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# Hello!



**A**nd welcome back! I hope you had a wonderful summer break, and that you're ready and raring to go for the new academic year. We certainly are.

As the days grow shorter and the term grows busier, we've put a spotlight on behaviour management, with a confessional on page 17 from a teacher who got kicked out of school when he was a child, and what that taught him about teaching; and an insight into how one school completely transformed behaviour in only six months on page 51.

We've also got a focus on the humanities this issue, looking at tips for getting the very best out of Google Earth for geography on page 85; how to develop a truly connected history curriculum on page 88; your guide to creating an RE curriculum that really works on page 82; and a triple whammy – figuring out whether your school's approach to the humanities is more paint-by-numbers or a blank Sistine ceiling (and what to do about it) on page 92.

Want to start the year off right with literacy teaching? Get yourself in order for writing moderation with Adam Levick's guide to what he learned through the process on page 62; read Aidan Severs' guide to explanation texts and how to teach them on page 69; and get help in relating abstract grammar teaching to real-life experiences with Rachel Clarke on page 59.

We're also keen to put our best foot forward this year at TP, and I'm especially interested to hear what it is you really need from us. Whether it's more lesson plans, worksheets and planning documents, or even run-downs of the government's myriad changes and guidelines, we're here for you. Drop me a line at [charley.rogers@theteachco.com](mailto:charley.rogers@theteachco.com) with requests or ideas, and we shall do our best!

I hope the new term goes well, and as always, thanks for bringing us along for the ride.

Until next time,

*Charley*

Charley Rogers, editor

@TeachPrimaryEd1

*Don't miss our  
next issue, on sale  
7th October*

## POWERED BY...



**ALEX RAWLINGS**  
on the pointlessness of target-setting, and why we need to focus on our systems instead.

*"By the end of the academic year, your class will have either made it, or they won't."*

p15



**SOPHIE BARTLETT**  
on how *The Viewer* can encourage children to understand grammar and the writing process.

*"Help pupils write their own narrative by analysing how a story has been constructed."*

p30



**MATTHEW LANE**  
explains how to teach Y6 about the birds and the bees without the 'eeuwws!' and 'errghs!'.

*"Let's stop thinking of RSE as simply 'Sex after SATs' and give it proper planning."*

p48





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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!

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

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



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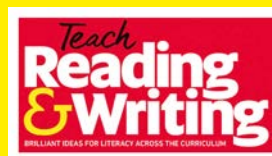
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# Breaktime

News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research



## Pay rise not what it seems

As the government finally announced a pay rise for teachers, after over a decade of real-term cuts, relief swept through much of the sector. But not for long. Though promised an average raise of eight per cent for ECTs, 6.4 per cent for mainscale teachers, and five per cent for upper scale and school leaders, schools are not receiving any additional funding. After the announcements, polling app Teacher Tapp asked 1,400 senior leaders about the impact on their budgets. On average, leaders estimate the pay rises alone are going to cost £96,000 for primary schools, and 42 per cent of leaders (across primary and secondary settings) said they will now need to consider staff cuts, with TAs most likely to face redundancy (or non-replacement).

Read more about the government's plans at [tinyurl.com/tp-GovPayrise](http://tinyurl.com/tp-GovPayrise)

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



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### WOMEN'S EUROS

UEFA Arts & Heritage has released a series of short films showcasing the strides taken in women's football, and the importance of making the sport available to girls as part of physical education in schools. See the films and learn more at [tinyurl.com/tp-UEFA](http://tinyurl.com/tp-UEFA)



### AUTISM TRAINING

The University of Birmingham, together with Tel Aviv University, has launched a free computerised progressive attentional training (CPAT) programme, designed for teachers, to help young people with autism develop basic attention skills. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-CPAT](http://tinyurl.com/tp-CPAT)

## →→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



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## System 'unable to cope'

Anne Longfield's Commission on Young Lives warns post-Covid children's mental health services are buckling under pressure and putting vulnerable young people at greater risk of exploitation, serious violence, and abuse. Their latest report calls on the two candidates hoping to become Prime Minister to pledge a once-in-a-generation post-Covid £1bn Recovery Package of support to make England's children's mental health services fit for purpose.

Amy Dicks, policy manager at The Children's Society, said the charity was supportive of the commission's recommendations, and says:

"The roll-out of mental health support in schools must be accelerated and schools must be supported to recognise changes in children's behaviour may be a sign of trauma and problems in their lives, and to offer help, with exclusion a last resort."

Read the full report at [tinyurl.com/tp-CYLreport](https://tinyurl.com/tp-CYLreport)



## Period positive

Campaigner, Period Positive founder, teacher and author Chella Quint has launched a new curriculum model using a 'much more thoughtful approach' to menstruation. The toolkit provides teachers with an outline of age-appropriate information about periods to add into existing lessons from the start of primary school, with the aim to empower all pupils to understand and embrace menstruation, and to remove the shameful taboos around periods. Chella says: "There is an enormous gap in the curriculum and in our training as teachers. Pupils need more than one 'period talk' - we need whole-school menstrual literacy." Find out more at [periodpositive.com](https://periodpositive.com)

**77%** OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PARENTS WOULD LIKE TO BE ABLE TO PRE-SELECT SCHOOL MEALS FOR THEIR CHILDREN AHEAD OF TIME, FINDS THE 2022 SCHOOL MEALS REPORT (FROM CYPAD).

## Look ahead | Book ahead

### JUST ONE TREE

Join 200k children from schools around the world in a non-uniform day to raise funds for environmental education, and planting trees. October 14th. More info at [tinyurl.com/tp-JOT](https://tinyurl.com/tp-JOT)



### READING TEACHERS

A conference to help you develop as a reading teacher and create engaged communities of readers across your school. Feat. award-winning author Katya Balen. Book at [tinyurl.com/tp-ReadingTeachers](https://tinyurl.com/tp-ReadingTeachers)



Q & A



## Katya Balen

Author and winner of the Yoto Carnegie Greenaway Award

*How have you used your background in social care to inform your characters?*

The titular character October (from *October, October*) learns to be very resilient, and I remember being on a skills development course once, where we were asked what we would do if a child we were looking after accidentally broke their toy. We were given about five options, ranging from punishing the child to just going and buying a new toy. I chose that last option, and it turned out it was wrong. What you should do is commiserate that the toy has been broken and then go and do something else – move on. That's how to develop a child who is comfortable with things not working out. It builds resilience. It's such a valuable lesson.

*How do you feel about winning one of the most prestigious awards in kids' lit?*

It's very surreal! Obviously, it's wonderful, and at some point I'm sure the full realisation of what's happened will sneak up on me, and properly sink in. But right now? That feeling is supremely hard to put into words!

*What message would you like to send to your young readers?*

I suppose the takeaway message from *October, October* is that life isn't perfect. You can't control everything; things aren't always going to go your way. And that's OK. Finding a balance, and learning to compromise and still not lose yourself, and what is important to you, is such a skill. With *October*, she wants to be in the wild. But she finds that wildness within herself – it's about understanding who you are, but also understanding who and what you need to take care of.

Katya's latest book *October, October*, (£7.99, Bloomsbury) won the Yoto Carnegie Greenaway Award 2022, and is available to purchase now.





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# 7 NEWS STORIES

*you might have missed*

## KEEP IT DOWN

Research from the University of Portsmouth has found that pupils at risk of school difficulty are also those most likely to be annoyed and easily distracted by noise. The study, published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* measured the impact of noise on over 350 children, aged between seven and 11 years old. Teachers were given 17 statements about each child's attentional focus, impulsivity, behavioural control and ability to engage in school work, all of which reflect pupils' effortful control, underlying their capacity to adapt flexibly to social demands and in particular to regulate their attention and behaviour. The results showed a correlation between those children who were identified by teachers as struggling with effortful control, and those who admit negative attitudes towards noise.

Read more at [tinyurl.com/tp-noise](https://tinyurl.com/tp-noise)

## NATURE WRITING PRIZE

The shortlist has been announced for the 2022 James Cropper Wainwright Prize, honouring children's writing on nature and conservation. Named after the much-loved nature writer Alfred Wainwright, the aim of the prize is to inspire young people to connect with nature and embrace the outdoors. The shortlist includes *Around the World in 80 Trees* by Ben Lerwill, illustrated by Kaja Kajfež, (Welbeck); *By Rowan and Yew*, by Melissa Harrison, (Chicken House); *Julia and the Shark* by Kiran Millwood Hargrave, illustrated by Tom de Freston, (Orion Children's Books); and *October, October* by Katya Balen, illustrated by Angela Harding, (Bloomsbury Children's Books). The winner will be announced on 7 September at [wainwrightprize.com](https://wainwrightprize.com)



## LIFE-SAVING KIT

Every state-funded school in England will be provided with a defibrillator by the end of the 22/23 academic year, the Department for Education has announced. The latest research shows that accessing these devices within three to five minutes of a cardiac arrest increases the chance of survival by over 40 per cent. The announcement comes after the government's meeting with the Oliver King Foundation last year (supported by ex-footballer Jamie Carragher), which has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of this issue. A survey will soon go out to all state-funded schools to finalise the number of devices that will need to be procured, which is estimated to be over 20,000.

Read more at [tinyurl.com/tp-defibrillator](https://tinyurl.com/tp-defibrillator)

## POOR VALUE CPD?

A new survey of over 300 primary teachers and early years practitioners has found that 49 per cent of those that accessed CPD in the last year found it had only a 'little impact'. The findings, based on analysis by online learning journal Tapestry, show that the impact of CPD experienced by educators is limited: although an encouraging 89 per cent of respondents reported that their school or setting provided professional development for all staff, only 41 per cent of primary teachers and early years educators said that CPD had impacted their practice 'a lot'. The three most popular types of professional development were in-person courses (69 per cent), trainer-led online courses (54 per cent) and self-guided online courses (46 per cent). Least popular was listening to a podcast, even with the huge growth in popularity of podcasts in general.

Learn more at [tinyurl.com/tp-CPDsurvey](https://tinyurl.com/tp-CPDsurvey)

## YOUTH CHAMPS

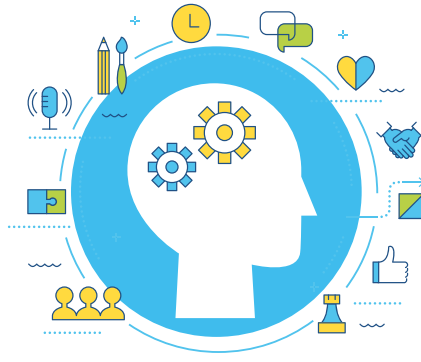
The Youth Brass Band Championships from Brass Bands England has been announced for 2022. Taking place at Stockport Grammar School in Greater Manchester on Saturday 25 March, the competition will welcome young musicians from around the country. All youth brass bands across the UK are encouraged to take part in competitive elements of the contest, while the Besson Prodiges Showcase Section will be available for any band, regardless of its level of experience. All sections will take place on a single day, with separate age categories removed; this year every section will be open to all performers who have not reached their 19th birthday on or before 31 August in the year of the contest. Applications to take part in Youth Champs 2023 will open on Tuesday 20 September 2022, and you can find pre-application info at [tinyurl.com/tp-YouthChamps](https://tinyurl.com/tp-YouthChamps)

## WAGE GAP

Children in England who receive free school meals end up earning less than their peers as adults, reports the *Guardian*. Even when they achieve the same qualifications as those children who aren't eligible for FSM, half earn less than £17,000 at the age of 30, according to analysis by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The findings are based on long-term data collected on 38 million individuals, and also showed that children who attended independent schools earned more than their state school counterparts – both FSM and non-FSM – at all qualification levels. Sara Ogilvie, the director of policy, rights and advocacy for the Child Poverty Action Group, called on the government to do more to support children from disadvantaged backgrounds, saying: "All kids deserve a fair start in life and the best way for the government to deliver that is to invest in social security for families. But at the moment we are falling well short of giving the nation's children the opportunity that everyone deserves."

## 'SOCIAL AND DIGITAL EMERGENCY'

Susie Hargreaves, the chief executive of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has warned that the rapid growth in sexual images from primary school-aged children amounts to a "social and digital emergency", reports *The Telegraph*. Ms Hargreaves has called on the government, the tech industry, law enforcement, teachers and charities to take urgent action on the issue. The IWF has found that the number of primary school children blackmailed or tricked into producing sexual images has more than quadrupled since lockdown. "Children are not to blame," said Ms Hargreaves. "They are often being coerced, tricked or pressured by sexual abusers on the internet. Only when the education of parents, carers and children comes together with efforts by tech companies, the government, police and third sector, can we hope to stem the tide of this criminal imagery. That is why the Online Safety Bill is so essential."



# 6 WAYS to develop problem-solving

There's a lot to be said for subject-specific knowledge, but these soft skills will support children across the curriculum, says Hannah Day...

## 1 | CREATE STRATEGIC THINKERS

If we want pupils to be able to really dissect a problem, then they need to think in nonlinear ways. To develop this, give children situations where there are many different options and outcomes, all with their own merits and downsides. For example, ask them to order the day's lessons: is it best to get some subjects finished first? Do some activities naturally follow others? Do different children offer different orders? List the benefits and drawbacks for the planned timetables and pupils will see that one question can have many answers.

## 2 | BUILD EMPATHY

Schools do incredible work here already, and much of it you may well do yourself. Often though, the link between feelings and their physical manifestations are not made clear. Start by linking emotions to how they feel for the person experiencing them; anxiety with a stomach-ache or embarrassment with a hot feeling. Then look at how these feelings seem to others, and role-play the children's responses. Get one child to act out a feeling, and another to guess the feeling and react in a supportive way. Finally, ask the first pupil to explain how the reaction made them feel.

## 3 | MAKE SKILLED NEGOTIATORS

Negotiating isn't about winning an argument; it's about resolving conflict through dialogue. Give pupils scenarios in which they and their partner have different aims. The aim is to resolve the situation with both members achieving and conceding some of their goals. Practical scenarios work best. For example, ask them to plan out a day, and give them a time frame, budget and a different list of activities each. Add to the list the cost and time involved for each activity. Ask the children to come up with a plan for the day that features elements from both lists. The fairest day wins a prize, showing that give and take has its rewards.



Hannah Day is a secondary school teacher, specialising in creative education, based in the West Midlands.

## 4 | INCREASE CREATIVITY

Open-ended tasks allow children to trial a range of solutions and test their thinking. First, set them a task they can practically complete and assess, such as creating a raft that allows a stone to float in water. Then give them the parameters, in this case a collection of material, some intentionally unsuitable. Ask them to draw a plan and to rationalise why they think it's the best solution. Build the raft and test. You can also use far simpler tasks, such as free drawing. Again, give pupils parameters; for example, if you are studying the Antarctic, ask them to design an animal that would survive in the extreme cold. Ask children to draw their creature and explain which features their animal has and why. The aim is for pupils to pick from many options, and to be able to justify their choices.

## 5 | ENCOURAGE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict is part of life, but it doesn't need to be acrimonious, just a case of different views or needs being considered and resolved. Improvisation is a powerful tool when developing these skills. In pairs, give children scenarios that will lead to conflict, give the scenario in three steps, each one building on the other and becoming more strained. At each stage ask pupils to say how the conflict could be resolved or compromised on. Explain that is in stages because conflict can be resolved at various points. If you've missed one good opportunity to take the heat out of a situation, it doesn't mean all is lost.

## 6 | DEVELOP COMMON SENSE

Sometimes overlooked as 'obvious', common sense is essential, and comes from lived experience, observations and reflections. Getting your class to reflect will help them to make better choices next time. This can be done through stories where you can pick out moments of the narrative, particularly a moment before something goes wrong, and ask pupils to come up with an alternative ending. The stories might not be as exciting without the jeopardy, but children will see how choices change outcomes and just how many choices they have. Books such as *Oh no, George!* by Chris Haughton can help illustrate the process.



# WHERE WILL YOUR STORY TAKE YOU?



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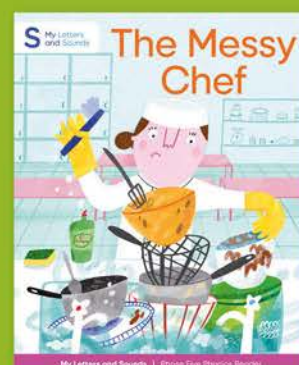
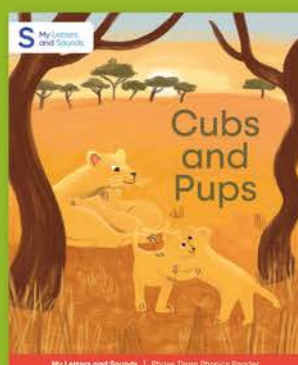
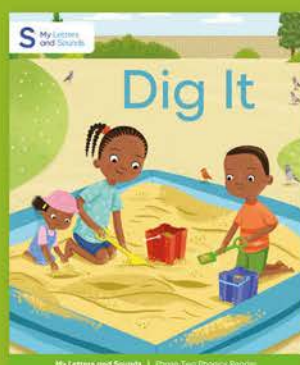


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system can. For instance, you can have a target to achieve a 90 per cent phonics pass rate (goal). That's great. But it isn't going to get you where you want to be. Providing high-quality phonics provision (system) is what will. Likewise, expecting a headteacher to achieve a '70 per cent outstanding teaching' goal isn't going to make it so. Investing in an incredibly effective CPD and coaching system just might, though.

Systems-orientated leaders spread accountability so thin that their team barely feels the weight. Those leaders commit time to collaborating with staff on an agreed system of teaching provision, rather than endless conversations about data. So, if the class isn't attaining as highly as hoped, you aren't determined to have failed. How could you? You've deployed the agreed system!

The focus is now on the systems and everyone is accountable for them, whether it is the way you expect children to line up in the morning, or how you intervene to support struggling learners. If something doesn't go quite as it should, the conversation isn't about you, as a teacher, it is about the system and your experience of it, and how senior leaders can understand that better: *was CPD effective? Do we need to rethink our approach?* It's not a panicked conversation about why your class is seven per cent away from their target.

This isn't to say target-setting is entirely futile; it guides the direction for the school. You've got to know where you're going. But goals restrict growth and force short-term thinking. They don't allow you to reflect and get better. Systems do, because they work daily, rather than just that beginning-of-the-year meeting. Systems challenge you and they need your attention and focus.

In the last three years, I haven't set a single attainment target for any of our children, nor have I linked target grades to staff appraisal. Do I think our children have learned less as a result? Absolutely not.

Target-setting shackles you to a dichotomy of success or failure.

Systems set you free.

Invest in your systems. You will breathe more easily. I promise." **TP**

*Alex Rawlings is a headteacher at Quarry Bank Primary School, in Dudley. He has worked as a senior leader in primary schools for nearly 10 years.*



## WHY SETTING TARGETS ISN'T SMART

Obsessing about goals doesn't get you (or your pupils) where you need to be – we need to invest in systems, instead

 @MrARawlings

**A**lmost every single teacher, up and down the country, will have sat in a target-setting meeting with a senior leader and come up with goals for their children (or been told them!). And almost every single teacher, at some point, will let out a defeated sigh. That sigh often signifies the beginning of a year-long tale about quick-fixes, curriculum compromises, and a teacher with a sense of inevitable failure that can all too often prove self-fulfilling.

While the senior leader waffles on about 95 per cent being 'an ambitious but achievable target' and making 'accelerated progress for the majority of pupils', you're sat there glaring at two names on your class list that you think just don't stand a chance. Your chest tightens, and in an instant you're capped at a target-missing 93 per cent. Failure is a guarantee.

You see this happen everywhere in schools.

Substitute 'target-setting meeting' with 'performance management' or 'HT appraisal' or 'IEP targets' or 'Phonics Screening' or 'SMART targets'

(shudder), and the same applies. The list goes on, as does the sighing.

By the end of the academic year, your class will have either made it, or they won't. You will be a success or a failure. And even if you are successful, that feeling is only fleeting. You might be very proud of yourself for a short while (and so you should be!) but what's next? Another target followed by another year-long wait to determine your success. And if you fail, I imagine you will enter your next target-setting meeting with a renewed sense of complete cynicism, defeatism and all the other 'isms'. Just how you want to start the year – with another cursed aim!

Goal-orientated people spend a significant amount of their time failing. In fact, they are continuously failing until the moment they aren't. And this non-failure is only momentary until the cycle starts again. As cartoonist Scott Adams says, "Losers have goals. Winners have systems."

The difference? Goals can only set the trajectory of travel; they can't actually get you there. But a well-thought-out and implemented



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Getting kicked out of school was the wakeup call I needed. Now I'm a teacher and it's got me questioning our view of 'unmet needs'

# Ben King

 @thatteacherguy\_



**S**tanding in my bedroom on a Tuesday morning I waited patiently for the voice on the other end of the phone to speak. It was October and I was in Year 11, approaching the final stretch of my studies before exams.

"Hello, Ben. We have a slight issue with your history coursework," said the voice on the other end of the line. "In brief, it is very similar to, well, to be honest, several others."

And that was that, I knew my time in secondary education was over. All for the sake of £35.

Having been caught selling history coursework, I knew I would be lucky if the all-boys school at which I had been studying for my teenage years would even allow me to sit my exams. I knew this was the final straw. I was only at home that Tuesday morning as I had already been excluded for two days for writing a mock report into the management of the school and handing it out on the playground at the 3:15pm bell. That was the fourth exclusion I had received in my time at the school.

There is a trend at the moment of declaring all behaviour as a means of legitimate communication. To be honest, this has me scratching my head a bit. I moved past my exclusions and other issues, and went on to achieve three A-Levels, an undergraduate degree, a PGCE, an MA in Educational Leadership, and I served with Sussex Police. But was my appalling attitude just an unmet need?

I really don't think so. I grew up in a fairly affluent part of the world where crime was very low, with parents who were happily married and in a home where from the age of 12 I had my own room. I was dressed well and fed healthily, I got pocket money, and my older brother showed no signs of my issues with authority or controlling behaviour. So why was I different?

The truth is – and nobody likes to say this aloud – I enjoyed the notoriety. It was something that hadn't been part of the fabric of my primary school, but in an all-boys (fairly old-fashioned)



secondary there were certain people that were known as lads you just 'don't mess with'. The first time I was excluded in Year 7, it was for a simple fight; a disagreement between me and another boy – fists and feet and two days at home. Simple as that. What was I communicating? I already had friends, it wasn't like I needed to be seen. I was. On the second occasion I threatened another pupil, not with a weapon, just words. But it went round like wildfire that I was out of the school again.

When I decided I was bored in a maths lesson and I threw my calculator out the window at another child I didn't like, I was only trying to communicate to him that I didn't like him. Nothing else. If restorative measures had been used with me, in that situation, I would've said anything the teacher wanted to hear and walked off smiling to myself.

The fact is, I was arrogant, I was gobby, and I was hormonal. But who isn't? Some say bad behaviour is generally caused by a desire to avoid something or a desire to gain something. But I just don't see life as that black and white, and I say that as someone who has worked with children, youth offenders

and criminals. I have arrested adults for how they treat children and arrested children for how they've treated adults.

We excuse those misbehaving by giving them a constant, cast-iron get out. We remove the personal and make it societal. Of course, it can be, that goes without saying. Of course an unfed, unloved child will potentially lash out. But how unfair, how unjust, to compare my enjoyment of fighting and causing a scene – and I say that fully aware of how that sounds – with the genuine horrors faced by some of our most vulnerable in the world.

I got my wakeup call at the end of that phone conversation. I begged to still take my exams, I pleaded with the local college to take me, and I developed a desire to work with children and offenders and help them on their path. Should I have been expelled earlier? Who knows. I know I wouldn't have achieved what I did though, if I hadn't faced those consequences. And it wasn't down to being unfulfilled.

*Ben King is a Year 6 teacher and history lead in a Sussex primary school.*





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

# A letter to...

## ECTs in shorts

**Ben Connor** on staff dress codes, and why wearing trainers to work isn't a hill worth dying on...



**W**elcome to the profession, ECT!

Teaching is simultaneously the most difficult and most

rewarding job you can do. What you'll face over the next two years will challenge you to your limits – and that includes the behaviour of your colleagues.

But there is one thing we need to discuss first, something which may not have made it into your day-one briefing: the staff dress code policy.

You thought that once you had left school, you'd no longer be pulled up by the headteacher for the way you're dressed. Ha! Think again. As a teacher, you are expected to:

- be able to put up displays and take them down again;
- teach in conditions ranging from arctic (when the heating is broken and the windows are open for ventilation) to tropical (when it's 40 degrees and the DfE still won't close schools);
- demonstrate forward rolls;
- chase after irate children who could give Steve McQueen a run for his money.

The list goes on. And by the way, all this needs to be done while wearing sensible shoes that cover your toes, an outfit that's not too tight but not too loose (health and safety!), and don't forget the clothes shouldn't look out of place in a book on Victorian etiquette.

If you happen to be a male teacher, think bank manager and you can't go far

wrong. This applies in all weather conditions. Sure, female staff can wear lighter clothes in the summer, but no-one genuinely believes tailored shorts on adult men is going to catch on. Sorry.

I know you've heard there are some schools where you can 'get away with it', or 'let the side down' as some teachers might have it, but don't get your hopes up. Maybe your new school has jazzy, logo-emblazoned tracksuits for PE, or your headteacher is a new-age renegade who lets the children call you by your first name and allows anything, as long as it's designer. But there are also schools where reading the staff uniform policy will make you wonder whether lion taming might be an easier vocation – especially since you'd get the chair and the whip for free.

Joking aside, there are of course some good reasons for a reasonable dress code policy. While you might have to suffer through the whole gamut of temperatures, most headteachers have a sensible attitude to extreme weather. And as always, everything we do is 'for the kids'.

For some pupils, you might be the only professional person with whom they interact, the only positive role model they can look to and see themselves in the future. It's no wonder that, along with 'Youtuber' and 'influencer', the job of 'teacher' is a common aspiration for our students. Not only are you their educator, but (hopefully) you're someone the children will look up to. Dressing

professionally is part of that. Police officers, judges and doctors all have a uniform as part of their profession, so arguably, though we don't have a uniform per se, teachers also need to look the part.

Not only that but in practical terms, telling your feistiest Year 6 to take off their knock-off branded hoody so they 'meet school policy', when you're wearing the same outfit, isn't a good look. Some might disagree, but pupil uniform is important, so we should make sure the way we dress reflects that.

### My advice:

1. Check your policy now. Don't spend money on clothes that will get you a one-way ticket to the head's office. It's simply not worth it.
2. Buy clothes that are purely for work. You will get whiteboard ink on them. You will potentially get bodily fluids on them (not your own). Buy a small number of suitable outfits and make them last.
3. Buy a thermal vest for the winter.
4. Also buy a fan for your room. Some classrooms may have aircon, but yours likely won't. You are new, after all.

*From Ben*



*Ben Connor is a primary deputy headteacher at a school in Bury, Greater Manchester. He has been teaching for 13 years in various schools and currently leads on curriculum and teaching and learning.*



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# How I do it

Figure out how characteristics are passed on through families with the help of the Mr Men...

EMILY WESTON

# 1

Introduce the lesson through two Mr Men on the board. Encourage the children to have a discussion about what they can see without any further context. This will allow you to observe what they can independently recognise. I always have this as the second lesson in the sequence, so there will be some knowledge of inheritance in place – will the children recognise the connection when looking at these images?



Science, I'll be honest, is not my specialty. There are some topics within the subject that have endless opportunities for experiments and active learning, while others are more difficult. And that is what lead me to 'Mr Men Inheritance'.

When I first started in Year 6, the evolution and inheritance topic seemed particularly daunting, as the concepts can seem quite abstract to children when you first explore them. Online I saw someone using Mr Men to look at features of the body and wanted to further develop this into an inheritance lesson. Art, literature and science?

You can't go wrong!

# 2

Each child then needs to have a Mr Men and Little Miss picture. I choose to have as many different combinations as possible around the classroom. Not only does this mean pupils can have discussions about their different 'children' as they complete the lesson, but their decisions will allow you to observe any misconceptions.

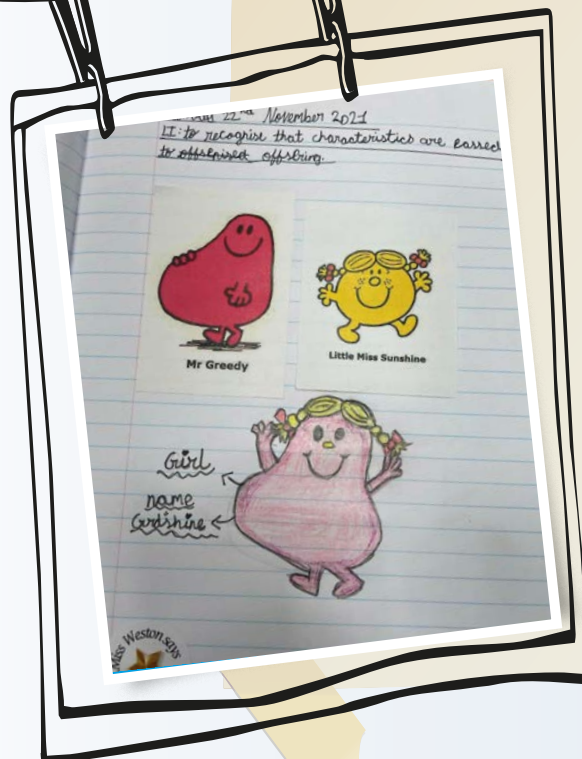
Next, ask the children to identify the features of the Mr Men which can be passed on through genes. Pupils can then determine, through conversation, which features (eyes, nose, body colour, mouth, height) we can focus on for the 'child' to inherit. Then, we can extend: is the hat something they can inherit?

# 3

# 4

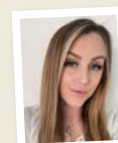
After this conversation, children will have a good grasp of what they can and can't inherit and can then begin on their

own work. Using the Mr Men and Little Miss, they need to determine what the 'child' will look like. They will have multiple options to choose from, but I would expect to see them select some more prominent features while ensuring that both 'parents' are represented. Get them to draw their 'child' into their science book and colour it in.



Once complete, ask pupils to write out the features which have been inherited from each parent, or, to differentiate for more able pupils, ask them to write a paragraph explaining how inheritance has worked in this instance using technical vocabulary.

# 5



Emily Weston is a Year 6 teacher, who has been teaching for eight years in Swindon.

 @primaryteachew



## UNDERCOVER TEACHER

# My school's approach to subject 'deep dives' has left teaching staff paranoid and panicking...

**C**ivil war has broken out between the teachers in my school. We are all fighting for 'our' subjects, and we are all going to lose.

Not a week goes by without another staff meeting where a particular 'Subject Champion' presents their reasons why we are letting the children down in their area, and provides us with a long list of things to do, evidence to provide, and classroom time to guarantee.

The rest of us sit there thinking, 'this isn't going to happen', talk behind each other's backs, then promptly demand the same for our subject the following week. We have all been perfectly prepared to throw each other under the bus if needed. At the end of the year, three teachers left the school; more may soon follow.

The root of this collective breakdown is the Ofsted approach to the curriculum in schools through 'deep dives' (where the teaching of a single subject is explored in the school) and, more importantly, our school's approach to preparing for it. It has been made clear to all of us that we are accountable for our subjects – something that theoretically should only happen when TLR payments are given – and that we are responsible for driving progress across the school.

Additionally, each Subject Champion has had to spend time with an ex-Ofsted consultant who has exacerbated their fears of the deep dive and left them paranoid and panicking.

What has become increasingly clear is that the thing ultimately under threat is our ability to teach through topics. For me, this is the very thing that adds value to the primary school curriculum over and above that of secondary schools. We seek to inspire children through in-depth, multi-skilled studies that can only be achieved through having the continuity of one teacher for most of the week, as opposed to flitting between subjects, teachers and classrooms.

As a school, we have always worked in this way. It is something that was considered a real strength, and many of us still feel strongly in favour of this approach. The previous 'outstanding' Ofsted report highlighted that our topic approach engaged pupils and even improved their attitudes to learning.

However, what was once one of our biggest strengths has now become our weakness: we are told Ofsted wants schools to be able to demonstrate a linear progression of skills in foundation subjects, something far harder to demonstrate through cross-curricular learning. Instead, we are being pushed into behaving like a secondary school with discrete subjects taught in isolation.

But something as paramount as removing the topic-based approach cannot be done on an individual subject level. For this change to happen, it needs to be guided by the leadership team and implemented consistently across the curriculum.

By 'empowering' each Subject Champion to simply make the necessary changes, we have been left with a glaring contradiction: we are, at present, still supposed to be working in a topical way; yet one-by-one subjects are being divorced from this approach.

Then we get onto the issue of time.

Our mornings are ring-fenced for maths and English, leaving only five afternoons for the nine remaining subjects in the curriculum (including the two hours the guidance suggests for PE). It would be very hard to apply the same rigour as we do

in maths to a subject given less than one-fifth of the time, and almost impossible to assess it in any serious way.

There are subjects that cannot be adequately taught in a 50-minute weekly session: I would love to hear from the teacher who can get children to produce quality art or DT work in this time-frame; to create something inspiring or cook something delicious!

Within my school, working topically meant that a significant proportion of English time would be spent covering history, geography or science-based topics as well, ensuring these were covered in significant depth and providing ample inspiration for the written work focusing on English skills. This in turn freed up more time to find some quality and joy from the other foundation subjects.

We know we can't be the only school facing these issues, but I wonder if there are many others facing it with the same level of angst, ineptitude and mismanagement.



***"Civil war  
has broken out  
between teachers in  
my school"***

*The writer is a primary teacher in England.*



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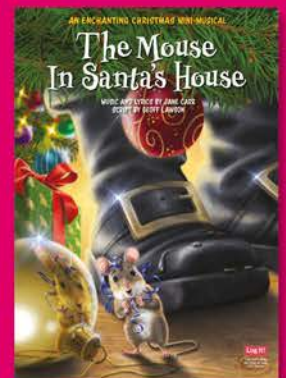
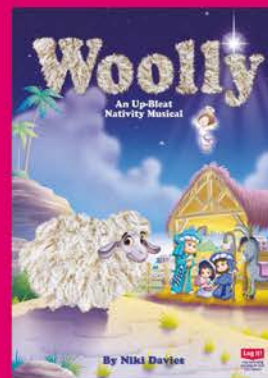
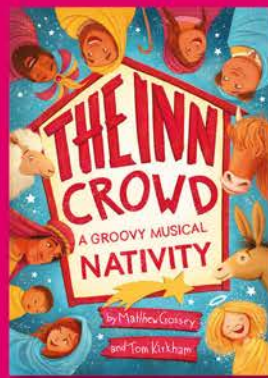
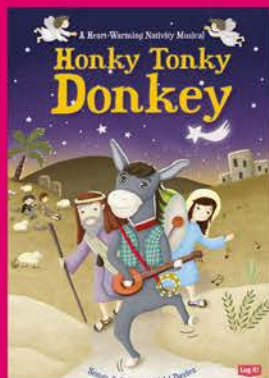
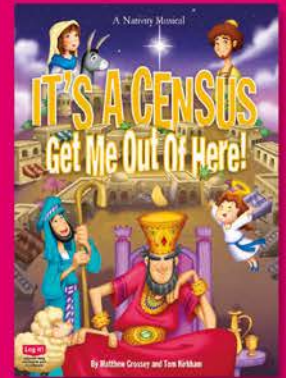
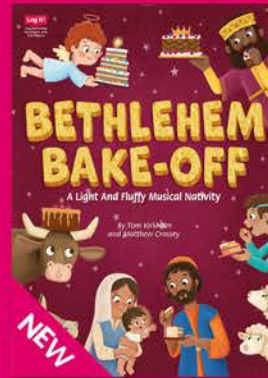
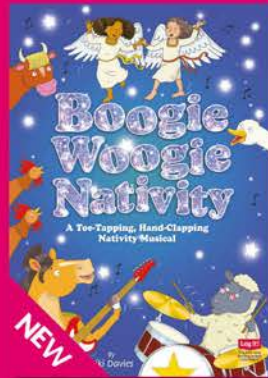
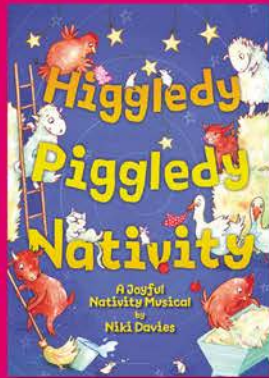


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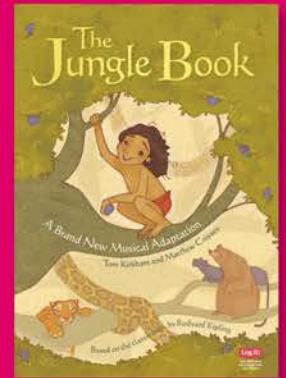
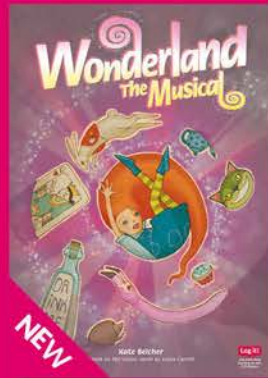
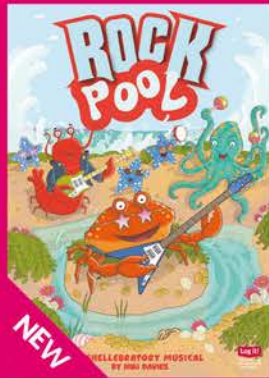


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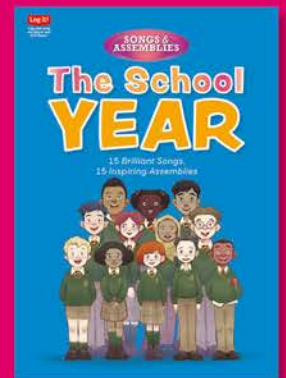
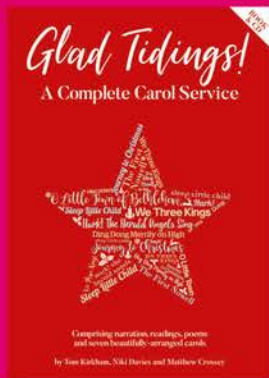
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# Play it AGAIN

Stick puppets and superheroes – develop little ones’ communication skills and empathy through role-play, says **Maryanne Martin...**

**T**he fight is starting to tire you out, but your superpowers are finally beginning to kick in. You’re able to single-handedly defeat the three bad guys and carry the little children to safety.

Are you wondering what your superpower is? Or how you managed to defeat the bad guys? Well, your power is whatever you want it to be, and you could beat 10 bad guys if you wanted! It’s all in the spirit of a great role-play activity...

Over the years, I have found role-play extremely captivating. It provides the participants – both young and old – an opportunity to transport themselves into an alternate reality, which in turn creates a safe space to express themselves and their dreams, fears, wishes and hopes without feeling scrutinised and judged. This makes role-play a great activity to help your KS1 pupils learn how to communicate. However, throwing your little ones into a role-play activity and hoping they just learn how to engage with others is not the way to do it. It is important that the children feel comfortable in expressing themselves before they engage in a structured role-playing environment.

The easiest way to do this is to encourage them to

take part in play where they pretend to be different characters that are interesting to them.

## Stick puppet characters

One fun activity to help your KS1 pupils get started with pretend play is to encourage them to create stick puppets

of their favourite characters from books or even films. Decorate sticks from the playground or wooden spoons with felt-tip faces, paper or felt stick-on clothes, and wool or string for hair. This is also a great way to tie in cross-curricular learning, such as art and design, and even the development of fine motor skills. Adult supervision will be needed for scissors!

Once everybody has a stick puppet, you can divide your class into groups and encourage them to pretend to be their characters. While children engage in this sort of pretend play, you will see them expanding their creative horizons and learning how to communicate and socialise

with their peers.

An activity of this sort will help your pupils build their social competence, too, and help them improve their ability to self-regulate and cope emotionally. Additionally, this sort of open-ended play will provide children with an opportunity to get creative and make their own storylines – something they’ll certainly need to do more of as they progress into KS2.

Putting your little ones in this position will also teach them how to be considerate and think from different points of view, which will in turn help to develop their empathy skills.

## Narrative structure

Once your pupils are able to relax and enjoy engaging in pretending, it is time for you to make the activity a little more structured (but still fun!). You could introduce some rules to the scenarios pupils are making up. For example, allow them to use the same characters, but encourage them to follow a rough framework by adding a new character with an ending to their story. This will





encourage the children to work towards a specific storyline based on the ending that you've specified. This addition to your activity will help pupils think more about their characters and storyline.

As the class gradually finds themselves getting used to the rules, you can try your hands at a fully structured role-play activity. Start by clearly defining the location and situation, and tell your students what the aim of their activity is going to be. For example, for a shop scenario, you could allocate different roles to each child, including shopkeeper, security personnel, and customer. Each of the characters will have their own aims and objectives; the shopkeeper's job is to check out the items, collect money, provide change, and be polite. The security guard is in charge of ensuring nobody is shoplifting. And the customer is here to buy ingredients to bake a birthday cake.

Be sure to make props to make the scenario more fun and believable for your pupils, such as a shopping list, a bill template, some money and change, a walkie-talkie for the security guard, food item cards, and whatever else you think might be relevant! Encourage the children to take turns being different characters, and see how they slowly learn how to communicate and ask for things.

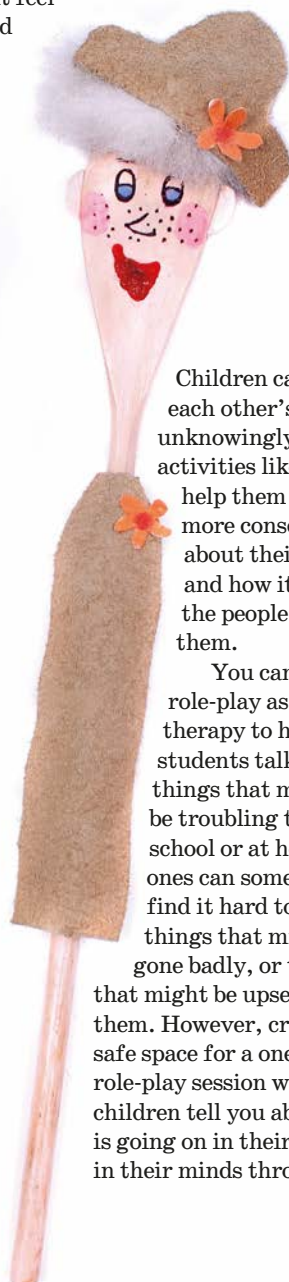
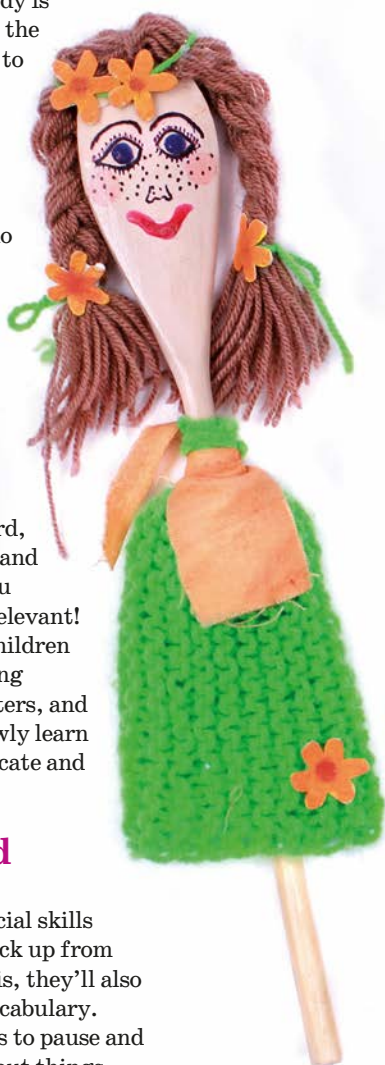
## Real-world skills

As well as the social skills little ones will pick up from activities like this, they'll also improve their vocabulary. Encourage pupils to pause and ask questions about things they don't understand or

words that they don't know. You could even ask them to write down word lists when they come across those that are unfamiliar, to help them learn something new.

As the children get more confident in this structured role-playing activity, you can mix things up a bit and add more elements of chaos. In the shop scenario for instance, you could add a thief that tries to steal things, a policeman who comes to the scene when the security guard catches the thief red-handed, a crying baby and stressed mother, and whatever else you and your students might fancy!

You can also use role-play to address bigger issues with your students. For example, you could showcase to your class how someone might feel if they were being bullied or treated unfairly.



## ROLE-PLAY IDEAS FOR KS1



### POST OFFICE

**Characters:** the sender of the letter, post office clerk, postman, and the receiver of the letter

**Props:** envelopes, stamps, postman bag, doorbell



### SUPERHEROES SAVE THE DAY

**Characters:** a group of superheroes, a few bad guys, civilians and children, and the Queen of England

**Props:** capes, masks, toys, a crown



### HAVING COFFEE AT A CAFÉ

**Characters:** a group of

friends, waiter, manager, and chef

**Props:** menu, bill, food cards, money, order pad



### GOING TO THE SEASIDE

**Characters:** children, friends, mummy, daddy, granny, grandpa, lifeguard, and ice-cream seller

**Props:** bucket and spade, lifeguard cap, ice-cream props, sandpit (if your school has one)

*“Role-play allows participants to transport themselves into an alternate reality”*

Children can hurt each other's feelings unknowingly, and activities like this will help them become more conscious about their actions and how it affects the people around them.

You can even use role-play as a form of therapy to help your students talk about things that might be troubling them in school or at home. Little ones can sometimes find it hard to express things that might have gone badly, or things that might be upsetting them. However, creating a safe space for a one-to-one role-play session will help children tell you about what is going on in their lives and in their minds through the

characters they feel safe and comfortable around.

The most important part about having a successful and fun role-playing activity is to just go with the flow. Encourage the class to get involved in planning the activity, too; maybe your pupils are more interested in fire engines and saving the day than in boring old supermarkets! No matter the situation, there will be lots of opportunity to develop skills. And most importantly, children will learn how to be spontaneous and have fun (and so will you!). **TP**



*Maryanne Martin is an education writer, and holds an MA in Education from the University of Sheffield.*



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# Investing in your team



**Phil Armstrong,**  
Head of Regional  
Development  
Early Excellence  
[www.earlyexcellence.com](http://www.earlyexcellence.com)

**Does your whole team have the knowledge and skills to fully meet the needs of your children? Do your curriculum leaders have the understanding to translate their subject appropriately for the youngest children in your school? As a senior leader, do you feel confident in supporting and developing your early years?**

**Here we take a look at three areas of professional development that will impact on quality outcomes for children.**

## **Powerful Interactions**

We know that adult child interactions lie at the heart of high-quality practice. These require not only knowledge of each child's interests and needs but crucially, a deep understanding of how children learn and their developmental steps through each area of learning. It is this knowledge that enables adults working with young children to become the best possible partners in learning.

This makes adult interaction and it's interconnection to curriculum, planning and provision, an essential area of focus for staff development, to help all staff recognise how central their interactions are in supporting a child's learning journey.

## **Curriculum Right from the Start**

As many schools continue to work at making their early years feel more connected to the rest of the school, curriculum development has become another key strand of professional development, especially for Subject Leaders.

To make curriculum continuity a success, those in a subject leadership role often require greater knowledge of how their subject is best approached in early years so that they can meaningfully support their EYFS colleagues. Early years can be 'unfamiliar territory' to many and with Ofsted's new focus on curriculum right from the start, senior leaders will need to invest in good quality CPD and motivate cross-phase collaboration

## **Confident Strategic Leadership**

The ability for senior leaders to fully articulate learning across the whole school is essential. Therefore, exploring the pedagogical approaches used by early years colleagues, understanding the 'what' and the 'why', are key conversations leaders need to be having on a regular basis with their teams.

Leaders may also need external support to ensure that they can talk about the journey and experiences their children make as they progress through their school; gaining help to feel secure in their own understanding of indicators of high-quality practice and child development.

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# MEDIUM TERM PLAN

## UKS2

## ENGLISH

# WRITE THIS WAY

SOPHIE BARTLETT

### FREE RESOURCES

Download your free worksheets and PowerPoint for this unit at [tinyurl.com/tp-TheViewerResources](http://tinyurl.com/tp-TheViewerResources)



The Viewer is a fantastic picture book aimed at Upper Key Stage 2. The story is short enough to read in 10 minutes, but has always, in my experience, gripped the children's attention and produced some brilliant pieces of writing. In this unit, your pupils will emulate the story of *The Viewer* to write their own narrative by imitating the grammatical techniques used and analysing how the story has been constructed, right down to sentence level.

for support.

Now draw attention to the use of dashes in this character description (slide 2). There are three examples where dashes are used in pairs as parentheses – what effect does it have when this extra information is added?

Try reading the sentences aloud without the added words in the middle. The class will use similar grammatical features in the next lesson when they write their own character description.

### Assessment

Can children sequence events correctly? In UKS2, children should already have some knowledge of adverbials, but this may be new to some and therefore need recapping – perhaps as a starter in the following lesson.

### WEEK 2

#### Learning objectives:

- To write a character description using multi-clause sentences

Re-read the opening section and focus on how the paragraphs may be short, but still contain lots of detail. Explain that long sentences such as these are called multi-clause, or complex, sentences. Show the children how these have been built up from a single main clause, or simple sentence (slides 4–7). By using commas and dashes to add phrases and clauses, these simple sentences become complex – and often much more impressive!

The character description in this story is four paragraphs, each based on

### WEEK 1

#### Learning objectives:

- To sequence events in a narrative
- To annotate grammatical features of a character description

Introduce the book *The Viewer* by Gary Crew and Shaun Tan (make sure to choose the latest edition published in 2012 as it contains detail pertinent to these lessons!) Can the children predict what the story might be about from the title and the cover? Read the book and give pupils time to look carefully at the pictures – there's a lot to be discussed. Ask their predictions after each page. Once finished, give the children a blank

copy of the generic story structure (see free lesson resources) and ask them to sequence the key events from *The Viewer*. Pupils can then use this grid throughout the unit to help them innovate and create their own stories.

Re-read and analyse the character description on page one. Ask children to annotate any hyphenated adjectives, adverbials of time or place (phrases which answer the question "where?" or "when?") and ambitious vocabulary (see slide 1 in the lesson resources PPT). Children who finish early could annotate these words with their definition, using a dictionary

Resources by Sophie Bartlett (@\_MissieBee)

The Viewer	Generic Story Structure
Tristan was curious	Main character (MC) description (including a specific personality trait)
Tristan likes the city dump. He fixes objects he finds there	Setting description of a place the character likes
He finds a curious wood and metal box	MC discovers an object at the place
Inside the box were 'binoculars' and compact discs	Description of the object
He worked out it was a Viewmaster and looked through	MC tries to work out what the object is
He put in 3 discs and heard chilling cries of creatures, creepy landscapes and people dying through the ages	MC uses object 3 times – what happens?
He went to school but can't stop thinking about the Viewmaster	MC goes out but can't stop thinking about the object
He looked through the Viewmaster again at home but all 3 discs had changed	Back at home, MC uses object 3 times again but it has changed each time
Tristan couldn't stop looking through it...	MC can't stop using the object!
Tristan didn't respond to his mother's calls. His bedroom was empty apart from a wooden and metal box on his desk.	MC disappears and another character walks into an empty room to find the mystery object...

Resource by Sophie Bartlett (@\_MissieBee)

Writing a Double, Double, Double sentence (double dash, double phrase, double adjective)

And when he had restored them - his fingers soft and aching, his eyes sharp and burning - he would place them on his desk and sit back, fixed with wonder at the smooth and secret workings of the life inside.

1. What was the character doing? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which 2 parts of their body play an important role? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
3. Find 2 adjectives to describe each body part. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
4. What did they do when they'd finished? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
5. Make it into a DDD sentence (using the following structure) and write it into your book:  
When s/he had \_\_\_\_\_ - his/her body part adjective and adjective, his/her body part adjective and adjective, s/he would \_\_\_\_\_

Writing a Double, Double, Double sentence (double dash, double phrase, double adjective)

And when he had restored them - his fingers soft and aching, his eyes sharp and burning - he would place them on his desk and sit back, fixed with wonder at the smooth and secret workings of the life inside.

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3. Find 2 adjectives to describe each body part. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
4. What did they do when they'd finished? \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
5. Make it into a DDD sentence (using the following structure) and write it into your book:  
When s/he had \_\_\_\_\_ - his/her body part adjective and adjective, his/her body part adjective and adjective, s/he would \_\_\_\_\_



a different stage in the protagonist's life. Pupils are going to write their own character description in a similar style, using the same sentence starters as those in *The Viewer* (see **slide 9**). Show examples from real children of how the original opening can be innovated (see **slides 10–12**). As a class, model building up a simple sentence to a complex sentence by collecting ideas and adding one phrase or clause at a time (**slide 13**).

The children should then write their own character description using the same sentence openers for each of the four paragraphs. They should aim to use a dash, or a pair of dashes, and hopefully even at least one multi-clause sentence like those they have just explored. Remind the children to update the first box of their 'My Story Structure' section in the grid from the previous lesson, and make sure they use this to loosely plan or update the structure of their story throughout the unit.



## Assessment

While most children should be able to include dashes for parentheses at least once, the most talented writers should be able to write multi-clause sentences for effect with accuracy.

## WEEK 3

### Learning objectives:

- To write a multi-clause sentences including metaphors

Re-read the setting description on page two. Ask children to identify the sentences that use dashes – can they read them without the extra information inside the parentheses, or after the dash (if only one is used)? What effect does the extra information have?

Photocopy the setting description and (assuming children's prior knowledge of the following terminology) ask pupils to annotate any examples of personification, similes, metaphors and alliteration or any other form of repetition (**slide 15**). Pupils who finish early could highlight any words they're unsure of and annotate them with definitions using a dictionary. They should then think about the setting for their own story – discuss amongst the class, and, using the prompt questions (**slide 16**), complete the second box of the 'My Story Structure' section in the grid from the first lesson.

A key feature of this book is the

complexity of its sentences. The class will use some of these sentences as inspiration for their own, which will be included in their final setting description. I have named the following sentence the 'triple metaphor' sentence (as there are three metaphors listed in a row): "But to Tristan, each barbed and jagged coil of rusted wire was a chain of gold, each shard of splintered glass a diamond, each oozing slick of oil a rainbowed vein of fresh-cut opal." Show the children how, in this sentence, three 'negative' objects are represented as 'positive' ones thanks to Tristan's imagination (wire as gold, glass as a diamond, oil as opal – see **slide 17**). The author has then added adjectives to make them expanded noun phrases, and listed the three ideas using commas to create another multi-clause sentence.

Ask pupils to imitate this process to create their own 'triple metaphor'

sentence based on their stories, firstly together as a class (**slide 18**) then independently (**slide 19**). You could use the 'Writing a Triple Metaphor sentence' worksheet to support the independent element. Challenge some children to use a semi-colon to list their expanded noun phrases as opposed to a comma (especially if they've already used a comma within the noun phrases).



## Assessment

Do children understand the concept of metaphor? Can they list expanded noun phrases accurately?

## WEEK 4

### Learning objectives:

- To write a multi-clause sentence including dashes
- To write a setting description using multi-clause sentences

Children are going to emulate another sentence this lesson, which I've named the 'double, double, double' sentence (as there are double dashes, double adjectives and double phrases): "And when he had restored them – his fingers deft and skilful, his eyesight sharp and focussed – he would place them on his desk and sit back, filled







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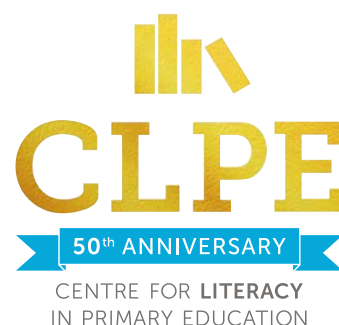
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\* Leeds Trinity University report on the impact of Power of Reading in the Exceed Academies Trust, Bradford. March 2019.





with wonder at the smooth and secret workings of the life inside.” After breaking down the sentence to show the children how it could have been created (slide 21), create one together as a class (slide 22). Pupils can then write their own independently based on their stories (slide 24). You could use the ‘Writing a DDD sentence’ worksheet to support this.



Look at the setting description in the story – it contains three paragraphs, each with only two or three sentences (slide 25). Children can now expand on the notes they wrote in the second box of their story structure grid using the ‘Setting description plan’ worksheet. Show a worked example of how this could be adapted (slide 26) and how the plan has been transformed into a piece of writing. Emphasise that although the writing looks quite long and detailed, each paragraph is actually only two or three sentences long (just like in the story) as each sentence is multi-clause. Point out where the ‘triple metaphor’ and ‘double, double, double’ sentences have been used.



### Assessment

Some children may find it difficult to implement all the previous learning into writing up their setting descriptions – in this case, encourage them to try to include at least one of the criteria (perhaps, for example, including a pair dashes in one of their sentences).

## WEEK 5 Learning objectives:

- To write the next section of the story using previously learned grammatical techniques



Up until now, we’ve been very clear with what each paragraph should contain, almost down to each individual sentence. From here on, we will start reducing the strict criteria slightly as hopefully pupils are now a little more confident.



Revisit the **story structure grid** from lesson one: our next chunk of writing is going to focus on boxes 3–5 (slide 29). This is all about the protagonist (or MC – main character) discovering a mysterious object. Read through the equivalent section in *The Viewer*, where Tristan finds a wood and metal box at the dump. We’ll now analyse the structure of this part of the story to inspire our own.

There are three paragraphs in this part of the story: a detailed description of the box; Tristan taking the box home; and then discovering what’s inside. The children will therefore emulate this in their own three paragraphs (slide 30). Once again, show some examples of real work for inspiration (slides 31–32).



### Assessment

It may be enough for some children to just get their ideas down at this stage, as we are expecting more independence from them at this point. For those who are more able, are they implementing any of the previously learned grammatical techniques, such as parentheses and multi-clause sentences?

## WEEK 6 Learning objectives:

- To continue writing the story independently using previously learned grammatical techniques

Re-read *The Viewer* up to where Tristan has looked through all three discs. Refer back to the story structure grid and explain that we will be writing about the sixth box in the grid now, where the main character uses the mysterious object three times, and something different happens each time (slide 33). Ask pupils if there is any relevance to using the object three times – explain the significance of a repetition of three and its prevalence in English (children may have heard of a ‘list of three’ when learning about persuasive techniques). The original story contains three paragraphs for this section, but pupils may want to write more in order to expand on their story – once again, show examples from real children’s stories (slides 34–46).



### Assessment

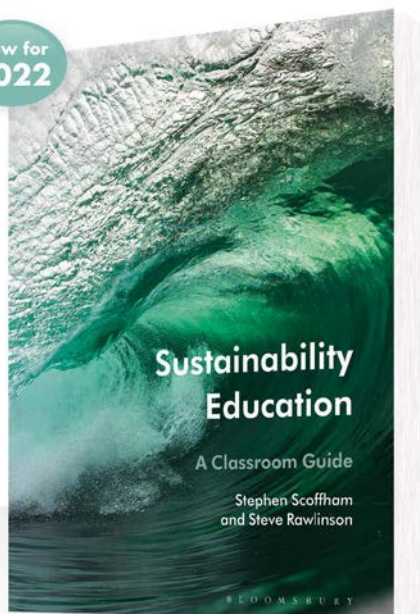
If teaching Year 6, this could be a good opportunity to assess against the Interim Teacher Assessment Framework to see which criteria the children have met that could be used as evidence (but probably only from weeks five and six which have been the most independent).



**Sophie Bartlett** is a Y5/6 teacher, and English and curriculum lead.



New for  
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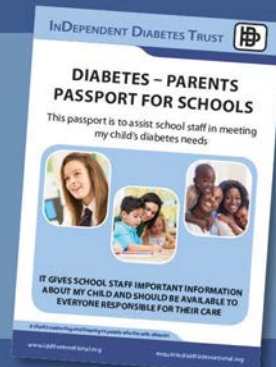
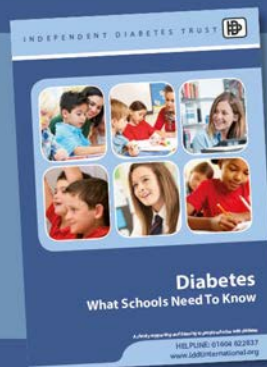
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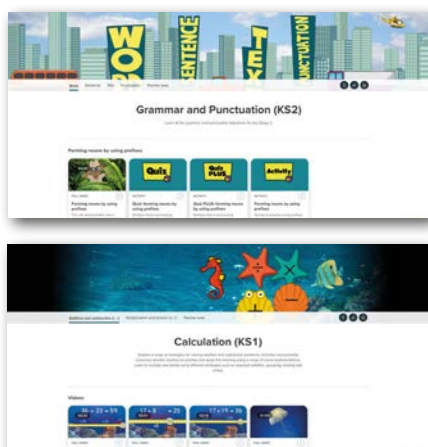
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## AT A GLANCE

- Easy to find, save and retrieve content
- Empowers teachers to generate engaging resources creatively and collaboratively
- New, flexible quiz tool for assessing understanding
- Blends seamlessly with other educational technology tools

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



Everyone likes to offer exciting lessons, packed with memorable experiences. The trouble is, tracking down suitable ones can take forever. Online videos have a nasty habit of disappearing. And even when you do find the perfect thing, can you always remember where it was?

Espresso, from Discovery Education, offers a neat solution to these perennial problems. It allows you to select what you need from an extensive bank of carefully curated audio, visual, interactive and text-based resources, conveniently organised by Key Stage and subject. It also promotes a breadth of learning by offering other features such as current events and news bulletins.

And, new for September 22, an Explore page has been added; a space for teachers to find the best of what Discovery Education has to offer. Use it to find inspiration for lessons, find new content, and get recommendations based on areas of interest.

For those who have encountered Espresso before, it is well worth taking another look as they have added an impressive range of improvements. The upgraded infrastructure includes enhanced navigation, so that you never fear getting lost. The My Content function

allows you to save and organise your work and resources in your own personal space. There is also a Quick List, into which you can drop things you like as you go along, eliminating the age-old 'Now where did I see that?' dilemma.

The Studio tool allows you to mould resources and activities into engaging lessons or allow pupils to create their own content. The new quiz function enables you to generate interactive assessments in a variety of formats, including embedding them into videos. It is also designed to work with other educational technology packages so you don't have to ditch everything you've done before.

The new student experience, also released this September, includes customisation and personalisation options, better search capabilities and a more intuitive assignments section.

On the face of it, this might seem like a virtual classroom platform. After all, the learning materials you create can easily be assigned to individuals, groups or the whole class remotely. Indeed, it could easily be used that way, should we ever need to resume hybrid lessons.

However, this is primarily being used in the classroom by the thousands of schools that are already enjoying its benefits.

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## VERDICT

- ✓ Visually appealing and user friendly
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- ✓ Promotes collaborative working

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# Sign HERE...

Make your classroom run like a well-oiled machine using classroom contracts to structure who does what, and when...

SARA ALSTON

As we start the new school year, one of the key issues is establishing effective working relationships in the classroom. When we are doing this, naturally our focus tends to be on the children. This can mean that we miss the importance and influence of the relationships between the adults in the room. Sometimes these will be between people who have been working together for years, but often between staff who have only just met or are new to being colleagues. They are then expected to develop the shared understanding needed to collaborate effectively to support children's wellbeing and learning almost instantly.

Being clear about and understanding the roles of the different people working in the classroom is key to ensuring the consistency children need to feel safe, which in turn will support their learning, wellbeing and behaviour. Few schools are willing or able to budget for proper liaison time between teachers and TAs, so we end up relying on a few snatched minutes on an INSET and then on good luck and making it up as we go along.

The teacher/TA relationship is key in the classroom. Not only does it act as a role model of working relationships for children, but it is fundamental to successful teaching and learning. Staff need to share information effectively so they know not only what is being taught, but how and why. In addition, they need clarity about how they're expected to deliver their role so

they can support and promote children's learning. This means that the ongoing sharing of planning and feedback is vital. But to be effective this needs to be grounded in a clear expectation of staff roles, which makes understanding how to support learning explicit.

A classroom contract provides a clear framework to support and structure discussions about identifying and planning the roles and responsibilities of each member of the staff team in the individual classroom. While these may include certain common elements across a setting, to be effective and useful they will need to be very different in Reception to in Year 6. They may need to vary across a year group, too, as there are different children and staff in each class, and it is important the contract reflects the needs of everyone in the room.

## A classroom contract needs to..

- Be ideally set up as part of common practice to support effective working at the beginning of the year, not as a response to alleviate difficulties if they arise.
- Be produced as a piece of collaborative work where all involved contribute, not regulated solely by the teacher or their line manager. They are a way of clarifying both the teacher and the TA roles and the expectations around them.



- Provide a formal opportunity for all staff to ask questions, and make comments and suggestions.
- Reflect the strengths of the adults and the needs of the children in each class, as well as the school policies.
- Act as working documents that can and should be adjusted as the needs and circumstances develop, including any changes of staff and as the children mature and change during the year.
- Act as prompts for the TA (and teacher role) at each stage of the lesson as well as what happens before the lesson (planning) and after the lesson (feedback).
- Place a focus on the role of the TA in supporting learning, rather than acting as an administrative assistant to the teacher.

The level of detail needed in a classroom contract will depend on the relationships in the classroom. It is important to balance providing enough information to support clarity and consistency without making it too long and unwieldy. Often the discussion, and the time given to it,

is more important than what is recorded.

See the attached download for a blank template you can fill in.

## Things to consider

- When and how to share planning and feedback.
  - The balance of roles with the children and admin jobs, e.g. who changes reading books, marks spelling tests, and when.
  - Are things different at the beginning and end of the day and on different days, particularly when the teacher has PPA?
  - Support for physical and medical needs and how these will be met.
  - Allowances for if there is more than one TA or teacher (due to job shares).
  - The role of IT in the classroom and who has responsibility for this and how it is managed.
  - Use of resources and particular strategies, including those used as part of behaviour management. Think about any rewards and sanction policies, including who can and can't give them and the recording of behaviour incidents.
  - The TA's role in marking – if and how they should write in children's books
  - The hours that the TA(s) works. It is likely to be less than the teacher(s).
- Most TAs' contracts are term-time only, and often only for school hours. They should, therefore, carry less responsibility.
- Any roles that the TA may carry out outside the classroom, e.g.



Classroom contract template

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playground duties, first aid, etc. and how these impact on their time in the classroom.

- That staff may change, and it is not always possible or appropriate just to slot a new member of staff into a role when someone leaves. The new person will have different skills, experiences and personality, therefore the contract should be amended to reflect this.

A classroom contract should cover class routines and set clear expectations, but it cannot cover the unexpected, and much of primary school life is responding to unforeseen circumstances. So it is important to retain the flexibility to cater for individual needs and situations.

For a classroom contract to be truly effective, the school also needs to give staff the time and space to have the discussions necessary to set it up.

Now, this is not a five-minute job, but giving the time for it at the beginning of the school year pays real dividends. However, bear in mind that the classroom contract will need to be reviewed regularly. As the year goes on, the children will mature and change, so the ways in which you support them and their learning will need to change too. It is important schools then give time to review the contract to reflect this.

At its best, a classroom contract acts as a working document which supports and structures discussions between the teacher and their TA about what happens in their classroom and how they can best work as a team to support children and their learning. **TP**



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





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**Tuesday 31st January** Play for Children with Autism with Dr Lila Kossovaki

*In this session the audience will be introduced to the importance of play in the life of children with special attention to autistic children, how play is likely to look like in these children and how adults can support it.*

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# WHY WE DITCHED THE TIMETABLE STRAITJACKET

From stress and constraint to Curriculum K – how **Ben Levinson's** school made fluid learning work

**T**imetables... love them? Hate them? Find them incredibly stressful? Wouldn't be without them? If you started this conversation in any staff room across the country, I'd suggest you'd get the full spectrum of opinions – we certainly did. Over the past year, we've been trialling a far more flexible approach to timetables at Kensington Primary School, and I wanted to share our experience with you.

Maybe it's best to start with *why* we decided to do this. At Kensington, we've always believed passionately in empowering our incredibly skilled team. Teaching is one of the most over-monitored professions, and as a school with wellbeing at its heart, we knew that this over-monitoring caused untold stress. We knew the importance of autonomy for wellbeing, yes, but also to get the best from people.

## Clearing the way

Teaching is not a one-size-fits-all job. Children are different. Teachers are different. Schools are different. Giving people freedom to decide how they teach is just common sense. So, we removed many of the barriers. Gone were, 'You must have three success criteria, two of which have to be generated by the children', and in came the freedom and flexibility to do what you felt was best. Some learning benefits from success criteria. Some doesn't. Sometimes children generating the criteria is great and sometimes it isn't. We supported our teams – particularly those starting out in the profession – but we also trusted them to do what was right for their children because they know them best.

While we were doing this, we were also hard at work creating a brand-new curriculum. (This was before the 2019 EIF and the pandemic.) Our experience and reflections, along with so many conversations we were having, had led us to realise the curriculum as it stood was not fit for purpose. A

mental and physical health crisis; the rapidly changing world (over 50 per cent of current jobs won't exist by 2030); feedback from businesses that children had the academic qualifications but not the skills for 21st century life; a profession on its knees, etc, etc. And this was all pre-Covid! It was clear something needed to change.

Our response to this was Curriculum K: a curriculum that balances academic learning with health, communication and culture; that provides children with what they need to thrive in the 21st century; and that empowers our team to deliver what they know is needed for their classes. One of the drivers for Curriculum K was the overcrowded timetable and the constant feeling that we were repeatedly ramming a round peg into a far-too-small square hole.

Let me briefly transport you back to my NQT year. There I was, sat in my classroom, looking at the number of hours I was expected to teach of each subject and looking at my blank timetable, and realising that it didn't fit. *Don't worry*, I was told, *everyone knows that, we just have to put it in to tick the box!* That's even before the





trips, performances, visitors and everything else that goes on threw it completely off track.

## Freedom for teachers

In contrast, with Curriculum K, we were in a position where each subject was of equal importance; we had removed enough content that it was achievable in the time available, and we had a desire to give our teachers the freedom to make the best decisions for the children (and themselves) in order to maximise learning.

Initially, the timetable was changed so that we no longer had maths and English in the morning. Sometimes we did, sometimes we didn't. But children were just as likely to start the day with an emotional health or communication lesson as English. As we continued to evolve our curriculum and our approaches, it increasingly became counterintuitive to have fixed times for specific lessons.

As part of our drive to improve the

## ***“The truth? Your best teachers are already doing this. And that timetable stapled to their door? A work of fiction...”***

quality of education and reduce workload, we stopped marking in favour of teachers spending more time and energy on assessment for learning (AfL). As teachers focused on this more, it became increasingly clear that they needed greater freedom to adapt the curriculum. If children struggled in maths that day, time would need to be found to revisit the subject, but if they are flying in culture, it's perfectly OK to move on quickly. But this was still happening within defined lesson times. What if teachers had freedom to totally change what they were teaching on any given day or week so that it matched the needs of their children?

So, we trialled it in Y3 and Y4. It was optional for teachers and we gave them freedom over how they did it. Some still wanted a timetable for security but knew they could adapt it.

Others got a blank timetable

every Friday and mapped out the week ahead. Some chose to tweak as they went, based on their assessment. We checked in with them regularly to see how it was going and to get feedback. All six Y3 and 4 teachers decided very quickly they wanted to be part of it. Before too long, Y2 had also come and asked to get involved. This year, all teachers will be taking the approach. (Although it will remain optional and they will have freedom over how they implement it.)

## Breaking out of the box

The results? Learning is far more fluid. Teachers are focused on the needs of their children and adapting what they are teaching to respond to them. Interestingly, this is also now working for content. How many of us have looked in horror at the English lesson we have to teach on a Wednesday after swimming, or a history lesson with lots of heavy content on a Friday afternoon? Teachers are now adapting their timings to meet the needs of children. This flexibility is key because they are all different. One class might be great at working together after lunch while another is best first thing in the morning, for example. There are also far more opportunities for teachers to ensure learning has been remembered and to adapt their planning so that defined end points are met. Finally, just the fact that teachers know they

can change their timetables has had a massive impact on wellbeing. It is just another area of stress for teachers, knowing they have to squeeze learning into a defined box. Learning doesn't often happen as a perfectly-formed, uniform process, so why would we try to make it this way?

Of course, there are some challenges. We have limited space for our physical health lessons so time in the hall and playground is timetabled and has to be adhered to. We need to work with some of our SEND children, particularly those who are autistic, so that the changes in routine don't cause them distress.

In this case, we have found that talking them through the day or week as applicable has been more than sufficient to help them process any changes and enable them to engage fully.

We will continue to reflect on and refine the approach but I cannot see us going back to the timetable straitjacket. Freedom has brought so many benefits for our children and team. But the truth? Your best teachers are already doing this. And that timetable stapled to their door? A work of fiction. **TP**



**Ben Levinson, OBE is head teacher at Kensington Primary School.**

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# *“We’ve gained and retained our COMMUNITY’S FAITH”*

Abbey Mead Primary Academy struggled to connect with parents, but a whole-team effort has made the school a trusted source of support for all

GARY ALDRED

**F**ollowing a period of turbulence in 2018, Abbey Mead Primary Academy’s local community had undoubtedly begun to lose confidence in the school despite the incredible commitment of the teaching and support staff. Around this time, a strong mix of emotions were prevalent amongst parents. We had regular visits from them, and on each occasion, it was hard to tell whether we’d be greeted with positivity, frustration or a somewhat sombre mood where mums, dads and carers were equally unsure of the reception they would receive.

We knew this situation had to change. I’d never before been a part of such a vibrant school community that, at the same time, suffered such fractious relationships with parents who held so little faith in being heard.

It’s important to note that throughout all these challenges, the school staff remained unwaveringly dedicated to its pupils. They were the ones who were essential to repair relationships, knew their pupils best and could effect change and ensure the school would thrive once more.

## **Know who you serve**

Vital to effecting change was developing a shared understanding and celebration of the rich

culture of the school, while also addressing parental concerns and challenging practices which had long become accepted as ‘just the way things are’. We knew we had to ensure the community’s values were interwoven with the school’s ethos and curriculum, and build purposeful parent partnerships.

While school staff across the country will know only too well the challenges of supporting families with the removal of common barriers – morning routines; school avoidance; relationships with technology – our local community showed that they needed more. They needed a system built for them that not only understood but also challenged cultural expectations, advocating for them as individuals; a team of

professionals who not only understood the cultural expectations, but also had experience of supporting others in navigating visa applications, housing issues, hidden domestic abuse, recourse to public funds and so much more.

## **Breaking barriers**

While the vision was clear, next came the task of formulating and empowering a team that held the necessary knowledge and skills to effect change. Removing Barriers to Learning (RB2L) brought together colleagues who had previously worked in isolation, providing opportunities to collaborate, thereby ensuring the voices of pupils, and the community, would be heard and acted upon.

Originally, SEND colleagues, those with attendance responsibility, home-liaison practitioners and safeguarding leads worked together to ensure a holistic outlook. However, as with many new concepts, RB2L quickly evolved, adding further colleagues to represent the school’s inclusion and wellbeing advocacy.

The work undertaken by RB2L acted as a breath of fresh air that heralded a new approach to parental, pupil and community relations and restored confidence. Parents felt valued, colleagues were once more discussing the essence of pupil wellbeing, and the internal and external barriers which had prevented pupils thriving were being challenged.

Newly established tiered support systems allowed the right support to be put into place in a timely manner. The impact of these approaches was seen in tangible results through improvements in absenteeism, reductions in behavioural incidents and improved communication with parents and other local stakeholders.

Over time, more refined systems and processes were introduced with a specific focus on unpicking the local risks to our pupils’ welfare. There was a drive to understand and improve the mental health and wellbeing of our children





and their families. The most notable contribution to this was the commissioning and deployment of a mental health practitioner from the NHS.

## Advocating equality

Advocating for children soon became second nature for staff at all levels. Colleagues reported that improved communication with parents

improvement was the lens through which SEND was viewed and the erosion of cultural stigmatisms that were held. This openness and acceptance allowed the school to put into place bilingual support groups and training to best support increasing numbers of families. Through outreach work and running ESOL courses, ASD-accredited courses and Solihull Parenting

*“Spending time with parents, that occasional smile and hello, instils immeasurable faith”*

and the community was contributing to demonstrable improvements and changes in attitudes towards our more vulnerable pupils, most noticeably assisting in the removal of cultural stigmatisms regarding SEND.

Through our efforts to advocate and celebrate equality, diversity and inclusion, parents began to openly discuss commonalities and the challenges they faced. A notable

Programme sessions, parents were enabled to better support the needs of their children.

More broadly, the RB2L team provided an avenue for parents to seek support outside of their community views and expectations.

Over time, individuals who had suffered domestic abuse felt comfortable opening up about their lived experiences, allowing them to seek support. Parents began to recognise and understand the detrimental impact their home situations were having upon

themselves and their children. The team became essential in signposting and advocating for those who had seemingly lost their voices amongst cultural expectations and practices.

## Remaining resolute

Despite all that had been achieved to this point, the arrival of Covid in March 2020 laid a new set of challenges in Abbey Mead’s path. School staff mobilised and shifted their focus to ensure that families not only had access to a quality education, but also the necessary access to food, benefits and support in a community detrimentally impacted by the loss of the local cash economy. We were not a community broken by Covid, but one that continued to thrive together, our resolve only strengthened as we forged new connections with local radio stations, religious organisations and charities to best support our families.

## The impact

Recently, I was standing in the hall at parents’ evening, doing my usual rounds, when I spotted him – the parent that, despite every effort, would find me on the gates each morning with what would seem like a trivial matter but was clearly important to him and his child. Standing at the feedback table, he took his slip and pen, apparently guarding what he would write as if to make his grand announcement. But any feelings of distrust or resentment he held were replaced by reassurance, as he watched me approach and read his entry – afterwards, his smile from across the hall said it all. **TP**



*Gary Aldred is principal at Abbey Mead Primary Academy.*

[@AbbeyMead\\_TMET](#)

## WHAT’S THE CONTEXT?

### LOCATION:

Abbey Mead Primary Academy sits in the heart of the city of Leicester. With its Victorian façade, it’s a colossus in an urban area, located just off Leicester’s Golden Mile.

### COMMUNITY:

The school serves a multicultural community, with the vast majority of pupils being of an Indian heritage, and the overwhelming majority, 98% of its 724 pupils, speaking English as an additional language. Its locale is globally recognised for its Diwali celebrations and features a main street full of opulent jewellery and sari shops.

### OUR NEEDS:

Local employment opportunities are dominated by the local clothing and food production factories and there is a sense that the families who live in the Victorian housing stock are a somewhat isolated and overlooked community. Many of our parents find themselves in unstable employment, often on zero-hour contracts and predominantly in a cash-led economy. As a result of the cultural expectations and norms of the community, many of our families live in multiple occupancy and multigenerational households. Consequently, they are often prevented from accessing government-sponsored assistance programmes for individuals and families in need. As with parents’ struggles to access financial support, the school faces its own challenges due to high levels of deprivation and the associated barriers but lower than reflective levels of pupil premium funding.

# 5 REASONS TO TRY... Money Heroes

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## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Young Enterprise's award-winning Money Heroes programme helps teachers and parents deliver financial education for children aged 3–11. The programme's fun and engaging free teaching resources are available in various formats to introduce into your lessons, helping young people develop a positive mindset with money.

### 1 INSPIRES ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

Learning about money is an important part of growing up. Research tells us that children are developing their mindset around money by seven years old, so we should be having these conversations during children's formative years at primary school. We also know that teachers are the second most significant influence in helping them develop this knowledge, after parents. That's why Money Heroes was created – to help children learn about money and finances in a fun and engaging way, both at home and in school.



children's financial learning to life.

### 4 INTRODUCES EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

We know that children learn best when faced with real and relatable situations – that's why Money Heroes resources are based on practical, everyday scenarios such as going shopping or how we earn money. We also know that children have an increased social awareness – that's why we explore themes important to them such as sustainability and food waste. And money can provide a powerful context for learning in other subjects too, so

embedding financial education across the curriculum will help engage children with learning by making it more relevant.

### 2 OFFERS A RANGE OF RESOURCES

The programme is flexible and can be introduced at any point in the school year, covering topics such as savings, pocket money and budgeting. Resources are free to access and include storybooks, digital games, printable lesson plans and even board games that you can play in your classroom. There are also materials available for children with special educational needs and disabilities. With specific resources for teachers and parents, they are fun, engaging and designed to spark conversations around money and finances, while also helping to develop literacy and numeracy skills.

### 3 ENCOURAGES PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT

As parents (or carers) and teachers are the two key influencers in developing children's financial attitudes and behaviours, the Money Heroes programme has been designed to encourage collaboration between home and school to increase financial capability. Working together in partnership inside and outside of the classroom, teachers and parents can access resources with clear learning objectives that complement each other's activity, track progression, and provide real-world learning opportunities that bring their



Find out more:

Visit [moneyheroes.org.uk](https://moneyheroes.org.uk) or search Money Heroes

### 5 PROVIDES ONGOING TEACHER SUPPORT

The Money Heroes resources are all designed to provide you with the knowledge, skills and confidence to help you teach children about money and develop their mindset. But we know that financial education is more than just providing resources – it also needs to adapt to the fast-changing financial landscape children face. That's why we offer free CPD-accredited teacher training sessions, access to a supportive advisory service, mentoring opportunities and much more to help you feel fully equipped to deliver engaging and relevant financial education lessons.

## KEY POINTS

Support children to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to manage their money, make informed financial decisions and achieve their goals in life.

Help young people navigate through an increasingly cashless and digital society where most access a smartphone at age 10 and use a debit card by age 11.

Encourage children to consider the connection between money choices and broader issues affecting the planet with our range of resources linked to the climate.

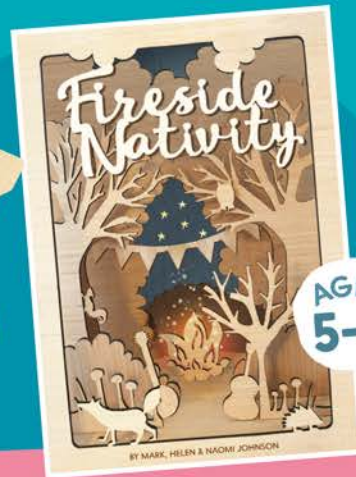
Enable conversations with teachers and parents to help children understand and avoid the potential risks involved in gaming and other online scams.



# NEW from Out of the Ark

## A Fireside Nativity

Gather round the campfire for this cosy re-telling of the nativity story.



AGES 5-9



AGES 3-6



## BaArmy BETHLEHEM

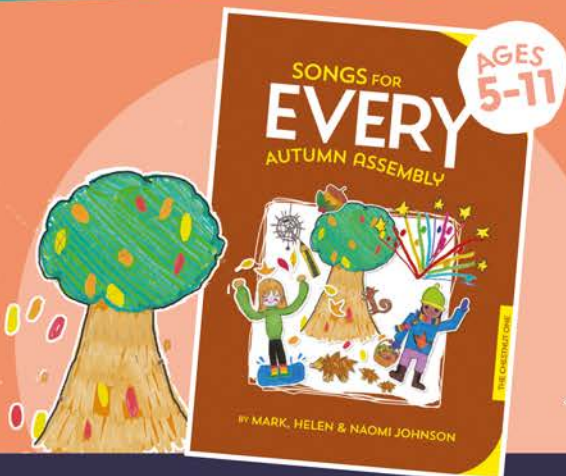
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AGES 7-11



AGES 5-11

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MUSIC ➔

Out of the Ark Music

# Fireside nativity & songs for autumn

Two celebratory musical resources for the autumn term from Out of the Ark



## AT A GLANCE

- A fully scripted musical nativity
- A collection of new assembly songs covering a range of autumnal themes
- Easy-to-learn songs with backing tracks
- Both come with a host of thoughtfully created extras

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



Are you any good at writing music and lyrics for children? No, me neither. Even teachers who have the requisite creativity would probably not have the time.

Thank goodness for Out of the Ark, then. They really have perfected the art of producing excellent song-based resources, precisely pitched for primary children to suit every part of the school calendar.

For me, the autumn term has a character all of its own. Stretching from the first tentative days of the school year, right up to the excitement of Christmas, it is all about change, hope and thankfulness. With these latest two releases, Out of the Ark really captured the essence of this season.

*Songs for Every Autumn Assembly* does exactly what it says in the title. Through fifteen catchy songs, it covers themes from new beginnings to bonfires. Each one has a charm of its own but, for me, there was something particularly lovely about the gently melodic Dance of the Leaves. I can also see the irresistibly foot-tapping Fireworks! becoming a firm favourite.

As the term draws to a close, why not cosy up to Christmas with *A Fireside Nativity*. Aimed at five-to-nine-year-olds,

this charming show uses the premise of a group of campers sharing yarns around the fire to retell the Christmas story. Provided you can get past the bleak prospect of sleeping in a tent in the UK in December, it works remarkably well. In any case it ties in with the theme of Mary and Joseph being travellers who have to sleep rough... sort of.

For me, what makes this production is the music. I know everyone has different tastes but I thought it had some adorable songs. They were a little bit different from the expected, which is no bad thing, and offered plenty of opportunities for schools with confident singers to voice multiple parts simultaneously.

This will come as no surprise to Out of the Ark's many existing fans. They have a knack of writing accessible and enjoyable songs that even the most self-conscious staff-member should feel confident with teaching.

As you would expect, both products come with music and lyrics in a choice of formats. There are also plenty of extras, such as assembly plans to accompany *Songs for Every Autumn Assembly*. Wondrous creations coming Out of the Ark in twos? There's hope for us yet!

## teach PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ Simple, catchy, accessible songs
- ✓ A charming, tuneful nativity with a twist
- ✓ Available in a choice of formats
- ✓ Extras including assembly plans
- ✓ Multiple parts so everyone gets a chance to sing
- ✓ Covers themes of change, hope and thankfulness
- ✓ Perfectly pitched for primary-age children

## UPGRADE IF...

You want to get your school year off to a joyous, musical start with seasonally themed songs.

RRP £24.95 for nativity resources. RRP £24.95 for autumnal songs resources. Performance licence £19.80 [www.outoftheark.co.uk](http://www.outoftheark.co.uk)



# Let's talk about sex (and babies)

How to teach your Year 6 class about the birds and the bees without the 'eeuwws!' and 'errghs!'

MATTHEW LANE

**R**elationship and sex education. You might know it as RSE, SRE, sex ed, or 'The Talk'; whatever you call it, it's a topic that can bring dread when seen on your medium-term plan.

But why? In science we cover many other body systems without as much fuss (although all that talk of poo in the unit on digestion can be giggle-inducing).

## What am I doing?

RSE can be an emotive and personal subject; the Department for Education received over 60,000 responses and contacts when the consultation on the new guidance was assembled in 2019. It can be confusing when starting at a new school as there is far more autonomy over what is taught in this subject than in many other curriculum areas, so approaches can differ significantly. Even schools in the same local authority may differ in what they teach from the prescribed scheme.

So, the first job is to find the member of staff that is responsible for the curriculum and check through your school's documentation in detail. Book in a meeting; this is not something that should be done in the middle of lunch. If you're not sure where to start, you can find some suggested talking points in the sidebar.

Some schools will have very specific vocabulary that

can and cannot be used. It is surprising to see curriculums pre-2019 that specifically did not want teachers to use the word *clitoris* nor make any reference to it when teaching female anatomy. In other schools, contraception may be on the county's model curriculum but not taught by the school. It is helpful to make a table with the MUST, COULD and BANNED words or topics which can then be shared with the other adults in the room before teaching begins. This is especially important when covering LGBT+ topics, as terminology and best practice are evolving and this content needs careful consideration.

Make sure you're using the correct terminology, too. A penis is a penis. The vulva is external, the vagina is internal. Expecting children to take a responsible approach to their RSE learning will be hobbled by talking about "boy bits" and "flowers".

## Relationships and me

Like many other parts of teaching, our own personal experiences can shape our planning and delivery of RSE lessons. Having had a good look at the curriculum, take time to reflect upon your own worldview and how this makes some content easier or more difficult to teach. Since 2019, relationships have taken centre stage in the primary curriculum. What

is your own experience of friendships and romantic relationships? Do you as an adult know what makes a 'healthy relationship'?

As a child, your own questions about sex, sexuality or relationships may have been met with red faces and vague descriptions. Historically, England has underperformed in the teaching of RSE compared to our European neighbours, with this often attributed to our seemingly Victorian views on the subject as a nation.

Just like you would with other subjects, take time to reflect on where you need to improve subject knowledge. Relate, BBC, Childline, NSPCC and thinkuknow (CEOP) all offer great guidance and definitions on what a healthy relationship is.



## What is that for?

As a man who has spent the last 10 years in Years 5 and 6, I've taught a lot of children about periods. Once upon a time, we would have split children into groups according to their internal or external plumbing, with girls taught by a female teacher and boys by a male. It was quite improper for boys to know about 'that time of the month'. Now staff teach what the curriculum asks of them, which can mean we meet content of which only have an academic understanding, and where practical experience could be of benefit.

So, how can you overcome this? The best place to start is to ask your colleagues or friends. While it's not

appropriate to discuss any personal experiences with children in any aspect of RSE, you can refer to your 'friends' and share what they have said. For instance, my class initially found it surprising I had asked my female friends what might be helpful to teach about periods, but appreciated hearing the views of real people alongside the content on the flipchart.

## *"Let's stop thinking of RSE as simply 'Sex after SATs'"*

### Putting tab P into slot V

While it makes up a small part of the primary RSE curriculum (nor is it compulsory to be taught until KS3), human

reproduction is the most awkward topic to teach for many. It can leave us all a bit red faced, but it's important to begin the learning as we would in any other areas.

Start by asking children to share what they already know. This prior knowledge can range from parents having already explained; garbled explanations from older siblings; playground

gossip about 'boys weeing inside girls' (this is suggested more often than you would think); or vague references about special cuddles and other euphemisms.

From this, explain how a man's penis goes inside a woman's vagina and this is the start of making a baby. And say it to your class, rather than leaving it to a video or a worksheet. If we as the adults in the room cannot bring ourselves to verbalise the content, how can we expect children to ask thoughtful questions or speak up about sexual content when in need of help?

Check that resources are of good quality, too. Is the video you're using 20 years old? Are the anatomic diagrams far too cartoonish and missing vital details? I once was given a resource that the made a penis look like a spatchcocked chicken, where any real-life male would have been in need of medical attention if his anatomy was arranged in such a way. The boys found it hysterically incorrect; the girls were very confused.

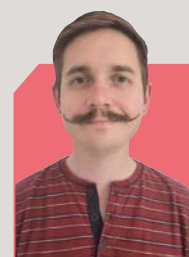
Answering questions can be minefield with human reproduction. Before you begin, be honest with children that there is content you can discuss if asked and some you

## WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING RSE

- What is the prior learning? From where am I teaching?
- Does this need to be taught in the summer term and in isolation? Can it be folded into our PSHE and/or science lessons in the spring term?
- What MUST be taught?
- What can I cover if a question is asked?
- What most definitely cannot be taught? This is especially important with any content linked to human reproduction and contraception.
- What vocabulary should and should not be covered?

are not allowed to. There is also the backstop of "that is a brilliant question, but I'm not allowed to answer it. Please go home and ask a trusted adult." Some teachers use a question box and bits of paper, others prefer hands up. A mix of the two is helpful as some children will not want to put up their hands, but others will benefit from the ebb and flow of an open discussion.

RSE is a topic we can all find tricky to teach. It can bring up emotive content and make us question our own opinions on the relationships we have and our own attitudes to sex and sexuality. Let's stop thinking of RSE as simply 'Sex after SATs' and give it a proper place in curriculum planning. **TP**



**Matthew Lane** is a primary teacher and subject leader in Norfolk.







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## School profile



**Name:** Gagle Brook Primary School  
**Headteacher:** Emily Holloway  
**Location:** Oxfordshire  
**Ofsted rating:** Good  
**Size:** 210 pupils  
**Extra info:** The school opened only a few years ago, in 2018



*Emily Holloway, Headteacher*

**“We are on an exciting journey, driven by sustainability”**

A love and respect for nature flows through Gagle Brook Primary School – from the design of the buildings to the curriculum – finds Dorothy Lepkowska





There is noticeable peace and tranquility around Gagle Brook Primary, despite this being a normal school day. It could be because the Oxfordshire school is currently only populated up to Year 3 and some classes are still waiting to be filled with the joyful sounds of children learning.

Or perhaps it's because it is a lovely warm day in early summer and most pupils are doing activities outside. But it could also be the environment in which these students and teachers go about their teaching and learning. The innovatively designed buildings make Gagle Brook a one-off ecologically speaking.

Regardless, there is a sense of purpose here underpinned by an evolving curriculum that is strongly focused on a love and respect for nature, an awareness of local ecology, and a deep understanding of the challenges facing the planet.

Gagle Brook is situated on Elmsbrook, the UK's first 'eco-town' – a sprawling zero-carbon housing development being built on former farmland in Bicester. The school opened in 2018 with just the nursery and reception class, and by the time it reaches capacity in two years' time, it will have 210 pupils.

"The driver here is the environment and sustainability, and we are all on an exciting journey which is guided by that," says Emily Holloway, the headteacher. "Our curriculum has four main streams – enquiring minds, rich vocabulary, knowledge and skills, and the One Planet Principles.

"The last one is particularly important and encapsulates 10 points that are threaded through our curriculum, so we live and breathe these in our learning and in the children's play," she says.

## ENQUIRING MINDS

Staff at Gagle Brook believe that children should be able to talk and question their learning, to express and encourage their curiosity about the world, and to have opinions.

Lessons often begin with a quiz to recap on previous learning and to help pupils to understand what they've already covered, to give context to what's to come.

"Teachers model enquiry and the language that is needed to the children so that they become effective at doing this themselves," explains Matt Street, Year 3 teacher and sustainability lead.



"We celebrate this in every class and if a child is seen to be using their enquiring mind, they move their peg along a special chart, so they soon understand that they're using this method and that it has had a positive effect.

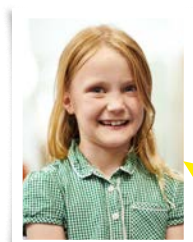
"The children are taught that no question is a daft question. If they don't understand something, then they should ask.

"Einstein asked daft questions and he became a brilliant scientist."

## RICH VOCABULARY

Developing a rich vocabulary is also an important step in helping children express themselves at Gagle Brook. "We try to ensure the children are exposed to high quality words in every lesson, so this focus is not a standalone or separate subject," says Chloe Burridge, who teaches Year 2.

## Pupil voice



Lily  
7, Year 2

I like that our school is eco-friendly and that we care about the environment. We have solar panels on the roof which give us our electricity and we don't produce greenhouse gases.



Dolly  
8, Year 3

Our school is different from other schools because we're zero carbon. We also have lots of exciting activities and clubs and I really like running club because we get to run around the track and get prizes.



Kara  
8, Year 3

"The teachers are really brilliant at doing lessons. I like English, maths and science and they make it interesting. Our toilets are also really good because they're flushed by rainwater, and we have a garden on the roof.



EliZ  
8, Year 3

This is a really cool school with fun lessons like PE, where we do bench ball, and there is also a quidditch club. We do different games every term, and I would like karate club to come back."



“We choose reading texts carefully so that the language used is exciting and stimulating, and this in turn encourages the children to use this vocabulary themselves. Successful readers always know a lot of words.”

The school also uses Tales Toolkit, a story-telling approach with four mystery ‘bags’ – one for character, one for the setting, a problem bag and another containing an outcome. Children pull one object out of each bag and create a story from what they end up with. The teacher then helps the pupils to build on their ideas to stimulate their imagination, and to learn and use new words.

“We also have opportunities for encouraging and modelling oracy in our early years setting through methods like role play, so it starts from a young age, and this is particularly important for the pupils from more disadvantaged backgrounds, so they have the same chances in life as everyone else and can reach their potential,” says Chloe.

“It is really noticeable that our children can talk about their own learning.”

## KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Gagle Brook’s curriculum design is sequenced carefully, so that children always learn in manageable steps, building on the content they have covered previously.

This system also allows pupils to make sense of their learning, seeing its relevance and making links and connections. Encouraging them to ask questions means they are always finding out more, and even two years down the line, they still remember what they’ve learned.

The curriculum is designed to ensure that learning is relevant to the diverse school population and the wider community, and is rooted in the unique opportunity that the eco school delivers. Gagle Brook’s enquiry-based curriculum

hooks children in, embracing cross-curricular links, to enhance learning experiences and give context to the knowledge acquired and skills taught. Where this is not possible, teachers use other high-quality texts, visual stimuli and experiences to make the knowledge and skills as accessible as possible.

Children are given regular opportunities to reflect on their learning and to share what they know, too. This happens in the forms of quizzes, presentations or discussions during lesson time.

## ONE PLANET PRINCIPLES

The One Planet principles around which the curriculum is structured, originated from Bioregional, the global sustainability company responsible for the development

### THE SCHOOL BUILDINGS

Gagle Brook believes it is unique in the UK. Even taking into account the use of building materials such as the concrete foundations and the use of heavy machinery, the school site is net biodiverse, meaning its construction has had no impact on the local ecology.

Inside, the walls are lined with cross-laminated timber, meaning the school is highly insulated from the heat in the summer and the cold in winter. Sections of the roof have solar panels, which provides all of the school’s electricity needs and also feeds into the local grid that powers the housing estate. Another has a ‘green roof’, allowing for plant and flower growth to attract bees and insects.

Horizontal beams on the south facing side of the school stop summer sun from hitting the classroom windows but allow lower winter sun in to help with heat and the provision of natural light.

Rainwater is captured in underground tanks and used for toilet-flushing – a detail that is particularly fascinating to the pupils – and there is a mechanism for cleaning it so it can be used in the sprinkler system.

Secure night-time vents allow a constant stream of fresh air with high level skylights pulling the draft through. Staff believe this has been particularly effective during the pandemic in keeping the school well ventilated.





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of the school and local housing. These sustainability goals are contained in Bioregional's own mission statement and have been adapted by Gagle Brook to be more accessible and understandable for young children.

The idea behind the principles is that while we live on one planet, in the UK and other European countries, we are exhausting the equivalent resources of three planets. We all need to scale back and live more sustainably.

"When the school first opened, Bioregional worked on-site and they supported us in integrating those principles into our curriculum so that children could understand them," says Emily.

"The principles are visible through wall art in our library, so the pupils are constantly reminded of our ethos, are able to talk about them and to see how we absorb these into the life of the school.

"The children learn these principles from an early age and understand why it is so special and unique to be a pupil and teacher in this school."

The One Planet symbols and principles are:

- *A bicycle – sustainable transport*
- *Recycling – zero waste*
- *Raindrop – sustainable water*
- *A tree – sustainable materials*
- *A butterfly – land use and wildlife*
- *A child – health and happiness*
- *A wind turbine – zero carbon*
- *A group of people – culture and community*
- *A handshake – equity and local economy*
- *An apple – local and sustainable food*

## BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY INTO THE CURRICULUM

The next step in the journey at Gagle Brook is to create a fully sustainable curriculum, with the One Planet principles woven into every subject.

Sustainability is already a feature of school assemblies and classroom discussions, and Gagle Brook is a Forest school. It is not unusual for children



## Meet the staff



**JAMIE IZZO**  
PRIMARY SUPPORT AND  
LEARNING MENTOR

My role is very fulfilling and gives me value. All our children are seen as unique individuals, and we support and encourage them to reach their potential, breaking barriers to learning along the way.



**LISA ROBINSON**  
EARLY YEARS TEACHING  
ASSISTANT AND PARENT

It is such a warm, nurturing environment. I love the focus on nature and the fact we are a Forest school. I have children in Years 1 and 3, and there is a real family feel with everyone looking out for everyone else.



**VICTORIA BOND**  
TEACHING ASSISTANT

There are plenty of opportunities for professional development and I've been training to become a Level 3 Forest school practitioner. I have been supported by colleagues in doing this, and my confidence has grown so much.



**LUCY WHISKERD**  
EARLY YEARS LEAD  
RECEPTION TEACHER

The school is unlike any at which I've ever worked, and I love it. The focus on the eco-friendly and outside learning really feeds pupils' imaginations. The children are developing important values through this curriculum.

to debate, for example, the pros and cons of being a vegetarian or meat-eater in the context of environmental impact. In doing this, pupils are given a voice for their views and are able to form opinions.

"We did one lesson on Greta Thunberg and the pupils were amazed to learn that such a young girl claimed her voice and had so much influence," Chloe explains. "It's so important for the children to understand that, even though they are young, their opinions matter. This is their world, too. They don't have to wait until they're adults to have an impact."

With a quarter of children currently eligible for pupil premium funding, the school has employed a learning mentor to work with pupils and their families with everyday challenges and needs, to identify, support and help remove any barriers to learning.

"We can already see the impact of our sustainability learning," adds Matt Street. "Our children ask questions that many children of their age won't have considered because of our ethos. It is really paying dividends.

"We sometimes ask ourselves in lessons: 'if we don't do that now, what could happen?'. Often, we don't know the answer, so we look it up." **TP**





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# Mud kitchens AND HAMMERS

How bug hotels and shooting arrows helped this school support a behavioural transformation in just six months

LUCY BONE



Last year, as I was getting settled with my new class, I realised that two of the boys simply could not be in a classroom. Each had very different needs – one was an introvert who suffered with high levels of anxiety, whereas the other would run out of the classroom and had a lot of avoidance issues. Both were in Year 2. The boys weren't at a level where an outside agency would give them support, and we knew that, without some form of intervention, they would not be ready for the step up to Key Stage 2 when it came. We decided that in order to really help them, we'd have to do something very different, so we came up with an alternative forest

school concept. We're very lucky here because we have a woodland area in our grounds, so we capitalised on that and completely changed their environment.

Most of our activities involved mud and we got them both one-piece waterproof suits and wellies so that they could jump in as many puddles as they liked without having to worry about getting their clothes wet or dirty.

## Natural boundaries

We found that forest school offered a uniquely effective space and approach to reach both boys, despite their differing needs. The outdoor area was created with natural borders to aid containment, and the children knew that it was a safe

place to express their feelings, even in crisis. The space also meant their classmates could easily be moved away, allowing us to help the boys develop self-regulation strategies for their behaviour. To develop this skill, we set up a range of activities such as hitting swimming noodles against trees, using hammers (under supervision!), climbing, and rope-pulling. The boys were able to access these activities at any time, turning negative energy into positive activity.

We also used nature to explore and promote empathy. The boys really struggled with this, so we needed to find a way of working on it that didn't involve their peers. We built animal



## 3 FOREST SCHOOL ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Build a den in groups either in school grounds or a nearby park using materials such as rope, sheets and branches. This sort of activity helps children to be confident, independent and creative. Find out more from the Woodland Trust at [tinyurl.com/tp-WTden](http://tinyurl.com/tp-WTden)

- Make a mud kitchen to help children enjoy exploring the texture, smell and look of this readily-available ingredient. This develops children's motor skills, communication, social play and understanding of the world. Find some recipes from BBC Good Food at [tinyurl.com/tp-MudKitchen](http://tinyurl.com/tp-MudKitchen)

- Be still and quiet in nature. This allows children to develop a connection with nature that will help them to feel calm and safe. It encourages pupils to slow down and to get in touch with their emotions. Find out more at [tinyurl.com/tp-FSmindful](http://tinyurl.com/tp-FSmindful)

support, so I think they will continue to have dedicated time for this for the foreseeable future, but it will help them to be able to stay in class.

They are both catching up with their learning, too. One of them has really shone and has caught up with his peers, although he is still a little behind with his writing. By the time they reach upper Key Stage 2, we want both of them to be at the same level as the rest of their class. When I see the progress they've made it fills me with so many warm feelings – they have come so far, it's just amazing.

For us, the forest school has given us another way to engage with and support our children. Spending a winter outside with those two boys was certainly a unique experience for me – but it achieved the right result and it's benefited our whole school, not just pupils in crisis. Sometimes, you just have to be brave and think, 'this isn't working – what can I do differently?' **TP**



*Lucy Bone is  
pastoral lead and  
a Thrive Licensed  
Practitioner®  
at Maple Cross  
Junior Mixed  
Infant and  
Nursery School in Hertfordshire.*



shelters, and practised carefully catching insects and admiring them, then letting them go. This is also a great way to encourage children (especially with additional needs such as ADHD) to be still and quiet. It opened up a great opportunity for us to explore how people see us. We talked about how if we are loud, too close, or grabbing at them, animals will run and hide. But if we are calm, and move more slowly and quietly, then they may come towards us. We talked about how this is also true with peers.

We gave the boys a range of challenges that built up as the term went on, starting with easily-achievable targets to build confidence. The challenges then became harder but still achievable, perhaps with the help of another person. Lastly, I set challenges that pupils might fail at – including fishing, woodwork, building bug hotels and shooting arrows – and gave them strategies for coping with failure, to develop their resilience.

At first, both boys would have regular outbursts, but we were able to push their comfort zones gently, and over time, in a controlled environment, to increase their ability to regulate their emotions and prepare them for an eventual return to the classroom.

### Fostering belonging

As we moved forwards, we brought the boys' classmates out to join them in some sessions. We built two dens so that they had their own space, and no one else was allowed in unless they were invited. When they were in class, both boys were, at times, rude and destructive, so I understand why their teachers found it hard – but that meant they had a strong feeling they didn't belong in class and, as a result, they were very isolated. By building the dens and allowing them to choose who came in, we were giving them

a sense of control and belonging.

Within six weeks, we saw a marked improvement in their behaviour. They started to want to come to school and we could see their resilience had improved. At this point, we started to reintegrate them with their peers in class, bringing them back in to some lessons. We reintroduced English and maths first, making sure that everything was done in a gentle and positive manner to keep building their confidence.

At this point, we were still working towards learning goals, but not necessarily in a conventional way. Instead, we took more of an Early Years approach and encouraged them to follow their interests so they learned what they needed to in a way that enthused them. For example, one of the children was really focused on video games and we wanted him to be able to connect him more with reality. We knew he loved dinosaurs so, in forest school, we created 'dinosaur land' with him and we produced a film about it. We wrote a script together and really encouraged him to develop his skills by getting involved – he loved it!

### Improved behaviour

After six months, both boys were spending every morning in the classroom and every afternoon in forest school. I supported them in the classroom so that we could maintain a consistent approach and continue the relationship they had built up with me.

A year after we started working intensively with them, both children returned to the classroom full-time. They still have 45-minute forest school sessions four times a week, but they are now able to cope with life in the classroom without displaying the problematic behaviours they did previously. They still need emotional





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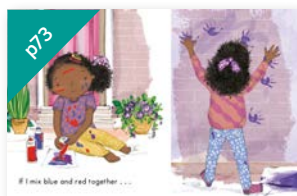
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Never mind rote learning; real SPaG progress only happens when we put the content in context, argues Rachel Clarke



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# Meet the AUTHOR

We need to expand narratives about WWII beyond a narrow, white history, says **Dan Smith**

I've been fishing with a hitman, lived in the jungle, and climbed a live volcano. I've tracked a Sumatran tiger and ridden with Brazilian cowboys. I once wore my trainers all evening without realising there was a frog in one of them. The frog did not survive.

These are some of the stories I tell the children when I'm visiting schools to talk about my books and my journey to becoming an author. They always go down well – especially the ones about the hitman and the frog.

But when I talk about World War Two, and the things that have inspired my books about the War, the children often connect in a different way. Perhaps it's because they find it easy to relate to... People weren't so very different back then. They lived in the same towns and villages that children live in today. Children's families are often somehow connected to the War, so when it's time for the Q&A, they put their hand up because they want to tell me something rather than ask me something: they want me to know about a family member who participated 'in the war'. They want to tell me about the old bomb shelter under their garden, or to relay some interesting fact they have learned about air raids (they seem to love talking about air raids).

## Always relevant

World War Two stories are as popular now as they have ever been. If you browse the tables and shelves

in your local bookshop, you'll see old classics, re-printed time and again, and you'll see new books, written by contemporary authors. I suppose World War Two is an excellent backdrop for unsupervised adventure, and its scope was so



Illustration ©Matthew Land



The truth of it is that authors will always find a way to make stories about World War Two relevant to young readers today – whether it is by connecting them to the past or by connecting them to the present. But there are things we can do to expand the relevance.

### Diverse histories

Many World War Two stories focus on events on the home front in Britain, but we need stories told from alternative perspectives. I was interested to understand what life was like in Germany during World War Two, so I did extensive research, learning about teenagers who called themselves ‘Edelweiss Pirates’, and opposed the Nazi regime. The research led me to write *My Brother’s Secret* which is about two young brothers – one a proud Nazi, the other an objector – and the conflict it causes within their family. The story is written as an exciting and adventurous mystery, but it deals with

the home front and explore different lives. World War Two was not just about air raids over London, and the Normandy Landings. It was not just about white British men and women defending Britain. I wonder how many school children know that 2.5 million Indians fought for Britain? The largest volunteer army in history. I wonder how many know that the soldiers who fought bravely when the Japanese invaded Malaya, were Indian. Do they know that Nepalese Gurkhas served in Italy, Greece, Malaya, Singapore, Burma, and Africa. Or that thousands of African, Arab, and Jewish soldiers fought for Britain across the globe. And there are darker, more shameful histories, too, such as the three million Indians, mostly Bengali, who were killed by famine as a result of Winston Churchill’s policies.

There are still so many more stories to tell; so many more lives to explore. It feels to me as if World War Two stories will always be relevant because they remind us of things that we must never forget. But we can make them more relevant by expanding and making them more inclusive. **TP**

***“World War II is an excellent backdrop for unsupervised adventure; there are always new stories to tell”***

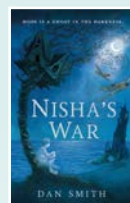
far-reaching that there are always new stories to tell. But many contemporary authors are telling their stories from a more modern point of view, using more current language, which makes them more accessible and more relatable to young readers today. And it isn’t difficult to make those stories feel relevant. They are stories that deal with loss, hope, courage, and the best and worst of humanity. These are universal themes that relate to modern times as well as they do to the past.

We do not live in a perfect world. All around us, and on the news, we see refugees, evacuation, and persecution. We see children fleeing the devastation of war. Right here, in Britain, there is inequality, racism, and hardship. There are children in our schools who are worrying about where their next meal is going to come from. Their parents have to make heart-breaking decisions like whether to heat their home, feed their children, or clothe them. Authors can use stories about World War Two to help young readers indirectly connect with these issues and to explore the mental health effects of such hardship. We can transport young readers into the shoes of others, helping them to develop empathy and understanding. And we, as adults reading with those children, can help them to draw parallels between events in the past and events in the modern world.


important themes like trust, betrayal, and guilt. When I talk about this during school visits, children are always interested to hear about young Germans, not much older than themselves, who opposed the Nazis and suffered as a result.

We have an ever more diverse population in Britain, and I would like for every child to be able to see themselves in the stories they read, and the things they learn. One of the most important things we can do is to show young readers that Britain did not have an exclusively white population in the 1940’s. We can explore the experiences of non-white children growing up in Britain at that time, making stories more relatable to modern young readers. I have done this in my novel *Nisha’s War*, which is about a dual heritage British-Indian girl who evacuates from Malaya to England where she faces suspicion and racism. These are the same issues that refugee children coming to Britain today will face – not to mention non-white children who have lived in Britain all their lives. Stories can highlight the effect these issues have on young people, and they can teach young readers to be more accepting and understanding.

And it’s important to remember that the war was far-reaching. It affected people right across Europe, Asia, and Africa, so I would like to see our stories stretch beyond



***Nisha’s War* by Dan Smith, is out now in paperback (£7.99, Chicken House).**

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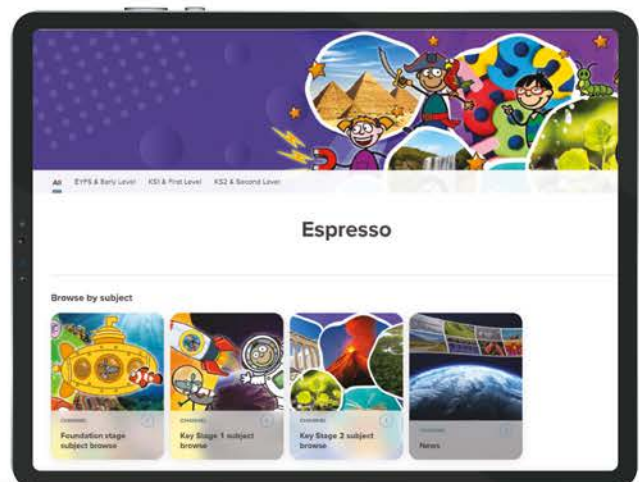
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Teacher, Moss Hall Infant School

# WHY I LOVE...

Nicole McLean, Y6 teacher, explains how Discovery Education Espresso provides exciting digital content and time-saving resources

## ABOUT ME:

### NAME:

Nicole McLean

### JOB ROLE:

Year 6 teacher

### SCHOOL:

Fraserburgh South Park Primary School, Aberdeenshire



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The content is now displayed very clearly and it's easy for teachers and pupils to navigate. The new search function is simple to use and great for finding resources for topic work. There's also a good variety of timely content, covering a whole range of topics from Fairytales to World War II. And I like the fact that you can filter this by curriculum level.

The videos have a follow-up activity such as a quiz, and we often complete these as a class on the whiteboard. The children then try the quizzes independently on their tablets. Each child has an individual Espresso login, which makes for easy access. They can also log in quickly with QR codes, which they enjoy.

### “ How does it support teachers?

I've been using Discovery Education Espresso for several years and it definitely makes my job as a teacher easier. It gives me all of the content I need for lessons, such as videos, quizzes and activities.

Best of all, everything's in one place. I don't need to look elsewhere for resources, which saves me time. Espresso has lots of great digital resources and I use these to support my teaching, especially in maths and literacy. The videos introduce new concepts, while the quizzes and games consolidate learning and check for understanding.



### Contact:

Discovery Education  
1 Lyric Square  
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W6 0NB

0800 6 527 527

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

### “ What has been the effect?

Our pupils love Espresso and not just because they enjoy online learning. The content is engaging and lots of fun. They love the quizzes, seeing their scores, and the fact that there aren't too many questions. They like the video content, too. Sometimes they'd rather watch a video on the carpet than listen to a teacher's explanation. And the videos are pitched at the right level for each age group. It's easy for pupils to use. They can see the difference between the learning at each level, and navigate from one to the next. Above all, they're having fun and learning, which helps them to stay engaged.

### “ Why is Espresso different to other curriculum-aligned teaching resources?

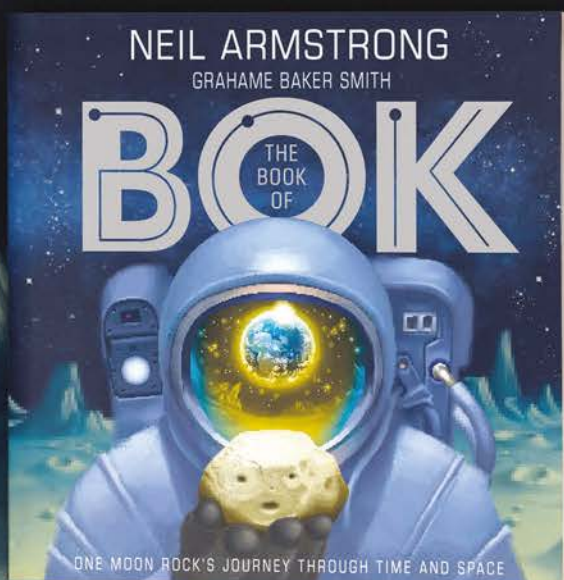
It is very easy to use. I like the variety of content, all linked to one subject and in one place. This is a big plus for me. You can log in quickly and find what you're looking for. The videos introduce new concepts, while the quizzes and games consolidate learning and check for understanding. The grammar and punctuation videos are especially good. Recently I used these to teach about speech marks and my Y6 class were very engaged. The video helped them to grasp the different rules and learn how to put these into practice.

## WILL IT WORK FOR YOU?

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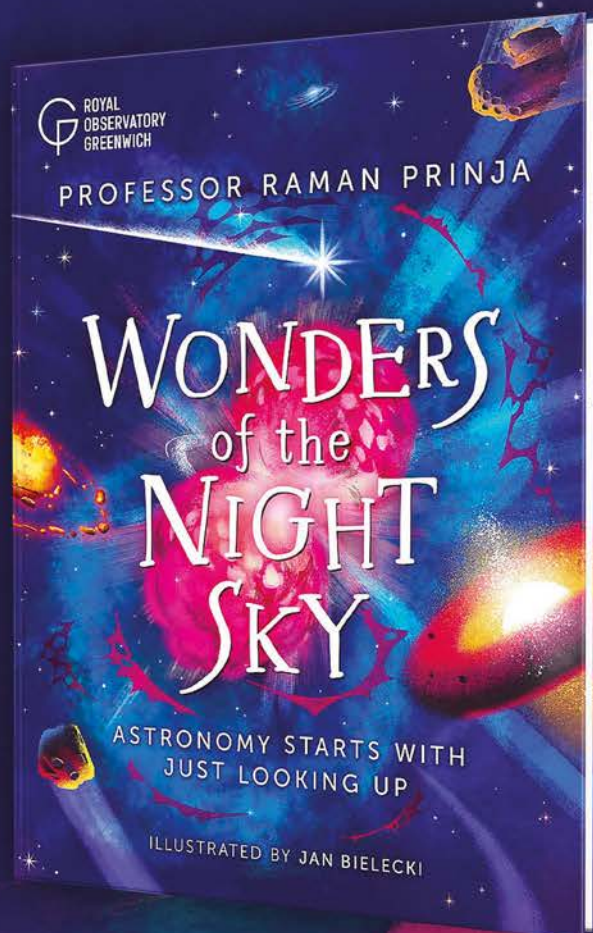
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# GRAMMAR RULES THAT STICK

Rote learning and drills may help (some) children pass SPaG tests – but real progress only happens when we put the content in context, argues **Rachel Clarke**

**T**eaching grammar without context is a little like sharing a meme of a literary quote without having read the book from which it has been taken. Yes, we can drill our pupils to spot grammatical features and name them; but without seeing those features used in the context of real texts, children can't really understand how they work as tools of communication.

The view that grammar is best taught in context is not a new one. It's an approach supported by research, including that of Professor Debra Myhill at Exeter University, and is something that most teachers aspire to do. However, despite this, many still find themselves drilling grammatical terminology in stand-alone lessons in preparation for the spelling, punctuation and grammar test at the end of Key Stage 2.

So how can we set about teaching grammar in context so that children remember it?

## 1 TEACH

In the first instance, we need to map out the objectives required in our year group; ensuring



that every objective is included.

Think about the model texts you want to use with children. Recognising that certain text types lend themselves to specific grammar objectives can be particularly useful when you do this. For example, if you need to teach command sentences, using an instructions model text, such

as a recipe, makes sense.

It's important to include direct teacher instruction in your grammar planning. You'll not want to take a directive approach in all lessons, but when introducing objectives, direct instruction means you can be sure that the mental models children create are accurate. Using the relevant grammatical terminology as you explore

your model text ensures that children see the grammar in a meaningful context.

### Quick Tip:

After teaching children about a target objective through the model text, set them a treasure hunt task. Can they find examples of the objective in their reading books? This could be a homework activity or something you ask them to do in pairs or small groups. You could extend this activity, for example, by challenging them to note whether specific text types use the feature. Equally, you could support pupils by providing accessible texts that you know contain the features you want them to locate.

*“Without seeing grammatical features used in the context of real texts, children can't really understand how they work as tools of communication”*





## FREE RESOURCE

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"All the resources I would make myself, if I had the time!"

— Alice Griffith, Peppard CE Primary School

Real Grammar, from Plazoom, is a brand-new programme providing you with everything you need to teach and embed all objectives from the grammar curriculum from Y1–Y6.

Created by literacy and teaching experts, Real Grammar's flexible, ready-made resources will not only save you time and ensure secure understanding and consistent progress for all pupils, they'll support you to upskill your own grammar knowledge, too!



## 2 PRACTISE

Once you've pointed out the target objective in your model text, children need opportunities to practise using it. This type of low-stakes activity means they can develop their mental models without feeling overwhelmed. Activities such as labelling, filling in cloze procedures and completing sentence starters are perfect for this kind of learning.

### Quick Tip:

Think about progression and what children already know. For example, if teaching pupils in upper Key Stage 2 to use dialogue to develop character and action, you may need to track back to earlier work on adding speech marks, using the range of speech punctuation, and using synonyms for 'said' in reporting clauses. Revisit these previous objectives if it will help children access their existing mental models. And don't be afraid to use pre-prepared resources!

## 3 REVISIT

Teaching a concept or rule once only is unlikely to ensure deep learning, so looking at how to space repetition so that children encounter each objective several times over the year is a good approach. It's beneficial to use different text types, too – so the command sentences I mentioned earlier, for example, could also be explored in a persuasive article, such as a tourism leaflet ('Visit Yorkshire!')

With each successive encounter with the objective, pupils modify their mental model and come to deepen their understanding of how

an aspect of grammar can be used in real texts.

### Quick Tip:

Create a set of grammar instruction cards. Children could answer these individually, in pairs, groups or as a whole class. Prompts could include: write me a sentence using the past progressive form of verbs; write me a sentence including an expanded noun phrase; write a sentence with a fronted adverbial. Once you've made the cards you can swap them in and out based on assessment for learning (AfL) and the ongoing grammar objectives you cover with the class.

## 4 APPLY

When children understand the grammar we've taught them, they can use it to write their own texts, communicating for different purposes and audiences. Model texts play an important role in this process, as they give children an example to base their own texts upon, exemplifying the target grammar objectives.

### Quick Tip:

Knowing how to use a grammatical feature to improve a piece of writing is a good way for children to apply their knowledge. Giving them a basic sentence such as 'The dog walked.', and asking them to improve it using the target objective (e.g. add an expanded noun phrase, or use a fronted adverbial) is a quick and easy way to check pupils' understanding.

## 5 REVISE

Giving pupils opportunities to practise using their stored knowledge helps them to draw on it when they need it. This is why it's worth planning opportunities for children to revisit and revise their understanding as part of any grammar teaching sequence.

### Quick Tips:

Low-stakes testing is a good way to help children retrieve and recall their grammatical knowledge. Testing doesn't need to be

formal – for example, you could ask the class to write three examples of a question, or to circle all the verbs on a grid of words containing a variety of word families. This will give you the vital assessment knowledge that you need to plan well-pitched and progressive learning, and it will enable the children to recall and revise existing knowledge.

Using tests that replicate the question types from the SATs means that pupils become accustomed to the question formats of the tests. It's worth remembering that 3–5 questions planned into a teaching sequence is plenty. **TP**



*Rachel Clarke is director of the Primary English literacy*

*consultancy, and has over 20 years' experience in primary education, in which time she has been a SENCO, English subject lead and deputy headteacher.*



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# Are you ready for writing moderation?

Grab your sticky notes and take a deep breath: here's how to make the process work for you

ADAM LEVICK

**W**riting moderation is something on which we all have an opinion. Some of us relish the opportunity to be able to show off our pupils' amazing work, while others dread the experience of having to 'prove' that a child has managed to cross the threshold of the expected standard.

After going through the process, I can confidently say that it was useful and (dare I say) enjoyable. It was a great form of CPD, and allowed for meaningful professional discussion and advice on the next steps to improve my teaching.

The key message is simple: know your class' writing, and know it well. Have the confidence in your ability as a teacher to know where each child is, and know what evidence is available to justify that. This knowledge of the work is the springboard for everything else when it comes to preparing for moderation.

To make the process as painless as possible, make sure you have done the organisational prep work needed. For me, that meant checklists colour-coordinated with sticky labels across a class set of writing books. However, any system that showcases where the evidence is and how children have met the standards is a winner. Find what works for you.

On top of this, your preparation truly begins at the point of your medium- and long-term plans. Having a broad range of genres, audiences and purposes for writing is essential, making a note of what knowledge you expect the children to gain where you can.

Let's take a closer look at some of these tips, to help you feel ready should you get that writing moderation call.

## Don't panic

Getting the selection email can be daunting. I remember the sense of dread I initially experienced when my headteacher came and told me, "It's a yes to moderation".

However, there is nobody in the world better suited to talking through your children's work than you. Moderators aren't there to catch you out. Most are teachers and just want to ensure that pupils are getting the grades they deserve.

Take a breath, and pause. If you're prepared and armed with a strong knowledge of your class' writing, you will be fine!

## Actually teach the children

Being prepared for writing moderation begins on day one. Your teaching sequences

will have a huge impact on the children's work across the year. The final pieces you'll take to moderation all stem from your lessons.

Independent writing is a skill that is honed through explicit teaching. I have made

the mistake of letting the children write independently far too early, only to be met with blank stares and a chorus of 'ummmm'.

To be prepared for moderation, you need to put the groundwork in first. Let your class see the writing process and the way a writer thinks. Model writing in front of them, explaining your reasons behind your language or grammatical choices.

Shared writes allow you to collate your class' ideas with you as a guiding voice. Take their suggestions on board and tweak where necessary to show them how they can turn ideas into great sentences.

Actually teaching the



children how to think like a writer is the best way to ensure their independent writing will be ready for moderation. If you're not sure where to start, try free podcasts like Author In Your Classroom to bring real-life writers directly to your pupils.

## Presenting evidence

Writing will be moderated against the teacher assessment framework (TAF), so make sure this is the basis for your prep. Your best tool to help present evidence is a checklist of the TAF statements, mapped onto different examples of the children's writing.

Finding the right checklist is key. Although the

*"The key message is simple: know your class' writing, and know it well"*

moderator will use a list filled with broad and generalised statements, using one that breaks each statement down will make your life easier.

For example, instead of ticking off 'I can build cohesion within and across paragraphs', use a list that gives each cohesive device its own tickable box ('for example', 'in conclusion', 'and', 'but', etc). This allows you to pinpoint individual or whole-class weaknesses.

I'm a firm believer that overpreparation is the key to success. I also swear allegiance to anything colour-coded. For me, that meant developing my own system of sticky notes to mark each piece of work for

different evidence markers. For instance, I could easily spot that pink meant 'using a dictionary to spell uncommon or more ambitious words': Having these visual prompts sticking out of the top of the books meant I could turn to that piece of work immediately and give the moderator the evidence they needed.

## Moderate before moderation

Moderation can feel like a lonely process, especially if you teach in a small school. However, a crucial part of feeling prepared is collaboration. To feel at ease, moderate some writing with others before the big day looms.

If you're part of a MAT, ask about cross-school moderation. That way, people who have taught different writing units will be able to look over your work and give you advice and reassurance where necessary.

Sitting down with your headteacher to go through your judgements and evidence is also a great help. Chances are, they will have seen the children's work in previous years and will be able to give you a positive narrative about how much progress they've made.

The key takeaway is always to ask for the help and support you need. I was lucky enough to moderate with colleagues in school and across the MAT, with my headteacher, and with friends and colleagues through Twitter. Not only did it help me understand where to ensure I had extra evidence, but it also boosted my confidence hugely.

You got this! **TP**



*Adam Lettich is a mixed Year 5/6 teacher in a small school in York.*

*He is also the subject leader for English, PSHE and computing.*

 @\_MrLevick

## 9 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WRITING MODERATION:

**1** First, moderation isn't as scary or daunting as it seems. It's actually a useful process that is meant to benefit you as CPD and to give next steps to influence your teaching the following year.

**2** Keep calm and take it as an opportunity to benefit your own practice as a teacher.

**3** Make sure you tune into a positive mindset to make the process work for you.

**4** Organisation is key to feeling prepared; using a system to collate evidence without inducing a huge workload. Find a way to showcase evidence that works for you.

**5** Ask for what you need; whether that's time, people to moderate with, or just someone to listen.

**6** Reach out to others going through the same. A support network is really helpful for ensuring that you feel prepared and positive going through the process. Twitter is great for this!

**7** Make sure you have a strong knowledge of the children's writing, including their strengths and roughly which level they are working at.

**8** Put the groundwork in from day one. A well-planned writing curriculum with a good range of genres, audiences and purposes will ensure a solid evidence base.

**9** Make sure you've explicitly taught your children the how and why behind writing, providing models and scaffolds at the beginning of the year.



‘Gripping . . . truly a beautiful cuento’  
*New York Times*

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## AT A GLANCE

- A subversive bestselling novel written for children aged 10+
- Merges sci-fi, speculative fiction and dystopian fiction
- Centres on family, community, and how the stories of the past can save the future
- Won the Newbery Medal and Pura Belpré Award in 2022

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



The core values of Bonnier Books are impressive: every perspective, every voice, every story and every future matters. Bonnier believes in the importance of sharing stories and content that will entertain, educate and inform.

One book that does all this and has a big 'cuentista' voice is *The Last Storyteller* by Donna Barba Higuera, which explores the perils of colonising another planet. It mashes together science fiction, urban legends and fairy-tale fantasy with Mexican folklore and their traditional stories of love, humour, pain, magic and lost souls. The book reminds us all that we are made up of stardust and stories, and also serves as a warning about how things could go wrong if we don't change.

Set in the year 2061, it tells the story of how Halley's Comet gets knocked off course by a solar flare and how scientists and others (including protagonist Petra and her parents) are chosen to leave Earth on luxury spacecrafts and terraform another planet, Sagan, to carry on the human race.

The book covers themes like grief, power, government control, dogma, planetary disaster and loss of individualism. Yet despite its darkness, the story also offers peace and hope, and

children can become pleasurably involved in a hugely compelling story while recognising that our world is not yet as awful as Petra's.

Petra is a tenacious, bright and agile young protagonist. She is a true survivor who beats the odds and we are desperate for her to succeed in saving her family and their Latino history. Petra's love of storytelling teaches children that by honouring the past, our ancestors, our cultures and remembering our mistakes, we become better because these are gifts that grant us a diversity of perspectives to meet that future with empathy and courage. The author draws on both traditional and contemporary tales and feeds these into the book with skill and energy.

This is the sort of cuento that you will want to read aloud for the sheer pleasure of hearing it. The language is powerful and effective and creates a startling gallery of futuristic visuals for children to plug into. The author creates a bittersweet narrative and makes a magnificent job of creating tension throughout the story.

Pupils will learn that stories travel hundreds of years and through many people and it is their job to go and make them their own.

teach  
PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ An intriguing interstellar science fiction adventure full of narrative zigzags and corkscrews
- ✓ Cleverly integrates nostalgia and oral histories of the past within a fizzing fantasy
- ✓ Suspenseful, though-provoking and highly creative
- ✓ A positive role model with positive messages who is brave, compassionate, and resourceful
- ✓ Perfect for book study and fuelling discussions

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Published by  
Owlet Press, 2022

# Colour and Me!

Delight in the colours of the rainbow, and help your pupils understand the beauty of every shade with Michaela Dias-Hayes' brilliant picturebook

ADELE DARLINGTON

*'I made orange, green and purple, using yellow, red and blue – and brown from all three colours, what a magical thing to do!'*

**C**olour and Me! written and illustrated by Michaela Dias-Hayes and published by Owlet Press, is a delightful mix of self-empowerment and creativity. The perfect text to share with an Early Years or Key

Stage 1 class, it is a simple tale of colour discovery, but with a joyfully powerful message at its heart. In the story, the main character, a little girl, enjoys a painting session with her beloved grandma. They paint their hands and fingers and create beautiful colour-themed masterpieces along the way. The pair mix paint using the primary colours – red, yellow and blue – and create the striking secondary hues

of orange, green and purple. They also discover that mixing all three primary colours together creates brown. This discovery initially prompts a "Yuck, I don't like brown" reaction in the young girl, until her grandma helps to realign her thoughts and see the unique beauty in all shades.

Let's join the young artist and her grandma and get creative, inspired by their painting fun...



## Sharing and talking about the book

*'Nanny says that every colour is special, just like me.*

*And now I know, I really hope that all of you agree!'*

Sharing this book provides the perfect opportunity to have meaningful discussions with the children in your class about the beauty in all of us. As teachers, we play an extremely important role in encouraging the children in our classes to develop self-love. We want to raise their self-esteem and self-worth. Such discussions can naturally lead to conversations about racism and anti-racism. For support and guidance on this topic, books such as *My Skin*, *Your Skin* by Laura Henry-Allain and *Standing Up to Racism* by Dr Pragya Agarwal are perfect in helping children recognise and celebrate

their differences in an age-appropriate manner. It is important we teach children from an early age that racism is unacceptable and that it needs to be called out.

### I am special because...

Following on from reading and discussing the book, ask pupils to think about themselves. What makes them special? Ask them to consider their positive character strengths. You may wish to write a list of characteristics (such as *kind, caring, hard-working, friendly, resilient, artistic, sporty, and musical*) on the board to help them with their word choices and thinking around the subject.

Help children to articulate why they are special with stem questions such as "When have you shown kindness?" and "What do you do that makes you a good friend?"

Some children may need more help than others to talk about themselves in a positive way and to sing their own praises, so you may need to tell some of them how amazing they actually are!

Ask your pupils to write sentences



about themselves celebrating their strengths. Younger children could be given sentence starters such as *I am special because I am...* which they could continue as a list, highlighting several positive characteristics, or they could focus on just one, and give an example of when they displayed that trait. To go alongside this writing activity, pupils could draw and paint self-portraits and annotate them with labels and captions highlighting their features and describing them in ways that imply their beauty, uniqueness and self-worth.

### My friend is special because...

Everyone loves to hear positive things about themselves and there's nothing better than hearing your friend tell you how special you are! Children often find it easier to talk



## Take it further ➡➡➡

**Feeling artistic? You can't read this book without having a go at colour mixing, so try out these simple activities with your class!**

### Hand print colour mixing

Explore basic colour theory using ready-mixed paint, hands or fingers, brushes and paper – but be warned, this can get a little bit messy!

In a palette, squeeze out some yellow, red and blue paint. Ask children to choose two

out of the three colours. Using a brush, paint the palm of one hand in the first colour chosen – red, for example – and the other hand in the second colour, such as yellow. The next step is where the magic really happens! Rub hands together to combine the two colours completely and watch as the primaries mix to create a secondary – in this case, hands would end up a delightful orange! You will be sure to have some 'wows' in your class as the children stare in amazement as the colours transform in front of their very eyes!

This activity lends itself to some hand printing, too, so allow the children to place their paint-covered hands on paper to print a colourful printed masterpiece like the rainbow in the book. Fingertips are an alternative to hands in this activity. Children can dip two fingers into two of the primary colour paints and rub the tips to create the secondary colours. They could create a finger-painting rainbow using both the starter colours and the colours they have mixed. It is a good idea to have a bowl of water nearby and a towel to wash hands and fingers in between colours!

about the character strengths of their peers rather than their own – some find it very hard to blow their own trumpet!

So, with that in mind, challenge your children to write down three sentences (or more or less depending on your particular class's needs) describing another child in a positive way.

You could provide them with similar stem questions to those in the previous activity, such as "What is your friend good at?" or "What do you like about them?". Once complete, read the sentences out loud and give them to the children to take home to treasure and share with their parents or carers.

## Rainbow colour poetry

Like the star of the story, get the children in your class thinking about the colours of the rainbow to create a poem – this could be done

collaboratively or individually. Write down all the colours of the rainbow and ask children to suggest items of each colour. Pupils may suggest a post-box, a rose, lips or a tomato for red; grass, grapes, leaves or frogs for green. Each line of the poem should begin with a colour, followed by an object. Encourage the children to write their poem in order of the colours of the rainbow. An example poem may read like this...

*Red apple  
Orange carrot  
Yellow sun  
Green grass  
Blue sky  
Indigo flowers  
Violet grapes*

For an extra challenge, ask pupils to add in an additional adjective to each line so 'Red apple' could become 'Red juicy apple' and the line 'Orange carrot' could be enhanced with the addition of the describing word 'crunchy'. Once finished, pupils could present their poems in the shape of a rainbow – they could paint a rainbow and then write each line on its coloured arc in pen. Alternatively, the poem could be written out in coloured pens, with each line matched to its own specific colour.

## Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *My Skin, Your Skin* by Laura Henry-Allain
- ❖ *Hey You!* by Dapo Adeola
- ❖ *Luna loves Art* by Joseph Coelho
- ❖ *Mixed* by Arree Chung
- ❖ *Family and Me!* By Michaela Dias-Hayes

## Find the rhyme

*Colour and Me!* is a simple rhyming text. While reading it aloud to your class, see if they can identify the pairs of rhyming words on each spread. Encourage them to say the words out loud after you have read each page to encourage participation from all.

Continue the rhyming fun with a pet name game. The little girl in the story has a turtle called Myrtle, so why not play with rhyme and ask the children what names they think she might have for some other pets? The names must rhyme with the animal. For example, could she have a dog called Mog, or a cat called Pat? What might she call a fish, a rat or a parrot? The names don't have to be real ones, just let your class have some fun with language; as long as the names they choose rhyme, it doesn't matter how silly they are!



*Adele Darlington is an EYFS teacher and art lead in Rutland. She is also the author of 100 ideas for primary teachers: art, published by Bloomsbury.*

## Mixing skin tones for self-portraits

Children are often amazed to find out they can mix skin tones using the primary colours and black or white paint. Provide pupils with some ready-mixed paint in these colours and give them the opportunity to explore and experiment with creating their own skin tones (or those of their friends).

Children will need palettes and brushes to play about with different colour combinations. Use the primary colours to create brown and then add small amounts of white or black depending on the skin tone being created. You may need to add a

dash more blue, red or yellow to match the skin's undertones. Children can use their skin tone paint to create self-portraits to display in a class gallery, alongside their 'I am special' writing.

## Melting coloured ice cubes

This is an exciting way to encourage your class to make colour mix predictions and also make links to learning in science and even geography (through the water cycle). Using food colouring, dye cups full of water red, blue and yellow, then pour the mixtures into ice cube trays and freeze. Make a good number of ice cubes in each

primary colour to ensure you can make all the combinations required.

Present the ice cubes to your class and ask them what they notice. Hopefully, they will observe that the cubes are primary coloured (make sure the concentration of the coloured water is strong enough to ensure the tones are obvious). Choose two cubes and place them in a dish; for example a blue cube and a yellow cube. What do the children think will happen when they melt? Can they link their previous colour mixing knowledge to the ice cube situation and predict accurately? Hopefully, your class will guess that the water will be green when the yellow and blue ice cubes melt together.







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SCIENCE



# CREST project-based learning

Add variety and richness to primary science lessons and link learning to real life experiences



## AT A GLANCE

- A comprehensive science-based resource, perfect for non-specialist teachers
- Contains in-depth activities and investigative stimulus
- Encourages independent thinking and collaborative discussion
- Research-informed planning and pedagogy

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



CREST is a project-based learning programme that is often used during enrichment activities to encourage open-ended investigation in science, technology and maths. The magic is that CREST can be used as a standalone enrichment programme or it can be integrated into the curriculum to add variety and richness to science offered in primary schools.

Principally, CREST Awards allow pupils to develop key skills that encourage them to develop self-efficacy. The real-world contextualisation of the resources encourages problem-solving and independent thinking in a way that allows learners to directly synthesise what they have learned to their real, everyday lives. Not only does this develop their understanding of science, it also builds decision making and critical thinking, as well as getting learners to reflect on the world around them.

The activities are designed to be easy to run and low-cost. You don't need to be a teacher, have a science background or have access to specialist equipment to run them, making the CREST Awards ideal for small primary centres. The packs contain helpful hints and tips, explaining the scientific themes and offering guidance on

conversation topics for your children – the detail even covers the vocabulary that the students might have to use.

Designed using curiosity-based stimulus, the resources for each Star or SuperStar challenge is designed to last between 45 minutes and an hour. Each activity starts with a clear overview and a checklist of what will be needed (simplicistic equipment; no need for complex scientific apparatus) followed by crystal-clear instructions of what the pupils need to do. No prerequisite knowledge is required for a teacher to oversee the activities and, helpfully, the teacher is even advised what to watch out for to minimise any aspect of danger – a really nice touch.

What stands out most for me is the fact that the investigative undertones are so well scaffolded and supported. It is clear that the activities have been designed to get young people thinking like scientists. Learners are encouraged to research and gather information, but most importantly, to then reflect and share their findings with others before undertaking evaluation. It is this kind of structured learning that young people need to truly enjoy and explore science, but also to succeed later in their learning when they start to implement practical experiments.

## teach PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ Exceptionally intuitive resources
- ✓ Resources well designed and presented
- ✓ Direct teaching of effective investigations
- ✓ Directly correlated with curriculum based resources
- ✓ Easy to run and low-cost
- ✓ Aspirational and founded in real-life contexts
- ✓ Designed to get young people thinking like scientists

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to build upon your science offer or to further rebuild project based inquiry in the curriculum.





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SCAN ME!



# TIME TO EXPLAIN

Tackle paragraphs, introductions and summaries while exploring non-fiction writing with **Aidan Severs'** guide to explanation texts...

**A**lthough writing explanation texts takes some careful and specific teaching, explanations are a part of children's everyday oral, aural and mental experience: they hear them at home and at school, and they explain things to each other and to adults just as much as they have things explained to them. Even the way we think about how to do everyday tasks is a kind of self-explanation. When it comes to writing explanation texts, then, pupils have a strong starting point that should be explicitly pointed out and capitalised upon.

## Paragraphs

The National Curriculum requires that children in Year 3 are introduced to paragraphs as a way to group related material.

The Water Cycle example (see download) has very short paragraphs, making it easier for younger readers to understand. Most non-fiction books aimed at children follow this convention, so any examples you share from real texts will almost certainly have similarly short paragraphs. However it's worth remembering that when pupils hand-write paragraphs of similar length, it will look like a lot more than the word-processed example!

Short paragraphs also demonstrate how specifically related ideas can be grouped. Look at the first paragraph of the Water Cycle text under the subheading 'What do we mean by 'changing state'?'.

It consists of four sentences, which themselves are quite short. The paragraph is very clearly about the three states in which water can exist. The following paragraph is limited to the idea that water can change between the states. Both could exist within one paragraph, but grouping information like this demonstrates that readers are more likely to comprehend the information better if it is clearly presented and not too complicated.

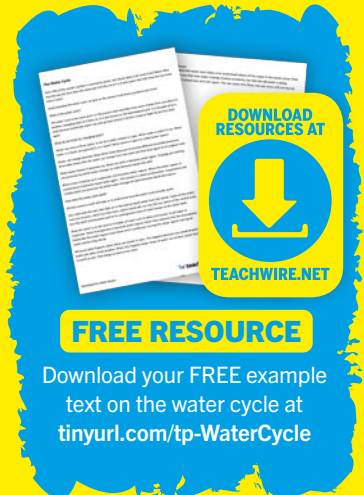
Activities that focus on grouping information are a necessary precursor to children being able to write in paragraphs. Simply giving the class a set of statements and asking pupils to group them is a good way to begin to do this. For example, you could provide facts about three different animals which need to be sorted according to the species. You could then move onto statements that are more subtly different in their content: facts about one animal, but some which relate to its eating habits, some about its habitat, and others about

its risk of extinction, for example. This same activity could be taken further, zeroing in on one animal's habitat

but with facts relating to country, biome and construction.

## Heading and subheadings

Writing a main heading should be fairly straightforward – children just need to know that it should summarise what the whole piece of writing is about. To ensure they are secure with this, try activities like multiple choice questions, where pupils select the best heading (the other options could be better suited as subheadings).



**DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT**  
TEACHWIRE.NET

**FREE RESOURCE**

Download your FREE example text on the water cycle at [tinyurl.com/tp-WaterCycle](https://tinyurl.com/tp-WaterCycle)

You can decide on subheadings as a tool prior to grouping information, or once it has occurred. Either way, the generation of subheadings should be a part of those practice activities so that when children come to writing a full explanation text, they have their subheadings already written.

In the example text, there are subheadings for the three main sections, and one for the summary. The introduction sits under the main heading. This is a

simple enough structure that you can teach, and ask children to follow. The example text also structures its content around three main questions, which provide further structure for the content of the paragraphs.

Pupils can focus on ensuring that their content helps to answer a certain question, and if it does not, they can consider revising and removing that part of their text.





## Introductions

These are notoriously difficult for children to write, but can build on prior work on introductions and summaries, as many non-fiction text types feature similar beginnings and endings. Employ extensive modelling, exemplifying writing introductions and summaries multiple times during the unit.

The basic principles of an introduction for children in KS2 are that it should appeal to the reader's curiosity, and be very clear on what the text is going to be about. You can also consider:

- Go-to stock phrases and sentence structures. These may come in handy, particularly if you are teaching this text type towards the beginning of KS2.
- Including questions that children might have had themselves, making sure the content connects with their natural curiosity: *'Have you ever wondered...?'*
- Facts that the reader will likely already know, coupled with a 'but' and a question, to begin to extend the reader's thinking and to pique their curiosity: *'Rivers flow into the sea but how does the water get into the rivers?'*

Phrases to avoid, particularly for children at the upper end of KS2, are the ones that pupils reach for when they feel stuck. For introductions, these include: *'This piece of writing is about...'*; *'In this text you will find out about...'*; and *'Read on to find out more.'*

Children do not need to write

***"When it comes to writing explanation texts, pupils have a strong starting point that should be capitalised upon"***

full explanation texts in order to practise writing introductions, either. After studying them in class texts, perhaps linked to their work in other subjects, pupils can begin to write their own three- or four-sentence introductions to texts about almost anything – they don't need to know too much about the content of the rest of the piece of text, as at the practice stage they aren't actually going to write it.

## Summaries

Children in KS2 need to understand that a summary should explain in just a few sentences what the main takeaway is. As writers, they should

attempt to tell the reader what they have just learned, but in fewer words, with less of the explanation, and focusing on the main points only.

Again, some taught phrases and structures will be useful:

- A sentence or two that points out why it is useful to know the content of the explanation text they have just read: *'Knowing about... helps us to understand...'*; *'It also helps us to see that...'*
- A one-sentence summary, that contains the central point of the text, and which might refer back to the questions asked in the introduction: e.g. *'The*

*rain water that flows into our rivers will one day be rain again!'*

Phrases to avoid in summary writing include: *'I hope you have learned more about...'*; *'This piece of writing was about...'*; and *'In summary...'*.

In terms of practice activities, once children have studied existing summaries and have seen you modelling how to write one, they could focus on identifying the main points in an explanation text, and then write a summary for it. The identification of main points alone is something that pupils often struggle with, so some shared work and modelling will usually be necessary. When it comes to summarising and identifying main points, and in order to ready the children for writing their own summaries, practise writing a 20-word summary of something they have learned or read; then challenge them to reduce it to 10 words, then five, causing pupils to really think about what the key information is.

For more tips on explanation texts, see [tinyurl.com/tp-explanation TP](https://tinyurl.com/tp-explanation-TP)



*Aidan Severs is an education consultant with over 15 years of*

*teaching experience.*

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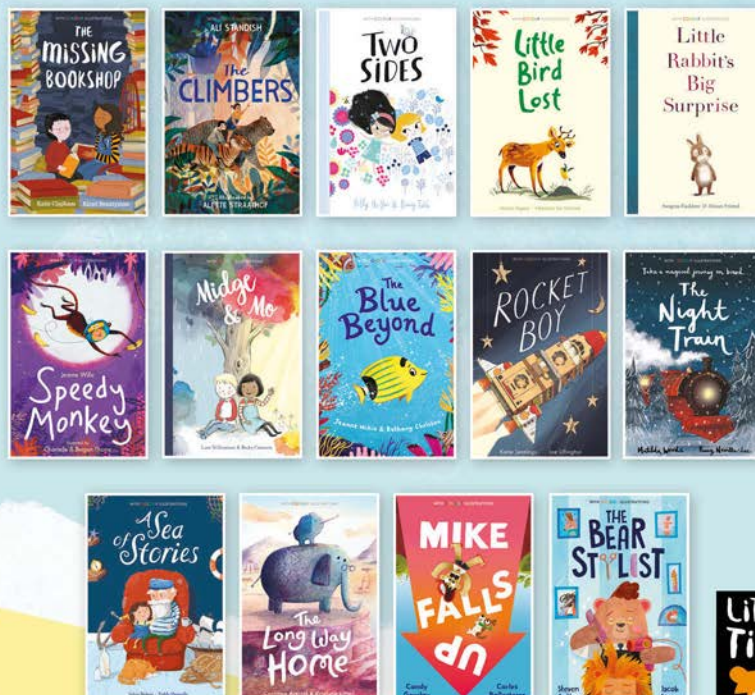
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Years  
1-6

# REAL GRAMMAR

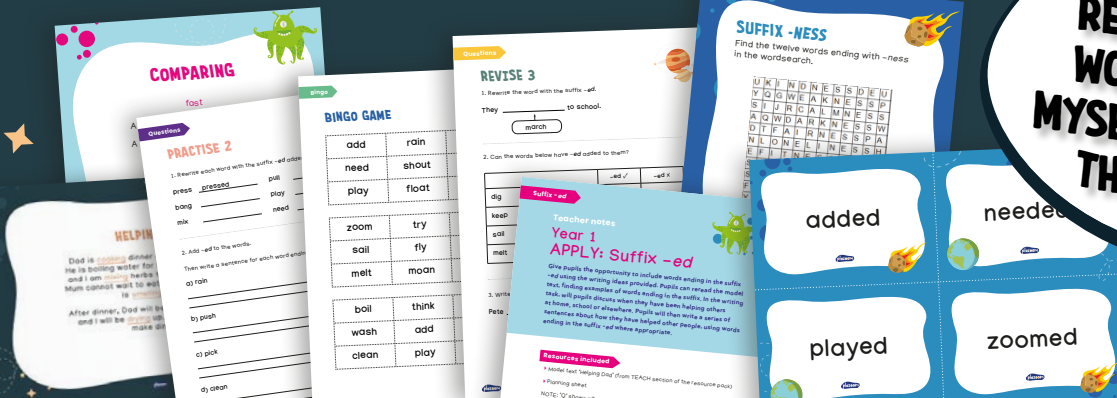


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RESOURCES I  
WOULD MAKE  
MYSELF IF I HAD  
THE TIME!"

Alice Griffith, Peppard  
CE Primary School



# A SIMPLE AND EFFECTIVE 5-STEP STRUCTURE

Ensuring progression and complete coverage of the  
whole curriculum

Can be used  
flexibly to  
suit the needs  
of your class

1

## TEACH

Comprehensive teaching sequences ensure your pupils grasp every concept and can apply their learning in context

### HELPING DAD

Dad is **cooking** dinner and I am **helping** him. He is **boiling** water for the carrots and peas and I am **mixing** herbs to go on the chicken. Mum cannot wait to eat it. She said the food is **smelling** great!

After dinner, Dad will be **washing** the dishes and I will be **drying** up. I love **helping** Dad make dinner.



2

## PRACTISE

3 differentiated practise activities that can be used flexibly to consolidate learning and identify any gaps or misconceptions

**Questions**

**PRACTISE 2**

1. Rewrite each word with the suffix -ed added.

press pressed pull \_\_\_\_\_

bang \_\_\_\_\_ play \_\_\_\_\_

mix \_\_\_\_\_ need \_\_\_\_\_

2. Add -ed to the words.

Then write a sentence for each word ending in -ed.

a) rain \_\_\_\_\_

b) push \_\_\_\_\_

c) pick \_\_\_\_\_

d) clean \_\_\_\_\_

e) buzz \_\_\_\_\_

3

## REVISIT

A range of games and activities that will ensure your pupils embed their learning

**BINGO GAME**

add	rain	moan
need	shout	buzz
play	float	melt
zoom	try	wash
sail	fly	pick
melt	moan	collect
boil	think	need
wash	add	pull
clean	play	pull

4

## APPLY

Extended writing tasks are used to encourage children to identify and apply the skill in context

**Planning sheet**

**I HELPED**

Draw some pictures showing how you helped others.


5

## REVISE

3 differentiated revision exercises to prepare your pupils for their end of year assessments

**Questions**

**REVISE 3**

1. Rewrite the word with the suffix -ed.

They marched to school.

2. Can the words below have -ed added to them?

	-ed ✓	-ed ✗
dig		
keep		
sail		
melt		

3. Write a word that ends in -ed to complete the sentence.

Pete \_\_\_\_\_ the door.

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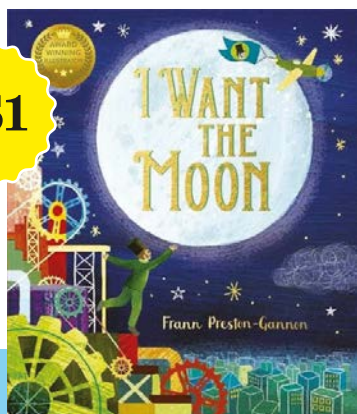


# Book CLUB



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

KS1



***I Want the Moon***  
by Frann Preston-Gannon  
(£7.99, Templar Books)

“Those who want, don’t get.” Who remembers those sage words from their youth? As educators, you probably say them a lot now, too. But teaching children that they can’t always get what they want, and that sharing is an important part of life, can feel like a complicated process. Enter *I Want the Moon*, the new picturebook from author and illustrator Frann Preston-Gannon, of *Bird’s Eye View* and *The Bad Day* fame. This time, the protagonist is a spoiled child who gets whatever he wants... that is, until he sets his sights on the moon. Beautiful rhyming text is accompanied by Preston-Gannon’s signature textured illustrations, to help your pupils understand that often happiness lies in the places they least expect it (and that joy is always best when shared).

KS1



***Pick a Story (A pirate + alien + jungle adventure)***  
by Sarah Coyle  
(£7.99, Farshore)

If you could write your own story, what would you create? Well, you’re in luck... here’s your chance! Vincent’s dog, Trouble, has disappeared, and he needs your help to find her. Discover not one, but three nail-biting adventures in this pick-a-story book. Whether your pupils want to sail the high seas with pirates, explore the undergrowth of the jungle, or zip up into space with aliens, there’s something for everyone, and each storytime can be different. With decisions to make on every single page, the book also shines a light on the narrative process, showing how many different ways a story can develop. Use as part of English lessons, or to engage pupils who might prefer to take a more active role in whole-class reading. Where will Vincent find himself this time?

KS1



***Mr Men & Little Miss – Discover You***  
by Roger Hargreaves  
(£4.99, Farshore)

Welcome these childhood favourite characters back into your classroom with a brand-new series. Consisting of four titles – *Be Kind*, *All Different*, *Worries*, and *Try Again* – the Discover You collection explores children’s emotions, wellbeing and mental health. Informed by educators and psychologists, including consultation from clinical psychologist Dr Elizabeth Kilbey, the books include engaging questions to encourage conversations between adults and children on different topics, and helpful tips from everyone’s favourite Mr. Men and Little Miss characters. Whether your little ones are struggling with anxiety, resilience, bullying or issues surrounding diversity, there is a book here to address it. And if you’re just after a funny, familiar tale for storytime? The Mr Men and Little Misses are here for you.

→→→RECOMMENDED

## RESOURCES

plazoom



### TRY COMIC COMPREHENSION

Engage reluctant readers, develop key comprehension skills of retrieval, vocabulary, inference and sequencing, and inspire creative writing, with these brilliant, FREE resources packs from Plazoom based on hilarious new stories from Beano – the nation's favourite comic! [Bit.ly/PlazoomComic](http://Bit.ly/PlazoomComic)

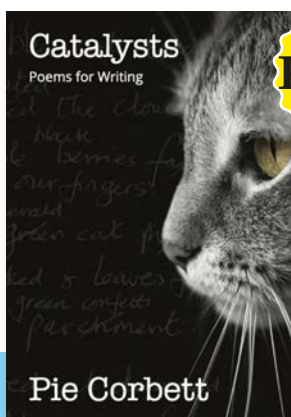


KS2

### Monster Hunting for Beginners

by Ian Mark, ill. Louis Ghibault  
(£7.99, Farshore)

Jack doesn't immediately look much like an official monster hunter, but then... what exactly does one of those *actually* look like? Either way, he's definitely a monster hunter now, ready or not, because an ogre broke into his garden and tried to eat his aunt! So begins this rip-roaring adventure featuring bogeymen, zomblings, and crusted hairy snot nibblers, in which Jack teams up with grumpy, 200-year-old veteran monster hunter Stoop and heads off to Cornwall where more ogres are causing havoc. At first, Jack is a bit worried that he might not be able to live up to the role of hero that's been thrust upon him, but, how many different kinds of monsters can there *really* be...? With emphatic endorsements from hilarious writers like Maz Evans and David Solomons, this is surely one that'll tickle the funny bones of the whole class.



KS1/2

### Catalysts

by Pie Corbett  
(£14.99, Talk for Writing)

Containing over 100 original poems, this new book from literacy expert and Talk for Writing founder Pie Corbett, *Catalysts: poems for writing*, is the perfect place to start when teaching verse in primary schools. Gaining its name from its form – a catalogue of lists – the book not only contains poetry, but teaching instructions and DIY activity ideas that educators can thumb through and apply in their classrooms. Explore a variety of different entry points into poetry, from humorous tales about a talkative dragon, to the beautiful imagery of the countryside. As an extra delight, *Catalysts* also contains a number of real-life examples written by children, so that even your most reluctant pupils will see that writing their very own poem is possible. This book is the perfect jumping off point for any form of poetry lesson for Years 1-6.

## Meet the author

### PIE CORBETT ON THE JOY OF CREATIVITY, AND WHY POETRY IS FOR EVERYONE



You've done a lot of workshops. Do you still delight in pupils' responses? Absolutely. I love any form of artistic

work in schools. The whole business of children making things is hugely important, especially if you come from a chaotic life, which most of us do nowadays. When the world doesn't seem like a very friendly place, being able to absorb themselves in creation, rather than destruction, can help pupils feel good about themselves, and it helps them cope. This is how young people can take steps out of the darkness, and into the light.

#### Do you have a favourite form of poetry for teaching?

There are a lot of list poems in this book (which is why it's called *Catalysts*). The reason for this is that I learned very early on that formal restriction can often actually make the writing process much easier. For instance, list poems must contain a repeating phrase, and although it might sound a bit odd, often rules and constraints like this can liberate creativity.

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

This book isn't like most primary resource titles. I wanted something that really respected the process of writing and teaching poetry, and that also respected creativity and the children's work. It's the sort of book I wish I'd had when I started teaching. There's a lot in there, and hopefully it's the sort of book that teachers might pick up and thumb through, and maybe even use as inspiration for their own writing. Something that might be worth trying, as well, is to copy some of the poems out and let the children choose one to respond to in their own ways. Once you've taught them what to look out for, a bit of free rein might not be a bad idea.

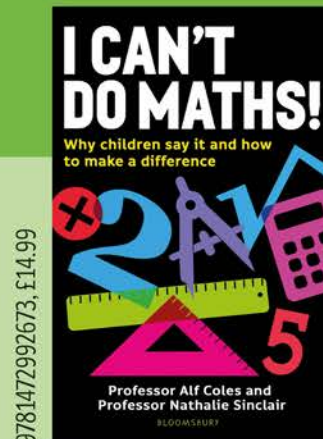
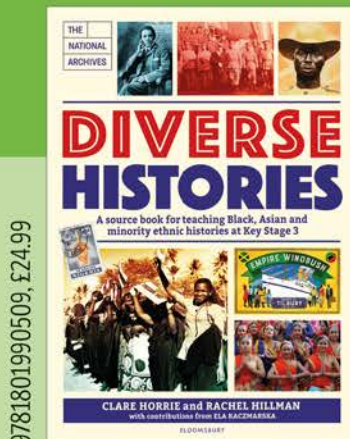
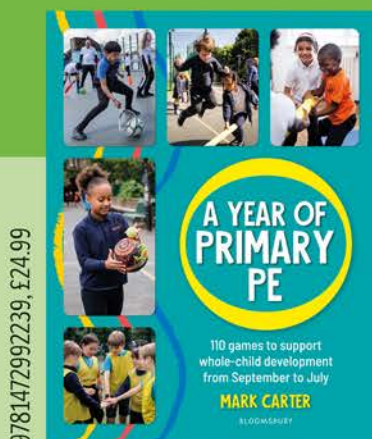
*Catalysts: poems for writing* (£14.99, Talk for Writing) is available now at [shop.talk4writing.com](http://shop.talk4writing.com)



# LEAP INTO THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR

## BOOKS TO ENHANCE YOUR TEACHING AND INSPIRE YOUR PUPILS

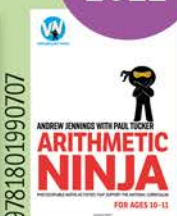
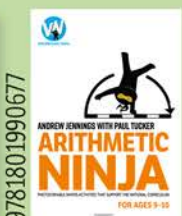
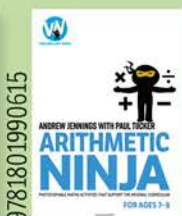
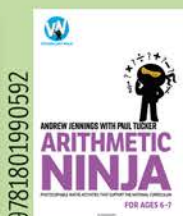
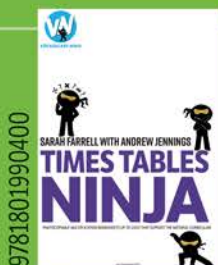
### REFRESH YOUR CURRICULUM



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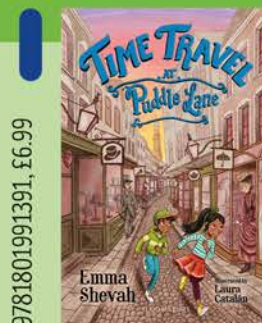
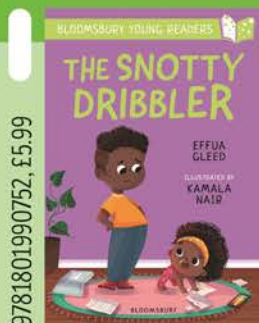
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MATHS →

# Times Tables Ninja

A comprehensive collection of photocopiable resources designed to embed multiplication knowledge



## AT A GLANCE

- Aligned to the National Curriculum
- Dedicated chapters for each table from 2 to 12
- A range of exercises to develop rapid recall
- Activities to promote the practical application of multiplication and division facts
- Includes answers, glossary and an informative introduction

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



As any martial arts expert will no doubt tell you, perfecting a skill often takes plenty of focus and dedication. Learning your times tables might not be as glamorous as creeping around in the shadows, trying to outfox your enemies, but it can take a great deal of practice.

For pupils, the journey from novice to mastery can be long and arduous. Still, there's no reason for the teacher to suffer too, is there? That's why Bloomsbury have created a resource that could save teachers a lot of hard graft as they try to instil each new times table.

Of course, there is no substitute for quality teaching, and *Times Tables Ninja* doesn't pretend to be. Nevertheless, this book does include a useful section at the beginning that outlines the sort of input that will be needed to introduce each new table, along with a glossary of essential terms. Hopefully, few teachers will need to have the process of going from concrete to pictorial to abstract representations of these concepts explained to them. Sometimes, however, a little reminder doesn't go amiss.

In my experience, one of the most frustrating aspects of teaching involves searching for ages to find appropriate resources. Too often, nothing seems

quite right so you end up making them yourself. It is to this soul-destroying process that *Times Tables Ninja* deals a swift and merciful blow. Stated simply, this book is a comprehensive collection of activities to help pupils embed the knowledge they are gaining. For each times table from two to 12, there is a dedicated chapter that contains a range of photocopiable practice worksheets. These start by encouraging fluency and rapid recall of multiplication and division facts. Thereafter, they allow pupils to apply that knowledge to challenges of shape and scale, such as calculating the perimeter of regular polygons or adapting recipes to serve more people.

To ensure that pupils are not just parroting what they have learned, there is then a chapter of challenges using mixed multiplication facts. There are even photocopiable certificates to allow children to celebrate each table they have mastered. This resource is flexible enough to be used in class, for small groups, or as homework. Meanwhile, you could multiply the time it saves you by your hourly rate and calculate the benefit of having a *Times Tables Ninja* on your shelf.

**teach  
PRIMARY**

## VERDICT

- ✓ Saves teachers' time
- ✓ Simple yet appealing design
- ✓ Reinforces link between multiplication and division
- ✓ Celebrates progress
- ✓ A powerful yet flexible teaching resource

## UPGRADE IF...

You have better things to do with your time than search for, or create, times tables practice activities.





*Sue says...*

**Got a classroom question? Our resident literacy expert is here to help...**



**Q** Are weekly spelling tests really a good way to help children become great spellers?  
N.W, Y4 teacher

**A** Weekly spelling lists taken home to practise and learn for a test the following week used to be commonplace in schools. However, many are now moving away from this. The EEF recommended in their 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2' document that teachers should 'Explicitly teach spellings and provide pupils with extensive opportunities to practice them.' (Recommendation 5, 2nd Edition 26th November 2021).

The best way to support pupils, in my experience, is to rehearse spellings little and often, focusing on spelling patterns and morphology. This may well include lists of words for the pupils to explore, but the emphasis should be on applying rules they've learned to words that they wish to use in their own independent writing. Looking at how words are formed using prefixes and suffixes, and rules around different spelling patterns for phonemes, particularly vowel digraphs, will all add to the toolbox that pupils can dip into to improve their spelling. For example, sharing when the grapheme 'ay' is used to spell the /ai/ sound (usually found at the end of words, with the exception of 'crayon') is much more beneficial than just sending home a list of spellings with the letters 'ay' in them. This also builds on pupils' phonetic knowledge, rather than have them thinking that phonics are not important once you leave Year 1!

Another important point is to remind pupils of the expectation that they will apply spelling rules when writing independently. They cannot be expected to spell everything correctly 100 per cent of the time, especially if we, as teachers, are also encouraging the use of new vocabulary; but they should be reminded to use the rules that they have been taught (and a dictionary). So, practising spellings little and often with a focus on rules and morphology of words can help children to become better spellers. Plazoom's Spelling Workout sheets ([bit.ly/PlazoomWorkout](http://bit.ly/PlazoomWorkout)), offer the perfect resource to teach and consolidate spelling rules, with opportunities to apply and use them in short, independent writing activities.

*Sue is literacy lead at plazoom.com, with over 20 years' teaching and mentoring experience.*

# The plazoom Room

*Ideas, techniques and resources for all your literacy needs*

## Autumn days...

Few things are more inspiring for poets and authors than the changing of our UK seasons.

So, as we approach another autumn term, why not think about drawing on the natural world to get your young writers producing powerful paragraphs of their own?

This engaging resource pack uses a model text to demonstrate how expanded noun phrases are formed, and why they are used to add description to writing. Pupils can read and share the text, identifying features including determiners, adjectives, modifying nouns and prepositional phrases, before composing their own description of a pumpkin patch, which could form part of a longer narrative, perhaps as part of a unit of work on harvest or Halloween.

Autumn-themed writing packs for KS1 (a senses poem) and UKS2 (descriptive writing with antonyms) are also available from Plazoom.

**FREE RESOURCE**

Download it at  
[bit.ly/PlazoomY6](http://bit.ly/PlazoomY6)



## Did you know...?

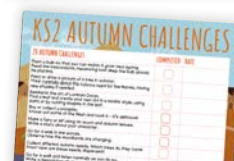
- Autumn, as based on the Earth's journey around the Sun, begins on the equinox (22 or 23 September). However, meteorological autumn always starts on 1 September.
- According to one study, babies born during autumn are more likely to live to 100 than those born at other times of the year.
- We may think of 'fall' as an American word, but it was widely used in England in the 17th century (and was short for 'fall of the leaf').

## 3 more ideas for autumn literacy work

**1** Autumn – Year 1 writing unit based on a model poem by Joshua Seigal  
[bit.ly/PlazoomAutumn](http://bit.ly/PlazoomAutumn)



**2** 20 Autumn Challenges – Creative tasks for ongoing home learning  
[bit.ly/PlazoomAutumn2](http://bit.ly/PlazoomAutumn2)



**3** Hedgehog's Journey – Key Stage 1 writing unit based on a narrative by Gabrielle Kent  
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## Build writing resilience



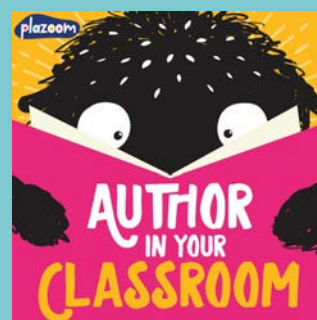
Much as children and staff alike desperately need a break by the end of the academic year, most teachers will be familiar with the concept of the 'summer slide' – a loss of learning that can happen when pupils are out of the classroom for weeks at a time. This can present as a lack of writing resilience, too – which is where imaginative writing prompts, such as those you'll find in Plazoom's Write Now! resource collection – can come in incredibly handy, giving learners the opportunity to form sentences on topics that intrigue and excite them, gradually building up to longer pieces of work. Find the resources at [bit.ly/PlazoomWriteNow](https://bit.ly/PlazoomWriteNow)

Plazoom's Effective Writing collection is full of model texts, planning sheets, success criteria lists and much more to get even the most reluctant writer putting pencil or pen to paper in a creative endeavour. Explore what's available at [bit.ly/PlazoomEffective](https://bit.ly/PlazoomEffective)



**Louie lives in London with her wife, their dog Buffy and a creepy puppet who has no name.**

**She loves comics and fact books of all kinds.**



'A writer' is something you become as soon as you begin to write and, for Louie Stowell, that happened at the age of eight. Now, she has used her art of storytelling to create a funny, fast-paced novel featuring Loki, the Norse god of mischief and lies, who has been sent to Earth by Odin to learn how to mend his trickster ways. So, in the resources pack accompanying this episode of the *Author in Your Classroom* podcast, pupils are asked to consider what might happen if gods from other mythical worlds were to visit our planet...

Listen to this episode and download your free teaching resources at [bit.ly/PlazoomLouie](https://bit.ly/PlazoomLouie)

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Keep a box of emergency (healthy!) snacks in your classroom; it's great for disorganised days when you've forgotten lunch and don't have time to nip out. What's more, your colleagues will love you.



**Save yourself**  
As an NQT, I saved and filed a copy of every worksheet. Did I EVER look at them? Nope – don't bother. They are all stored electronically anyway.



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READING 

# Phonic Books – Moon Dogs Extras

A set of suitable decodable books specifically written for older, struggling readers



## AT A GLANCE

- A set of 24 decodable books for older, beginner and SEN readers
- Accompanying photocopiable workbook to support reading, writing and comprehension
- Age-respectful and inclusive stories
- Highly engaging content with contemporary illustrations
- Sensitively supportive of the target

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



There are some readers that seem to get short-shrift and aren't catered for in the way they deserve. Disregard anyone who suggests that children will have been "phonic'd" up to the eyeballs" by the time they enter secondary school – many aren't.

Although there are plenty of phonics resources available for a younger audience, older readers at the very early stages of reading tend to struggle because suitable decodable books are in short supply. Older poor readers have the same basic problems as younger poor readers and need to learn the same skills and to address that, phonics is the only game in town.

Moon Dogs Extras is a unique resource that contains a number of fun stories about a group of teenage friends in a rock band and has been written specifically to engage older readers so they relate to the characters and their tween adventures. These age-appropriate stories provide crucial practice for those children learning the sounds of the alphabet at CVC (consonant/vowel/consonant) level, and those who need a great deal of support. It has been carefully designed for pupils learning how to blend sounds into CVC words.

The books progress gently, with each title introducing a few sounds at a time. This allows children to make steady and scaffolded progress. No learning is lost along the way as previous sounds/letters are included through the set. The books start with advice on how to use the stories and end with a 'Jumping Jack'

game, questions and reading practice.

High-interest text and illustrations combine to tell a story and, when done well, they help children learn about narrative structure, plot and character development in an accessible way. The Moon Dogs Extras illustrations are quite simply brilliant and they work alongside the text and real-world images to help develop children's deeper comprehension skills, allowing them additional opportunities to infer, deduce, think critically and empathise. The visual element of these books is a major strength and they will attract learners who may traditionally struggle to engage with literacy activities.

You'll be pleased to learn there is a wonderful workbook that complements the series with some extremely well-crafted reading, writing and comprehension activities to develop and embed essential skills. The workbook contains a number of clear, organised and polished activities that support and provide crucial further practice for the sounds of the alphabet at CVC level, with opportunities to consolidate phonic skills and improve their writing.

Learning to read fluently requires attention to letters and sounds, and how they connect in text. Struggling readers are at risk of poor educational outcomes and so they need to access supportive resources that can help close the gaps. Moon Dogs Extras offers just what these readers need: they are visually appealing, age-appropriate and well-resourced with practice materials.

**teach  
PRIMARY**

## VERDICT

- ✓ Helps to nourish confident, independent reading and spelling strategies
- ✓ An exciting and engaging resource for children who need extra support
- ✓ Gives children struggling to read opportunities to succeed and enjoy a real sense of achievement
- ✓ Ideal resources for developing reading resilience in older, beginner readers
- ✓ Provides children with a voice and a language
- ✓ Closes the reading-enjoyment gap

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to address the needs of neglected and forgotten readers using a dedicated suite of high-quality decodable books to upgrade their skills, fluency, performance and reading self-efficacy.

Moon Dogs Extras set £48; Moon Dogs Extra Workbook £25; [phonicbooks.co.uk](http://phonicbooks.co.uk)





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Based around the award-winning *Inner Buddy* book by Emily Madge Payne, the session focuses on gratitude and encourages children to design their own Inner Buddy. Team-building games are part of the interactive session, along with a one-hour jump session.

## 3 INCLUSIVITY

Jump In offers a safe space for kids to enjoy a jump session while learning new skills that will help them succeed academically as well as socially. Our sessions can be tailored for children with additional needs, too. It's exercise in disguise!

## 4 SPACE

Every Tuesday our sites are closed to the public and are open for school bookings. We host our all-day school trip booking option on a Tuesday and can accommodate other days of the week upon request. Jump In offers a safe space to host between 80–130 pupils or multiple classes at a time. Teachers jump for FREE!

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### Contact:

For more information please email [schools@gojumpin.com](mailto:schools@gojumpin.com) or call us on 0800 098 8212

## At a glance

- Jump In takes fun and safety extremely seriously. We lead the way!
- Our staff are fully trained and have experience working with children from all backgrounds.
- Sessions at Jump In teach persistence, and improve self-esteem and learning success.

# WHY I LOVE...

Anne-Marie Martin, founder of diddi dance, on why she adores teaching EYFS children

## ABOUT ME:

### NAME:

Anne-Marie Martin

### JOB ROLE:

EYFS dance teacher and founder of diddi dance

### FAVOURITE FEATURE:

diddi dance encourages a love of movement that can last a lifetime



babies and toddlers. This is where I discovered the joy of working with this age group.

### Platform for expression

Dance is great as a platform for expression. It's especially useful for children in Nursery and Reception whose communication abilities may not be fully developed yet. Children can express themselves freely and start to gain confidence and develop their social skills through moving to music.

### Building up strength

We teach diddi dancers to move with confidence and imagination by using lots of different free movement methods in every session, including



galloping, jumping and twirling. We use large and small props to help children build their strength and develop their fine and gross motor skills. These are fundamental to a child's development.

### Expert syllabus

We've been delivering diddi dance sessions in EYFS settings for 17 years. During that time our syllabus has been tailored to cover the prime areas of learning. We work with child development experts to ensure we deliver classes that are full of fun and meet the developmental needs of under-fives.

### Contact:

Enquire about having diddi dance in your school by finding your local contact at [diddidance.com](http://diddidance.com). com/contact or email [info@diddidance.com](mailto:info@diddidance.com)

### Where it began

After graduating with a degree in dance and retiring from a career as a professional dancer, I began teaching dance classes. I gave weekday lessons in a local play centre, working with



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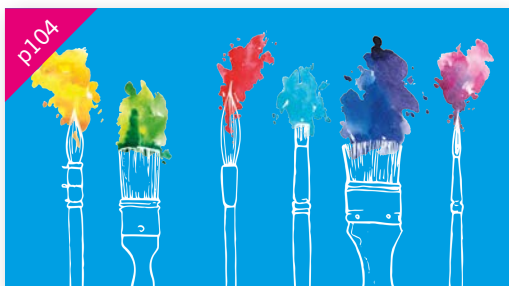
## INSIDE THIS SECTION



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# How to build a powerful RE curriculum

From storytelling to extended writing, use these tried and tested strategies to put together a truly effective subject plan

ADAM SMITH

**R**eligious education (RE) is probably the most variable element of the curriculum across the whole of our schooling system. There is little else on the timetable that varies so much in quality, quantity, and content from setting to setting. Other subjects are standardised by the outline given in the National Curriculum, but RE appears in only one line, to inform readers that it must be taught in all state schools. There are locally agreed syllabuses, a form of curriculums-by-committee which, far from being standardised nationally, are different across every local authority. Broadly speaking, if you are in a LA school, you are obliged to follow yours. If you are a free school or academy, you have a great deal more freedom over what you choose to teach.

Freedom, of course, sounds brilliant, but if you're an RE or curriculum lead without a background in theology (and religious studies/philosophy/sociology/anthropology), it can be quite daunting. If you really are starting from scratch, then it's worth taking a look at some different locally agreed syllabuses to get a feel for what a broad and balanced curriculum looks like. (Norfolk is a good place to start.) I am fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to have a degree in theology and philosophy, and I began my teaching career as a secondary RE teacher. A few

years ago, I moved to primary and have developed an RE curriculum for my school, which we're now in our third year of teaching.

## What is powerful RE?

RE can, and should, be a powerful subject for pupils. Done right, it can open up the world for our children, give them insights into cultures and systems of thought that are different from their own, and make them more curious and well-informed about the world around them. So, what is it about RE that makes it powerful?

RE takes our students beyond their personal experiences – over the course of a year we can open pupils up to Hindu ideas about life and death, the pilgrimage of Hajj to Mecca, Christian debates about violence and war, and the story of the life of Buddha and what that means to millions of Buddhists today. The immediate practical applications of this knowledge might seem a bit hazy, but they make the world a richer and more



interesting place for children to exist in, by building up an intellectual worldview where different cultures and conflicting ideas sit alongside students' own.

## How to plan your curriculum

### BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

The first thing you need to do is make a long-term plan. If you're the RE or curriculum lead, you have the exciting prospect of doing this for the whole school, but if you're a classroom teacher, you need to know at least what you'll be teaching all year. Everyone will be in a different position here; if you're working from an existing scheme or a locally agreed syllabus, then you'll have units of work ready to go. If you're starting from scratch, then this is probably a more daunting prospect, but essential nonetheless.

### LAY IT OUT

Get a group of interested folks together to lay out your curriculum. Write each unit on a note card, then add the five most important ideas in each unit, and start to lay out your plan from EYFS to Y6. By doing this, you can begin to see the lines that run through the subject. If we are going to teach Easter in Y3, have we already introduced ideas like the Gospel, Jesus and sacrifice before that? Shuffling the cards around will help you think about a sensible teaching sequence.

### BREAK IT UP

There are so many tools at your disposal to break up big ideas into interesting, digestible chunks. Here are a few I've used:

- **STORYTELLING.** RE is full of stories that tell us something about religious

beliefs and what we have in common across cultures.

We can read, retell, act, summarise, and question.

- **READING.** Be it whole-class, guided, paired, echo, or individual reading, RE is a great chance to read and discuss. I find it useful to rewrite magazine or newspaper articles, or use Bible stories designed for Sunday school with a bit of an edit to remove their explicitly evangelical overtones.

- **DEBATE.** The big ideas in RE, of course, lend themselves to debate, but it's worth doing properly. Lay the groundwork, ask what kind of knowledge students need to have before they can come to meaningful opinions, and try to ask what real people in the world believe, rather than focusing only on what we as teachers may think.

- **WRITING.** Across all our foundation subjects, we emphasise the skill of extended writing. Starting in Y3 we have heavily scaffolded the process of writing paragraphs at the end of each unit. Over the course of KS2, we remove a lot of that scaffolding which means our Y6s can plan and write some very impressive mini-essays that reflect their engagement.

### STICK TO A FORMAT

It's worth deciding early on what you think will work for your context. You need to answer some basic questions: how much space will RE have in the timetable? How

are you going to assess it? And how do you think lessons will flow? For the scheme I wrote, we followed other foundation subjects in using booklets and PowerPoints to scaffold lessons. Teachers have all the key knowledge and examples in the presentation, and pupils use the booklet to answer questions and recap knowledge. In KS1 we began using booklets but found that they didn't add a huge amount to the lessons, and so now we mostly stick to storytelling, discussion and teacher-led reading. Deciding on a common format for your planning will mean you get into a good rhythm, where one unit builds on the format and the successes of the last one.

### ALL ABOARD!

When you start planning, try to find teachers who want to be involved in laying the groundwork. From there you can spread that enthusiasm outwards. CPD is obviously a great place to start, but it can sometimes give the impression that things are being imposed from on high. Honest discussion with colleagues, no-stakes coaching, listening and acting on feedback will help get everyone on board. Subject knowledge is often a big stumbling block to teachers feeling confident in RE, so do the hard work for them: include extra background knowledge in the planning and make suggestions for some short reading – OUP *Very Short Introductions*, and Karen Armstrong's books are good starting points. **TP**



*Adam Smith is a Year 5 teacher and RE lead at Charles*

*Dickens Primary School in Southwark, London.*



@MrSmithRE



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# Oh, the PLACES WE'LL GO

Delve into spatial representations and diverse points of view, and gain essential map skills for free...

ANTHONY BARLOW

Using maps is at the core of the geography curriculum in both KS1 and KS2. Sometimes you'll be using paper maps in the field, scrutinising keys and legends, to give pupils a real sense of space. Other times you might be plotting detailed routes and looking very closely at a few individual houses, or using apps such as Digimaps for Schools to take an historical view.

However, the go-to for all teachers is likely to be the trio of Google products

geography lessons? I have some suggestions...

## Diverse stories

Ofsted says that one of the key skills when using maps is for children to 'learn to interpret spatial representations, particularly maps, globes and atlases, and construct their own maps and plans' (2021). Crucially, they should also be able to compare and contrast how different media, or 'spatial representations' depict a particular location. For example, if we look at a photo, a video and a map

root of poor geography teaching. For example, for many pupils, it can be difficult to ascertain what is an ordinary street, housing estate, or high-street or park, as opposed to the tourism centres, royal palaces and parks that we might see at first glance when researching a new location. This is where Google Maps, StreetView and Earth really come into their own, allowing us to explore the spectacular alongside the mundane, all from a number of different perspectives.

Even when teaching very young children, we need to avoid giving them only a partial view or a 'single story' when they're introduced

to a new location. We can investigate diversity in viewpoints within the classroom by asking the children simple questions about localities and settlements, and sharing and exploring their answers. For instance, ask pupils: What is your favourite place? Why? What's your favourite journey? Show

accessible from any browser: Maps, StreetView, and Earth. Of these three, we're likely most familiar with Maps – it's what we pull up on our phones whenever we're lost. But it's Google Earth that I think has the greater potential for helping us to meet the following Ofsted requirements:

- decoding information from maps
- constructing (or encoding) maps
- analysing distributions and relationships
- route-finding
- interpreting information to draw conclusions

So, how can we use this suite of free tools to enhance

of London, each will present an image of how the city is laid out (topography), what it looks like (character), how it is navigated (transport nodes), and what it might be like if you were actually there.

I say might be as this is incredibly important; everything we see is subjective and partial. We only have an outsider's view unless we can go to the place we're studying, talk to the people who live there, and assemble a comprehensive 'sense of place' from various sources.

This outsider's perspective can often be found at the





me on a map. Point out how interesting it is when we have different answers to these questions, and how we might even take different routes to the same place. You can consider how viewpoints may change between pedestrians and cyclists, for example. Each will see the world differently, even if they're in the same place, physically.

Google Earth is a great place to start when figuring out what your local area looks like. Try exploring the routes and places your pupils talk about as part of the questions above, and link what you see back to your discussions on diversity and points of view. See the pointers below for getting the most out of this exercise.

## How to use Google Earth

There are four main parts of this tool. They are:

- Voyager – this connects you to ready-made collections of locations (such as great places to hike, coastal cities, etc.)
- Square tool – picks a random spot on the map for you to explore
- Pin tool – mark places on the globe and make a project yourself.

(E.g. parks within walking distance of your school, or the most popular cycling routes.)

• Map style – this is the most important one, which allows you to change how you view the map. More below...

The 'map style' tool allow for much more customisation. For example:

- Clean – this shows a blank version of the Earth, without labels for borders, place names, bodies of water, etc. It's useful to use when asking pupils 'What does this location look like in real life? What do you think the colours, buildings and topography suggest about it?' (E.g. 'Are there hills or is it flat? Is it inhabited and built up, or countryside without houses? Where in the world do you think this is?') It makes for a great discussion starter.
- Exploration – this gives you all the information that's left out on the 'clean' version. You can now answer the questions you asked

above, and see what pupils got right, and what

patterns you can now see. Could they tell which hemisphere the place is in, for example?

• Everything – this mode can provide a sense of how active our world is. The dynamic nature of geography visible through this style of mapping can be overwhelming, but it's also awesome!

• Custom – have a play with this mode and come up with your own custom viewing style. Bear in mind that you can screenshot different viewing styles before you start the lesson, so you don't have to go through it all live with the class.

• 3D buildings – toggle this option to get a drone-style rendering of locations. It often shows a 'bird's-eye' perspective, and completely changes your view of what an area looks like on foot (try comparing with StreetView of the same area). You could show your class the area around your school, and then visit some of the places in real life. Now have a look at contrasting places – how is your landscape different from that in Edinburgh, Cardiff, or Belfast, for example?

• Gridlines – this is a very important option. One of the most difficult-to-teach aspects of the National Curriculum is the lines of latitude and longitude.

Use this to help children become familiar with these lines, and to begin using them to give information about different locations. For example: London is 52 degrees north of the Equator (similar to Alaska), and Accra, Ghana, Valencia, Bordeaux, Greenwich and Brighton all have almost exactly the same line of longitude, despite being nowhere near each other! **TP**

## FOUR AMAZING PLACES TO EXPLORE

### New Zealand

look into Ambrym Volcano Marum Crater in Vanuatu. Perfect for physical geography units.

### Greece

Monemvasia is a rock fortress with just one way in and out, highlighted by Google as one of its most-loved locations. It is a good example of where a single image prompts further questions, such as, "How can we tell from the map that the plateau is 100m above sea-level?", and "What are the streets like? What kind of traffic do you think they'd support?" (Hint: they're only fit for donkeys!).

### Poland

Play a version of eye-spy but every question has to be about the location of the object is the room. Is it on the wall? Is it above the clock? Older children have to ask unambiguous questions: "Is it within one metre of my desk?" Rather than "Is it near my desk?"

### Jordan

Do you recognise the location of Petra from films? It's appeared in *Aladdin*, *The Mummy Returns*, *Indiana Jones*, and *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen*. What features make it so immediately recognisable?



**Anthony Barlow** is principal lecturer in Primary Geography Education

at University of Roehampton. He is co-author of *Mastering Primary Geography*, Bloomsbury (2019), and a trustee of The Geographical Association.

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Connect past, present and future, and help pupils build on history learning from year to year

STUART TIFFANY

Over the past couple of years, primary history teachers have spent countless hours rewriting, resequencing, and refocusing their curriculum so that it is in line with the current Ofsted inspection focus. There are many schools with clearly defined sequences in place and a growing understanding of the building blocks of knowledge, so thinking about how we can link learning within and across year groups is a useful next step.

If you've heard me talk on this before, you will know I like to present the history curriculum as an open-ended framework which is full of possibilities. This is also how it was described in 2013 by the Historical Association's Alf Wilkinson alongside the greater emphasis on the 'big picture of history... of making sense of how it all fits together.' A core aim of

the National Curriculum for history is to support children's ability to 'gain a coherent knowledge and understanding of Britain's past and that of the wider world. It should inspire pupils' curiosity to know more about the past.' Tim Lomas wrote about coherence in issue 76 of the journal *Primary History*, too, and said, 'Coherence is often best achieved when pupils see the links, connections and inter-relationships across periods, themes and events.'

As such, I wanted to share some approaches that can support children's ability to make those critical connections between what they have already learned, and what they're about to encounter in a new academic year.

## Chronological connections

Chronology has a two-fold purpose in that it helps us

organise the past, alongside being an important historical concept in its own right. I have written about timelines before ([teachwire.net/news/ks1-history-how-to-use-timelines](https://www.teachwire.net/news/ks1-history-how-to-use-timelines)), focusing on how they can be constructed to depict more than just an arbitrary sequence. When focusing on connections, constructing timelines is less critical than what we do with them. When we deconstruct what the timelines depict, the role of the teacher is similar to a narrator in a story, helping children to understand the characters, settings, and events, and make more sense of the abstract historical world.

The National Curriculum explicitly talks about connections for KS1 and KS2 history in the processes paragraphs and Aim 6. Specifically, around being

able to 'identify similarities and differences between ways of life in different periods' in KS1. This can be accomplished by using timelines to organise children's understanding of when in the past they are



learning about, and how it sits alongside what they have learned previously. Once the children can identify this, the teacher can support them to understand a number of core ideas: why life was different; what technology would have impacted life (think no fire engines in the Great Fire of London); and why making comparisons is helpful when learning history.

KS2 directly builds on this by 'establishing clear narratives within and across the periods [of] study.' The

## “Constructing timelines is less critical than what we do with them”

example, if we focus on the economy, ask 'How did most people earn a living?'. What emerges is a huge turning point in the neolithic era with the transition to agriculture, and then another in the late 18th century with industrial revolution. It's key that the purpose of the timeline isn't lost – the children need to interact, debate, discuss and consider what it says.

One important addition alongside this is maps! Not only should we consider when in the past we are learning about but also where in the world. Both are key to developing understanding, and combine to provide greater clarity over future learning.

### Substantive connections

The current inspection framework defines 'progress' as 'knowing more (including knowing how to do more) and remembering more', and stipulates that 'when new knowledge and existing knowledge connect in pupils' minds, this gives rise to understanding.' Progress was also referenced several times in Tim Jenner's Historical Association conference talk 2022 as 'building knowledge of concepts through repeated encounters'. This is an approach I actively use in the classroom as it allows me to ensure children have retained what they were taught previously and therefore I have a more solid foundation upon which I can add depth in the new topic. To facilitate this, we need to define the core knowledge for the history curriculum to ensure subsequent teachers know what they are building on.

When teaching, I often start with a low-stakes quiz. This is nothing uncommon in classrooms but, after reading a piece in TES by Mark Enser, I adjusted the nature and use of the questions. Firstly, I ensured to emphasise retrieval of definitions around concepts that were key in the lesson ahead. This has helped the children make connections because they are actively built into the teaching sequence. Secondly, I used some of the questions to generate learning by selecting information and then doing something active with it. In UKS2, for example, we focus an enquiry on whether King Alfred deserves to be known as 'the Great'. This draws attention to his actions in relation to Viking conquest, defending his kingdom, reforming aspects of state and subsequent interpretations of his reign. This is especially useful when a concept such as monarchy is fundamental to an enquiry.

As part of this, it is helpful to have a clear definition of what you're actively investigating. In this case, what a monarch is and their role in societies; previous examples including key decisions they made (think Charles II in the Great Fire of London) and the ability to link them together. Some of the questions we use are:

- What is a government?
- Can you match the definitions to the correct type of government (democracy and monarchy)?
- Who is the odd one out and why? (Boudicca, Emperor Claudius and a Pharaoh).

By consistently making these kinds of connections,

## 4 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

**1** Do I know what the children have been taught in previous years that I'm building on?

**2** Am I making use of timelines and maps to highlight the relative position in time and place of my new unit of work?

**3** How does retrieval support activating prior knowledge, while also connecting it to what the children are learning next?

**4** Within lessons, how am I prompting children to identify links and explore them in depth?

children are used to it being a core part of the lesson, so they engage independently and see it as a way to help them understand the subject. The initial fears some pupils had about getting questions wrong were reduced when they realised the retrieval process was there to prompt remembering and not as a test where scores were calculated and shared. There is much more support available in Kate Jones' new book, *Retrieval practice: Primary: a guide for primary teachers and leaders* – I heartily recommend purchasing it.**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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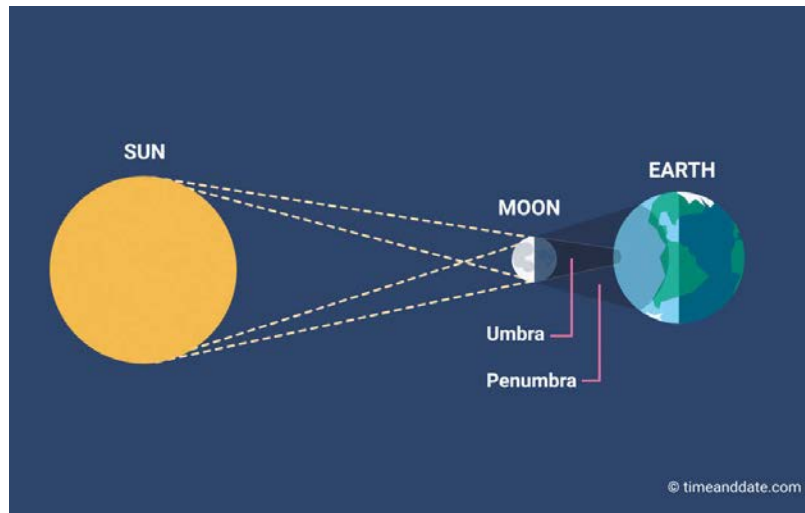
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# The Devil's in THE DETAILS

If your humanities curriculum is a blank Sistine ceiling, starting with some detailed sketches may stop you making a Jackson Pollock of it...

JON HUTCHINSON

“**T**he curriculum is too packed! Chock-a-block! Bursting at the seams!” It’s a common complaint in most schools, but especially in primaries, and especially recently. I myself may have been overheard grumbling something similar over a custard cream in the staff room. Despite the joy of spending all day with our classes, it can often feel like there is too much to do and too little time to do it.

The National Curriculum is usually held up as the villain in this pantomime; the source of all our woes. While this may be true in some subjects (yes, I’m looking at you, *grammar*), I’m not so sure this applies to areas such as history, geography or RE. In fact, and bear with me here, I think that the problem in some of the foundation subjects is that the curriculum is too *thin*, not too dense.

Let’s take an example: Roman Britain. It’s true that this is a National Curriculum topic and therefore schools have a statutory duty to teach it. But beyond the vaguest title ‘The Roman Empire and its impact on Britain’ there is no further statutory expectation. This means that someone needs to decide which of the people, events, themes and concepts to teach from an empire spanning 500 years (or 1500, if you are including Byzantium) and several continents.

Too often, all of this choice is left up to classroom

teachers. Rather than being given paint-by-numbers, as it is sometimes claimed, they are left with the curricula equivalent of the blank ceiling on the Sistine chapel. Now, if you’ve got nothing else to do for several years, dozens of assistants and a relaxed attitude to toilet etiquette, then it’s true you may well conjure up a masterpiece. But precisely zero classroom teachers enjoy any of those luxuries. This can mean that curriculum is planned on the hoof, with little more than a lunchtime to prepare an hour lesson from scratch.

At Reach Academy Feltham, we started sketching out our curriculum in more detail about five years ago. We haven’t stopped tinkering ever since, and one of the biggest conclusions we’ve arrived at is that a good curriculum is a detailed one. Good for leaders, good for teachers, good for pupils and good for parents. There are five main reasons why, and it’s worth looking at each in turn in a little more – ahem – detail.

## 1 Specified checkpoints and endpoints become clearer

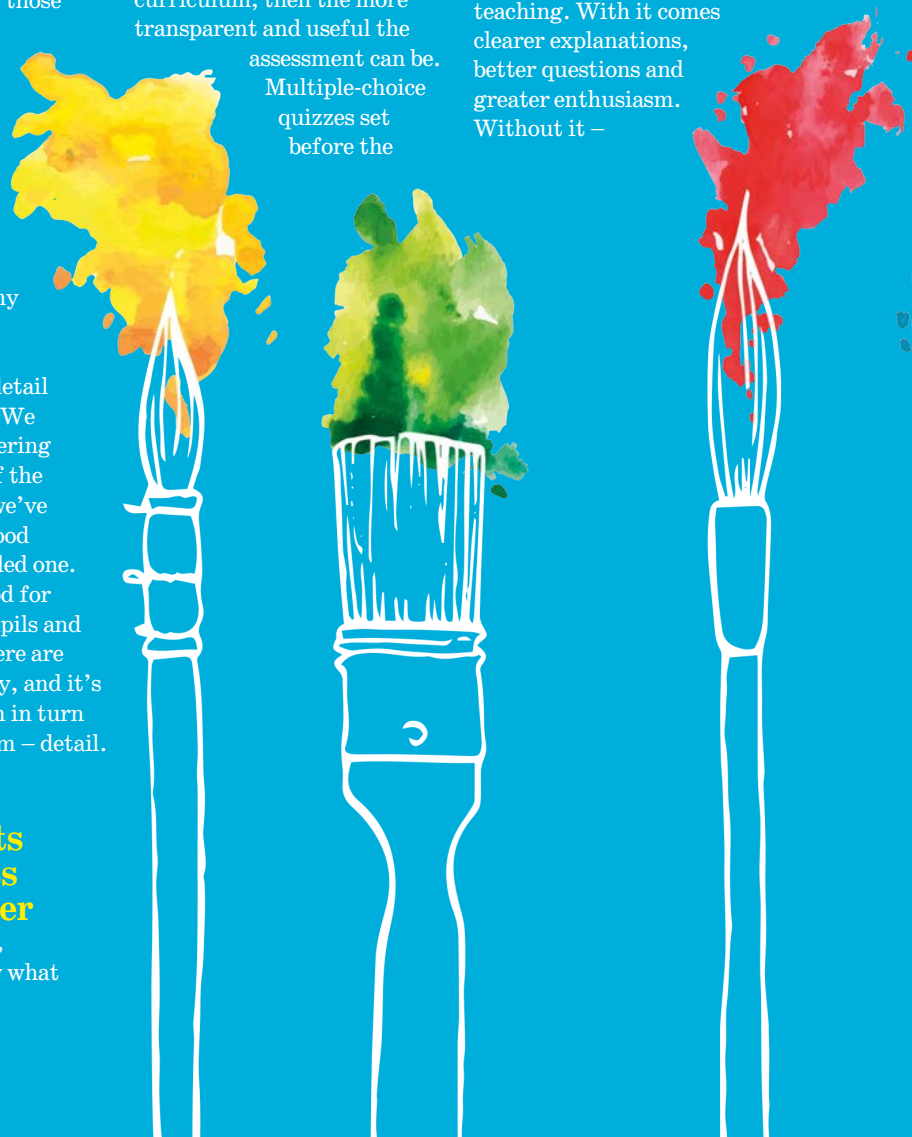
There is little clarity, nationally, of exactly what

pupils should know and be able to do in many of the subjects and topics outside of English, maths and maybe science. Vague descriptors such as ‘emerging in understanding chronology’ or ‘understands how humans can affect their environment’ are entirely unsatisfactory in terms of setting out pupils’ knowledge and skills. The more detail that we can provide in the curriculum, then the more transparent and useful the assessment can be. Multiple-choice quizzes set before the

topic is taught can be a useful starting point, but broader assessments could also be planned, such as presentations in which pupils must explain the features of each biome.

## 2 Subject knowledge is teaching turbo-fuel

It’s difficult to overstate the importance of subject knowledge when it comes to teaching. With it comes clearer explanations, better questions and greater enthusiasm. Without it –



well, we all know how that feels. And primary teachers are often set an impossible task of being some sort of human equivalent of Wikipedia with a personality. Setting out exactly what pupils need to learn in each lesson not only gives clarity to pupils, but also provides teachers with a primer for what they need to know. Writing out 500 or so words of text for each lesson can serve both purposes, ensuring equality of curriculum offer for all pupils and acting as a mini, tailored subject knowledge boost for teachers.

### 3 Conceptual knowledge relies on examples

Of course, when talking about detail in the curriculum we aren't aiming for an uninspiring list of facts to be memorised and regurgitated. The beauty of each subject is in the broad concepts that underpin each discipline. In geography these will include big ideas such

as migration, habitats and natural resources. However, conceptual knowledge relies on concrete examples. The more examples you know when it comes to, say, monarchs, the better your conceptual understanding of monarchy will be. A detailed curriculum, therefore, ensures that conceptual understanding isn't left up to chance.

### 4 Sequencing takes place over years, not weeks

The curriculum is bigger than any individual teacher. While primary teachers, of course, are responsible only for their year group, the curriculum for children extends both before and beyond. If we want pupils' conceptual knowledge to gradually become more sophisticated year after year, then the curriculum needs to be detailed enough to ensure that. If pupils learned that the Abrahamic religions all consider Moses a prophet in Y4, they need that

understanding to become more nuanced in Y5 or 6, perhaps by learning about his role as a liberator. Without the detail of exactly what pupils learned in the preceding years, we essentially do a factory reset of each subject every September.

### 5 Parents are invited into what their pupils are learning

We all know that parents and carers are children's first and best teachers. Too often, though, we lock them out of exactly what their kids are learning. If you ask your daughter what she is learning about in history and she responds with 'Knights and Castles' or 'Chocolate', it becomes an almost impossible task to consolidate and extend her learning at home. What on Earth are they expected to know? The greater detail that we can provide, then, the more able parents are to support. In my experience, with this greater clarity, folks at home are only too happy to boost their kids' learning.

A risk with this 'detailed approach', of course, is that a sort of educational arms race emerges, in which subject leads are determined to pack more and more into lessons and units of work. So I should be clear: more detail doesn't necessarily mean more content. Rather, it is a clearer and more thoughtful level of granularity that helps to ensure that one

topic builds on the last and sets up pupils for the next. The approach that I'm advocating should remove headaches and free up time for teachers. If it's doing the opposite, then something has gone wrong and we have the same problem that we started with.

Gradually getting to a greater level of detail as a school in each subject is not something that happens overnight or in a mad sprint over a half-term holiday. Rather it's a process that takes years, and even then is never quite finished. We made the choice to set out the detail in pupil work-booklets for each unit, with all of the tasks, questions and content included. It may be that as a school you decide to adopt such materials, perhaps adapting, adding and iterating, over time. However you choose to approach curriculum development, remember that the devil is in the detail. **TP**



**Jon Hutchinson** is director of training and development at the Reach Foundation,

which partners with schools and trusts to develop cradle to career approaches within their communities. Before this, Jon was a primary school teacher and assistant headteacher at Reach Academy Feltham.

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### 3. Set practical activities as homework

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### WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To be able to identify and sort polygons as regular or irregular
- To know the properties of regular and irregular polygons
- Know how to use a tablet to scan QR codes and retrieve information

# Gotta scan 'em all! (QR codes, that is)



Add excitement and challenge using QR codes in your maths lessons, says **Karl McGrath...**

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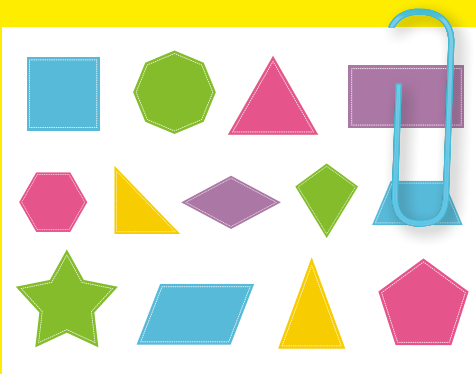
Just under six years ago, Pokemon Go took the world by storm, exciting millions of children and adults alike. Over the summer of 2016 I must say I became a little obsessed myself; though I never did manage to 'catch 'em all'.

At the time of the game's takeover, I was undergoing my second PGCE placement, and a few tired months later I realised the potential to use this phenomenon to my advantage and engage my class in a maths topic that can otherwise be a little bit prescriptive and boring. Behold, 'scan 'em all' was born!

### START HERE

I usually start soft with this one, asking the children to tell me what they

know about shapes already. You can encourage this discussion by drawing and naming four polygons on the board, then asking the class to give you five things they can tell you about the shapes on display, or getting them to explain what's the same and what's different about the shapes. It's best to have pupils in pairs or groups, and give them a print out of the information on the board, allowing them to annotate as they discuss the shapes.



### MAIN LESSON

#### 1 | SCAN 'EM

First, there is a bit of behind-the-scenes setup required to get everything just so. I located a set of pictures of regular and irregular polygons. You can download them for free at [tinyurl.com/tp-IrregularPolygons](http://tinyurl.com/tp-IrregularPolygons) and [tinyurl.com/tp-RegularPolygons](http://tinyurl.com/tp-RegularPolygons) Once you have saved these in your Google drive or equivalent, you can create a QR code for each image, either using a free web-based generator (such as [qr-code-generator.com](http://qr-code-generator.com)) or simply by using your chrome browser. Granted, this process can take a while,

but once they're created, the codes are there for a long time. Hide the QR codes in different areas around the classroom (or school) for the children to hunt out later. Make a note of where they all are, especially if you're using a large area! You'll also need to create corresponding cards for each shape (make enough copies for each pair or group in your class to have one of each). These can be simple A6-size cards with a picture of the polygon and its name. Add some facts about the shape on the back if you want to extend the learning. The cards will form the basis of the 'sorting' exercise, later.

#### 2 | CATCH 'EM

Now it's time to get the children excited about the lesson! I



*“Use this popular game to your advantage and engage your class in a maths topic that can otherwise be a little bit prescriptive and boring.”*



did this by playing the theme tune to the Pokemon animated series for the class. You can find the audio on Youtube here: [tinyurl.com/tp-PokemonTheme](https://tinyurl.com/tp-PokemonTheme) While probably not essential, it definitely captured the attention of the room. Next, tell the children that you have lost your ‘Shapemon’. Explain that they are Pokemon that look like polygons; and the pupils’ task is (you guessed it) to catch ‘em all (and sort them into two categories – regular and irregular). Take this opportunity to revisit prior learning and vocabulary – can they remember what a polygon is, and what makes it irregular or regular? You can warn them that some

polyhedrons have escaped too, and if they manage to find them, they should sort them (this is a great differentiation exercise for children who are already familiar with polygons). Now the scene is set, explain that the children will need to hunt for and scan QR codes with iPads. I usually have pupils do this in pairs. Once they have scanned each code and identified the shape, they can collect a corresponding card from the front of the class to sort into groups. I did have QR codes spread out in our breakout area as well as outdoors, as it helps create a sense of adventure, but it’s definitely worth setting your limits and ensuring

you have eyes on each group – TAs will come into their own here, if you’re lucky enough to have one. Throughout the search and when the children find shapes, it’s important to ask questions, such as “How do you know it’s regular?” and “What parts of the shape will help you put it in the right category?”

### 3| SORT ‘EM

Finish the lesson off by counting the children down (30 seconds / 20 seconds / time’s up, etc). Get them to return to their tables and give each pair a Pokeball sheet (downloadable at [tinyurl.com/tp-Pokeball](https://tinyurl.com/tp-Pokeball)). They should discuss with their partner which of their found shapes are regular and which are irregular – each category is represented on the sheet by a Pokeball, on which they can pile their cards. If the children feel there are any shapes that don’t exactly fit into one of these categories, they can place the card outside of the two Pokeballs. Once the children have sorted the cards, ask them to come up with any other properties they could use to sort the shapes. This could be how many internal angles each shape has, or whether the shapes would tessellate.

*Karl McGrath is a Year 6 teacher and computing lead. He is an NCCE facilitator, runs a CAS community of practice and was the first to receive the Primary Certificate in Computing Education.*

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Have the children look at each shape. Can they use their protractors to calculate the total of the internal angles?
- Expanding on the children’s digital literacy skills, support pupils to create their own QR code scavenger hunt for your next maths topic, incorporating the knowledge they’ve learned.
- To develop this further the children could record videos that include clues as to which shape belongs in which category, based on the properties they’ve learned (angles, etc). You can send the final product home to parents, or share them with other classes when they start the project. Great inspo!

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What makes a shape regular or irregular?
- What does the root word *poly* tell us about these shapes?
- Is there any other way that these shapes could be organised?
- Can you think of the most difficult and the easiest way to organise these shapes?





## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To identify types of 2D shapes.
- To describe the properties of given 2D shapes
- To understand the difference between acute, right and obtuse angles
- To justify which angles are acute right and obtuse
- To compare types of angles within 2D shapes

## KS2 LESSON PLAN

# Get colourful with shapes and angles



Allow children the time and space to create their own set of bespoke mathematical forms, says **Matt Ellis**

 @MRMJellis

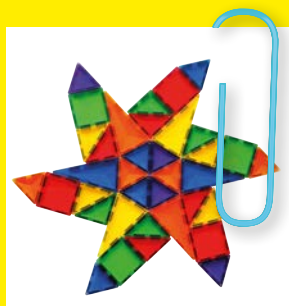
‘Shape and measure’ is an area of maths where knowledge of the previous learning can be lost as new vocabulary, equipment and facts are introduced all at once. Children need opportunities to practise their learning in a range of different situations, in order to make connections and build confidence. So here is an outdoor lesson, which will have children creating their own bespoke 2D shapes, identifying angles, comparing them and much more, all outside of their exercise books. (If the weather doesn’t allow you to go outside, large sheets of paper on your classroom floor or in the hall would work.)



## START HERE

Begin the lesson by recapping the properties of 2D shapes. Use examples of regular and irregular 2D shapes on the tables, and ask the children to split them into groups. Allow pupils time to talk and ask them to come up with a title for each group, e.g. three-sided shapes, quadrilaterals, etc. Note: if children pick colour, steer their thinking towards mathematical properties, instead. Further discussion should lead to the naming of the shapes.

Now introduce new vocabulary – acute, right and obtuse. Make sure to show an image of each angle by itself, and within a shape. At this point in the lesson, children need to make a right-angle tester using a whiteboard pen and tracing paper: take a square or rectangular piece of tracing paper, and help pupils to measure out and draw a large 90-degree angle on it in pen. This will be used to identify angles later.



## MAIN LESSON

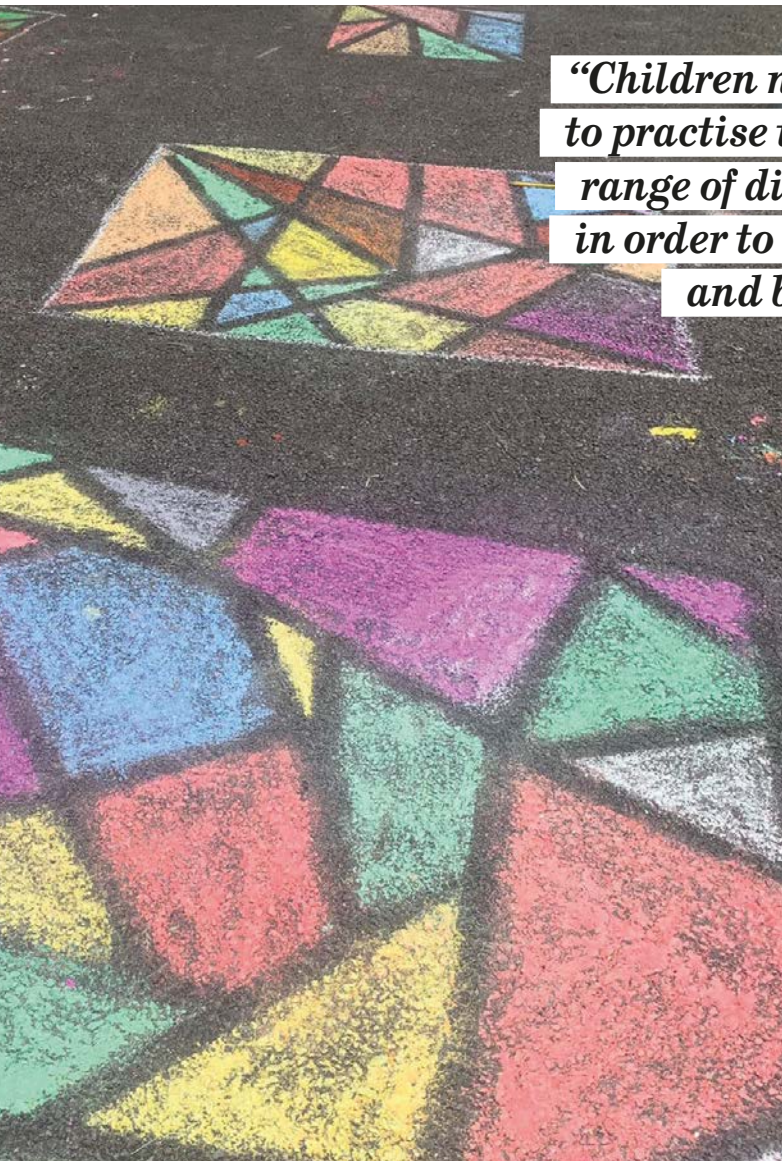
Children are now ready to go outside armed with masking tape and coloured chalk! Make sure you split pupils into ability groups, as this will allow for plenty of peer conversations, therefore helping all the children to achieve something within the lesson. Putting high-ability kids with lower-ability will mean these discussions are more likely to be one-sided, or even worse, not go anywhere at all. Each group should contain three or four pupils, depending on the space and the amount of masking tape you have.

### 1 | MASKING SHAPES

For the first step, model making a square out of masking tape (roughly 1m2) on a concrete surface and then set children off to create their own. This is a good time to recap what a right-angle is, and how many of them there are in a square. Once they have completed this, model filling your square with horizontal and vertical taped lines (another opportunity to check vocabulary understanding). Be sure to talk through each type of line as you are creating it – *is it at a right angle to its preceding line?* *How do we know that?* *Can we measure it?* etc. When all children have created this, it is time to add in diagonal lines (another opportunity



***“Children need opportunities to practise their learning in a range of different situations, in order to make connections and build confidence.”***



to check vocabulary understanding). This is an important phase, as it helps create different sided shapes within the square, such as triangles, rhombi, etc. Send children off to



complete this. You could ask questions such as: *what type of line is this one? What shape have you made here? How do you know?*

## 2| COLOURING IN

Next, children should use different coloured pieces of chalk and shade in each of the shapes. Again, you should model before they start as some children will use the same colour for shapes next to each other, and you want them to identify the different shapes and angles clearly, so using different colours is best. Once children have completed shading in their shapes within the square, help them carefully to remove the tape. Ask pupils what shapes they can see.

How do they know which shape is which? This is another great opportunity to check understanding of irregular 2D shapes.

## 3| ANGLES, RIGHT?

For the final stage of this lesson, model using your previously made right-angle tester. Using the tracing paper allows children to see if the angle is greater than 90 degrees, whereas, using paper (an angle eater) blocks off angles greater than 90 degrees. Move around different squares and model how you would use the right-angle tester to discover if the angles within their shapes are acute, right or obtuse. Place the sheet of tracing paper over your chalk shapes, and get the children to identify whether the shapes are wider than the angle on the tracing paper (obtuse), or narrower (acute). As you are walking and talking, continue to recap the definitions of each type of angle. When the children are confident in identifying them, they should go to their own square and work out which are acute, right and obtuse angles.

If you're lucky enough to avoid the rain for a few days and keep your chalk shapes intact, you could also use them with other classes. Try measuring angles in Year 5, for example, or naming 2D shapes in Year 2.

***Matt Ellis is a NCETM PD lead and assistant headteacher, with responsibility for maths and PE at Eastfield Primary School in Thurmaston, Leicestershire.***

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Ask children to order angles within each shape from smallest to largest. How are they sure they have done this correctly?
- Compare different angles within similar shapes – what do the children notice about these angles? For example, how many different angles are visible within one triangle? This will lead onto the next lessons of looking at different categories of triangles and quadrilaterals.
- Try linking this lesson to the wider curriculum, such as art. You could study the shapes and patterns, for example, when studying Mondrian, or colour and line.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Which shape has the largest/smallest angle? What is this shape called?
- Looking at this shape, can you order the angles from smallest to largest?
- How many acute/right/obtuse angles have you made?
- If I add more masking tape to split a shape into two parts, do the types of angles inside it change?





## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to be an active reader
- How to activate background knowledge to help with making inferences
- How to identify emotions and character traits
- How to look for evidence to support inferences

# How do you really know what happened here...?



Discover what reading between the lines means in practice, and develop inference skills through investigation, says **Kate Heap**

@kateheap1

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

A huge tree branch is blocking the road. What happened? Inference occurs when we come to a logical conclusion after combining evidence with our own knowledge and experience.

When reading, this allows children to dig deeper, beyond basic decoding, and really make sense of the author's meaning.

Because authors don't provide us with every detail, using inference pushes children to become active readers. They are a part of the story, bringing as much to it as they receive from the page.



but aren't too obvious. They should create a picture of your mystery person. For example, an archaeologist might carry a messenger bag containing a notebook, pencil, trowel, brush, old coins or fossils, etc.

Present the bag to the children. Examine it from the outside. Who could it belong to? Have they seen a bag like this before?

Reveal items one at a time. Start with more general objects, gradually becoming more specific. Ask: what is it? What is it used for? Who might own it? Why? Provide time for partner talk and jotting down ideas on mini whiteboards. This will help children see how inferences change as more evidence is found. Keep a list of objects and guesses about the owner.

When children think they have worked out who the bag belongs to, ask them to explain their answer: "I think this

## START HERE

Start by sharing a picture book that has plenty of scope for discussion. Ask children to make connections between the story and themselves.

Have they ever met anyone like these characters? Has something similar happened to them? Have they been to the place where the story is set? Then challenge them to think about the wider world. Is there an issue in the story they've heard of (perhaps plastic pollution or the struggle of refugees)? What do they know about it? Can they use empathy to understand how characters might feel? Finally, ask if they've read any other books that are similar in some way. How are they similar? What's different? How have two authors approached the same idea in different ways?



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | A MYSTERIOUS SUITCASE

Be detectives by identifying the owner of an unusual suitcase. First, decide who owns the suitcase. Is it an archaeologist looking for fossils or a spy on an undercover mission? Perhaps a link the exercise to a class topic or book – could the bag belong to a one of the characters, or a historical figure? Whoever you choose will determine the type of bag you need: an explorer might have a backpack while an athlete might have a hold-all.

Once you've chosen your bag, fill it with objects. Think about items that give clues



*“Inference allows children to dig deeper, beyond basic decoding, and really make sense of the author’s meaning.”*

key part of fiction. Children can learn to identify this change by thinking about roles at different points in a story.

Choose a short story with a strong character who will go through a definite change. Before you begin, ensure pupils understand the difference between emotions and character traits.

Read the beginning of the story then pause to analyse the character. Make a list of character traits with evidence, e.g. “independent because they like to be alone” or “selfish because they only look out for themselves.”

Continue reading to the midpoint of the story then analyse the character again. Is there still evidence to support the character traits identified at the beginning? Look for new traits. Show change by linking new traits to those already noted. (Go from ‘independent’ to ‘team player’ which are linked rather than ‘independent’ to ‘calm’ which are not related.) Always back up these inferences with evidence from the story.

Finish the story. Go back to the original character traits. Are they still valid? Use inference to identify how and why the character has changed.

*Kate Heap is a primary English consultant and author from Leeds. Her Developing Reading Comprehension Skills series (Brilliant Publications) provides teachers with quality texts and practical activities that will inspire young readers.*

bag belongs to \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.”

Repeat the activity with a different bag for each group. Ask them to prepare a report by sketching each object and making notes about what it tells them about the owner.

## 2 | VISUAL CLUES

Using images for inference eliminates the demands of reading, allowing children to focus on the evidence they can see.

Choose an image that has a lot of unknowns but also a lot of clues. The Inference Collection from Once Upon a Picture is a fantastic free resource: [tinyurl.com/tp-OnceUpon](http://tinyurl.com/tp-OnceUpon)

Children should study the image and talk with a partner about what’s happening and, more importantly, why.

Activate background knowledge: what’s familiar? Have they been in a similar

situation? Have they seen this in a book, film, or somewhere else? Sometimes children will have a lot to share; sometimes it will be completely new, which is when looking for clues becomes even more important.

Use magnifying glasses to investigate the image. Ask questions to draw out inferences: what are the characters doing? Why? How is this character feeling? How do you know? Why are they feeling this way? Who are the other people in the image? When or where are they? What happened just before this moment in time?

Children might create speech or thought bubbles, explaining how these words show characters’ feelings without explicitly saying it.

## 3 | HOW CHARACTERS CHANGE

Character transformation is a

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- You could turn the first suitcase activity around by asking children to create their own mystery bag. They can draw the bag and its contents, providing a mystery for someone else to solve. An empty suitcase template is a great starting point for younger children or those needing a bit more scaffolding.
- Create an Emotions Bank. A key part of inference is understanding emotions. Make a list – include simple ones like happy or embarrassed as well as more complex feelings such as jealous or guilty. Work with children to create a mind map or table for each emotion that describes:
  - how a character would look
  - how a character would act
  - what a character would say
  - what a character would think

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Why...?
- How do you know?
- What is the reason...?
- How does the character feel?
- What evidence is there that...?
- What does this tell us about \_\_\_\_\_’s character?
- What impression do you get of...?





## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Read for meaning
- Draw on what they have read for their writing
- Write effectively for a clear purpose and audience
- Plan, write and edit a formal speech
- Deliver a formal speech

# Practise formal composition and editing skills



Use *Boy in the Tower* to develop children's oracy and writing of speeches, says **Rose McDermott**

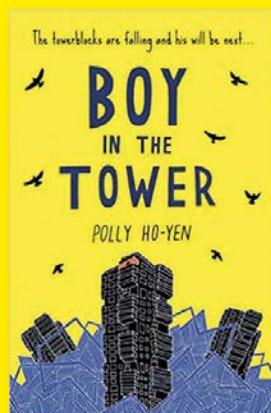
[rosemcdermott.com](https://www.rosemcdermott.com)

Teachers and students often find KS2 formal written pieces difficult. In moderation meetings and online forums, they emerge as an area of concern – particularly for our greater depth pupils. Teachers are nervous about balancing independent writing with modelling and how to support children to maintain consistency with their formal writing. The solution? Plan opportunities during the year for children to practise writing and speaking formally. This lesson will help your pupils develop their formal voice as they adopt the role of the Prime Minister in a dystopian world.



## START HERE

*Boy in the Tower* by Polly Ho Yen is a wonderful book for UKS2. It depicts an inner-city life which will be familiar to many pupils – high-rise living, busy roads, and not much food in the cupboards. Then the Bluchers arrive. As everyone leaves the city, Ade is forced to stay and look after his mum whose deteriorating mental health has resulted in her staying in bed for days at a time. During the crisis, Ade's only company is the TV news bulletins and his imagination, the former keeping him up-to-date with what's happening around his building. His block of flats is mysteriously immune from the destructive power of the Bluchers who are consuming everything in their path...



## MAIN LESSON

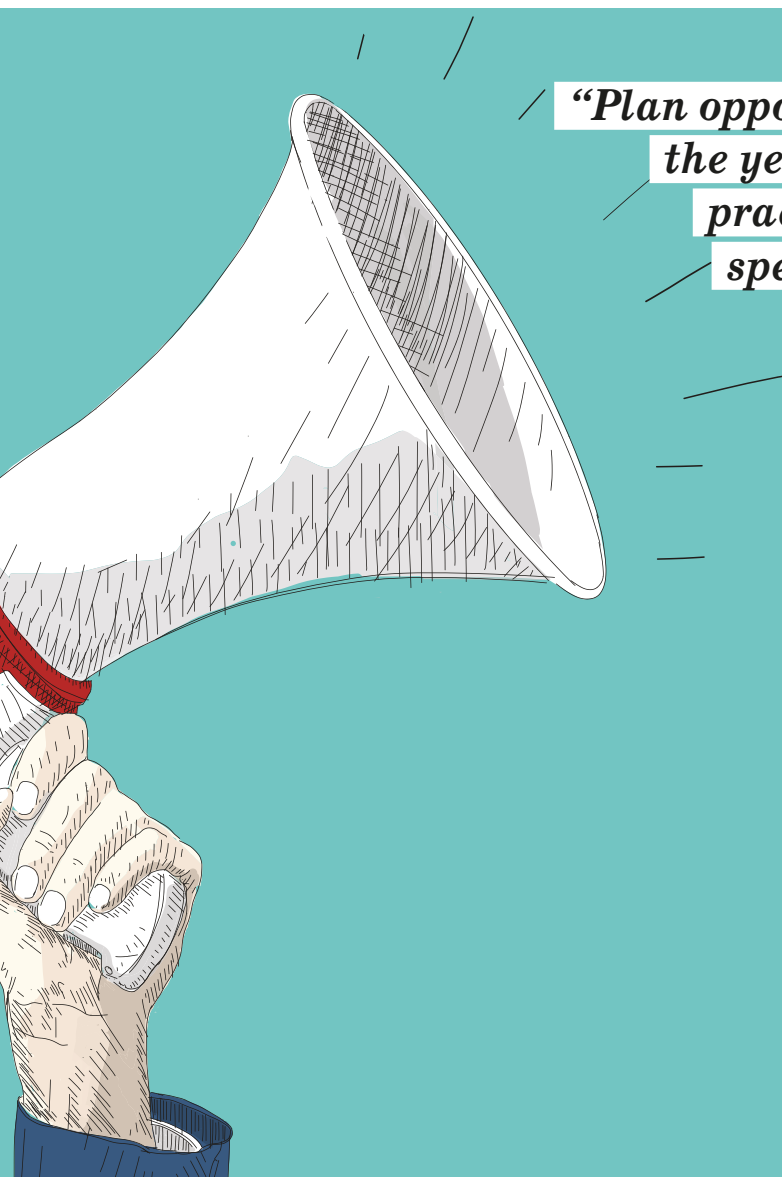
### 1 | CRISIS COMMS

During our recent national crisis, we all remember huddling around the TV to listen to Boris Johnson's 5pm speeches. We were desperate for information and good news, wondering what restrictions would be put in place and hoping for some to be lifted. Ade is in the same situation looking for guidance and reassurance.

This piece of writing focuses on chapters 18–25. As you start chapter 18, tell the children the end outcome and give them a planning sheet to begin gathering ideas and vocabulary as you read

and watch clips. Pupils should be supported to gather appropriately formal descriptions of the Bluchers, and vocabulary and phrases to inform and reassure the public.

Ade's world is in crisis, too. Sensitively ask the pupils what they remember about Covid lockdowns. Watch carefully selected videos from Johnson's daily updates (such as this one, from the BBC: [tinyurl.com/tp-Covid](https://www.bbc.com/tp-Covid)). Read and discuss edited transcripts of his speeches. Explicitly draw parallels to the Blucher crisis, and bring the children's attention to precise vocabulary choices such as 'contamination' and 'devastating impact'. Pupils should then rehearse



**“Plan opportunities during the year for children to practise writing and speaking formally.”**

saying the transcripts out loud in pairs. What impact does Johnson have on his audience? Is it different to how they speak? How?

## 2 | MAKING DECISIONS

Next, ask the class what Ade’s government should do to protect people. Lead them towards ideas that they considered when remembering Covid restrictions, such as masks and lockdowns. Pupils should then gather evidence for instructions from previous pages - e.g. ‘stay indoors...avoid going outside’ (p.116) and ‘they were sending out deadly spores into the air’ (p. 123) - and come up with their own ideas. They are, after all, the Prime Minister!

Now that the children have explored and verbally rehearsed an exemplified model and collected notes and ideas, make sure to ask if they are clear about their audience (the British Public) and their purpose (to inform and reassure). Then it’s time to write.

For those who struggle with cohesion and structure, consider scaffolding the order of the paragraphs – perhaps with suggestions of content. For example, “Use this paragraph to reassure the public. What three things are you going to do?” Let pupils write freely for an extended period of time.

## 3 | POLISHING UP

I prefer to let the children write a piece almost in its

entirety before editing but, if it suits your class to break it up and edit after each section, do what’s best for their needs. Always give them time at the end of a writing session to proofread and, if they wish, edit. Allow pupils to share their writing by reading part, or all, of their speeches to the rest of the class. Support them to give structured feedback to their peers by using sentence stems such as, “You sounded like a Prime Minister when you said.....”, or “I could tell you were trying to reassure me when you said...”.

You should read their speeches and see if there are any common misconceptions and errors which need addressing as a class in the next lesson. I found that apostrophes for contraction and appropriate vocabulary needed modelling and reteaching the next day.

During the editing lessons, check children are still clear on the audience and purpose and how this will feed into their structure and vocabulary choices.

Pupils always love dressing up! To really take the lesson to the next level, why not ask them to come to school in formal clothing and record their speeches on film. Once they’re performing, they may also continue to spot opportunities to edit.

*Rose McDermott is a middle leader at an East London primary. She regularly consults and writes content for children’s publishers. She has a book due to be released in 2023.*

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- There are obvious and necessary PSHE links to this lesson. Revisiting the peak of the Covid crisis may be traumatic for some children and you should be sensitive to this. Only use video clips you think are suitable for your cohort and use edited speeches if you are in any doubt. Always allow the children time to discuss their experiences.
- Boy in the Tower draws on the adult novel *The Day of the Triffids*. This is a great opportunity to read sections and make comparisons between the texts. Using *The Day of the Triffids* is a wonderful example of Polly Ho Yen drawing independently on what she has read as a model for her own writing, particularly the opening sentences.
- Pupils could use the texts as a model for writing their own dystopian short stories.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Listen to this extract from two years ago ([tinyurl.com/tp-Covid](https://tinyurl.com/tp-Covid)). How can you tell it’s a Prime Minister speaking?
- Who is the audience for your writing?
- Where would you like to go next with your learning?





# THE GO-TO GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

**We are the Go-To-Guide for families.** They depend on us for inspirational ideas and suggestions to keep their children occupied, engaged and happy when they spend quality family time together. Families tell us they value our magazines which is why they genuinely appreciate receiving them in their children's school book bags four times a year.

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**Sarah, Chichester**

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## PHONICS ➔

# My Letters and Sounds

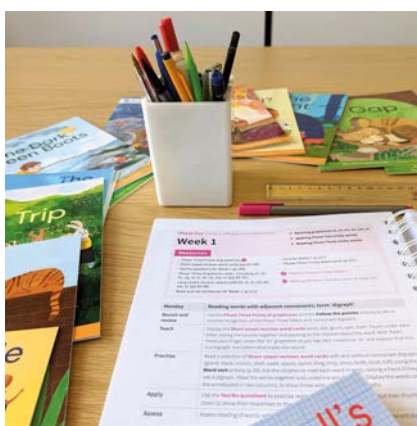
A new, systematic synthetic phonics programme from Schofield & Sims



## AT A GLANCE

- A DfE-validated phonics scheme for Letters and Sounds schools
- Comprehensive programme designed for Reception and Year 1 children
- Teacher's handbooks featuring detailed guidance and lesson plans
- Built around 110 fully decodable fiction and non-fiction reading books
- Supported by multi-sensory resources

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



As I'm sure we are all well aware by now, high-quality phonics teaching provides the firm foundation on which children can build their reading skills. The DfE certainly thinks so. Understandably, neither they nor Ofsted recommend or promote any particular systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) programme above the others. Instead, they have created a validation process to ensure schools can be confident the scheme they have chosen meets certain core criteria.

Assuming you opt for an approved scheme (and why wouldn't you?) you then have to pick a package based on what matters to you. If you're looking for a programme that provides everything you need in a way that engages pupils and makes life easier for teachers, My Letters and Sounds from Schofield & Sims is well worth a look.

At the heart of the programme sit the teacher's handbooks. Having seen a variety of teacher guides over the years and frequently noticed my eyes glazing over, I found these admirably useful and readable, considering the sheer volume of information they convey. The content is well organised and clearly presented. No doubt, teachers' eyes will also light up when they see all the ready-made lesson plans and photocopiable resources.

Each new grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC) is introduced with a range of multi-sensory resources, from visual mnemonics to physical activities. To embed the pupil's steadily expanding phonics knowledge still further, there is a range of attractive and engaging write-in workbooks for use at school or at home. They also offer classroom kits packed with goodies such as colourful friezes and flash cards.

For me, it was the quality of the phonics readers that really stood out. As well as being bright, colourful and thoughtfully presented, they successfully manage to present new learning in a humorous, engaging and natural way. This is not nearly as easy as you might think, so their authors deserve a great deal of credit.

Schools might also enjoy the Schofield & Sims approach to pricing. If you sometimes feel suspicious of, or bamboozled by, subscription systems, you'll probably appreciate the straightforward way they price-up their products. This gives you the chance to pick and choose what you want or opt for a complete package, with reduced prices for schools available across the scheme. So, whether you segment or blend what you take from their range, it is likely to spell good value.

**teach  
PRIMARY**

## VERDICT

- ✓ Easy to follow and implement
- ✓ Comprehensive yet teacher-friendly
- ✓ Attractive and engaging resources
- ✓ Promotes reading for pleasure
- ✓ Simple pricing structure

## UPGRADE IF...

You want a convenient, comprehensive SSP scheme that makes learning to read a pleasure.



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LITERACY ➔



# Plazoom – Real Grammar

A whole-school grammar resource, packed with plenty of pedagogical punch



Full curriculum coverage Y1-Y6

## AT A GLANCE

- Quality-first grammar lessons furnished with a raft of resources
- Follows a simple five-step structure
- Three levels of differentiation included
- Terminology definitions and modelled examples
- Superb teaching guide

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Recent research suggests that what helps children to develop their writing skills at different points in development, is focusing on teaching approaches such as sentence-combining, strategy instruction and emphasising the processes of writing. For this you need innovative, interactive and expert literacy resources such as those by Plazoom. For grappling with grammar then look no further than their new whole-school programme, Real Grammar.

This multimodal and visually appealing set of resources follows a new approach to teaching grammar to ensure deep learning through meaning, creativity and choice. Real Grammar adopts a very structured approach and is taught as part of the literacy sequence 'teach, practise, revisit, apply, revise', so that learning can be spaced over time. The units have been organised to cover all the grammar and punctuation objectives and each has a specially written model text showing the objective in context.

The 'teach' section provides comprehensive teaching sequences so that pupils are able to get to grips with every concept and can apply their learning in context. There are impressive teaching scripts to follow, with key questions and

prompts included for high-quality learning. The 'practise' examples are pitched at three different levels and so they should capture the needs of most pupils, and can be used to consolidate learning and identify any gaps or misconceptions. These sections can be adhered to as part of a classroom literacy routine, but they can also be used flexibly rather than as a fixed route through grammar terrain.

A range of games and activities are included so that areas can be revisited and embedded. 'Revise' sections include differentiated exercises to help prepare pupils for end-of-year assessments. Embedded within these sections is an outstanding collection of teaching essentials, including detailed notes, editable PowerPoint lessons, model texts, practice worksheets, games, writing prompts, and more, all of which have suggestions for challenge and support, with opportunities to investigate and develop ideas.

The high-quality resources are child-friendly without being childish, age-appropriate, and have plenty of pedagogical punch. These are genuinely outstanding materials that are expertly created for making grammar lessons easy.

teach  
PRIMARY

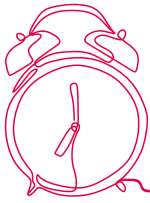
## VERDICT

- ✓ A sure-fire way of helping pupils to generate sentences and get in the groove with grammar
- ✓ Supports children apply their skills across the curriculum
- ✓ Grammar for fun, challenge, interest and creativity
- ✓ Helps to improve listening and comprehension skills
- ✓ Everything you need to introduce, explore and identify each objective in context

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to create cohesion in your grammar provision using effective resources underpinned by a robust teaching sequence so that children can achieve deep grammatical learning.





# DAY in the LIFE



A one-day diary from first alarm to lights out

## WAKING UP

My alarm usually goes off at 6am. I get out of bed and the first thing I do is pop my travel mug in the coffee machine to make sure I can get my caffeine kick on the go! Then it's getting ready and off to school.



STEPHANIE ELLIOTT IS A Y6 TEACHER AND MATHS LEAD

@eenalol



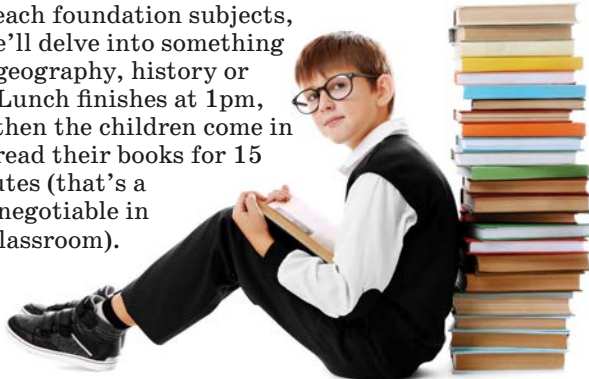
## MY MORNING

I get to school between 7.15am and 7.30am, do some prep, talk to my TA, and then children start to arrive for 8.50am. Mornings are usually core subjects, so maths, English and SPaG. I work in a Catholic primary school, so we have liturgical prayer time first thing on a Monday.



## MY AFTERNOON

Usually, afternoons are when we teach foundation subjects, so we'll delve into something like geography, history or art. Lunch finishes at 1pm, and then the children come in and read their books for 15 minutes (that's a non-negotiable in my classroom).



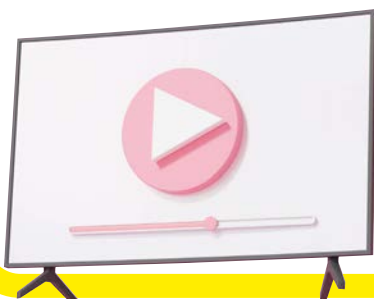
## LUNCHTIME

I tend to have lunch at around about 12.30pm every day. I'll usually have some leftovers from dinner the night before, or some noodles (I'm a big fan of noodles!) and finish off with some fruit, before getting ready for afternoon teaching.



## MY EVENING

The children leave school at 3.15pm. I get going anywhere between 4pm and 5pm, (depending on what I have left to do). Evenings are usually filled with a film or a TV series and some yummy food. We're big cinema-goers in my house, too!



## BEDTIME

My phone goes in to sleep mode at 9pm; I like to be in bed by about 9.30pm and am usually asleep by 10.30pm. Reading or listening to a podcast is my go-to way to destress.

## QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

❖ **Career plan B?** If I weren't a teacher, I'd still be working with kids, I think. Maybe I'd be a paediatric nurse or something similar.

❖ **Must-listen?** I'm a big fan of the *Thinking Deeply About Primary Education* podcast – they have such a wide range of speakers! Music-wise, I'm forever listening to Ed Sheeran and I love a good bit of musical theatre! You'll always find me singing.

❖ **Must-read?** I'm a massive fan of kids' books and graphic novels. The most recent book I finished was *Spark* by MG Leonard (the sequel to the brilliant *Twitch*), and it was excellent!

❖ **Twitter hero?** Dean Boddington (@Misterbodd). He is forever shouting about books and he's a brilliant friend too. He's always there to listen when I need an ear.



A photograph of three children in a science classroom. Two girls in the foreground are wearing clear safety goggles. The girl on the left is looking at a small globe, while the girl on the right is looking towards the camera with her hands clasped. A boy is partially visible on the right, also wearing goggles. The background shows a blurred classroom setting with white chairs.

# Sustain their potential

At Zurich, we help you protect the next generation.

Our insurance supports children and their schools in ways you might not think – from keeping young people safer online with our safer schools app, to protecting the physical and mental health of your team through access to

nurses, counsellors and therapists. So you can protect their future in more ways than one.

For more information call 0800 232 1901 or visit [zurich.co.uk/teachprimaryeducation](https://zurich.co.uk/teachprimaryeducation)

**Sustain your world.**



# 10 new BBC readers coming to Bug Club this autumn!



Exciting news! We've collaborated with the BBC to create 10 brand-new fully decodable books based on popular children's TV series.

**Your pupils can learn to read with family favourites!**

Our new books are written to help all children develop a lifelong love of reading, whatever their ability, background or identity.

Want a sneak peek? Download our free digital samples today at: [pearsonprimary.co.uk/BugClub2.0](https://pearsonprimary.co.uk/BugClub2.0)

