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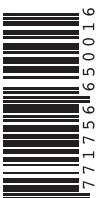
Reading IDEAS

‘What you can
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Hello!



As far as chaos goes, 2022 has been pretty much the dictionary definition. The revolving door of staff changes at Number 10 means we've certainly lived through an... *historical* period. And although pupils – especially the youngest – may not be acutely aware of the ins and outs, you can bet they're picking up on tension, whether at home or at school.

This kind of persistent change is what Yoto Carnegie Medal-winner Katya Balen talks about in her article. She discusses the fact that change in life is inevitable, as is having to adapt to conditions we may not have necessarily chosen for ourselves – but that stories can help. Read more on page 42.

If you're keen to develop your own teaching identity, look no further than our research and CPD special, starting on page 60. Pedro De Bruyckere, Casper Hulshof and Liese Missinne kick things off by investigating whether or not we can actually teach creativity; Nick Hart outlines a simple five-part framework to transform your teaching (page 62); while Sam Strickland explains how you can tell whether your behaviour CPD is actually working on page 64.

I'm also delighted to announce the winners of our annual Teach Primary Resource Awards. This year's entries were of excellent quality, and narrowing each of the 10 categories down was very tricky! Hats-off to our expert judges who tirelessly investigated each and every resource to find those that will really make a difference to your classroom. Thanks also to everyone that entered, and a massive congrats to our finalists. Get the lowdown on everything from apps to wellbeing from page 77.

So, as 2022 comes to a close, so must this letter. I hope you have chance to decompress over the holidays, and I look forward to welcoming you back in 2023.

Until next year,

Charley

Charley Rogers, editor
@TeachPrimaryEd1

*Don't miss our
next issue, on sale
6th January*

POWERED BY...



MARIA RICHARDS
on why we should be talking more about how menopause is affecting women in education.

"I thought menopause was the stuff of legends. How wrong I was..."

p15



SARA ALSTON
outlines why TAs need a clear career structure and more formalised support – right away.

"It's time to reconsider how we train our TAs. Without this they remain vulnerable."

p19



SCOTT EVANS
on how change can be beautiful, as told by Joe Todd-Stanton's *The Comet*.

"Share in a story of hope with KS1 and KS2 using this beautiful picturebook..."

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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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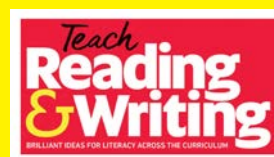
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Helping children talk about their lives
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Breaktime

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Is PE CPD ineffective?

The government's £320 million drive to help primary schools promote children's physical health is in danger of failing because most of the teacher development it funds is ineffective, new research from the University of Cambridge suggests.

The study examined the training given to teachers both in the UK and elsewhere who are charged with implementing new schemes of work in PE, 'active lessons' and other programmes designed to promote physical activity in schools. The findings suggest that many of these endeavours – such as the PE Premium in England – are failing due to a lack of proper training. Mairead Ryan, a doctoral researcher at the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge, said: "This funding can have a tremendous impact on children's health and education, but schools could be better supported in identifying and delivering effective professional development for their staff. Read more at tinyurl.com/tp-PECPD

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



LITTLE TROOPERS

Military children's charity Little Troopers has released a free, two-hour wellbeing and mindfulness workshop to explore what it's like growing up with a parent in the Armed Forces. Topics include deployment, and moving home or school. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-LT



LET'S PLAY

A new programme from the National Theatre supports teachers to inspire creative learning across the curriculum, with lots of new free and low-cost resources, including opportunities for assemblies, and creative writing lesson plans. See tinyurl.com/tp-LetsPlay



TEACH WITH GIS

Check out these lesson plans, videos, interactive maps and more to help you teach using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) across the primary curriculum – it's not just for geography! Find free resources, and information on upcoming online training, at tinyurl.com/tp-GIS

→→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



Get grammar sorted!

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Are you the next education superstar?

Back for its third year, LiteracyPlanet's annual Educator Wall of Fame

recognises outstanding teachers across the globe, and is now open for 2022 nominations. The awards shine a light on educators and behind-the-scenes support staff from primary and secondary schools who are inspiring their students and peers with their passion, excellence, and creativity. Teaching staff, students and parents from any primary or secondary school worldwide can nominate their favourite educator across one of four unique categories in 2022, to recognise the many different facets of the classroom support system. Categories include Champion Teachers (for those delivering fun, engaging and inspirational lessons); Creative Educators (a behind-the-scenes genius who helps orchestrate the show); Unsung Educational Heroes (the quiet achiever who always works with passion, care, and empathy); and Phenomenal Leaders (HTs, principals, deputies, and other SLT who have gone above and beyond). Nominations are open until 13 November, and are free to enter. Nominate your chosen superstar at tinyurl.com/tp-WallOfFame

Children of the revolution

The Happy Confident Company, along with supporters from across the education and mental health sectors, has launched a new campaign calling for a 'mental health revolution' in UK schools. The 10 Minutes Matter campaign is backed by prominent figures such as Sir Anthony Seldon and Dr Linda Papadopoulos, and is calling on government to implement a new curriculum mandate for 10 minutes a day of mental wellbeing. Get free access to its video programme, fronted by Emma Willis, at 10minutesmatter.org



source: Sangoma

38%

OF PARENTS AGREE SCHOOL COMMS NEED TO BE BETTER MANAGED

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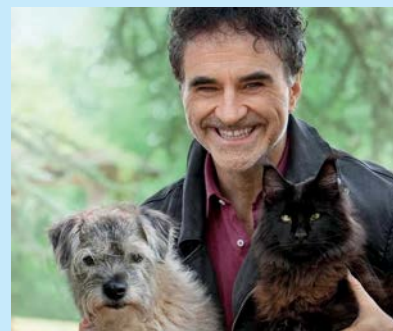
BIG SCHOOLS' BIRDWATCH

From 6 Jan – 20 Feb, the world's largest school wildlife survey returns, inviting children to watch and count birds at home and at school. Sign up at tinyurl.com/tp-Birds



CODING COMPETITION

The 11th incarnation of a Raspberry Pi coding competition is open for entries until 20 March 23. Aimed at pupils aged eight plus, get more info and sign up at tinyurl.com/tp-RasPi



Noel Fitzpatrick (Supervet)

Vet, TV presenter and author

What was school like for you?

I went to a small primary school in Barnashrone and then on to the Patrician College, in Ballyfin. School was rough. I wasn't bright, and I couldn't read or write very well. Of course, the boys spotted that I was different straight away; they threw me in a ditch and poured milk over my books and did anything they could to make my life a misery. My salvation came in the form of my best friend – a sheepdog on my family's farm called Pirate. He was there for me and loved me. I found sanctuary with him in my mind.

Have you always wanted to be a vet?

I knew from an early age that I wanted to become a vet - but when I was 10 a life-changing experience set me on this path forever. I was helping with the lambing one night and a ewe was stuck in a ditch, and subsequently lost both her lambs. I never felt such a profound and overwhelming feeling of despair. I was intensely frustrated by the lack of options available to our animal friends. I felt powerless and helpless. I realised that I could spend the next 30 years feeling like that, or I could do something to make a difference, so I was determined to study hard so I could do the very best possible for the animals that came into my care.

What made you want to write this book?

I've always loved comic books and wanted to write about my own superhero. I'm eternally 10 years old inside! Vetman has always been there for me, since I dreamed him up, and I'd like him to be there for other people, and for all the animals too. He inspires me to be the best I can be with compassion and creativity.

Noel Fitzpatrick is an Irish veterinary surgeon. His book *Vetman* (£7.99, Hodder) is out now.



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SCAN ME!



6 WAYS to teach climate education

Want to talk to your pupils about the crisis without scaring them? Try these ideas to show the happy side of environmentalism...

1 | FIND RELEVANT BOOKS

Of course I'm putting this first, I'm a writer, but there are many brilliant, engaging, thought-provoking stories out there to capture your students' imagination and interest. Books like *The Last Bear* by Hannah Gold, *Where the River Runs Gold* by Sita Brahmachari, *The Last Wild* books by Piers Torday, and mine!

For younger children, there's a raft of picture books about protecting nature and plastic in the ocean, etc. These titles generate conversation and empower change. They can also be prompts for creative writing. A 'climate-fiction' story provides an intriguing setting and a ready-made goal (finding clean water / air / land / food / justice). Pupils can write survival stories, journeys and revolutions.

2 | GET GARDENING

The nature crisis comes hand-in-hand with the climate crisis. Teach them together. Schools can make a big difference to biodiversity locally. If every school encourages wildlife into its grounds – wildflowers, log piles, bird feeders, ivy screens separating playgrounds from roads – this adds to nature corridors up and down our country and allows more species to thrive. It enables all pupils to play a part in protecting their local environment, too, whether they have outside space at home or not.

3 | MODEL ECO-FRIENDLINESS

Reducing waste, encouraging recycling, introducing meat-free days, avoiding single-use plastic, starting a school compost heap – these habits spread out to families and the benefit goes well beyond the classroom. Don't underestimate the power of what you model and teach. One of my daughters learned about palm oil and orangutans at school and this directly changed our family's shopping habits.



Nicola Penfold is an author, and lives in North London with her husband, children and cats. Nicola's latest book, *Beyond the Frozen Horizon*, (£7.99, Little Tiger) is out now.

4 | GO OUTSIDE

Being in nature is good for us. The evidence is overwhelming. It makes us happier, healthier, calmer, even kinder. Make time to take your class outside to any wilder areas in your school grounds, or visit local green spaces. Enjoying being in the natural world is a gift you can give your pupils that, like reading for pleasure, they can benefit from their entire lives. The climate and biodiversity crisis are the biggest challenges we face, and there are difficult times ahead, especially for younger generations. Many young people know this and are frightened. Equip them with the solace nature can provide.

5 | STAY TUNED TO CURRENT EVENTS

Many organisations reach out to schools with climate education tools, for example WWF has free live lessons you can register for online. All these things increase around Earth Day in April. Celebrate it in your school. You can also have a go at identifying wildlife you see outside. It doesn't matter if your starting point is ignorance; show curiosity and learn alongside your pupils (or from the more nature-literate ones among them).

6 | FIND OUT ABOUT NATURAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

What is rewilding? What natural habitats capture and store carbon? It goes way beyond trees. When researching *Beyond the Frozen Horizon*, I was fascinated to learn about the part whales play in the climate. They feed in the depths of the ocean, but return to the surface to poo. Their excrement feeds vast plumes of phytoplankton, which in turn captures carbon dioxide (four times as much as the Amazon rainforest!). When a whale dies naturally, it sinks to the ocean floor and the carbon in its enormous body is locked away for centuries. Knowing that the natural world has in-built climate solutions can give us hope, and also make us double down on our efforts to protect it.



LESSONS FROM 100 OFSTED REPORTS

I reviewed a lot of good and outstanding primary inspections, and found five things that I think you should know...

Dr Helen Edwards

Earlier this year I reviewed over 100 good and outstanding primary Ofsted inspection reports; an interesting experience for a former HMI. My review revealed some important themes that primary leaders might reflect upon when preparing for their inspection, including these...

Curriculum

A key message from the review was the focus on having an effective curriculum that was ambitious, carefully sequenced and with key learning steps identified. Subject leaders play an important role in supporting staff in how, and when, they should teach pupils new information, and when they should build on what they already know and can do.

Inspectors want to hear from pupils to find out whether they can describe what they know and how it links to their previous learning. For schools in the early stages of curriculum design, inspectors highlight that leaders aren't regularly checking how often pupils will revisit important subject knowledge

information and whether they can recall it.

Ask yourself: Do subject leaders have enough information to support staff? Are we checking the subject knowledge our children understand?

Teaching, learning and parental engagement

Unsurprisingly, a theme in reports was how teachers plan activities that motivate and challenge pupils, and how they check if pupils have remembered their previous learning before they introduce new knowledge.

Sharing progress information with parents and carers is crucial in ensuring all children make good progress. Strong partnerships with families remain hugely important in inspections. Feedback from parents is referred to in reports, where communication between school and home is lacking.

Ask yourself: Do you inform families about the learning that happens at school and what they can do at home? How can your team reduce any barriers to engagement for parents?

Assessment

Reports comment on how regular assessment helps teachers recognise what each pupil has learned and ensures that teaching is carefully matched to their level of understanding. Checking overall progress does not always give sufficient detail, and teachers can struggle to gain a clear picture of what pupils have found difficult. This means that pupils do not get the extra support where they most need it.

Ask yourself: Do you make the most of the assessment that happens in your school so that it benefits all pupils?

Reading and phonics

All reports referred to reading and to what extent it was a priority, highlighting well-organised programmes to teach phonics. Pupils who struggle, or start to fall behind, should benefit from swift, additional support from well-trained adults; they learn to read books that are well matched to their phonic ability, which builds their confidence and helps them to catch up quickly.

Schools that are not as strong in this area find their inspectors might comment along the lines of: 'Pupils learn new sounds when they have yet to secure sounds already taught. They struggle to read the books they receive. This is because the sounds in the books are not the ones they know'.

Ask yourself: How do I know all relevant staff are knowledgeable and confident in teaching phonics?

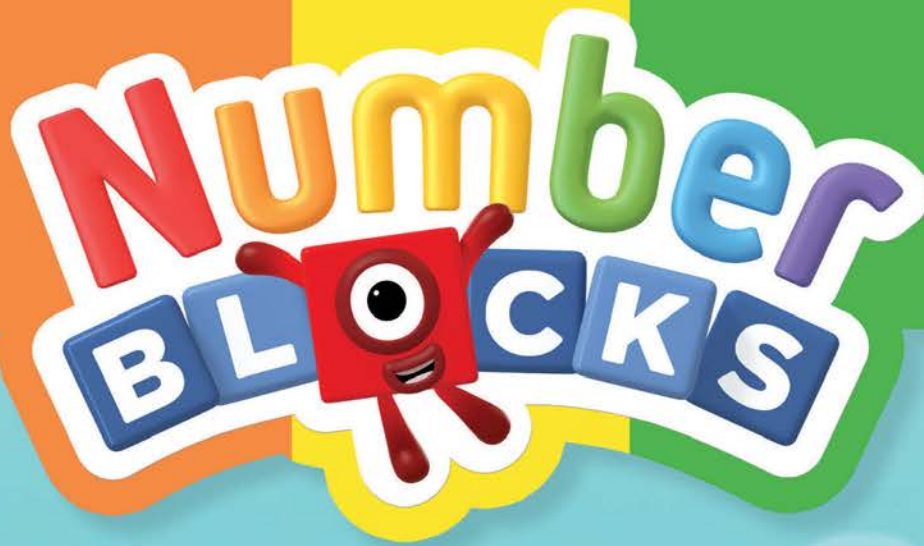
Modern Britain

Reports have become more detailed on this theme and have quoted pupils' examples of when teachers have addressed racism and sexism through their lessons and the positive impact this has had on them. Others highlight how pupils have benefitted from exploring cultural diversity through a school's recent focus on antiracism, or how teachers are confident to talk with pupils about the campaigns of Marcus Rashford.

Ask yourself: Do you enable your staff team to be confident to discuss diversity and representation with children, through high-quality training and inclusive, on-going professional learning?

Readying ourselves through reflecting on these themes from reports will help staff feel prepared for their inspection. **TP**

Dr Helen Edwards is co-founder of Tapestry, and a former Ofsted inspector.



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RISING STARS

I thought menopause was the stuff of legends, something that happens to other people. How wrong I was...

Maria Richards

 @Infeducation



I have worked in education for almost 30 years, first as a primary school teacher, then as a school improvement adviser and now as a literacy specialist and Talk for Writing consultant. So why, for the first time, am I struggling to do my job well? One word... menopause.

Not a menopausal woman? **DO NOT** stop reading! With over three quarters of primary school teachers in the UK being female, even if you are not a woman experiencing menopause, chances are someone in your school is. However, I bet you have no idea what they are going through. I can say that with conviction, because I thought menopause was the stuff of legends, something that happens to other people and has little or no real impact on your life, other than the odd hot flush and perhaps a mood swing or two. How wrong I was.

I consider myself to be an intelligent, rational, well-informed woman. So how have I got to the age of 51 without knowing the real impact of menopause? Why are the things that are happening to me such a surprise? Why am I embarrassed to explain to the people I work alongside that I am finding things difficult, sometimes near impossible? Why isn't more being done? The answer – a clear lack of education across the board (even for GPs) and a distinct culture of sweeping it under the carpet and 'just getting on'.

The thing is, menopause **IS** real, it **DOES** affect women in immeasurable ways, and it **CAN** have a profound effect on behaviour. I know this because it's happening to me. It's important to say that every woman's journey through menopause is different and totally unique. Some sail through it, some have mild symptoms, and one in four women have a severe reaction to the changes going on in their bodies – I am one of those women. However, if you met me, you wouldn't know. If I ran training in your school, or taught a demo lesson in your class, you wouldn't know – but the truth is, every day is a huge battle. I find myself embarrassed about my symptoms, ashamed at my inability to cope, confused about how I feel or what I think, and



baffled as to where I can get help. But worse than all of this, I find myself hiding it all, not admitting to myself what's going on and not talking about it to anyone. Well, enough is enough. The stigma, taboo and misunderstanding around menopause **HAS** to stop.

There are far too many women out there (around 13 million UK women are peri- or post-menopausal, according to the Nuffield Health Group) who could be suffering in silence – 'suffering' being the operative word. Over 70 per cent of menopausal women suffer symptoms, which can last up to 15 years and range from mild to severe, says CIC Menopause Support. Mine cover the whole spectrum. The mild ones are manageable – things like brittle nails, dry skin and hair, watery eyes, digestion issues, palpitations, tinnitus, and weight gain. However, their effect is cumulative and I don't feel 'normal' anymore. The severe ones are much more debilitating and are relentless. Heightened anxiety, low mood and depression, uncontrollable hot flushes, problems sleeping, lack of motivation and confidence, inexplicable tiredness, frequent headaches, an inability to concentrate, memory issues and brain fog which affects my ability to

process information and articulate it. All of these have had a severe impact on my capacity to do my job – a job I love.

But it's not just me. There will be countless teachers, support staff and heads in schools who are trying to 'carry on,' but are being floored by symptoms. Trying to get through each day, each interaction, each event and each Ofsted inspection, feeling like a different person, like they are not in control of their own body or mind. Some not even realising it could be linked to menopause.

The reality is, at the peak of their careers, one in 10 women leave the workplace due to their symptoms, and in education, one in four consider leaving (via charity Education Support). Don't let one of them be you or a colleague. Make the menopause matter in your school. Talk about it, reach out, ensure you have a policy to support women experiencing symptoms – every workplace should have one. Get as much information as you can to be menopausal aware, but please, if you're menopausal right now, don't suffer in silence. It's time to change 'The Change'. **TP**

Maria Richards is a former primary teacher, and literacy consultant.



HOMework HASSLE – IS IT WORTH IT?

The issue has divided teachers and parents for decades, yet we're still no closer to arriving at a verdict...

Homework is a word that can spark despair and ire in children, parents and even teachers!

While there is evidence that homework can be useful at secondary school - for example, consolidating learning or revising for exams - there is less evidence that this is useful for children in the primary or early years phases.

In 1998, David Blunkett, as education secretary, suggested primary pupils should spend 30 minutes a day on homework, with early years pupils doing 20 minutes. Ofsted set guidelines in 1999 but these were scrapped in 2012. A decade later, Damien Hinds stated that *"We trust individual school headteachers to decide what their policy on homework will be, and what happens if pupils don't do what's set."*

So, what should schools do? Is it worth setting homework - and what are the benefits?

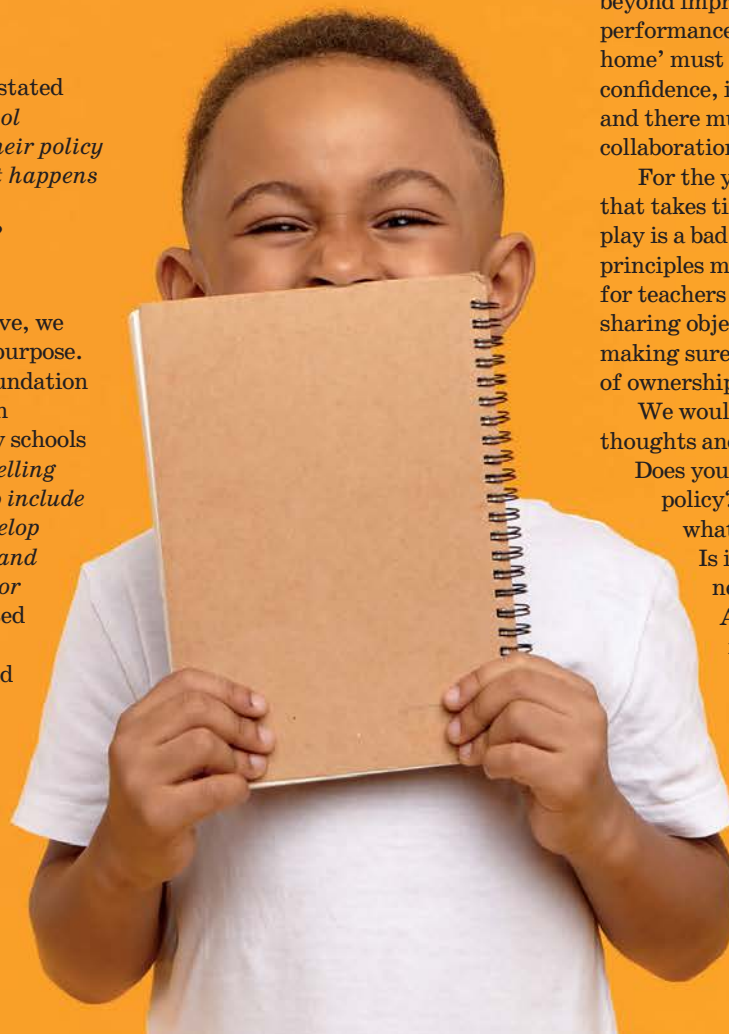
If homework is to be effective, we need to have a clear idea of its purpose. The Education Endowment Foundation in 2021 suggested that common homework activities in primary schools are: *'...reading or practising spelling and number facts, but may also include more extended activities to develop inquiry skills or more directed and focused work such as revision for tests'*. Vatterott (2010) suggested that homework should have meaning, elements of choice and be possible to complete, as well as being motivating.

Homework is seen as encouraging parents to play an active role in their children's education. But while 64 per cent of parents

think homework is helpful, a third felt it was not - and risked creating stress for the whole family.

Worldwide, most of the meta-studies on homework indicate that there is little or no positive benefit to children's academic achievement, and a central reason for this tends to be the inability of pupils to complete this homework without support. Some studies suggested

"If homework is to be effective, we need a clear idea of its purpose"



primary pupils lack independent study skills and the ability to stay focused. Despite this, they recommended doing some homework as this develops habits that will be useful later.

It might be that the tasks often set for primary pupils (usually reading and basic numeracy skills) are harder to measure academically, so there might be benefits around engagement, developing responsibility and resilience.

Parents are generally positive about homework and a common task is reading with children. While there is some evidence of positive impact, the quality of interaction may be more important than the quantity. There may also be a negative impact of homework if parents incur unrealistic expectations, apply pressure or use approaches counter to the school's methods. There are also indicators that homework may magnify differences between high and low-achieving pupils because of different levels of parental support and home environment.

Given the mixed messaging, then, what is the right approach?

If homework is to develop the home-school relationship, and give parents a greater stake in the schooling of their children, then this might be a positive thing. But it must be linked, at least in the primary sector, to metrics above and beyond improving test scores or school performance. Rather, any 'work at home' must be something that develops confidence, intent and engagement, and there must be a degree of collaboration, not imposition.

For the youngest children, anything that takes time away from developmental play is a bad thing. The Vatterott principles might be a good place for teachers to start, especially sharing objectives with pupils and making sure that there is a sense of ownership and meaning.

We would be interested in your thoughts and your own practice.

Does your school have a homework policy? For which year groups, in what subjects and how much?

Is it a positive or a negative experience?

Are there consequences for not completing it?

Contact: p.hopkins@hull.ac.uk. **TP**

Phil Harris is lecturer and researcher in education at the University of Hull.



WHAT YOU CAN LEARN FROM MY SLT JOURNEY

If you really want to succeed as a leader in education, leave the Miss Trunchbull attitude at home and be open to new ideas...

I made my first foray into senior leadership in 2018, when I became an assistant headteacher at a secondary school. In some ways, I suppose, like anyone new in a role, I was perhaps a little naive and had a lot to learn, but surely as educationalists this is only a positive? If you're not learning anything new, or not excited by it, then how can we inspire others to be enthused about education? (That was my justification, anyway.)

After three years in my first senior leadership role, I made a big decision to move to primary and was fortunate to be seconded as deputy headteacher. I am now acting principal at another school within our Multi-Academy Company (MAC).

All too often, people think there are huge differences between leading primary and secondary. While, yes, I do agree that there are different challenges, at the heart of every decision is a young person: whether they are three years of age or 18, they are children in our care. We have a duty to lead everyone down a positive path and give them the best opportunities in their educational journey; culturally, academically, pastorally and personally.

Put simply, leadership is leadership.

Another frequent comment I get as a senior leader is "I couldn't do it". So why do we? Well, for a start, the difference that we can make to our pupils' lives. Fostering a culture in a school, sharing the vision, working collaboratively, thinking strategically and winning hearts and minds of all stakeholders means there is never a dull moment! It's a big responsibility, but seeing the children grow is so rewarding. Here's what I think are the most important elements for your leadership journey, whatever Key Stage you work with:

The power of compassion

Sadly, I've frequently seen individuals move into leadership roles and lose their way. A colleague and friend once said to me that she honestly felt that when first becoming a leader she would have to become 'less kind' and much more 'ruthless'. She of course realised that this was definitely, wholeheartedly NOT the case and I cannot emphasise this enough. We all have this shared vocation to work with children, and emotional intelligence and

empathy are the key ingredients. A dose of each is necessary.

When first stepping into my role as principal, my main priority was to sit down with every member of staff and to get to know every single child: that Mrs A loves yoga, has two children and has worked at the school for twenty years; or Mr B has two dogs, is ambitious, passionate and keen to develop; or that Pupil C has recently discovered a love for art and is keen for my office to be turned into a gallery of pictures and portraits (this has happened by the way, and it's added a whole new dimension of colour to my walls. An interior designer in the making!). Leave the Trunchbull to one side and let compassion out.

Advice for new leaders

The amount of advice available on leadership can be a little overwhelming. I look back and think that I would have greatly appreciated a concise list and key pearls of wisdom. Here are some of mine if you so wish to use them:

- Always be open to new ideas and accept that you will be wrong at times!
- Always listen to the staff and of course, the children. I can't promise the children a yes to 'no homework forever please Mrs Rowley,' or the School Council's desperate request for 'lime green curtains with pink spots' for the hall, but I will always listen.
- Always model high standards, for your staff and children, and make no apology for this.
- Think about the last two years and what we can take from it. There was a greater focus on wellbeing during the pandemic and a sense of togetherness among schools and communities. Build on this.
- You're never on your own – even as a principal or headteacher.
- Ultimately, be YOU! Please always show compassion and love, even when making the difficult decisions.
- Come back to the 'why'. If a decision will not benefit the children or have a negative impact, put simply, it's a 'no'.

So, why do we do it? Why do I love what I do?

Every day is a new discovery. That's why. **TP**

Charlotte Rowley is acting principal at St Maria Goretti Catholic Academy, Stoke-on-Trent. She also has a background working as an English teacher in secondary schools.

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

A letter to...

The Department for Education

Historically, the TA role has been shrouded in uncertainty. Now, more than ever, we need a clear career structure...



In most – if not all – UK primary schools, teaching assistants (TAs) are seen as an integral part of the staffing structure. But the exact nature of

their role – and the expectations made of them – is hugely varied. This uncertainty can make fulfilling the role difficult, especially if a school doesn't have a clear outline of required duties. This needs to change; not just for the benefit of TAs and teachers, but for the children they support.

So where have today's TAs come from, and why aren't there standards? Well, the role has essentially developed by stealth. There have always been additional adults in classrooms – whether older pupils in Victorian classrooms, or parent helpers more common in the 20th century – but they were not expected to actually teach the children in any way other than perhaps hearing them read.

Somehow, however, modern TAs (in most settings) are usually much more focused on supporting and promoting learning. This change has grown over the last half century, and is rooted in major policy changes in education that were not directly related to the role of the TA. For example:

1. Changes in SEND and approach to inclusion

Until The Warnock report in 1978, children with special needs were regarded as 'handicapped', largely excluded from mainstream settings, and placed in special schools and institutions.

Enshrined in the 1981 Education Act, The Warnock report started the move to

increased inclusion in mainstream schools, and replaced the term 'handicapped' with 'special educational needs' (SEN). This led to a requirement for additional adult support within classrooms. Over time, TAs have become, in many schools, the default form of support for children with a high level of SEN, particularly if they have an education health care plan (EHCP). This has been an organic development born out of necessity, but without any formal planning, per se.

2. Raising standards and workload agendas

Since the 1980s, alongside the reframing of the approach to SEN, there has been an increased emphasis on raising educational attainment, leading to the implementation of the National Curriculum from 1989 and the birth of Ofsted in 1992. These increased the pressures on school staff and fed into a growing concern about teachers' recruitment, retention and workload.

This, in turn, led to 'The National Agreement' (2003) between the government, employers and school workforce unions, aimed at tackling these concerns. It established expectations for 'the increased use of staff who are not qualified teachers to work in a range of teaching and support roles'. This directive included a list of 25 administrative and clerical tasks to be passed from teachers to support staff (including those in the office, etc), but again, did not set out a clear job description or training programme for TAs.

Supplement support

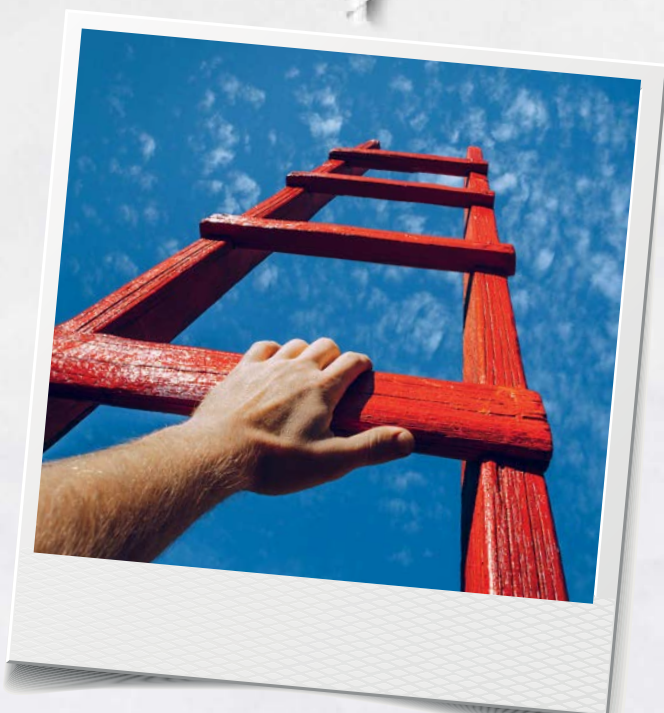
TAs these days, then, have many different duties, usually directly involved in learning and providing wider non-pedagogical

support. But this is still largely unregulated, with huge variations from school to school, and the government hasn't provided a clear policy (arguably due to a lack of understanding about the role TAs actually play). Despite an attempt to introduce TA standards in 2016, and years of work from the Maximising the Impact of Teaching Assistants (MITA) projects and the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), there are just four statements in government guidance about teaching assistants. These highlight that the teacher remains responsible and accountable for all the children in their class and that TAs should 'supplement rather than replace support from teachers'.

So, not only is the exact nature of their role and duties unclear, but TAs have no formal career structure, recommended training or even a requirement for line management and appraisal. This seems ludicrous for such an essential role.

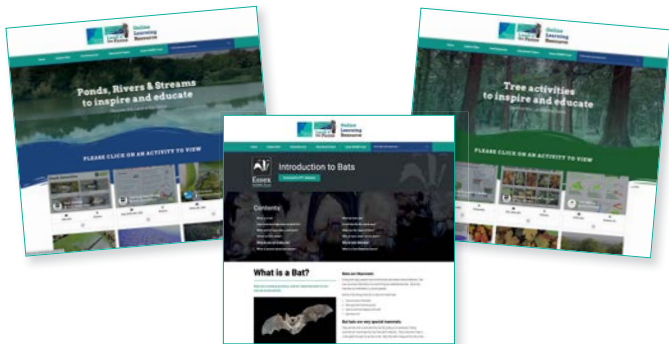
In short, it is time for us to reconsider how we train and deploy our TAs. We need to start this process by changing the emphasis from them being seen as assistants to the teacher, to focusing on their role as professional learning support assistants (LSAs) who specialise in promoting children's learning. This needs to be underpinned by a proper career structure which identifies and reflects their value in schools. Without this, they will remain vulnerable to ongoing threats of cuts and job losses, which in turn increases the vulnerability of the children they support.

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Jenny Merrison Year 2 Teacher
Christian Fellowship School

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How I do it

Investigate word choice and non-fiction writing with your very own school newspaper project

KAREN HART

1

Start with a whole-class activity. Look at a few news stories covering a range of subjects if you can – our session included a story about the London Marathon; one about healthy eating; and a report of a T-Rex skeleton that was going to auction. Lead a discussion, and encourage children to talk about why these subjects are interesting to people, and how the language used makes the written stories seem both fascinating and exciting.



This KS2 activity formed part of a 'looking at information texts' literacy project.

Although many stories are not suitable for general reading at KS2, I found that most local papers contain plenty of suitable content. Prior to this activity, we had looked at newspapers in detail, talking about their constituent parts, such as: features, advice columns, sports section, business news, horoscopes, adverts etc. I found this workshop delivered great results throughout; children even tried out contributing imaginative language to stories that were both inventive and genuinely funny. We had a lot of fun with it!

...

Next, look at these stories in more detail, writing lists of the words children think were chosen specifically to add interest. For example, our T-Rex story included words such as *menacing pose*, and *bloodthirsty stance*. Get the pupils to work in groups to write their own short news story using the title, 'Giant, hairy creature spotted in East London'; aiming to make it as exciting as possible. Each group might have a different take on the topic. You can also do this as a whole-class activity.

2

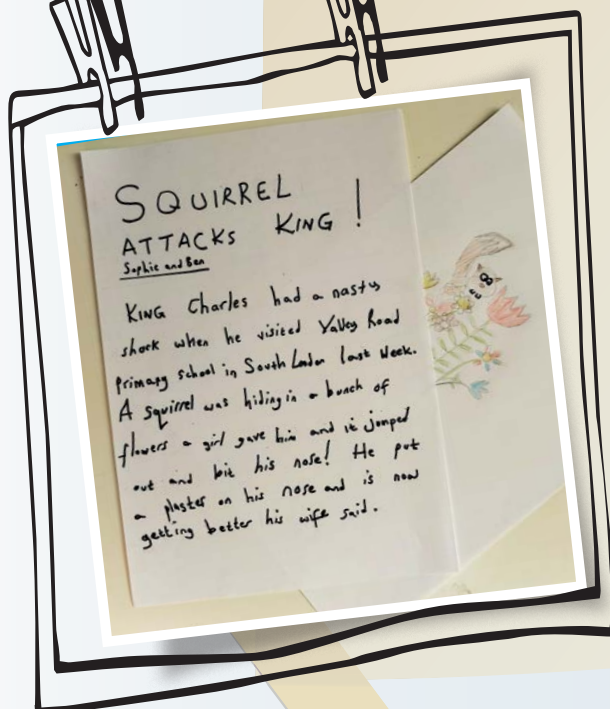
Now, working in groups of two to three, give the children an envelope containing two short snippets of an interesting news story, such as 'King Charles visits Dunfermline' and 'Twins grow record-breaking pumpkin', plus two unrelated newspaper picture cuttings, such as a squirrel and a wedding cake.

Support the pupils to write their own short news stories combining at least two of their given cuttings. Remind them to consider elements they've already covered, such as language choice, and to think about how they can combine seemingly unrelated things (such as a squirrel and King Charles' Dunfermline visit) in a funny or unexpected way.

3

4

To help structure their stories, give children a simple framework to use, and display it on the board. This could comprise: a **headline** (title); a **byline** (names of people writing the article); a location (explains where the story takes place right at the beginning of the article); a **story** (the main part – who, what, when, why, and how); and **supporting information** (any extra facts that are relevant). Make sure to talk about all these terms and what they mean.




Pupils can create their own images to accompany their news stories, and then finish off the workshop with a fun newsreader activity. Staying in their groups, children can pretend to be newsreaders, taking turns to present their stories to the rest of the class – being mindful that not everyone likes to read in front of others. For the finale, you can work to combine all the news stories into a class newspaper.

5



Karen Hart is an independent drama teacher, author and freelance writer.

 @KarenStevie23

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UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

The table shoved in the corridor shows that schools' so-called 'inclusive education' isn't really working...

Walk around many primary schools and you will see them: cosy nests tucked away in corners of classrooms or corridors. Ask children why they are there, and they will gently explain that, "Oh, yeah that's Daniel. He needs loads of help with his learning from Mrs Smith" (the 1:1 teaching assistant).

Every few years I have had "that Daniel". The one you and the other teacher spend most of the class handover discussing. The child with acute SEN, which the school can barely support. Their EHCP is a litany of acronyms you have not even seen before, never mind comprehend. Their education psychologist report puts their level of understanding in the bottom one percentile and with the abilities of a child half their age. Your heart drops as you realise that the provision you will be continuing for this child is a salve. Come INSET you and their 1:1 will install the child and their 'classroom' into whichever spare corner can be found. As pupils progress through KS2, this will inevitably be outside of their actual classroom as they will be on an individual curriculum detached from the learning of their peers.

Teaching the child is a hope rather than a given: learning delivered by a TA using whichever resources you can find as you lack the training (and the time) to understand what the child needs. You may need to plan an individualised curriculum for this child, but that's alongside learning for the other 30+ pupils in your class. Leaving the question: do you prioritise the learning of one child over that of the rest?

The number of children with an EHCP has increased by 10 per cent since 2021 alone. As many of us know all too well, getting an EHCP for a child is a battle, especially in EYFS or KS1. Post-Covid, those with acute mental health needs has skyrocketed, yet there is little support. In my county, there are less than 20 SEN schools compared with nearly 500 mainstream schools. Of these, the majority are for children with complex needs or ASD who would never have attended mainstream. Only one offers education for pupils with mental health needs that preclude them from mainstream schooling as a whole, but who

can access the mainstream curriculum. There is no provision for children who are profoundly dyslexic.

At a time of shrinking budgets, the provision for these children becomes a question of ROI – Return on Investment. Can we justify the TA's salary being spent on one child who will not do SATs, versus supporting four who will? As the Timpson Review noted in 2019, SEN children are persistently more likely to permanently excluded or off-rolled, compared to their peers without SEN. Anecdotally, we have seen that in our local high school: children with complex needs arrive in Y7 but will have left for 'home schooling' by the end of Y8 – if the academy will even accept them in the first place.

These are children that fell into a gap made for them. Their needs could not be properly supported by their teachers; they ended up working outside of the classroom setting to support their learning because no SEN school place was available; the high school cannot provide this level of provision so won't take them. And then you have a

child who finds themselves with neither a SEN nor mainstream school place.

The most frustrating, wretched, maddening aspect of all this is that along the way the child gets lost. Daniel becomes

"that Daniel": an administrative and logistical problem to be solved. A child who is confused and disconnected from the world around them and who loses friends as their peers outgrow them. The fortunate children won't notice this; their needs leaving them disconnected from the perceptions of others. The unfortunate will, and we witness the slow decline in their behaviour and self-esteem. The slump in the shoulders and the falling of the head as they trudge to their educational purgatory.

In June, the government announced funding for up to 60 new SEN/Alternative Provision schools creating 4,500 new places. But will these be in metropolitan areas or the rural counties that are often forgotten?

Until then, schools will carry on trying their best. Choosing the lesser of evils to support pupils in a failing, under-resourced system. **TP**



"These are children that fell into a gap made for them"

The writer is a primary school teacher in England.

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Be true TO YOURSELF

How I discovered that the skills I was looking for were in me all along
– I just needed to recontextualise them

NICKY BISHOP

I began my teaching career as a TA in a secondary school. I held the post for around two years, but quickly caught the education bug and trained to be a teacher. I was keen for a new challenge, and figured that that formative time in secondary – as well as my background in music and drama – would set me up well for EYFS. So here I am – and I love it.

Recently, my role has evolved to include the day-to-day running of the nursery, helping to coordinate a team of eight – one other teacher and seven nursery nurses – and arranging which children should be in which classroom with what staff member. Although I have worked with a lot of teams during my career, I hadn't before had a taste of leadership; like with teaching, as soon as I did, I wanted more.

I am very lucky in that my nursery supported me to take part in a leadership course, which has taught me a huge amount, and definitely influenced the way I work.

So, what exactly have I learned?

Leadership styles

Well, as you can imagine, there was a lot of practical advice to take on board – such as using coaching techniques to help people solve their own problems – and a real understanding of different leadership styles (a whole separate article!). However, the most pertinent takeaway for me was the importance of being credible and authentic as a leader. This is absolutely vital, but does take time to build up.

I'll be honest – this wasn't something I'd necessarily thought a lot about before the course, but it has become absolutely central to the way I do my job as a leader, and even influenced my teaching. A lot of it came down to being precise about what I promised my team, and making sure I could follow through on things – hollow yeses are not the way to build up trust. I also learned some strategies for showing staff that they had a voice in the nursery. A big part of this was clearly communicating the organisation's wider vision to the team, so we could discuss together how to make it specific to their

roles, rather than just have it hanging over everyone as a contextless, broad aim. Showing how our values and vision relate directly to teachers' and nursery nurses' work helped us figure out that, leader or not, we're all on the same page, and want to put children first. This kind of transparent discussion made us more effective as a team, and helped staff trust that I had their interests – as well as the children's – at heart.

Credibility and authenticity

As you'll know if you're a teacher or TA, children can sense in a second when you're not being authentic, or if you're just going through the motions. At nursery, most of what we do occurs through play, and once a pupil invites you into their imaginary world, it's a clear sign they trust you. But as with staff, this doesn't happen by itself. The leadership training helped me see that the rapport I am able to develop with the children comes from taking an interest in them and supporting them to try new things. Seemingly simple actions such as encouraging pupils to contribute to class discussions, and thanking them for their efforts even if they don't come up with the right answer, is a really valuable leadership tool that you can definitely apply to dealing with a team of adults. Everyone wants to be heard and valued.

So, credibility and authenticity in leadership might sound like a far-off goal, but you're probably already using a lot of the techniques in your interactions with your class. The end result in my particular setting is that we've developed a much greater sense of unity among the team. I'm sure this isn't the end, either, and there will be plenty more benefits down the road. **TP**



Nicky Bishop is a middle leader at a school in London. Nicky took part in the Lead London course by LETTA. Find out more info at tinyurl.com/tp-LETTAlead



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WEEK 1 Lesson objective

- To give students a working knowledge of the mechanics of climate change and the evidence base for it.

The main purpose of this first lesson is to introduce some of the scientific evidence behind climate change and give children a working knowledge of the cause of increasing global temperatures. Depending on when pupils last encountered climate change, you

might want to adjust the pitch to be more of a recap or to take the evidence a step further. Begin by looking at the difference between weather and climate, a thorny distinction that even fully-grown politicians and commentators can sometimes fail to grasp. Children should understand that climate refers to a long-term pattern of temperature and weather, and that weather refers to the short and medium-term which includes phenomena like cold snaps and heatwaves. Then take a step back and look at how global temperatures have stayed broadly consistent from the Roman

Teaching about the climate crisis is something most of us are keen to do, but often it isn't easy to find a way to make time for it in the already packed schedule. Luckily, many subjects lend themselves to seamlessly incorporating modern-day climate discussions – including RE!

In this unit, we'll explore the concept of stewardship in Islam, how the holy Hajj pilgrimage is being affected by climate concerns, and how Muslim communities have worked to better the world we live in through ecological measures – including one very impressive eco-friendly mosque.

period until around the time of the Industrial Revolution (see **slide 3** in the downloadable resources). Could this be a clue as to what has caused this increase in global temperature? An overview of the greenhouse effect and the way in which CO2 traps heat inside our atmosphere (**slide 4**) leads on to a discussion about how human activities can be linked to the increase in carbon dioxide emissions (**slides 5 and 6**). End the lesson with a pertinent question: what does any of this have to do with RE? (**slide 8**). Explain how we are going to look at the interaction between Islamic communities, Islamic teaching and what Muslims are doing about this global threat.

Assessment

Pupils should be able to draw out the trends from the different graphs they are shown, particularly that global temperatures are on the rise. They should also understand the difference between climate and weather and how our global climate is changing. On the **week 1 worksheet** (in downloads), ask children to give a written interpretation of one graph and answer short questions about climate.

WEEK 2 Lesson objective

- To gain an understanding of what Islamic scripture says about creation, Allah and nature.

Begin this lesson with a recap of what we have learned about climate change, and challenge pupils by asking them to interpret a graph of rising global temperatures and explain it to their partner (**slide 10**). Over the next two lessons we take a look at how Islamic

scripture has formed ideas about Allah's role in creation and nature, and mankind's role as stewards of this creation. We need to make sure students understand the importance of the Quran as the main text in Islam, and the hadith as a key collection of reports about the Prophet's words and actions (slide 12). We then go on to look at three quotes from the Quran – you will need to be able to interpret these with your class; the ideas are quite simple but the language in scripture can often be challenging. Simply put, Allah created all things in the best way and created mankind (slide 14), Allah has ownership and power over all things (slide 15) and Allah shows his goodness and beauty through nature (slide 16). These ideas are summed up on the last slide (17) and should inform a discussion about how a Muslim might feel about Allah and creation when they look out over a stunningly beautiful natural site – you could find an example here that you might have experienced personally.



Assessment

Pupils should understand the two main sources of scriptural wisdom in Islam: the Quran and hadith. With assistance and guidance, children should be able to draw out the three main ideas about Allah and nature from the three Quran quotes on the week 2 worksheet and in the slides. On the worksheet, get pupils to interpret three quotes from the Quran.

WEEK 3

Lesson objective

- To understand the concept of stewardship and how it appears in Islamic teaching through the idea of khalifah.



Dive into the idea of stewardship in Islam by asking how a belief that the world is created by Allah and reflects Allah's nature might impact how Muslims treat the Earth. Introduce a Quran quote to illustrate this discussion (slide 19) and then explain the idea of stewardship – a concept found in almost every religion (slide 20). Stewardship, the belief that we are taking care of a divine creation and need to look after it for future generations and out of reverence for a divine force, is a huge influence in the lives of religious people who take up the fight against climate change. Next, look at how this idea is found within Islam, specifically within two Quran quotes (slides 21 and 22). Again, these are fairly complex pieces of scripture but with clear ideas – Allah has created the Earth and it is under his ownership; humankind has been given the right to exist on Earth but only under Allah's favour. The third set of quotes (slide 23) is simpler, and pupils should interpret these using this week's worksheet. You can then introduce the Islamic idea of khalifah (slide 24) – that Allah gives Adam responsibility for the Earth, which is then passed down to all people. This reinforces the idea that all people on Earth share a responsibility for the planet as well as the ability to exploit it for their own ends. End the lesson by asking how a Muslim with a strong belief in stewardship might respond to the shocking exploitation of the Earth through open-cast mining (slide 25).



Assessment

Pupils should be able to define the key concept of stewardship and relate this

to the idea of Creation within Islam. They should understand that the term 'khalifah' is a guardianship passed down from Adam to current-day humans to look after Allah's creation. Using the week 3 worksheet, children should interpret two quotes from the Quran and answer short questions.

WEEK 4

Lesson objective

- To understand how a place of worship like the Cambridge Central Mosque can respond directly to the challenges of climate change.

In this half of the unit, we look at how Muslim practices (specifically the Hajj pilgrimage) are being affected by climate change, and how Muslims are seeking to fight the crisis. This lesson centres around Cambridge Central Mosque, a stunning building I had the privilege to visit back in 2019, and which takes its sustainable responsibilities very seriously. Start the lesson by summing up what you have learned up to this point (slide 28) and then move on to a 'virtual tour' of the mosque using photographs from my own visit (slides 30–36). Look at the use of natural light; the recycling of rainwater and excess water from the washing area; the solar panels on the roof and the use of sustainable wood throughout the building. End the lesson with two videos (tinyurl.com/tp-RIBACambridgeMosque and tinyurl.com/tp-BBCecoMosque). These are



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designed for adults and will need some interpretation; you could even play them with the sound off and narrate. If you have studied Islamic art or architecture before, it is interesting to point out the use of traditional patterns and themes in such a modern building. The final slide (39) summarises the four main ways in which the mosque reflects stewardship.



Assessment

Children should be able to make a connection between the mosque's eco-friendly features and the responsibility towards stewardship felt by Muslims. On the **week 4 worksheet**, they should specifically identify what those features are and how they are part of the fight against climate change.

WEEK 5 Lesson objective

- To understand how the Hajj is impacted by climate change.

The final two lessons focus on the Hajj pilgrimage. Start the lesson with a brief recap (slides 41–43). This is primarily a reading lesson based on an adapted version of an article entitled 'Is the climate emergency making Hajj even more exclusive?' from the website Gal-Dem (tinyurl.com/tp-HajjClimate). The article can be read individually, in pairs or as a whole class, depending on the reading ability of pupils. When I have used it with Year 5, for example, I have read it to the whole class and added lots of interpretation to each paragraph. The main themes are how the Hajj is becoming increasingly uncomfortable, how that discomfort is being mitigated in the short-term, and how those mitigations are both making the Hajj more exclusive and creating more CO2



emissions. Each of the reading slides (45–49) have vocabulary definitions and prompts for class discussion.



Assessment

Pupils should be able to summarise the main points from the article and put them into their own words. They should understand how the Hajj is affected by climate change and how some adaptations to this stand to make climate change worse. The **week 5 worksheet** provides the reading in full and asks students to make summaries of each paragraph.

look at two short extracts from articles about 'greening' the Hajj through more recycling and through taking personal responsibility for travelling an eco-friendlier way (in this case, on foot, from Bosnia-Herzegovina) (slides 55 and 56). End the lesson with suggestions from The Green Guide to Hajj (slide 57) that pilgrims reduce their footprint by not buying anything unnecessary and not bringing plastic bottles on the pilgrimage. It is a slightly unsatisfying answer to the issue, but one that accurately reflects the fact that often there are no easy fixes for the problems facing the world – no matter how strongly you might feel about them.



WEEK 6 Lesson objective

- To understand how the Hajj is adapting to climate change.

The final lesson looks again at the Hajj pilgrimage and some of the ways it is changing to adapt to climate change. Begin with the issue of transport (slides 52–54) – over two million people attend the Hajj each year and this creates one of the world's biggest logistical challenges. Most people arrive by plane – something which is hard to avoid – but steps have been taken to provide more eco-friendly transport inside Saudi Arabia through both the high-speed rail line to Jeddah and Medina, and the Mecca Metro system. Next, take a

Assessment

Children should be able to bring together the ideas of pilgrimage, stewardship and climate change to discuss how the Hajj is affected and being adapted. They should be able to talk about the limitations to the ways in which climate change is being addressed in the Hajj. Using the **week 6 worksheet**, ask them to write a three-pointed paragraph explaining how and why Muslims are acting on the threat of climate change. **TP**



Adam Smith is Year 5 Lead and RE lead at Charles Dickens Primary School in Southwark, London.



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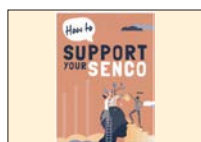
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What is DYSLEXIC THINKING?

Ever wondered how you can best support your pupils with dyslexia? Right this way...

KATIE GRIGGS

As many as one in five children worldwide have dyslexia, but research conducted by the British Dyslexia Association suggests that 80 per cent of dyslexic children leave school without being properly diagnosed.

This means that right now, education systems around the world are failing children. With only 20 per cent of dyslexic students identified, a disproportionate majority are being left to 'muddle through' without the necessary support and confidence they need to succeed.

On top of this, research suggests that most teachers aren't aware of 'dyslexic thinking' as a concept and have little or no understanding of 'dyslexic strengths'. As a result, the way teachers work with dyslexic children is not optimised, and many children never truly understand their full potential, and suffer as a consequence.

So, what is dyslexia?

Dyslexia is the most common learning difference, with up to 20 per cent of the population affected by it. It is genetic and runs in families, and has common characteristics that can be identified as early as pre-school.

Dyslexic brains are wired slightly differently, which means they have a unique way of processing information. They are often naturally curious and highly creative, with an ability to unconventionally connect the dots and think laterally. This difference results in a pattern of challenges but extraordinary strengths too.

Young dyslexic minds have strengths in areas like creativity, problem solving, empathy and communication, so look out for these qualities. Many children with dyslexia may struggle with other things such as concentration and following instructions, remembering facts and figures, and elements of literacy, such as reading, spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Identifying dyslexic thinking

Dyslexic Thinking has created some of the world's greatest inventions, brands and art. From Roald Dahl to Richard Branson, inspiring dyslexic minds have shaped culture and commerce over the last century, with their brilliant qualities and unique strengths.

Dyslexic kids often become experts in the subjects they love because they are inquisitive and curious and use lots of dyslexic thinking skills – such as exploring and questioning – to find out all there is to know about a subject, but at the same time they might struggle to grasp simple skills their peers find easy. Easy-to-spot strengths include sport, art, music and dancing.

Dyslexic challenges

Dyslexic children often struggle with manipulating and holding on to sounds and words, which can make learning to read and spell difficult. They may have difficulty with verbal memory to follow instructions with multiple

steps and struggle with executive function skills, such as organisation, concentration, and sequential tasks. They may find maths operations difficult and struggle with memorisation and might require more time to process their thoughts and complete tasks.

Often in dyslexic children there is a mismatch in what a learner seems capable of and the written work they produce, and they may not have test scores and grades that reflect how much they have actually learned. This is often misread in undiagnosed children as laziness or lack of concentration to the great detriment of the child and the ability of the teacher to assist them.

Research suggests that the earlier dyslexia is discovered and supported, the sooner dyslexic kids catch up and keep up, and four in five dyslexics attribute their knowing they were dyslexic to developing the perseverance needed to succeed. It is clear that the 'label' is vital for our own self-understanding, and essential for teachers to be able to provide the necessary assistance the children require to flourish.

10 ways to support dyslexic thinking

1 Look for and pay close attention to the dyslexic children in your class, and find out from the parents what they love to do. These usually point to their dyslexic thinking skills, and you can learn about how you can integrate them into the children's projects and goals.

2 Look out for easy-to-spot strengths including sport, art, music and dancing, as well as other common dyslexic skills such as empathy, kindness, imagining, listening and questioning.

3 Define dyslexic thinking as a valuable skillset to be proud of.

4 Encourage dyslexic children to do what they love and are passionate about at every opportunity. Skill + practice + passion = superpower. Acknowledge their expertise. Dyslexics often don't realise how good they are at these things, so may not recognise them as their superpowers.

5 Build self-esteem with positive praise. Research suggests that we are most motivated to improve when we hear negative and positive comments in a ratio of 1:5. That's five pieces of praise for every one negative comment. Positive praise is vital for dyslexic children. And even if certain things are challenging, or progress is slow, each small win should be celebrated.

6 Make the most of assistive technologies, such as text-to-speech and speech-to-text, spelling and grammar checking, tablets and calculators, and provide supports such as guided notes and copies of presentations. Dyslexic children struggle with spelling, punctuation and grammar so focus on what they're trying to say and their wonderful ideas first, rather than spelling – that can always be checked later.

7 Use a multi-sensory, explicit phonics approach to better help pupils with dyslexia learn to read. Don't force children to read aloud; instead ask them if they would like to in advance and make it optional in a group setting. Dyslexic learners will take longer to read than others so give them the text ahead of time so they have time to prepare before the lesson.

8 Consider different options to complete tasks, both in your classroom and during tests. Dyslexics love to have the big picture, so giving them an overview of your lesson ahead of time will help to them keep on track. Provide accommodations on traditional exams and assessments, such as having the test read aloud, allowing students to dictate their answers, and provide additional time.

9 Learn about dyslexia and dyslexic thinking, including how to spot, support and empower the one in five dyslexic kids in your classroom. You can access free video training at tinyurl.com/tp-DyslexiaTraining

10 Create supportive structures for fellow teachers, parents and children to share experiences and information. Posters, factsheets and more information is available for free at madebydyslexia.org/teachers


Recently, LinkedIn added dyslexic thinking as a skill, offering their 810+ million global members the option to add it as a skill on their profile. Dyslexic thinking has also been added as a skill on dictionary.com. This is a huge step forward in the recognition of the incredible strengths dyslexic thinkers bring to the world.

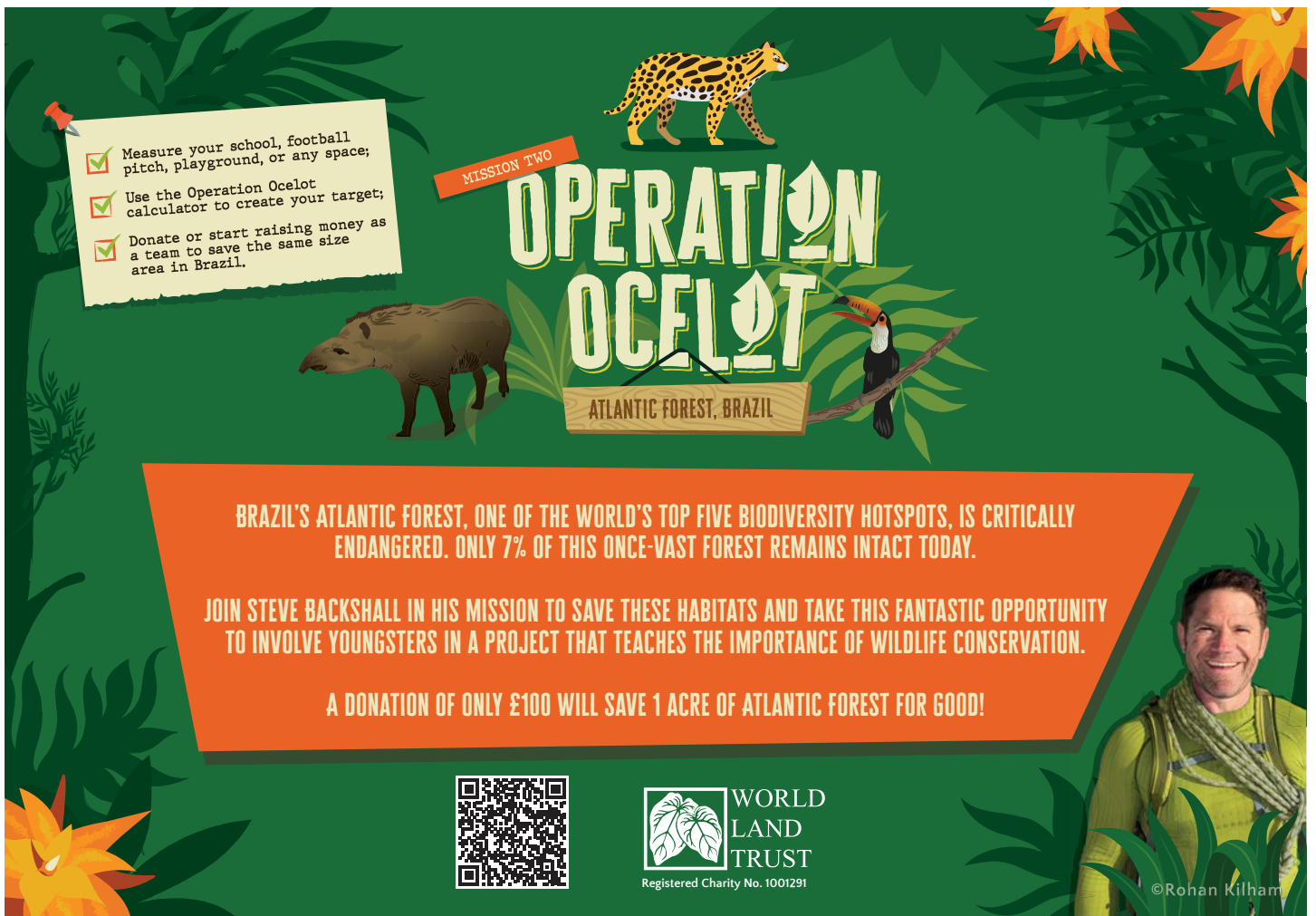
With more tools at our disposal to identify and support dyslexic children than ever, it is not acceptable to let it slip under the radar or to view it two-dimensionally as a learning difficulty. The best way we can support and empower dyslexic children is to discover their particular strengths, and place as much importance on them as we do on the things they struggle with. **TP**



Kate Griggs is the founder and CEO of global charity Made By Dyslexia and author of dyslexia guide This is Dyslexia (£11.99, Penguin)

and children's book Xtraordinary People: Made By Dyslexia

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5 REASONS TO TRY... Dove Self-Esteem Project

Help pupils discover just how amazing they really are with free body-image resources



30 SECOND BRIEFING

The Dove Self-Esteem Project helps teachers to create an open conversation around body positivity and celebrate pupil individuality. These free evidence-based resources have been developed and written by experts and include everything you need to carry out engaging, curriculum-aligned body confidence lessons.

1 PROMOTES POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE AND STRENGTHENS SELF-ESTEEM

When research tells us that young children are developing attitudes towards body shape and size – and that by the time they reach their teens, many (both boys and girls) feel anxiety about their body image – it's time to take action. Perceptions and feelings about body image impact young people's mental health. The Dove Self-Esteem Project strives to make this a positive impact, not a negative one, by celebrating attributes that aren't connected to the way we look.



4 ALIGNS TO THE CURRICULUM

The programme aims to help primary school teachers meet National Curriculum objectives in statutory health education and PSHE (England and Wales), Health & wellbeing (Scotland), PDMU (Northern Ireland), citizenship and literacy, by helping pupils to:

- Recognise their worth by identifying positive things about themselves and others.
- Critically explore how the media presents information.
- Examine what influences the way they feel about themselves and others.
- Justify their opinions and listen to and respect other points of view.

2 IMPROVES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE THROUGH BODY POSITIVITY

Body positivity is a critical factor in building good mental health, self-esteem and motivation, but did you realise the adverse impact on learning that a negative body image can have? Research shows that pupils who feel positive about their bodies tend to perform better academically. The Amazing Me resources – including lesson plans, slide decks, activity sheets and links to informative videos – help children to celebrate and value how unique and special they are, building self-esteem and resilience, which in turn supports academic performance.

3 ADDRESSES THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA

We can't ignore the impact the digital world has on body image, which is why the Dove Self-Esteem Project tackles this head on, helping pupils understand what body image means in a digital age and how to beat the pressures to align to an 'ideal'. By showing children how to critically reflect on the way body image is portrayed in the mainstream media and on social platforms, they have the tools to override this external pressure.



Find out more:
Visit: bit.ly/DoveAmazingMe

5 ALREADY HAVING A POSITIVE IMPACT

The Amazing Me resources are already helping thousands of primary pupils on a journey towards life-long body confidence, helping them to develop self-confidence, self-esteem, self-worth and personal wellbeing. As an evidence-based programme, teachers have the confidence to know materials are age-appropriate and accurate. But don't just take our word for it, there are already over 5,000 teachers seeing the positive impact running the programme has on their pupils. Take a look at the resources for yourself at bit.ly/DoveAmazingMe

KEY POINTS

Access these free-to-download lesson plans and resources by registering on the National Schools Partnership website: bit.ly/DoveAmazingMe

Aligned to NC objectives in statutory health education and PSHE (England and Wales), Health & Wellbeing (Scotland), PDMU (NI), citizenship and literacy.

150,000 pupils are already benefitting from the Amazing Me resources – that's 5,000 teachers making the most of Dove's free body confidence packs.

Materials are evidence-based and include everything you need to carry out engaging and age-appropriate body confidence lessons. Amazing Me is designed specifically for ages 8-11.

Planning for MUSICAL SUCCESS

Need a music development plan but don't know where to start? **Dr Liz Stafford** breaks down how to organise your vision without going off-key...

Most teachers who find themselves taking on the role of a primary subject leader will be asked to produce some kind of development plan for their subject. For those in charge of music in England, this task has now been enshrined in the new National Plan for Music Education (NPME), alongside some very specific ideas about what the document should contain. But what exactly is a development plan, and how should you go about writing one?

“It’s important to take a step back and consider why you value music in your school”

A subject development plan is a guide to improving your subject – in this case music – in your school. It is not an ‘end goal’ in and of itself, but rather a flexible planning document which is reviewed annually and never fully ‘finished’. There is always more work to be done! So, what should it look like?

The process of planning how to improve your subject might seem a bit daunting. Conversely, you may have lots of ideas for individual little things that need fixing. Either way, it's important to take a step back before you dive into the detail, and instead consider why you value music in your school. Take some time

to ask yourself the question, ‘Why do we do music?’

You might consider some of the following possible answers:

- to help children develop a lifelong love of music;
- to help pupils develop musical skills;
- to prepare children for further musical study;
- to help pupils develop transferrable skills;
- to widen pupils’ experience of other cultures;
- to meet statutory requirements;

- to provide children with opportunities that are unavailable to them outside school.

Every school will have a different perspective on this important question, and the answer doesn't matter as much as what you do about it! Once you know why you value music and what you're hoping to achieve through the subject in your school, then you will have a clear aim, which can form the backbone of your plan.

Planning the finer detail

Once you have a vision to aim for, you'll want to check how

close you are to achieving it by carrying out a subject audit. Depending on how music is taught in your school – for example, whether it's delivered by individual class teachers, or one music specialist – you might take a number of different approaches to finding out the state of play. You could survey your staff to find out how they feel about it, scrutinise curriculum plans and assessment evidence, observe teaching, or invite a group of pupils to share their experiences. The method that you choose should be designed to give you the information you need to ascertain what aspects of music need to be developed in order to deliver your vision. For example, if you want to improve the efficacy of music teaching to help pupils develop musical skills, you'll need to check how effective it is to begin with – this would require teaching observations. If your vision is to prepare pupils for further musical study, you'll need a clear progression strategy for music through the school, which will require scrutiny of existing planning documents and considering possible areas of improvement.

Once your audit is complete, you can start planning how you get from where you are now to where you want to be, through a series of smaller goals. You might want to use SMART techniques (standing for specific, measurable, achievable,

relevant, and time-bound) or other goal-planning methods to ensure that the individual steps are achievable and measurable. Another good idea is to try and make links with wider school accountability measures, such as your school improvement / development plan.



By linking things up in this way, you will show the value of your plan, and ensure that colleagues are more likely to do their part in delivering it.

Linking to the National Plan for Music Education

If your school is based in England, the NPME provides a list of 'key features of high-quality school music provision' which it suggests are included in your plan.

These are:

- access to lessons across a range of instruments and voice;
- timetabled curriculum music of at least one hour each week of the school year;
- a school choir and/or vocal ensemble;
- a school ensemble, band or group;
- space for rehearsals

and individual practice;

- a termly school performance;
- opportunity to enjoy live performance at least once a year.

Some of these will doubtless fit well with your vision for music in your school and can therefore be worked in as part of your goal-setting process. Some, however, may not align with what you are trying to achieve. (The idea of providing rehearsal and individual practice space, in particular, has rung alarm bells with many primary colleagues!). The key thing to remember is that the NPME is a non-statutory document, so schools do not have to adopt all (or any!) of these recommendations. If you feel strongly that some or all of the items on the list will not deliver your school's vision for music, then you can leave them out of your plan.

That said, as discussed at the beginning of this article, the NPME is relying on the idea of overlapping plans as its delivery method, and if all schools decide not to deliver against the recommendations therein, then it may as well not have been written! Even if you are not adopting all the ideas in the list above, you may still wish to align, reflect or refer to other music planning documents at the level of your Trust (where relevant), Local Authority (as yet unwritten until the new music hubs are in place after the open bidding process) and National edicts. **TP**



Dr Liz Stafford is director of **Music Education Solutions®**, a global music education consultancy company, and author of *The Primary Music Leader's Handbook* (£9.99, HarperCollins).

 @DrLizStafford

USEFUL QUESTIONS FOR MUSIC AUDITS

Consider these to help structure your audit:

KS1:

- Can you teach children how to use their voices expressively and creatively?
- Can you teach a range of songs and chants?
- Can you teach children how to play tuned and untuned instruments musically?
- Can you advise children on what to listen out for in a piece of music?
- Can you support children to appreciate and understand a range of different music?
- Do you know and understand the interrelated dimensions of music and how to teach them?
- Can you support children to create, select and combine sounds?
- Can you teach the full KS1 music curriculum with confidence?

KS2:

- Can you teach children to sing with accuracy, fluency, control and expression?
- Can you teach children to play instruments with accuracy, fluency, control and expression?
- Can you advise children on what to listen out for in a piece of music?
- Can you support children to appreciate and understand a range of different music?
- Do you know and understand the interrelated dimensions of music and how to teach them?
- Can you support children to improvise and compose music for a range of different purposes?
- Do you have knowledge of the history of music and how to teach this?
- Can you read music?



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LESS EXPERIENCED
TEACHERS

Just 27 per cent of primary teachers think that the balance of professional development is right in their school. Primary teachers need to be a jack-of-all-trades, so it's no surprise that what respondents would most like to see is more subject professional development.

A similar percentage, 31 per cent, want more key stage professional development too.

19%

One way of supporting less experienced staff is to help them enforce behaviour. When primary teachers were asked whether leaders at their school consistently enforced behaviour management, nearly 20 per cent of primary teachers said they do not.

Furthermore, 28 per cent of less experienced teachers said they wanted leaders to support them more in behaviour management.

IS BEHAVIOUR
GETTING
BETTER?

A single metric won't tell the whole story when measuring behaviour.

It remains unclear whether the pandemic led to a deterioration in conduct. In 2019, 39 per cent of teachers admitted they had to stop a lesson because of pupil disruption. Recently, the figure had decreased – just 33 per cent of teachers now said they had to stop a lesson for this reason.

WHAT BOTHERS
teachers
most about
pupil
discipline?

85%

Pupil absences have remained high – not least because Covid has still been rearing its head. But there were other factors too. Teachers said that absenteeism was far worse in the past year than in 2019. Disruption due to absences was worse in more socially deprived areas, where 85 per cent of primary teachers said lateness and absence interfered with teaching.

8%

Overall, just 8 per cent of teachers thought behaviour had improved since they started their teaching career – and more than half of primary teachers said it had deteriorated. Even those who have been teaching five years or fewer said this – so it's fair to say that it remains unclear how the pandemic has really affected behaviour.

Many teachers think heads don't do enough to support them with poor classroom conduct. Teacher Tapp shares its findings

The last 12 months were the most 'normal' year for some time and the first in the past three that wasn't interrupted by at least one full lockdown. But despite this, pupil behaviour continued to be a challenge, with teachers struggling to manage this in the classroom. At Teacher Tapp, this prompted us to ask the question, "Do headteachers need to do more to help their staff?" Here's what we found out.



Iain Ford is senior data and reporting analyst at Teacher Tapp. You can take part in and see the result of regular teacher surveys by signing up to the Teacher Tapp app (teachertapp.co.uk)

What's the best arrangement?

Emma Cate Stokes didn't realise the advantages of seating her pupils in rows – until Covid forced a change

Covid hasn't been good for much in schools but, in my experience, it has been great for improving the learning of my class. Now, this might seem like a strange statement. But let me explain.

As part of the Covid guidance issued in 2020 for the return of children to schools after the first lockdown, the Department for Education instructed us to set up classroom seating arrangements 'with forward-facing desks' in order to lessen transmission of the virus. For some of us, it reignited an age-old debate – are rows or groups better for teaching and learning?

This was all new for me. Up until that point I had spent the entirety of my teaching

career with grouped tables in the classroom. Before March 2020 it was rare to find a primary school classroom with rows. Most classes were set up with small grouped tables in fours, sixes and eights. However, in response to the new guidance, I dutifully set my classroom up with all desks facing the front of the room.

I thought it would be a disaster. How wrong I was.

I found that rows aid both me and the pupils. They help provide a purposeful and calm classroom environment, and can even settle children and allow them to ignore any external distractions. In Reception and Key Stage 1 we often seat children in rows to facilitate learning for this very reason.

All eyes on the teacher

Something that became quickly evident during the first couple of weeks was how much easier learning became when pupils were arranged in rows. All of the children in class could see me, all the time. There were no more body contortions to try and see the board. It sounds small but I would bet there are countless classrooms in the country where children can't see the board/easel/teacher properly from where they sit. Put yourself in the vantage point of different pupils – can you see the teacher and the board?

I know all eyes are on me when I am modelling, instructing and explaining.

This is necessary for the pupils to learn well.

Managing partner and group work

As educators we often feel rows are Victorian in nature and take the joy out of learning. Indeed, during my teacher training I was taught that rows were bad – they were old-fashioned and strict. They stopped children from collaborating and must never, ever be used.

I have previously favoured group configurations, as do many teachers. I believed this layout naturally lent itself to discussion, and that there was a genuine argument to be made for it bringing more



collaboration to the classroom. Now I am not so sure.

However, rows do need to be handled correctly, and well. If there is a need for partner work, pupils can collaborate with the child next to them. However, if the teacher wants them to study in groups, two children can turn to face the children behind them. It can be done. If anything, having rows aids learning discussion, but it does rely on embedded routines.

“All of the pupils in class could see me, all the time. No more body contortions to try and see the board”

To ensure that pupils are explicitly guided through your expectations of partner and group work within the row setting, you could model with the TA (if you're lucky enough to have one) what you expect to see and how you want the class to behave.

More equitable learning

In many ways, rows can make the classroom experience more equitable, too. The front-facing

configuration means that, unless directed otherwise, pupils will be looking at the teacher rather than each other. This can often mean that the quieter children in class are more inclined to raise their hands and contribute to the discussion.

Rows also make the lives of both teachers and TAs easier. A layout of rows with an aisle down the middle of the classroom allows all pupils to be easily accessible, which in

turn means the adults in the classroom are able to support them. It also leads to fewer collisions with the corners of those deceptively sharp tables, and so fewer bruises when you get home from work!

In my experience, probably the only advantage to seating pupils in groups is the ability for them to be supported by a member of staff. But this, too, needs careful consideration. When an adult is with one group, it takes them away from

the other children in the class. With quality-first teaching and regular assessment, all pupils – including higher and lower attaining and those with SEND – can be supported without having to be sitting at ‘that’ table.

Easier assessment

Ultimately, we have to put the learning of our pupils first and do what works best for them. Giving all children equal access to you and other adults who support them is important. Rows have made formative assessment much easier, as well: you can walk up and down those aisles and spot misconceptions in a flash.

Of course, rows don't work for every subject and I'm not advocating them for a drama lesson, for example. Tables can always be moved, and nothing should ever be set in stone.

The Covid rules in classrooms have long since been relaxed but I am still persevering with rows the majority of the time. Perhaps there is a reason we are still discussing rows over a hundred years after the Victorians introduced them; they are actually a really sensible way of teaching lots of young people at the same time. And, in my experience, for the majority of subjects, rows work best. **TP**

TRANSFORMING YOUR TABLES


Thinking of changing the seating arrangements in classrooms in your school? Here are some things to consider:

- Make sure your desk is located where every pupils can clearly see it, as well as the board.
- Leave an aisle in the middle of the room so you can easily walk up and down to access pupils quickly and address misconceptions, and to keep an eye on behaviour.
- Introduce routines for pupils to enter and exit their rows quickly and efficiently, and pass out papers and books. For example, those whose desks are at the back might be asked to come in first, to avoid crowding.
- Have a clear seating plan so you know where all pupils are supposed to be at all times. This also makes it easy to spot straight away if anyone is absent.
- Have pupils turn around to the rows behind them if you want to have larger discussion groups or to do group work.
- Don't be afraid to change table configurations if rows do not fit what you are teaching – for example, drama.
- Consider changing the seating arrangements termly or half-termly so pupils don't become bored or irritated by constantly sitting next to the same child, and so that the same children aren't always seated at the back or the front.



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Sequencing science

The knowledge transition from EYFS to KS1 can be tricky, but rearranging the bones of the content makes a surprising difference, says **Aidan Severs**...

The transition from Early Years to Key Stage 1 is an important one. Often it's the time when children are required to switch from play-based learning to more formal, classroom-based teaching. Where this is the case, it can be quite a challenging time for children in Years 1 and 2. It can be quite testing for the staff as well!

It is often the case that as pupils get used to a new way of working, they are also experiencing greater curricular demands. New information is taught in new ways, and there is the potential for any content that is taught in the first half term to be forgotten as children instead focus on getting to grips with the new routines and expectations.

One school I worked with suggested an approach to address these potential issues when it came to teaching science. They had noticed that there isn't a great deal of content in the Year 1 science curriculum, particularly since they intended, very wisely, to teach seasonal changes across the year, rather than as a discrete unit. So, we decided to develop a transition unit to bridge the gap between a child's experience in Early Years and the new (to them)

expectations of the National Curriculum. Not only would it aid the pupils' transition, but it would also provide another unit of content, meaning that science could be taught more regularly throughout the year.

Making it relevant

One objective stood out as being the perfect basis for such a unit: the statement 'identify, name, draw and label the basic parts of the human body and say which part of the body is associated with each sense', which is located under the 'Animals, including humans' heading of the statutory Year 1 science curriculum.

In addition to this statutory objective, we also selected two related non-statutory objectives to include in the unit:

Pupils should have plenty of opportunities to learn the names of the main body parts (including head, neck, arms, elbows, legs, knees, face, ears, eyes, hair, mouth, teeth) through games, actions, songs and rhymes.

Pupils might work scientifically by using their senses to compare different textures, sounds and smells.

Both felt suitable as a continuation of teaching and learning experiences the children would have had in Reception, and by putting them front and centre of a unit in the autumn term of Year 1, they would be a strong reminder to teachers of the kinds of pedagogies they might employ in order to aid transition.

Although there are no

current Early Learning Goals that specifically relate to human body parts and senses, we felt this was something that would have naturally formed a part of Early Years teaching and learning, and therefore something that children would have some prior knowledge of, on which we could build.

Another guiding factor as to the selection of these objectives was the idea that when teaching young children, information that relates to their own experiences is perhaps



“When teaching young children, information that relates to their own experience is easier for them to grasp”

easier for them to grasp. Why start with the parts of a variety of animals' bodies before looking at the children's own bodies? Start with what they know and go from there – this was the thinking behind having this as a first transition unit in Year 1.

A simple structure

Once we started to flesh out the unit, we couldn't resist the simple structure of basing learning 'episodes' (almost a mini-lesson) around each of the five senses and their related body parts. We built each episode around an enquiry question to conform with the school's approach of promoting curiosity and giving a clear purpose to the learning:

- How do we feel things?
- How do we see things?
- How do we hear things?
- How do we smell things?
- How do we taste things?

These similarities in approach are intended to foster investigative thought patterns, the idea being that once children have learned about one or two senses, they can begin to make similar enquiries about the others. It also simplifies planning for teachers, as these five points can be summarised in the unit overview.

We decided on some key facts around which to build the content. These were the things that we wanted children to know by the end of the unit:

- Humans have five senses.

- Humans can feel things by touching them.
- Humans can see things using their eyes.
- Humans can hear things using their ears.
- Humans can taste things using their mouths and tongues.
- Humans can smell things using their noses.
- Some people are not able to use all of the five senses, for example people who are blind cannot see.
- The parts of our bodies that we use to sense things send messages to our brain.
- Some animals have 'super senses', for example night-time (nocturnal) creatures can see in the dark.
- Some animals have senses which they use more than other senses, for example bats use their hearing to 'see' in the dark.

Each key fact also has the potential to act as starting point for further exploration and learning, or as a reminder about extra information. For example, fact four could be a starting point for children to find out about different sounds that we can hear; fact nine could remind them to name particular animals that have super senses, perhaps even adding which particular super sense they possess.

As you can see from the list of key facts, we also decided to begin to make links to animals, because of the grouping in the National Curriculum, but also as a way to transition into a follow-up unit about animals. While deciding on these key facts it became apparent that there would be the need to talk about people who may not be able to use particular senses – building in such content at an early age is so important if we want children to celebrate the differences in the people around them. It was also important considering that any Year 1 cohort might contain children with such

KEY VOCAB FOR THIS UNIT

We chose to define some important words, focusing carefully on simple, child-friendly definitions which teachers would unpack and explain, display centrally, and then refer to throughout the unit:

- **Sense** – a way of experiencing things in the world around us
- **Nocturnal** – active at night
- **Texture** – how something feels
- **Sound** – something you can hear
 - **Flavour** – how something tastes
- **Danger** – something that could hurt you
- **Enjoyment** – when something makes you happy
- **Vision** – the ability to see

disabilities who would need to experience themselves being reflected in the content.

So, although adding a unit into Year 1 science might sound like a workload no-no, it didn't add in any extra content, but rather just scaffolded it in a different way, allowing for a more seamless transition between Key Stages. After the initial planning stage, this actually made things work more smoothly – never a bad thing in the life of a busy primary school teacher! **TP**

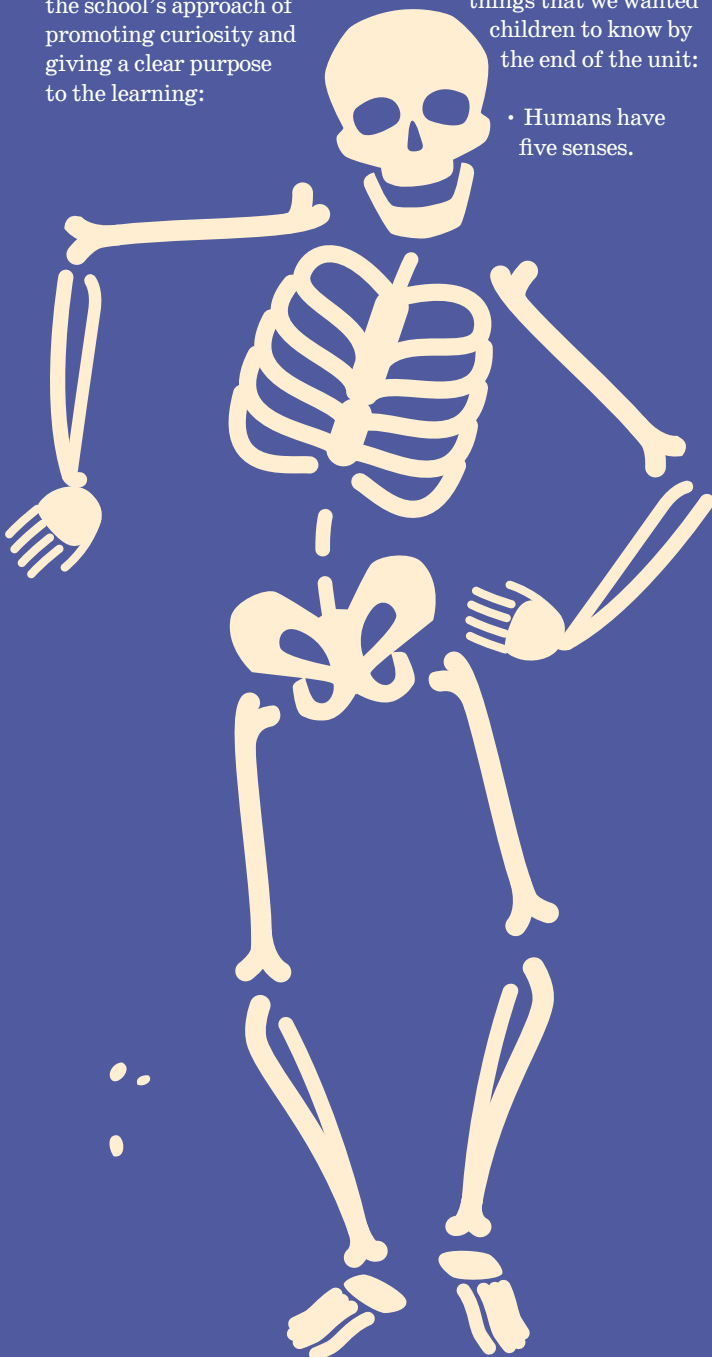


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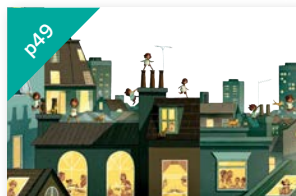
INSIDE THIS SECTION



Explore endless impossibilities and get pupils into the scribbling spirit with these ideas for running a creative writing club...



Perfectly punctuating dialogue can trip up even experienced editors – but this quick guide should help pupils get it right...



Share in a story of hope and explore how change can often introduce something truly special, with *The Comet*...



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→→→ RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

DIRECT SPEECH RESOURCES

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Meet the AUTHOR

The stories we tell – about ourselves and others – inform how we move through the world, says Yoto Carnegie winner **Katya Balen**

When I set about writing stories, I often find myself using a lot of sensory imagery. I'm not sure that this is always (or ever!) a conscious choice, but I have experience in working with children who don't always communicate through a visual or verbal medium, so perhaps that's why.

Writing for diverse readers

I didn't set out to write characters who are neurodivergent, but I've always been keen to explore personalities that aren't perhaps your *typical* child, and I'm keen to make sure my books appeal to a variety of different readers. I'm fascinated by the idea that there are people living lives that we know nothing about – everyone's having their own experience, and you just don't know what goes on in people's homes. Telling stories is definitely part of that; they can of course give us comfort if we're going through a tough time, but we also use narrative to understand our own lives, and the world around us. Humans are obsessed with stories – they give us a sense of place, and can help us to understand our own identity

Making meaning

My background is in social care, and I found this focus on stories was particularly true when working with autistic pupils who didn't use very much spoken language. They would



often utilise single echolalia (repeating chunks of phrases) from a story they'd read or heard. Often this was triggered by anxiety, and related to their environment. So, for example, I knew one child was hungry because he was repeating parts of a story where a boy goes home for his delicious tea. Memorised narrative gave the child the vocabulary that they otherwise wouldn't have had access to – it was a meaning-making strategy in a way. It's amazing to see young people access these stories on so many different levels.

All children – whether neurodivergent or not – have to deal with an emotional load that they perhaps aren't quite sure how to navigate. We've all seen a child apparently throw a tantrum over something we consider small, and often it's just that they're not sure how to work with their emotions. Again, stories can help with that. In my book, *October, October*, the eponymous protagonist is thrust into a new environment without her consent – she has to move from her beloved countryside to the city because of her dad's new job. This, of course, is a bit of an emotional upset for October, but she's able to develop some resilience by finding her wildness within – essentially, by telling herself a story about who she

“If you can read and understand someone else's story, then that can give you the key to understanding them as a person”

is, and how she exists in the world.

Of course, narratives also help to connect us to other people. Sometimes understanding others' views can be intimidating, but often children are better at this kind of empathy than adults. Young readers have responded well to my exploration of points of view, and multi-sensory descriptions. Because that's how they experience the world – with wonder and curiosity – they often come at things with a more open mind than adults. Essentially, if you can read and understand someone else's story, then that can give you the key to understanding them as a person, even if they're completely different from you. Again, this can be a really powerful relativity tool for children who perhaps have autism, or other communication differences – to give them a chance to process information about their peers in their own time and

slot them into a structured narrative arc. Stories are all around us, too; they don't have to be contained only in books, but in TV, films, video games - all sorts of places. Giving children the space to explore those stories and extrapolate from them is so powerful, and it does change lives.

Building resilience

I guess the key takeaway from *October, October*, for me, is that life isn't perfect, and we can't expect it to be. There is always going to be some form of conflict – just like in a good fictional story. As humans, we regularly face things we need to overcome, whether big or small, and I think that's why we can rely so much on narrative. Stories help us make sense of the chaos of life, and they can be a safe place for us to explore different situations without them having an impact on the rest of our world – it's often called 'safe resilience'. Some pupils, of course, will come into contact with risky and undesirable situations, and therefore develop very real reactions to them, but for those that are lucky enough to avoid such circumstances, stories can play a powerful role in emotional development.

And it's not just children. As adults we can learn a lot from the stories we tell ourselves about who we are, and those we tell about our friends, family, colleagues – even our class. It's an interesting concept to keep in mind: for example, what story might we have told ourselves about a child with behaviour problems? Is there a narrative we're taking part in subconsciously? It's fascinating, really. This is why books are a great starting point to help your pupils talk about their feelings, or understand treating others with empathy and kindness – for some reason, when we read or hear something in story format, we can put ourselves in the place of the characters, walk in their shoes, and, hopefully, come out the other side with experiences that positively influence our lives. Reading really is magical. **TP**



Katya Balen lives in South London with her partner and her two dogs, Raffi and Mouse. She's the author of The Space We're In and October, October which won the 2022 Yoto Carnegie Medal and Shadows' Choice Award. Her third book, The Light in Everything, (£12.99 HB, Bloomsbury) was published earlier this year.

Illustrations © Angela Harding



How to run a creative writing club

Would you rather fly, or be invisible? Explore endless impossibilities and get pupils into the scribbling spirit with these ideas for your own group

MEL TAYLOR-BESSENT

If you could wish for one thing, knowing that it would definitely come true, what would it be? A million pounds? To fly? To talk to animals? To live in a tree house? To travel the world at the click of a finger? I've asked this question hundreds of times to thousands of pupils, and their answers are always imaginative, normally well thought-out, and quite often, impossible.

I then follow it up with the question, "What if you could experience that thing right here, right now?" Cue eyes widening, ears pricking and backs straightening. "All you need is... a pencil."

Before becoming an author, I ran creative writing clubs in 30 schools a week for almost a decade. I hired over 100 tutors, won some awards, teamed up with publishers to arrange author events, and even had requests from teachers in Europe, Dubai and Australia asking to launch a club in

their schools. There were long waiting lists in almost every setting, and teachers, parents and librarians would ask on a weekly basis, "How have you turned that reluctant reader/writer into someone that actually wants to do more writing after school?"

The secret?

First and foremost, I planned workshops that were FUN. I knew if I enjoyed running them, pupils would enjoy taking part. I was just another writer in the room who talked about the books I was reading, collaborated on ideas, and asked for feedback on stories in the same way they asked me. I wasn't a published author at this point – just someone that loved to invent characters and write about

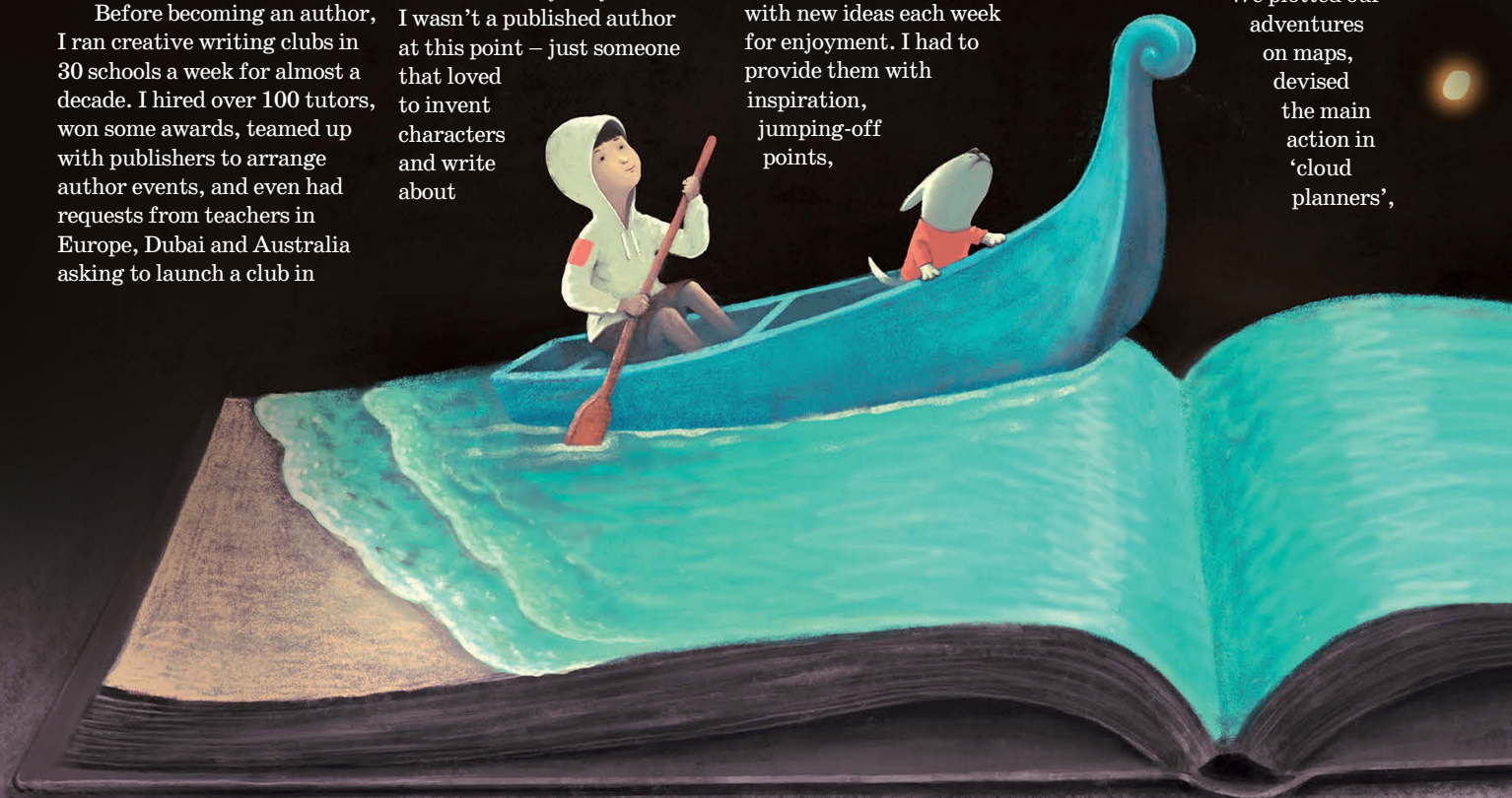
fantastical, magical worlds. I wrote alongside the pupils, making mistakes, scribbling over anything I didn't like, and asking for help whenever I got stuck. Everyone knew this was just 'rough' work. There was no pressure. No marking. No tests. And we didn't have to share our ideas if we didn't want to. I genuinely looked forward to every single workshop I ran, and I know the students felt the same when they came racing into the classroom and didn't want to leave at the end (yes, even the ones who 'hated' writing to begin with!).

Of course, I couldn't rely on pupils simply coming up with new ideas each week for enjoyment. I had to provide them with inspiration, jumping-off points,

and exciting writing hooks, too. For this, I turned to the experts – children's authors. I chose five 'Authors of the Term' that I knew would enthuse and inspire the students, and designed workshops around their books. This was always a fun part of the process – I looked for books that had wide appeal, simple concepts, and an excitable element that made my inner child say 'oooh!'.

Here are a few examples . . .

I used Abi Elphinstone's *Rumblestar* to write fast-paced adventure stories. We plotted our adventures on maps, devised the main action in 'cloud planners',



“I wrote alongside the pupils, making mistakes, and asking for help whenever I got stuck”

and focused on exciting ‘world-crossing moments’ to start our stories. At Halloween, I chose books like Guy Bass’ *Stitch Head* and Joseph Coelho’s *Zombierella*, and ended each workshop with a spooky storytelling session where we turned off the lights, closed the blinds, and sat on the floor as if we were gathered around a campfire!

The most successful workshops were the simplest. I used L.D. Lapinski’s *Strangeworlds* series and copied what happened to the protagonist when she jumped inside a suitcase and travelled to another world. Pupils planned their new setting, focused on the five senses, and described the first thing they noticed when they arrived. Their stories were thrilling, fast-paced, hugely descriptive, and completely individual, because they had the freedom to take their ideas in any direction they chose.

I normally scheduled two sessions around each book – the first session involved planning and starting stories (or poems / diary entries / letters, etc), and the second

session involved extending, improving, or continuing them. I also added one ‘paint a picture’ session (using images for inspiration) and ‘free writing’ at the end of each term to give pupils a chance to finish their favourite piece of work.

Remember, if you want to boost writing for pleasure, pupils should know that they can write about anything. Nothing is off limits. Nothing is impossible. Nothing is ‘wrong’. And if you’re not sure how to start your first session, why not ask your pupils that if there was one thing they could wish for, knowing that it would definitely come true... what would it be? **TP**



Mel Taylor-Bessent is the author of *The Christmas Carrolls* and the

director of the award-winning educational website, *Authorfy*.



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5 GAMES TO BOOST WRITING FOR PLEASURE

1 DISTRACTION!

Beware: pupils love this game so much, they might ask to play it every week! The idea is simple. Children write for 10 minutes, in silence, and if they speak / laugh / stop writing for an extended period of time, they get a ‘strike’. If a table gets three strikes, they risk not being allowed to read their work out. The twist? It’s your job to distract them! Shake tables and shout ‘EARTHQUAAAAAKE!’, steal their pens, use rulers as drumsticks, play songs they’ll want to sing along to, bust out the YMCA and get caught by a bemused headteacher. Between the giggling and dancing in their seats, pupils will write so much in these 10 minutes, and it’s a great way to get them writing without overthinking.

2 WHERE AM I?

Give students a setting (e.g. a library / the moon / horse stables / a rocket ship) and challenge them to describe it without saying where it is. They should focus on the five senses. They must give at least three clues before the class can guess where it is, and the person who guesses correctly gets the next go. The winner is the person who gets the most correct answers or the person that comes up with your favourite description.

3 FIVE-MINUTE CHALLENGE

Tell pupils that most adults can write two lines in one minute, and then challenge them to write 10 lines in five! Give constant time reminders, walk around the room shouting out ideas or words of encouragement, and watch their competitiveness soar. This is a great game to play if, like me, you spend most of the lesson talking about books and story ideas, and realise there’s not much writing time left!

4 ONE-WORD GAME

This game is a great way to warm up imaginations at the start of a workshop. Ask pupils to stand behind their chairs and give them an opening line such as, ‘I was walking through the haunted castle when . . .’. Walk (actually, it’s more of a run) around the room, pointing at each pupil in turn, and asking them to add one word to the story. It must make sense and they have three seconds to answer. If they can’t think of a word, if it doesn’t make sense, or if they take too long, they are out and must sit down. The winner is the last person standing. Note: when they get really good, try introducing a one-second hesitation rule – it’s hilarious!

5 WHAT’S YOUR PROBLEM?

Remind students that every story needs a problem to make it exciting. Then ask them to stand behind their chairs and each give one problem like, ‘aliens invaded Earth’ or ‘I broke a fingernail’. Problems can be big or small, but they must give an answer in three seconds, and they can’t repeat anything that’s already been said. The winner is the last person standing.



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“Have you used speech marks?”

Perfectly punctuating dialogue is something that can trip up even experienced editors – but this quick guide should help pupils get it right, says **Sue Drury**

Carefully crafted dialogue can make a big contribution to a piece of writing, especially a creative narrative. Indeed, the requirement in KS2 English is that it is used to convey character and advance the action. However, the impact can be diminished, or even lost altogether, if the writer is unable to punctuate it properly – so here are eight tips to help your pupils get full marks when composing speech.

1. Speechbubbles

This may seem obvious but it is important to make sure pupils are clear about what their characters are saying. It might help to do a little roleplaying here. Find a short piece of dialogue from a book and act out the conversation using only the words shown in direct speech. You could then repeat it with each character saying the reporting clause (the bit that isn't spoken) as well, just to show how silly it sounds.

2. Single or double

Once pupils can effortlessly distinguish dialogue from reporting clauses, they need to demarcate it using inverted commas. It might be worth discussing single inverted commas, as many books use these instead of doubles. Generally, it boils down to 'house style', but it's worth making sure that your school has a particular policy (doubles can reduce confusion with other punctuation such as apostrophes).

3. Capital letters

Essentially, whenever you open up inverted commas, the first word that follows needs to be capitalised. (The only real exception is outlined in tip six below.) This is true whether the reporting clause comes at the beginning or end of the sentence. For example, the following sentence is correct: *“Put it there,” said Ash.* So is this one: *Ash said, “Put it there.”* Note that the full stop goes inside the inverted commas when the speech follows the reporting

clause. Also remember that a capital is still required to start each sentence if there is more than one in any passage of uninterrupted speech. For example: *Nisha said, “That is your pen. This one is mine.”*

4. End marks

This could cause a little confusion, so it is important to emphasise this point: when the dialogue requires a question mark or exclamation mark, it needs to be inserted *before* the closing inverted commas, even if the reporting clause comes at the end. For example, *“What are you doing?” Mum demanded.* *“Run away!” cried the knight.*

5. Splitting speech

Placing the reporting clause in the middle of a section of speech can be really effective and, by and large, all the punctuation rules above will apply. For example: *“That is so kind of you,” said Shay. “I had always wanted one of those.”* However, when the reporting clause interrupts a sentence, a capital is not needed when the inverted commas are re-opened. For example: *“If you drop your ice cream,” warned Dad, “you won’t get another.”*



Sue Drury is literacy lead at Plazoom, the expert literacy resources

website. Find more advice at plazoom.com/blog

4 SPEECH PUNCTUATION RESOURCES



bit.ly/PlazoomDS1

Grammar Burst – five lessons on punctuating direct speech



bit.ly/PlazoomDS2

Speech Marks KS2 – classroom display pack with interactive posters



bit.ly/PlazoomDS3

Real Grammar – teaching sequence on the reporting clause



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Years
1-6

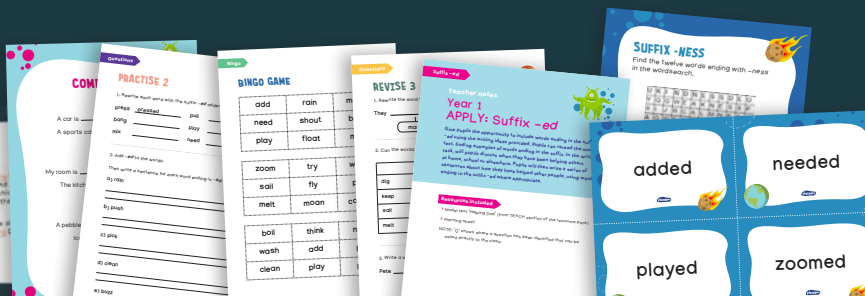
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The Comet

Change can be difficult, but something special happens when we remember we're all here on Earth together. Share in a story of hope with this beautiful picturebook...

SCOTT EVANS

This is my home, where the trees tower tall and I can count a hundred stars. We even saw a comet once!

The Comet, written and illustrated by Joe Todd-Stanton, is a beautiful, magical and heartfelt picturebook that's based on the creator's own experiences, and touches on the memories of moving house, what makes a 'home', and finding it in new surroundings. The perfect text to share with children (especially when encountering new experiences) across Key Stage 1 and

Key Stage 2, it delicately explores the impact of important moments and how they can affect pupils' sense of belonging and provide wonderful adventures.

In the story, we see the main character, a young girl called Nyla, leaving her home in the countryside behind to start life again in the city, because her dad needs to find a new job. But when they arrive and start to settle in, there are a lot of unforeseen changes to their lives that they have to negotiate, and all Nyla can

do is think about everything that she misses from before.

One night outside her window, however, she spots a comet soaring in the skies that glows and grows, which transports her up and away from the city streets. As her dad starts to share in the magic of the meteorite, they soon realise that this could be the thing that not only brings them back together but also makes them finally feel at home. Let's join them as they show us that no matter where you go, home is always where your heart is...



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EASYgraph pencil are available for left and
right handers and can be purchased in a
classpack from all good school suppliers.

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National Handwriting Association 
Promoting good practice



Available for left
and right handers.



**STABILO EASYoriginal pen classpack and
STABILO EASYgraph pencil classpack**

*In UK user trials 95% of teachers approved the use of EASYgraph pencils and EASYoriginal pens in their schools.



Activities

'This is not my home. All I see are grey towers and I can only count seven stars.'

Sharing the story

Talking about this text together will provide the perfect platform for meaningful conversations with the children in your class about the changes they experience in their lives. There is so much to think and talk about in *The Comet*, with more to be seen and found with each reading, because not only does it discuss the practicalities of moving house, it also explores the emotions involved. But first of all, share the story by reading it aloud right through without pausing for discussion or analysis, to provide an uninterrupted, shared experience.

A home away from home

Following on from reading, revisit particular pages. Start off by sharing the spreads at the beginning of the book which compare and contrast Nyla's experiences between countryside and city living in her old and new houses. Discuss how she feels about moving to the city. How is this shown not only through the text but also by the illustrations? Explain that moving house can be quite a difficult process for children and adults alike as they adjust. Ask the children to consider what it would be like for them if they were moving home to a place that they didn't know. Be mindful of any for whom this might be the case. For those that haven't moved house, ask children to draw on their own experiences of other changes, such as starting at new schools or clubs, or moving classrooms from one year to the next. How did they feel? In pairs, develop this activity with one



child taking on the role of Nyla and the other taking on the role of an interviewer. Hotseat the character of Nyla to find out how she felt at particular points during the book, as well as explaining her thoughts and emotions. Once complete, swap the roles over.

Freeze frames

Can children describe what happens when people move house? (For example, they pack up their things in boxes and suitcases to transport them – as seen in the book when Nyla hides behind her dad's legs; load things on vans; lock up the old house and drive away; arrive at their new house, unlock the door; carry in all their things and unpack them at the other end; perhaps decorate the new house to make it feel more homely; and explore the area.) Freeze-frame children acting out these processes and then 'unfreeze' at particular points to describe the feelings people might have as they do different things. Establish that moving house can produce a wide range



of emotions and even though some changes can seem scary to start with, that our friends, families and teachers are here to help us.

Like father, like daughter

Point out places where Nyla and her dad are physically close, such as in the polaroid picture in the endpapers at the beginning of the book. Highlight how when they move house this changes because there are physical barriers like the laptop and desk between them; he no longer sits on the floor beside her and his face and body disappear out of the frame. Explain that Joe Todd-Stanton has carefully and consciously created these to show Nyla and her dad growing further apart, and how he loses himself within his work because he is so caught up in the move that he temporarily forgets Nyla and her feelings until he sees the comet too, and remembers what they used to share and how much Nyla needs him. Can children use pictures alone to show themselves and a loved one doing something they enjoy together?

Take it further →→→

What can you see from your window?

The first time that Nyla sees a comet, her view is full of trees, rolling hills, and the sea – with the sky full of stars. When she moves to the city and she sees a comet again, this time her view is tall grey towers, rooftops, and houses bordering her home. Everyone has a different view from their window, with interesting things to see – like gardens, parks,

neighbours' houses or perhaps even a beach. What can children see from their different windows at home and in school? Sketch out either what these windows look out onto. You can find a free printable template for this activity on the Flying Eye Books website (tinyurl.com/tp-WindowView).

A window on the world

Further the 'What can you see from your window?' activity by reading *Window* by

Jeannie Baker, which begins by showing a woman standing at the window, holding a baby. The view outside changes with every turn of the page – a lush green countryside full of plants and animals gradually disappears to be replaced by houses, roads and supermarkets. Finally, the last pages show the grown-up baby holding his newborn child as he looks through a different window at a pristine piece of countryside set aside for a new housing estate, bringing the story



New job, new house

Nyla has moved to the city because of her dad's new job. Have any children ever had to move house because members of their families have new jobs? Ask children to write or draw why they think that someone might move house. How many reasons can they think of? Are they aware that some people across the world are forced to flee their homes in order to leave a challenging or difficult situation? Do any of them use the term refugee? Record their range of reasons which could include: the need for more space; upgrade or downgrade; new job, relationship or change of scenery and lifestyle; move closer to family; move closer to a school that they want their children to go to (called the catchment area); and leaving their home and/or country in order to escape war, persecution or natural disaster. Can they categorise these reasons for moving house into positive, neutral or negative, and explain why they've organised them that way?

A warm welcome

We also see Nyla starting a new school where she experiences some feelings of isolation, and describes it as being 'full of wild animals'. As a class, talk about what you could do to be a compassionate classmate to Nyla in her position. List a range of positive actions using sentence stems such as 'In this class, we...'. In small groups, make posters of ways in which pupils would welcome someone new to your school. Display them on your classroom door or around the school in prominent places to show empathy towards visitors.

Community comes together

The final spread of the story gives readers an insight into how Nyla and her dad's relationships with their new neighbours have developed. This is particularly powerful because it invites us to physically turn the book around in a portrait orientation and literally read these pages from a different perspective.



Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *Window* by Jeannie Baker
- ❖ *My New Home* by Marta Altés
- ❖ *Maybe the Moon* by Frances Ives
- ❖ *Home* by Carson Ellis
- ❖ *Coming to England: An Inspiring True Story Celebrating the Windrush Generation* by Baroness Floella Benjamin and Diane Ewen

Ask the children to consider what a community is and relate this to the book. Talk about communities that the children may belong to, such as: their family; their group of friends; a class in their school; a club inside or outside of school; a place of worship like a church, mosque, temple or synagogue; or their street, and so on. Discuss togetherness and what it feels like to be part of a community. After discussion, children could create their own community maps by drawing a diagram with themselves at the centre and lines leading off to showing all of the different communities they belong to. As a class, you could create a collaborative community map for Nyla and her dad in their new home. **TP**



Scott Evans is a primary school teacher, reading for pleasure adviser and children's books consultant. He is also the author of the upcoming title 100 Ideas for Primary

Teachers: Reading for Pleasure, published by Bloomsbury in 2023.

@MrEPrimary

back to the beginning. Use software such as Google Maps and Google Street View to observe the historical land use around your school and see how it has been developed over time as a result of urbanisation, population growth, and the need for new housing.

Shooting stars

Discuss with children how comets have always amazed people because of their unpredictability and their beauty, and that they have been seen as both signs of evil and as beautiful, harmless objects. Explain that a

comet is made up of dust and ice, and it orbits (or travels around) the Sun. Highlight that there are billions of comets in the solar system, but most never pass close to Earth, and that the best-known comet is called Halley's Comet which can be seen from Earth about every seventy-six years. Show photographs of meteor showers and talk about how they are caused when Earth moves through the debris left behind by comets. Within the book, Nyla showcases her creativity through her wonderful stories, love for the natural world, and imaginative interactions with the comet all over her walls.

Using a range of art materials such as black paper and bright chalk pastels, children could create a picture of a meteor shower in Nyla's style. Encourage them to think about how they could use techniques such as colour mixing, layering, blending and smudging. To extend, encourage pupils to get outdoors with their families to see spectacular night sky displays. You can send home the dates of activity peaks for all the major meteor showers visible in the UK, such as the Perseids during August. Find a calendar from the Royal Observatory at tinyurl.com/tp-MeteorDates

Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration into your classroom

1



Cadbury World

With over 30 years' experience and more than 2,000 school groups attending each year, Cadbury World offers unique educational experiences that provide a fascinating insight into the nation's favourite chocolate brand. With an assortment of interactive chocolatey zones

to explore and a variety of informative curriculum-linked talks and workshops, including a brand-new creative language workshop for KS2 pupils, Cadbury World is the perfect day out for school groups. Visits are currently available from £9.20 per pupil for school groups. For more information and to book your trip, please visit tinyurl.com/tp-Cadbury



3

Book-based learning

Used by over 40,000 teachers, the Literary Curriculum from Literacy Tree is a comprehensive and cohesive award-winning, book-based approach to primary English. Written by teachers for teachers and using expertly chosen, high-quality texts, children are immersed in fictional worlds to heighten engagement and provide meaningful contexts for writing. School members have access to over 300 book-based resources for writing, reading comprehension and spelling, as well as resources for catch-up and home-learning. Learn more at literarycurriculum.co.uk

4



Kick Start grants

It may not get going until 10-19 March 2023, but it's time to get excited and start planning for British Science Week! It's a 10-day celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) run by the British Science Association (BSA), a charity whose work includes encouraging and supporting STEM education for all children. Every school should have the chance to plan fantastic, engaging events for their pupils, which is why the BSA provides Kick Start grants to those in challenging circumstances to fund their STEM activities during British Science Week. Eligible schools can apply for grants ranging from £150 to £700 to make their Week go with a bang, and show pupils that science is for absolutely everyone! Find all the information you need at tinyurl.com/tp-KickStart

2

Silent Night CHRISTMAS CHALLENGE



with SAT-7

Gemma Hunt
TV presenter &
children's author

Silent Night

Children's TV presenter Gemma Hunt is challenging schools to make some noise with SAT-7's Silent Night Christmas Challenge! The Christian media network is producing a special international recording of the well-known carol, Silent Night, inviting schools to film their own version.

Children can learn about four countries in the Middle East and North Africa – Iran, Egypt, Algeria and Türkiye – as they sing, write poetry and discover more about the worldwide Christian faith. The top three most creative school videos will also get a FREE online visit from Gemma to their school assembly or class! Order your free resources at tinyurl.com/tp-SilentNight

5



Create writing experts with STABILO

STABILO specialises in ergonomic shaped pens and pencils which are specifically designed for left and right handers. Learning to write is an important skill to master and with the EASY Start range of handwriting pens and pencils this can be made EASY. Within the range you'll find something suitable for all school ages and abilities. Also, the EASYgraph and the EASYoriginal are not only loved by kids but they are also approved by UK teachers. stabilo.com/uk

A novel approach

Combine twisting tongues and paperback publishing to produce an exciting writing project that allows pupils to make their very own book

DAVID HORNER AND MIKE JACKSON

Have you ever tried to get your class excited about a writing exercise, only for them to pipe up with “But what’s the point?”. We’ve all been there, and it can be incredibly frustrating when you don’t have an answer lined up.

Well, with this project, the outcome is both evident and impressive! As part of a workshop, we decided to show children the amazing process of publishing, while adding in some humour, and – of course – essential literacy skills...

We visited Helen and her Y6 class for a morning, and explained to the children that we would do some writing that would lead to the publication of their very own paperback book. We would act as their agents, editors and publisher; they would have full control over all other aspects of the process.

We settled on tongue twisters as our subject, and began by inviting children to try out some old favourites. After much twisting of tongues and accompanying laughter, we showed the children probably the best-known English example: the one featuring Peter Piper:

*Peter Piper picked a peck
of pickled pepper.
A peck of pickled peppers
Peter Piper picked.
If Peter Piper picked a
peck of pickled peppers,
Where’s the peck of
pickled peppers Peter
Piper picked?*

We challenged the class to compose 26 brand-new twisters, each following the pattern of that original but finding their own vocabulary.

Helen organised the class into pairs or threes, and each group was given two letters of the alphabet to work on, ensuring no

group got two of the trickier letters. Armed with dictionaries, the children got to work, and by brektime had produced some impressively inventive twisters. Here’s an example, cleverly coping with one particularly difficult letter:

*Xavier Xmas x-rayed an
extra-terrestrial xylophone.
An extra-terrestrial xylophone
Xavier Xmas x-rayed.
If Xavier Xmas x-rayed an
extra-terrestrial xylophone,
Where’s the extra-terrestrial
xylophone Xavier Xmas x-rayed?*

Although writing was the focus of the project, there were clear opportunities throughout for lots of worthwhile speaking and listening, too. The pupils engaged in planning their tongue-twisters, and shared drafts in small groups. Next, the groups came together to swap ideas and ask for opinions, and, finally, children read aloud their contributions and again asked for feedback. As the children worked, they giggled a lot, but the seriousness and concentration they brought to the task was impressive throughout. The talk was easily focused, because, in National Curriculum terms,

pupils were ‘discussing writing similar to that which they [were] planning to write’. There was also a clear need for writers to read the original text very carefully, which was built into their discussion and planning for their own verses. This focus was nicely balanced by the eager and sustained use of dictionaries and the need for creativity in their word-hunting, showing their ‘enjoyment and understanding of language, especially vocab’.

Throughout, the process was always collaborative; writers understood they were working towards a shared, larger whole, and to tight deadlines, with a clear need for some ‘speedy writing’! Once drafts were complete, all the children had to do some editing, and lots of proofreading.

After brektime, we explained that once we were gone, they, the writers, would be in charge. All 26 twisters must be typed up and emailed to us by the end of the week. For the book, they must write a blurb and an introduction, and choose a title. We explained how easy and low-cost it is to self-publish; the only cost came with the ordering of actual copies and so they must settle on a price per copy and crucially decide how many they would like to order (sneaking in a bit of economics!). The children listened with real attention to all this and asked a good number of questions after, showing a remarkably mature commitment to the task.

Helen reported that the children very much liked the novel approach to writing. They enjoyed their shared creativity and loved being entrepreneurs, relishing the involvement and control they had over the tasks, the decision-making, and the purpose. For that short time, they had turned their classroom into a genuine publishing house and experienced purposeful writing for a real-world outcome – we won’t soon forget the looks on their faces when they saw their books for the first time. **TP**



David Horner was a writer-in-schools for over twenty years.

davidhorner.com



Mike Jackson is a former primary school headteacher.

[@mj51day](https://twitter.com/mj51day)

Book CLUB



We review five new titles that your class will love

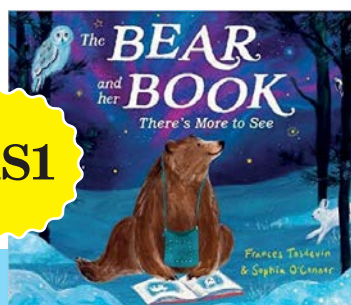


A Family Christmas

***by Alana Washington, ill.
Emily Nash***

(£7.99, UCLAN Publishing)

This sweet rhyming story celebrates all that is best about Christmas gatherings with family, from delicious cooked dinners to the traditional afternoon walk, and – of course – spending invaluable time together. With short phrases and large text on each page, this is one your KS1 pupils can follow along with. The big, bright illustrations encourage children to see themselves in the story through diverse representation, and for those who haven't quite gotten to grips with reading yet, provide a wealth of detail on what's going on. A deceptively simple tale, this book is perfect for sharing at a festive storytime, or for starting conversations about different kinds of families, reminding us all of the pure joy our loved ones bring. Merry Christmas!



The Bear and Her Book

***by Frances Tosdevin, ill.
Sophia O'Connor***

(£7.99, UCLAN Publishing)

*"I'm a curious bear who must explore.
The world is big and there's
more to see,
And I'll find this bear who is not
like me."*
This wonderfully wintery tale takes us on a journey from a cosy bookshop to the icebergs of the Arctic, to meet the fellow bear that our protagonist has found in her *Book of Being Wise*. Along her way, Bear helps out a whale with a blocked spout, a moose worried about his antlers, and a muskox with a 'hurty' hoof, all thanks to her trusty tome. Exploring the power of kindness, and how meeting those that aren't like us can open up our worlds, this lovely picturebook also has a brilliantly meta message... that books are powerful, and perfect to share!



The Very Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra

by Tim Lihoreau & Phillip Noyce,
(£20 HB, DK)

Are you endlessly impressed with the ways in which books are evolving to meet the needs of today's children? Well, look no further, we think we've found your new favourite. Enter DK's impressive hardback, in partnership with Classic FM, which explores many of the instruments commonly found in an orchestra, and – wait for it – actually plays music when you touch the pages. Covering everything from the flute and the piano to the oboe and timpani, this book will introduce pupils of all ages to classical music. Boasting clips from 10 famous compositions – including Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* – this really is a joy to behold, and the perfect title to use as an opener to music lessons. Extra points for spotting Ernie the Earworm in the pages...

→→→RECOMMENDED

RESOURCES



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

Meet the author

ALANA WASHINGTON ON THE MAGICAL NATURE OF CHRISTMAS, AND FAMILY TRADITIONS



What's your favourite thing about Christmas?

If I had to pick just one thing, I'd say it's that magic

feeling you get at Christmastime. But I love all of it! The build-up, old traditions mixing with new ones, and having time with the extended family. I'm from a big Irish brood, and we always host Christmas at my house. I teach art, too, so getting to do lots of crafts at Christmas is great, and I have so many happy memories of the season from my childhood.

Why did you want to write about this celebration?

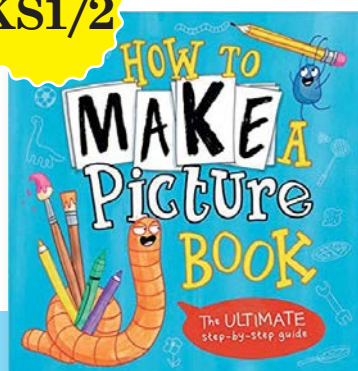
I've always wanted to write a Christmas book. One of our newer traditions at home is to have a big box of Christmas books that we share with our girls every year. It includes stories from when they were younger, and I was delighted this year to be able to add my own title to the box! I also wanted to write a story that children could see themselves in – I grew up with a single mum, and that wasn't always visible in the stories I read. You'll notice *The Family Christmas* doesn't include any character names, so hopefully kids can see their families in the pages.

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

It's a great opener for KS1 discussions around different kinds of families, and how they celebrate – you could use it in PSHE or RE for that. Emily Nash's beautiful big illustration of food is also an interesting conversation starter – what are pupils' families' special meals? You can also link it to geography, and learn about celebrations around the world, or in literacy, to model the retelling of an event from the beginning of the day to the end. You could also use the front cover as a template for Christmas cards, and children can draw in their own families.

A Family Christmas by Alana Washington, illustrated by Emily Nash (£7.99, UCLAN Publishing) is out now.

KS1/2



How to Make a Picture Book

By Elys Dolan

(£12.99 HB, Walker Books)

We've all experienced the particular joy that comes with cracking the spine of a brand-new picturebook, but have you ever considered making your own? Join Bert the worm as he takes you through the ultimate step-by-step guide to including all the essential elements of this beloved genre. Take an adventure through character, setting, story and more, to discover what it really takes to create an engaging book. As well as large and colourful illustrations throughout, this title also includes a number of activity ideas in each section, to help pupils create their very own story with pictures. An excellent exploration into the nature of narrative, as well as a useful manual for a class project, this book is sure to inspire you to turn your class into a room full of authors!

KS2



Snow White and Other Grimm's Fairy Tales

ill. Mina Lima

(£6.99, Farshore)

Mirror, mirror on the wall... is this the most beautiful book of all? Quite possibly. This stunning hardback presents Grimm's classic Fairy Tales like you've never seen them before, enclosed within intricate pages sporting pop-ups, fold-outs, metallic flourishes and more. Each of the 20 tales includes the Grimms' original text, along with sumptuous illustrations that somehow both provide a respectful nod to classic, whimsical images of old, and enough colour and movement that modern children will be hooked from the first glance. Explore the origin stories of characters your children might already be familiar with, including Snow White, Cinderella, and Hansel and Gretel, though beware some gore and peril.



Sue says...

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



Q I'd like to set up a lunchtime 'book group' for our keen KS2 readers – do you have any tips to make it a success?

HM, literacy lead

A First, well done for planning such a positive initiative! There are a few things to consider when setting up your group so it's a huge success and promotes reading for pleasure in your school. Decide whether you will read a book together or if pupils will share book recommendations. If reading the same book, it is important that you have enough copies for everyone. Your local library may be able to help you with this if funds are limited at school. If you're inviting recommendations, think about the structure so everyone has a chance to suggest a book.

• Think about who will be invited to join.

Have an open invitation for all. This might mean that you have a waiting list, that the group changes each half term or there will be more than one group running. This can have a positive impact on reading for pleasure as all readers get to hear about books that their peers are reading, helping to generate a reading 'buzz' in school.

• Choose books that you share carefully.

Expose the group to a wide range of authors and books they may not choose for themselves. Find out which titles they enjoy and bring suggestions that have a similar setting, characters or theme.

• Train older pupils to run reading groups.

Support pupils to run their own reading groups with younger children. They can recommend books they loved to read when in younger year groups.

• Don't forget poetry and non-fiction

There is a wealth of fabulous non-fiction books to explore and choosing from these may encourage more reluctant readers to join. Poems are often overlooked by children; perhaps you could hold a poetry slam, with pupils bringing their favourite poems to the group to perform.

• Most importantly, share what you are reading!

Bring along your own favourite book choices. These don't always have to be children's books; it is important that pupils see adults reading for enjoyment, too!

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

Literacy, but make it festive

Despite what some parents think – presumably based on memories of their own years at primary school, well before the introduction of today's National Curriculum – every teacher knows that the idea of some kind of 'winding down' in the classroom as Christmas approaches is pure fantasy; those targets aren't going to meet themselves!

At the same time, though, there's no need for anyone to be a Scrooge about it, of course. Yule-themed lessons and activities are just as suitable for curriculum coverage as any others, and no research has yet suggested that tinsel and fir trees have any detrimental effect on pupil progress. This delightful writing resource pack for KS1 is filled with magical fun; while offering the chance to teach or revisit grammar objectives including noun phrases, conjunctions and more.

FREE RESOURCE

Download it at
bit.ly/PlazoomSparkles



Did you know...?

- Santa Claus originally wore green, purple or blue, rather than red (but that has nothing to do with a certain fizzy drinks company!)
- Alabama was the first US state to recognise Christmas as a holiday, in 1836.
- Christmas crackers were invented by a man called Tom Smith, who was inspired by French 'bon-bons' – almonds wrapped in pretty paper.

3 more ideas for Christmas resources

1 Developing Inference with Pictures - KS1 Reading Activity
bit.ly/PlazoomXmas1

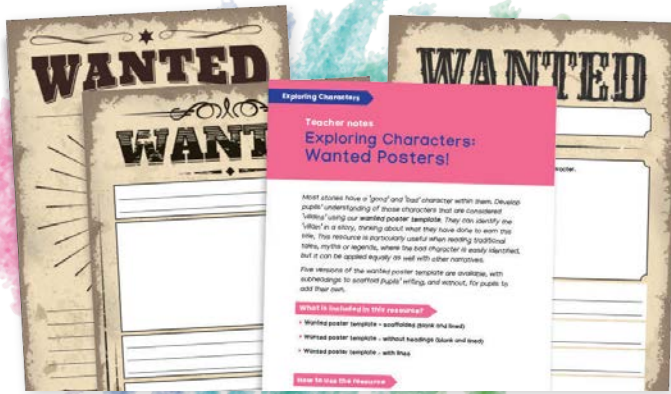


2 Twas the Night Before Christmas – LKS2 Festive Writing Resources Pack
bit.ly/PlazoomXmas2



3 A Christmas Carol – UKS2 Festive Writing Resources Pack
Bit.ly/PlazoomXmas3





Print your own...

...Character study 'Wanted' posters! Develop deeper understanding of characters by getting pupils to complete these templates, adding details of their deeds. Full teaching notes are included – follow the link below to download and print your pack, for FREE.

Find them at bit.ly/PlazoomWanted

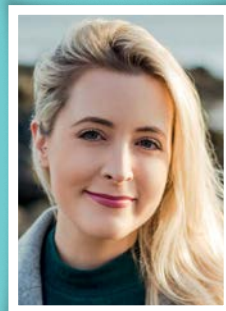
Take a word journey



In Year 3 and Year 4, pupils should be taught to use the first two or three letters of a word to check its spelling in a dictionary; and by the end of Year 6, they should be able to use dictionaries independently to check the spelling and meaning of any word; use the first three or four letters of a word to check spelling, meaning or both of these in a dictionary; and also, to use a thesaurus.

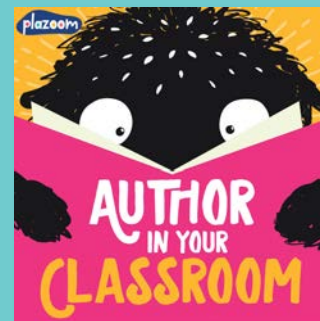
At Plazoom, you'll find a collection of beautiful KS2 worksheets, specially designed to help children build and practise these skills – and have a brilliant adventure with language as they do so! Download them all at bit.ly/PlazoomDT

Make sure pupils can correctly and confidently write all the common exception words and statutory spelling words from Year 1 to Year 6 with the bright worksheets and handy dictation sentences packs you can find at bit.ly/PlazoomGB



Catherine Doyle lives in the West of Ireland.

She holds a BA in Psychology and an MA in Publishing.



The Miracle on Ebenezer Street, by Catherine Doyle, is a brilliant reimagining of Dickens' festive classic, A Christmas Carol, set in the modern world. Share her episode of the Author in Your Classroom podcast with pupils, in which she discusses what it means to reinvent such a well-known tale, as well as how she uses magic realism in her writing – and then use the accompanying teaching resources to inspire children to write their own, brand-new Christmas story, using a familiar narrative as a starting point.

Listen to this episode and download your free teaching resources at bit.ly/PlazoomClassic

Hack your class!



Carpet spots

Children fussing or chatting during group work can be frustrating, so have a seating plan for the carpet, as well as tables. Pupils can then get quickly to their spaces if time together is needed.



Salt dough

Get prepped for seasonal activities by teaching your class how to make their own salt dough for ornaments. This works brilliantly in EYFS/KS1 as part of continuous provision.



Label your own books!

Got lots of your own books in your class? Create a sticker for them! Mine had 'Mrs Drury recommends this book' on the cover, so borrowers knew to return them to me.

CPD & research SPECIAL

INSIDE THIS SECTION



'Having an impact' might seem like a nebulous concept, but by following these five steps, you can really make a difference...



When it comes to behaviour management, the odd INSET workshop just won't cut it. Here's what to do instead...



Funnies, feelies, and rivers: how two award-winning teachers successfully encouraged their pupils to take an interest in books...



Don't miss our music special,
on sale 6th January

Can you teach creativity?

It's one of the 21st century's most touted 'soft skills', and a key driver in schools. But can you actually impart originality and imagination on children?

**PEDRO DE BRUYCKERE,
CASPER HULSHOF & LIESE MISSINNE**

Test yourself. Take a pen and something to write on. Choose one of the following objects:

- a paperclip
- a piece of paper
- a chair

Now try to think of as many possible ways to use the object as you can.

This is known as the 'alternative uses' task or test. It was originally devised by Guilford in 1967 for the purpose of assessing people's creativity. The test became more widely known after it was used by Sir Ken Robinson in his popular TED talk, *Do schools kill creativity?*

Perhaps your paper was not big enough to note down all your ideas. If so, great! You might be a creative genius in the making... but maybe not. The test measures the quantity of your ideas but not their quality. So don't give up the day job just yet. One thing, however, is certain, because research has proved it: intelligence and creativity are not the same thing (Sawyer, 2011).

It does indeed seem at first glance as though this test measures creativity as an easily transferable, general skill. However, David Didau and Nick Rose argue that all attempts to measure creativity suffer from the same lack of validity and reliability.

So, let's ask another question. Of the following two options, who do you think

will come up with the most (qualitatively) creative solutions for fixing a leaking sink?

A a musician

B a plumber

The answer seems obvious: the plumber. But who would be most creative when it comes to writing a song? Probably the musician. Just because the plumber is creative at finding solutions for leaking sinks, this does not mean that they are automatically creative in other fields. Creativity takes many different forms in many different domains, and experience and expertise in a domain can always strengthen a person's creative abilities.

In other words, creativity is not a general, overarching skill. In fact, creativity is not really a skill at all but is more a human quality or 'trait', which cannot be learned to any significant degree, in contrast to the more influenceable 'states', which are personality characteristics that remain relatively stable over time. But although creativity is very difficult to learn, it doesn't mean what a person already possesses cannot be stimulated by organising the best possible environment.



Smith and Firth (2018) have offered the following definition of creativity: 'The ability to create something, ideally something that is useful or entertaining in some way. Typically, this is going to involve a rearrangement of existing parts or concepts (words, musical notes, mathematical notation, etc.) rather than making something completely new and unrecognizable.' In other words, creativity is about making new and useable combinations of existing information.

Viewed in this way, we can't consider creativity in isolation from domain-specific knowledge and skills. We have already

has confirmed that we become more creative as we get older. This is only logical, since by then we have acquired much more domain-specific knowledge, which is what you need to be qualitatively creative. Does this mean that basic knowledge is less important and that we no longer need it? Far from it! This is a major misconception: we still need schools to teach this crucial domain knowledge to our children and young people. It is the first important step on the way to improving their creativity in the long run.

In summary (and based on a broad vision of creativity): without knowledge there can be no creativity (probably).

Children must feel confident to experiment and think 'out of the box' without the possibility of being criticised or laughed at by their teachers and classmates. They must have the courage to take risks, make mistakes and be themselves. One way to do this is to ensure that creative tasks are not marked with points or grades. Stress to 'perform' can limit a creative spirit.

As a teacher, also ensure that pupils are not harshly criticised or ridiculed by their classmates. They must be free to exchange ideas, however seemingly bizarre, without fear. Establish an atmosphere in which out-of-the-box thinking is valued and appreciated.

With this in mind, allow your pupils sufficient play breaks, quiet moments, chat time, etc. It is an illusion to think that children and young people can concentrate non-stop throughout a 50-minute lesson.

4. Encourage daydreaming or mind-wandering. During periods of away time, encourage pupils to clear their heads and let their minds wander. This kind of random and fragmentary thinking stimulates creativity.

5. Encourage sufficient sleep. This is not always easy with children and young people but it is a crucial factor. After your REM sleep (the dream phase), you reach a kind of hyper-associative state in which your thoughts are given free rein, some of which resurface in your waking hours. Like daydreaming, night-time dreaming is also good for your creativity (Smith & Firth, 2018).

6. Develop routines and habits. Developing an automatic approach to certain tasks (like your morning routine or cooking a meal that you have made a hundred times before) means that you no longer have to think about them consciously, so you once again free up capacity in your brain for the kind of thinking that can lead to creativity (De Bruyckere, 2018). **TP**

3. Invest in 'away time'.

Our minds need a certain amount of away time; time when we do not need to

concentrate or be attentive.

Make sure that your pupils have sufficient time to be 'unaware' or 'absent'. This kind of 'time-out' is not only useful for allowing our brains to relax, for processing emotions and for putting things in perspective but also helps to bring our creative inspiration to the surface.

Creative ideas often emerge when you least expect it: under the shower, during a walk, tidying up your room, just doing nothing... Free time is not wasted time.

Six ways to stimulate creativity

1. Encourage pupils to make connections between different domains of knowledge.

For example, when teaching about the planets (science), let your children also calculate the distance and size of them (maths). Or combine maths with the concept of a timeline in history.

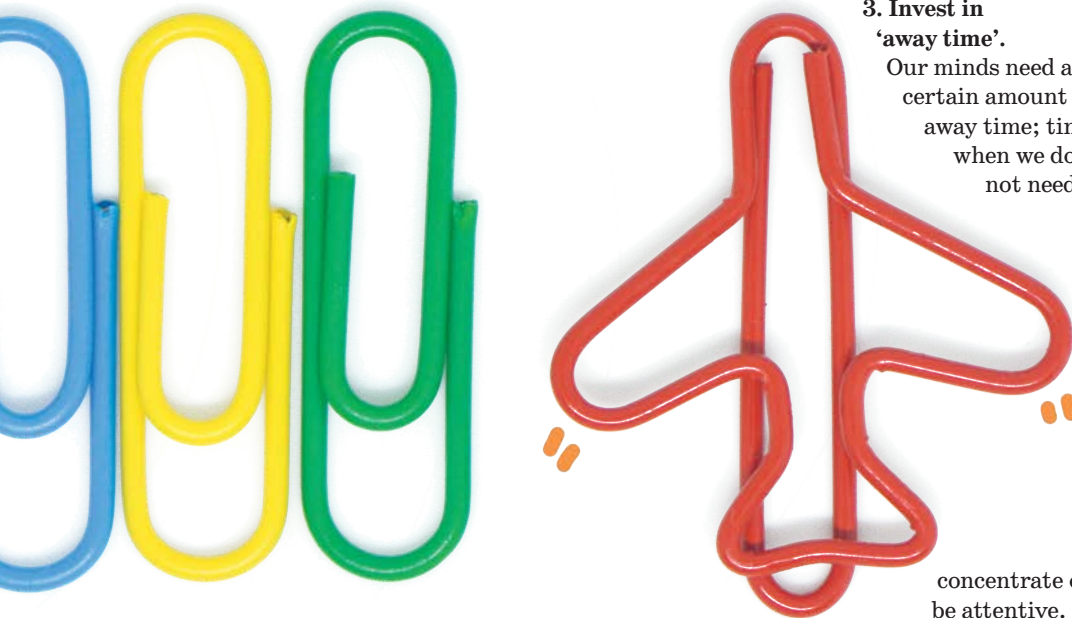
2. Create a psychologically safe learning climate.

seen this with the musician: great at writing songs, sometimes rubbish at fixing sinks. Education plays a huge and important role in developing the necessary knowledge and skills that allow creativity to express itself.

Can we learn and grow creativity?

Short answer: no, but we can stimulate it and bring it to the surface by creating the right conditions.

Long answer: the good news is that most research



The Psychology of Great Teaching, by De Bruyckere, Hulshof & Missinne is out now (£22.99, Sage)

A framework FOR CHANGE

‘Having an impact’ might seem like a nebulous concept, says **Nick Hart**, but by following these five steps, you can really make a difference to your pupils

In our schools, we should not be putting children first.

Wait, bear with me.

It might be hard to agree with this because it’s considered such a noble sentiment to say that children come first. But the sentiment is misunderstood. If we were to actually follow this mandate, there could be no end to the demands placed on us, all in the name of what is best for the children. We should keep in mind that, ultimately, we’re aiming to make a difference to pupils’ lives. And that doesn’t just mean academically, but socially, emotionally, behaviourally and more. If we’re going to achieve these outcomes, though, it will be because we have a team of motivated, happy staff, unburdened by excessive workload and free to develop their practice in an environment characterised by psychological safety and trust, by clarity of purpose and collective efficacy. Our colleagues come first so that they can do brilliant work with children.

Cause and effect

Schools are complex. Each day there are innumerable interactions between colleagues and children; a tangle of multiple causes and effects, each influencing the others. It is this complexity that makes teaching and school improvement at once both exciting and

frustrating. We have to understand that every action will advantage some staff and children, while disadvantaging others. Our best-laid plans will never lead to blanket improvement – our classes and our schools sometimes lean into our improvement efforts and at other times evade them. Sometimes we make things better and sometimes we inadvertently make them worse.

Now, depending on your mindset, you might find this reassuring. It might satisfy the niggles that makes you wonder why your carefully thought-out plans didn’t

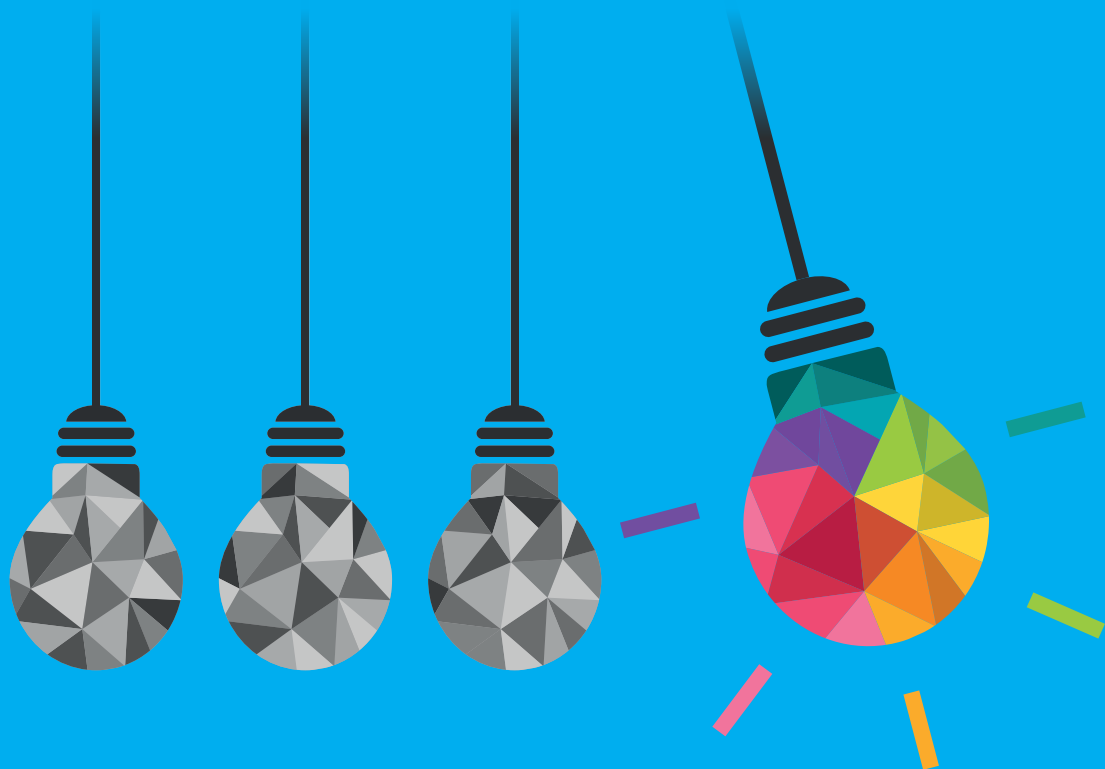
work out as expected. Or you might find it stressful, especially when it becomes clear that we have far less control than we might like to believe. To make a difference we have to appreciate complexity, and this requires us to pay attention differently.

The five-part framework for making a difference in schools is a way of doing just that.

Five-part framework

We undoubtedly have grand aims for children to flourish in different ways in their time with us, but we don’t necessarily have direct influence on how they respond to our efforts as leaders. It is the teachers and TAs working with children in classrooms that have a greater degree of influence

“To make a difference, we have to appreciate complexity, and pay attention differently”



on the development of the children in their care. So, to make a difference to children's outcomes we must seek to influence these direct connects – we'll call them 'impact domains'. The first domain is **climate**. This refers to how it feels for colleagues to work in our schools; their lived experience. It includes the extent to which staff feel psychologically safe, the trust they have in their colleagues, the autonomy they have over their working practices, how successful they feel in their job, and more. The second domain is **systems and processes**. Leaders create systems for all aspects of school life including the curriculum, behaviour, safeguarding, how teachers plan lessons, and CPD, etc. The third domain is **colleagues' behaviours**. What adults do every day in terms of how they manage behaviour, how they explain concepts or how they engage with CPD is what makes a difference to children's learning. The fourth domain is **colleagues' knowledge**. What our colleagues know about teaching and behaviour, as well as the informal knowledge of the children that they teach and the fellow staff they work with, shapes their actions. The fifth and final domain is **outcomes for children**. These outcomes include the academic and the pastoral.

So, how does this help? Well, if we are tasked with improving something at school, for example phonics attainment in Year 1, the framework can help us to understand the problem more fully and fight the urge to claim a single cause for the poor attainment. We can consider:

- **The phonics climate**
How do colleagues feel about teaching phonics? Do they

have enough autonomy over their practice? Do they feel successful in teaching phonics? Do they understand the reasons why we chose the approach that we have?

- **The phonics systems**
When is phonics timetabled? How do teachers plan? Is the sequence of learning optimal? How do children behave in phonics lessons? How do we approach phonics CPD?

- **Individual behaviours**
How do teachers model and explain decoding and reading fluency? How do they check that children have understood new sounds? How do they correct errors in decoding?

- **What colleagues know**
How is their knowledge of the alphabetic code? What do they know about phonics pedagogy? What do they know of each child in their class, including the sounds they do and don't know, and their proficiency in segmenting and blending?

- **The outcomes**
Which sounds do children know and not know? What patterns are there in the cohort's segmenting, blending and reading fluency? To what extent do they feel successful and enjoy phonics lessons?

Digging deeper into these impact domains can help us to get a more accurate and rounded picture of the problem, so that we can take the most appropriate, coordinated action. Of course, this doesn't just work for leaders – if you're a classroom

HOW TO USE THE FRAMEWORK



Check assumptions

A very common trap for leaders to fall into when monitoring or quality assuring, is to use too small a range of activities to understand the reality of school life. We might make assumptions after a couple of lesson observations or flicking through some children's books. If, however, we take the time to gather information from a range of sources, we're more likely to end up with reliable information upon which we can make more valid inferences.



A well-rounded plan

Each impact domain influences the others in ways that we might predict, and in some ways that are unforeseeable. But by addressing each domain, we are more likely to develop a joined-up approach to dealing with problems. Outcomes at scale won't happen unless we have systems, so an implementation plan must include the design of school-wide structures. These can't be established without changes to individuals' behaviour, so an implementation plan must also include what we want colleagues to do differently, and how we'll support them to do so. Similarly, said behaviour can't improve without staff knowing more first, so your plan should, in the first instance, consider what colleagues need to know and how you'll build that knowledge.

teacher, you can use the framework to evaluate your pedagogy or individual class. This might include a combination of building subject knowledge (e.g. of the phonetic code and how the chosen programme

works), or refining practice in modelling and checking understanding. It might include reviewing the teaching sequence of sounds or tightening up routines in phonics lessons. Or it might be seeking ways to increase autonomy in the classroom.

The framework helps us to deliberately and systematically build our knowledge of the reality of school life. Considering a problem from multiple angles in this way makes it more likely that we select solutions that will make a difference. **TP**



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‘Didn’t they TRAIN YOU?’

When it comes to behaviour management, the odd INSET workshop just won’t cut it, says **Sam Strickland**. Here’s what to do instead...

The who, what, where, when and why of training teachers is often a topic of staffroom conversation. It comes up at the start of each academic year as schools inevitably commence afresh with an INSET day. The National Professional Qualifications (NPQs) have, rightly, recognised the need to offer a behaviour pathway for colleagues who are seriously considering (or are already performing) a pastoral role within a school. However, there is still a lot more that can be done. Behaviour training can frequently be treated as a bolt-on, assumed or even forgotten. When the training does occur, it can be stale, too theoretical and once delivered, assume that staff know what they are doing without further input.

What’s the issue?

All too often teacher professional development has focused on the end product, as opposed to the foundations and bedrocks that allow teachers to do their jobs. Training has focused predominantly on pedagogy, activities, and attempting to measure progress. But these are all false proxies for learning. In more recent times, training has often honed in too rigidly to a select lens of research. I applaud the system-wide shift to consider curriculum, the quality of education and

expert subject knowledge, but I do think that there is a health warning to be had here. There has to be a timely reminder that we are working with people. To err is human.

Another key challenge is *when* teachers should receive explicit behaviour training. Often, approaches are assumed: ‘Teachers can handle it,’ or ‘Children will behave if told “you need to behave!”’. But is this really the case? For many professionals, their most notable behaviour training session was a one-hour workshop as a trainee teacher, focusing on the use of their voice, keeping their palms down to pacify a situation, and raising an eyebrow in displeasure. This, on top of the fact that many teachers cite pupil behaviour and discipline as one of the main demotivating factors that they experience at work (as per the DfE’s ‘Pupil behaviour in schools in England’ report), and that there has been insufficient training put in place to manage it, compounds the issue.

A dangerous red herring, which has been pushed on numerous historic NPQs, is that good planning will lead to good behaviour. It might in some cases, but it won’t in all. If the social norm in a school or a classroom is to misbehave, then even the most meticulously planned lesson will fall apart.

So, what can be done?

The role of leaders

Leaders should serve as the vanguards of their staffing body. They are integral and critical to shaping their staff’s professional worth, expertise and development. The crucial role that leaders play will set the tone, tenor, rhythm and heartbeat of the school. Whatever leaders prioritise becomes **THE** priority. If SLT neglects to train staff in behaviour – and to come back to it time and again – then it won’t be at the top of the list for anyone.

“All too often teacher development has focused on the end product, as opposed to the foundations and bedrocks”



What does research tell us?

Expert teachers can help children learn up to four times faster, and ultimately, nothing can substitute for that. But teacher development is hard and takes time. The Sutton Trust reinforces this view, citing the paramount importance of expertise, which includes subject knowledge as well as human and social capital.

But there needs to be a focus on the mechanism as well as knowledge. Namely, quality-first teaching: what goes on in the classroom, which is where the magic ultimately happens. There is also a need to make these approaches a habitual norm for the teacher so that they themselves do not suffer from cognitive overload. With any training it is important to consider the starting

point of any given colleague, to carefully consider their needs and the context within which they are operating.

Solutions and remedies

As a profession, we need to be honest that there is no secret silver bullet when it comes to behaviour. But what we can do – and I strongly believe that senior leaders have a professional and moral duty to provide this – is to support staff with timely, consistent and regular behaviour training. This needs to be more than a one-hour workshop in September. It is worth considering:

Staff briefings/meetings

What do these actually look like? Could they be converted into mini, regular training sessions for staff to focus on key elements of behavioural training and support?

Subject teams

How much time is given to year group teams or subject teams, to consider carefully crafted approaches to teaching and learning that will promote and inspire children to learn and to behave?

Inset days

While we need to avoid the one-off workshop approach, I would urge colleagues to have some element of behaviour / culture training built into INSET days, for example.

Working with colleagues

We don't want to compare ourselves to our fellow colleagues. However, watching other professionals (provided there is an explicitly clear focus) can actually help us to develop and to consider ideas.

Targeted coaching

Some staff need, want and welcome having a professional and supportive coach who will assist them to consider their own classroom delivery. Ask around your school to see to whom this might apply.

Assemblies and other public opportunities

As much as assemblies are about conveying messages to the children, they are also an opportunity to remind and retrain staff. Every single time you have a public forum is an opportunity to focus on what your culture is all about.

Pathway models of training

What support is in place for ECTs, those aspiring to be middle or senior leaders, more experienced teachers, etc.? The needs of your staff may vary and you need to consider bespoke approaches to support each and every one of them.

Further reading

If you're interested in reading more about the research behind effective behaviour management, the following are worth consulting:

- The EEF research-informed behaviour interventions ([tinyurl.com/tp-RIB](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-RIB))
- Creating a culture: How school leaders can optimise

BEFORE PLANNING TRAINING, ASK YOURSELF:


- Is teaching technically difficult, or technically quite simple (but tiring)?
- Do you value long periods of training or does teaching require a more limited intellectual ability?
- Does good teaching come over time, with continuous incremental improvements, or is it something that through hard work and determination can be mastered quite quickly?
- Should you allow teachers to use sound professional judgement that is informed by evidence and experience, or is it better to drive staff with hard performance targets?
- Does good teaching come from a collective approach or is it purely down to working as an island?
- Is in-depth subject knowledge key, or should teachers be trained in an array of pedagogical approaches that help facilitate learning?

behaviour ([tinyurl.com/tp-Culture](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-Culture))

- Tom Sherrington's blog on Everyday Routines ([tinyurl.com/tp-Routines](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-Routines))
- HMCI commentary: managing behaviour research ([tinyurl.com/tp-Commentary](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-Commentary))
- Behaviour Hubs Portal ([tinyurl.com/tp-BehaviourHubs](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-BehaviourHubs)) **TP**



Sam Strickland is a principal at an all-through school in Northampton.

 @Strickomaster

Read the room

Funnies, feelies, and rivers: how two award-winning teachers successfully encouraged their pupils to take an interest in books

PROF TERESA CREMIN

What do you know about your current class as readers?

Do you know more about their decoding and comprehension skills than their attitudes, preferences, and taste in books? Does this lead to imbalanced provision, with reading instruction pushing reading for pleasure to the side-lines?

We cannot and should not measure children's pleasure in reading. But we can and must develop our knowledge of their identities as readers, their diverse personal interests, reading networks (or lack of them) and home practices. Research reveals that knowledge of individual readers positively impacts on teachers' classroom practices, builds reader-to-reader connections between adults and children, and helps nurture a love of reading.

Can you list the reading behaviours, attitudes, and networks of the less engaged readers in your KS1/2 class? Do you have enough strategies and research-informed approaches to find out more? Let's explore some examples from the winners of the annual Farshore Reading for Pleasure Teacher Awards in association with the UKLA and the Open University. The winning teachers got to know their young readers, honoured their interests and enhanced their engagement.

Research via surveys

Georgie Lax from Starcross in Devon, winner of the

Experienced Teacher Award 2021, wanted to find out about her Year 1 children's reading interests. Through using surveys, observations and discussions, she developed a book corner that better reflected the children's reading preferences. Reflecting on the children's favourite books, Georgie found she could categorise most of these into 'The Funnies', which were books that provided light relief, laughter and escapism from the unpredictable and often unsettling world of Covid, and 'The Feelies': books which could support children's wellbeing, allowing them to connect and empathise with one another during that time. In particular, Georgie felt the latter often 'gave children a voice even when they didn't have the words themselves'.

This investigation into the children's favourites not only nudged Georgie to read more herself, and to buy new funnies and feelies, but also led to spontaneous book discussions. The pupils realised their teacher had read these books too, and was open to chatting about them. The initial survey further revealed that being comfortable when reading mattered to most of the class. So, Georgie began to give them more opportunities to relax and read in their own preferred ways: some took their shoes off, others sat on blankets,

mats or under tables, some read with friends, others read alone, and Georgie joined in too, occasionally offering hot chocolate and snacks. Gradually the young learners began to develop increased ownership of their reading time and Georgie noted the care and attention they gave to the new 'books in common' and was pleased, much more

frequently than before, to hear children asking, "Can I get a book?" when they had finished their work. She also felt better able to make tailored text recommendations based on children's personal interests. In the spring and



summer terms, Georgie used the survey again, alongside observations to analyse the children's changing attitudes to reading, and noted that some pupils expressed increased confidence and were beginning to view themselves as readers. In responding to individuals' interests and her class's views, Georgie made a difference to their engagement.

Reading Rivers

Amy Greatrex from Wilford in Trent, winner of the Experienced Teacher Award 2022, specifically wanted to enhance her understanding of a group of Reception children who needed support to develop a positive view of reading. Amy used a number of strategies to develop a richer understanding of the threads connecting the

“Can you list the reading behaviours, attitudes and networks of the less engaged readers in your class?”

focus children's choices. She observed and recorded their selections when they were exploring books, helped the group complete a reading preferences survey, and invited their parents to create a Reading River with them. Reading Rivers are visual collages which have been used in research to track teenagers' reading (Cliff Hodges, 2010) and to help primary pupils reflect on their everyday reading lives (Cremin et al., 2014). Amy developed another version of a Reading River with her own five-year-old. Gradually, they gathered her daughter's favourite texts, chatted about each, and photographed the resultant pile spread

out like a river on the floor. Amy shared this visual with the focus children's parents and encouraged them to do likewise. She emphasised that they should only add texts that their child loved; that all reading counts (noting for instance her daughter's inclusion of Top Trump cards and the Playmobil catalogue); allowed


a long timeframe for completion; and chatted to parents informally about it at pick-up times. After uploading images onto Tapestry, Amy took time with each child to hear more about their choices.


She found that the children were drawn to classic texts, Disney, and superhero


books and magazines, and were particularly keen on preschool and toddler books. Honouring their interest in these texts, Amy altered her read-aloud provision and read from these twice weekly. Additionally, recognising the influence of agency in reading, she offered two choices and invited the children to vote by placing a pebble on their desired book. Book voting triggered considerable talk around preferences and personal interests, and some discreet swapping of pebbles, such as the children's eagerness for their own choices! Introducing two tall boxes for the pebbles to sit in, Amy simultaneously created an aura of excitement and mystery about which book would be read that day. Through finding out about their preferences and explicitly respecting and using these, Amy motivated the children's engagement and supported their emerging sense of themselves as readers. In July, her school held a Reading Rivers Day with staff modelling their own rivers on the playground, and each class creating one. These were photographed for their new teacher to build upon.


Learning more about your readers' likes and dislikes, individually and as a class, and honouring these as Georgie and Amy do, nurtures children's reading rights. Their tastes and preferences will change as they encounter different writers and genres, so regularly updating this knowledge is helpful, enabling you to plan, connect and more effectively support young readers' journeys. **TP**


HOW TO GET TO KNOW YOUR READERS

 **Observing** a few target children is invaluable in capturing a sense of their identities as readers in school. You could watch as they browse and choose texts during reading time, when you read aloud, and when they're chatting informally with their peers.

 **Reading surveys** help you to explore pupils' attitudes, self-confidence and home reading. KS1/2/3 surveys and tools to visualise the results are available at tinyurl.com/tp-ReadingSurveys

 **24-hour reads** are simple collages of books consumed across 24 hours that reveal children's real world reading and interests. Do share your own to help highlight diversity.

 **'Me as a reader' diagrams** can help children reflect on their likes, dislikes and practices, and share them.

 **Reading conferences** enable you to spend some time with individuals – they are most productive if based on surveys, observations, 24-hour reads, or 'me as a reader' diagrams.



Teresa Cremin is a professor of literacy in education at The Open

University and a judge of the annual Farshore Reading for Pleasure Awards, run in partnership with the OU and UKLA. Find out more about the awards and how to enter in 2023, at farshore.co.uk

 farshore.co.uk





WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To decipher a timetable
- To multiply and add times to figure out how long a route will take
- To count money accurately and give change
- To draw out a basic map to scale
- To lead their own learning

Practise time and calculation with transport



Develop maths skills and sneak in some physical activity by turning your classroom into a bus route, says **Blair Minchin**

@Mr_Minchin

If you, like me, grew up living just outside a big town in the 90s, you will likely have many a tale to tell about your local bus stop. Being able to navigate those columns and calculate your journey time was a vital tool to stand any chance of a teen social life. Today though, with everything quickly accessible on our phones and Google Maps, being able to read a bus timetable doesn't appear to be quite as crucial as it once was. However, there is so much maths and discussion around sustainable transport to be had that it makes this lesson truly worthwhile.



START HERE

Create a bus route in your classroom (it only needs five or six stops: the reading corner; the teacher's desk; the window, etc). Present the timetables on the board (you need only have times for each of your stops – e.g. using the time you start the activity as the first entry) and have pupils discuss the key features with a partner – how do the times change, for example? Are the differences between each time the same? If not, why do pupils think this might be? Nominate a bus driver, invite pupils to pick a bus stop and a destination and then walk out the bus route conga-style, with passengers boarding and disembarking at their chosen destinations. A key feature here is to let the children see how the bus returns to its start point, by following the 'flipped' or 'reversed' journey back.



MAIN LESSON

1 | STOP THE BUS!

The class are going to work in small groups to create a mini tabletop bus route and drive a small bus. It's playful, purposeful and doesn't require too much setup, especially if you have whiteboard tables. If not, two sheets of blank A3 stuck together works fine. For the bus I'd use a tens cube and for the passengers, individual ones/units. (If you have cuisenaire rods, these work well too.)

Gather the class on the carpet after their opening conga bus journeys, and invite them to discuss how the timetable and

journey, drawing the route and timetable on the board, and thinking about how many seconds it might take to walk from one to the next (working out the length of each journey from stop to stop in cm works well too).

Using the model on the board, you can then ask the class to head to their tables in small groups to create their very own bus route. This could be based on landmarks in your local area, a fictional place from their favourite story, or even a completely new made-up place. My top tips for success criteria would be to limit the number of stops to five or six, and to ensure that you have a scale for journey time (for example: 5cm = 1 minute).



“Plenty of maths skills and discussion about sustainable travel makes this lesson worthwhile”

2 | PAY UP

Once the bus route is complete, have the pupils measure the distance between each stop, and use the scale you provided to write out the timetable. Groups can carousel around to check one another's work. Then, gather the pupils back on the carpet to model the next part of the activity which involves collecting bus fares. The children can discuss how much a bus journey costs and you might want to have two differing fares (for a child and an adult potentially). By pushing the bus round and picking up passengers, the children need to calculate how

much money the bus is generating.

Pupils can then decide where the passengers disembark and can really immerse themselves in the small world they have created. When I carried out this lesson with my Primary 6 (Year 5) class, I noted some fantastic conversations and imaginative dialogue taking place. “Oh, thanks so much driver. I thought I’d miss my dentist appointment!”; “I’ve only got 50p, has anyone in the queue got an extra 25p I can borrow?”; “What time do you call this?! It’s now quarter past 11 and the bus was meant

to be here at 11:07. That’s eight minutes late!”

3 | TALK IT OUT

To round the lesson off, I asked pupils to estimate how much money a bus can make in a day, using their own roleplay experience to garner an estimate. It was a great mathematical discussion that saw pupils combining their knowledge of time, money, multiplication and their own experiences (“Well if it’s a Saturday, the bus would make more money because everyone is going into town.”).

Activities like this offer a great deal of choice for pupils, presenting them with the opportunity to lead their learning. It can give the lesson real relevance, engages and motivates the children, and provides adequate differentiation. Successful facilitation of this session will require you to actively listen to the pupils and to be mobile and move between groups at a decent pace. With pupil-led activities I always get a buzz from working together with the children, whether to further challenge their learning with deeper/more complex questions or to pause and simply re-consolidate the core knowledge they need for the activity.

Blair Minchin is a teacher in Scotland, championing pupil voice and all things play.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Give the class straws and paper to make their own bus stops, get the plastic money box out and let them play at buses. Have each group of pupils sit at another group’s table and generate word problems using the bus timetable the other groups have created. For example, ‘If the bus leaves the first stop at 10am, and spends two minutes at each stop, what time will it finish the route?’. Add roadworks or a breakdown to each group (I had these made on cards and just placed them on the tables as the activity progressed). Pupils will have to recalculate their journey times and can discuss how these incidents impact commuters and bus companies, too.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What mental strategies can we use to calculate the journey times?
- What roles can we assign to each person at your table?
- Why do you think bus fares are charged in multiples of 5s and 10s?
- How many maths areas are we touching upon in this activity?
- Where do we take the learning now?
- What are your next steps and why do you wish to develop that area?



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Hand-eye coordination
- Balance
- Muscular endurance and identification of key muscles involved in the activity
- Strategic decision making and consideration of how to outwit an opponent

Improve agility with an air hockey rally



Encourage fair play alongside competition with this exciting tournament, says **Ben Holden...**

 @WannaTeachPE

Air hockey may not be the activity that immediately springs to mind when you think about getting kids up and moving. Does it conjure memories of teenage arcades and greasy chips? Well, this version will get hearts pumping and encourage pupils to think about all sorts of important sporting elements, such as timing; fair play and rules; strength and intensity of movement; aim, and much more. Tournaments add a sense of competition, and music to punctuate each section's pace creates an exciting atmosphere. Ready, set, rally!



START HERE

To raise the pulse and get the energy injected into the lesson from the outset, play some music and model different movement methods for children to copy around the hall: jogging, side steps, heel-flicks, high-knees and skips all work. Encourage the development of spatial awareness by challenging pupils to move in and out of the goals without colliding with others or touching the cones. Once the song has finished, take the class through some static or dynamic stretches and begin discussion around the names of the key muscles that will be used in the air hockey tournament extravaganza that is about to take place!



MAIN LESSON

Prior to the pupils arriving in the hall, set up the goals with cones – using four cones per pair of pupils – and space them out in your working area so each pair has two goals. Begin by discussing coordination, perhaps including a definition of the word, and challenge pupils to consider which sporting activities utilise this skill.

1 | RALLY

Begin by getting pupils to work cooperatively to develop a cone slide rally. This is pretty much what the name suggests – children should each take a cone, and use the pushing motion used in air hockey to try and get it

through their partner's goal. The partner needs to try and stop it. Pose challenges such as how many passes pupils can make with the cones back and forth without an error, or within a particular time frame. Begin with each pupil sat behind their goal in a kneeling position or even sitting to simplify if required.

Progress onto one-on-one air hockey matches in kneeling (if they've been sitting) or plank position. This will add an element of strength training to their games. Within each match, remind pupils to keep score and set a time limit for each fixture. In plank position particularly, matches should be no longer than 90 seconds, if not even shorter.

The lesson can run with a pre-populated fixture



“During the lesson, encourage fair play, for example suggesting opponents shake hands after each fixture.”

During the lesson, encourage fair play, for example suggesting opponents shake hands after each fixture. Discuss why this is important, and investigate whether pupils can identify other examples from sport or events where shaking hands is commonly seen. What does it signify?

3| COOL DOWN

As ever, at the conclusion of the lesson, ask pupils to collect the cones and begin a gradual cool-down to bring them back down from their heightened (or even euphoric!) state. Use calming music as a backdrop and take pupils through a range of low-intensity and relaxing movements to even out their breathing and get them ready to go back to other lessons.

To close, as a plenary, discuss with pupils how they found the activity. Ask them questions such as: where was the best place to aim, and why? How did you feel at the end of each match? Was this significantly different whether you won or lost? Why do you think that is? If you want to give the class homework, you could provide a series of exercises for pupils to complete at home to further develop muscular endurance, or simple hand-eye coordination challenges with a ball or even random household objects.

Ben Holden is head of physical education at High Tunstall College of Science, a senior teacher, SLT, and NPQSL. His bestselling book Wanna Teach PE? (£18.99, Scholary) is out now.

list (allowing teachers to differentiate by ability) or can run in a ladder tournament format. Ladder tournaments run by the winning pupil being promoted (move up one court) and the losing pupil being relegated (move down one court). As the lesson progresses, especially with the speed and frequency of fixture, the ladder tournament will begin to naturally differentiate and provide appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils.

2| FEEDBACK

Interject during the lesson with specific feedback or recognition for successful or resilient demonstrations of practice from pupils. These mini conversations will also provide respite

for those hard-working deltoids and triceps! This could encourage pupils to consider other components of fitness that are being used in this activity. Discussion will probably move towards the fatigue being felt in the arms and shoulders. Link this discussion to muscular endurance and once again, challenge pupils to discuss sporting activities that rely upon good levels of muscle strength and longevity.

Next, introduce a doubles competition. This can take the form of two pupils in each (enlarged) goal or by children taking turns as part of a team. This particular tweak can be useful if pupils begin to become tired. In a doubles format, they can support, encourage and coach too.



EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Replace the cones for rolled tennis balls, and investigate how pupils' technique might have to change to account for the shape and weight of a ball (as opposed to a cone).
- Make the goals for higher ability pupils wider or narrower, depending if they're trying to score, or defending.
- Input a handicap scoring system where stronger pupils begin on -1. Discuss the use of the term 'handicap' in a sporting context, and see if pupils can point to another game where it's used often (e.g. golf).



USEFUL QUESTIONS

- How could this activity help in another sport? Has anyone got any examples?
- Which muscles in the body feel tired? Do we know the names of any muscles in our body?
- Could we display sportsmanship after a match? How could we do this? Could pupils shake hands after each match and say, "Well played"? How would that make you feel?



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to appreciate music that is outside of their normal experiences
- How to freely express the way music makes them feel, using their own creativity
- How to experiment with colour and musical patterns
- How to collaboratively compose and perform a new piece of music I patterns

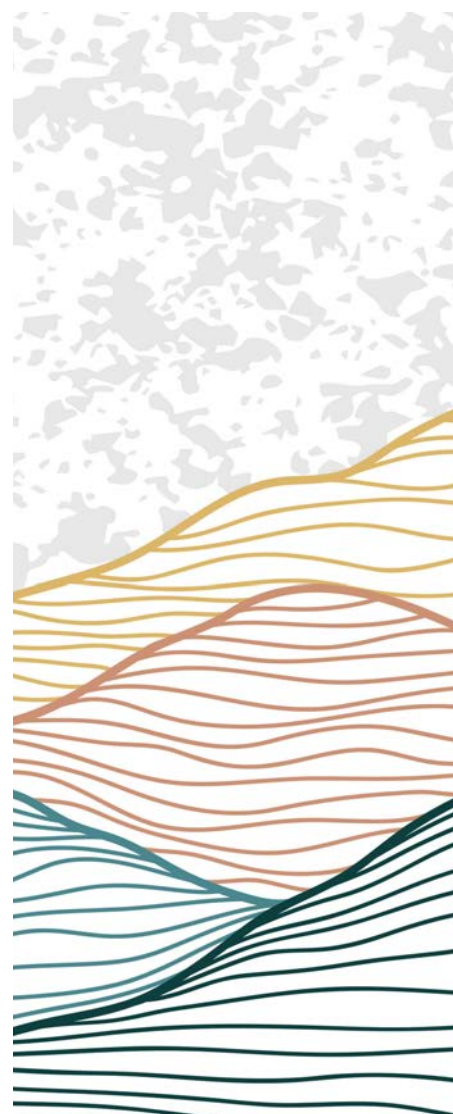
Explore classical music through different media



Use abstract art and animation to immerse children in the work of Modest Mussorgsky, says **Marc Bowen**

@raglanvcprimary

As a primary school teacher with absolutely no personal musical skills or talents, I have always felt like I have been feeling my way through the darkness when it has come to teaching music. However, my recent experimentation with expressive arts immersion days, combining art and music as part of an integrated project, has illuminated the huge possibilities of this approach. Modest Mussorgsky's 'Night on a bare mountain' was the first truly inspirational piece of classical music I explored; however, this approach has also worked with other musical styles and pieces since.



START HERE

As a complete musical novice, my starting point was to make sure I felt secure in what we were going to be exploring as a class. As a supportive tool, the BBC Ten Pieces website (tinyurl.com/tp-TenPieces) is a goldmine. They have selected a variety of noteworthy, relevant pieces of music, as well as providing background information about the composer, piece and suggestions for learning activities. Prior to the session, I also assembled as many different percussion instruments as possible and commandeered a break-out room within the school, as our workspace for the day.



MAIN LESSON


1 | WHO IS MODEST MUSSORGSKY?

To commence the immersion day, first spend some time finding out about the composer, Modest Mussorgsky, using the child-appropriate biography provided by the Ten Pieces website. For us, this raised lots of questions about the work of historic composers, as compared with online musicians and their YouTube channels today. With their interest piqued, next make use of the amazing video created by the BBC (tinyurl.com/tp-BareMountain), which dramatizes the piece of music. By watching the short but exciting video, the children

should hear the focus music for the first time, while also learning about the inspiration for the piece: the mythical witches gathering on St John's Eve where they would dance, cast spells and celebrate with all forms of magical creatures. Understanding the story of the piece will really help pupils to engage with musical appreciation.

2 | PENCIL WALKS + NEW VOCAB

Now distribute sketch books and pencils, introducing the task of 'taking the pencil for a walk'. Get the children to simply listen to the piece a number of times, while allowing the pencil to move in ways stimulated by the music. This is the first, important stage in the artistic element of the day, as it makes clear



“Combining art and music as part of an integrated project has illuminated huge possibilities.”

eventually perform to the rest of the class with peer feedback and appreciation.

3 | MAGICAL MOUNTAIN RANGES

Finally, having covered every inch of floor with DIY plastic sheets, it's time to dive into some abstract art. Provide pupils with A1 pieces of paper, to be shared between two, onto which they could make use of a range of brushes, sponge tools and other materials to paint a response to 'Night on a bare mountain'. It can be fantastic to see children entering into a calm, expressive state where they simply listen to the music and respond with colour, strokes and patterns. For me, this was a stark contrast to the often-frenetic atmosphere of past music lessons where percussion instruments had relentlessly assaulted my ears! To end the wonderfully creative day, ask children to collaborate as a class to create a magical mountain range. They can cut out mountain shapes from their abstract paintings, and combine them to create their vision of what the mountain range would have looked like in Mussorgsky's piece. For us, there was a palpable sense of achievement amongst the class as everyone had experienced success at various points.

Marc Bowen is a deputy head and primary teacher in South Wales. Contact him at marc.bowen@raglan.schoolseduc.org.uk

that they are to be free with their expression and they don't need to worry about whether 'it looks right' – a common barrier for some children. Once completed, there should be time for the pupils to discuss their 'pencil walks' with their peers and draw out their first impressions through whole-class discussion.

Next, move on to the first musical experimentation of the day: learning a series of simple clapping rhythms and how to maintain a steady four-bar beat. This was a brilliant 'leveller' for my class, as no-one (including me) felt intimidated or overwhelmed by the music content of the activity. With the new rhythms still tingling in our palms, we progressed

to using xylophones to explore glissando (a slide between notes), accelerando (speeding up gradually) and 'next door' notes as key techniques for our own compositions. All of these terms (and the confidence to use them!) came from the BBC Ten Pieces teacher support materials (tinyurl.com/tp-TeachingNotes). Having established some basic principles for your own compositions, you can then discuss whether your musical pieces will have a similar story: starting with the witches casting spells, leading to their magical celebrations and then ending with the calming sounds of dawn. Then get the children to work in teams to compose their own pieces, which you can



EXTENDING THE LESSON

• Prior to the immersion day itself, some of the musicians within the class asked if they could bring along their own instruments for the event. This hadn't occurred to me beforehand, but I agreed. Upon reflection, this was one of the most powerful aspects of the day and something I have repeated since. Across the class, children brought in harps, recorders, guitars, penny whistles and even a roll-out keyboard reminiscent of the scene from Tom Hank's *Big*. These children really had a chance to share their talents, leading their groups during the composition phase and providing excellent support to me! This was so successful that we even eventually performed our pieces to a group of assembled parents – I'd highly recommend it.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Are you confident in the musical terms and definitions that are needed? If not, then do your research – it will be worth the effort!
- Are there enough instruments for all the children to have one each, ensuring that everyone is engaged?
- Do you have any musicians in the class who might want to bring along their own instrument?
- Have you prepared a space where the children can freely explore with paint and experiment with music, without disrupting the rest of the school?

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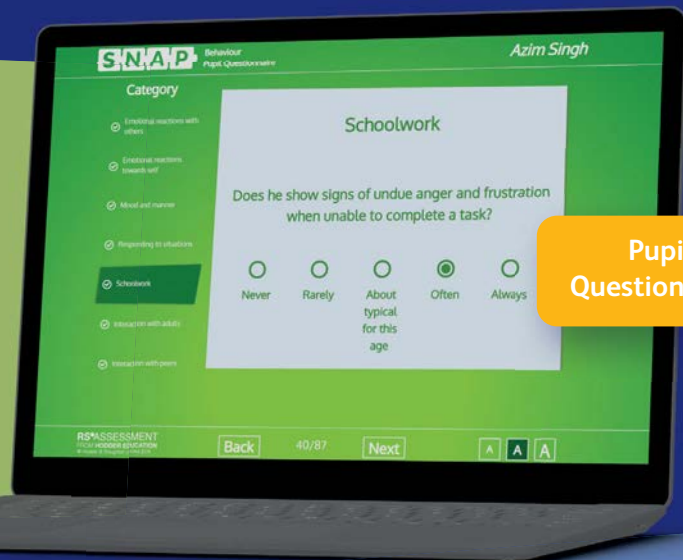
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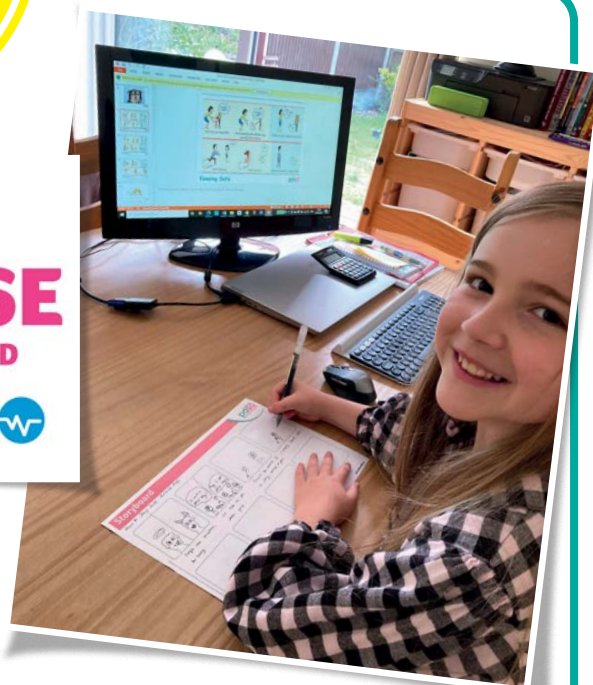
pdsa.org.uk/petwise-award

WINNER

PDSA

PETWISE AWARD

The PetWise Award programme is a fun, free, educational resource package aimed at primary-aged children, although anyone is welcome to take part. It teaches pupils how to ensure their pets are happy and healthy, how to stay safe around dogs, and about careers where they can work with animals. It consists of four easy-to-follow levels, each with its own downloadable curriculum-linked resources, which can be incorporated into everyday lessons. Once the award has been completed, every child is sent a lanyard and pin badge to show the nation that they are 'PetWise', and schools are sent a glass plaque to display. Visit pdsa.org.uk



**Woodland
Academy Trust**
Ignite the spark, reveal the champion

"I've not seen a resource quite like this anywhere else. It gives different options for the children to work through for the award, and all the presentations and lesson plans are ready to use, meaning very little setup. There are also great links to the National Curriculum."

HIGHLY COMMENDED

SL Media

THE LINK MAGAZINE

The Link is the only specialist speech and language magazine written for schools. Posted free of charge, termly, to every UK primary SENCo to share with teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and other school staff, the magazine provides a reliable point of reference that builds on existing knowledge about speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). Visit speechandlanguage.info



"The magazine promotes knowledge and understanding of children with SLCN needs, and includes great ideas for practical help to support them as part of a whole-school approach."

Category finalists

IDLS GROUP

IDL Multiplication Tables Check,
idlsigroup.com

B SQUARED LTD

The SENDcast, thesendcast.com

MR DILLY

Mr Dilly Meets, mrdilly.com

PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S

Puffin Schools Story Makers Show,
puffinschools.co.uk

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

Stay Home Stories, rgs.org

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Young Enterprise

FIVER CHALLENGE

The Fiver challenge aims to enable young people to develop a wide range of skills using real-life contexts.

Pupils are encouraged to use their creativity by developing an idea that helps them to engage with their local communities, and develop new employability and financial skills through a practical learning opportunity. The programme's ready-to-teach resources can be used flexibly across the curriculum, offering educators the ease and confidence to develop enterprising mindsets. Visit fiverchallenge.org.uk



"The Fiver Challenge is well suited for older pupils, and helps develop business skills. The resources include useful tips for parents and community involvement, too."

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the Mohn
Westlake foundation



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

WINNER

Encounter Edu

ENCOUNTER EDU LIVE

Encounter Edu live lessons create ‘wow moments’ in the classroom. Bringing the frontiers of knowledge and a changing planet direct to thousands of children, classes have travelled to farms, brain-scanning laboratories, the coral reef and even the Arctic. Encounter Edu believes that live lessons bring book learning to life and enhance traditional transactional learning. Visit encounteredu.com



“Encounter Edu takes us to places that would be impossible within the classroom, and for many children this may be their only opportunity to experience these environments. I was impressed with the wealth of topics and experts, and the ability to ask live questions is a powerful tool for increasing children’s enjoyment and engagement.”

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Thames & Hudson

HOW LIFE ON EARTH BEGAN

Aimed at readers aged eight and above, this beautiful title draws inspiration from illustrated science books of the 18th century, incorporated with 21st-century information and diagrams. Illustrated in Aina Bestard’s signature style, this book will take readers on a fascinating journey through millions of years of history to discover the ancient story of our planet. The book features interactive layers to turn back the pages of time and sees lost landscapes come to life, filled with strange plants and extinct creatures. Visit thamesandhudson.com



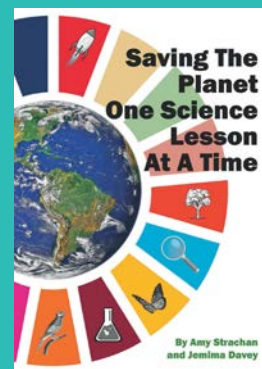
“What an absolutely beautiful book! As a teacher, I felt inspired by each and every page and could picture the numerous lesson opportunities it conjures.”

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Millgate Publishing

SAVING THE PLANET ONE SCIENCE LESSON AT A TIME

Learning about the world around us through observation and science enquiry is vital to the understanding of our global home. Saving The Planet One Science Lesson at a Time approaches the 17 global issues identified by UNESCO (including clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, and responsible consumption and production) by utilising purposeful enquiry, curiosity, and critical thinking, accompanied by 17 downloadable PowerPoint lesson plans. Visit millgatehouse.co.uk



Category finalists

INSIGHT & PERSPECTIVE LTD

The DNA Detectives series,
insightandperspective.co.uk

CHILD’S PLAY LTD

Rosa Explores Lifecycles, childs-play.com

MACMILLAN PUBLISHERS INTERNATIONAL

Everyday STEM Technology, Machines,
panmacmillan.com

NFU EDUCATION & HI IMPACT CONSULTANCY

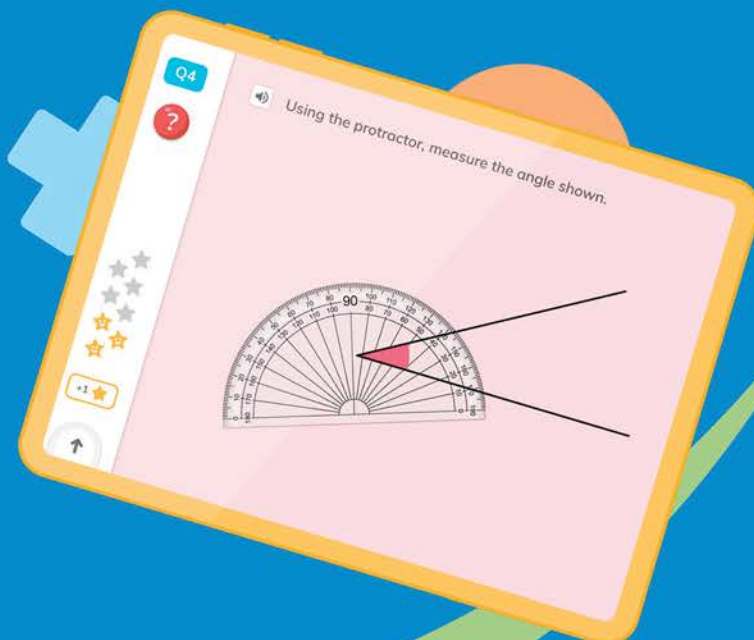
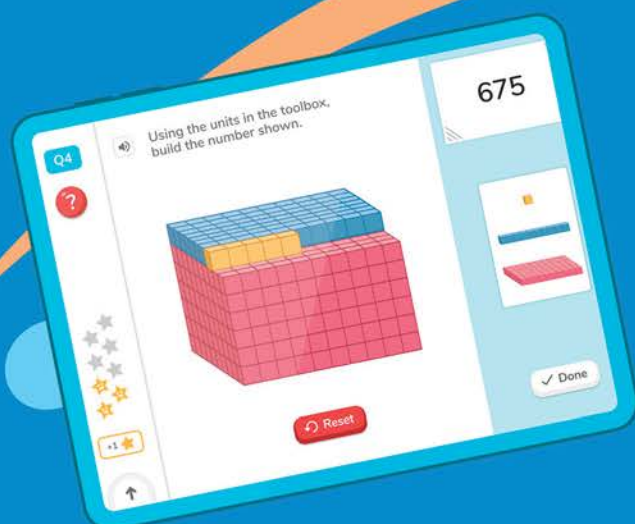
Anytime, Anywhere Engineers,
aaengineers.co.uk

IMAGINE LEARNING

Twig Science Reporter,
twigsciencereporter.com

Bring the curriculum to life with DoodleMaths

Meet DoodleMaths, the award-winning learning programme for ages 4-14!



Filled with interactive exercises

From measuring angles with a protractor to weighing items on a scale, DoodleMaths explores concepts in a fun, approachable way, removing any anxieties pupils may have about maths

Supports in-class teaching

Teachers can leave Proxima™, Doodle's adaptive algorithm, to fill each child's learning gaps and consolidate their knowledge, building a solid foundation of understanding

Provides powerful insights

DoodleMaths automatically marks work and tracks each pupil's progress over time, making lesson planning, report writing and Pupil Progress Meetings a breeze!



Exclusive offer: Speak to our team to find out more and receive a **£25 Amazon voucher** when you quote **Doodle25!**

Book your slot by visiting doodlelearning.com/for-schools or scanning the QR code and pressing **Chat to our team**.

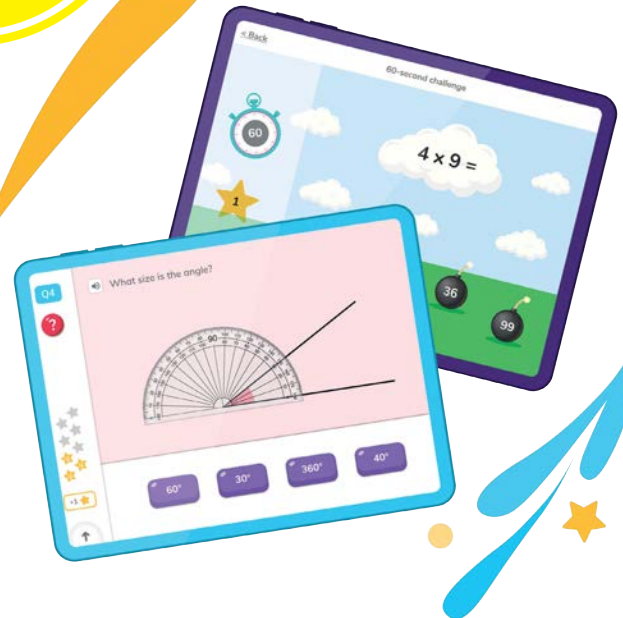


WINNER

DoodleLearning

DOODLE MATHS

DoodleMaths is a digital learning programme that's designed to enhance in-class teaching and build positive learning skills. Created by teachers, for teachers, it's proven to boost confidence and ability in maths — and save you invaluable time! Filled with thousands of interactive exercises for EYFS, KS1, KS2 and KS3, DoodleMaths covers all key curriculum content and helps pupils to become better all-around learners, both in school and beyond. From measuring angles with a protractor to weighing items on a scale, it uses hands-on activities and digital manipulatives to explore numerical concepts and problem-solving in a fun, approachable way, removing maths anxiety. Visit doodlelearning.com



"This is an innovative use of online material, particularly the clarity of questions, teacher feedback, and the range of topics that is covered. It's very reasonably priced, and easily accessible to non-specialists."

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Learning Resources

NUMBERBLOCKS MATHS MANIPULATIVES

Numberblocks MathLink Cubes Sets bring the concepts and learning from the award-winning *Numberblocks* TV series to life in the hands of young children. Available in sets 1-10, 11-20, and a new Classroom Set, the MathLink Cubes come with character cards that allow children to see the magic behind each number, as well as write-and-wipe activity cards related to selected episodes of the CBeebies series. The sets also include a national-curriculum-aligned teacher's guide. Visit learningresources.co.uk



HIGHLY COMMENDED

SMASH Maths

SMASH MATHS

Using a tried and tested spiral curriculum learning approach, SMASH Maths enables pupils to practise all six content domain areas of learning from the UK maths curriculum every week rather than a traditional topic-by-topic based approach. All partner schools are provided with free weekly online spiral practices for Years 1–6 during term time, made up of six to eight questions covering each content area. Visit smashmaths.org



Category finalists

BUZZARD PUBLISHING
[CanDoMaths, buzzardpublishing.com](http://CanDoMaths.com)

SUMDOG
[Sumdog, sumdog.com](http://Sumdog.com)

RENAISSANCE
Freckle, renlearn.co.uk

HARPER COLLINS
Greater Depth Maths, collins.co.uk

WHIZZ EDUCATION
Maths-Whizz, whizz.com

"An innovative resource; particularly the videos to support learning, which enable children to use SMASH Maths without a teacher."



Award Winning Primary PSHE Resources

for 3–11

Jigsaw PSHE integrates PSE, emotional literacy, social skills, and well-being in a **lesson-a-week** programme, including all teaching resources.

Consisting of six-half-term units of work, each containing six lessons covering each academic year.



**Being Me
In My World**



**Celebrating
Differences**



**Dreams and
Goals**



Healthy Me



Relationships



**Changing
Me**



Over 300 easy to use Lessons



Integrated Assessment Process



Continuous Mentor Support



Teacher Preparation Pages



Online Optimise Training Library



Launch Assemblies with Songs

WINNER

Jigsaw PSHE

JIGSAW PSHE

With a strong emphasis on emotional literacy, building resilience and nurturing mental and physical health, Jigsaw properly equips schools to deliver an engaging and relevant PSHE curriculum within a whole-school approach. Jigsaw lessons also include mindfulness, allowing children to advance their emotional awareness, concentration, and focus. Through an easy-to-use lesson-a-week and structured curriculum programme, it perfectly connects the pieces of PSHE, emotional literacy, social skills, and spiritual development, ensuring best practice. Jigsaw's curriculum has developed, but the team behind it continue to be passionately committed to improving children's mental health, wellbeing, and personal development. Visit jigsawpshe.com



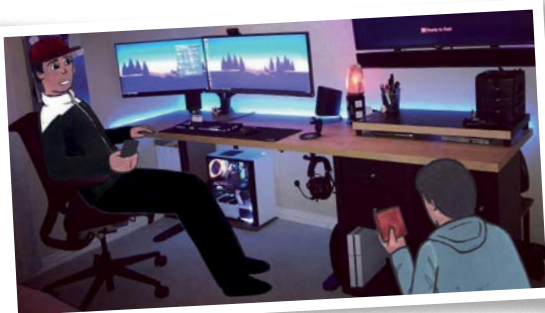
"This is a complete curriculum which schools could use to ensure well-sequenced, age-appropriate lessons. The resources are easy to navigate and interesting for the children. As a complete package, this is great value for money and can be used by most pupils in a primary setting."

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Ariel Trust Ltd

GRASSING OR GROOMING?

Grassing or Grooming? is an online resource designed with children and teachers, to support educators to address issues associated with gang-related grooming as part of the relationship education curriculum. The resource is Module 4 of a wider programme, SafeSkills, and takes a skills-based approach by building resilience through critical thinking and communication. The animation is supported by interactive activities that take children through a process of critical thinking about the actions of the characters. Visit arieltrust.com



"This tool offers something to schools that isn't overly publicised, and will certainly be beneficial. The resources are clear and well designed, as well as being user-friendly and well pitched."

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Satchel

SATCHEL PULSE

Satchel Pulse helps schools to understand how their pupils are feeling about their own wellbeing, mental health and school experience in a safe, friendly and age-appropriate way, whilst supporting the new Ofsted judgements. The wellbeing tracker lets schools collect anonymous feedback from their entire school community – including pupils, parents and staff – to really understand how they are feeling over time about important areas of their school experience. Visit satchelpulse.com



Category finalists

LITTLE SUNFLOWER
Little Sunflower, littlesunflower.ie

NOT JUST BEHAVIOUR
Tackling Anxiety in Schools,
notjustbehaviour.co.uk

SAGE PUBLISHING
A Little Guide for Teachers: Teacher
Wellbeing, us.sagepub.com

SHOOTING STAR ENTERTAINMENTS
Captain Wonderweb and the Cyber Patrol,
shootingstarents.co.uk

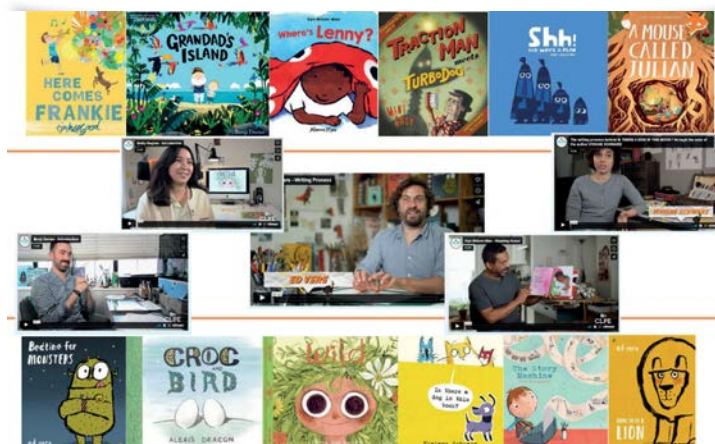
THE NATIONAL COLLEGE
Certificate in the Role of the Senior Mental
Health Lead, thenationalcollege.co.uk

WINNER

CLPE

THE POWER OF PICTURES TRAINING PROGRAMME

The free Power of Pictures resources are created by CLPE in partnership with practising author/illustrators. Each set of resources – including teacher plans and supporting author videos – focuses on a specific picturebook and its creators, and provides units of work that support pupils to understand the purpose of picturebooks and how they are constructed. The first two weeks focus on getting to know an author/illustrator and their key text, learning the specific visual literacy skills needed to gain meaning from both the images and words, and engaging in creative activities. Visit clpe.org.uk



The National Association of
School-Based Teacher Trainers

“This is a resource of which every primary school should be made aware, and that could be incorporated into a well-sequenced curriculum. In Power of Pictures, books are more than an inanimate object on a shelf; they become a living breathing process that goes beyond traditional lesson sequences.”

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Discovery Education

DISCOVERY EDUCATION PATHWAY

The personal development of every teacher is as important as that of their students. The Pathway Programme, created by headteacher Andrew Hammond, blends personal and professional development together: supporting your wider interests, ambitions and wellbeing, as well as your professional skills and competencies. The CPD courses are led by practitioners sharing authentic stories such as the mistakes they’ve made and lessons learned along the way. Each film is accompanied by thought-pieces and questions for reflection. See discoveryeducation.co.uk



Category finalists

BULLIES OUT

Understanding and Exploring Bullying for Professionals, bulliesout.com

BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING

Fast Feedback, bloomsbury.com

COMPLETE PE

Complete PE, completeperesource.com

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS
Numicon Professional Development,
global.oup.com

EDUSPARK INC.

Eduspark Professional Learning,
eduspark.world

HIGHLY COMMENDED

INEQE Safeguarding Group

TEACHER-TARGETED BULLYING TRAINING COURSE

Pupils teasing and berating their teachers is not a new phenomenon. However, as technology has evolved, this behaviour has progressed into the online world and has become a widespread and worrying issue across schools. INEQE’s new course is hosted by online learning platform iAcademy, and provides proactive steps every school can take to prevent these incidents from happening. Visit ineqe.com



“This is an original take focusing on a relatively new phenomenon – tackling an issue that is the daily reality for some teachers. If implemented well, the guidance would contribute to maintaining a safe environment.”

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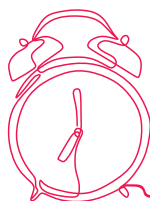
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DAY in the LIFE



A one-day diary from first alarm to lights out

WAKING UP

I'm one of those people who need multiple alarms to get up and likes a slow wake-up. My first alarm goes off at 5:30am, the second at 5:45am and then the final at 6:00am. I'll then get out of bed and get myself and Winston the pug ready for the day!



DALE FITZPATRICK IS A YEAR 3/4 TEACHER AND SENCO

@FitzTeaches



MY MORNING

I usually get to school for about 7:45am. I'll spend 10-15 minutes setting up the classroom, then check my emails and complete any SENCO tasks. Then it's guided reading, maths and worship.



MY AFTERNOON

We begin our afternoon with a bit of reading. We're currently on *Grimwood* by Nadia Shireen – the children are absolutely hooked and find the characters hilarious. The afternoon is when we usually teach our foundation subjects. At the moment our topic is the Stone Age, so lots of our learning is built around that. Afternoons are very busy but fun. The children always end with some social time.



LUNCHTIME

If I'm on lunch duty, I'll get myself wrapped up and head outside for a game of football with KS2, or investigate our adventure trail with the younger children.

Other days, I'll make myself a brew and have lunch in the staffroom – usually some porridge and a piece of fruit, but occasionally the school cook will sneak me in something a bit more sinful like a slice of pizza or a piece of cake... it would be rude of me to not accept!



MY EVENING

Once the children have left, I mark work, print resources for the next day and complete management tasks. Normally, I leave school about 5:30pm. When I get home, my fiancé and I will usually take the dog for a walk – sometimes ending at the pub! We are both teachers, so sometimes one of us might have a bit of additional work to do.



BEDTIME

Bedtime is usually about 10:00pm. But there has been the odd occasion when I have fallen asleep on the couch while watching a Netflix series! I find the best way to destress after a busy day is to play a bit of my game – usually FIFA. Although my other half might disagree... especially if I am losing!

QUICKFIRE QUESTIONS

❖ **Career plan B?** I've always wanted to be a teacher – there are photos of me in Reception reading to the whole class, 'playing' teacher. I did have a short-lived phase of wanting to be a Fireman though!

❖ **Must-listen?** I quite enjoy the *Secret Life of Teachers* podcasts on BBC Radio 4 – they don't half make me laugh and even sometimes cringe!

❖ **Must-read?** As I'm mid-term, all my reading has been influenced by the children. We've just read *Stig of the Dump*, *Grimwood* and the *Stone Age Boy*.

❖ **Twitter hero?** It has to be Jonathan Glazzard (@j_glazzard). He is just a guru of all things SEN and inclusion – as well as a fellow dog-lover!

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