’s so exciting when children get used to tackling sequences of

questions, especially when you have taught them how to attack the questions skilfully. There is such a buzz as pupils make connections and explain their thinking. So much reasoning can be drawn out from so few questions! And I can use this technique early on in a series of lessons too, so long as children have the skills to carry out the calculations. It is an approach that has given me so many great classroom moments. I hope it can be useful for you too! **TP**



*Gareth Metcalfe is the director of I See Maths and author of the I See Reasoning and I See*

*Problem-Solving eBooks.*

@gareth\_metcalfe

iseemaths.com

<sup>1</sup>Answers: 4, 8, 16, 16.  
<sup>2</sup>Answers: 4, 3, 4, 6, 2.  
<sup>3</sup>Answers: 10, 10, 30, 60, -35.  
4 Largest:  $20 \times 5 - 2$  Smallest:  $2 - (20 \times 5)$ .





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# CATCHING UP POST COVID

Curriculum or pedagogy, what matters more as we return to classrooms, asks **Hayden Tyers...**

**W**hen the Covid-19 crisis caused all schools across the country to close to most pupils in 2020, it was clear that this would have an impact on wellbeing and learning. How big of an impact was unknown at the time, driving speculation about 'lost learning' and the need for a 'catch-up curriculum'. For the Lion Academy Trust, there have been many positives that have come from this challenging time and it has made us think carefully about what matters more – is it what we teach or how we teach that makes the biggest difference?

## Exciting curriculum

Running ten schools nationally showed that irrespective of Covid-19 or the large-scale disruptions, all children benefit from an exciting curriculum that is curated and sequenced in a logical and well thought-out manner.

Our curriculum is designed so that all children are fully immersed in the learning experience and are able to talk about and lead on all aspects of their learning. Alongside distributing over 1,000 devices to support learning at home throughout lockdown, we supplemented rich curriculum content by regular and meaningful opportunities for assessing how well pupils were progressing via a range of questions to make children think deeply about what they have learned and their next steps. This curriculum – The Lion Learning Pathways – can be found at [www.lionlearningpathways.net](http://www.lionlearningpathways.net)

## Classroom layout

When children returned to classrooms in September, a key priority was helping them engage with content in a new and adapted way. Classroom layouts had to be changed; we amended entry and exit processes, and stringently controlled mealtimes and movement around the school to meet infection control requirements.

The period of closure had also impacted on children's ability to persevere with tasks, as well as

their levels of independence and resilience to challenges in learning. In all key stages, it was clear that additional teacher development would be key to delivering content effectively and meeting the needs of all our learners.

## Dealing with disruption

Those that were new to teaching (currently NQTs and RQTs) and those that had recently secured a new leadership post were also largely affected by lockdown. The first year in post was significantly disrupted, breaking the cycle of the peaks and troughs of the academic calendar. How to deliver and lead teaching was also different, due to the many changes and challenges emerging. This resulted in some staff thinking that the strategies for delivering remote education would be the same as in the classroom. Equally, those that were responsible for leading teaching needed support in transitioning practice back into the class settings.

This ongoing disruption has reminded us of the importance of the following foundations:

- A curriculum that is designed to help children make progress but is taught poorly will not have the right impact.
  - Equally, highly effective teaching practice that is delivering the wrong content is also ineffective.
- Developing



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

both curriculum and pedagogical expertise in a systematic manner leads to the largest impact on pupils' progress and raising attainment.

- The biggest key to unlocking success and enabling progress is making the learning process clear and consistent for the children.
- Assess pupils in a range of ways and with planned regularity, so that there is a clear understanding of gaps in learning.
- Teachers and leaders are great at adapting and providing solutions, but also benefit from continuity – both in how they are teaching and what they are expected to teach.

The pandemic has reminded us of many things. What it hasn't done is taught us anything new about how to support those who have fallen behind, or those who need a bespoke plan. Simply, we need to know what the gaps are, to have an exciting curriculum that meets pupils' learning needs, and to teach it very well, every day. This will make the biggest difference, and it always has. **TP**



*Hayden Tyers is director of schools at Lion Academy Trust. For more information contact [info@lionacademytrust.net](mailto:info@lionacademytrust.net)*

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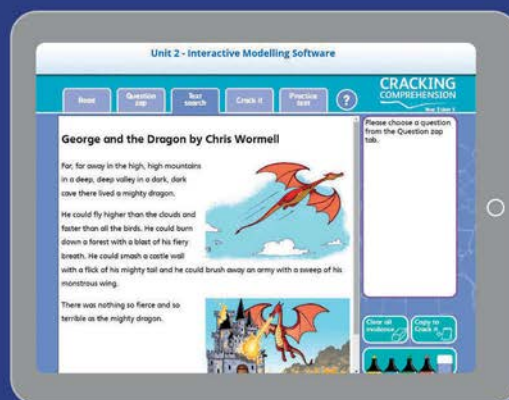


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## EVERYBODY WELCOME

Bilingual clubs can help schools support EAL students, says **Colin Baxter**

**I**t's no secret that meeting the needs of pupils who aren't yet fluent in English is something a lot of schools have challenges with. Incredibly, in the UK, there are over 1.5 million children with English as an additional language who speak over 360 languages between them. I strongly feel that these children should not be made to feel invisible in the classroom. Schools should be using resources to help empower pupils with a different heritage, language, and culture, to make them feel valued and welcome, but all too often this is neglected.

At the heart of Gladstone Primary Academy's vision is a profound belief that difference is a strength to be valued and celebrated. Therefore, we decided to set up Bilingual Clubs using funding from the local Peterborough City Council Community Fund. Our

Bilingual Clubs were set up to support our pupils aged between four and seven and help them learn both English and their home-language. The club aims to improve pupils' bilingual and literacy skills, expand their vocabulary, boost their confidence, and form stronger relationships with their parents.

A large proportion of our pupils at Gladstone Primary Academy are EAL and we felt we needed to properly support them. That's why we put a lot of time and effort into finding the perfect group leaders for each of our clubs. All of our inspiring leaders have experience with teaching young children, reflect our academy values, and can speak fluent English and at least one of our second languages.

I'm so pleased to say that despite multiple Covid-19 lockdowns, we've made exceptional progress in all of these aspects! From November 2020 to April

2021, Urdu-speaking pupils attending our Bilingual Club, improved their spoken language skills by 27%. Similarly, Romanian-speaking pupils' language skills improved by 23%. It was incredible to see this group also deliver a 22% increase in their English spoken language skills.

Our leaders run Bilingual Club four days a week after school, pick a story for the week and then create exciting activities around this including storytelling, acting, games and crafts. They model the use of both languages throughout the sessions and encourage pupils to continually switch between English and their home language. This shows the children that both languages are equally important and reinforces their ability to communicate bilingually. This approach develops the children's reading and listening skills, vocabulary, social interaction and use of longer sentences. It also impacts on their confidence and encourages them to contribute within a group setting both in school and at home. In doing this, we help to include and involve parents and provide weekly sessions where parents attend, have coffee and join in with the activities and see first-hand what the children have been doing. We have found it's a wonderful opportunity to create healthy and happy relationships between school and home life.

Earlier in the year, due to Covid-19, we sadly had to press pause on face-to-face sessions but this didn't hold us back and we moved to weekly WhatsApp video-based club sessions between January and March. Even with these less than perfect sessions, lockdown measures, and multiple school closures, we still made such great progress, and I'm so proud. **TP**

*Colin Baxter is a teacher with over 30 years' experience of language learning and teaching in senior leadership roles. He currently works with the central education team of Thomas Deacon Education Trust in Peterborough.*

### HOW TO SET UP YOUR OWN BILINGUAL CLUB

#### ● Plan, plan, plan

Researching and planning is important to ensure you know if Bilingual Club will work in your school setting and it's important to establish how you would like them to run.

#### ● Secure buy-in

Your headteacher and support staff need to be on board with the concept and understand in detail the positive impact it can have.

#### ● Engage your parents

Communicating with parents is vital. Make sure they understand what is required of them and clearly outline how best they can help with the project.

#### ● Find the right space

Running Bilingual Club in a space removed from the traditional 'classroom' and 'teacher' environment is essential to break down barriers, not only with pupils but with parents too.

#### ● Surround yourself with the right team

Having the right team around you is crucial for the approach to work. Staff members need to not only have the language skills, but also be able to communicate with and motivate pupils.

#### ● Enjoy and continue learning

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# What can we learn from GARETH SOUTHGATE?

**Jordan Coombes** looks at how leadership lessons from Euro 2020 apply to the classroom...

A lot has been said about this England team: passionate, driven, conscientious... the list could go on. And it's relevant for their actions both on and off the pitch. However, for a team to truly thrive, leadership must allow them to do so. Gareth Southgate led his England team with an empathy, consistency and humility that provided a platform for them to succeed; attributes that are also seen in our schools, both in the classroom and in leadership roles.

## Responsibility

After the disappointment of the final, inevitably questions were asked about some of England's decisions: tactics,

personel and why certain players were chosen to take the penalties that were sadly missed. Without hesitation, Southgate spoke to the media and took full responsibility for every aspect of the game, doing his best to protect his players in the process.

Although the country may not view it as quite high-stakes, a school day is made up of lots of decisions, too, and they can range in significance and vary depending on the role of the person making them. Let's be totally honest here, some of these decisions we make are wrong. We all care, we all want the best for everyone, but sometimes the choices we make just do not work out. We can learn from Southgate during these times and accept that some

of the our choices may not have been the best possible ones. Accepting responsibility when things go wrong is not easy, it makes us feel vulnerable and as if we are going to be judged negatively. But in doing so we help create a culture that accepts mistakes (both from children and adults), and will give you long-term respect from the people you work with and teach.

## Empathy

We saw Southgate always put his players first, showing a huge degree of empathy to how they might feel about different situations both on and off the pitch. He spoke about the team he was leading as humans first and footballers second, understanding the experience of the players, their feelings and how this may affect them in both spheres. Similarly, the children that we teach and adults we lead must also be seen as people first, before we consider them as pupils and members of staff. This may sound a rather obvious statement, however expectations in our schools are so high and days move at such a pace that there is often the danger of forgetting the human aspect of the jobs we have. Yes, there should be challenge and yes there should be ambition, but these should coexist alongside empathetic responses to the people that we work with.

## Consistency

Consistency is an aspect of school life that is often one of the

hardest to enforce. At times, this is because things are out of our control, but it is more likely that every day brings a totally new challenge to the one we have just faced. Southgate's tactics were often called boring, predictable and unimaginative (some would argue rightly so), but nobody would ever be able to call them inconsistent. The style of football remained the same throughout the tournament, this therefore meant that every player on the pitch and within the squad had a crystal clear understanding of where they stood and what was required of them. If we are consistent in our classrooms and in our schools so that children and staff know exactly where they stand and what the expectations are, we provide a much sturdier platform for success. Children respond to the same rules day in and day out and staff look to their leaders for consistency with their guidance and attitude;

### GARETH SOUTHGATE QUOTES:

*"If you are not constantly improving and learning, then you are going to be stuck and not progress."*

*"We always have to believe in what is possible in life and not be hindered by history or expectations."*

*"My players' feelings are the most important thing for me."*

*"I think if the players have some ownership of what's going on then that's going to help them make better decisions on the field."*

*"I like the players to speak up in meetings – I like them to have an opinion on the game, because in the 85th minute they have got to make a decision that might win or lose the game and we can't make all those decisions from the sideline."*



*“Everyone felt valued at all times, regardless of their role”*



a lack of understanding of expectations will only ever lead to disappointing outcomes.

## Humility

We all want things to go right, nobody sets off on a task and chases failure. However, showing humility after success and being able to recognise the efforts of everyone who aided that success is sometimes a skill that is overlooked. At every turn during Euro 2020 Southgate and his players showed a constant humility that had been instilled in them, never over confident and always thankful after a positive outcome. Everybody wants the best in schools; teachers want the best from their students and leaders want the best from their staff, which there is absolutely nothing wrong with. Although, when successes are evident and the best is achieved it is so important to remember others who have been

on this journey with us.

It is also vital to consider the fact that not everyone is experiencing success, some will be dealing with disappointment. When we are wrapped up in our celebrations and revelling after the hard work has paid off, being humble is a challenging attribute to show, but it is one that greatly affects the people around us.

## Inclusion

There were 26 members of the England squad that travelled to Euro 2020 (although it has to be said there wasn't much actual travelling) and with 11 players only allowed on the pitch at a time, there were inevitably people who were left out. With this in mind, how did Gareth Southgate possibly keep everybody happy and feeling included? In post-match interviews he regularly spoke about players who had not kicked a ball and praised their attitude

and contributions off the field. He made sure that everyone felt valued at all times, regardless of their role. Every member of a school (both children and adults) has their part to play and deserves to be part of the journey, whether this is in the classroom or the school as a whole. Teachers and leaders create roles for everyone and ensure that in classrooms and schools individuals become part of a collective, a greater good and ultimately achieve so much more that is beyond the purely academic.

## Bravery

Don't let your past define you, but in equal measure don't shy away from it. We all know that Gareth Southgate missed a decisive penalty at Euro 96; it was a moment that clearly affected him deeply. He spoke about it regularly and never cowered when it was brought up in conversation, but he also

spoke about this team being on a different journey, as was he; he was not defined by that one moment of disappointment. As educators we have all had lessons, observations, meetings, discussions (the list goes on) that did not go to plan. We must not forget these moments, as they are all part of who we are, but use them as learning experiences to constantly improve; it's not about righting wrongs, but creating new moments and situations along the journey. **TP**



*Jordan Coombes is an assistant head teacher in an East London Primary School and has previously held positions including science co, literacy co and class teacher.*



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# Learning TOGETHER

From NQTs to vastly experienced teachers – how sharing resources and best practice online has helped the Focus Trust weather the Covid storm and come out stronger

**DONNA TANDY**

**T**hose of us working in education throughout the pandemic have faced many an uphill battle. Adapting to the changing demands of pupils, families and staff, as well as tackling the ever-changing rules, regulations and guidance, has been tricky to say the least. We've all had to think creatively and quickly, to devise innovative solutions and ensure that children have been able to continue to access education, despite – for many – an extended physical absence from school.

It is this ongoing uncertainty – which is persisting despite widespread vaccination rollout – that inspired us to share our resources with anyone working in education. And our Learning Together website ([learning.focus-trust.co.uk](http://learning.focus-trust.co.uk)) is at the heart of this project. Learning Together collates articles and resources from teachers and leaders across the trust, which are freely available for anyone to use.

## Supporting each other

Even before the pandemic hit, there had been a lot of conversations throughout the trust about how to make sure that we were sharing best practice and our wealth of

resources in a dynamic and accessible way across our 15 schools.

However the mechanisms we had to share this beyond the literal school gates were somewhat limited. The notion of collective efficacy was well embedded in many other ways at this point, so colleagues were used to sharing on forums and understood how they contributed to the wider success of the whole trust.

And so the Learning Together website was born. Named after the trust vision of 'Learning Together, Making the Difference', it was agreed that the site would be accessible to all employees of Focus Trust.

To get the ball rolling, each school in the trust contributed an article, presentation or blog on different aspects of teaching. All colleagues were represented, so governors, admin, site, support and pastoral staff were all included in this process.

After being inspired by a talk from Leora Cruddas (CEO of the Confederation of School Trusts) on civic leadership at a Leaders' Forum, we realised that in order to live out the Focus Trust vision, the now substantial collection of articles and resources could be opened up to the wider education sector.

## Community-minded

Learning Together, and all its articles, blogs and resources, is now publicly available to offer support to everyone in the profession after what can only be described as a quite extraordinary year-and-a-half.

Over the last 18 months or so, it has become really apparent that we have a determined and highly capable team across the Focus Trust who, from NQTs to vastly experienced colleagues, have amassed an abundance of resources that

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*\* Find expert advice such as model answers to common NQT interview questions, and top tips on keeping your class happy and engaged.*

enrich the learning experience of our children and the development of all staff.

## Moving forwards

We're launching a reinvigorated version of Learning Together for autumn term 2021, sharing quality development resources to help progress teachers' pedagogical toolkit.

This has been a testing year, and we've found that sharing best practice has made it easier to provide the best possible learning and teaching experience. Not to mention making it more bearable to know you have a group of people by your side!

Teaching professionals can access the site by visiting [learning.focus-trust.co.uk](http://learning.focus-trust.co.uk) **TP**



*Donna Tandy is the deputy chief executive and academy improvement partner for Focus Trust. Donna has extensive experience as a system leader and a proven track record of securing sustainable improvement in different schools through developing others.*







**Little Sutton Primary** has worked closely with **Whizz Education** for the last three years. Initially, assigned to support pupils in Year 6, the **Maths Whizz programme** is now offered to Year 5 and Year 6 pupils to help further supplement their mathematical learning.



Since the induction of the programme, pupil engagement and progress in maths has increased. Our pupils perform well above national average in maths where our Key Stage 2 progress in mathematics (3.8) was significantly above national and in the highest 20% of all schools in 2019 as well as in 2018 and 2017.

Along with the focused mathematical strands and challenges that appear as tasks for children to complete, there are also several additional activities which further keep our pupils motivated. From achieving progress points to create their own avatars, the Whizz shop, obtaining stickers and progress messages, receiving awards including rulers and pencils, there is also the chance to win the weekly Whizz class cup!

Whilst many of our children regularly access the programme from home, the usefulness of being able to utilise Maths-Whizz in the current pandemic has been very well-received by our staff, pupils, and parents. The ability to check progress whilst also allowing children to still see a purpose for maths has been hugely motivational. In such times, online tools and options are great to support the balance of remote learning.

Comments by **Rachel Davis MBE, Headteacher, Little Sutton Primary**



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# Feeling POSITIVE?

While learning can lead to feeling good, is there any evidence that feeling good enables learning? **Mike Askew** shows there is, and shares practical suggestions for maths lessons...



**H**ow do we decide what a 'good' mathematics lesson might look like? One model I like suggests that quality mathematical teaching requires a blend and balance of:

- Cognitive activation
- A supportive climate
- Classroom management

Cognitive activation is just a fancy way of saying pupils need to think in lessons, and no one would question that sound classroom management is needed for learning to go well.

A supportive climate is, I believe, sometimes thought of as more or less taking care of itself – get pupils thinking about some interesting mathematics in a well-managed class and the climate naturally will be supportive. But is it only the case that a supportive, positive, classroom climate emerges as a result of pupils sensing they are making gains in learning mathematics, or can taking deliberate action to build a positive climate actually lead to better learning?

The recently published Ofsted review into teaching and learning mathematics comes down firmly on the learning-leads-to-feeling-positive side of this argument, claiming that pupils develop positive attitudes

towards mathematics when they succeed at it – a sentiment with which I expect we could all agree. I would also go along with the review's recommendation that trivializing mathematics, just so that everyone feels good, is not the way to go. But I part company with the review's advice on avoiding thinking that positive emotions can lead to better learning, as there is research evidence showing that this direction of causality – feeling-positive-supports-learning – is equally important.

## Promoting positive emotions

One theory that has shown the power of positive emotions is psychologist Reinhard Pekrun's Control-Value theory that pupils' emotional responses to lessons are influenced by two things:

- What sense of control they have over what they are asked to do.
- How much they value what they are doing, either as important in its own right (intrinsic value) and/or in terms of achievement, of 'doing well' (extrinsic value).

## THE POWER OF POSITIVE

Up until around 15 years ago, research into the impact of emotions on learning mathematics focused mainly on the impact of negative emotions, for example, fear or anxiety, with the assumption that positive emotions, whilst desirable, had less impact on learning than negative emotions. Evidence now shows, however, that actively fostering positive attitudes is valuable in its own right and contributes to learning in ways that are different from simply removing negative emotions.

The psychologist Barbara Fredrickson has developed a 'broaden-and-build' theory, which, backed up by empirical evidence, posits that positive emotions go beyond feeling good about experiences, but they promote a 'building' response to experiences. That is, positive emotions increase attention and awareness and as a consequence we respond more broadly to experiences.

Evidence from work based on Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory applied to classrooms indicates that positive emotions go beyond indicating that learning is going well; that establishing positive emotions creates the conditions for learning to go well. And there is evidence to show that this does impact on learning. Positive emotions such as enjoyment correlate with positive gains in mathematics grades and test scores across years of schooling, and conversely, negative emotions such as boredom and anxiety have negative effects on attainment.

Importantly, this productive impact of positive emotions extends beyond the current moment. A virtuous cycle is set up – presenting mathematics in ways that promote positive emotions results in pupils engaging more creatively with the mathematics which in turn fosters more positive responses towards the mathematics.

In short, positive emotions are not a merely nice 'add-on' to mathematics teaching, they actively foster and support learning.







Values are general, and long lasting ('I really like maths' or 'I want to do well') and so take time to develop or change. Sense of control, on the other hand is short-term, linked to specific experiences, and so more easily influenced by the way mathematics lessons are set up and enacted.

Another thing shown to promote pupils having a sense of control is giving them with opportunities to make choices. But how might pupils be offered choices without mathematics lessons turning into 'anything goes' situations? The Canadian author Marian Small suggests in her book – Good questions: Great ways to differentiate mathematics instruction (2008) – two ways to provide some choice without diminishing the quality of the mathematics:

## Choice of two tasks

Rather than pre-determining that different pupils may need to be given different tasks to meet different needs, Small advocates letting the pupils themselves determine which of two tasks to do.

Take, for example, this problem (adapted from one of Small's problems):

### Will Mike and Jo ever have the same number of grapes?

#### Choice 1:

Mike has 30 grapes and Jo has 12.

Mike gives Jo 3 grapes at a time.

#### Choice 2:

Mike has 50 grapes and Jo has 10.

Mike gives Jo 5 grapes at a time.

While each option involves counting down and up, pupils may choose initially to work on choice one as the numbers are smaller. But they may come to reason that although the numbers are larger in choice two, the calculations are actually simpler.

Another example (again adapted from Small's work) is to ask pupils to mark two dots on a piece of paper. They can choose between:

#### Choice 1:

Making a square with the dots as corners

#### Choice 2:

Making a parallelogram with the dots as corners

#### Choice 3:

Making an isosceles triangle with the dots as corners

Choice three might at first appear to be the easiest option, as only one other point is needed, but it is actually challenging. And all three choices allow for more than one solution.

As these examples show, not only might offering pupils a choice of problems help them to develop a sense of control, it can also get them thinking more deeply about the mathematics.

## Choice of values to work with

The second strategy that Small suggests is to set up tasks in ways that require pupils to make a choice of numbers with which to work.

For instance, in a problem like the one below, having more than one blank to fill opens up the range of choice.

\_\_\_\_\_ is 8 less than \_\_\_\_\_

Find five pairs of numbers that make this statement true.

In thinking about what pairs of values would work, pupils are encouraged to think about the patterns in the answers and the underlying mathematical structure. Not only do they get to do some subtractions, they deepen their understanding of 'less than'.

Other examples could be things like:

\_\_\_\_\_ is double \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ is 8 more than \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ is five times \_\_\_\_\_  
 7 is \_\_\_\_\_ minus \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ is 25% of \_\_\_\_\_  
 8 is \_\_\_\_\_ (fraction) of \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ is  $\frac{3}{5}$  of \_\_\_\_\_  
 7 is \_\_\_\_\_ % of \_\_\_\_\_

Finally, problem solving is also a way to give pupils the opportunity to make choices, particularly if the problem offered allows them to choose a solution method and how they might represent their solution. **TP**



*Mike Askew is adjunct professor of education at Monash University, Melbourne. A former primary teacher, he now researches, speaks and writes on teaching and learning mathematics.*

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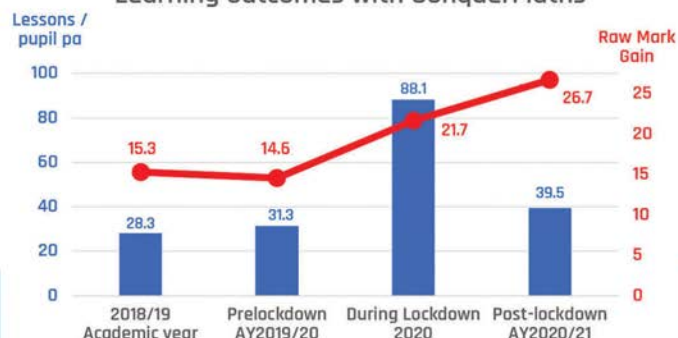
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# ‘Accessible and cost-effective interventions’

Mental health expert Cath Beagley explains how Drawing and Talking can help support pupils overcoming trauma



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Drawing and Talking technique is a short-term intervention designed to complement the work of CAHMS and can support those children and young people who will otherwise go untreated and remain affected by unresolved trauma and anxiety.

### What is Drawing and Talking?

Drawing and Talking is an attachment-based therapeutic technique which has been created to support anyone (age 5+) who suffers from emotional distress linked to trauma. As professionals, we see our young people lock themselves into a punishing struggle of trying to process deep feelings which can be painful and difficult work, often leading to destructive external behaviours and communications. Drawing and talking is a person-centred approach based in Jungian and Bowlby principles, focusing on healing through the unconscious and not a cognitive-based or solution-focused therapy.



### Why should Drawing and Talking be implemented in schools?

Having been delivered for over 20 years, Drawing and Talking is regarded as one of the most accessible and cost-effective interventions a school can offer. With waiting lists for CAMHS and other specialists at an all-time high, along with record numbers of children and young people displaying moderate to complex mental health issues in schools, early interventions that are specifically designed to target the emotional wellbeing of the community we support are essential.

### What resources are needed for Drawing and Talking?

12 pieces of paper, a pencil and document wallet can transform a child's life. Drawing and Talking Therapy is a proactive one-to-one intervention and not designed as behaviour modification. A total of 12 sessions are delivered at the same time, in the same room, once a week for 30 minutes. As this is an attachment-based technique the practitioner must be available each week.



#### ABOUT CATH:

Cath Beagley is the CEO of Drawing and Talking & The Mental Health Hub



#### Contact:

020 8715 0745

[info@drawingandtalking.com](mailto:info@drawingandtalking.com)  
[drawingandtalking.com](http://drawingandtalking.com)

### What happens on the training day?

Training is a full day and is CPD accredited. During the day, practitioners are taken through theoretical components that underpin our technique, exploring the emotional, physical, and neurobiological impact of trauma on the brain. The experiential training and case studies are highly emotive and designed to empower trainees to internalise the feelings and power of being emotionally held by another as they experience Drawing and Talking for themselves.

### Who should attend the training?

Our training programmes are suitable for anyone working with children, young people, and adults. No previous knowledge or experience is necessary to attend the foundation training. Suitable for (but not limited to) TAs, learning mentors, family support, SENCOs, pastoral workers, ELSA, nurture groups, and mental health leads.

## Need to know

- + Our training programmes are suitable for anyone working with children, young people, and adults( ages 5+).
- + Drawing and Talking Therapy is regarded as one of the most accessible and cost-effective interventions a school can offer.
- + Provides a person-centered approach based in Jungian and Bowlby principles that focus on healing through the unconscious.



# How to develop REAL READERS

If we want children to pick up books for pleasure, we need to do more than teach them the essential reading skills, say **Christine Chen** and **Lindsay Pickton**

**W**hen considering the question, “How do we turn children into lifelong readers?” (those who read for pleasure as well as when they are required to), we often find it helpful and revealing to ask the same question of other life-enhancing skills, such as swimming.

Helping a child become a lifelong swimmer, who swims for pleasure as well as in an emergency, is a worthy goal that will contribute to a healthy existence. So, what needs to be in place to bring this about? Pleasant environments – well-maintained pools and beaches, even lakes – will help with motivation and build associations between swimming and pleasure, especially if experienced very early in life. Similarly, early opportunities to playfully build confidence in water, in a safe way, before the ability to swim has been acquired, will help enormously. Then there’s being surrounded by swimming and swimmers, and therefore the expectation that this is a thing we do.

None of these replaces the teaching and learning of the necessary skills, but they all help... and they are likely to make that learning process easier.

As for swimming, so for

reading. Lovely environments and attractive resources, a culture of expectation, early associations with fun through safe, playful experiences, plus immersion in plentiful models of adept reading are all important components in developing the habit of reading for pleasure and purpose. They cannot replace the teaching and learning process – however, they’re likely to make that process go more smoothly.

breadth of experience.

What are the hurdles that get in the way of reading comprehension (and therefore, pleasure and purpose)? Simply put, accuracy, fluency, and prior knowledge of content and vocabulary. What are the chances of developing a love of reading if you aren’t fluent? Fluency requires speedy decoding and automatic word recognition, plus familiarity with the speed, phrasing and

perhaps the key comprehension strategy for life, too; it’s what we all do when we don’t get something!

Alongside the development of fluency, pre-empting and addressing likely gaps in knowledge (subject matter and vocabulary) is a foundational, powerful way to address inequities in children’s starting points; this enables comprehension.

## Deeper understanding

Once these things are in place, we must think about what is happening inside readers’ heads as they read (or listen). We have found starting with a personal response – What did you think of that? How did it make you feel? What did you particularly notice? – to be fundamental in building real understanding; it engages and motivates.

Then, we can use clarification questions: what is in their heads? Have they noticed the key things that need noticing? Are they clear what is meant by this phrase in this context? As well as exploring what is in their heads, we can use this almost line-by-line analysis (or ‘close reading’) to articulate what’s in our head as the teacher, as we read; in other words, to demonstrate the thinking processes of an accomplished

*“If some children are always kept in the ‘baby pool’, they never learn to swim 25 metres”*

## Starting points

The development of real readers, then, requires a truly multi-pronged approach; this is especially true for children who don’t come from backgrounds in which those environmental aspects are the norm. When we were invited to work with Plazoom on a new comprehension resource, we sought to help teachers with the teaching and learning process, while aiming simultaneously to support engagement, motivation and

intonation of language.

And then lots of practice. That’s why we are such fans of what Doug Lemov (et al), in *Reading Reconsidered*, calls ‘layered reading’: repeated re-reads in different forms. We strongly advocate, at the very least, a model-read followed by a choral-read of the focus text, first to demonstrate what it should sound like, then to ease children safely into reading (and if they really can’t, they’ve had another chance to listen to it). Multiple re-reads is



reader. This requires a good deal of pre-reading, thinking and planning to get right; teachers have often told us that pre-annotated texts give helpful starting points, and so save precious time and energy.

Varied, engaging ways for children to respond to texts and to demonstrate their understanding help to build both ability and positive attitudes. A range of questions for written response is vital, but use of quick-fire 'micro-drama', and graphic organisers such as the time-honoured emotions graph, role-on-the-wall and zone-of-relevance, all contribute to breadth of understanding.

On the subject of variety, children need to develop and practise their comprehension across a range of forms, including engaging, well-written, age-appropriate non-fiction and poetry. Once these are in place, we can help them to make comparisons and spot common themes (such as forgiveness, or triumphing over adversity). Theme-recognition both depends on comprehension, and enhances it enormously.

### Access for all

Perhaps the biggest question when it comes to growing abilities in a class setting is differentiation, and here the swimming analogy

helps again. If some children are always kept in the 'baby pool', they never learn to swim 25 metres. Similarly, if some children are always exploring below-age-appropriate texts, how will they learn to read appropriately? Whether we use whole-class reading or small groups, we want all children to access the age-appropriate text. Some will need additional pre-teaching of knowledge, vocabulary and/or fluency; some may also need additional support with easier texts to practise their decoding and automaticity. But they can all listen to the class text (this is the key comprehension mode for Y1, after all), and through layered reading, children will begin to increasingly join in with the choral aspects. Then, they may well surprise you with their comprehension.

And those strong readers, who can

already read the class text with ease?

The processes we've touched upon here give them a deeper read with close analysis, the requirement to articulate and evidence their understanding (orally and in writing), and the exploration of themes and comparison between a range of texts that they might otherwise not explore.

Lifelong reading (for pleasure and otherwise) is dependent on comprehension, and we know that teaching

comprehension is dependent on so much more than set texts and set questions. But if we can get it all in place, with luck all children may relax on holiday with a good book, then read the safety notices before leaping into the water for a pleasurable swim! **TP**



*Christine Chen and Lindsay Pickton are primary education advisers ([primaryeducationadvisers.co.uk](http://primaryeducationadvisers.co.uk)) supporting English development nationally.*



### EXPERT COMPREHENSION RESOURCES

Real Comprehension, from Plazoom, is a unique, whole-school reading comprehension programme designed to develop sophisticated skills of inference and retrieval; build rich vocabularies; and encourage the identification of themes and comparison between texts from years 1 to 6. Find out more, and take a FREE trial, at [plazoom.com/real-comprehension](http://plazoom.com/real-comprehension)





# Power Maths Reception now improved and updated for the new EYFS framework!

These engaging digital and print materials support a teaching for mastery approach that is tailor-made for Reception children, bringing together everything schools love about Power Maths.

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Explore Power Maths Reception second edition:  
[www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/TPPowerMaths](http://www.pearsonprimary.co.uk/TPPowerMaths)



# SENCo

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## Supporting pupils who stammer

Adam Black explains what teachers can do to stop a pupil's stammer from getting in the way of their learning and development...

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



## Inclusive school trips

With a little extra planning, you can ensure that students with SEND can enjoy the full benefits of your group's away days, explains Juno Hollyhock...

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



## Inspire pupils at risk of exclusion

Help children whose progress is hindered due to behaviour, emotional wellbeing needs or social difficulties to grow with this advice from Katrina Brown...

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

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# WORKING together

Effectively working with parents will help schools provide successful support for children with SEN, says **Sara Alston**

In schools, we are often forced to tread an impossible tightrope between parents who demand a diagnosis and SEN support for their child, and those who struggle to engage in the process at all.

The SEN Code of Practice (CoP) recognises that 'sometimes discussions between home and school can be challenging, but it is in the child's best interests to maintain a positive dialogue'. While parents are the experts on their children, too often schools feel that they are working against, rather than with them, to ensure the best support for children with SEND.

## Differing views

Parents and the school are often looking from different perspectives. The SENCo and school staff focus on the child in school, engagement in learning and progress against formal assessments. For parents, this is only a small part of a much wider picture, including speech, eating, toileting, sleeping, interactions with siblings and behaviour in public.

Children often behave very differently at home and at school. This can be a response to different boundaries and expectations or a 'masking' of difficulties. As school staff, we can struggle to believe parents in such scenarios. Too often either the school or family place 'blame' on the other's management and expectations of the child. But we need to listen, respect and understand parents' experiences and view of their child, not dismiss them because they are not the same as ours. However we cannot provide SEN support in school for what is happening elsewhere. If the child

does not need 'additional or different' support to their peers in school, we need to signpost parents to other services.

Parents and schools often lack a common language or understanding of learning. Parents, even those who are also teachers, struggle to look at their child's learning in a dispassionate way. They tend to focus on the highs – variations of 'my child is a genius' – or the lows – 'why can't they read, behave', etc. There is often a fear that their child won't be able to achieve, leading to a natural and commendable desire to protect and help them. Equally, there can be a defensive response when parents feel professionals are suggesting that their child is less than perfect. Indeed, parents can produce both responses within the same conversation making it even harder for professionals to respond constructively.

For many parents who fear that there is 'something wrong' with their child, a diagnosis can seem like a golden bullet that will explain everything. Sadly, while a diagnosis can add to our knowledge of a child, it will neither cure nor change the child. A diagnosis of dyslexia will not on its own improve a child's reading. The thing that will make the difference is how we respond to the child. We need to be clear that support in schools is not dependent on a diagnosis. Equally, a diagnosis does not automatically entitle a child to SEN support, EHCPs or additional time in exams. Support is provided in response to children's needs with or without diagnosis.

Parents also need clarity about what a school can and cannot do.



For instance, the Local Authority issues EHCPs, but they cannot be distributed by the SENCo. Parents (and medical professionals) can apply for an EHCP, but a school cannot apply for one where they have no evidence that it is needed.

### Tricky conversations

Conversations with parents who struggle to accept that their child requires special needs support are also difficult. Many do not see the difficulties or understand their significance. Some parents just want their child to be happy, but for others, their own experiences of education or cultural background mean they see SEN as a source of exclusion or stigma. In these cases, it takes time, tact and persistence to work with parents to build trust. However, when managing parents, emotional responses should not come at the expense of their child's needs. There are occasions when disregarding a child's needs becomes neglect and a safeguarding issue.

The SEN CoP emphasises the role of parents in decision making and the importance of parental choice. However, in reality, much of the responsibility for this rests with the local authority and is relevant at EHCP level. If the school is making SEN provision for a child, they need to inform the parents.

***“We need to listen, respect and understand parents’ experiences and view of their child, not dismiss them because they are not the same as ours”***

They should record the details of the SEN support provision being made and share this formally with the parents. They should seek to involve parents and ensure decisions are informed by their insights, but their agreement is not required at this level.

If the school wishes to involve an outside agency such as a speech and language therapist, then parents should be involved in the decision and their agreement should be sought. The school should record the involvement and share this with parents.

Schools must also provide parents of

SEN pupils with an annual report on their child's progress as they do with all children, and should meet with them at least three times a year to set outcomes and review progress. These meetings could be part of the normal cycle of parents' evenings and discussions, though they may need to be longer for children with SEN. A record of the meeting should be kept and shared with all the appropriate school staff and given to the pupil's parents.

Effective working with parents is key to successful support for children with SEN. We need to be open to and listen to each other's point of view and be realistic about what the other can offer. It is vital that we keep the child at the centre of the conversation so that the promotion of their welfare and learning are paramount.

TP



***Sara Alston is an independent consultant and trainer with SEA Inclusion and Safeguarding, and a practising SENCo.***

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





# Time-saving resources

Find, create and personalise learning materials easily with Discovery Education Espresso

## Need to know

Most UK teachers use technology in the classroom, so it's no surprise there's a tool for every task and endless search results for content. But it doesn't have to be a challenge for teachers to find and invest in what they need. **Meet the new Discovery Education Espresso. Your daily learning platform.** Built around the quality content Espresso is known for, it's one secure place you can rely on to create engaging learning experiences, closely track pupil progress and gain professional inspiration – every day.

### It's diverse, authentic and leaves teachers wanting to explore

Feedback has shown teachers are looking for exciting real-world content that can integrate with personalisation tools in a digital collaboration space. And it's here in Espresso. Teachers find a treasury of videos, texts, activities, audio and images that span all primary key stages, subjects and topics of today. Every month we add new resources, from age-appropriate news to curated channels. And we ensure our content is culturally authentic and reflects the diversity of today's world.

### Use Studio to build activities and presentations

Studio, our collaboration and presentation tool, serves as a creative outlet for those activities teachers always wanted to design. And, they can rely on Microsoft's Immersive Reader for literacy support. Pupils can also design their own presentations, allowing them to share knowledge in creative ways. Teachers and pupils can collaborate in real-time within Studio to encourage lively discussion.

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capabilities to make finding the content you want an intuitive process. Pupils and teachers can search, find, preview and save the content they need right when they need it and easily identify related materials and instructional support.

### Our redesigned Video Player

makes it easy for teachers to incorporate rich media into the learning experiences they design and deliver every day. Build an interactive video quiz or create an activity in a few simple steps. Activities can be assigned to individual pupils or the whole class to personalise learning and reach all learners.

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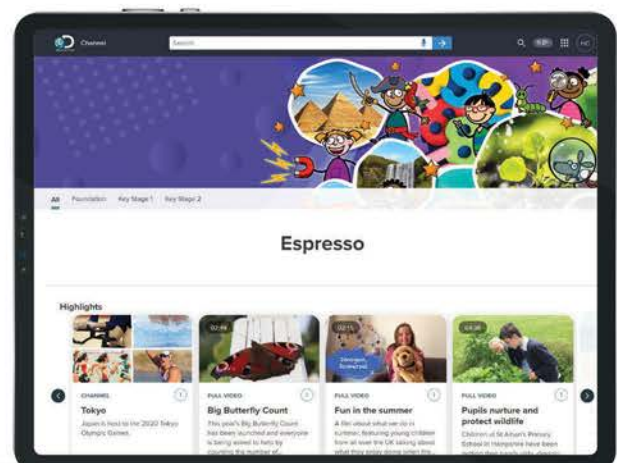
Built around the amazing, timely content we're known for, it's one secure place you can rely on to create engaging learning experiences, closely track pupil progress, and gain professional inspiration—every day.

- Access timely and relevant content that's easier than ever to find, use and personalise
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Dale Lawson, Teacher,  
Westclyst school, Devon

**Time-saving resources, relevant content  
and useful tools for primary teaching  
all in one place.**





# MEDIUM TERM PLAN

## KS2 NUTRITION

# TURF TO TABLE

MICHELLE CASEY

These sessions encourage and facilitate children to follow their food's journey 'from turf to table' and consider where ingredients are sourced. There will be the opportunity to experience a variety of herbs using their senses, and children will collaboratively make decisions and complete tasks to build on their knowledge about where food comes from. They will also learn about seasonality and the conditions needed for specific ingredients to grow, and incorporating an ingredient they have grown themselves into a recipe will engage and excite them. This soil-to-table journey is a life skill that enables pupils to feed themselves and others affordably and well, now and in later life, all whilst learning about the basic lifecycle of plants and the impact of the environment.

### EVEN MORE NUTRITION IDEAS...



Learn about different kinds of fruit and what connects them, with this KS1 lesson plan. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-favefruit](http://tinyurl.com/tp-favefruit)



Examine the science behind cereal nutrition in KS2. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-cereal](http://tinyurl.com/tp-cereal)



Give pupils the opportunity to explore a variety of herbs through taste, smell, touch and sight. You could also provide a few food samples that

contain the herbs (eg parsley – tabbouleh, basil – basic bruschetta, coriander – soup, chive – sour cream and chive dip) to see if they can match the herb to the recipe. (Allergies would need to be a major consideration within this task – avoid the obvious basil pesto as this could be a major risk factor for nut allergies).

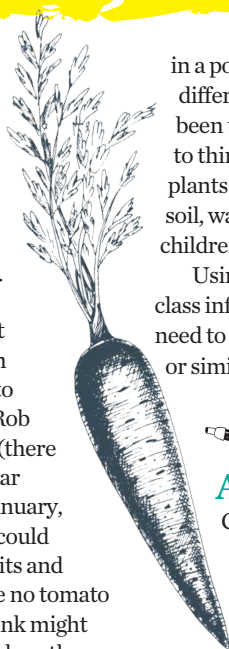
The give the children a worksheet to complete, describing each herb under the headings: taste, smell, look and feel. As a class (or a group) they could then vote for the herb that they will grow to use in a recipe once harvested. They might want to decide on the recipe they will make at this point too, for later in the topic. They could make one from above or research one they'd like to make themselves. (Decide at this point – are children bringing in some/all of the rest of the ingredients? Or will the teacher/school provide these?)



## WEEK 1 Learning objective:

- To explore the requirements of plants for life and growth

Show the children a PowerPoint with different situations on each slide depicting someone trying to grow something. For example, Rob has planted tomato plant seeds (there would be an image of the calendar behind Rob showing that it is January, and the hills in the background could have a dusting of snow). Rob waits and waits. June arrives and there are no tomato plants growing. What do you think might have happened? Elicit from children the response that Rob did not plant them at the right time of year so the cold weather would have affected them. Discuss how Rob should have planted them later in the year as it gets a little warmer, or alternatively he could have sown them in January but kept them



in a pot inside. The other slides would have different situations where the growth has been unsuccessful, thereby getting pupils to think about what it takes to grow healthy plants (eg time of year, weather conditions, soil, water, position in garden etc). Let children discuss in pairs or small groups.

Using evidence from the slides, collate a class information sheet showing what plants need to grow and display it on a 'working wall' or similar.

## Assessment

Can children correctly identify all the elements a plant needs to grow and be healthy?

## WEEK 2 Learning objective:

- To begin to understand and apply the principles of a varied diet

## Assessment

Are children able to describe, either written or verbally, the various herbs and compare and contrast them?

## WEEK 3

### Learning objective:

- To understand the concept of seasonality

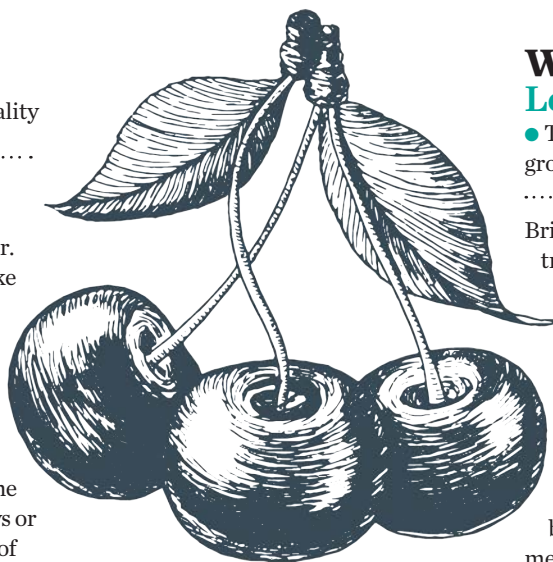
Present another situation: Jacob goes to the farmer's market one day in September. He wants to make a strawberry cheesecake but at the market he can't find any strawberries! Why might this be?

Look at the seasonality of different fruits, vegetables and herbs. Make them aware of the difference in cost of eating food in season.

Ask the children to make a list of all the things they have eaten in the past few days or in the past week. Then make another list of the fruits, vegetables or herbs within the food. Children can do some research to find out if the produce was available locally or if it had to be brought in from somewhere else. Ask them to consider what this means for the environment and the price we pay as consumers.

Children could make a calendar (or be given a template). In each month they could draw a fruit, vegetable or herb that could be grown then.

Now, in small groups pupils can plant the seeds they voted on as a class or group, ensuring correct conditions (choosing parsley, basil, coriander or chives means they



can start to harvest their produce within approximately 4-6 weeks). It might be in pots, or in a school garden or allotment if you have one. Discuss how different seeds can be planted at different times.



### Assessment

Do children understand what is meant by eating seasonally? Do they understand that by eating seasonally, they are reducing their carbon footprint?

## WEEK 4

### Learning objective:

- To understand the benefits of growing your own

Briefly discuss the term mental health – try and pitch it sensitively according to your class – and talk about the benefits gardening can bring. Being in the outdoors can be good for mental health: even a 15-minute time period of gardening has been scientifically proven to dial down our stress hormone. Growing your own produce seasonally can also be financially beneficial. Growing your own food means you don't have to rely on food being transported from elsewhere, thus reducing pollution and plastic required for packaging. Local food also reduces the demands put on land by commercial farming.

Children could do a cut-out-and-stick activity about the benefits of growing food. Ask them to make a table with four headings: Financial, Environmental, Wellness and Ecological. Pupils can cut out words or images that represent different benefits of growing food, and place them under each heading. Alternatively, ask children to write about the benefits in their own words under the different headings.







### Assessment

Can children explain a few benefits of growing your own? Despite the benefits, why do lots of people choose not to do it? (Eg convenience, time, space etc.)

## WEEK 5

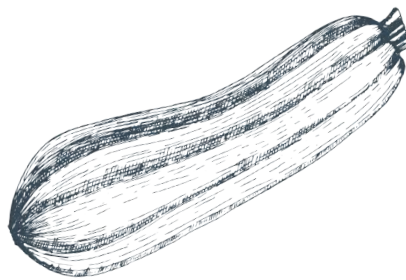
### Learning objective:

- Use of persuasive language to encourage the government to give schools more funding to grow their own

Revisit the benefits of growing your own food generally as a society.

In groups, let children come up with some reasons why they should be allowed to grow their own in school. Some reasons might include:

- Children will have more appreciation for where their food comes from
- Children who don't have the opportunity for this at home can have the opportunity in school



- Promotes good mental health
- Positive environmental impact
- Encourages children to eat a variety of food by seeing their peers eating it
- Will encourage children to continue the practice later in life.

Let children share and discuss their ideas.

Now think about what the potential barriers to the project might be, such as lack of time, lack of money, or a lack of in-house knowledge, meaning a specialist may need to be brought in.

Ask children to write a letter to their local MP trying to persuade them to allocate money to their school to support and enable children to grow their own. Encourage them to lay out all the benefits and counterargue all the potential challenges.

This task will develop children's skills in empathising with alternative viewpoints.

It is important in terms of being able to present a balanced and fair argument. The children will also develop their skills in adapting their language and style when writing in a formal context.

### Assessment

Can children explain why growing their own produce in school would be beneficial? Can they also appreciate that this would come with some challenges?

## WEEK 6

### Learning objective:

- To prepare a savoury dish using a variety of techniques

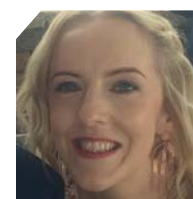
It's harvest time! Children will harvest their produce. They will then follow their instructions to prepare their chosen recipe. They will use a variety of techniques, as previously discussed, to make their recipe.

*Note: At some point before this lesson, children will need time in their groups to write up and research the instructions for the recipe they are making in this session. They will need to think about all the ingredients and equipment they need, and anything they might need to ask for help with. Discuss the techniques the children will be using, such as cutting, chopping, grating, blending, mixing, tearing, whisking, drizzling, pouring, etc. As a class, look at a few of the recipes the children are planning on making and look at the ingredients they are using. Talk about what the group will need to do to make that ingredient 'recipe ready', for example, wash it then chop it.*



### Assessment

Do the children know what to do to their ingredients to make them 'recipe ready'? Are children listening to each other and co-operating well?



*Michelle Casey is a primary school teacher based in Surrey.*

## INSIDE THIS SECTION



**Sue Drury** shares six top tips on getting children excited about poetry



**Richard Gerver** discusses why investing in staff libraries training is essential



How to expand success criteria for descriptive writing to transform your pupils' approach



Although tech is a great tool, we need to make sure it doesn't impede pupils' reading ability, says **Cathy Prole**

## →→→ RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

### BUILD GREAT RELATIONSHIPS

Starting a new year with a new class? These bright, appealing worksheets from literacy specialist website **Plazoom** are the perfect way for you and your pupils to start getting to know each other. Try them for FREE with a 14-day trial, at [bit.ly/TPallaboutme](http://bit.ly/TPallaboutme). [plazoom.com/collections/back-to-school](http://plazoom.com/collections/back-to-school)



# Meet the AUTHOR

**Maisie Chan** on dispelling Chinese stereotypes, and how diverse books can help all pupils feel welcome in the classroom

I loved primary school. I went to Tiverton Junior and Infant School in Bournbrook, Birmingham, and because we were so close to the University of Birmingham, we always had a diverse intake of international students' children. The downside was that I would often make friends with many children from all over the world and then they would leave after a year or so when their parents finished their studies.

My first best friend was Monica Escobar. In reception, she went back to Columbia and we tried to keep in touch but you can only do so much when you are five! Then I had friends from Malaysia and Pakistan, and again, they would leave. It was quite sad actually. But I think that early exposure to people from around the world has influenced who I became later on. I travelled and lived on three continents and was always interested in people from other places and cultures. To me it shows how important having diverse and inclusive books in a classroom really are. For those children who aren't able to meet people from a different culture, having books is the next best thing. They can immerse themselves in the lives of others they see in picture books, early readers and on front covers, experiencing people who are different to them. Perhaps if this was more common we would have less prejudice and more empathy?

I also moved up to Y6 a year early, skipping Y5, because I was ahead of my class academically. But despite being a shy pupil I made friends and loved being with the older, more mature pupils.

### Joy of stories

My favourite thing about school was making up stories. My friend Hannah and I would come up with songs in the playground, or we'd make up stories about a ghost in the spooky bell house that sat upon the roof. I was proud to be the stationary cupboard monitor, which essentially meant that I could stay inside some break times and hide in the stationary cupboard and pretend I was counting notebooks or pencils. I would invite friends to come in there too, so it was like a secret den.

I had a teacher called Mr Bowen and he was from Wales. He was fierce – just like the Welsh Dragon – but had a soft spot for me and my family. My mom Jean was well known for sending all her fostered and adopted children to the school. She was a fixture in the parent council and helped out with the jumble sale. My mom was on a first-name basis with the teachers – they were friends. Mr Bowen used to hold a times table test at the end of every week and the winning table would get a Cadbury's Cream Egg. I think my mom used to supply these to Mr Bowen as my dad worked at Cadbury's and got a discount.



# LUCKY DRAGON



## *“My favourite thing about school was making up stories”*

### Diverse friends

Growing up in a council house in Birmingham and going to that primary school did definitely shape who I am as an author. I understood that you could be friends with someone who didn't speak the same language as you. That is very much central to *Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths* because Danny and his nai nai (gran) find it hard to communicate verbally. But humans are humans, right? I've lived in Taipei where I couldn't speak the language, yet I managed to eat out, find my way around and eventually picked up a basic knowledge of Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese). I have now forgotten most of

the language, but the experience of living in a vastly different country will always stay with me.

I'm often asked if there is much of Danny's personality or likes and dislikes in me and I didn't think so at first. However, I suppose there are. I didn't like a lot of fruit when I was younger either and I used to draw a lot. I won a couple of art competitions when I was in reception. One of my paintings of Little Red Riding Hood was on display in a library and I felt proud of that achievement.

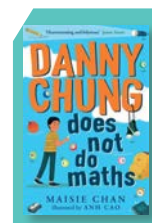
Being one of the very few British Chinese authors is both a big responsibility and an honour. Danny Chung is a regular British boy for the 21st century. I know people

might say that Danny's family having a Chinese takeaway is stereotypical. It is to some extent but it's also still common; my portrayal of the Lucky Dragon is my homage to my family, my foster siblings' family, and my friends who still work in the food industry. They worked so hard for a better life and I wanted to show that in the book. My next novel won't have a Chinese takeaway in it.

I want my books to show British East and Southeast Asian children that someone who looks like them is a central character. I want to show non-Asian readers what it's like to walk in the shoes of someone else. It was important to me to show Chinese people in a positive light, especially at this time where there is a lot of negativity towards East Asian and Southeast Asian people because of Covid-19. East and Southeast Asian children are being called names and told that Chinese people “eat bats”. My own children have experienced this in school.

One thing I would like to ask teachers is to make space for those children, check that they are okay. When I was a child, I experienced racism at secondary school and sadly internalised it. I didn't like myself. I felt there was something wrong with me. I don't want the next generation to feel like that.

And secondly, be mindful of language to describe East Asian and Southeast Asian peoples. The word ‘Oriental’ is outdated and shouldn't be used and there is a movement to remove it from various places. I'm from Birmingham – I'm not ‘Oriental’, I'm a Brummie. **TP**



**Maisie Chan is the author of *Danny Chung Does Not Do Maths* (£6.99, Bonnier Books UK)**



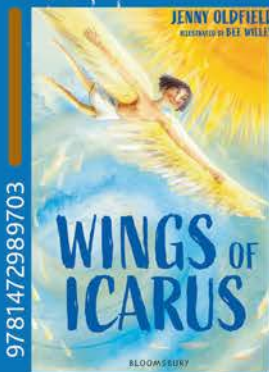
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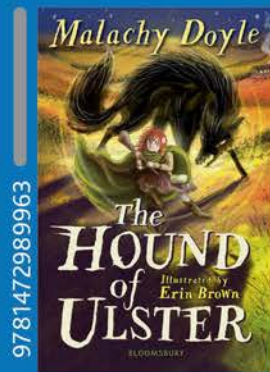
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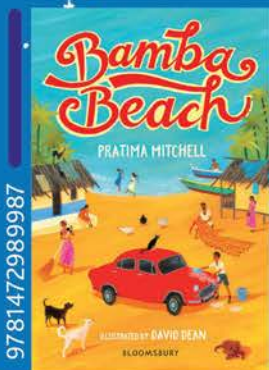
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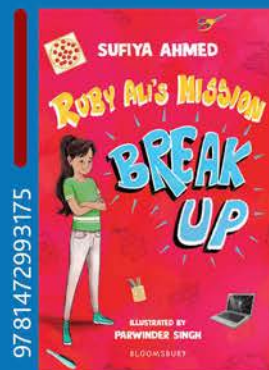
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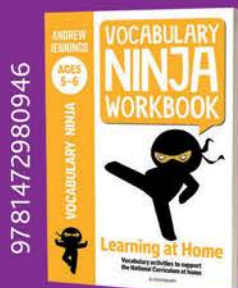


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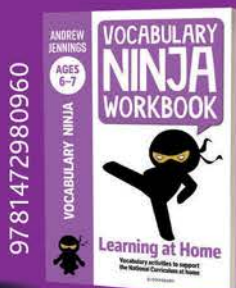
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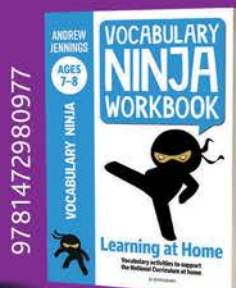
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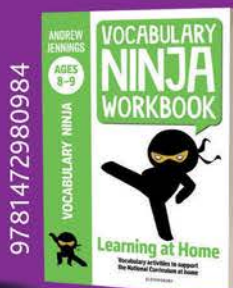
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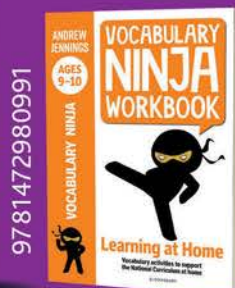
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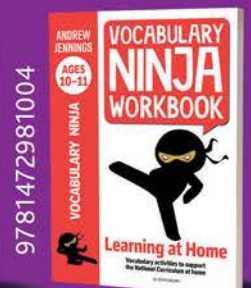
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# 6 steps to better POETRY LESSONS

From limericks to sonnets and everything in between, these tips and strategies could help unlock a love of language in your pupils, says **Sue Drury**

## 1 GET THEM TALKING

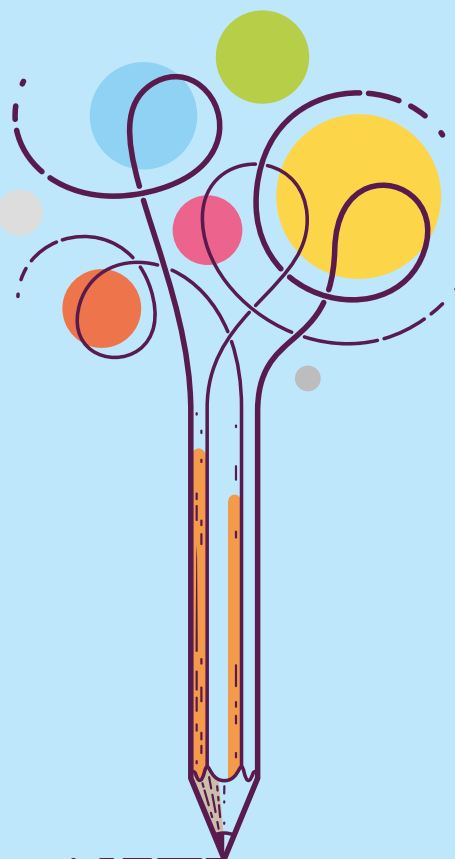
Whether it's part of a guided reading session, or you are introducing a poem to the whole class, do everything you can to whip up enthusiasm for the words you are sharing. Read with joy and expression. Ask questions. Start discussions. Invite debate. And don't be afraid to show when you don't know, or perhaps have learned something from a pupil's observations. You want them to feel that poetry appreciation is often a very personal thing and all (sensible) opinions are welcome.

## 2 SHARE THE CLASSICS

Introducing pupils to classic texts is, of course, a requirement these days. But that doesn't mean it has to feel like a chore. Embrace classic poems (for example, *From a Railway Carriage*, by Robert Louis Stephenson) especially if you have had limited exposure to them thus far. There is often a very good reason why they have endured.

## 3 ENCOURAGE PERFORMANCE

Poetry is not just about reading the words on the page quietly in your head. It has an important role to play in helping pupils to



develop their speaking and listening skills. Use your lessons as a chance to explore performance poetry. It is well worth watching some examples together if you can find them online (Benjamin Zephaniah's *Talking Turkeys* is ideal – [bit.ly/TPTurkeys](http://bit.ly/TPTurkeys)). Then, once children have got the idea, give them time to rehearse a performance of their own. Encourage them to think carefully about pauses and which words to emphasise, using text-marking methods if necessary.

## 4 FIND THE FEATURES

Use both your guided reading and your performance sessions to take a good look at the features of the poems you're studying. Rhyming patterns are an obvious one that children should be able to latch on to pretty quickly. Nevertheless, there are plenty of others to delve into as well. Is there

a rhythm structure and, if so, how does this contribute to the effectiveness of the poem? Is there any pattern to the verses, such as repeated lines? Have any other sound effects been used, such as alliteration or assonance? What about figurative language?

## 5 FOCUS ON VOCABULARY

Poetry is an excellent vehicle for enriching vocabulary, whether it's learning new words or making better use of the ones we already know. While you are sharing poems with the class, take time to check that they really understand what each word means. Don't just assume they do, because you could be in for a big surprise. Take a few moments to pick unfamiliar words apart – perhaps by examining their constituent elements such as roots, prefixes and suffixes – as this may give pupils a head start in understanding other, linked words later on. Most importantly, encourage them to use these words in their own efforts to show that they really have learned how to use them.

## 6 PICK A STYLE

There is a bewilderingly wide range of styles in the world of poetry, from highly structured forms to some, like free verse, that follow no rules whatsoever. At this age, it is probably best to give your pupils a style to follow – such as a limerick or acrostic poem – rather than allow them to experiment with anything as unconstrained as freeform. And while you might not expect your class to match Shakespeare's extraordinary linguistic dexterity and invention, there's no reason why the older ones at least couldn't attempt a sonnet or two themselves. **TP**

### 4 FANTASTIC KS2 POETRY RESOURCES

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

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 [plazoom.com/blog](http://plazoom.com/blog)

# Book CLUB

*We review five new titles that your class will love*



***Daisy's Dragons***  
by Frances Stickley  
(£6.99, Studio Press)

This stunning picturebook, featuring whimsical illustrations from Annabel Tempest, is a beautiful ode to the confusing rollercoaster of emotions that comes with being a child.

Daisy has six dragons... but only she can see them. Brightly coloured and each representing a different feeling, the dragons and Daisy must learn to coexist together, even when one or two of the dragons grow so big they completely squash the others! Rhyming verse and colourful double spreads will entice children, whilst also relaying an important message about accepting feelings of all kinds, even if they're a bit tricky to handle sometimes.

An easy-to-follow and entertaining look at how competing feelings rise up within the same person, and how we can learn to control them as we grow, Daisy's Dragons is a lovely tale that we can all relate to.



***Kate on the Case***  
by Hannah Peck  
(£6.99, Piccadilly Press)

Cats, clues and croissants... intrigued yet?

Meet Kate, reporter-in-training, and her enterprising sidekick, Rupert the mouse. When Kate and Rupert embark on a steam-train journey with Dad to go and visit Kate's very clever Arctic explorer Mum, they meet a whole host of characters, from award-winning gymnast Miss Bonbon, to haughty Madame Maude and her unpleasant (and rather stupid) cat, Master Mimkins. But appearances are not always as they seem – when a mystery breaks out aboard the train, Kate uses her skills in 'Special Correspondenting' to get to the bottom of it.

Beautifully illustrated by the author in black, white and orange, the book also includes pages from The Special Correspondent Manual by Kate's reporting hero, Catherine Rodriguez, on how to write an engaging newspaper story. A tale of following your dreams and learning not to judge a book by its cover, the pages are bursting with ideas for classroom activities.



***The Tindims of Rubbish Island***  
by Sally Gardner and Lydia Corry  
(£6.99, Zephyr)

Join the Tindims – Skittle, Pinch and Brew – on their adventures around Rubbish Island. Made from stuff thrown into the sea by the Long Legs (humans, to you and me), Rubbish Island is a testament to the Tindims' incredible ability to recycle. Their motto is 'rubbish today, treasure tomorrow', and until recently it has helped them build everything from their houses and clothing, to Bottle Mountain. But now, the Long Legs have thrown more plastic bottles into the sea than even the Tindims can handle, and more fish than ever are getting trapped.

Teach your class about the power of recycling, and the effect of excess rubbish on the sea and climate through this whimsical tale. Easy enough for KS1 children to follow along with, the story also provides ample opportunities for older readers to explore the subject matter.



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## Meet the author

**ABIE LONGSTAFF ON MESSING ABOUT, DIVERSE CULTURES AND MAKING MISTAKES...**



**What made you want to write about storytelling?**

I grew up with story making as part of play. I am the eldest of six girls, and I was

often left in charge of my five sisters. We played a lot of pretend games: we made pop groups, we jumped on the sofa as a gymnastics troupe, we whizzed about the yard in a roller disco, and we were always dressing up the poor dog as a character in our stories. So much of story making comes from messing about; throwing things together to see what will happen, or imagining 'what if?' I wanted to write about that.

**How did growing up in Australia, Hong Kong and France influence your writing?**

Moving countries and schools so many times definitely made me more confident, and able to enjoy diverse cultures and personalities. I had a bit of a mixed education at times, which exposed me to a fair amount of randomness.

**How would you like teachers to use this book in the classroom?**

In a way the book is already a classroom activity. Children can copy Ollie and Suzy, picking up random things and mixing them into a container. From playing like that, I'd like children to learn that anyone could be a writer or creator of any kind. Writers aren't magic. We make lots of mistakes. We often just chuck things into a plot to see what will happen and we have to work on our stories over and over to get them right. I'd like children to know they don't have to be 'perfect' straight away. Mess up your paper. Scribble down all your ideas. Put in something weird, something crazy. Later on, you can edit, you can write up your work neatly. But it's ok to start with a mess. Sometimes the best things start with a mess.

**KS2**



### Listified!

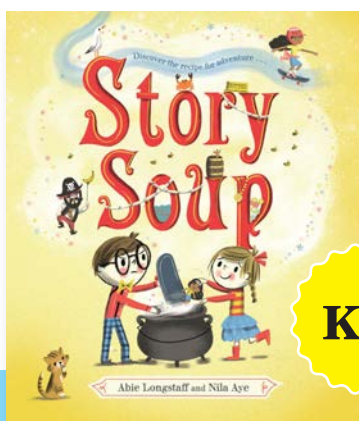
by Andrew Pettie,  
illustrated by Andrés Lozano  
(£18.99, Britannica Books)

Ever wondered what eight of the smelliest things on the planet are? Or the nine weirdest things that have fallen out of the sky? Listified! has the answers. Containing 300 amazing lists, from ten of the brainiest breeds of dog, to five things scientists would need to do to clone a T.Rex, this is the perfect book for inquisitive children that just love to ask 'what if?'.

Creatively illustrated throughout, the latest from Britannica's new reference imprint for young readers, teachers and pupils alike will learn – and laugh – at the facts within, all of which have been verified by Encyclopedia Britannica researchers, so you know you can confidently answer the inevitable 'What?? Really??'.

And if you need any more convincing? Michael Morpurgo has called Listified! 'A treasure trove of fun and fantastic facts'. 'Nuff said.

**KS1**



### Story Soup

by Abie Longstaff  
(£6.99, Templar Publishing)

A skateboard, a princess, ketchup and a purse - all elements that add twists and turns to Ollie and Susie's story soup.

As Ollie tries to concoct a story of his very own, he can't keep little sister Susie from throwing in her own ideas. As they cook up their tale together, the items they find in their house direct the narrative, creating an unusual but entertaining yarn. Featuring a pirate ship and a vampire pony amongst other things, children will giggle along with Ollie and Susie's exciting story, and pupils and adults alike will nod knowingly at the sometimes fraught, but loving dynamic between siblings.

Author Abie Longstaff uses the theory of narrative construction in a fun and engaging way, highlighted by bright and detailed illustrations by Nila Aya, helping young readers understand how stories are made, and maybe even inspiring them to create their own.



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# More than books

A great school library can be transformative,  
but investing in staff training is vital

**RICHARD GERVER**

**A**t the end of 2020 I stepped into the role of president of the School Library Association (SLA). Before taking on this role I was headteacher of Grange Primary in Long Eaton in Derbyshire. In two years I transformed it from a failing school into an acclaimed learning environment. I was lucky enough to be celebrated by UNESCO and won Headteacher of the Year at the National Teaching Awards. After that I went on to serve as a government adviser. So, with a record of success behind me, and in a year of further cuts to UK public libraries, what exactly drove me to want to lead the SLA?

It all stems from one of the most important things I did to transform Grange Primary from failure to success. You might assume that it involved installing a major new learning management system, retraining all the staff or having the school modernised. However, one of the first things I did was to build a state-of-the-art, purpose-built library. Staff received full school library CPD training. The result proved my belief in the transformative power of libraries: great libraries make an impact.

In an age of the digital divide, 'fake news' and a growing attainment gap, school libraries have never been more important, and yet

one in eight schools don't have one at all. It has always been my belief that the current perspective on school libraries is too narrow: they are not just about books. There are several evolving purposes of the school library, many of which are not often recognised.

## Visiting new worlds

Of course, libraries were always a place for children to access books; both for reference and stories. From the earliest years, reading allows children to be transported from their world to another.

Between the pages of a book, we can immerse ourselves in the lives of fictional characters or learn about other cultures across the world. Younger children can learn new words and acquire essential skills and knowledge.

Stories are a brilliant way to help children understand the complex sociocultural context in which we live, while also developing other key skills such as communication and language, critical engagement and curiosity; all skills which will help children develop into well-rounded and successful thinkers.

***“School libraries have never been more important, and yet one in eight schools don't have one at all”***





Indeed, according to the National Literacy Trust, children who have fun with reading are three times more likely to have good mental wellbeing compared with children who don't enjoy reading. This is where librarians play an essential role in our schools, but it takes fully trained librarians to do this.

When a library is managed effectively, librarians work with classroom teachers to understand each student's individual needs so that they can help them to find books that are aligned to their reading level, and in turn, ensure they develop a love of reading.

However, believing that libraries are just about reading books is a misconception. They are so much more than books and story time.

## Trusted information

The internet can be a source of valuable learning content, but the volume of information is growing

exponentially and, sadly, misinformation is spreading faster than ever. Outrageous information is usually easy to identify as 'fake', but as the 'misinformation' epidemic grows, identifying fact from fiction is becoming increasingly difficult, especially for younger children. Primary-aged children aren't highly discerning about the information they consume and need teachers and school librarians to play an active role in filtering sources and content.

Teaching children from all socioeconomic backgrounds how to access valid, trusted information from books and online – and to interrogate what they are being told – has never been more important.

## Levelling up

Continuing the SLA's drive for education equity is at the heart of my vision for my time as president. As we focus on the 'levelling up' agenda, I'll be spending my time bringing school libraries

back to the heart of the debate around education. A National Literacy Trust study prior to the pandemic found that one in 11 disadvantaged children in the UK don't own a book of their own, yet children who do own books are six times more likely to read above the level expected for their age, highlighting the link between reading and academic outcomes.

The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the most disadvantaged children has further transformed the gully between the less and more privileged into a deep canyon. The gap in education outcomes between less and more privileged students has stopped, and possibly even gone into reverse.

To address this, I believe that the government should put library funding at the heart of the 'levelling up' agenda. In doing so, we can ensure all children, irrespective of where they live or their family's income, will have free and easy access to books and opportunities to raise their learning levels and aspirations.

It's been interesting to note that with the total funding for British public libraries falling by nearly £20m in the year to March 2020, immediately before the lockdown, they actually faced a rapid increase in demand for their services, which were eventually deemed essential by the government. Libraries, whether in a school or high street, are a great leveller in ensuring everyone, whether or not they have internet, has free access to reading and

learning content.

Most school librarians are already highly trained and skilled. However, others aren't and for some, they were trained several years ago when school libraries were a very different part of a school's infrastructure. At Grange Primary I ensured that library staff received full, updated CPD training so that our library could achieve the vision of being an effective central hub of the school. It's so important that school librarians are trained to drive the transformation of their library.

Of course, it's not as easy as simply investing in some training, but it's certainly an important first step. By helping young people to engage with the joys of reading and training teachers and library staff properly, we can harness the true power of libraries and help the next generation achieve their full potential. Together we can get libraries back to the heart of the debate around education. I therefore invite all schools to work with their local MPs and the SLA to drive the school library agenda. **TP**



*Richard Gerver is a speaker, author and president of the School Library Association.*

 @richardgerver

 @uksla

 [sla.org.uk](http://sla.org.uk)

## TRAINING FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIANS

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Suzanne McCaig,  
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# WHY I LOVE...

## Raintree's Match Funding Scheme

### ABOUT ME:

**NAME:**

Lorraine Newbey

**JOB ROLE:**

Class teacher and curriculum coordinator

**SCHOOL:**

Charville Academy is a primary school in Hayes, Middlesex, with around 490 pupils.

**FAVOURITE FEATURE:**

Huge selection of books perfect for the curriculum



### TALKING ABOUT: RAINTREE'S MATCH FUNDING SCHEME

#### “ How did you hear about Match Funding?

Our school received an email advertising Raintree and the Match Funding offer. This just proves how important it is to read emails and not just delete before checking, as good offers could be missed! We were delighted with the offer, as it meant our school could provide classes with a range of books to support the curriculum and ensure book corners include a range of books to inspire our children to love reading.

#### “ What has been the effect of getting more books in your school?

We have recently developed a new and exciting curriculum for our school, which we hope inspires a lifelong love of learning, and reflects the diversity of our school. The books we have purchased through Raintree's Match Funding Scheme have been used to support each lesson in all subject areas. From English and history to PSHCE and geography, we want all our lessons to support the development of children's reading and comprehension skills while also developing the children's subject knowledge and understanding of the wider world.

#### “ What difference has it made?

Since developing our new curriculum and having such a range of

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interesting and high-quality texts to support lessons, we have found children are much more engaged in lessons and so many of the children seem to have a renewed love of books. In conversations, children are able to use a wider range of vocabulary and pupils are able to participate more easily in discussions and debates. Parents have also noticed the new passion for the curriculum that can be seen among our children, as many children are now regularly sharing the exciting knowledge and skills they've learned with people at home.

#### “ What advice would you give to schools looking to make the most of Raintree's Match Funding Scheme?

I would encourage other schools to apply as soon as they can and then spend time looking at the huge selection of books on offer, so that they can choose the best books for their pupils and curriculum. In our school, we got a range of subject leaders to select books to ensure we gained a range of high-quality books. It was brilliant to have the cost of our large order matched by the scheme, meaning we could purchase even more books for our school.

### WILL IT WORK FOR YOU?

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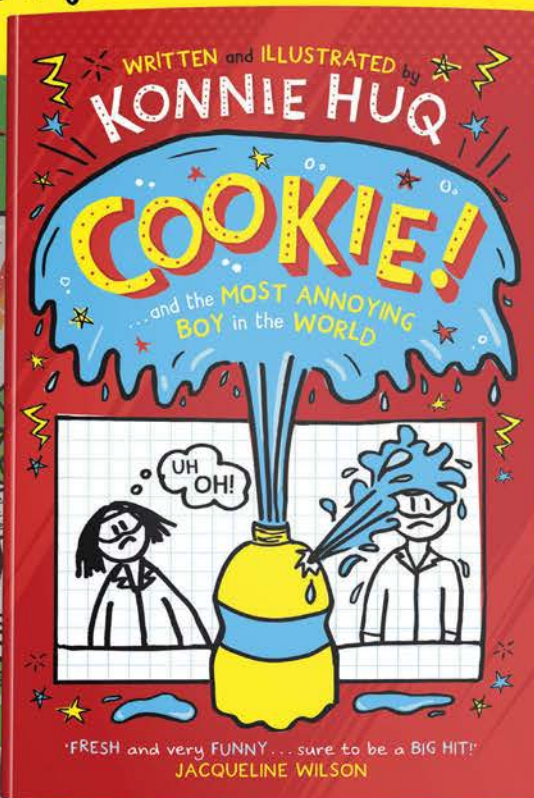
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# Think INSIDE THE BOX

Success criteria for descriptive writing can be restrictive for pupils – but they can be easily expanded

JAMES DURRAN

**W**hen approaching a piece of writing, pupils are often given 'success criteria' in the form of a list of features which the writing 'requires' in order to be successful. However, colleagues and I have been working with primary schools to develop an alternative to listed success criteria for writing, which we call 'boxed' or 'expanded success criteria'. It is very easy to adopt, and teachers have been finding that it can transform how writing is discussed and approached in the classroom, with an immediate impact on the quality of what pupils are producing.

Current criteria are tied explicitly to particular curriculum and teaching 'objectives', and often include technicalities such as full stops and commas; may include features such as metaphors, adjectives for description, varied sentence openers and so on; and they tend to include grammatical or cohesive devices, such as time adverbials, subordinate clauses or relative pronouns. These ingredients can be useful, such as reminding pupils of things they might do to make the writing effective, reinforcing learning, providing a ready checklist for self and peer assessment, and so on. But teachers are increasingly

aware of their potential drawbacks:

- They can promote a 'writing-by-numbers' approach, in which writing becomes a performance of features rather than a coherent whole.
- They can encourage teaching and task-setting by narrow text type, limiting the scope of what pupils might achieve.
- They are not really success criteria. The success of a piece of actual writing can only be measured by how well it communicates or achieves its purpose for its intended reader, not by whether it contains specified ingredients.
- Feedback – at the end or while drafting and editing – can therefore tend to focus just on whether specific elements are included, rather than on how effective the writing is as a complete piece.
- Together, these interrelated factors can work against pupils' development as real writers, writing for specific, authentic purpose and audiences.

## Why and who?

If pupils are writing a recipe, it is simple and easy to give them a list of components including, for example, ingredients and equipment; numbered steps; time and sequence adverbials; imperative or command verbs. And these components are a useful starting point. But if you then ask children to compare the following two fragments, which each give the same instruction:

**Add Worcester sauce for extra flavour.**

**Slosh in some Worcester sauce to make it even yummiier.**

Suddenly there is much more to consider. Now, questions



## "Grammatical forms should be used for a reason, not for their own sake"

such as: Who is the recipe for?, What do they want and need?, How can we engage them?, and What sort of verbs, nouns and adjectives might we therefore use? come up.

Although this might sound like more work, it is much more interesting for pupils, and is certainly more fun to teach!

It is important to teach about genre and the features of different kinds of writing. But as teachers we know that when pupils move on from thinking just in terms of text type, their writing opens up, with much more potential for richness, variety and authenticity. For example, an account of a trip – perhaps in the form of an article – is not just a 'recount'. It can be engagingly descriptive, will have elements of entertaining narrative, is likely to involve explanation, and even elements of persuasion and argument. Similarly, a brochure about a town should be much more than a 'non-chronological report'. Depending on the intended audience, it will modulate between and blend elements of description, narrative, explanation, instruction and persuasion.

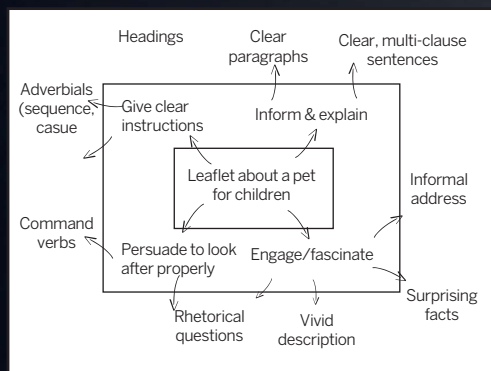


FIG. 1

When considering how to help a pupil develop a story opening, it is easy to start listing technical or stylistic devices.

**Billy went into the house. He looked into the kitchen. He saw a big dog. The dog ran to him.**

But the first question to ask this child is not 'Could you use some...?' or 'Can you add in...?' It is, simply, 'What sort of story is this, and how do you want the reader to feel?' Then things move forward.

### Boxed criteria in practice

Traditional 'success criteria' are really the wrong way round.

They define 'success' in terms of the presence of ingredients, not in terms of the actual point of the writing.

Boxed criteria keep the ingredients, but link them explicitly to purpose and to the reader. It's really that simple. In the middle, pupils put what type of writing they're doing and its intended audience; outwards from this are the intended 'effects' on that audience, or what the writing is meant to provide for its readers; outwards again are the ingredients – the features which might help to achieve these things.

For example, a guide for children to looking after a chosen pet animal might be planned like fig.1.

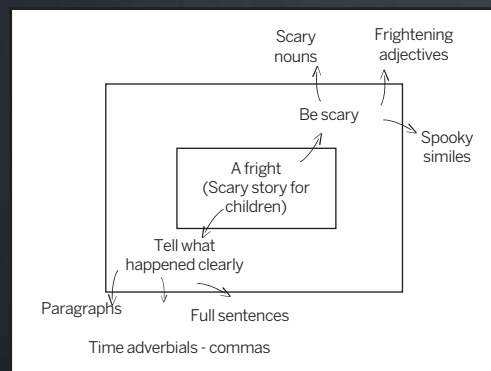


FIG. 2

The boxed success criteria for the story above, about Billy entering the house, might look like fig.2.

Note that in this example the ingredients are themselves described in terms of their impact: 'scary nouns', 'frightening adjectives' and 'spooky similes'. Grammatical forms should be used for a reason, not for their own sake.

You might create these boxes yourself and give them to the children. It is more likely, however, that the class will construct them together through discussion, and reading and picking apart examples. Ultimately, there is nothing radical or intrinsically innovative about this method. It is just a visual device for focusing the thinking of teachers and pupils on what writing is actually about: communication and effect, not just the performance of skills. **TP**

### GRID IDEAS

Pupils might have their own grid in their books, which can be easily replicated through a simple template. (You can create this in a Word document and keep it handy for the children to stick into their books). Or, you might decide to have a big class one on the wall. This can be drawn onto the whiteboard, or constructed as part of a classroom display. A fun way to mix up the boxes is to print out examples of sentences in texts you like and stick them up on the board with an image.

Either way, it can be a dynamic, evolving thing, added to and adjusted as ideas are developed and shared through the planning, drafting and editing stages of writing. This is a tool which can live with the piece of writing through its stages: from reading and exploring examples, to planning and assembling ideas, drafting and editing, proof-reading, all the way through to publication and reflection. And of course, at every stage, the starting point for teacher, peer or self-assessment and feedback is not a list of ingredients, but whether the writing is achieving what it is meant to achieve.



*James Durran has been an English, media and drama teacher for 24 years, and a local authority*

*advisor for seven.*

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

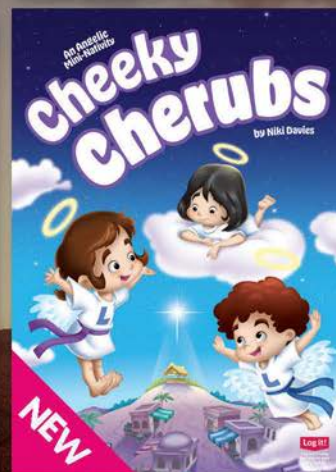
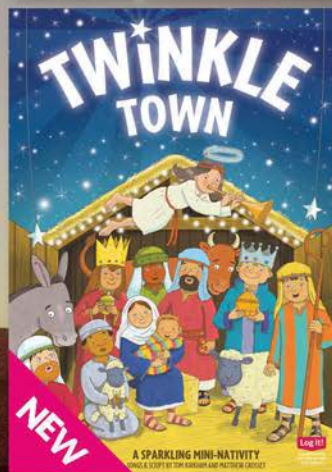
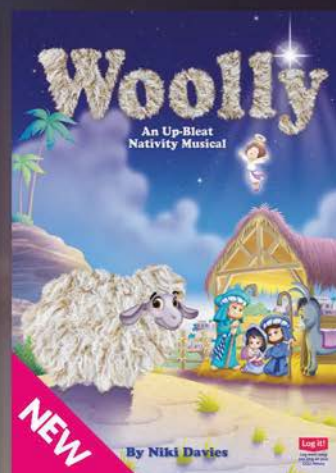
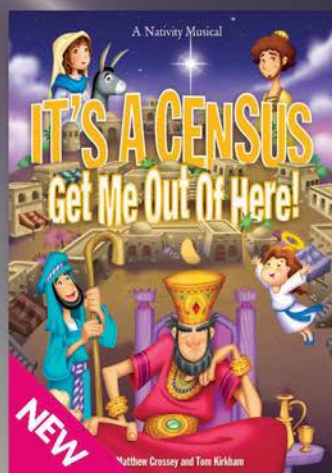
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# SWAP THE SWIPE

Although tech is a great tool, we need to make sure it doesn't impede pupils' reading ability

CATHY PROLE

**T**echnology saved the day during lockdown. When they couldn't come into the classroom, children were able to keep learning thanks to the creative use of digital activities, online quizzes and smartphone apps. Schools also relied heavily on tools such as video conferencing to keep in touch with families and provide support for home learning.

Children who had access to digital devices became adept at using them for researching topics, working on projects and interacting with their teachers and classmates. Technology kept everyone entertained too, when get-togethers with friends and extended family were not possible. And as teachers, parents, leaders and support staff, we've all had to step up the pace and become more tech-savvy.

## Online vs offline

The extent to which children have risen to the digital challenge and adapted to the virtual world is impressive. However, since pupils have been back at school, as teachers we've noticed that the move to remote learning has affected their ability to read longer pieces of text.

A diet of video clips, sound bites and memes may have boosted digital literacy, but has it dampened offline literacy?

Swiping from one visual stimulus to the next is a very different activity from sitting in a quiet corner with a book, and children are finding it difficult to concentrate on longer

stories or more complex written content. The issue has only been worsened by Covid restrictions keeping the libraries closed for extended periods of time and putting a stop to book sharing.

The problem is that if pupils

can be gradually increased.

Starting with fifteen minutes of reading followed by a break, you can then build this up as the child becomes more used to focusing for longer periods of time.

highlighter pen and challenging them to find particular words in a piece of text. Then ask them to summarise a paragraph they have just read. It's also useful to get pupils to scan and skim short pieces of text before helping them consolidate these skills by moving on to longer extracts of writing.

## Speed read

Silent reading is an important skill for learning and for life, but slower readers can easily be discouraged, especially if they are used to accessing visual content at the tap of a screen. However,

***"It's amazing how children's enthusiasm for reading grows when we encourage groups of pupils to talk about books"***

are unable to read longer pieces of text, it will be more challenging for them to access learning in other subjects as they progress through school. Without good reading skills, children may find their learning in the arts, sciences and humanities is held back. If they don't develop a habit of sustained reading, they could also miss out on one of life's great pleasures – the enjoyment of a good book.

To encourage them to spend time on the passage they are reading, try giving each pupil a

## Manageable chunks

When children have become accustomed to consuming content through a fast-paced information feed, long blocks of text can look rather intimidating and it's all too easy to give up at the first hurdle.

It's a good idea to break content down into manageable chunks which





it's not always easy to spot if a child is having difficulties reading alone. One of the tools we use at school to see beneath the surface of reading ability is software that follows a child's eye movements as they read. The technology from Lexplore Analytics analyses how long a child's eyes rest on one word, and how quickly their eyes move forwards and backwards across a series of words.

If the eye movements show a child's eyes are resting a long time on a particular word, or frequently moving backwards while reading from the screen, this flags up a risk of reading difficulties. The technology helps us see which children may need additional interventions to help them improve their reading speed so they can sustain reading for longer.

### Shared enjoyment

It's amazing how children's enthusiasm for reading grows when we encourage groups of pupils to talk about books.

Asking children to tell us all about their favourite books is a great way to bring new ideas to the class. When a child recommends a book to their friends, it is a very powerful endorsement of the book indeed.

Activities such as paired reading with time built in for discussion about the themes can prompt children to start questioning facts and enjoying stories together. As the world opens up, we are seeing more opportunities for children to get involved in library reading challenges, book fairs and competitions. It's also making it easier for us to get parents involved by suggesting ways to get their children excited about reading with projects they can work on at home and at school.


Children's technology skills have taken a great leap forward over the past year and a half, and we're keen for them to retain


their new expertise. By making reading engaging, accessible and fun, we can make sure children build their stamina for sustained reading too. **TP**





*Cathy Prole is deputy head at St Michael's C of E Primary School in Flixton, Manchester.*


### TOP TIPS FOR SUSTAINED READING:

 Give children content in different formats, for example facts about dinosaurs from an online source, some images on a tablet and a dinosaur story book.

 Make timed reading fun by getting the children to silently read a short story or poem for fifteen minutes, then spend the next fifteen minutes acting out the story in groups.

 Ask each child in the class to name a favourite book, and then ask them to say in one sentence what they liked about it.

 Write the titles of everyone's favourite book on the whiteboard and conduct a quick survey to see how many people have read each one.

 Hold quiet reading sessions in different places around the school, if possible, such as in the library, the classroom or a peaceful spot in the playground.







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# Does spelling STILL MATTER?

Demanding accurate spelling isn't 'elitist' – it's a skill that every pupil can learn with the correct support

**ZAHARA CHOWDHURY**

**T**he University of Hull recently announced that students will not be marked down for poor spelling, punctuation and grammar – calling it 'elitist' – in a bid to provide a more inclusive assessment system for all students, regardless of their background. What's problematic with this decision is the implication that students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those for whom English is an additional language need this policy to achieve well. However, it's not correct spelling that creates this prejudice. Rather, the university's decision associates spelling with academic achievement. As someone who was an EAL student, has headed up a pretty successful English department and taught several pupils labelled with 'EAL', correct spelling isn't 'elitist' – it's an education every child should be entitled to and a skill every student can learn.

Spelling shouldn't hold people back, but confidence in the skill can enable and support success in the future. Whether it be an email, job application, reading a book or writing an article, accurate spelling and written communication skills do make a difference.

I remember a lesson where I was teaching students speech writing. One child picked up on a spelling error in my piece. We discussed whether it mattered that I'd spelled something wrong, with a bit of banter around my credibility as their English teacher. They decided, quite rightly I think, that it did matter. It's not about being a self-proclaimed Shakespearean prodigy or about policing pieces of work: accurate spelling is a part of written communication and signals attention to detail.

However, that's not to say that spelling is the be-all and end-all either. In its guidance for GCSE English Language, Ofqual states that students must use "accurate spelling and grammar". Some of my pupils and their parents would have been disheartened and angry that this element of the exam was non-negotiable. However, as an examiner, I always reassured them that the word 'perfect' isn't

used in the mark scheme and examiners always look to award – not take away. My students were excellent at so many things; they excelled in other assessment objectives and spelling didn't need to hold them back.

Ultimately what we need to address are our attitudes to literacy: it should absolutely be taught in every classroom, but it shouldn't be the focal point of any success journey. Unfortunately, teaching around spelling can sometimes be prejudiced – I've seen it from colleagues and even parents. Research by the Children and Families Policy Research Unit suggests that children with dyslexia and those on the autism spectrum who struggle with reading, spelling and literacy skills feel anxious, stressed and sad. Red pen marking, calling out students for poor spelling and undermining their intelligence based on one element of literacy is unfair. Teaching spelling should in no way belittle students. It should be done to simply improve written communication.

As a writer and former English teacher, of course spelling matters – it's a major part of my work. With the digital world opening up an array of possibilities for future generations, I can see why spelling may seem like a secondary skill. That's only if we look at it in isolation though. We need to 'level up' our teaching of literacy skills in the wider

context and relevance of the digital world. We also need to remove stigmas associated with spelling. Perhaps this is an area exam boards, schools and even workplaces need to revise if they are to be wholly inclusive.

Literacy is an important set of skills and it's not as simple as saying it does or doesn't matter anymore. Typos and a few errors here and there shouldn't be a game-changer, but they do matter and I can't imagine a world where we just ignore correcting them. Instead, we need to address why so many children struggle with spelling, the teaching and learning of literacy and how we tackle a variety of problematic attitudes and perceptions in this area – not just at school, but in the wider working world too.**TP**



*Zahara Chowdhury is a former teacher. She is a writer and founder of School Should Be, a platform where students, parents and teachers can*

*have conversations that matter. Listen to her education podcast at [anchor.fm/schoolshouldbe](https://anchor.fm/schoolshouldbe)*

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# UNLOCKED

*– Stories of hope from Tiny Owl artists in lockdown*

Travel the world and learn about inspiring stories of lockdown with illustrators from the UK to Iran, Canada and more...

**CAREY FLUKER HUNT**

**I**n this beautifully-designed collaborative picture book, fifteen Tiny Owl illustrators from around the world reflect on their experiences of being 'locked down' at home, and show us how they coped.

From Iran to the UK, South Africa to Italy and Portugal to

Canada, their words and pictures capture a moment in history and draw attention to the things we share, rather than our differences.

Thoughtful, diverse and packed with realistic recipes for joy and hope, this is a book to treasure – not only as a record of a momentous year, but as an inspiration for the future.

From watching the world with new eyes and appreciating an unexpected moment of calm, to putting on your party hat for an impromptu performance, there's a wealth of ideas in these pages to kickstart explorations and discoveries, and the format encourages participation and sharing.



## Sharing and talking about the book

This is a book that can be shared in lots of ways. Dip in and out, getting to know one illustrator at a time and allowing each spread to prompt discussion, or read the whole book in one sitting, so that themes and connections can emerge. Leave copies in your book corner to encourage independent exploration, or work in small groups with adult helpers, allocating specific questions to each group.

Whatever your approach, you'll have lots to talk about, so leave plenty of time for bookchat!

Here are some questions you can adapt to suit your class.

- What do you like most about this book? Is there anything you don't like?
- Could this book be improved? How?
- What are the people in these pictures doing? How many different activities can you spot?
- Which of the activities in this book did you do during lockdown? Which activities are new to you?
- What's the most surprising lockdown activity you can find in this book? Why did it surprise you?
- How do you think the activities shown in this book made these people feel?
- How are the people in these pictures connecting with each other? How did you keep in touch with friends and family during lockdown?
- If you were describing this book to someone who hadn't seen it, what would you say?
- Why do you think this book is called *Unlocked*? Is it a good title? Why/why not?
- Lots of different people created these pictures, and they all have different styles. Which style appeals to you most? Can you say why?



- The publisher has called this book *Stories of Hope*. What does hope feel like, and why is it important? How do you think the activities shown in this book made these people feel hopeful?
- Did you learn anything new during lockdown?
- What do the pictures show us that isn't mentioned in the text? What do we learn from the words rather than the pictures?

## Activities Shared experiences

Talk about your school-day routine. What do you do on the weekend? Construct a timeline showing a weekend day at home. What happens, and at what time?

Choose activities that often/always happen, rather than describing a special day.

Compare your timelines. What do you have in common? We all sleep, have breakfast, clean our teeth... What differences can you spot? Some of

us play outside while some of us watch TV...

What do you have in common with the people depicted in this book? Think about what they're doing, the objects in their homes, what they're eating or drinking, what they're imagining, their pets, their emotions... What are the differences between you?

Working with someone you don't know well, discover three things you have in common, and three differences. Share what you've discovered with your class.

## What fills you with hope and joy?

What can you see in this book that makes these people feel happy, optimistic or hopeful? Talk about wellbeing. How can we stay well, and help others to stay well, too? Why is it important to be hopeful, and do things we enjoy? What fills you with hope and joy? List your ideas, then choose your favourites. Draw or paint a beautiful rainbow. Write HOPE AND JOY on it, then cut it out. On the back, draw pictures

## Take it further → → →

### INVESTIGATING KEYS

Collect lots of keys in as many materials, shapes and sizes as possible. Handle them, talking about what you can see, hear, feel and smell as you do so. Ask someone to describe a hidden key and try to guess which one it is. Hide keys and hunt for them, or draw round them and see how quickly you can match the actual keys to their outlines.

What do your keys weigh – individually or all together? How long are they? Sort them from longest to shortest, or heaviest to lightest.

Draw your keys freehand from observation, or cover them with paint and print with them.

Collect words to describe your keys, and write about them.

Choose one key. Where did it come from, and what does it unlock? Share







representing the ideas on your list. Hang your rainbows where they can move, so people can see both sides.

## Lots of different activities

What did you do during lockdown? Pool your memories, then write each activity on a separate card.

Use labelled hoops to sort your cards into categories, eg: Exploring outdoors, caring for others, keeping fit, eating and drinking, being creative, keeping in touch, learning new things, playing, relaxing, and helping out.

Record this information on a table (or as a Venn diagram). What does it tell you about lockdown activities in your class? eg: *We did lots to keep fit but didn't go outdoors much, or, We mostly relaxed by watching TV.* Write about what you've done and what you've learned. Display alongside your tables/diagrams.

## Where in the world?

The illustrators in this book come from many different countries. Explore their biographies to discover where each person lives. How many countries are represented? Find them on a map.

What do the pictures tell us about these countries? What can you learn from the library, or by searching online? Does anyone in your school or community come from one of these countries? Could they tell you more about it?

## Windows

The endpapers feature windows belonging to many different people. What can you see? What's going on? Where could the windows be? Are the people interacting? How?

Ask yourselves questions about these people – who are you? How old are you? Are you related to anyone else in this picture? What's your job? Make up names for them, and invent 'back stories'. Pretend you're one of the people and introduce yourself. Draw a window, then add some busy characters. Display your drawings 'block of flats'-style on a wall, and write about your character(s).

## Try a new activity

Tiny Owl's illustrators came up with lots of ways to learn from (and enjoy!) their lockdown time. Why not try some of their ideas?

- Growing plants and creating an indoor garden

## Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *The Book of Hopes: Words and Pictures to Comfort, Inspire and Entertain* edited by Katherine Rundell, Bloomsbury
- ❖ *At The Same Moment Around the World* by Clotilde Perrin, Chronicle Books
- ❖ *Stuck Inside* by Sally Anne Garland, Sunbird Books
- ❖ *Welcome to Our World* by Moira Butterfield and Harriet Lynas, Nosy Crow
- ❖ *In Every House on Every Street* by Jess Hitchman and Lili la Baleine, Little Tiger
- ❖ *Home* by Carson Ellis, Walker
- ❖ *What We'll Build: Plans For Our Together Future* by Oliver Jeffers, HarperCollins

- Discovering green spaces close to home
- Imagining a café (with a menu and loyalty card)
- Hugging a tree
- Closing your eyes outside and listening intently
- Making kimchi (and inventing new ways of eating it)
- Making music and singing together
- Planning special celebrations
- Inventing ways to show we care



**Carey Fluker Hunt** is a freelance writer, creative learning consultant and founder of *Cast of Thousands* ([castofthousands.co.uk](http://castofthousands.co.uk)), a teachers' resource featuring a selection

of the best children's books and related cross-curricular activities.

story ideas, then tell or write a story about your key.

## DALE BLANKENAAR'S MAGIC BOX

The fabulous box at the end of this book is designed 'to keep you safe' and nurture your imagination.

What can you see in this picture? If you could enter this box, what would you hear, smell and touch? How would you feel?

Put differently-textured fabrics and other materials in a box and invite children to explore them via touch alone.

If you were making a magic box, what would you like people to hear, smell and see? How would you like them to feel? Draw a picture of your imaginary box, and present your ideas to your class.

Work together to create a shared model that represents your best Magic Box ideas by filling an old aquarium or display case with wonderful colours, textures, objects, pictures and words. Eg: Drawings of fun things to do; models you've made; paintings representing your emotions; scraps of textiles and other materials; found objects; words

and phrases on bits of coloured card.

What would it be like to enter your magic box and explore it? Discuss, then write about it.

## 'SHARING FOOD, STORIES, SUPPORT AND HOPE'

Dunja Jogan talks about sharing 'food, stories, support and hope'. Could you share these things, too? How?

Plan and organize a Covid-safe way to celebrate the work you've been doing, and bring people together to share food, stories, support and hope.

# Humanities SPECIAL

## INSIDE THIS SECTION



Why we should include the non-religious in religious education



How to use timelines in KS1 history



Using the 'worldview' approach in RE to help children understand others' points of view



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## POWERFUL GEOGRAPHY: *A curriculum with purpose in practice*

**Mark Enser's** new book aims to empower teachers to design and deliver an effective geography curriculum

**I**n *Powerful Geography: A curriculum with purpose in practice*, experienced teacher Mark Enser breaks down the core elements of curriculum planning for geography and provides subject-specific guidance.

Suitable for subject leads in primary schools, the book explores both the purpose of the geography curriculum and its various applications in practice. Part one examines the role of the school in society and shows the place that geography occupies within it. Part two is a practical guide which illustrates how to put the theory of curriculum purpose into practice.

Below is an extract from *Powerful Geography's* introduction, courtesy of Crown House Publishing and Mark Enser.

### "Anything is geography."

These three words defined the thinking around the geography curriculum when I started teaching in 2004 and, for a while, this seemed hugely exciting. Geography is such a broad discipline that we could – we were told – study anything in our classrooms, put anything into our programmes of study, at least until we had to prepare for an exam specification, and we could call it geography. And so we did. We would create units on the geography of crime in which pupils would consider how different stakeholders felt about a crime that had taken place and, as a result, develop empathy, or study the geography of sport and plot the location of Premier League football stadiums and, as a result, relate the subject to pupils' interests.

They could study the geography of fashion and learn about the deplorable conditions of sweatshops





and, as a result, hopefully change their shopping habits. What mattered wasn't the content but the result of studying it.

The problem is that once we decide that "anything is geography", it starts to become clear that therefore nothing is geography. If geography is the development of empathy, the study of things familiar to pupils, and an attempt to make them more conscientious consumers, then what unites it as one subject? How do we define this subject? As I will describe in this book, our subject became lost as it was turned into a vehicle to deliver learning around a range of social issues – according to political priorities – and soft skills to prepare pupils for the needs of an imagined 21st century. Although you could see elements of this in a range of subjects, I think it was a particular issue in geography because it is an unusually messy discipline.

Geography, as a field of study, has a long history stretching back at least as far as the ancient Greeks and the scholar Eratosthenes, who originated the term, coming from the title of his book *Geographica*. However, as an academic university discipline its history only reaches as far back as the 19th century, and much of its expansion occurred in the early 20th century as a way of providing geography teachers to schools. This adolescent subject is still testing its boundaries and seeking to define its role (something which we will discuss further in Chapter 2). As it has gone through this

period of reflection it has become too easy for it to be led astray by those who would use it to further their own ends.

These years of confusion are a huge shame as geography has the potential to be a truly powerful subject. An understanding of the planet that we call home – how it works, how human and physical processes interact and lead to change – can transform those who study it and open up new vistas from which they can view the world.

## ***"This adolescent subject is still testing its boundaries and seeking to define its role"***

It is this notion of powerful geography that I wish to explore in this book, building on the idea of powerful knowledge developed by Michael Young and of GeoCapabilities developed by David Lambert and others. I hope that this book will be a practical guide to developing a curriculum with a clear purpose behind it – a purpose which is carried out in practice in the classroom. I will argue that a powerful curriculum needs a clear purpose driving it. Without this

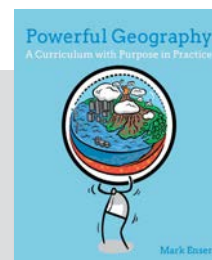
clear purpose we will once again get led off into the territory of "anything is geography". The first part of this book will therefore consider the issue of purpose by looking at the role of the school in society and then showing the place that geography occupies within it. We will then consider the history of our subject so as to better understand where we stand today and look in more detail at how we lost sight of geography in the geography classroom. The first part will conclude by discussing how the concepts of powerful knowledge and GeoCapabilities can help us to find our way again.

The second part is a practical guide which illustrates how to put this theory of curriculum purpose into practice. It explores the steps which must be taken to create a powerful geography curriculum by deciding on content and places to be studied, putting the components into a sequence and then using all this to do geography. It will also discuss the extent to which we need to consider the future and respond to the concerns of the wider world when planning our curriculum. It is worth stressing at this point that this book is not just for heads of department and subject leads. The curriculum is not created by one person writing out a programme of study but by each and every teacher in the classroom. The word curriculum derives ultimately from a Latin word describing the route of a race, a journey. It is, excitingly for us geography teachers, a map. It is the individual teacher who takes their pupils on this journey and

so it is the individual teacher who must take responsibility for understanding their map, especially as they will inevitably alter the route as they teach, finding new tangents to explore and bringing in examples and references from their own lives, interests and experiences. A curriculum is created many times over: set out by national bodies, interpreted by subject associations such as the Geographical Association and Royal Geographical Society, written by individual school departments, and then created again in the classroom as the teacher brings it to life. **TP**



*Mark Enser has almost 20 years of geography teaching experience, and is head of department and research lead at Heathfield Community College, as well as a specialist leader of education (SLE) and evidence lead in education (ELE).*



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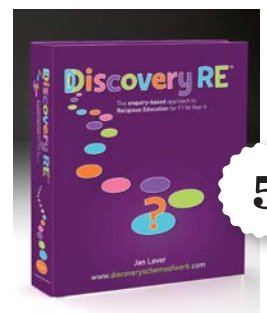


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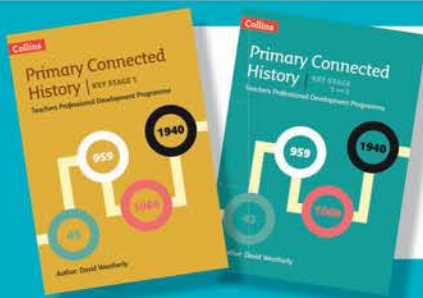


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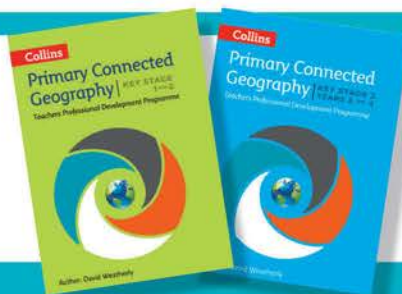
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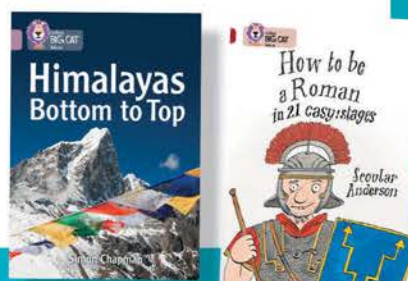
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# *Including the* **NON-RELIGIOUS** **IN RE**

Teaching children about non-religious views such as Humanism is just as important as traditional RE, says **Luke Donelan**

**T**oday, over half the population of the UK (and over 70% of young people) describe themselves as ‘non-religious’. However, space for pupils to explore the beliefs, values, and aspirations of these people has historically been severely limited. That’s changing, and an ever-increasing number of schools are making their Religious Education provision more inclusive by including non-religious worldviews (it’s not just good practice – it’s also the law). The most common non-religious worldview in the UK today is humanism, an approach to life that sees the world as a natural place and believes we can lead good, happy, and meaningful lives without the need for religion.

## **What is Humanism?**

The most common label people think of when considering the non-religious is ‘atheist’. However, it’s not always the best word to use. The label only tells you that a person doesn’t believe in a god. It doesn’t tell you more about that person’s wider worldview. Humanists will be atheists (or agnostic – they’ll accept we can’t know whether there is a god or not). However, a humanist

approach to life involves more than this, and it’s important that we don’t just focus on those things that non-religious people might not believe in.

So what is the core information about humanism that students need to know? I’d normally start by presenting pupils with a humanist understanding of human beings. Where did we come from? What are we? And where are we going? Humanists believe we have natural origins. They believe we have evolved both negative and positive instincts and capacities, and if we put those positive capacities to good use, then we have the potential to lead good and happy lives.

I’d then introduce three core features of a humanist approach to life:

- A belief that the world is a natural place and science provides the best way to understand it.
- A belief that we have one life and that we should each have the freedom to find what makes us happy in the here and now, while supporting other people to do the same.
- A belief that empathy can support us to understand why we should treat others with kindness and respect – we should consider the impact of our actions on other people, animals, and the planet.

I’d also make sure I cover how humanists might live out their

lives. Humanists believe that human beings alone are responsible for making the world a better place (help isn’t going to come from outside humanity). There are many diverse examples of individuals around the world that can be used to illustrate humanist support for freedom, equality, and human rights.

It’s important not to present humanists as anti-religious. There are features of some religions that humanists might

disagree with or oppose. However, humanists will typically be secularists – they believe in freedom of religion and belief and that everyone should be treated equally on such grounds.

## **Stories and ceremony**

One of the best ways to approach teaching about humanism is through stories. For a humanist, what is important is not where a story comes from, but whether





## STIMULI AND SYMBOLS

Humanism lacks the festivals, clothing, dietary customs, and places of worship that might be found in religious worldviews. However, there are many ways you can bring it to life in the classroom. The Happy Human is a symbol shared by humanist organisations all around the world. It symbolises a celebration of being human – a celebration of our human potential and our capacity to be happy. You can also use various objects to help illustrate some of the features of a humanist approach to life. These are not objects that are special or sacred to humanists (like a cross might be for Christians), but they can provide a helpful, visual and tangible hook, on which students can hang some of the more abstract ideas. For example:

1. An artist's manikin, like human beings, is made from natural materials but has the potential to shape itself into what it wants to be.
2. A magnifying glass can symbolise science, the search for evidence, and the pleasure to be found in curiosity.
3. A pen or pencil can represent the idea that we should be free to be the authors of our own lives, rather than allowing others to decide for us how we should live.
4. A love heart can represent the belief that our capacity for empathy and kindness comes from inside us (we evolved as a social animal).
5. A globe symbolises human responsibility for the planet and for each other.



it can teach us something about life that chimes with our understanding of human nature and wellbeing.

The Two Wolves is a story that is thought to have a native North-American origin. In it a grandmother explains to her granddaughter that there are two wolves fighting inside her: one kind and good, the other angry and cruel.

When asked which wolf will win, she replies, 'The wolf that you feed.' The story provides a great way to illustrate the recognition that human beings have naturally evolved both positive and negative instincts and capacities, and the humanist ambition to promote those capacities that support cooperation and happiness, and overcome those that lead to harm.

In Hans Christian Anderson's *The Emperor's New Clothes* you could explore why humanists might admire the actions of the young boy who speaks out at the end of the story. He is someone who looks at the evidence, who asks questions about what he is being told, and is brave enough to speak up.

The *Starfish Thrower* by Loren Eiseley illustrates a humanist belief in human responsibility and that our actions and choices can make a difference. Here *We Are: Notes for Living on Planet Earth* by Oliver Jeffers is a fantastic picture book packed full of humanist messages.

Humanist ceremonies can be another great way to introduce a humanist approach to life. Not all humanists have ceremonies, although they are becoming increasingly popular (there are now more humanist marriages in Scotland than all

types of Christian marriages). A humanist naming ceremony often focuses not on labelling a child as a humanist but on their freedom to decide for themselves what they believe and for others to support them to find their own path in life. Humanist weddings can illustrate the importance of other people in our lives – it is the connections we make in life that can be the source of meaning and joy for many humanists.

They can also illustrate the humanist support for diversity and equality (humanists have carried out ceremonies for same-sex couples for decades). Finally, humanist funerals can illustrate the belief that, although death is the end of our personal existence, something of us can live on in our children, in the memories we leave behind, and the impact our lives have had.

## Inclusive RE

Including humanism in RE, then, provides a great way to support students to better understand how many non-religious people tackle life's big questions and make sense of their lives. It allows them to develop a fuller picture of today's landscape of religion and belief, and gives them a deeper and richer knowledge of how to navigate it.

Free resources to support your teaching are available from Understanding Humanism ([understanding-humanism.org.uk](http://understanding-humanism.org.uk)).

You can also request a visit from a free trained school speaker who can answer your pupils' questions. **TP**



*Luke Donnellan is the director of Understanding Humanism at Humanists UK. He manages their school speakers programme, teacher training and CPD, and the production of educational resources. He's a former primary teacher and freelance philosophy teacher.*

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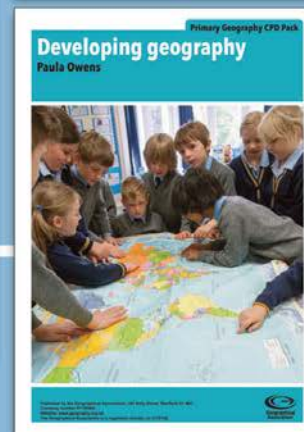
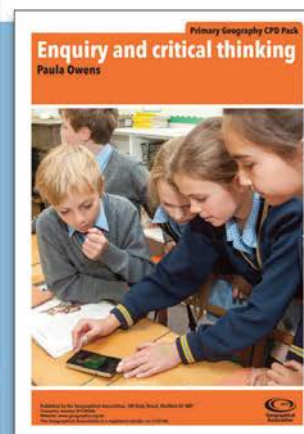
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# LINE IT UP

Using timelines in KS1 can help children grasp context in history lessons

STUART TIFFANY

I am a massive fan of using timelines! If done properly, they can add context and coherence to a history unit of work. But in the past, I remember using them as a quick starter in lesson one to 'tick that box' on an arbitrary assessment spreadsheet. The task involved sequencing a few random picture cards with dates, correcting the sequence without really breaking down the concept sufficiently, then finally photographing the group of children with thumbs up. This adds very little value to the understanding of history (if any) and can reinforce misconceptions.

In Key Stage 1, we need to be mindful of the new EYFS framework and build on the chronological understanding that has been introduced. Children, going forward, should be familiar with history as 'the past' and the fact this is different to 'now'. That gives us a benchmark from which to build. To that end, every timeline I use as a lesson activity or interactive prompt starts with 'now'. It anchors children's understanding and enables my teaching point to start with the fact we are looking back in time at what has already happened. There are also a number of mathematical concepts we need to consider before diving in.

## The big picture

The new concept we introduce here is breaking the past into two differing durations of time. See Figure 1.

The first is within living memory, which is the past 80 – 100 years (NOT the child's memory alone!) and the second is everything further into the past than that. This represents the most basic scale that timelines in KS1 need to include. It allows children to meet the curriculum objective: 'Know where the people and events they study fit within a chronological framework and identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods.' The scale is important to allow children to see how their new learning fits within their existing knowledge. It allows us to teach children that events do not happen in a perfect sequence, there are varied intervals between them and they all happened across vastly different durations of time.

Personally, I'd suggest your scale is in 10s to reinforce the duration in a way that children can understand via counting. This does not need to be a numbered scale. I also colour-code mine instead of using words and numbers to reduce the complexity of the model children are working with.

Hopefully, the purpose of this timeline is clear: to add new knowledge onto the existing chronological framework to ensure the history is represented coherently.

## The individual unit

Once we establish the overall narrative, we can now move on to teaching the new unit material. This could include a wildly different scale – for example from the Great Fire of London through to changes within living memory – covering a century of history. This is where we can zoom in from the big picture into one particular example, looking at the chronology in more depth. The plan here is to set out the sequence of lessons in order to purposefully organise what is being taught. See Figure 2.

This timeline uses a scale that is easy to read and replicates the children's mathematical understanding of place value and counting. The scale is different than the previous example, therefore we need to explicitly teach that or children may not realise. The content here will vary based on the person or event you're teaching about. For the life of a person (in the example below I've used Amelia Earhart) I start at birth and go through until their death. This simplifies the timeline and makes it easier to compare with other significant individuals. For example, the fact Earhart was born in 1897 is represented on the first timeline.

## Using the timelines

This sounds more complex than it is! At the start of the unit of work, use timeline one. This allows for recaps on what the children have learned previously, and is a useful way of introducing comparisons. Amelia Earhart is further in the past which explains why her aircraft is less advanced than the Tim Peak's rocket. People invented the aeroplane before the rocket.

The second timeline is more detailed.



### TOP TIPS FOR USING TIMELINES

- Make them clear and clutter free
- Add a scale to represent the information clearly
- Teach what they represent explicitly
- Use them in every lesson



Fig 1.

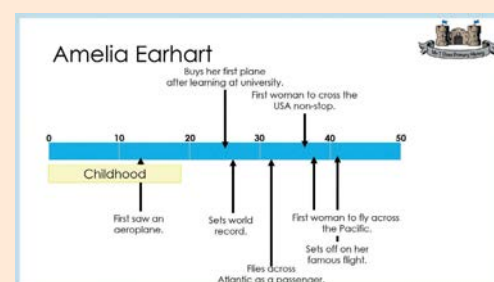


Fig 2.

It contains the individual events from a person's life or a step-by-step of how the event took place. This is what forms the backbone of teaching and needs to be a reference point that the knowledge is added onto. It should be used in every lesson to recap and build on. **TP**



*Stuart Tiffany is a primary teacher, history CPD provider and consultant. He supports schools to embed the historical discipline within their curriculum.*



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# What is the point in RELIGIOUS EDUCATION?

**Katie Freeman** explores the 'worldview' approach in RE, and how it can help children understand others' points of view...

I'm sure that many teachers and specialists have been asked the question 'What is the point in religious education?', but I wonder what your view is. Often there is a misunderstanding that surrounds this subject; some people think that it is teaching children to be religious, whereas others assume that we teach children about a few places of worship, some key beliefs or festivals. The reality is that RE is none of these things.

The last few years has seen many discussions and developments within the

subject. The RE community believes that religious education should be seen as an academic subject that is ambitious, rigorous and exciting for all pupils.

In 2018, The Commission on RE (CoRE) published its final report, within which many recommendations were made about how RE should be taught. One of these recommendations

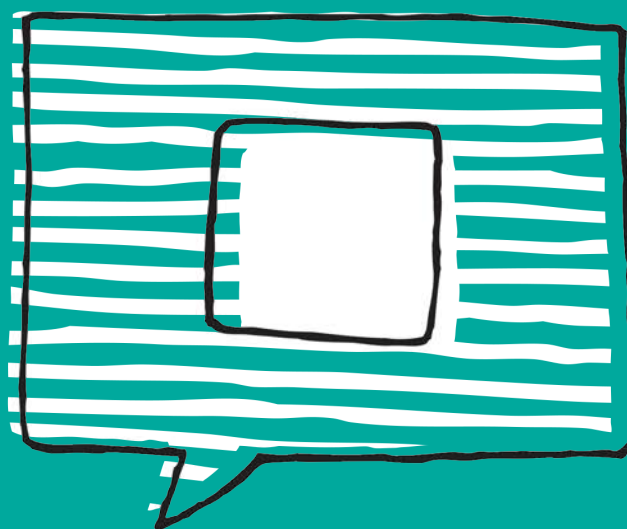
was that teachers should move away from teaching through a world religions paradigm to teaching through a worldviews approach. But what is this approach and how does it make RE challenging and exciting for pupils in our primary schools?

## Understanding the world

Professor Trevor Cooling (former chair of the Religious Education Council) defines 'worldview' as "a translation of the German *weltanschauung*, which literally means a view of the world. A worldview is a person's way of understanding, experiencing and responding to the world."

Worldviews, then, can be religious or non-religious, so when we talk about teaching RE using a worldviews approach, we are talking about teaching children about how different people view the world. It is also important to consider that there is a lot of diversity within these religious and non-religious worldviews. As teachers of RE, we should ensure that this diversity is taught so that our pupils find out about lived experience of people from different religious and non-religious worldviews.

So, what might this look like in a primary classroom? In 2020, Adam Dinham and Martha Shaw visited several schools to find out more about how schools were approaching this way of teaching RE. My school, Bickleigh Down CofE



*"We should ensure that this diversity is taught so that our pupils find out about lived experience of people from different religious and non-religious worldviews"*



Primary School, was lucky enough to be asked to be part of this project. At the time I was teaching a unit of work about science and religion. My Year 5 classes were focusing on the big question 'Science and religion, conflicting or complimentary?'. The children started the unit of work by reading and investigating Genesis One from the Bible. As a class, we discussed the text, drew out key events, looked at unfamiliar vocabulary and talked about what the creation story means for Christians today. Many of the children asked questions such as, When were the dinosaurs made?, or What about evolution?. As a class, we noted down these questions and I explained that later in the topic we would find out about some different views that might help to find the answers.

## Mix it up

I wanted the children to be really familiar with the biblical text so we also studied the work of a local artist, Hannah Dunnett. Hannah creates pictures that have text from the Bible inserted into them, so after showing the children her work, I asked them to choose the text that they thought taught Christians something about the creation story and use this to create their own pictures.

Once the children were really familiar with the text, we thought about how Christians might interpret it. As a class we talked about how some Christians might understand the story literally, whereas some might see it more as a metaphor. We also talked about how people from other religious and non-religious worldviews might understand the link between creation and science. At this point in the topic, I wanted the children to really understand the fact that there is diversity within the Christian worldview so we looked at different theological interpretations of Genesis chapter one. The children found out about

the Reconstruction theory, the Concordist interpretation, the Literary theory and the Literal theory. They spent time discussing these and considering why different Christians may interpret the creation story in different ways.

## Respecting opinions

Once we had considered these different interpretations, the children asked about what a scientist who was also a Christian might think about the creation story. As a class we researched Jennifer Wiseman who is a scientist and a Christian.

talks about giving children 'beautiful' resources, she says that if we give children something beautiful, they will be curious, and this curiosity leads to deep learning. I believe that a worldviews approach offers children opportunities to be challenged, to be curious and to learn creatively.

As practitioners, we know that children are naturally curious about the lives and beliefs of other people, by teaching children about diversity of belief and about the way people live their lives we learn what it means to be human.

This new approach to teaching RE is challenging, it requires teachers to have strong subject

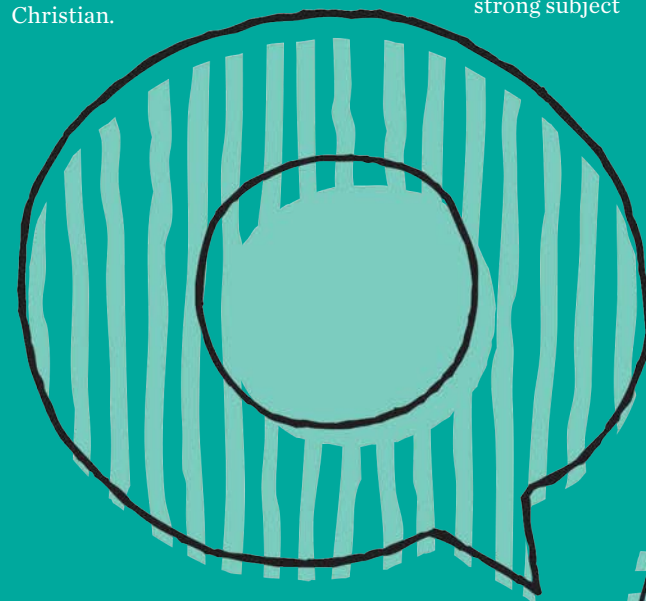
knowledge and for schools to invest in high quality CPD. This is available through organisations such as The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE). I can promise you that if you invest in high quality RE in your setting, your school will be full of inquisitive children who are keen to find out about how different people live their lives.

So, what is the point in religious education? It teaches children about what it means to be human, about how different people live their lives and about how these people come together to form the community in which they live. **TP**



*Katie Freeman is the RE leader at Bickleigh Down Primary School in*

*Devon and chair of The National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE). Katie is also part of the Learn, Teach, Lead Religious Education Project with Exeter Diocese and leads the Plymouth RE hub.*



The children found Jennifer's views fascinating, especially as she said that science teaches some things, but sometimes she just has to trust that God knows things that she doesn't. Towards the end of the unit, we invited a Christian minister, a scientist (who was also a Christian) and a Buddhist into school so that the children could ask them questions. To ensure that the children gained a range of information, I gave them a question planning grid where they had to think of the question and predict what the answer might be. The session was fascinating because the children were able to apply their knowledge and find out about a range of views.

Mary Myatt often







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## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to listen to a piece of music and respond using appropriate musical vocabulary
- How to play crotchets and quavers reading musical rhythm cards
- How to compose and play a four-bar rhythm
- How to perform to a class reading musical notation

# Learn to compose and play African drumming music



Explore listening, composing, playing and performing with **Peter Simons...**

 @thornhill\_ji

Musical composition has been around since the birth of music itself about 40,000 years ago, but the notation of music has only been around about 1000 years. Before that, music was passed on through listening and watching the musician to learn the piece and in turn, pass it on. In this lesson the pupils will learn to develop their musical listening and musical vocabulary; they will learn how to read and write crotchets and quavers; and finally, they will learn how to play their own four-bar rhythm.



## START HERE

To begin, explain you are going to start by listening to Jalikunda. This group is from

Senegal and their music is completely different to the music we are surrounded by in the UK, but it is equally as amazing. It is important that you set ground rules for musical listening so the children are respectful and view this as a live performance, but do allow them to talk and express themselves as they listen with excitement. Ask the children to think how the music is making them feel and why.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZHfmg1b4mc>



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | AN ALIEN ENCOUNTER

Now you have listened to the performance it is time to explore the music in a little more depth.

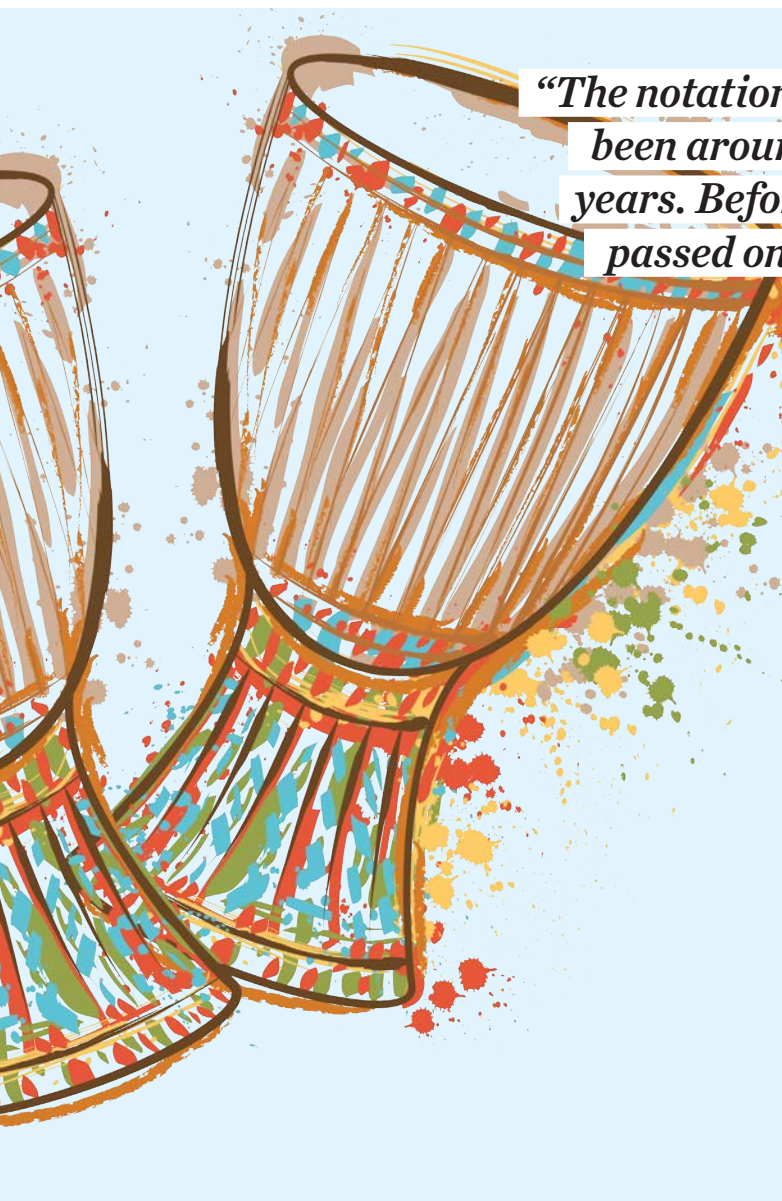
Use the PowerPoint and work through the slides with your class. The children can do this on whiteboards, in table groups, on a worksheet, by putting hands up... how you do this is up to you. The slides help the children to start using musical terminology and explore the elements of music, including instrumentation, dynamics, tempo, pitch and tonality. Once you have worked through the slides, allow the

students to think in more depth as to why the music made them feel the way it did. Pose the question: *Would Mozart have been able to write this down?*

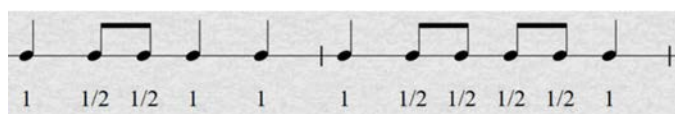
### 2 | HOW TO READ MUSIC

Use the first rhythm card on the PowerPoint and introduce the note, called a crotchet, and explain that each one is worth one beat. Show the children that under the note there is a frog. When you play a crotchet, you can say the word frog to help you. Teacher counts to four and the pupils clap the four crotchets saying frog each time. Then show the next slide which are quavers. The picture is a tadpole, with





**“The notation of music has only been around for about 1,000 years. Before that, music was passed on through listening and watching”**



each syllable worth half a beat, so together they make one whole. As you count to four, the students clap four tadpoles following the rhythm cards. Once the children have this basic concept you can work through the rest of the slides counting to four while the children clap the crotchets and quavers using frogs and tadpoles. If you have them, pupils could also use hand drums, drumsticks or percussion instruments instead of clapping. **Explain to the children that the four beats you count in is called the pulse and this sets the speed everyone plays at.**

### 3 | HOW TO WRITE MUSIC

Draw a straight line on the board. Ask the children if they would like a crotchet or a quaver and then draw these with the note head inside the line. Under the notes it is important to write down the beats.

When you reach four beats, split the music up into bars by putting in a vertical line called a bar line.

Complete four bars of music and then get the children to practice this on their own. Ask for volunteers who could play the composition using

tadpoles and frogs. Now you can start to let your pupils have a go in pairs. Follow the same steps:

- Draw a horizontal line.
- Decide if the children want a crotchet or quaver and write it inside the line with the stick going up on the right-hand side.
- Write the beats underneath.
- When you reach four beats, insert a vertical line (bar line) to split your music up into bars.
- Now play your composition using tadpoles and frogs. You can now allow your children to compose their own music, and play and perform it.

At the end of the lesson, pose the question again: *Would Mozart have been able to write down the piece we heard at the start of the lesson?*

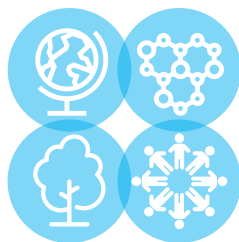
*Peter Simons is a silver Pearson National Teaching Award winner and works at Thornhill Junior and Infant School and Boothroyd Primary Academy in West Yorkshire.*

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Ask students if they can extend their composition and move onto 8, 12 or even 16 bars. This becomes far more difficult to perform with a good sense of pulse.
- Ask if two pupils can perform at the same time. Can they both keep their part going and at the same speed?
- Ask one student to play forwards and another backwards. Can they both keep their part going and at the same speed?
- How do you play your composition faster or slower? Refer back to the count-in (called the pulse) and explain that this would need to be faster or slower to allow the composition to be played at the speed needed.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- **Would Mozart have been able to write down African drumming music?**
- **How do you write music for African drums?**
- **How do you play the music you have written?**



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Understand how our actions can impact on the environment
- Understand how plastics get into the ocean
- Learn plastic is valuable and can be reused if it is recycled
- Discover how plastics are recycled into new products

# Explore how plastic impacts the environment



Learn the impact of littering and how recycling protects our environment with this interactive workbook, says **Kirsty Beasley**

[@Pledge2Recycle](#) [recoup.org/p/389/sort-it-out-recycling-journey](https://recoup.org/p/389/sort-it-out-recycling-journey)

Just one person can make a difference. Children learn from actions – sending them on a plastics hunt in the classroom and sorting the items they find helps them to make the link between the littering alien in the Sort It out story and the plastics we find in everyday use. This lesson takes pupils on a recycling journey – encouraging them to make their own choices and lead the direction the story takes, helping them to learn new facts about plastic pollution, and reinforcing the view that caring for the environment is an important part of life.



## START HERE

Hold up a plastic bottle and ask pupils to discuss with a partner how long they think it will take to break down. Are they surprised to learn that it could take hundreds of years? What impact might this have on the animals and plants that live in the oceans? And how might this affect us? Go on a plastic hunt around the school or classroom. Collect as many plastic items as possible – water bottles, glue sticks, plastic bags, washing up bowls and pens. These items will be used later in the lesson when the children sort their own recycling.



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | AN ALIEN ENCOUNTER

Use the Sort It Out plastic recycling story to show why recycling plastics is so important. The story follows a visiting alien, whose own planet is swamped with litter. He doesn't understand the negative impact of dropping plastic bottles but, by working through the resources, and joining the confused alien on a trip to the beach or park, children will be able to help him to understand why his planet is such a mess.

Once the class have chosen a path (to recycle plastic bottles or not), encourage the children to see what happens if

they make different decisions about what to do with the alien's plastic bottle.

Discuss how these decisions could impact the environment, wildlife and other humans. Ocean plastics can harm marine life; animals can become entangled in fishing nets and plastic rings. Plastic is also accidentally eaten by many species, including sea turtles, which may mistake plastic bags for jellyfish.

Using the plastic items the class found earlier, create a classroom sorting station. You may want to add items like cosmetic bottles and food packaging. Ask the children to explore, describe and discuss the different types of plastic, then sort them into single-use,



**“Sending children on a plastics hunt helps them make the link between the littering alien and everyday plastic items”**



non-recyclable plastics and commonly-recycled plastics like drinks bottles. For single-use, non-recyclable plastics, challenge pupils to write down a plastic-free alternative and stick a post-it note to the item.

## 2 | SORT IT OUT

If the children help the alien to choose the correct path for his empty bottles, they are rewarded with a video about how plastic is processed at a recovery facility. Find out from the class what they

have learned so far about plastic recycling. Record their responses as a class on a flip chart or white board – what have they found out that they didn’t know at the beginning of the lesson?

The video gives a detailed view of all the stages of recycling. Watch the video again and ask the children to work in small groups to record the processes involved. This might be done as a flow chart on a large sheet of paper. Challenge them to use the correct technical vocabulary such as ‘bales’ and ‘flakes’. Groups could then feedback to the class, using their notes, to see if they have included all of the steps involved. This is a good opportunity to encourage children to practise speaking in full sentences using conjunctions (when, after, because), adverbs (next, therefore, then) and prepositions (before, after, during).

## 3 | THE POWER OF PERSUASION

Ask the pupils to think of a slogan that will help the alien’s friends to understand the importance of recycling. How can they convey a clear message which will help the other aliens to stop dropping their plastic waste? Display some of these ideas on the board and discuss how they might persuade the aliens to become better at recycling their rubbish and, in particular, their plastic bottles.

Using these ideas, ask pupils to design a poster or information leaflet for the alien to take back to his planet. Encourage the children to reflect on what they learned during the Sort It Out story and revisit the resource if needed.



## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Read the story Duffy’s Lucky Escape by Ellie Jackson. It tells the story of a sea turtle who has a lucky escape from the harmful effects of marine plastics.
- Ask the children to write a letter to a local MP, explaining why stopping litter is so important and what we can do to help.
- Use drama to act out the conversation that the alien might have when he gets home. How will he explain the problem of littering to his friends and how will they react?
- Get involved in helping to clean up our planet. As a school, take part in a #2minutebeachclean, #2minutelitterpick or #2minutestreetclean. The 2 Minute Foundation is a charity that is devoted to cleaning up our planet, two minutes at a time. Find out more at [beachclean.net](http://beachclean.net)

*Kirsty Beasley is a qualified primary teacher currently teaching Year 6 at Cam Everlands Primary School, Gloucestershire. She is always looking for more ways to recycle at home and in school.*

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Why has the alien never seen so many fish or such clean sparkling water?
- How do you think the alien will help his planet to be a better place to live?
- What could you do to help reduce plastic pollution?



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To use the poem as a vehicle for exploring the natural world and the choices we have in how we shape and engage with the world

- To use rhetorical questions to provoke the reader

- To consider presentation elements of a poem (illustrations; how verse looks on the page)

- To engage with the poem as a performance as well as a written object

# Celebrate National Poetry Day with John Agard



This poem will get pupils excited about poetry and help them explore the natural world, says **Charlotte Hacking**

@CLPE1 [clpe.org.uk/](http://clpe.org.uk/)

National Poetry Day is the UK's biggest mass-participation celebration of poetry, taking place this year on 7th October. By connecting with classrooms, libraries and a large community of partners, our aim is that everyone who uses words can share and enjoy poetry.

Engaging with poetry can have many positive impacts for learning and wellbeing, and National Poetry Day is the perfect time to get started. This lesson is tailor-made to this year's theme of Choice (#ChooseaPoem) by our partner the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education.



## START HERE

- Download John Agard's More Pointless Questions from the CLPE website at [clpe.org.uk/poetry/poems/more-pointless-questions](http://clpe.org.uk/poetry/poems/more-pointless-questions) Read the poem out loud to the children. Give them time to consider the poem themselves and to reflect on what connections they might start making; what the poem makes them think and how it makes them feel.
- Give a copy of the poem to mixed pairs or groups of children, re-read it and allow them time to discuss, encouraging them to mark up and annotate the text with their thoughts and ideas, looking for interesting vocabulary and examples of particular poetic devices.
- Come back together to reflect on and discuss some of their thoughts and ideas. This might include the repetition of the natural object at the start of each stanza, holding your attention on it; the opposition in the two choices presented in each verse; the carefully chosen verbs and adjectives that create such evocative imagery; the use of rhetorical questions to provoke the reader to think or question. You could encourage the children to follow up by recording the most effective examples on word cards or sentence strips to refer to in the main writing activity.



*More Pointless Questions* appears in Agard's 2017 poetry collection, *The Rainmaker Danced* (£6.99, Hodder)

## MAIN LESSON

### 1 RE-READ AND CONSIDER THE FINAL STANZA

Why do you think the poet points out that: 'Putting such questions / to a goldfish / or a bird / or a rose / is pointless I suppose.' What does this mean to you? What thoughts does this final stanza leave you with? Consider this in relation to the title: More Pointless Questions.

### 2 ALLOW THE CHILDREN TIME TO RE-READ THE POEM

Ask them to think about other connections they make with it, text marking and annotating their copy of the



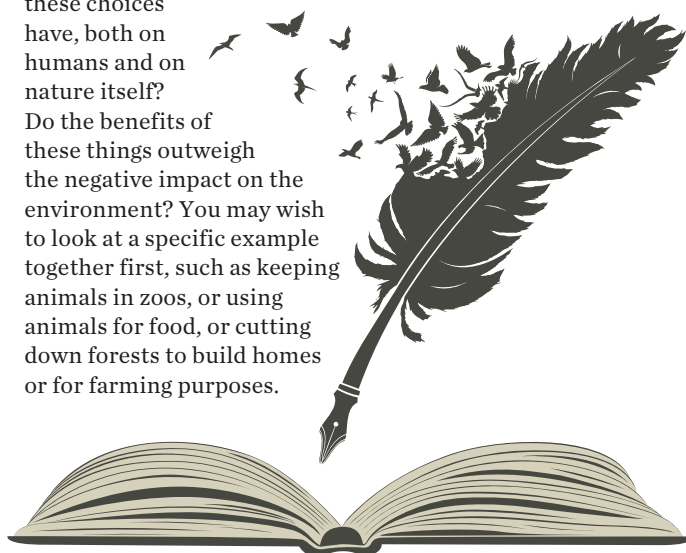


*“Engaging with poetry can have many positive impacts for learning and wellbeing”*

poem to record their thinking. What other elements of the natural world might humans be making choices about? What consequences might these choices have, both on humans and on nature itself? Do the benefits of these things outweigh the negative impact on the environment? You may wish to look at a specific example together first, such as keeping animals in zoos, or using animals for food, or cutting down forests to build homes or for farming purposes.

### 3 | MAKE A CHOICE

Give the children the opportunity to consider a human choice about the natural world that they might



like to share in writing. Think about the elements they found effective in John Agard's work and look at how they can use these elements in their own writing. Let them draft out their ideas together. Ask the children to practise their draft verse out loud and see if it works off the page.

### 4 | SHARE HOW THE POEM LOOKS IN THE FINISHED BOOK

How might they use illustration to emphasise the messages contained in the words? You can see this spread at <https://clpe.org.uk/poetryline/poems/more-pointless-questions>. Give the children time and space to polish up their work, checking spelling, punctuation and layout and adding illustration before typing up or writing out in presentation handwriting. You can then allow children to display their published poems in a shared space for an audience and/or to perform these as an audio or video performance.

*Charlotte Hacking is the Learning Programme director at CLPE. She is an experienced teacher and senior leader who has taught across the primary school age range.*

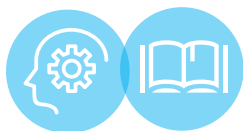
## EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Read and discuss other poems that centre around the human impact on the natural world, such as Roger McGough's Give and Take, Sue Hardy-Dawson's Planet for Sale, Grace Nichols' For Forest or Valerie Bloom's I Asked the River.
- Encourage children to write their own poems about human impact on the environment that bring issues to light to readers and encourage them to consider their actions.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What responses does it provoke in you as a reader?
- Why do you think the poet might have chosen to write the poem?
- What questions does the poem raise for you about some of the actions and choices we make as humans?
- Do you believe these questions are pointless?



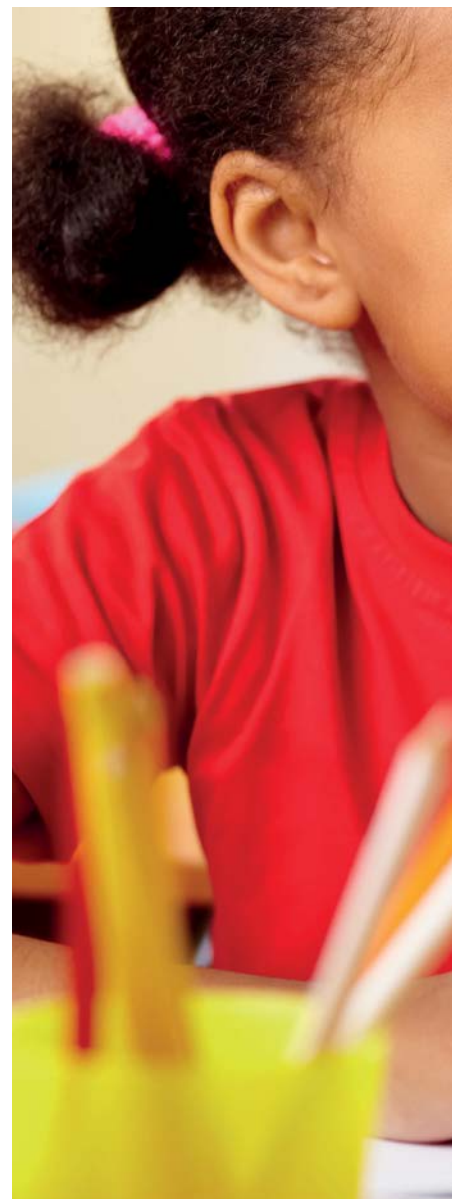
# Make metacognition as easy as 4 x 4



Build metacognitive strategies into a Y3 lesson on the four-times table with this plan from **Jane Downes**

[junipereducation.org](http://junipereducation.org)

Metacognition helps learners plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning. When children identify which strategies are most helpful to them in learning something new, and which strategies don't work so well, they build up a toolkit for tackling new tasks. It's a great step towards helping children become more independent learners. Embedding metacognition into a lesson plan needn't involve huge changes; it's more about tweaking what you're already doing. This lesson plan uses metacognitive strategies to support pupils to learn their four-times table.



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- A range of different strategies for learning the four-times table
- Ways to identify which learning strategies work for them and which do not
- An understanding of how these strategies can help them learn future tasks

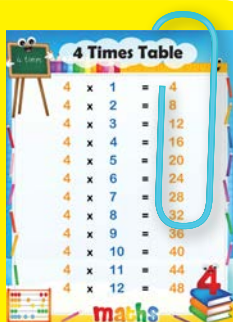
## START HERE

You can build metacognition into the lesson right from the start by introducing the new task – learning the four-times table – and reminding the children what helped them learn previous tasks.

Introduce the topic and give the children a purpose for their learning, for example a tables test at the end of the week.

Begin by asking “What do we mean by the four-times table?” Then ask the pupils for some visual prompts such as groups of four items, Numicon shapes, or marks on a number line.

Then ask the class what helped them remember their two-, five- and 10-times tables which they learned in Y2. They might say counting in steps, working in pairs, or singing songs. This is a metacognitive question which helps children reflect on how they have successfully learned new skills before, and what might help them learn the four-times table.



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | PLAN OF ACTION

This part of the lesson gets children thinking about the different strategies and resources they could use to learn the four-times table.

Show the whole class a counting stick and count up in steps of four. Ask the children what they notice about the numbers – they might say that all the numbers are even, or that they are double the two-times table. Then show the class some number sequences with gaps, for example:

4	8	12		20
---	---	----	--	----

and ask the children to fill in the gaps.

These sequences can go backwards and forwards, and start with different numbers. Go back to the counting stick and this time talk about 1 x 4, 2 x 4 and 3 x 4 to reinforce the multiplication facts.

Then ask pupils “If I forget what 4 x 4 is, what can I use to help me?” This prompts them to think metacognitively about the learning strategies they would use to find the right answer. The children might say you could double 2 x 4, take 3 x 4 and add 4, or take 5 x 4 and subtract 4.

### 2 | TESTING THE STRATEGIES

In this part of the lesson, pupils try out different strategies for learning. Working in pairs, ask the





**“Metacognition is a great step towards helping children become more independent learners”**

children to practice learning the multiplication facts in the four-times tables, and encourage them to work on the facts they already know as well as the ones they find hardest. Give the children ten minutes to practice the facts together using whichever methods they prefer – for instance number lines, number sticks or repeating the facts to their partner.

Set six questions on the board for the children to answer individually, and when they have done this, ask the children to mark their own work. This helps pupils recognise how helpful their learning

strategies were.

Now is the time to introduce a reflection point in the lesson. Ask the children to discuss with their partner how successful their strategies were. Encourage them to use language in their discussions such as “I tried using known facts and this helped me,” or “I tried testing myself but this strategy didn’t help as much as expected, so I will try a different strategy.”

Then tell them to mark each learning strategy with a red dot if they felt it wasn’t helpful and they needed to try another, or a green dot if the strategy has helped and they would carry on using it. This is the monitoring phase of metacognition.

### **3 EVALUATING THE OUTCOMES**

Now pupils have had the opportunity to try out a range of learning strategies, use this part of the lesson to help them understand which method worked best for them. Reassure them that it’s fine to say repeating the facts wasn’t helpful and they prefer to use a number line. Explain that the children should think about which strategies they find successful, and that these might not be the same for the person they are sitting next to.

Then use an exit ticket to ask each of the children what they have learned, what they hope to achieve and how they plan to achieve it. It could be “I am hoping to score 8 out of 10 in the tables test,” or “I am going to learn my four-times table by using a number line.”

Stick the children’s notes up on the wall so they can see them every time they come into the classroom. This will remind them of the strategies they have chosen to use, so they can keep using them at school and at home to practice their four-times table and to learn new skills.

*Jane Downes is a teaching and learning adviser for Juniper Education and has over 30 years’ experience in primary education. Jane taught in primary schools for 10 years across all year groups and she is currently a moderation manager for KS1 and KS2.*

## **EXTENDING THE LESSON**



- Once the children are familiar with the four-times table, write a fact on the board and ask them to identify related facts such as  $4 \times 4$  and  $16 \div 4$ .
- Ask the children to come up with their own four-times table facts. You can challenge pupils at a range of ability levels, from the simpler facts such as  $5 \times 4$  to more complex ones such as  $2 \times 40$ , and then  $2 \times 41$ .
- Then ask the children which strategies they used to arrive at their correct answers, and whether they would use them again when learning a new task.

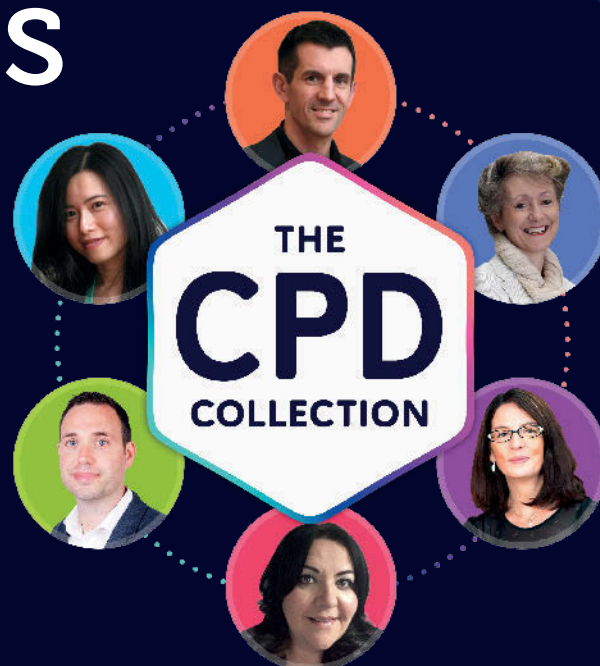
## **USEFUL QUESTIONS**

- Which strategies did you find most helpful for practising your four-times table?
- Are there any other strategies you can think of which might help you to learn times tables?
- Can you think of how these strategies could help you learn new skills too?

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# ANIMAL MAGIC

## 1 The Song of the Tree

by Coralie Bickford-Smith  
(£14.99, Particular Books)

When your debut children's book makes Time Out's 100 Best Children's Books list, you know you're onto a winner. This is the third in Bickford-Smith's nature-themed series and follows the ponderings of a little red bird who wants to find out who keeps her favourite tree company when her flock flies south for winter. Featuring a tactile cloth binding, each page of this exquisite book features striking William Morris-style illustrations in a palette of greens, blues and reds that would be the perfect jumping-off point for a pattern-based art project.

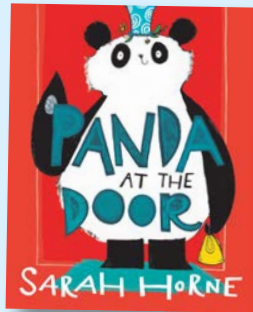


KS1/2

## 3 Panda at the Door

by Sarah Horne  
(£6.99, Chicken House)

Nine-year-old Cal Campbell's dad has gone missing, and worse, the present he left for Cal was, well, weird – a panda at Edinburgh Zoo. What Cal doesn't know is that Pudding the panda, tired of doing roly-polys for the public, has escaped captivity and is keen to help, inspired by her hero Mary Poppins. When the zoo puts out a large reward for the panda's safe return, local bully Spud Spiker cooks up a plan to claim the money for himself. It's up to Cal and his family to keep Pudding safe and sound, learning a few lessons about friendship and love from their new friend along the way.



KS2

## 5 Crocodile Tears

by Roger McGough  
(£12.99, Otter Barry Books)

Crocodile has decided that 'the jungle jangle' isn't for her, so she disguises herself as a banana and stows away on a ship to London to find freedom and adventure. Despite the famous sights, city life on a stone-cold street soon begins to pall. With witty, rollicking verse and poignant letters from the crocodile to her mother, this is a fantastic picturebook for reading aloud. The facsimile notes from croc to her mum provide lots of scope for letter-writing extension activities.



KS1/2

## 2 Fizzy and Bandit

by Sarah Crossan  
(£4.99, Bloomsbury)

Protagonist Fizzy is hankering after a golden dog with a black nose and very curly hair, so when a canine called Bandit matching the description appears in her neighbour's garden, Fizzy stops at nothing to keep him. The book is split up into seven chapters, with full colour illustrations on every page, and while eminently readable, the vocabulary offers just the right level of challenge. You'll find notes inside to help adults reading with children, as well as ideas for activities related to the story.

KS1

### Fizzy and Bandit

SARAH CROSSAN  
ILLUSTRATED BY NICOLA COLTON



## 4 The Last Bear

by Hannah Gold  
(£12.99, HarperCollins)

When master storyteller Michael Morpurgo describes a book as "deeply moving, beautifully told, quite unforgettable," you know to take notice. There are no polar bears left on Bear Island. At least, that's what April's father tells her when his scientific research takes them to the Arctic for six months. But one endless summer night, April meets one. He's starving, lonely and a long way from home. Determined to save him, April begins the most important journey of her life. This moving story is a celebration of the love between a child and an animal, an environmental battle cry and, perhaps most importantly, an irresistible adventure.



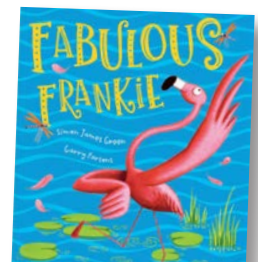
KS2

## 6 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. This funny, feel-good story is perfect for reminding children that it is what's on the inside that matters.

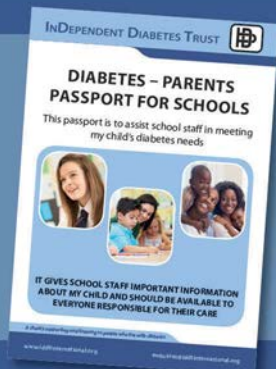
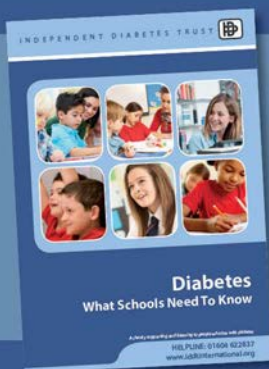
KS2







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# BIG ISSUES

**KS2**

## 8 That's My Willy

Edited by Ruth Owen & Mark J. Sachner  
(£7.99, Ruby Tuesday Books)

This new title – and the accompanying version for girls, *What's Down There?* – has been carefully written in consultation with Mandy Lancaster, RSE trainer for Public Health Cornwall, to give you lots of opportunities to talk with your class about their bodies. The book's humorous tone and cartoon illustrations are a great way to deflect embarrassment – for both you and your pupils – while still taking the subject seriously.



## 7 Ask First, Monkey!

by Juliet Clare Bell  
(£12.99, Jessica Kingsley Publishers)

This light-hearted picturebook has been designed to help Early Years and KS1 children understand consent. Monkey is the best tickler in the world (even his mum says so), but what happens if some of his friends don't want to be tickled? With teacher guidance included at the back, this entertaining story is great for helping young children to understand the idea of personal boundaries.


**KS1**

## 9 Real Superheroes

by Julia Seal (£6.99, DK)

The phrase 'key worker' entered our collective vocabularies back at the start of the coronavirus crisis and pupils will probably have enjoyed clapping for them at 8pm on Thursdays. This charming picturebook from prolific author-illustrator Julia Seal features a diverse cast of characters and celebrates the brave, everyday folk who keep our world turning during difficult times.

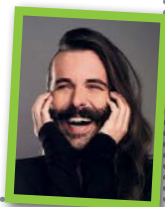

**KS1**

## 10 Peanut Goes for the Gold

by Jonathan Van Ness  
(£12.99, Harper)

Van Ness' first picturebook follows Peanut, an enthusiastic guinea pig who wants to take up rhythmic gymnastics. It encourages children to be true to themselves, even when others don't quite understand. Peanut is also non-binary and uses the pronoun 'they', making this a gentle way to introduce the idea of gender identity.

*Growing up, the things that made me unique weren't always celebrated. I wanted to help inspire kids to celebrate things that make them special.*


**KS1**


## 12 One Hundred Steps

by by Captain Sir Tom Moore (£12.99, Puffin)

One of the best good news stories to come out of lockdown was the incredible fundraising efforts of Captain Tom who, aged 99, began to walk laps of his garden to raise money for NHS Charities Together. This beautifully illustrated picturebook tells the story of key moments from Tom's amazing life, and would be the perfect starter for a project exploring the extraordinary moments in the lives of grandparents or older people in the community.


**KS1**

## 13 Floss and the Boss

by Catherine Lawler & Abigail Sterne  
(£11.99, Routledge)

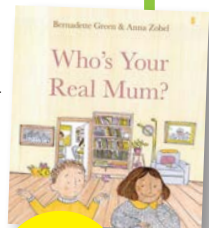
This sensitively written story has been created to help primary-age children understand about domestic abuse and coercive control. Floss is a happy puppy who loves going to doggy daycare, but things change when her mum's new friend, Boss, comes into their lives. Initially he's funny and caring, but after he moves in he starts making up new rules. Schools can also purchase an accompanying professional guide to support the effective use of the book, featuring page-by-page notes, activities and further support.


**KS1/2**

## 14 Who's Your Real Mum?

by Bernadette Green  
(£11.99, Scribe)

Inspired by author Bernadette Green's own daughters, who were often asked "Which mum is your real mum?" by their friends in school, this is a funny, tender story about a young girl, Elvi, who finds imaginative ways to answer the same question about her two mums. It's a thoughtful, playful tale that celebrates non-traditional families and captures what lies at the heart of family – love. Use it as a gentle starting point for your own classroom discussions.


**KS1/2**

## 11 Shu Lin's Grandpa

by Matt Goodfellow  
(£12.99, Otter-Barry Books)

Shu Lin, a Chinese immigrant, is finding it hard to gain acceptance in her new primary school. She doesn't speak English very well and doesn't seem to want to join in with playground games. But when Shu Lin's grandpa comes to school and shows the class his amazing Chinese paintings, everything changes. This uplifting picturebook shows the transformative power of art and imagination and is perfect for helping pupils develop cultural understanding and empathy. Illustrator Yu Rong's delicious artwork is authentic and full of detail.

**KS1**




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Tara Finney, Teacher, Clacton CEVA Junior School

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# FAST-PACED ADVENTURES

## 15 The Secret Explorers and the Tomb Robbers

by SJ King (£5.99, DK)

The Secret Explorers – a diverse STEM supergroup comprising eight children from all four corners of the globe – are banding together to stop the Cairo Museum from closing down by travelling back in time to Ancient Egypt to prevent thieves from robbing treasure from the Pharaoh's tomb. While they're absorbed in the action-packed plot, children will be picking up facts about real-life Pharaoh Khufu and his treasures, ancient Egyptian religion, and how mummies were made. Playful black and white illustrations make the text accessible and keep kids engaged, while a reference section at the back featuring timelines, quizzes, maps and glossaries will help pupils to extend their knowledge.



KS2

## 16 The House at the Edge of Magic

by Amy Sparkes

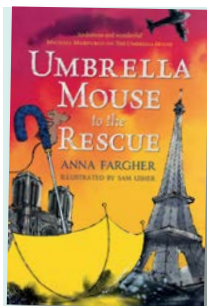
(£6.99, Walker Books)

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. 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**



KS2



## 17 Umbrella Mouse to the Rescue

by Anna Fargher  
(£6.99, Macmillan Children's Books)

This is the eagerly-anticipated sequel to Anna Fargher's award-winning novel The Umbrella Mouse, described by legendary children's author Michael Morpurgo as "ambitious and wonderfully-well achieved". Based on true stories of animals caught up in the conflict of the second world war, our hero, young mouse Pip, is fighting for the French Resistance group Noah's Ark, a secret gang of animals operating beneath the feet of human soldiers. Beautifully illustrated throughout by Sam Usher, this classic-feeling tale will appeal to fans of Watership Down and The Animals of Farthing Wood.

KS2

## 18 This Wonderful Thing

by Adam Baron (£7.99, HarperCollins Children's Books)

Adam Baron, author of best-selling Carnegie-nominated Boy Underwater brings Cymbeline Igloo and familiar friends back to life in a third fantastic adventure. Middle-grade readers will enjoy the playful narrative form as alternate chapters tell the stories of Cymbeline and a new character, Jessica. Whole pages dedicated to one tiny phrase or a repeated scream in different fonts, make this a fast-paced page-turner that keeps you guessing right to the end, when all is cleverly resolved in a heart-warming happy ending. **Recommended by ReadForGood.org**



KS2



## 19 The Midnight Guardians

by Ross Montgomery

(£7.99, Walker Books)

In a wonderful departure for Carnegie Award-nominee Ross Montgomery, The Midnight Guardians sees Col, a wartime evacuee to Derbyshire, experience every child's wildest fantasy – he discovers that his three imaginary friends have come to life. Punctuating this scary and often humorous adventure are cold reminders of the reality of war, including excerpts from the Daily Mail in 1940 and the story of Ruth, a Jewish girl who arrived on the Kindertransport. Montgomery's clever interweaving of make-believe, history, humour and tenderness will have a broad appeal. **Recommended by ReadForGood.org**

KS2

## 20 Monster Doughnuts

by Gianna Pollero (£6.99, Piccadilly Press)

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 people-eating cyclops Mr Harris, she realises she's about to face her biggest challenge yet. Monster profiles, included at the back, would make a great jumping-off point for a piece of writing.

KS2



*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!*







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LEVELLING UP: What does this mean today

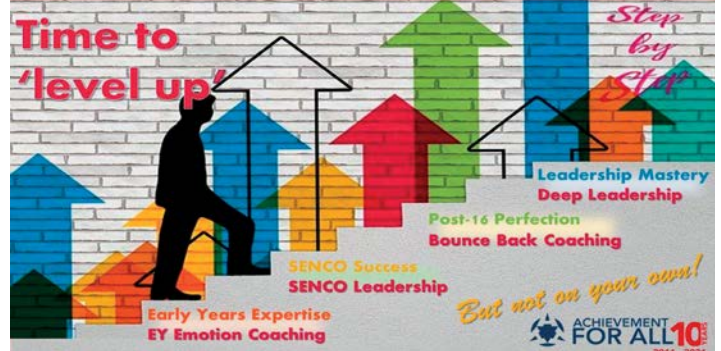
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B 12

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D 18

E 24



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# HAVING A LAUGH



## 21

### The Night Bus Hero

by Onjali Q Rauf  
(£6.99, Orion Children's Books)

This novel from Onjali Q Rauf, bestselling author of the award-winning

The Boy at the Back of the Class, is as surprising and compelling as her previous hit, and likely to be just as popular with pupils. Deftly tackling bullying, homelessness and the redemptive power of kindness, the

story of ten-year-old bully and narrator of the story, Hector, and his mistaken hatred of a local homeless man, also deals enough intrigue to interest older readers. With great pace and humour too, this is an ideal class reader and the extra resources at the end will help to prompt further discussion.

**Review by reading charity readforgood.org**

**KS2**

## 23

### The Worst Class in the World

by Joanna Nadin  
(£5.99, Bloomsbury)

Perfect for fans of Horrid Henry and Kes Gray's Daisy books, this new series follows class 4B who are, according to their headteacher Mrs Bottomley-Blunt, the worst in the world. Children will giggle at the boisterous pupils' exploits and nod knowingly at the little details of school life. Bolstered by Rikin Parekh's chaotic illustrations, this celebration of learning and friendship will cheer children up and get them excited for the new school year.



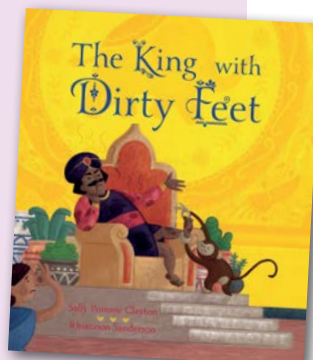
**KS2**

## 24

### The King with Dirty Feet

by Sally Pomme Clayton  
(£7.99, Otter-Barry Books)

There once was an Indian king who hated bath time so much that he never washed. When he demands the land be rid of dirt instead, his servant tries his best to oblige but it's not as simple as it seems... This is a delightful, funny retelling of an Indian folktale, The King and the Cobbler, about the invention of shoes. This is a great story to use to help introduce children to traditional tales. Why not ask pupils to have a go at retelling the story in different ways?



**KS1/2**

## 22

### Anna Gain and the Same Sixty Seconds

**KS2**

by Guy Bass  
(£6.99, Barrington Stoke)



This Groundhog-esque tale from Blue Peter Book Award winner Guy Bass has been designed by publisher Barrington Stoke to be 'super readable'.

Targeting those with a reading age of eight, it features a dyslexia-friendly font, an accessible, clutter-free layout and gently tinted paper to reduce visual stress. Energetic illustrations keep the story ticking along and the language has been carefully selected to ensure unnecessary words won't hinder young readers. At 66 pages, this title is a manageable length, and great for building reading stamina.

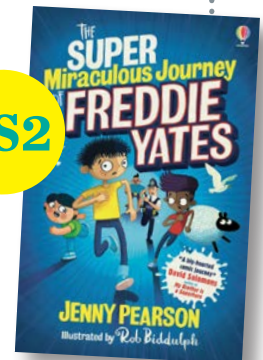
## 25

### The Super Miraculous Journey of Freddie Yates

by Jenny Pearson  
(£6.99, Usborne)

Do you ever look at your class and think you should write a book about all their funny quirks and characteristics? Durham-based primary teacher Jenny Pearson did, and Freddie Yates and his friends are the result. Freddie loves facts, but the fact is that right now his journey around Wales to search for the dad he's never met isn't going to plan. Children will love the funny pants-based humour but this is also a story with real heart that touches on blended families, love, grieving, boys' friendships and the power of kindness.

**KS2**





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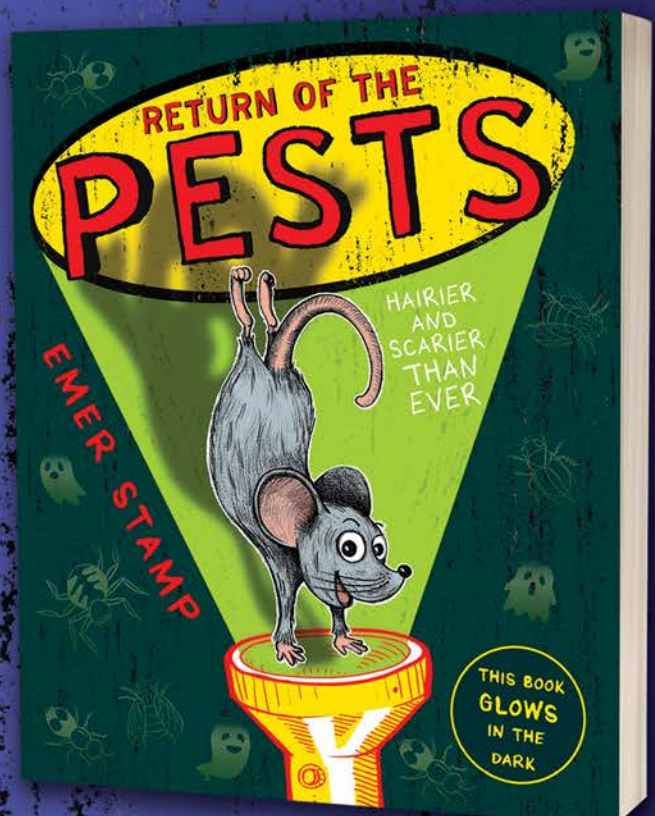
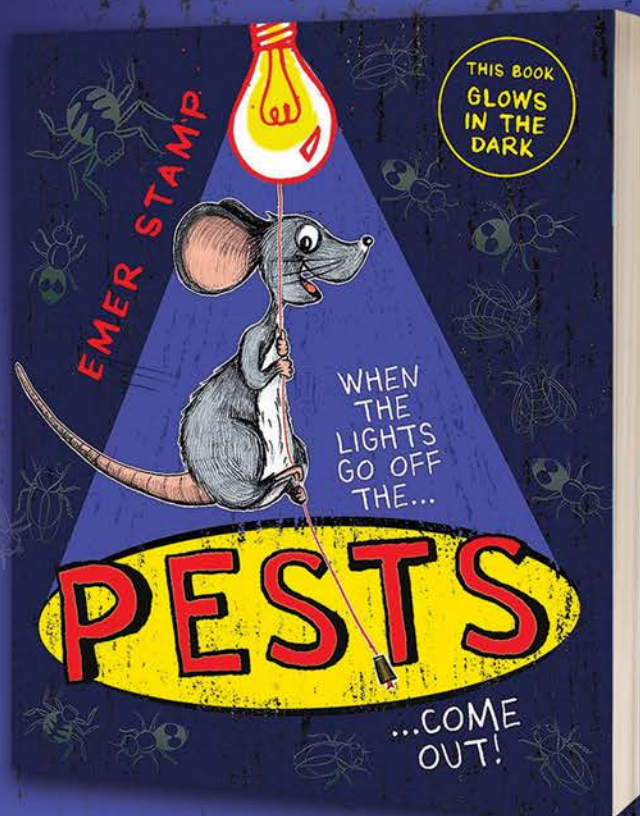
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# POETRY AND LANGUAGE

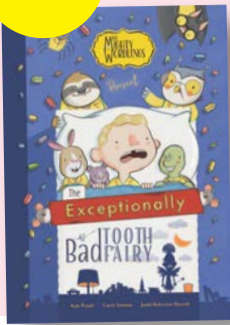
## 26

### The Exceptionally Bad Tooth Fairy

by Kate Woods & Carrie Norman  
(£12.99, Norman Woods Publishing Ltd)

This unique book aims to open children's minds to exciting new words and meanings. On each left-hand page, pupils can read the tale of Jack and his scheme to ambush the tooth fairy. On the facing right-hand page, three words from the story are highlighted, with accompanying illustrations, definitions,

LKS2



synonyms, example contexts and etymologies from a cast of Latin-named cartoon characters called The Mighty Wordlings. Co-author Carrie Norman is principal of Peckover Primary in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, and her language development knowledge shines through here.

## 28 Literally

by Patrick Skipworth (£11.99, What On Earth Books)

Subtitled 'Amazing words and where they come from', this eye-catching picturebook from children's book editor Patrick Skipworth introduces pupils to the rich history and cultural diversity of the English language and reveals the diverse origins of 12 separate words.

KS2

Nicholas Stevenson's painterly illustrations depict both the old meaning of the word and the new one, enabling children to piece together the incredible puzzle that is our language. At the back of the book is extra information about language families, including a large world map depicting where different ones are spoken.



*I hope that Literally will*

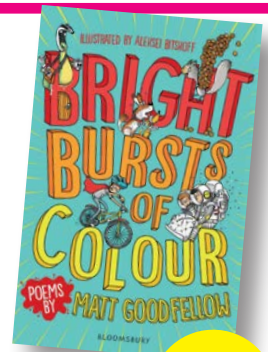
*be an engaging introduction to etymology that makes readers want to find out more about their own languages, whether that's English or something else. In the classroom there's definitely scope for students to research the etymologies of words and draw their own illustrations which reflect both the current meaning and the origin of the word.*



## 27

### Bright Bursts of Colour

by Matt Goodfellow  
(£5.99, Bloomsbury)



KS2

This beautiful poetry book covers topics as diverse as grief, blended families, absent parents, SATs stress and refugees. There's plenty of light relief too, from a slug who thinks it's a badger to a cat with flavoured fur. Author Matt Goodfellow spent ten years in the primary classroom before becoming a full-time writer, and it shows. There are powerfully recognisable slices of school life here. From the 'Chameleon Kids' who keep their feelings quiet to avoid ridicule, to Charlie, who didn't cry when he broke his wrist or when his nan died, but is finally brought to his knees by the reading paper.



KS2

## 29 Stars with Flaming Tails

by Valerie Bloom

(£7.99, Otter-Barry Books)

Funny, thoughtful and perceptive, this joyful and richly varied collection of poems by Jamaican-born poet Valerie Bloom will inspire curiosity and laughter in pupils.

Many of the poems focus on friends, family, empathy and care for others and the environment, alongside Ken Wilson-Max's thought-provoking illustrations. The verses are rich in wordplay and use forms that you can have fun exploring in the classroom, including echo poems, cinquains (five-line poems), riddles and limericks. Bloom is a popular performer in schools and her education experience shines through – this book and the 60-plus verses within have been tailor-made for classroom performance and study.

## 30 Roald Dahl: Words of Magical Mischief

by Susan Rennie (£6.99, Oxford University Press)

Jam-packed full of words, definitions and examples from Roald Dahl stories, this book is designed to help children build confidence and have fun with their own vocabulary and creative writing, encouraging them to invent their own words and create their own spellbinding stories. There's help with using, spelling and saying a rich array of challenging words and formulas for concocting wonderfully inventive new ones.



KS2





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# STRONG MINDS

## 31 A Little Bit Worried

by Ciara Gavin  
(£11.99, Little Tiger)

Coping with new experiences and dealing with anxious thoughts can be tricky for small people. When Weasel gets caught in a scary storm he builds himself a fort to hide in. He's happy hunkering down alone, but soon a mischievous mole with a different perspective comes to visit and teaches Weasel that by looking at things a different way, he can learn to find joy in a storm. This charming text acknowledges self-protective behaviours and encourages a mindful approach to things that are out of our control. The story will be comforting for nervous pupils, but can also be used to encourage empathy in the more confident and outgoing members of your class.



KS1

## 32 Pete Stays Home

by Karra McFarlane (£6.99, Karra McFarlane Editorial Ltd)

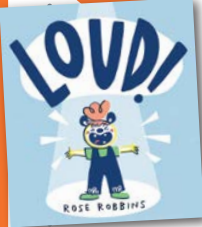
Pete Stays Home follows the story of a little grizzly bear forced to retreat from the forest to his cave until spring arrives and things get back to normal – sound familiar? When the day to leave the cave finally arrives, Pete feels apprehensive but learns that fun times are just around the corner. Author, publisher and editor Karra McFarlane was inspired to write the tale for her three sons who were finding isolation difficult. Order a print copy or download an ebook version from [petestayshome.com](http://petestayshome.com), where you'll also find free downloadable resources.



KS1

## 33 Loud!

by Rose Robbins  
(£12.99, Scallywag Press)



Abigail is frustrated. She can't focus on writing at school. Instead, she scribbles, fiddles and fools around, often getting sent to the calming down room. When it's time for a music class and Abigail discovers that she can't make any of the instruments work, things are about to go wrong again, until a special teacher discovers exactly

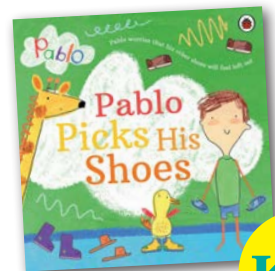
what to do. Written by Rose Robbins, the Waterstones Prize shortlisted author of *Me and My Sister*, this is a sensitive book that celebrates neurodiversity – specifically ADHD and problems with concentration.

KS1

## 34 Pablo Picks His Shoes

by Rosie King (£6.99, Ladybird)

Five-year-old Pablo is on the autistic spectrum and thinks a little differently. He creates imaginary friends who come to life and, together, they figure out how to face tricky everyday situations with confidence. The titles in this series are great for primary classrooms and can be used as an educational tool to teach children to be kind and understand one another. When she was 13, author Rosie King was featured in BBC Newsround documentary *My Autism and Me* and now voices one of the characters in the Pablo CBeebies series.



KS1

## 35 Meesha Makes Friends

by Tom Percival  
(£6.99, Bloomsbury)

Meesha finds making friends tricky. She doesn't know quite what to do, what to say or when to say it, and she struggles to read and respond to social cues. But one day she discovers that she has a special talent that will help her to navigate challenging social situations and make new pals. This is a warm and affectionate look at the joys and difficulties of making and keeping friends, relating to others and finding your place in the world. Download an activity pack from [tinyurl.com/tpmeesha](http://tinyurl.com/tpmeesha)

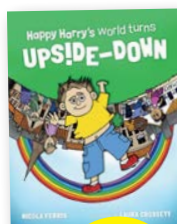


KS1

## 36 Happy Harry's World Turns Upside Down

by Nicola Ferris (£6.95, Bear Press)

Created during lockdown, this timely picturebook follows the journey of a happy little boy called Harry whose life is disrupted by the announcement of a 'sick bug'. Written in rhyme, the book was created to act as a starting point for discussions with children about the confusion and change of the last 18 months. Laura Crossett's cartoon illustrations have largely been left monochrome to allow children to add their own colour to Harry's world. For bulk orders or to purchase an ebook version with worksheets visit [bearpress.uk](http://bearpress.uk)

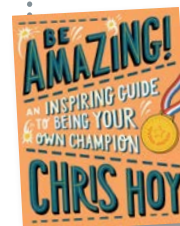


KS1/2

## 37 Be Amazing!

by Chris Hoy (£9.99, Walker Books)

This inspiring book explains how Chris Hoy, the most successful track cyclist of all time, triumphed by having a dream and working hard. Its empowering message will hit home with any child who wants to turn a dream into a reality, no matter how big or small. The stories aim to teach the importance of determination, hard work and positivity, and the inevitability of occasional failures.



*The books's messages apply to any passion, and I really hope this book will*

*appeal not just to keen readers but also those who, like me when I was a kid, need a little nudge every now and again.*



KS2

"Stoooooop," moaned Mr Sloth.

With a quick huff, Sasha stopped.

"What is it now, Mr Sloth?"

**WIN**  
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# WIN

**1 of 10 copies of**  
***Mindful Mr Sloth* by**  
**Katy Hudson!**

**M**indful Mr Sloth is a brand-new picture book from Katy Hudson, author of the bestselling *Too Many Carrots*, which brings new characters and new relationships to encourage children to stop, breathe, and be present in every moment. It follows the character of Sasha, a highly energetic young girl, and her relationship with Mr Sloth who loves to take things slow. This budding friendship is

put to the test by two very different personalities. Can Mr Sloth's mindful ways teach Sasha to slow down and enjoy life? Mindfulness helps equip children with tools to build self-esteem, manage stress, and skilfully approach challenges. Combined with the story's theme of friendship, it is perfect for use with PSHE topics of social awareness and relationship skills, as well as generally to promote wellbeing.

#### About the book

Best-selling author Katy Hudson gently weaves a mindfulness theme into this unlikely friendship tale between an energetic girl and a sloth, encouraging children to stop, breathe and be present in every moment.

#### About Raintree

Here at Raintree, our vision is to improve the world through literacy. With a wealth of experience in meeting the needs of schools and libraries across the UK, we continue to work with educators to provide high quality and accessible resources for readers of all abilities.

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# SUPER SCIENCE

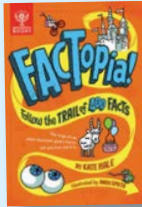
## 38

### FACTopia!

by Kate Hale (£9.99, Britannica Books)

KS2

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, and there's not just one way to read the book. All 400 facts have been verified by Encyclopaedia Britannica, and are presented along with more than 300 witty illustrations and photos. Where will your students' curiosity take them?



## 39

### Is There Life on Your Nose?

by Christian Borstlap

(£12.99, Prestel)

KS1/2



Germ, 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. 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.

## 41

### Every Second

by Bruno Gibert

(£12.99, What On Earth Books)

KS1/2

Every second, somewhere across the globe, four babies are born, 500 pairs of shoes are sold and 8,000 scoops of ice cream are eaten. This lushly illustrated non-fiction book has a simple premise – each page documents a different jaw-dropping statistic about the incredible things that happen each and every second in our world. The clean, colourful infographics are the perfect launchpad for classroom discussions about a wide range of issues, including the environment. The statistics would also be a great jumping-off point for a maths project.



## 40

### My First Book of the Cosmos

by Sheddad

Kaid-Salah Ferrón & Eduard Altarriba (£12.99, Button Books)

Cosmology is the study of the origin and evolution of the universe. Take a trip through the life of the cosmos and unravel some of its mysteries with this ambitious non-fiction title, which begins with the head-spinning question, "Why does the universe bother to exist?". Making an incredibly complex subject fun and entertaining is an art, and the author's teaching experience shines through in his simple, lively explanations. Pupils with a passion for science – and those that love to ask "Why?" – will lap this up.



KS2

## 42

### Earth-Shattering Events

by Robin Jacobs (£14.95, Cicada Books)

Tectonics rip open the earth, vast waves sweep away coastal towns, magma spews from volcanoes and hurricanes lay waste to entire countries – this book by Robin Jacobs explores nature at its most destructive. Clear, coherent explanations break down the science behind phenomena including hurricanes, tornadoes, avalanches, earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes, while informative illustrations by Sophie Williams bring the facts to life. Find a guided reading resource for teachers at [tinyurl.com/tpshattering](http://tinyurl.com/tpshattering)

KS2



## 43

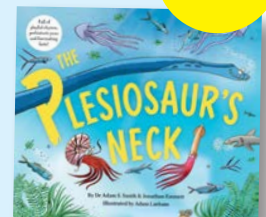
### The Plesiosaur's Neck

by Dr Adam S Smith & Jonathan

Emmett (£7.99, UCLan Publishing)

Poppy is a plesiosaur with an extraordinary seven-metre neck that makes up almost two-thirds of her entire body length – but what is it for? Children can explore entertaining hypotheses scientists have suggested to explain this prehistoric puzzle in this new non-fiction picturebook from world-renowned plesiosaur expert Dr Adam S Smith, curator of natural sciences at Nottingham Natural History Museum, and award-winning author Jonathan Emmett. Playful rhyming text outlines each hypothesis and is supplemented by fact-filled information boxes exploring some of the science behind each suggestion.

KS1



## 44

### What the World Needs Now: Trees

by Cheryl Rosebush (£12.99, Cheryl Rosebush Communications)

This story follows an orangutan called Jefri who lives in Indonesia. The simple prose and vivid illustrations explain why life-giving trees are vital not just for animals, but people too. Endorsed by primatologist Dr Jane Goodall, the book also walks the environmental walk – it's printed on 100% recycled paper and emissions generated from its manufacture are offset. Author Cheryl Rosebush, a climate change specialist, acknowledges that deforestation may cause children to feel worried, but is quick to reassure readers that there is a solution.

KS1





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# FEMALE ROLE MODELS

## 45 Pizazz

by Sophy Henn (£6.99, Simon & Schuster Children's)

It's not easy being a superhero when all you want to be is normal. Our reluctant protagonist, nine-year-old Pizazz, has just moved to a new town, but it's tricky to make friends when you have a daft name, have to wear a stupid cape all the time and have a really embarrassing superpower.

**KS2**



Author Henn is a two-time World Book Day Illustrator and has been previously nominated for the Kate Greenaway Medal and Waterstones Children's Book Prize. This page-turner is excellent for reluctant readers and superhero fanatics alike and features a strong female lead.

## 46 The Perfect Shot

by Eve Ainsworth (£7.99, UCLan Publishing)

Freddie tries to distract himself from the nightmares and guilt about a mistake that led to a man's death during the war, by becoming the unofficial photographer for a female Preston football team. As the girls embark on their first tour, Freddie's on a journey of his own, facing up to his mistakes and taking steps to correct them. The Perfect Shot is a coming-of-age retelling of the historical events leading up to the formation of the real-life Dick Kerr Ladies football team. This is an inspiring story about a group of women who found the courage to play the game they loved at a time when they weren't allowed to join in with professional football.



**KS2**

## 47 Uma and the Answer to Absolutely Everything

by Sam Copeland (£6.99, Puffin)

The heroine of middle-grade star Sam Copeland's new novel, Uma Gnudersonn, is striving for control over the challenges in her life – the death of her mother, the silence of her grief-stricken father, school bullies and an evil corporation threatening to destroy her neighbourhood. Una's many questions are answered when a car crash with a drunken alpaca leads to the discovery of a genius AI named Athena who knows absolutely everything. Much tomfoolery follows, as together they take on the sinister corporation, while helping to restore Una's dad to his normal self.

**KS2**



Recommended by ReadForGood.org



## 48 Queens

by Victoria Crossman (£12.99, Scholastic)

Dive into the wondrous world of queens with this joyous roll call of the resilient, brave and often ruthless women who have ruled across the centuries. Covering a wide range of royals from the obscure to the super-famous, pupils will discover new stories about fierce female monarchs who were expected to take their lead from men but often rebelled to take power.

**KS2**

*There has been a neglected global history running alongside the mainly European history that we are accustomed to in the UK. Cleopatra, Boudicca and Empress Zenobia stood up to the might of the Roman Empire in different parts of the world, showing the vast swathes of land that the Romans conquered and how long they ruled for.*



## 49 Mohinder's War

by Bali Rai (£6.29, Bloomsbury Education)

Set in occupied France during the second world war, Mohinder's War follows 13-year-old Joelle Breton as she stumbles across Indian-born RAF pilot Mohinder Singh (based on a real-life Sikh squadron leader), whose plane has just crashed. It's up to Joelle and her parents, members of the French Resistance, to hide Mohinder from the Nazis and get him back to Britain. There are episodes of violence, so this book may not be suitable for all, but with some background knowledge and adult guidance it makes for an intriguing glimpse into occupied life and the role of Indian soldiers during the war.

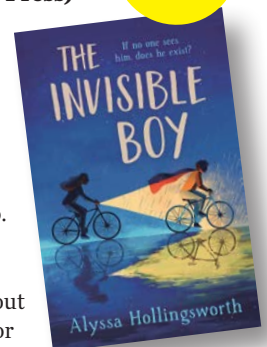


**KS2**

## 50 The Invisible Boy

by Alyssa Hollingsworth (£6.99, Piccadilly Press)

12-year-old budding journalist and Superman fanatic Nadia has discovered a new and dangerous secret: she's lonely. Then something happens that changes everything – she meets Eli, who she suspects may be a superhero. Something about Eli's family is very strange – is her new friend hiding his own secrets? This powerful novel about slavery, friendship and standing up for what is right will appeal to UKS2 readers who enjoyed Refugee Boy or The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas.



**UKS2**

# Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration to your classroom



1

## News-based learning

First News Education combines First News newspaper and award-winning learning resources to provide schools with a complete, news-based learning solution for the classroom and home learning. The last 18 months have shown that the need for young people to have access to a reliable, age-appropriate source of news is more crucial than ever. It is our goal to equip children with an enriched knowledge of the world and the reading, writing and oracy skills they need to succeed. Thousands of schools have successfully embedded First News Education across the curriculum, including in English, PSHE, citizenship, intervention groups, assemblies and debate, and school newspaper clubs. Learn more at [schools.firstnews.co.uk/discover](https://schools.firstnews.co.uk/discover)

2



## Improve literacy

This September classrooms across Ireland will once again hum to the sounds of Jolly Phonics as children belt out the songs, perform the actions, blend, read and write words at a phenomenal pace. Ireland's education system surfs the Jolly Phonics wave, and to tremendous success. Over the past 12 years, Jolly Phonics has become the programme of choice for approximately 90% of Ireland's primary schools, and in the latest PIRLS results for 10-year-olds which compares reading and literacy skills across countries, Ireland came fourth out of 50 countries, and first in Europe. The evidence base says that Jolly Phonics truly delivers, and it can deliver for your students too. [jollyphonics.cpdcollege.com](https://jollyphonics.cpdcollege.com)

3



## Accredited first aid

Tigerlily Training is an innovative not-for-profit, offering high-quality first aid training at the most competitive rates. **First Aid for Schools Courses** meet all Ofsted, HSE and EYFS requirements and are fully monitored and accredited by CTQ. They consistently receive 5\* feedback from learners, who appreciate a modern, friendly and fresh approach to delivering first aid to this essential sector. Tigerlily offers a personalised service, with a dedicated schools and education account manager to support your training needs.

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  - Fully certified for three years
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Email: [nina@tigerlilytraining.co.uk](mailto:nina@tigerlilytraining.co.uk)

## Sports premium

Timotay Playscapes creates inspirational outdoor spaces for schools and Early Years settings. To support the Sport Premium initiative, it has developed a proven range of engaging products that will motivate children and increase participation in sports and help to reduce obesity. Contact Timotay for your free inspiration guide and consultation at [enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk)

4



5



## Diabetes support

The InDependent Diabetes Trust (IDDT) 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](https://iddtinternational.org)





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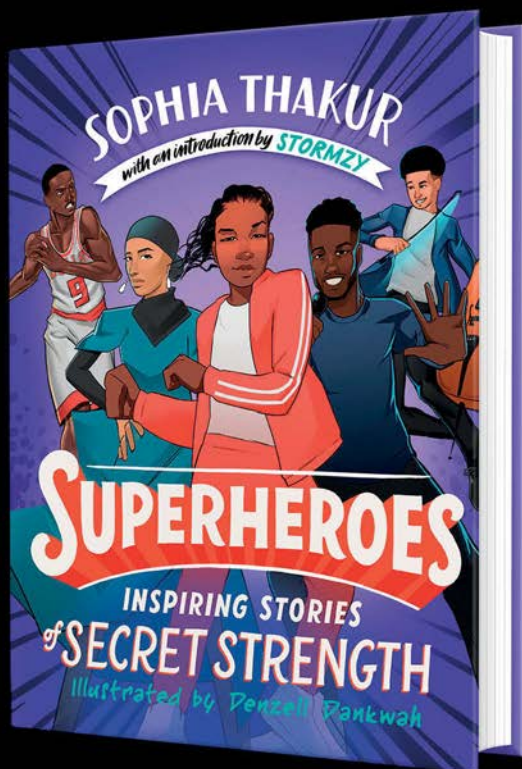
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**SOPHIA THAKUR**  
ILLUSTRATED BY  
**DENZELL DANKWAH**  
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Take the stress out of  
**Anti Bullying week** this year by booking  
a show which comes to you. This year,  
we have three shows touring, which are  
accompanied by lesson plans and/or  
classroom activities.

### Our 2021 shows are:

**"Captain Wonderweb and the Evil Queen"** - KS2.  
Join the Cyber Patrol as they travel through cyber  
space keeping children safe online and in the real  
world.

**"Bully Bot"** - KS1. Bully Bot comes to life to protect  
his best friend from bullies, the only problem is, he  
isn't completely sure what the difference between a  
friend and a bully is.

**"Zorg and Zarg Find Friends"** - EYFS. Zorg and  
Zarg are having problems on their home planet -  
the other aliens just aren't very nice. Can you help  
them discover the secrets of friendship?



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## DRAMA ➔

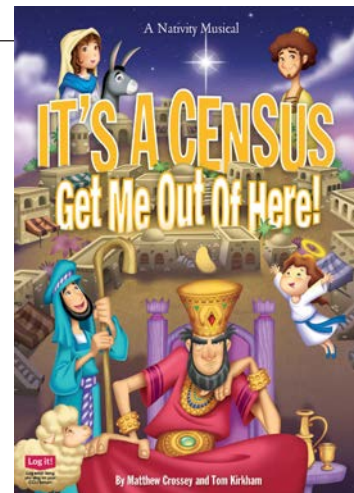
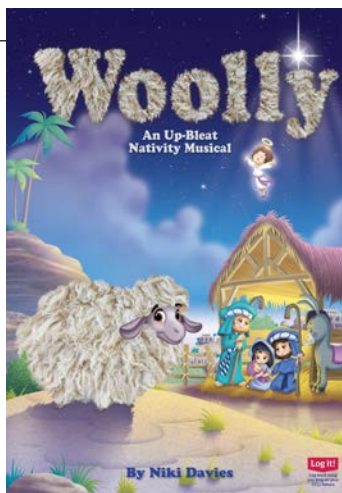
# The Schools Musicals Company

Two sparkling new Christmas shows for Early Years and KS1/LKS2

### AT A GLANCE

- Fully scripted shows for 4–7-year-olds and 5–9-year-olds
- Age-appropriate adaptations of the traditional Christmas story
- Comprehensive booklets including scripts, song lyrics and staging and casting notes
- CDs featuring vocal and non-vocal versions of each song

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



A great weight of responsibility is loaded upon the poor teachers who are charged with staging the traditional, end-of-term Christmas shows. They are expected to put on a heart-warming, tingle-inducing, musical extravaganza, complete with parts and costumes for every child, within the time it takes for some professional actors or directors to 'have a moment'. Given everything else they are required to do as part of their teaching duties, thank goodness there are now quality off-the-peg packages to choose from, such as these latest offerings from The School Musicals Company.

For the younger children (4–7-year-olds), they have just added **Woolly** to their catalogue of award-winning shows. This weaves a narrative about an unusually woolly sheep and his special gift to the new-born king into the Christmas story. Not only is it a simple, sweet, age-appropriate retelling of the Nativity but it also touches upon important issues such as bullying, difference and acceptance. Niki Davies's songs are easy to learn and pleasing to the ear with plenty of the repetition essential for the target age range.

For slightly older children (5–9-year-olds), The School Musicals Company offers **It's a Census, Get Me Out of Here!** Now, don't be alarmed, this goes nowhere near the excesses of the TV show evoked by the title. In fact, it is a reasonably straightforward retelling of the Christmas story. The only real nod to the hit programme is the presence of the two Ant-and-Dec-style narrators. This allows the writers to introduce plenty of light-hearted banter to the proceedings. It also means that two of the parts have significantly more lines than the rest, so you may wish to have two or even three children taking on part of each role for a section of the performance. The songs are catchy and accessible, although the inclusion of the word 'astrophysicist' in **The Three Wise Men** might demand some targeted rehearsal. Meanwhile, **Just an Old Barn** has the potential to melt even the iciest of audiences.

Both shows come complete with booklets that include the script, song lyrics, scene breakdowns, casting and staging guidelines, and further learning opportunities.

Editable versions of the scripts are also available as Word documents, should you feel the need to customise

the shows. The CDs include two versions of each song: one with vocals and one as a backing track. These can also be purchased as digital versions. In short, these shows include everything a teacher needs to ensure peace of mind and goodwill from parents.

**teach  
PRIMARY**

### VERDICT

- ✓ New shows from a trusted, award-winning brand
- ✓ Traditional Nativity tales with a small twist
- ✓ Well-pitched scripts
- ✓ Charming, accessible songs
- ✓ Speaking parts for over 30 children

### UPGRADE IF...

You want to stage a brand-new production this Christmas that is bound to hit all the right notes.

Woolly — £22.95 RRP • It's A Census, Get Me Out of Here! — £23.95 RRP • [www.theschoolmusicalscompany.com](http://www.theschoolmusicalscompany.com)

LITERACY →

# Bloomsbury Readers

Helping emerging readers to build fluency and confidence, from a trusted partner



BLOOMSBURY  
EDUCATION

## AT A GLANCE

- An extensive series of books to help build reader confidence and skill
- Teacher notes available online to accompany every text
- A huge range of themes and topics to choose from
- Titles written by a diverse range of award-winning authors

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



Bloomsbury is a name synonymous with books. Steeped in history, the publisher is a household name and has brought us hundreds of stories, many of which we will have enjoyed at different stages of our lives. Bloomsbury is all about reading and that doesn't just mean the big titles. The Bloomsbury Readers range is designed to help emerging readers build fluency and confidence, and the plethora of titles ensures that young people are drawn into reading through intrigue, not duress.

The Bloomsbury Readers series is packed with brilliant books to get children reading independently in Key Stage 2. The texts are expertly written and cover a number of themes and ideas. They come packed with creative authorship and well-balanced illustrations, making reading the stories engaging and entertaining.

The books are banded by challenge meaning learners can progressively build their skills and confidence whilst exploring the series. Stories are written by award-winning authors like double Carnegie Medal winner Geraldine McCaughrean and Waterstones Prize winner Patrice Lawrence, covering a wide range of genres and topics. The diversity of content is what makes Bloomsbury Readers really stand out. Stories range from fables to Shakespearean reworks and as such, readers are exposed to

sophisticated plots and characters with consistent and clear support.

Each book also comes complete with online guided reading notes written by the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE), meaning that teachers (and parents) have additional support when it comes to discussion of the texts. Not only does this make for more rich discussion, it also reduces teacher workload. The notes range from general comprehension questions to specific revisits of important passages – they are written to tease out the details of the text.

One of my favourite titles is the rework of *The Tempest* by Franziska G. Ewart. It is an imaginative recreation of one of William Shakespeare's most well-known plays through the voice of Ariel. There is no required prerequisite knowledge of the original play to enjoy the story, however it cleverly builds a familiarity with the setting, context and characters of the popularly taught play. The story comes complete with beautiful black-and-white illustrations by David Wyatt and is perfect for children who are developing as readers.

Bloomsbury Readers are ideal for reading both in the classroom and at home. The series appeals to all emerging readers and the range of titles means that there are texts to suit all tastes and abilities.

teach  
PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ Engaging and interesting books to support reading skills
- ✓ Well-crafted and supplementary illustrations work well
- ✓ Supportive and developmental series allowing learners to quickly build confidence
- ✓ Massive range of choice in terms of theme and topic

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for a supported and resourced class or individual reading series. Also consider if you are looking to build support at home or target a specific group of learners.

## COST

From £4.79 (ebooks) and £5.99 (paperbacks). Full details online.

[www.bloomsbury.com/uk/series/bloomsbury-readers](http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/series/bloomsbury-readers)



## DRAMA →

# Don't Be Afraid!

An uplifting new nativity show from Out of the Ark



Out of the Ark Music

## AT A GLANCE

- A positive retelling of the nativity story
- Detailed booklet including script by Sue Langwade, lyrics, music, tips and instructions
- Charming songs by Naomi Johnson with backing tracks
- Suitable for children aged 5-9

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



Fear, doubt and panic. Those are probably the three most powerful emotions the majority of teachers feel when they are volunteered to stage the traditional nativity show. If that sounds like you, then *Don't Be Afraid!* (at least, try not to be) because Out of the Ark has created a new nativity show – one in which the only place you're likely to meet fear, doubt and panic is in the cast list.

That's what gives this new take on the Christmas story such a human feel. Everyone in this timeless tale, from Joseph's donkey to the wise men, experiences very difficult emotions, and with good reason. The clever hook of this version is that these feelings have been personified as the key characters of Fear, Doubt and Panic.

In every scene, these trouble-makers are a constant, malign presence, trying to cause their own particular brand of mischief. Happily, they are thwarted at every turn by the main protagonists. Even so, it is a neat idea that lends the show a satisfying degree of emotional intelligence whilst providing the participants with a practical lesson in courage and resilience.

The show is also a guaranteed crowd-pleaser, as fans of Out of the

Ark will have come to expect. The lively script covers all the essential elements of the nativity story, along with plenty of gentle humour. (I have always been a sucker for gags such as a donkey called *Ferrari* and the shepherds' *Fort Flocks* sheep security services.)

Meanwhile, the action is augmented with seven feel-good songs which include a pleasing selection of foot-tappers and goose-bumpers. My only reservation is that this feels more appropriate for the upper end of the advertised 5-9 age range; younger pupils might struggle with some of the concepts and vocabulary.

The rock-hard icing on top of the Christmas cake is the way they have done all the thinking for you. With up to 47 speaking parts of varying lengths, there is the opportunity for every pupil to shine, regardless of their stage confidence. The script booklet contains detailed, practical suggestions for everything from props to costumes, along with song lyrics and piano music. There is also a CD of all the songs, professionally arranged and sweetly performed to ensure your production hits all the right notes. So *cast away your fears* – this show has it all covered.

teach  
PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ Entertaining script
- ✓ Uplifting, bespoke songs
- ✓ Parts for everyone
- ✓ Positively delightful

## UPGRADE IF...

You want to take the fear out of staging a heart-warming nativity.

Packages available from £24.95. More details at [www.outoftheark.co.uk](http://www.outoftheark.co.uk)

DRAMA →

# A Happy-Clappy Nativity

A quirky, musical and enthusiastic interpretation of a traditional nativity show



## AT A GLANCE

- A Christmas musical production with 30 speaking parts
- A refreshing reimagining of the familiar nativity story
- Suitable for KS1 & lower KS2
- 40 minutes running time
- Includes 'clapping-karaoke' videos for clapping and percussion parts
- Embraces singing, listening, composing and musicianship of the Model Music Curriculum

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



If there is one thing primary schools have really missed out on during the pandemic, it is the Christmas production. Who would have imagined shepherds would be furloughed?

This is the highlight of the year for many and always a magical mixture of emotions. Fingers crossed, parents can all look forward to attending a performance in person this year and getting all teary-eyed once again seeing their young ones singing and acting.

One absolute cracker of a production you might want to treat them to is 'A Happy-Clappy Nativity' from Edgy Productions. This brilliant nativity is available to buy in three different formats as either a book and audio CD, CD-ROM and audio CD, or as a digital download. You get character information, easy-to-use scripts, sheet music, thoughtful lyrics and catchy songs. All are £31 and for that price you get a stable full of features that even the three Wise Men would be impressed by.

This fun and professional production tells the Christmas story through a simple but charming script with enough speaking parts for the whole class to be used flexibly. It still retains the traditional aspects but evolves it with a new spin. Unsurprisingly, the production contains lots of clapping, and features eight wonderful clap-along songs. As a discrete movement, clapping is a skill and clapping in time with music is a fundamental part of being musical, so these songs will also

help children polish up their rhythm skills. The clapping-karaoke videos included as part of this nativity are designed to get everyone participating and so are perfect for rehearsals, but also for using during an actual performance so that the whole audience can join in.

The production running time is around 40 minutes, which is the perfect length for this age group – although the audience might be wanting more by the end.

For a further £15, you can also purchase some digital backdrops which can be projected as the performance unfolds. There are six hi-resolution jpeg file images that are also provided as a PowerPoint presentation. These could be well worth getting to save you days, weeks and months painting your own scenery.

Research has also shown that hand-clapping songs improve motor and cognitive skills, and clapping in time may boost literacy in children learning to read, so this production delivers more than a nativity – it's also a platform for child development.

After all that clapping, will the audience have enough left in the tank to give a big round of applause? You might need earplugs – we reckon the noise will be deafening!

A Happy-Clappy Nativity is a memory-making production, and retains the true spiritual meaning of Christmas and will feed the soul of your whole school community.

teach  
PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ A traditional nativity full of Christmas cheer, joy and clappiness
- ✓ Energetic, enthusiastic and poignant
- ✓ A karaoke cracker for maximum participation and collective music making
- ✓ Helps children develop their focus, attention, musicality and synchronisation
- ✓ A production for all children to stand proud and have their moment
- ✓ Builds musical confidence and active engagement as performers and music creators

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for a quirky, musical and enthusiastic traditional production that will bring the whole school community together and get everyone clapping, tapping and back-slapping.

Prices from £31. See [edgyproductions.com/shop/happy-clappy-nativity](https://edgyproductions.com/shop/happy-clappy-nativity) for details



READING

# Raintree No Nonsense Phonics

Expert, ready-to-use resources from a staple name in the field of phonics



Phonics International  
by Debbie Hepplewhite

## AT A GLANCE

- A DfE-validated SSP programme that helps readers progress quickly and sustainably
- Authored by Debbie Hepplewhite, specialist in phonics teaching
- Research-informed, systematic synthetic phonics approach
- Focus on reading, handwriting and spelling

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



Over the years, Raintree resources have supported thousands of young learners to read. No Nonsense Phonics Skills draws upon Raintree's previous pedigree and provides learners with clear, progressive and enthralling reading support.

No Nonsense Phonics Skills is a DfE-validated systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme that provides a comprehensive step-by-step method of teaching reading, handwriting and spelling in the English language. The approach incorporates various elements of teacher-led support, utilising texts, class discussion and displays to help learners really understand the intricacies of English.

Authored by Debbie Hepplewhite, learners and teachers are guided through a series of carefully designed systematic phonics routines to master the complex English Alphabetic Code. Through spaced practice and mastery, learners are able to quickly and sustainably progress their reading skill and confidence. Not only this, learners are guided on handwriting too, meaning that more than just one skill is addressed during learning sessions.

Each of the nine pupil books is rich in content, providing phonics instruction and exercises with 'cumulative' code, words and texts developing language comprehension and building up knowledge of spelling word

banks. The mini texts themselves are engaging and entertaining with a target readership of 4–9 years, and with 109 in the series, there is plenty to explore. Illustrations are helpful and engaging and work well with the decoding process for newer readers.

Throughout the series, high-frequency and tricky words, and additional letter/s–sound correspondences, are drip-fed into the teaching and learning sequence of the mini stories. Using lessons learned from years of phonics teaching, little touches like this show Raintree knows the best ways to get learners progressing. The collaborative feel adds to the sense of safety for learners, meaning that they quickly become accustomed to phonics.

The No Nonsense Phonics Skills resources are available to buy individually or as a set. There are nine different workbooks, each with a teacher accompaniment. The workbooks are well laid out and provide easy-to-follow, engaging tasks. The teacher books contain additional guidance and example comprehension approaches to ensure that teachers are fully informed of content delivery. Teacher books are an exceptional resource for experienced teachers, those new to the profession, TAs, and other classroom support staff.

In short, No Nonsense Phonics Skills is an exceptional resource for making rapid and long-lasting reading gains.

teach  
PRIMARY

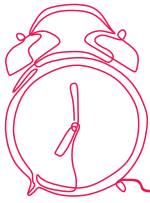
## VERDICT

- ✓ Engaging resources that encourage a love of reading
- ✓ Embedded handwriting and spelling tasks mean that learners make progress in more than one field
- ✓ Exceptional illustrations and well-developed layout and design
- ✓ Holistic programme supports learning as well as teachers delivering content

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for a research-informed approach to teaching reading that is designed to build learners sustainably. Also consider if you are looking to provide more reading practice for KS1 learners.

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# DAY in the LIFE



A one-day diary from first alarm to lights out

## WAKING UP

My alarm goes off at 5:45am. I have a shower, get ready, then have a strong coffee before I get my three children up.



**KATE STURDY IS A KS2 CURRICULUM LEAD AND Y5 TEACHER**

@k8KES8



## MY MORNING

After dropping my twin girls off at nursery, I arrive at school at 8:10am. Learners read newspapers and books during registration then share facts. I teach maths in the mornings. I make lessons practical by including cooperative learning strategies, Numicon, writing on tables and recording explanations using Flipgrid and Seesaw.



## MY AFTERNOON

Throughout the year with the help of Dom Traynor (@dom\_traynor) from Adobe, we have been working hard to infuse creativity across the curriculum using Adobe Spark. We use Page, Post and Video to present our work, it looks really professional! We even won a global competition with Adobe and Khan Academy by sharing our work. Our prize was a live Q&A session with Sal Khan!



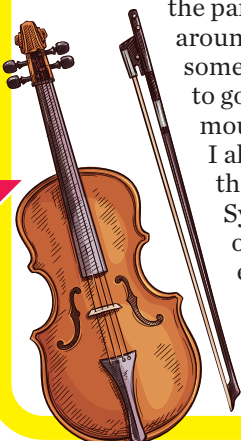
## LUNCHTIME

This term I have been working with some of my class on a cheerleading routine. They have just entered a county cheerleading competition.



## MY EVENING

I leave between 4pm and 5pm. I usually take my children to the park, put them to bed around 7pm, then have some time to myself. I like to go for a walk on the mountain where I live. I also play the violin in the Wrexham Symphony Orchestra on a Wednesday evening. Before Covid, I also went to the gym and boxing.



## BEDTIME

I go to bed around 10:30pm. To destress I have a brew and don't look at my phone for a while.

## QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

- ❖ **Career plan B?** I would love to be a sports photographer for famous sporting events, particularly boxing.
- ❖ **Must-listen?** Teacher Talk Radio on ttradio.org with Alfred Bache (@mr\_alfredb). I have also been a guest! Toria Bono (@Toriacaire) on Tiny Voice Talks Podcast.
- ❖ **Must-read?** I am currently reading a fabulous book Kindness Matters by John Magee, that inspires and motivates you to be kind to others. As John says, 'Kindness is the gift that keeps on giving.'
- ❖ **Twitter hero?** Kyrstie Stubbs – The Tattooed Headteacher (@KyrstieStubbs). Kyrstie is so passionate about representation and equity. She also believes wellbeing is the most important focus for a leader. Kyrstie's school, Boothroyd Primary Academy (@BoothroydAcad) has been awarded the Mental Health Schools award, Gold Inclusion in Schools award, and was the first school to gain the Therapeutic Schools award. Not only is Kyrstie an inspirational headteacher, she is also a fabulous mum.



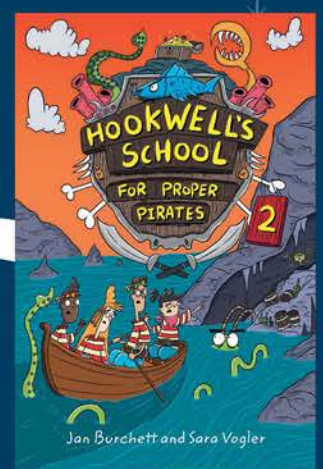
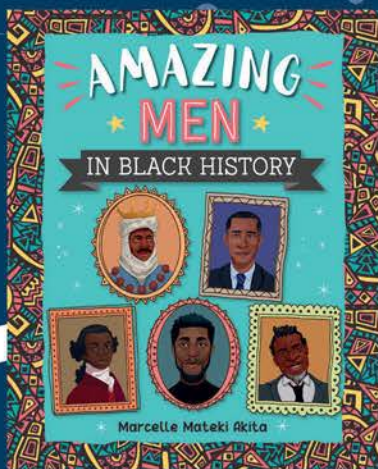


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Drew Kearns, Paddock Primary



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