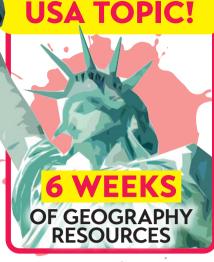
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## Hello!



y the time you read this, the clocks will have gone back, and we'll officially be in spring. Traditionally, this season brings with it thoughts of renewal, refreshment, and a chance to shake off the cobwebs. But many areas of the education sector are still under a shroud of darkness, with ongoing teacher pay disputes, and serious questions being asked about the systems by which schools are held to account. At times like these, it can be difficult to see

the light at the end of the tunnel.

But as always, in our small way we thoroughly believe in the enormously valuable work you all do, and we're here doing our best to champion the great work being done across the country every day, making a positive impact on the lives of children.

In this edition, we're focusing on how teachers are helping pupils with SEND thrive, not only in the classroom, but in their lives outside school, too. Check out Liz Hawker's explanation of how to make some changes to better support pupils exhibiting emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) on page 58; learn how to use drama games to encourage your SEND pupils to explore their own unique strengths on page 64; and understand how one award-winning school has helped prepare their SEND pupils for life beyond primary school on page 66.

If you're struggling for the time (and energy) to create new resources for your class, we've got your back with another batch of expert lesson plans, unit plans, and – new this month – an exclusive WAGOLL from Tamsin Mori's beloved Weather Weavers series, exploring how she creates a captivating atmosphere. Best of all, alongside prompts and insights from Tamsin, we have an entire bespoke teaching pack that you can download completely for free, whether you're exploring the extract on its own, or the entire book. Check it out on page 40.

I hope you're all keeping as well as can be expected and thank you once again for your dedication to this publication, and – more importantly – to the young people of the UK.

Until next time,

Charley

Charley Rogers, editor

@TeachPrimaryEd1









#### POWERED BY...



MATTHEW LANE shares his six-week unit on the USA, traversing the East Coast and Southern states...

"Get kids practising mapping skills and exploring the human geography of the US"

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collette waddle on how she uses sentence starters to help improve her pupils' confidence in writing...

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### We're all

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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#### TRAVELLING LIBRARIES AND DINOSAURS

How one school improved outcomes (and impressed Ofsted) by using immersive theatre techniques

#### **MEDIUM-TERM PLAN**

Strap on your cowboy boots and fuel up your truck for this six-week journey across the USA

#### **BRING IT TO LIFE**

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#### **REAL SCHOOLS**

The combination of innovative teaching and use of technology is enabling all of Cheam Fields' pupils to become confident and independent learners

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#### **BOOK TOPIC**

Yoto-Carnegie winner October, October explores our connection to the natural world, making it perfect for Earth Day activities

#### SEE IT, TAP IT, SAY IT

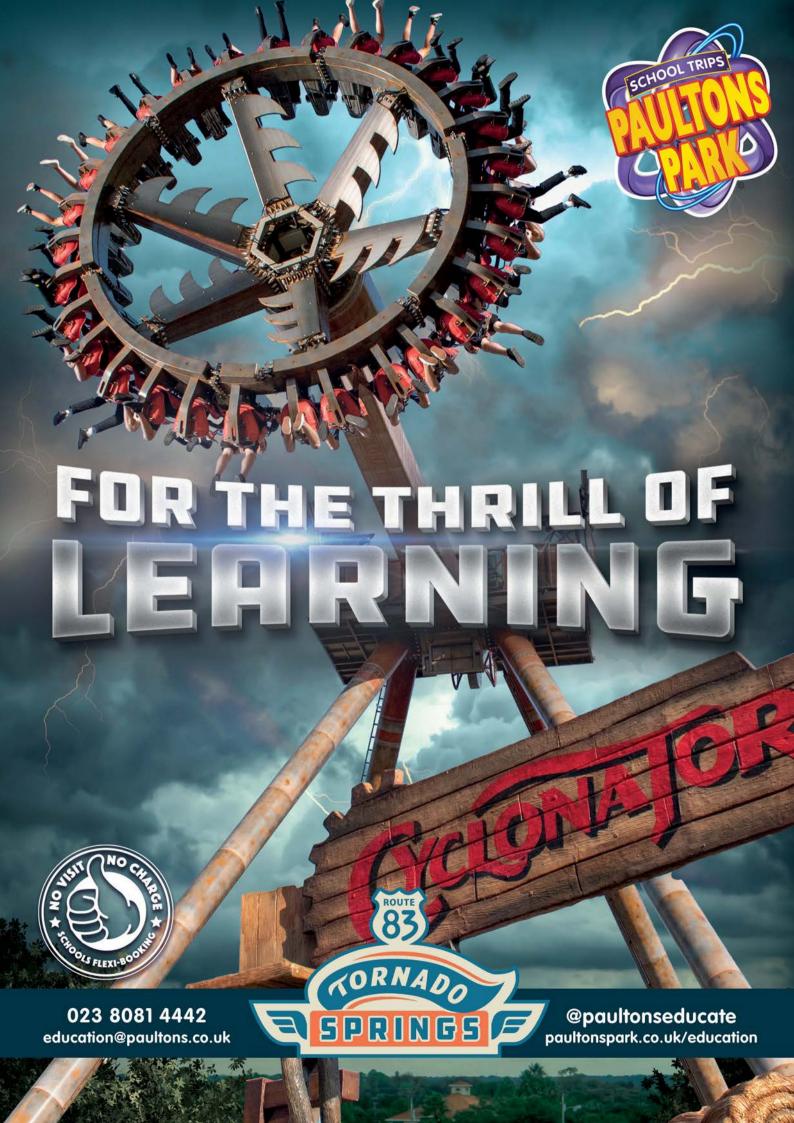
Turn phonics into a game, and improve behaviour while you're at it, with this simple, no-prep classroom hack...

#### **HOW I UPPED MY WRITING GAME**

Lose those exasperated refrains of "I don't know what to write", and get pupils off to a flying start with these irresistible ideas

#### **BOOK CLUB**

We review five new titles that your class will love



## Breaktine

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Interviews

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Research



#### 500 words competition

Do you love reading your children's writing and helping them to refine their stories? If so, BBC's 500 Words could be for you. The UK's most successful children's writing competition will relaunch this September, supported by BBC Teach, with BBC Breakfast hosting the initiative.

The BBC is currently on the lookout for teachers and librarians across the UK to register their interest in joining the judging panel – alongside big names such as Sir Lenny Henry and Malorie Blackman – to help choose the best entries later this year. With a focus on primary schools, the entries will be split into two age categories: 5–7-year-olds and 8–11-year-olds.

Find out more and sign up at tinyurl.com/tp-500Words

#### 3 INSTANT LESSONS...

(You're welcome)



#### FIND YOUR VOICE

Music charity ISM Trust has released a free primary singing toolkit to help teachers discover inspirational and practical singing strategies to enhance the music curriculum, and feel empowered to share the joy of singing with pupils. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-SingingToolkit



#### SAVE OUR PLANET

Celebrate Earth
Day with your class
on 22nd April by
using WWF's free
primary resources,
covering various
topics such as an
introduction to
climate change,
and the enigmatic
'walrus from
space'. See
them all at
tinyurl.com/
tp-WWF



#### A BUG'S LIFE

Invertebrate conservation charity, Buglife, has launched resources aimed at pupils aged 5-7 on the importance of pollination, giving children the chance to learn about some of the small things that run the planet. Visit tinyurl.com/ tp-Buglife





Raise your grammar game Real Grammar provides you

with everything you need to teach and embed all objectives from the grammar curriculum for Years 1–6. Its comprehensive and flexible five-step TEACH, PRACTISE, REVISIT, APPLY, REVISE approach makes delivery a breeze; with engaging model texts that ensure that children can see and understand each point in context, and creative writing tasks that allow them to put their learning into practice. Visit plazoom.com/real-grammar

SEND investment

The DfE has published its SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, outlining investment in training for 'thousands of workers', and approval for 33 new special free schools. The training will consist of 'up to 5,000 early years special educational needs coordinators' and '400 educational psychologists'. The £70 million change

programme will work over the next two to three years with selected local authorities in nine regions, working alongside families to implement, test and refine longer-term plans — including new digital requirements for local authority EHCP processes. Annamarie Hassall, CEO of nasen, said: "We acknowledge that this improvement plan is not presented as a finished article, but rather marks the beginning of a new phase. In taking this approach, they are unlocking the true spirit of coproduction, [which] can only be positive." Read more at tinyurl.com/tp-SENDAPplan

#### Petition for free school meals

The UK's largest children's charity, Bernardo's, has submitted a petition of over 32,000 signatures to Downing Street, calling on the UK government to roll out free school meals to all primary school pupils in England. The charity was joined by actor and Bernardo's ambassador Michelle Collins, known for her roles in *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders*. Scotland and Wales have already committed to providing free meals for



primary school children and are gradually rolling this out. Barnardo's wants to ensure those in England aren't left behind. Read more about the proposal and larger campaign at tinyurl.com/tp-BernardosFSM

750 OF 6-7-YEAR-OLDS HAVE JOINED IN A CHAT ONLINE

#### Look ahead | Book ahead

WALK TO SCHOOL WEEK



annual challenge to encourage kids to be more active returns this spring, from 15-19 May. Help your pupils Walk with Wildlife (this year's theme), at tinyurl.com/tp-w2sw

#### NATIONAL SHAKESPEARE DAY

Missed Shakespeare Week but still want an excuse to explore the Bard's work with your class? Fear not, celebrate his birthday on 23 April, with these great resources: tinyurl.com/ tp-Shakespeare







### George Webster Beloved CBeebies TV presenter and author

#### What was primary school like for you?

I loved it. I made loads of friends – some of whom I'm still in contact with now. A couple of them actually feature in the book. I enjoyed getting involved in everything in primary school, and I attended lots of after-school clubs, and had loads of fun!

#### Did you have any positive role models of people with Down syndrome in books as a child?

When I was younger, there wasn't really any representation in books, or even in the wider media. I did really enjoy reading though. I'd often get home from school and sit down with a book. It even inspired my younger sister – she saw me reading and thought, 'Well if my brother can read a book, so can I!'. My favourites were *Room on the Broom*, *Billy Goat's Gruff*, and *The Smartest Giant in Town*.

#### What was your favourite part about writing This is Me?

Everything! I loved writing with Claire Taylor, because we're good friends, and working with Tim on the illustrations was great, too - he has amazing skills. I also think it's really important for the media to see the message that we're all creative, we're all talented, and we're all unique. Representation of all our differences is really important for me, personally. There are spreads in the middle of the book that show my real-life friends - some who have Down syndrome or disabilities, and some who don't - and it tells of their talents and what makes them tick. Having real-life representation of people I know personally was an additional joy.

George's first book, This is Me (£7.99, Scholastic Children's Books), is out now. By going in with a solutions-focused attitude you can make your professional voice heard...

#### **Toria Bono**



@Toriaclaire



tinyvoicetalks.com



inding your voice in education can be challenging, especially when you're potentially surrounded by people with more experience, more confidence and a louder presence.

Have you ever had a great thought but been unable to express it? Or if you have said something, have you have found that it's fallen on deaf ears or didn't come out the way you wanted it to? I hope I can help you to not only identify what you want to do and what your great ideas are, but also how to express them and get the outcomes that you want.

First things first – grab some paper and a pen or your phone so vou can write some notes. I want you to write down the things vou'd like to say at school but haven't had the courage to do so. These might be ideas you've had, changes you'd like to make, or difficulties you're encountering. It could be about your teaching, a subject you lead, or another staff member.

The next thing I want you to do is go through each item and identify how important it is to you. Use the following kev:

- Double underlined or bold this is important to me and really needs to be heard now.
- Single underlined this is important to me and I would like someone to know about it.
- Do nothing it's there but it's not very important and I don't need to do anything about it vet.
- Cross it out writing it down was enough and I can let go of it now.

Look at your sheet and write down anything you've double underlined on a separate page. These are the thoughts that your inner voice is screaming at you to hear. Think about why they are so important to you - what is it about them that means that you double underlined them? Identifying why things are important to us helps us to better communicate this to others. Beside each item,



write down why this is important to you so that you can refer back to it later.

You should now have what you want to say and why you want to say it. The next thing to consider is who you could say it to. Who do you think would listen? Who would give you the response you need? This is very important to consider. Some people instantly start giving advice, even when you haven't asked for it. Others will just sit there and nod. or will only be half-listening. What do you need? Can the person you are thinking of give you that? If not, who else could you go to?

Considering what response we need is so important. As an example, if I ask you to get milk while you're in your house, you will probably go to the fridge in the kitchen. You wouldn't head to the bathroom or the bedroom. Some people are just like bathrooms and bedrooms - they don't have the capacity to hear us and give us the space we need. So find your kitchens!

Thinking about what you want the outcome to be is equally important.

If you just want to be heard and for nothing to come of it, make that clear at the beginning of the conversation. If you're saving something because you need a change to happen, know what it is you want to change. If we don't frame our thoughts well when we're talking to someone else it can appear like a moan. Instead, try and be solution focused. What solution do vou want?

My final tip is this - ensure that you create the space you need to be heard. If you think that you need to be listened to by a busy member of staff, book an appointment. This tells them that what you have to say matters and that you require a dedicated time to share your thoughts. What's stopping you? You know what you want to say, why you want to say it and who you want to express it to. So go and book that appointment and find your voice. TP

Toria Bono is a primary teacher and coaching lead in her school. She's the host of the Tiny Voice Talks podcast and the author of the educational book Tiny Voices Talk.

#### FEATURES KINDNESS



## 6 WAYS to use kindness as a teaching tool

If pupils feel wanted and safe then they are more likely to achieve, says **Hannah Day**, so it's time we brought out our inner Miss Honey and got our welcome faces on...

#### 1 START THE DAY RIGHT

How can you make the start of the day less hurried, calmer and with space to welcome your students? Make sure there is an activity that children can dip into independently, giving you time to support pupils with anything that arises first thing. Make sure you welcome each person warmly, using their name. Ask them how they are. It sounds so simple but since I have been making time to ensure I say hello personally to each of my children, I have found the days start off with a positive energy and, I hope, a feeling that I am pleased to see everyone.

#### 2 | MAKE TIME FOR WHAT KIDS VALUE

We all have our favourite pet topic, and so do children. Show and tell is a classic because it works so well at teaching young people that their interests have value. Do you have a space set aside each week for this? Make sure it is not the last few minutes of the day, but a proper section of time that is given over to the children. Benefits include knowing their interests are important, becoming comfortable in sharing with a group, learning about and listening to others, and building friendships.

#### 3 | REASSURE PUPILS THAT LEARNING IS HARD

Children can become despondent quickly, and often it is because they expect to be able to do their work without frustration or failure. However, if pupils understand that finding work hard is a sign of building new skills and challenging themselves, then they are more likely to meet the emotions of frustration and failure as part of the process, not a sign that they are no good.



Hannah Day specialises in creative education and is based in the West Midlands.

#### 4 | KNOW WHAT THEY CAN DO

As well as reassuring them that not everything comes easily, be sure to highlight pupils' natural talents. It may be obvious, but don't forget to recognise when they are helpful or inventive, kind or funny. The key is to be explicit. Research suggests we need five positives to overcome a negative, so regular comments such as "I am so pleased when you..." or "What I love about you is..." help the children to trust you. This means that when you do have to give feedback that involves criticism, they have a positive relationship with you and so can take the comments constructively.

#### **5 CHECK IN WITH FEELINGS**

A weekly check-in for pupils can be a quick and effective way to highlight and resolve any difficulties as they arise. A simple sheet, used at the same time each week, where children can circle a face showing a feeling, and write down anything they would like the teacher to know, allows you to capture a regular emotional record. Of course, you must review and act on anything that comes up, but rather than creating more work it can be an effective way of stopping problems before they have time to take hold. Additionally, keep the sheets as records so you can check for patterns, which may be helpful.

#### **6 | TRUST THE PARENTS**

Sometimes it can be frustrating or difficult to work with parents. Other times it's easy. But either way, we need to trust them. They love and know their children, and if something is bothering them or the child, we must work with them. There is often a sense of 'them and us' between teacher and caregiver, but remember we are on the same team. Check how you feel when you get negative feedback from parents. What does it bring up for you? Are you open or hurt? Do you feel judged or angry? If it's a negative response and you can figure out why you react that way, you can work on it, and so be more able to work with parents in the future, through open, welcomed dialogue.

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

#### A letter to...

## My neurodivergent colleagues

Openly discussing ND in teaching may be difficult, but it opens the door to true inclusivity for colleagues and children



'm so glad to connect with you. When I first started teaching 23 years ago, I thought I was the only one. I certainly didn't know anyone else in the sector who was

dyslexic and bipolar. In fact, for the first 17 years of my career, I never met a single 'out' neurodivergent (ND) teacher. These things weren't talked about. There was an unwritten rule that, should you declare any kind of neuro-difference, it would certainly affect your career.

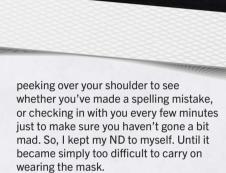
Now, statistically speaking we know there must be plenty of neurodivergent teachers and support staff. One estimate by the ADHD foundation says that up to 20 per cent of the population are neurodivergent. This includes a range of conditions including dyslexia, dyscalculia, ADHD, autism and dyspraxia. Genetic mental health conditions such as bipolar and schizophrenia, and acquired brain injury are also types of neurodivergence. When you consider the range of conditions, and how it's very likely that you have friends or family members who have one or more of them, it seems certain that they would also occur amongst school staff.

There are also many reasons why a neurodivergent person may be attracted to teaching.

Classroom teaching, especially in Reception and Early Years, is constantly busy and you're always on your feet with lots of changes going on. This seems perfect for a person with ADHD who could use their amazing hyper-focus and ability to multitask to great effect in this environment. Likewise, the dyslexic teacher has that fantastic helicopter view and can have a full picture of what's going on within the classroom. They use their creativity to think of different ways to present information to a range of learners. Moreover, if you have an intense special interest, such as many of our autistic colleagues do, why not talk passionately and enthusiastically about this topic to inspire the next generation? Yes, neurodivergence amongst the teaching profession makes perfect sense! Indeed, we have a lot to offer.

We have a lot in common, too, dear colleague. Though no two neurodivergent people are exactly alike, we are both members of a profession where neurological differences are not often celebrated, and yet we choose to be here. We have both, I am certain, felt isolated at times, wishing we had a kindred spirit so that, if nothing else, we could hear a colleague say "Yes, me too". Why then, has it taken such a long time for you and me to connect?

My own story is that for many years I did a fantastic job of masking my ND. Mainly because of my shame. I had been conditioned to believe that my dyslexia and bipolar brought with them nothing but weakness and disorder. Why then would I admit this difference to others? I suspect many ND colleagues feel the same. The constant scrutiny in teaching is hard enough without other members of staff



I was terrified when the mask slipped and yes, it did affect my career. I must be honest with you about that. Declaring you're neurodivergent openly and proudly will not be easy. Though it will make your life a lot simpler. You will no longer have to hide who you are, but you will have to deal with uninformed opinion from peers and parents who believe your ND makes you unfit to do the job.

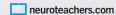
Please know that I'm with you.
There are more of us than you may
think. A growing number of organisations
such as the ADHD foundation, British
Dyslexia Foundation and Neurodivergent
Teachers Network are taking an interest
in neurodiverse educators. Unions can be
brilliant too.

On a personal level I want to thank you. The more of us that are visible, the more likely it is we can generate an environment of true inclusion. A school that is fully inclusive for its ND staff will become inclusive for ND children. In talking openly about our ND, we can truly make a difference to the education system. Thank you so much for your honesty, and for being your authentic self.

From, Catrina

 $Catrina\ Lowri\ is\ a\ former\ SENCo,\ and\ founder\ of\ Neuroteachers,\ which\ helps\ educational\ settings\ work\ with\ their\ autistic\ and\ neurodivergent\ learners\ to\ find\ simple\ solutions\ for\ inclusive\ practice.$ 







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Melissa Benn VOICES



#### IT'S TIME TO **END SELECTIVE TESTING**

Though a remote memory for most, the 11+ still has a malign impact for some. Now it's up against a new foe: a campaign group that wants to end the practice for good...

ow many of you are familiar with the 11+? For the majority, it may evoke memories of a bygone age the post-WWII period that saw a newly invigorated state education system built upon the grammar/secondary modern divide. Children as young as 10 were assigned secondary school places according to the results of a test eventually found to be both scientifically flawed and socially divisive, before the ushering in of a comprehensive system of schooling.

#### Singled out

As a result, most of today's children don't take exams as part of their transfer to 'big' school. They can therefore begin their first terms full of hope and optimism, rather than feeling themselves cast out as failures - a common feeling among children who fail the 11+-or singled out for academic success, which brings its own pressures. However, these emotions will still be familiar to readers living in those counties, principally Kent, Buckinghamshire and parts of Lincolnshire, where the 11+ continues to hold sway. For

these teachers, parents and pupils alike, the 11+ remains an ever-present threat or opportunity; one that depends to a great extent on family

background and wealth.

It's now wellestablished how some children entered for the test benefit hugely from intensive and expensive tuition. Some private preparatory schools coach their pupils in how to pass the test, thus ensuring that successful entrants effectively receive a selective secondary education for free. Only a tiny proportion of children on Free School Meals make it through the 11+ successfully.

#### Fierce opposition

Leaving aside for now the feelings of dejection that many young people can internalise and carry with them for a long time, sometimes even for life, those who don't pass the test are often assigned to schools that struggle to recruit and retain high quality teachers. Many such schools - which are no longer called 'secondary moderns', but are more or less functionally the same - do a fantastic job, despite their perceived 'second rate' status.

Yet the perpetuation of the grammar/secondary modern divide, and the test that underpins it, surely prompts us to ask, why does it still exist?

Occasionally, political figures will sing the praises of the old grammar

school system and seek to expand it in the name of 'aspiration'. Indeed, grammar school places have actually grown incrementally in recent decades, under both Labour and Conservative governments. But as Theresa May discovered during her time as Prime Minister, education policy advocating a deliberate and extensive expansion of the grammar system can now expect to be met with fierce opposition from across the profession, and even from within the Conservative Party.

#### Antithetical to wellbeing

The bald truth is that no mainstream party now believes the division of children before puberty to be a good idea. Instead, such systems are widely acknowledged to be antithetical to wellbeing and opportunity. Even so, neither of the two main parties will publicly commit to phasing out the 11+ where it still exists, and complete a task of reform commenced nearly five decades ago.

Yet while politicians may not feel able to make that pledge, a new group launched late last year is calling for just that. 'Time's Up for the Test' is a coalition based around a single, simple idea - the phasing out of the 11+. TUFTT doesn't want to close good schools; it wants to open them up to all local children.

The Coalition has already assembled an impressive array of established educational groups and individual supporters, ranging from Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham to former HMCI Sir Michael Wilshaw, as well as professors Danny Dorling and Peter Mandler. Also on board is the former BBC Director General Greg Dyke and the Booker Prize winning writer, Bernardine Evaristo.

In the coming year, TUFTT will be campaigning for an end to the 11+ via a series of talks and events. With luck, it will change the political weather just as the next General Election

> looms into view, and encourage our political class to finally to bring all parts of England's school system into the 21st century. TP

Melissa Benn (@Melissa Benn) is a writer and campaigner, and visiting professor of education at York St John University. For more information about TUFFTT, visit timesupforthetest.org; a series of personal stories relating to the 11+ can be found at 11plusanonymous.org





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Q&A

# "Give pupils life-changing experiences, and make lasting memories"

Visit us in the gorgeous Cheshire countryside, and let your children explore various adventures, whilst still learning



#### 30 SECOND BRIEFING

With three locations in the Cheshire countryside, Conway Centres is the perfect place for children to come together and make lifelong memories. Situated in beautiful, natural surroundings, we offer courses that combine true life adventure and immersive cultural arts celebrations.

#### What do the Conway Centres offer schools?

At Conway Centres, we offer high-quality outdoor adventure and cultural residential courses that are a powerful development experience, making both educational and life-changing differences to children's lives. Away from the usual routines, staff and pupils can experience extended and meaningful engagement in curriculum-linked activities.

#### Tell us more...

The three Cheshire centres are perfectly placed for children to enjoy a residential experience. Whether you visit the Delamere centre nestled in the forest; our largest centre, Tattenhall, situated in the Tudor village; or our Burwardsley centre with its Iron Age roundhouse experience — we offer children true adventure in the great outdoors.

#### Which one should we visit?

Children visit Conway Centres every year and enjoy an entirely new experience every time.
Schools enjoy progressing through the different centres and being welcomed by the same friendly, experienced faces. From bringing your Year 2s to Delamere to learn about the flora and fauna of the forest, your Year 4s to learn about the Iron Age era, your Year 5s for a residential mixed



with true adventure and arts, and then your Year 6s to our larger Anglesey centre in North Wales— we have activities and accommodation that will suit every child, no matter their level of experience, ability or needs.

#### How do you support all children?

Schools tell us that our staff are a significant highlight of their stay, being supportive, friendly and professional; no child gets left behind. We only employ the



ABOUT BETHAN AND CARL: Bethan Cooper and Carl Sutton are the managers at Conway Centres Cheshire.



#### Contact

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highest calibre of very qualified and

experienced staff who differentiate

their teaching to suit the specific

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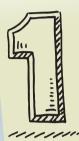


his approach first

## How I do it

Use hexagons and concept maps to assess knowledge in history, geography and RE

KARL MCGRATH



First, you will need to decide what knowledge you are trying to assess and connect. For me, this was keywords, icons I had used, pictures, and questions that the children asked during lessons. This was fairly simple and I added these to the hexagons - feel free to use this template that I put together for

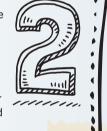
the Anglo-Saxon lesson: tinyurl.com/tp-HistoryHexagons



came about when I had come to the end of a history unit on the Anglo-Saxons, and was struggling to decide how I was going to assess what the children had learned. I remembered that in the past I had used concept maps within lessons, and in my lesson observation for my current role. Concept maps are fantastic for pulling out connections between ideas, however, I remembered a training session on 'solo taxonomy' that had used hexagons to show content links through shape tessellation. My children were also already used to using hexagons to make links through the work we've done with Alex Bedford and the CUSP curriculum, so I knew this was the way to go!



- This is where things can get messy. You need to decide whether the age and sensibility of the
- class allows for them to cut out the hexagons
- themselves. As I teach Year 5, I felt they were
- capable. It was also a great opportunity for
- the children to discuss and interact with each
- 'knowledge hexagon'. Although I'm assessing
- their individual knowledge, it was important for
- pupils to work in pairs as their discussion aided
- in knowledge retrieval. But you can always cut
- them out yourself, beforehand.



Next, we move on to sorting and grouping of the concepts. Pupils will have started to discuss the concepts they can see laid out in front of them, but now they need to group them. First, they need to put any hexagons that have a term or idea that they don't understand to one side. The rest of the hexagons need to be laid on the sheet of paper and arranged in a way that makes sense to them.





Then the children will need to put any hexagons that they

think are related close together. It's important to leave a small space between them, because they will need to write in this space. The beauty of this concept is that there are no real right or wrong answers. Normally, as long as the children can explain and justify their connections, within reason, they'll be able to arrange the hexagons as they see fit.



When pupils are happy with the placement of their hexagons, they should then stick them down. Next, get them to draw lines between the terms that are related and write next to each line the reason why they believe them to be related. Finally, look at the hexagons that were put aside; if there are any that could now be related, can they be added? I always add a few blank hexagons for the children to generate other ideas that you may not have thought of.



Karl McGrath is the curriculum task design lead at Benton Park Primary school, Newcastle upon Tyne.





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#### UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

# Striking is divisive, but sometimes it's our only available option. Here's why I changed unions to join the action...

t's strike day!
Instead of going to school and teaching
my usual gang of thirty, I'm sitting at home
writing this, safe in the knowledge that most
of my colleagues are taking the same action: an
action that, by the time this is printed, is hopefully

Solidarity and strength in numbers has ensured that we have the support of our leadership team, and that rogue parents don't have individuals to single-out and vilify. That solidarity was strengthened by the decision two other teachers and I took to switch unions – just like the 40,000 other teachers that the NEU claims had done the same. This now means 12 out of the 16 teachers at my school belong to the same union, whereas previously it had been more evenly split.

now resolved... (yes, I can hear the laughter!).

Yet, the decision to switch and strike had not been an easy one. I had been with the NASUWT since entering teacher training in 2014. There had been regular contact with reps in my previous schools and the messaging from the leadership had been consistently strong. In short, I had no reason to feel unhappy with them.

But I had campaigned vigorously in my school to vote in favour of striking, and was disappointed when the results were announced.

The responses may have been overwhelmingly in favour of action, but too few members felt strongly enough to cast their vote.

In spite of the talk of re-balloting, for me it was the moment that I realised the strength of opinion amongst other NASUWT members didn't match my own. With many of those in favour of striking switching unions, it feels as if their chances of a positive vote in the near future have now gone.

At first, the idea of switching unions to strike seemed a bit convoluted, perhaps even like a wilful act of self-destruction. After all, we don't get paid for these days and finances have never been tighter. But then I had missed the first strike day and regretted it; I felt like a classic case of all mouth, no action.

I was also concerned how my switching unions would be received by the parents of children in my class. One parent in particular sprung to mind: they had accused all strikers of being, "As bad as murderers!" I felt perhaps her far-right chatroom had started to confuse the messaging around teachers and nurses. She is, however, known as being an influential member of the parent network, so I feared a backlash. However, most parents have remained supportive of the action and their

children were incandescent on my behalf when
I told them that teacher pay (according
to the Institute of Fiscal Studies) had
already gone down by 13 per cent in real
terms since 2010, and has gone down by
another 5 per cent this year alone.

The support from my headteacher and the governing body was both surprising and welcome, and made the decision easier to make. The fact that the

> heads' union (the NAHT) also came close to reaching the threshold for calling their first ever strike, speaks volumes for the desperate state schools are in.

> The decision to switch unions appears to have been vindicated. In my school, it feels like it is bringing the teaching staff together as a more solid unit. We had previously had a problem with staff camaraderie, particularly in and around Covid

times, where mixing with other year groups had been actively discouraged. This had left a legacy of some teachers rarely venturing from their classrooms while others sniped behind their backs.

A new togetherness was a welcome change and something that contrasts favourably with stories I heard from a neighbouring school — notably an academy. Teachers there were told not to strike by their head; forced in a staff meeting to publicly declare if their intention is to strike; were covered by HLTAs on the strike days; and were publicly 'named-and-shamed' in a letter to parents. The one teacher that did choose to strike last month now no longer works for that school; he has just joined mine instead! TP

"Solidarity and strength in numbers has ensured that we have the support

The writer is a primary teacher in England

# Dinosaurs and travelling LIBRARIES

How one school improved outcomes (and impressed Ofsted) by using immersive theatre techniques in the classroom...

JAMES SEARJEANT

n the autumn term
we had a surprising
visitor to the school.
A T-Rex was spotted
in the playground during
break! It seemed to be looking
for something, and moved
around the playground until
it disappeared as suddenly
as it had arrived...

A few days later, a pile of twigs and sticks was found in the corner of the yard, and these gradually accumulated over the next few days. The children started to talk about what was happening, particularly when they discovered some extraordinary teeth and fossils. It wasn't long before they made the connection with the T-Rex and started to think the pile of sticks might be its nest. In the following days, this was confirmed when a dinosaur egg appeared.

Now, you may have guessed that this special dinosaur visitor was a bit of a stunt. And you'd be partially correct — but it was also much more than that. The dinosaur nest was in fact part of a Year 2 cross-curricular approach to teaching about dinosaurs, supporting science, art, history and English. It's an example of immersive learning, an approach we use across our school.

#### Immersive learning

Immersive learning has its roots in immersive theatre, which invites the audience to move through a theatrical world as active participants. Taking this into the classroom, we have found it gives greater purpose to learning for the children and increases their engagement.

The dinosaur nest and the visit from the T-Rex gave children a sense of awe and wonder. They engaged in a number of ways, including dissecting dinosaur poo in science to learn more about the animal's diet; writing stories linked to the dinosaur nest in English, inspired by The Dinosaur's Diary by Julia Donaldson and The Dinosaur that Pooped a Planet by Tom Fletcher; and learning more about chronology and what the world was like during the time dinosaurs roamed the earth in history.

Even now the project is complete, it continues to have a positive impact on the children's general engagement and communication. They still find clues in the playground that they think could have been left behind by the

dinosaur, and it remains part of their day-to-day conversations. Dinosaurs have been a topic of discussion and inspiration for much longer this year than they were during a different iteration of the topic last year.

different iteration the topic last year.

Why we

use it Using immersive theatre as a tool to educate, explain and enlighten is an emerging discipline. We learned about it eight years ago when the charity Punchdrunk Enrichment led an immersive learning project for the whole school. It was about a travelling library, The Lost Lending Library, which arrived in the school following the visit of

a peripatetic librarian...
Located behind a bookcase
which had mysteriously
replaced the door to our staff
room, small groups of children
discovered that it led into a
fantastical library crammed

with books of all sizes and colours. They met the guardian of The Lost Lending Library, who told them about its travels and how it jumps from place to place driven by the imagination



of young people. The guardian explained that their colleague Gillian had reported a whole shelf of books missing, and asked the children to help by writing stories to replace them.

All our pupils visited The

Here's how you can make it happen in your school:

1. Think about what you want the children to learn and how this links to the curriculum. For instance, following The

#### "Even now the project is complete, it continues to have a positive impact on the children's general engagement"

Lost Lending Library and, whatever their age, were absolutely stunned. Each was given a library card so they could return, and in the days that followed they wrote many new stories for the library before it mysteriously disappeared – although not before making every child a lifelong member.

We found that the children became much more engaged in their learning, enthusiastic about writing stories, and immersed in their work. Children who usually never spoke in class contributed, and families reported that children were writing more stories for The Lost Lending Library at home.

#### Planning projects

Immersive learning connects well with the creativity that so many primary teachers bring to their job, but it does require planning; dinosaurs don't just appear in playgrounds! Lost lending Library, we wanted to sustain the children's enthusiasm and engagement in writing. We created 'Gillian's Room' in the corner of the school foyer, creating a link to the original immersive learning experience and building on it. Throughout the year, each class visited Gillian's Room as part of their creative writing work, and wrote more stories to keep the library well-stocked throughout its travels.

2. Start planning early. The dinosaur nest was developed by Year 2 teachers in the summer term over a four-week period. It also linked with our autumn term whole-school topic theme of 'time', fitting into teaching on chronology, and getting the children to think about the past which is a key historical skill in KS1. Artefacts in

the nest such
as the 'fossilised'
dinosaur teeth also
enabled pupils to develop
their understanding

of historical enquiry, as well as short and long-term timescales.

- 3. Small-scale is good –
  immersive learning doesn't
  need to involve lots of
  expensive equipment
  and resources. For
  instance, the dinosaur
  nest was simply sticks
  and some papier-mâché
  teeth and bones.
- 4. Involve colleagues once you have devised your immersive learning project, let everyone know what you're planning. It's important everyone is engaged and can respond correctly to children's questions.

In all cases, immersive learning values the expertise of children.

In The Lost Lending Library it is the children who restore the books and stories to the shelves. In Gillian's Room they are the ones who need to write stories to keep the lost lending library well stocked on its travels; and with the dinosaur nest it was the children we relied upon to explain what was happening. This increases confidence and changes how they see themselves in relation to their learning and their school. They become more enthusiastic learners, and it encourages greater participation and breaks down social barriers. For example, we saw children interacting together who never normally talk to each other.

We were also recently inspected by Ofsted, and they talked about how the pupils clearly felt inspired in their learning. Immersive is not the only way we do this, but it is certainly an important factor. TP

#### FEATURES OF IMMERSIVE LEARNING

The story happens to the learner – they are protagonists, peir feelings are as much

their feelings are as much part of the story as the characters they encounter.



Learners have a specific role — they are cast as the

experts who are uniquely placed to help.



Pupils' work helps propel the narrative

forward – learning is positioned as a chapter in an unfolding story.



Pupils experience a tiny part of the imaginative world.



Impact beyond the experience – learners are

encouraged to take their new role, for example as expert writers of adventure stories, back to their normal lives.



A means to return

— there is always the possibility for

pupils to return to the world they visited.

\*Developed by Punchdrunk Enrichment



James
Searjeant is
headteacher
of Wyborne
Primary
School
in New

Eltham, Greenwich.

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#### Children's writing competition

The BBC is relaunching 500 Words, the UK's most successful children's writing competition, this September. This year, the competition is supported by BBC Teach and hosted by BBC Breakfast. There are two age categories: 5-7-year-olds and 8-11-year-olds, and children of all abilities can enter and not worry about spelling, punctuation or grammar. The best-selling authors Frank Cottrell Boyce, Francesca Simon, Charlie Higson and former Children's Laureate Malorie Blackman all return as judges, and joining the judging panel for 2023 will be Sir Lenny Henry! 500 Words will also enjoy the support of Her Majesty, the Queen Consort. Find out more at bbc.co.uk/500words





#### Schools & Academies Show

The Schools & Academies Show is the UK's leading education policy event, bringing together thousands of school leaders to connect, spark new ideas and discuss the biggest challenges currently facing the education community. Bringing together some of the sector's most decorated and influential speakers to share their knowledge and expertise, our goal is to ensure we support schools, academies and MATs to overcome some of the most pressing challenges facing the sector, and continue to provide practical resources to ensure efficiency is at the forefront of each operation. Find out more at hubs.la/Q01zKjZQ0

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MATTHEW LANE

rom sea to shining sea, the USA is a huge country in many ways. Our much younger cousin, just across the pond, presents an engaging and engrossing locale to apply a host of geographical skills. You can spend whole terms studying the USA (and I have). The six lessons I outline in the following pages will guide students on a tour of the eastern seaboard of the United States, practising mapping skills and exploring the human geography of these locations. So strap on your cowboy boots, fuel up your truck, and let's hit the highway.

**DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT teachwire** What are the state capitals? What are the state capitals? Download your FREE teaching pack at tinyurl.com/tp-USAplan

state and how it is far bigger than just New York City. Watch the video (slide 10) and then share the starter knowledge on NYC, its history and how it is made of five Boroughs (slides 11-14). The main activity involves using Google Maps and Streetview to conduct a virtual sightseeing tour of above download). Begin by gauging prior knowledge: it is surprising what children

New York. For each place, ask children to note the address (which will prompt interesting discussions on the street and avenue convention); give a description of the place, and to reflect on what they think of it. Some places, such as Grand Central Terminal, allow you to walk around inside, too. You can complete this activity on tablets, but you'll get a better experience using a computer with a mouse.

Whilst this appears a simple task, it will take children a while to get to grips with using Streetview, and



like all tourists, getting a little lost and distracted. The seven locations outlined on slide 14 are my favourite, but these can be readily substituted for your own favourites. Maybe a secret Friends tour?

#### Assessment

Can children confidently find a location? Can they note addresses in the correct local format? Are they able to explain their reflections on a place?

.....

.....

#### WEEK 2 Lesson objective

• What is social geography?

Start by recapping the learning on New York from last lesson. Children may well have gone home and researched more, so this is a chance to celebrate that, too. Recap on the five boroughs, focusing on Manhattan (slide 17). There is a link to a map on slide 19 which you can print for display. Using the maps (slides 20 & 21), talk through the name conventions of streets and avenues, comparing this orderly planned city to the 1000-year muddle of London's streets if you wish. This will springboard into a discussion of Upper, Mid and Lower Manhattan as well as what is Uptown, Downtown, and the East and West sides (slides 22-27).

WEEK 1

• How can we explore

In this first lesson, we start

with some virtual sightseeing of

New York (see slides 2-14 in the

will have already gleaned from TV and

located, recapping on continent names

and how far the USA is from the UK.

From here, zoom in to discuss New York

YouTube. Discuss where the USA is

Lesson

a location?

objective

The task for this lesson is, in essence, a reading comprehension activity (see slide 28 for instructions). The first text (see L2 texts in download pack) gives children an overview of the various neighbourhoods that can be found within the five boroughs. The second text introduces a number of different characters who speak briefly about where they live. The challenge for students is to piece together which character lives in each neighbourhood.

This activity has been differentiated into three levels so can cater to a range of abilities. Whilst designed as a human geography activity, this is also a chance for children to practise their inference skills and comparing texts to find answers. A set of teacher's answers is also available in the downloadable pack.

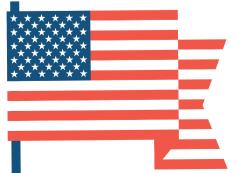


#### Assessment

Can children compare descriptions with explanations from locals? Are they able to spot the key locations for evidence?



In this lesson we learn more about the USA as a whole, as well as expanding the students' general knowledge. Start by discussing which states pupils know the names of and if they have connected that some have similar names to locations in the UK (slides 30-31). Expand this on to thinking about US cities and how these link back to their UK namesakes. For interest, take a quick exploration of US government and how the US of A is, sort of, made up from countries that sit within a country (slides 32-37). It's quite unlike how the UK is governed. The video from the ever entertaining and informative





CGP Grey on the history of the United States ends this portion of the lesson (see slide 38).

After a pause to discuss the difference

between a capitAl and a capitOl (slide 39), we can discuss how few states share their names with their capitals. E.g. New York state, with its capital of Albany (pop. 99,000) and metropolis of New York (pop. 8.5 million). See slide 40 for details.

The main activity for the lesson is an atlas-based exploration of the USA, with children finding the capitals of each state. You will be pleased to know that children will not be searching for the capitals of all 50 states – you can use the L3 states worksheets if you wish. Find answers on slides 43 and 44. Should your school's atlases not have the information needed, there is a USA map with state capitals on slide 42. Print this out on A3 if you plan to use it.

#### Assessment

Can all students use a map or atlas to find locations? Can they use given location information to complete the task?

•••••



This lesson helps children to develop their place knowledge and skills for analysing different places. Start by discussing the region of New England, talking about how it is on the East Coast and the different states that make it up (slides 47 and 48). Watch the two short videos (slides

49 and 50) to give children a grounding in the region. Due to Covid, many USA travel vloggers turned their attention to their home shores in the last few years, so

you could swap these tourist board videos for the YouTube channel of your choice.

Discuss the videos and then watch the third one (slide 52) which gives a short introduction into the history of the region. The point of this is to guide children towards seeing the similarities between England and New England, such as their coastal settlements and temperate climates (slides 53 and 54). The first settlers gave many UK place names to the region, with 110 locations sharing UK place names with those in Massachusetts alone (slides 55-57).

Now for the main task - comparing English towns with their American counterparts. For my Norfolk school, I have planned my 'Tale of Three Cities' around Norwich (slide 58), but you can readily swap these places for a local city or town of your own. Using a tablet or laptop, ask children to complete the L4 - Atale of two Norwichs worksheet to better understand the locations. Children can write their own questions too. Some terms might need explanation, such as what an elementary school or a Walmart are. This is a lesson that can easily fill a whole afternoon as children go down rabbit holes of research, looking at schools and libraries in their American counterpart.

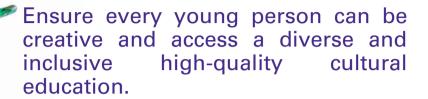
#### Assessment

Can children find similarities in locations? Can they explain these observations? Can they contrast these with differences?



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#### WEEK 5 Lesson objective

• What is a cultural region?

Start with recapping prior learning and explaining how the states we've been talking about so far (including NY and those in New England) are all 'Northern' states. Discuss the idea of regional cultures and what these could be (slide 65). This can then lead on to discussions of examples we see in England, such as Cockney or Yorkshire, and how these have accents, lexicons, foods and history all linked to their location (slide 66). The USA is a land of many regional cultures and there is much debate as to how many there are. Children may know some of these already, whilst others will be little known (slides 67-70).

To begin the second half of the lesson, listen to the wonderful song 'Southern State of Mind' by Darius Rucker (a YouTube video of the song is on slide 72). Rucker is a major star of country music, and all of his songs are classroom safe should you wish to explore more of his work. Discuss the themes in this song and debate the content of the following pictures (slide 73). This is a good place to discuss stereotypes and how these can come into being. It is also a good opportunity to explore how some stereotypes can be negative or derogatory to the people they are applied to.

The task for the lesson asks children to compare and contrast the lifestyles of New England and the southern states (slides 74-75). You may wish to model how to complete the first question so children have the structures to scaffold the longer sentences that this work can inspire them to write. Pupils can use

the L5 comparing New England and the South info sheet to help them answer questions.

#### Assessment

Can you explain what a regional culture is? Can you explain what a stereotype is and how this differs from a culture?



WEEK 6 Lesson objective

• How can we compare climate data?

In this final lesson, we look more at the southern states with a focus on their climates. Start by discussing the landscapes children may expect to see and then look at the photos on slide 78 which show a breadth of habitats. Discuss if children know what sort of climates they can expect from the southern states using the photos as a prompt.

The task for this lesson has children looking at the climate data of four cities and following questions to draw conclusions. Look at the climate data for Austin (slide 81) and explain how to read the

various forms of data folded

into the deceivingly simple graphic. There are five prompt questions to help children engage with the data and find conclusions (see the L6 climate questions worksheet). Discuss these and model how to complete the first question so pupils know how to fold data into

their answers

and explain their

thinking. There are some

terms (such as arid) which children may need explaining. This is a good lesson for practising graph reading and developing inference skills which can take longer to complete than you first think. If needed, children could write their own questions as an

Alongside Austin, Tampa and Raleigh, I have used Norwich, CT for the fourth city of comparison (see L6 southern climate data info sheet), relating back to our learning much earlier in the unit. You can easily change Norwich for a city of your choice using the website usclimatedata.com which provided the data and graphs

#### Assessment

for all of the cities.

extension task.

How do we read a climate graph? What information can we learn from the graph? TP



Matthew Lane is a teacher from Norfolk.

@MrMJLane

# Bring it (C) LEE

Struggling to reanimate the past? Teachers share their history trip winners...

"The smell of

preserved deer skin is something many children will remember!"

**Teacher Kate Munnoch took** Year 3 on a 'prehistoric Britain' residential...

> 'Prehistoric Britain' is a unit of learning we struggle to bring to life at school. So, we booked an

experience package, choosing a residential visit rather than a day trip off site or a visitor to school. Because as a school we feel it's important to provide children with immersive experiences that take them out of their comfort zone. The Mount Cook Adventure Centre is a purpose-built facility in the heart of the Peak District, with a Stone Age to Iron Age-themed residential. The Centre itself sits within a large secure area and within the site there are a range of different zones for various activities. The focus is on spending time outdoors. Many of our Year 3 children had never had the opportunity to stay away from home before, so the excitement and 'wow factor' was there from the get go!

The opportunity for school staff to carry out a pre-visit helped us to promote the visit to parents and carers and confirmed that the experiences the children would have were going to be extremely memorable. In terms of the added wow factor, the group leaders were dressed in authentic costumes and this instantly engaged the children, got them

interested and made them think more carefully about the focus time period. The children took part in a range of activities to help them understand more about life during the Stone Age and each activity was well-resourced and suitably equipped. I'm sure the sight and smell of real deer skin preserved in salt is something many children will remember!

School staff had purposely given very little input about the Stone Age in advance of the residential; we wanted the children to have these hands-on experiences and learn from the experts. We've since been able to follow up the learning at school and build on this key initial knowledge. The group leaders were knowledgeable and engaged well with the children, using questioning to develop their understanding and make them think! The children invested completely in each of the sessions and were engaged throughout.

Most of the questions I heard showed a genuine interest in the subject and a thirst for more information from our expert. I feel very strongly that the costume and the replica resources helped to steer the questions in the right direction! The children had very few pre-conceived ideas and showed an eagerness to find out more. The experiences added detail and understanding to this period of history which we would have otherwise struggled to bring to life for the children.

Kate Munnoch is Year 3 teacher and SENCO at King Edwin Primary and Nursery School in Edwinstowe, Nottinghamshire

#### "A school trip becomes such a core memory for lots of children'

Teacher Ruth Wheatley rates an interactive display

The Florence Nightingale Museum at St Thomas' Hospital is the best history trip I've done. The kids loved meeting 'Florence'; the actor was brilliant and really drew them in. The museum also has great real artefacts and dressing up clothes! What makes a great school trip? When it comes to fun vs curriculum content I think it's a bit of both. The experience of a school trip becomes such a core memory for lots of children. It's amazing if they are seeing a mix of content they've already learned so they feel like experts, but also new learning that might stick. The best trips definitely include lots of interactivity and really get the children involved.

Ruth Wheatley teaches Year 5 at Henry Cavendish Primary in Streatham, North London

#### "It's can be as simple as visiting your local war memorial"

#### Local context is key for Year 6 teacher Robbie Burns

For me, the underlying purpose of a school trip should be twofold: first, to take students beyond their everyday experience (Young, 2014) or second, to help them see their places and spaces with fresh eyes. One of our best trips, to our local war memorial after a local area study with an emphasis on World War Two, was the latter.

We had done loads and loads of work about war heroes from our local area; to see their names on the war memorial at the bottom of our school road totally changed pupils' perspective on something they walked past every day.

One moment is particularly memorable. On a park bench next to the memorial was lots of graffiti. I didn't really draw attention to it, it wasn't rude or of concern, but one child said to me: "Mr Burns, it is so disrespectful for someone to graffiti on a bench near this special place. What must the local families think? I am going to write a letter to a local MP to tell them about this."

This, for me, achieved the objective of our trip: to help our students see their places and spaces with new eyes. They had learned to respect their histories. They had learned about the lives that were eternalised on a symbol of peace, suffering and hardship and this had moved them to respect.

I felt my work was done. History had been taught which had changed their understanding of the present. Is that not our aim?

Robbie Burns is a senior leader in an all-through school in the North of England



#### OUR BEST HISTORY TRIP?



- "Windsor Castle with Year 1 and the look of astonishment when they realise it's a real castle with real guards. All eyes were on marching and overall it was a fantastic trip filled with architecture and history; past, present and future knowledge!" @527 rank
- "Our school is going to Geevor Tin Mine in a couple of weeks after studying Cornish mining. The children (and staff!) are so excited!" @BethJulian9
- "The National Holocaust Centre near Newark is amazing; we took Year 6. The guides are wonderful and they explain everything perfectly for children to understand. They follow the journey of Leo, a Jewish boy. It fitted into our curriculum really well." @solly\_bridget



#### Day at the Museum

#### Headteacher Jackie Sankey loves Oxford National History Museum

The Museum itself is very impressive with its architecture and the vast number of objects contained within. The skeletons of the different animals give a 'wow' factor too; there's just so much to see. The best bit? Time flies in the hour-long Evolution talk. It's absolutely brilliant. Chris Jarvis, who delivers all the museum's sessions for primary schools, is incredibly talented at bringing to life the evolution story with objects and drama so the children have a memorable experience. I've listened to it twice now and learn something new each time! The children are always captivated.

The impact of a visit is huge; many children say the Oxford museum trip is the highlight of their seven years at school. Many also go back with family members at another time.

By organising a trip to go to the Pitt Rivers museum (in the same building) on the same day, the children truly have an enriched science and history experience.

Jackie Sankey is head teacher at Harestock Primary School near Winchester



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# Dove Self-Esteem Project Thom amazing they really

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.

#### **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 voung 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.



#### 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.

#### **IMPROVES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE** THROUGH BODY POSITIVITY

Body positivity is a critical factor in building good mental health, selfesteem 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.

#### **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

#### **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-todownload 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.



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#### Helen Shaw, principal

## "In this school every teacher is a SEND teacher"

The combination of innovative teaching and use of technology is enabling all of Cheam Fields' pupils to become confident and independent learners, finds **Dorothy Lepkowska** 



here's a new word in education – pedtech. It is putting pedagogy, rather than practice, at the forefront of digital technology. And Cheam Fields Primary Academy is a major proponent.

"As teachers, we all have those moments in class when we look at a child and thought 'this pupil has so much to contribute, but they just can't write it'," says Amy Mann, the school's SENCo. "If only they could speak it and their words appeared on a screen in front of them. What a difference it would make."

Cheam Fields has a relatively low number of pupils with SEND, but a high proportion of those children have EHCPs. Of its 489 pupils, 38 are on the SEND register and 16 of those children have an EHCP – which equates to 3.3 per cent of its total roll, compared with a national average of 2.3 per cent.

Necessity, as much as a school and Trust-wide policy of excellent pupil outcomes, meant that the school had to consider how best to deliver high-quality teaching and learning. "Nationally there are not enough specialist places for all the pupils who need it, and some of the children attending Cheam Fields might, in different circumstances, be attending a special school," Amy adds.

#### STAYING AHEAD OF THE GAME

The challenge for the school is huge, says Helen Shaw, the principal.

"We're part of the LEO Academy Trust, which is big on innovation, staying ahead and being outward looking," she says. "The Trust has an expectation for every child that by the time they leave the school they will outperform their peers nationally, so one of the things we focus on is creating innovative learners, who pursue excellence, and we maximise the use of technology to deliver this aim.

"The big push comes from the Trust and the strategic plans, but it is fed into schools through teaching and learning policies, into which individual schools breathe their own life."

Certainly, technology plays a big part in the process. Matt Clements, Year 6 teacher and the computing and digital skills lead, explains that, from Year 2, every child has a Chromebook, which they can take between home and school from Year 3.

"In reception and the foundation stage the pupils use SeeSaw where they can log in independently using Chrome pads, and each class has a couple of class sets of those," says Matt. "It allows them to listen, read and watch videos to support their learning activities."

#### Pupil voice



People are very kind. You can ask teachers for help with anything, which helps you worry less. We have lots of tech and we can access all our lessons and apps to test our learning. It's fun doing that.



My favourite book is *The Tiger Who Came to Tea.* I can read the whole story! I can use a computer, too.



Everyone is treated the same, and the teachers help us in every way they can. The tech is great.



This includes 'speak to write' technology which allows the children who need it access to the curriculum. And this is where the adaptive teaching and learning processes come in. Alongside the technology, and largely because of it, teachers can adapt their approaches to ensure every child can engage in lessons as equally and equitably as their classmates.

"One of the first things we became comfortable with was giving young children the opportunity to speak their ideas and to record these on the screen in front of them," Amy says. "It made a huge difference to their access to learning because it meant that they weren't limited by having poor handwriting. That doesn't mean to say that we stopped allowing them to write as, of course, they still need that skill.

"But if, for example, they are planning a piece of written work, there is no reason why they can't speak and record their ideas before undertaking the exercise.

#### NO MORE COLOUR-CODING

At Cheam Fields, the days of a teacher giving out colour-coded worksheets with differentiated work for

different groups are long gone.

"Now, we are developing independent learners who know what they need, and they have the tools and know how to use them," Helen explains. "If they need to put on their headphones to listen to some text then they can do so and highlight the words they don't understand, even if the child next to them is reading quietly from a book and using a dictionary."

It also means that teachers monitoring pupil engagement during a lesson on Google Classroom can drop in a support resource for a child they can see is struggling



with an aspect of the lesson. "Instead of digging around for a physical resource, they can just post it to the child's stream. It makes some of those basic methods of support much easier for teachers and makes the children more independent learners," Helen adds. Such a discreet intervention ensures there is no stigma attached.

"We are always looking at raising children up so that they can all access the same learning as their peers," says Amy. "This isn't always appropriate and sometimes they need to have a differentiated curriculum if they're working below a certain level, but generally, given the right support, there is no reason why they can't access what's happening in the classroom most of the time. We believe that by giving them the tools to scaffold their learning, they can work towards the same outcomes as their peers."For some children, scaffolding learning might mean working with a step-by-step guide on how to perform a specific task, or an outline of the criteria they need to complete a successful piece of work.

"In some of our classrooms we have individual workstations where children can use a highly structured approach to learning," Amy says. "For example, they will do units of work lasting five minutes, which they measure themselves with a timer. Then they take a two-minute break before turning the timer over again to do the next task."

## FREE TO CHOOSE

The approaches used at Cheam Fields also bring an element of choice to how pupils learn. Helen says: "We're big on choice here, which removes some of the anxiety about coming to school. So, for example, if the children are learning about Vikings, they can read a book or watch a video, regardless of what the person next to them is doing. They also have the choice of how to present their work, which could be a piece of writing, a poster or a short film."

This doesn't happen in all lessons, Helen explains, because there would be some children who would never pick up a pen, so work has to be structured appropriately. This approach also enables every child to produce a high-quality piece of work, she says. "It might not be comparable to that beautifully written text, but it will mean the child has accessed the same content and curriculum."

Occasionally, even simpler methods are used. Some pupils cope better with maths, for example, when the questions are cut up into individual tasks, rather than being faced with a whole page of work, which can feel overwhelming.

"We have children here who labelled themselves as not being able to learn, but we're empowering them to show they can learn and, not just that, but the same content as everyone else, though with a slightly different approach – which is fine," Helen adds. "The most important thing is that it builds a positive attitude."

To be a successful learner, she continues, you have to feel content, so Cheam Fields' approach is to get to the root cause of any problems. "We understand that all behaviour is a form of communication, and when we see undesirable behaviour in the classroom, we ask ourselves what that is communicating about the learning environment for that child. This is where we really look at what we can do to give access to learning through the adapting resources and using assistive technology."

The school also works closely with parents, and is committed to serving the whole community, says Helen. "As cheesy as it might sound, we consider ourselves as a family and we run the school like a family, which means that we show kindness, care and compassion. Yes, there are moments when we might have little fallings out and sometimes deliver a message parents and carers might not want to hear. But we have a shared experience.

"In this school every leader is a leader of SEND and every teacher is a teacher of SEND. There is no 'that child over there has a TA so they're not my problem'. Each of us has a responsibility." TP





LOUISE FLKINS YEAR 2 TEACHER, ENGLISH AND

There is something about the vibe and atmosphere here. It's more than a family feel - you just know everyone will champion and support you. There is a real culture of sharing.



GEORGIA LENNARD. YEAR 4 TEACHER, ECT SINCE SEPTEMBER

I did my work placement here last vear and a job came up soon after. I love that the teachers and children have so many such an amazing resources to help with their learning, which is something I noticed other schools didn't have.



DANI BORFHAM RECEPTION TEACHER

We work in close partnership with parents and children. and it's been nice to see siblings coming through. There is no hierarchy here and Helen strives for that everyone is valued and important.



JO HARRIS, RECEPTION TEACHER

I love it here and the pupils are the best bit. The children who come out of this school are so kind and confident. We do offer children range of activities and experiences. I teach Mandarin club and might not have had that opportunity elsewhere.





## 8 steps to improved PE PLANNING

Think outside the timetable, connect with parents, and consider whole-school activities to help bolster your sport provision, says **Michael Brennan** 

s a PE lead, PE planning was one of the most important parts of my job. Without a robust plan, it's hard to implement lessons effectively.

But every school is different — there is no 'one size fits all'. That's why PE plans have to be adapted to best serve the changing needs of the pupils.

Want to improve PE delivery in your school? Revitalise your planning using my top tips:

## Maximise active time

A recommended two hours of physical education per week is simply not enough, especially for kids who are struggling with their health and wellbeing. I would like to see schools offer a statutory two hours and, if not, look at the other ways that physical activity can be included in the school day. Golden Mile or energetic brain breaks offer an excellent opportunity for children to be active on top of PE time. Or set up a breaktime equipment cupboard to help children remain active in between lessons.

## Step outside the timetable

The timetable is so structured and packed that, for some schools, there's no scope to branch out during the school day. Look for quick wins such as after-school clubs which encourage children to learn new skills and try something different (especially popular activities such as gymnastics, yoga, or archery, which may be side-lined from curricular PE).

## Skills AND attitude

PE isn't just about physical literacy and movement, so make sure that your lessons are an opportunity to develop social skills, emotional literacy and resilience. I encounter children in Years 5 and 6 who still can't deal with losing. It's part of life so PE should help them work through that. If they lose a game, look at what went wrong and how they can improve.

## Break the mould

All too often PE lessons cover the same sports year after year. I encourage schools to offer different sports each year, repeating them at least once.

For example, offer tag rugby in Year 3 and again in Year 5. This gives children a wider outlook and is great for skills expansion. It may also encourage kids to join a local club, which could put them into a sport for the rest of their lives.

## Wet weather contingency plan

When the weather's bad it's too easy to pop a dance video on the TV. Instead, plan a serious and physically active alternative. Portable indoor table tennis tables are excellent as they work on skills development, so strategy, hand-eye coordination and communication come into play.

## Parent involvement

I've worked with schools who invite parents to join pupils for the Daily Mile first thing every Friday morning. Get the music playing, invite parents into the playground and create a positive weekly event which unites the entire school community!

## **Sport Premium**

Sport Premium should form part of a strategic investment to improve physical literacy school-wide. Try to ensure your funding is spent across all areas. These should include developing your PE curriculum; connecting PE, sport, and physical activity with other curriculum areas; and diversifying your enrichment and competition offer. Look at mass participation opportunities which have the potential to inspire and engage every child in the school. An integrated long-term plan will produce better results than short-term thinking. TP





Michael Brennan is a former head of PE, and current franchise owner at Premier Education.

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@PremEducationUK



## WAGOLL

## Winter's Keep by Tamsin Mori

Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to create a captivating atmosphere with their writing...



inter's Keep is the third book in the Weather Weaver trilogy. Stella, the main character, and her storm cloud Nimbus, have completed their initial training in the art of weather magic and are now officially weather weavers. The story now turns to the righting of old wrongs. The council of elders have overturned the Storm Laws and decreed that all the storm clouds imprisoned by the Ice Weavers are to be released. However, the first storm cloud imprisoned was the most dangerous of them all — it belonged to the sea witch and now she wants it back. Throughout this story, Stella must make hard choices about who to trust; but if she gets it wrong this time, she risks plunging the world into endless winter...



Text © Tamsin Mori. Winter's Keep (£7.99, UCLAN Publishing) is available now.

The premise of weather weaving is that clouds and their weather weavers share an emotional connection. In order to master weather weaving, Stella has had to learn to identify, conjure up and regulate her emotions. In The Weather Weaver, this is an explosive problem, as she's quite short-tempered and has caught a thundercloud. Teachers could use the weather-as-emotion theme to gently open discussions around feelings, wellbeing, self-regulation and empathy. In a wider sense, it is a very clear example of pathetic fallacy - the weather mirrors the characters' emotions and ways of seeing the world.

The sea witch is an enigmatic character – both terrifying and fascinating. In the scenes where Stella secretly meets her, she is rapidly trying to work out the sea witch's intentions. Teachers might find it useful to highlight

how the descriptions of the sea witch within a single scene change as Stella's opinion of her changes.

The extract on the right is a high-tension moment, but the mood in the story quite deliberately alternates between moments of friction and moments of playfulness and curiosity. Comparing chapters with very different moods would be a good opportunity to compare how word choice, action, and setting can all be used to create different atmospheres.

Although the book is written in third person, most of it is very close to character. We get to hear Stella's internal dialogue and experience the world as she does. I very often 'act out' scenes when editing them, to make sure that the movement, body language and physical sensations are accurate and immediate. This might be a fun exercise to try in class! TP

## 5 STEPS TO IMPACTFUL WRITING

Poetry scraps — a bit like artists start with sketches, I often start with scraps of writing. I always carry a notebook and instead of drawings, I use poems to capture a scene, mood, or idea. I think of them as word sketches.

Flex your writing muscles – even when I'm not working on a book, I write something every day, just to keep

my writing brain in shape. Writing gets easier the more you do it.

**3** Active editing – when there's no-one around, try getting out of your seat and acting out a scene, complete with expressions and movements.

4 Choose juicy words – for me, the mood of the scene decides the word choices. Calmer scenes have time for

meandering descriptions of setting and longer sentences. Active scenes are packed with bouncy verbs – jump, rush, hurry – and sentences tend to be shorter.

Flex your writing muscles — even when I'm not working on a book, I write something every day, just to keep my writing brain in shape.
Writing gets easier the more you do it.

## **Extract from**

Winter's Keep, chapter 19, pages 165-166

I love using all the senses to build the mood of a scene. This is a spooky, uncomfortable scene, so I matched it with an icky uncomfortable sensation that everyone will have felt at some point.

One of the things I love about Stella as a character is that she's very outdoorsy and practical. There are at least four clues to this in the extract, including 'wiped it on her jumper' — Stella doesn't much care about her appearance or getting mucky. Another example is her acknowledgement of 'storm petrels' — she can immediately identify the birds and knows where they nest.

I use a question here to fire up the reader's imagination and 'something moving' is very non-specific, which adds to the sense of spookiness.

I used the sound of the wind moaning to 'zoom out', reminding Stella (and the reader) that even if she's found what she's looking for, she's still in a dark spooky place on her own. Essentially it says: don't relax yet! Chapter 19

Should have brought a torch, she thought, squinting into the dark gap in the centre. But there'd been no time for planning.

She shoved her fingers deep into the cracks and felt about, mud and grit wedging themselves under her nails.

And then she felt it – a sudden round smoothness. She scrabbled at the gem until it came loose, and carefully pulled it out.

Stella wiped it on her jumper, then turned it round in her hand. The gem was larger than the one that had trapped Tas's cloud and it looked older; its surface pitted and scored. When she held it up to the light, it shone; glowing like a milky rainbow. Was it her imagination, or was something moving in the centre of it? A fragment of cloud

The wind moaned and there was a fluttering overhead. Stella looked up. Tiny birds were streaking out of the walls of the broch — storm petrels, disturbed from their hidden nests. They circled Nimbus in a whirl of hurried wingbeats, then streamed out of the top of the tower. Wisps of cloud were emerging from the ancient stone wall — some of them weaving to and fro, clearly confused — four of them flickering with threat.

165-166 WINTER'S KEEP

Here I wanted to build the tension with a sense of the rapid, unexpected movement overhead, which startles Stella (and hopefully the reader!). I used a whole series of active verbs and adjectives to create this sense of motion – streaking; hurried wingbeats; streamed.

Here, I've used dashes for of rhythm. These could be three separate sentences, but I want the reader to read them all in one go, as a series of rapid realisations, almost as if you were inside Stella's head.

Stella is in a hurry to find the gem before Tamar discovers what she's doing. You can feel the sense of rush in 'there'd been no time for planning' and 'scrabbled'.

I use an en-dash (literally a dash the length of the letter n!) when the second half of the sentence is a further description or explanation of the first half. It makes the beginning of the sentence a launch pad for the end.

This sentence refers back to events that happened in book 2, A Gathering Storm. However, it contains enough information that even readers who haven't read that book can glean the information they need.

I used a semi-colon here to let the phrase 'glowing like a milky rainbow' shine — a brief moment of wonder in an otherwise dark and tense scene. A comma or a dash wouldn't have created enough of a pause, while a full stop would have broken the rhythm and the sense of exploration.



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and sign your school up to receive a FREE Welcome pack and Childhood Day Mile spinner.





## THINK OUTSIDE THE BOOKS

Having restrictive ideas and goals for children's reading will only make them resent it, says Lis Jardine. We need to be open to their choices, instead – so pass the comics!

s a secondary school librarian. I see first-hand a lot of children who stop reading, often in Years 8 and 9 (age 12-14). They find it boring, irrelevant, and no kind of competition to their screens. Any love for books they ever had has often been squashed out of them by the things schools 'have' to do to improve reading skills

in their pupils - filling out worksheets, close reading, writing reviews or responses. and spending months on the same text.

I'm sorry to have to tell you that there aren't a bunch of quick fixes for this. No single activity or trick is going to give these kids back their love of reading.

But, what I think we should do to encourage a habit of reading in children is to relinguish

control. And we need to begin this in primary school, so they have the skills to find texts that matter to them in those later years.

We all know that children's own choices of books are an essential part of enjoying reading. We've all seen a child we thought completely uninterested in reading finally get absorbed into a text they're genuinely fond of.

So, how does this work in the classroom? These are Make reading time a priority in your own life. If you're a teacher or a librarian who deals with a lot of younger kids, read books for that age group. Without a community around them who all read and talk about their books, how will kids know that reading is rewarding and relevant?

## Respect their reading rights

Don't ever laugh at, judge or invalidate what they read. No



## Offer texts related to their interests

They aren't you and they won't necessarily like the books you read, or read as a child. Many children are jaded by old-fashioned books, and have no idea that fresh and exciting stories exist. Because so many people only shop for books in supermarkets, the rich diversity of current children's titles is never even noticed by the majority of adults - but there is something for everyone out there.

If they're gamers, get them gaming magazines or books that tie in to their favourites. If they watch Marvel films on repeat, why not offer them the source graphic novels? What you think of as 'quality literature' can come later; what we're aiming for is establishing the custom of reading.

## Provide a vast range of material

Kids need to be surrounded. every day, with fiction, comics, magazines, non-fiction; whatever they express an interest in. All classrooms should have a big bookcase with modern and attractive books relevant to the age group and just above, especially short non-fiction reads for those kids who find chunky fiction off-putting (there are a huge number of kids who avoid anything longer than 50 pages).

Get rid of tattered or old-fashioned books in your collection. Their unattractive appearance will dilute the impact of any fun books you actually have.

## Teach kids how to choose a book

And use a library! I've known (and continue to meet) many children for whom a library is a mystery.

They don't know the



## "No book should ever be ridiculed, especially if it's one they've chosen themselves"

vocabulary of borrowing, returning and renewing; they don't know how to find anything specific, or how books are arranged, or whether they can actually take the books home with them. But as the book blogger Dawn Finch says: "The library is a key factor in turning your child into an accomplished reader precisely because of that treasure trove of choice. Where else can your child stand in the midst of hundreds of different titles and grab whatever catches their eye for free?"

## Give them time to read

In *The Book Whisperer*, Donalyn Miller suggests that without lots of time spent reading books they have freely chosen, children will not get that wonderful feeling of immersion in a story.

If you can, ringfence lengthy opportunities in class, and don't expect them to drop their book without a nice bit of warning (you'd hate it if you couldn't finish the chapter!). I heartily recommend Donalyn's book for anyone wanting to know more about her approach to encouraging reading.

## Be flexible when using reading schemes

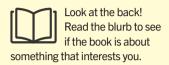
I've used schemes at two different schools and I see them as a means and not an end - I've learned to be flexible. Some kids will love the structure and the point-earning, and quiz frequently for that feeling of success. For other kids the limitations are terribly discouraging; they have to read something quizzable, and they have to keep trying to test and often getting disappointing results back. If they're slow readers they may be told off for not quizzing often enough; unsurprisingly, this doesn't make them any keener to read! Being told they can read what they like is a huge weight off their minds.

## Focus on successes

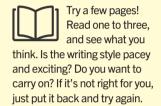
And PLEASE don't insist that they must finish what they have started. Kids should be allowed to abandon anything that they aren't actively enjoying. Any kind of pressure to stick with something dull is giving them negative feedback. TP

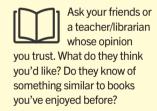
## HOW TO HELP KIDS CHOOSE A BOOK

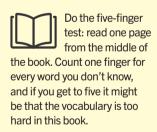




What genre is it? If you watch a lot of murder mysteries or listen to non-fiction podcasts, you might find books in these genres more attractive.







\* Adapted from the National Literacy Trust's 'How to choose a book'



Lis Jardine is a secondary school librarian and author. Her first book The Detention Detectives

(£7.99, Puffin) is out now.

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## October, October

This Yoto Carnegie Medal-winner by Katya Balen explores our connection to the natural world, making it a great choice for Earth Day activities...

## CAREY FLUKER HUNT

e live in the woods, and we are wild..."
October and her dad live off-grid in the woods, and are deeply connected to the wild world that surrounds them. They find, grow or make almost everything they need, and October couldn't be happier – until her 11th birthday, when Dad has an accident and October must leave her beloved home to live in the city with a mother she barely knows. How will October cope without the wildness she needs?

October's year of devastating change is narrated first-person in this stylishly readable stream-of-consciousness account. She cares about her environment in a way that feels personal, immediate, and nail-bitingly important, and she makes us care, too. Intriguing topics such as mudlarking and rewilding sit alongside questions about our relationship to the natural world, and as we're drawn into her tale of owls and scavenging and the power of imagination, we share her discovery that wildness is everywhere and there are many ways of being free.

## Talking about the book

Every page of this wonderful book will give you lots to think and talk about. Here are some questions to get you started:

Why doesn't October's sketchmap

show the road to the village? How does she feel about the outside world?

- Should an 11-year-old be allowed to drive a quad bike or use a machete? Talk about risk, accidents and the advantages/disadvantages of gaining life skills in this way.
- How does October deal with difficult emotions? Do you think her reactions are helpful? What advice would you give someone feeling angry or afraid?
- "She is alive in London the way...

  Dad is alive in the woods." Discuss

  Mum and Dad's choices. Where

  would you prefer to live?
- If Stig the tame owl must learn to be

wild, what must October 'the wild girl' learn? What does being wild mean? • "I never knew if this was the right thing, if the woods were the right place, if the way I lived was fair..." Should October be living wild in the forest? Argue for and against Dad's choice.

## Activities Living off-grid

"Our little wooden house painted green and hugged by trees and filled with all the right things..."

How do October and her dad survive in the woods? What tasks must they do? Gather evidence, then draw a labelled diagram of their house.

What services are provided to your homes? How do Dad and October manage without them? Talk about living off-grid. What does this teach October? Discuss skills and attitudes as well as the concrete examples in the text (electrical circuits, garden maths...).

If you were building your own wild house, what would it look like and how would you live? Draw it and write about your off-grid life.

## Do we need to own and use so much?

"It's like if you could make me from a pile of things... it would be these things that built me."

What does October get for Christmas? Why do they represent her so well? Write about October, referring to these items to help your readers understand her character.

If you were picking six gifts to represent you, what would they be? Write about your choices.

"I feel like the pile of presents is pressing on my chest...'

What does this book tell us about October's attitude to things? Do we need



find for themselves. What do they barter for, or buy? What must they manage without?

What do you use or consume? Keep a record and compare it with October's list.

What impact are we having on our planet by owning/using so much? Talk about reducing, re-using and recycling. Should we cut down? What could you do?

## Being wild

"My brain fizzes with all the wonderful ways I used to spend my days..."

When she lived in the woods, how did October connect with the wild world? Start your list with cooking over a campfire, howling at the stars and add to it.

How did October discover and connect with London's wildness? Start another

list with finding open spaces, mudlarking and add to it.

"I am wild in the woods and wild in the city and I have a foot stamped in each world..."

Label two PE hoops 'wild in town' and 'wild in the country'. Pull one partly over the other to create an empty intersection. Write each item on your lists on separate cards, then sort them into the right spaces in your Venn diagram.

What can you say about being wild in town AND in the country? Add more cards to your intersection (fresh air, physical activity, experiencing the weather...) then write about your diagram. What could you do to connect with the wild world where you live?

## Take it further $\Rightarrow \Rightarrow \Rightarrow \Rightarrow$



## Mudlarking fun

"Things from the wild and from nature and from the earth and from the sky. Searching for scraps of treasure and scraps of stories... finding the old and making the new...."

When October talks about scavenging and storytelling, it's hard to resist her enthusiasm!

Warm up with observational/sensory games, then hide small objects outdoors and hunt for them. Display your finds, create stories inspired by them and follow up by researching Victorian mudlarks or visiting a museum to view local finds. Finish by sharing your work in assembly, like Yusuf and October.

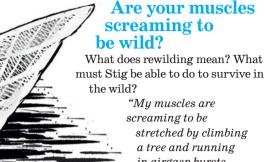
## A larder full of story-bottles

"All the stories... whirl and spark inside me

and I imagine bottling... every one and watching their colours swim inside clear glass..."

Collect glass jars with lids and invite children to turn them into themed story bottles by adding colourful scraps of fabric, paper and found objects, for example a summer bottle, a night-time bottle, a woodland bottle...

Pop some key words or ideas in each, then sprinkle with dry pigment or glitter. Seal and add labels, as



"My muscles are stretched by climbing a tree and running in airgasp bursts through the woods

and tumbling into the

glittery pond and being free..." We're not wild owls, but we still need to be physically fit! Invent a

wildness challenge to stretch your muscles and develop natural strength and fitness. How fast and strong and

flexible can you become? Chart your progress.

## Observing and writing

Share October's lyrical descriptions of the natural world and ask children to identify what's being described. Discuss October's similes, metaphors, word choices and writing style. Which is your favourite description? Why?

October notices almost everything, and this skill helps her to survive. It also helps her scavenge for her treasured 'finds'.

"I listen to the pull and lap of the water... I see the shape of the river and the sky and the ground. I feel this new world with my fingertips..."

Find ways of noticing and sharpening your senses (close your eyes and record what you can hear and smell in different locations; identify objects by touch) then visit a wild place that's new to you. Record your observations factually and imaginatively (sketches, audio recordings,

annotated sketchmaps, snippets of poetry, photographs) and use to make a collaborative moodboard or mindmap of vour experience.

List exciting words to describe what you're seeing, hearing, smelling and touching, then use to write about your wild place.

## **Story magic**

"We magic up a world that might exist and it might not and our imaginations are like a spell and the finds table is a portal to a world that we can build and twist and turn and spin into anything we want..."

Collect objects for your own finds table and use as starting points for storymaking and sharing.

Encourage children to question their objects (Who owned you? Where did you live? What have you seen?) or prepare storystarter cards - you find this object wrapped in silver paper on your doorstep. Who left it there? What happens next? Give everyone a lucky dip to prompt ideas.

Why do you think October loves stories so much? How do stories feature in your lives?

## **Exploring change and** growth

Describe October's life in the days leading up to her 11th birthday. What changes by the time she's 12?

Change brings challenges and opportunities. Discuss the difficulties October faces, and how she overcomes them. What does she lose and gain during this year?

It can be hard to notice change, but Angela Harding's illustrations of Stig's growth make change visible as well as anchoring the passage of time. For each picture, describe what you can see and discuss the changes

## Loved this? Try these...

- The Space We're In and The Light in Everything by Katya Balen
- The Wolf Wilder by Katherine Rundell
- The Last Wild by Piers Torday
- \* The Last Bear by Hannah Gold
- ❖ Where the World Turns Wild by Nicola Penfold
- ❖ Wild City by Ben Hoare and Lucy Rose

you observe. Research another wild UK creature, then draw and/or describe it at different stages of its growth.

## **Understanding our** wild behaviour

October is good at describing her feelings.

Discuss how she does this (close observation; vivid vocabulary) and find examples in the text.

Name some of the emotions she describes and collect relevant quotes. Discuss them, then write your own October-style descriptions.

How does October deal instinctively with difficult emotions? Avoiding people; climbing trees; shouting; breaking things. TP



Carey Fluker Hunt is a freelance writer, creative learning consultant, and founder of Cast of Thousands (castofthousands. co.uk). Find out

more about how to shadow this year's Yoto Carnegie Awards at yotocarnegies.co.uk

though you're adding produce to Dad's winter store.

Ask children to invent stories inspired by the bottles, then set aside a special time for sharing them.

## A wild celebration

Encourage your class to discover wildness in unexpected places by celebrating your project outdoors.

Choose a location with a hint of wildness and plan October-inspired activities to help children observe and connect with their surroundings. For example, you could play 'Kim's Game' with natural objects and get messily creative by printing with them, or go one step further with a den-building challenge and a campfire. Don't forget to unleash your wild side with some howling!

## Discuss 'wild behaviour'

"Suddenly all the words I've been wanting to say tumble out in jumbles and knots and tangles..."

How does October learn to tame some of her wilder impulses? Telling other people how she feels; seeing their point of view; taking time out in nature...

What advice would your class give someone experiencing difficult emotions? Can you work together to suggest ideas? Create a colourful mind-map to help organise how you might respond to different feelings?



## See it, TAP IT, SAY IT

Turn phonics into a game, and improve behaviour while you're at it, with this simple, no-prep classroom hack...

## **JESS DARBY**

honics. As a previous KS2 teacher, the word used to send shivers down my spine. I made the transition to Year 1 a year ago and have been on an incredible journey since - I have never looked back. Phonics is nowhere near as scary as people think. Important, imperative even, yes... but certainly no longer scary. I have developed such a huge passion for the subject and its effective teaching since becoming phonics lead at my school in the last academic year. My biggest aim will always be to pass that passion on to my children and give them what they deserve – the ability and tools to read, but above all, to find joy and pleasure in reading.

We already do two daily phonics sessions in my class – a full 45-minute session in the morning and a quick whistle-stop session after lunch. I had been thinking of ways to level this up and give the children consistent opportunities to review previous learning. I had come up with a few ideas, but flashing sound cards while the children were lining up became my go-to because, let's face it, teachers are spinning so many plates as it is – I needed something with

minimal prep but maximum impact. It was okay, but just that, and certainly not giving me the outcome I had envisioned. Children at the back of the line couldn't see the cards properly, and there's always those couple of louder voices drowning out everyone else, so you can never be sure just how engaged each child is.

Then my headteacher suggested popping a sound on the door that the children have to say whenever they enter or exit the room. Initially, the idea was to put a new sound up every day, but it soon occurred to me that this was the perfect opportunity to get some of those previously taught sounds up there to ensure past learning could be reviewed consistently. Now I tend to choose a sound I know the majority haven't nailed. Take 'igh', for example – always that bit trickier as it's a trigraph. The sound stays up for the full day and the beauty of it is, all I need to do is take the flashcard off one side of the door and pop it up on the other, depending on if the kids are coming in or going out. No preparation, no resource making, no marking - just a simple, low-stakes but incredibly effective way of reviewing previously taught sounds.

> This review method has slotted straight into our routine. As the children walk past, I say "Tap the sound, say the sound". While the children do this independently, I stand by on the off-chance that someone needs a prompt. If they don't copy the child in front, I'm right there to offer on-the-spot support. Not only that, but it helps behaviour in the line - the children know what they need to do, and are more focused on what sound they are going to be tapping and reading than

> > making any poor

behavioural choices.

There are so many adaptations that could be made to this simple activity. I have my KS1 head on and of course the priority is phonics. However, a couple of simple tweaks and this could easily be something that can be transmitted throughout each year group: common exception words or high-frequency words, for example. For KS2 you could try times tables, year group spellings, fractions, literary techniques, or even arithmetic.

As teachers, we know the importance of daily review; it strengthens the neural connections over time that are necessary for developing expertise, supporting retention in short-term and long-term memories. However, I think sometimes we are all guilty of over-complicating things. Who would have known that such a simple activity could lead to so much engagement in some of our youngest children?

The impact has already been immense. Pupils are now able to recall sounds at a faster pace due to the consistent exposure. They are able to better spot digraphs and trigraphs in words, which in turn leads to a more successful and more accurate decoding rate. For assessment purposes, it helps me identify which children may need a little extra support and/ or intervention around a particular sound. Not only that, but it engages my children – they view it as a game and they genuinely enjoy the process. In the morning, while hanging their coats up, I hear them say, "Ooh I wonder what sound it is today!". Isn't THAT what we are all here for? TP



Jess Darby is a Year 1 teacher, and phonics and history lead at a primary school in Yorkshire.



## How sentence starters upped MY WRITING GAME

Lose those exasperated refrains of "I don't know what to write", and get pupils off to a flying start with these irresistible ideas, says **Collette Waddle** 

've been a teacher for nearly 20 years, and almost every educator I know has suffered the pain of delivering what you believe is an engaging, stimulating, practically BAFTA-winning introduction to writing, only to be met with "I don't know what to write," or "What are we doing?". And so often the difficulty comes not from writing in general, but rather getting pupils to start writing.

We all know those pupils that struggle to write, and often it's the ones that don't read a lot. There are many reasons for this correlation, but I think one key factor is that they don't have that bank of imaginative ideas that reading provides, to dip into. Sentence starters are great for providing these

ideas that allow children to get going. For me, they've been a game-changer. I made up a few within a lesson one day and popped them on the working wall. It was a spur-of-themoment idea, but it really worked. The less confident children used them, found a voice and began to engage, safe in the knowledge that they were on the right track. Others even added their own suggestions.

## So, how

you want

them to

learn.

did it work? If you haven't come across them much before, sentence starters, also known as sentence stems, give all pupils the chance to contribute, orally or in writing, while using complete sentences. They'll help the children begin their composition, while (sneakily) encouraging practice of the vocabulary and grammar conventions

## Types of sentence starters

Just like people, sentence starters come in many shapes and sizes. Some are a classroom staple and useful for many writing opportunities. Others are created for a more specific purpose. They can help to introduce, activate prior knowledge, build, support, structure, suggest, clarify, elaborate, give examples, reinforce and summarise.

You can use them at any point in the lesson to structure meaningful conversation. They can be useful at the beginning of a piece of writing, in the middle, or even towards the end – whenever you think they will clarify learning or

## Here are my steps to success:

aid progress.

Create
When thinking
about writing
genres, create
your starters
and always

include

genre-related key vocabulary, phrases and language structures. Start small and keep sessions speedy, oral and fun at first.

## Adapt

Once pupils have mastered using them, download these ready-made sentence starter clipboards: tinyurl.com/tp-SentenceStarters Use as they are, or adapt to suit your style, teaching, children or aims. You choose. Just be sure to build in progression.

### Model

Show pupils how to use sentence starters. Don't just focus on the writing, but the thinking, the choosing, and the 'hmmm, that one doesn't quite work, I need to change it' moments. Model changing your mind, and the messy planning and writing process: just do it with the sentence starters as part of the journey.







### Practise

Review the starters you use regularly, and provide examples of how children could potentially complete some of them (oral or written). Complete a couple deliberately wrong and watch the fireworks! Can children identify what's wrong with the rest of the sentence? Can they correct it? Create opportunities for practice.

## Review

Once pupils are confident with sentence starters, they can share their ideas. You can critique results, giving kind, constructive feedback. A crucial piece of advice to give to pupils is: "Vary your sentence starters." Even with strong sentence openers, writing becomes bland if they overuse the same ones. Encourage variation. Write your own bland version and read it out in a monotone voice, just to drive home the point.

## Revisit (regularly)

Plan regular revisits. To encourage progression, challenge pupils with sentence starters that are just above their current assessment level. Make them work for it!

As well as making sure you're following the right processes,

engaging activities can also help bring your writing lessons to life. These are my favourites for helping pupils use sentence starters:

## **Connections**

Cut out (or just mix up on a worksheet) a selection of sentence starters and endings. Pupils need to match up each starter with the correct ending. Are there any starters that work with more than one ending? Why? This activity is great for provoking discussion on the ways we use language.

## Upgrade

Prepare some sentence starters and give a copy to each pupil. Then, give them two to three minutes to complete each one, using information from recent learning. After three or four minutes, the children should swap their sentences with a partner and add to or edit the information on their partner's sheet. After another three or four minutes, pupils should then swap back and review their edited list.

## Sentence starter reboot

Get pupils to choose a paragraph from an old piece of writing that they want to improve, and have them redraft it using sentence starters. Encourage them to focus on choosing the starters that are going to provide the best flow, will have the best impact, and will make their writing the best it can be. This is a good opportunity to discuss who the intended audience of the writing is, and

whether children can figure out which type of sentence starters will work best. For example, are they trying to introduce something, support an argument, give examples, or summarise a point of view?

### News at 10

This follows on well from 'sentence starter reboot', and involves pupils presenting their writing as a news report, using the appropriate sentence structures. You could even turn your classroom into a news studio and have the children take it in turns to read their work, and give each other constructive feedback.

## Prior knowledge tap

For this activity, give the children a time limit and see how many sentence starters they can come up with. You could try prompting them with questions like: "How many sentence starters that you would expect to see in a set of instructions can you write in four minutes?"

## Interactive dice

Try adding sentence starters onto interactive dice, so pupils have a fun way to practise their vocabulary. In groups of three or four, depending on the size of your class, give each pupil a turn rolling the die, and then the rest of the group need to come up with different possible endings to the starter that has been rolled. The bonus is that these are easy to adapt, depending on your class needs or learning aims. TP

## 10 REASONS TO USE SENTENCE **STARTERS**

They're easy to make, adapt and readily available.

Starters provide scaffolding for pupils who need additional support and more time to think.

Conversations become more vocabulary- and content-rich. Pupils build on each other's ideas.

F They create a supportive environment where pupils encourage one another.

They can be adapted for individual SEND aims to allow all pupils to access learning.

Familiarity with them can help to decrease anxiety and encourage a positive mindset to get started.

Like the joy of a good pick 'n' mix sweet selection, a budding writer can really experiment and learn new ways of expressing themselves.

Sentence starters often work like a 'word map' to help explain struggles when pupils need help. They are a great tool for children who are non-verbal - I found this to my absolute delight!

You can use them for games and spelling when you have a few spare minutes.

You can download a FREE set of sentence starters at tinyurl.com/ tp-SentenceStarters



Collette Waddle is a teacher and resource creator. Follow her

on Twitter @ColletteR







## Book CIUB

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







## Silver Linings by Fiona Woodcock

(£11.95 HB, HarperCollins Children's)

Oh dear - Pip's day appears to be getting worse and worse, and it's putting her in a bad mood. Luckily, her best friend Parker is around to help her see the silver linings in all her setbacks. An extremely simple story that is elevated by gorgeous illustrations, Silver Linings is great for very small children who might struggle with getting over disappointments or hitches in their plans. From paper boats being whisked away by the wind, to rain spoiling an outside play day, there are plenty of scenarios that will be familiar to your pupils. This book would also be a great starter for children who can't yet read, as the illustrations are so expressive as to almost tell the story independently of the text. Share with kids at your next story time to remind everyone that although life often doesn't go the way we plan, there's always a silver lining, especially when friends are about.

## **Be Yourself / Sharing** by Roger Hargreaves

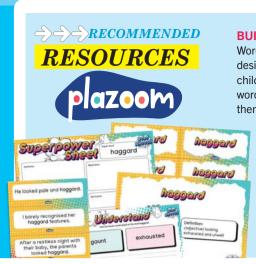
(£4.99, Farshore)

The beloved Mr Men and Little Miss are back with two new titles in the 'Discover You' series. Be Yourself and Sharing explore facets of personality amongst well-known Mr Men and Little Miss characters, and help teach your youngest children about how to develop confidence, and the joy of sharing with others. In Be Yourself, Mr Funny is full of confidence, but Mr Quiet soon learns that you don't have to be funny or loud to believe in yourself. Meanwhile, in Sharing, Mr Grumpy and Little Miss Stubborn find it difficult to share, but learn to enjoy the feeling you get from playing fairly, with some help from their friends Little Miss Sunshine and Mr Cool. With classic illustrations that generations can recognise and enjoy, these new titles are designed to help children understand more about their own emotions and how to manage them - perfect for supporting personal development in KS1 and beyond.

## Luma and the Grumpy Dragon by Leah Mohammed, ill. L Schauer

(£6.99, Welbeck)

As far as Luma's mum is aware, she has a lovely little fluffy puppy called Tamir; he loves breakfast (and lunch, and dinner!), and playing with Luma. But, when Tamir and Luma are alone, or with Luma's Nani, Tamir transforms from a fluffy puppy into a scaly dragon! Today, dragon Tamir is grumpy because Luma's new friend Ella is coming to play, and he's jealous. He's determined to cause trouble... Meanwhile, it's Nani's birthday and her very own dragon Zayan hasn't come to visit. Can Luma and Tamir track Zayan down in time for birthday tea? This sweet book contains two stories, and plenty of expressive, black-and-white illustrations so children can follow along, even if they're new to chapter books. Ideal for story time or independent reading, large text and short chapters mean that those moving on from picturebooks won't be overwhelmed with too many words on each page.



## **BUILD WORD POWER**

Word Whoosh, from Plazoom, is designed to clarify and extend children's understanding of tier 2 words from Reception to Y6+, enabling them to make more ambitious and

accurate language choices when speaking and writing.
Each resource pack explores six words through a series of four mini-lessons: read and visualise, associate, understand, and define and master (based on the Frayer model).

Find out more at bit.ly/PlzWords





## Rhinoceros Can't Draw ill. Mr Griff and Luke Newell

(£9.99, Noodle Juice)

Saving Neverland by Abi Elphinstone (£7.99, Puffin)

••••• Rhinoceros can't draw, but he's keen to learn, and he'd love it if you could join him on his journey from apprentice to artist! With help from his friends Orangutan, Crocodile and Tiger, Rhinoceros is ready to explore all facets of the art world, and put pencil to paper. This fun and varied book is not just an instruction manual for young artists looking to develop their talents, but rather a workbook for anyone who would like to stretch their skills, or even just learn a bit more about the kind of art they enjoy. From explaining the visual origins of the alphabet to exploring shading, perspective, landscapes and tone, there is plenty for any pupil interested in drawing. Artists can scribble right on the pages, and with over 30 activities, 'warm up' exercises, and big ideas, this is sure to keep kids busy for hours. An ideal addition for any art lesson or creative session.

In an ordinary-looking townhouse, on an ordinary-looking street in Bloomsbury, London, there is a window that won't shut. A window that hasn't shut, in fact, for 100 years. Martha Pennydrop, resident of said unassuming townhouse, is herself very curious about it. And as it turns out, 14 Darlington Road is not exactly as ordinary as it first seems, which Martha discovers when she stumbles upon a drawer full of magic fairy dust in her bedroom that allows her to fly from the enchanted window... Over 100 years after J M Barrie's beloved Peter Pan first hit the shelves, we are whisked back into the magical land of Captain Hook and the Lost Boys, but this time with a female hero to lead the way. Abi Elphinstone's modern reimagining of one of history's most beloved adventure stories reminds us that the joy of childhood capers really doesn't have to stop, even if, unlike Peter, we are doomed to grow up.

## Meet the **author**

ABI ELPHINSTONE ON REIMAGINING THE CLASSICS, AND NEVER GROWING OUT OF ADVENTURE



What made you want to modernise a beloved classic? I wanted the opportunity to readdress some

elements of the original that I found unsettling, namely the sexism and racist stereotypes. So, I set about re-imagining a more inclusive, compassionate and contemporary story while staying true to the spirit of the original: the nail-biting peril of battling pirates, and the joy and ache of growing up. Writing Saving Neverland was mostly exciting but also overwhelming — there's a lot at stake when you're dealing with such a beloved classic!

## What do you think is the most enduring lesson from the story of Peter Pan?

I'm a big believer in the importance of childhood adventures, but in the original *Peter Pan*, we're presented with the idea that growing up suddenly means saying no to adventures. In *Saving Neverland*, I wanted to combine the idea of a boy who never grows up with a girl who does — and the power in that. If she can bottle everything that childhood is made up of — imagination, courage, friendship, wonder and hope — and carry it through with her into adulthood, she'll be on the cusp of her greatest adventure yet.

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

There are some official Puffin resources, but as a former teacher I'm always thinking of ideas for my books! Try creating your own fantastical land with map-drawing (like the one at the beginning of the book); or see where your story takes you when you start with the words what if... What if the footprint in the sand down on the beach belongs to a dragon? Or, in the case of Saving Neverland, what if you found a drawer full of gold dust that meant you could fly?

Saving Neverland by Abi Elphinstone (£7.99, Puffin) is out now. Find free resources at tinyurl.com/tp-SN



Sue says...

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



Is there a secret to getting the balance right between correcting errors in children's writing, and encouraging them to be ambitious in their use of vocabulary and sentence structures?

- TP, Year 3/4 teacher

Getting pupils to use unfamiliar vocabulary and grammar accurately in their own writing can be tricky. On the one hand, you want them to try new skills and ideas, but on the other, it's important that misconceptions around spelling and usage don't become embedded. The learning process can — and even should — be naturally messy, with many mistakes along the way as children explore how to use what they have been taught independently. A safe environment where pupils feel they can try out ideas, secure in the understanding that it's ok to make errors, is the most important thing to establish in order to nurture experimentation and ambition.

The best way to encourage trying new skills when writing independently is to model this yourself, including ideas that don't work as well as those that do. Share your internal voice when writing, explaining the process, not just the outcome. This enables you to address any misconceptions that the pupils have, or errors that you have seen in their writing. They could then be given time to correct these independently in their own work.

At the point of writing, offering oral feedback is the most effective way to correct errors, discussing what needs to be changed and why. If you are marking work after the lesson, always highlight and make corrections according to the objective that you are teaching first and foremost. Then, if there are other errors that need to be addressed, it may be better to make a note and discuss these with the pupil in the following lesson. It can be very off-putting for a child to find a large number of errors marked in their work and it will almost certainly put them off taking a risk with their writing in future. Always acknowledge their attempt to use new learning, saying how pleased you are that they are exploring interesting vocabulary and sentence structures, whilst gently guiding them to the correct use.

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

## Where there's a Will...

Whether you're a huge
Shakespeare fan, or still
scarred from struggling to
read his speeches out loud in
front of your Y8 classmates
at secondary school, there's
no denying the playwright's
importance in the literary
and cultural life of our nation
– and what better time to
introduce him to your KS2
pupils than as his birthday
is celebrated, in April?

At Plazoom, you'll find a range of intriguing, age-appropriate resources inspired by the work of England's most famous writer, including comprehension packs, writing tasks based on his plays and poems, and vocabulary-building activities; but for a first experience of the Bard of Avon that's bound to get children onside, why not appeal to their mischievous side with a hilarious lesson based on Shakespeare's renowned knack for coming up with fantastically creative and cutting insults?

## FREE RESOURCE Download your pack bit.ly/PlzBard





Ideas, techniques and resources

for all your literacy needs

## Did you know...?

- In his will, Shakespeare left his wife 'the second-best bed in the house'... and nothing else!
- The moons of Uranus are mostly named after Shakespearean characters, including Juliet and Ariel.
- Shakespeare only started writing sonnets because a plague caused all the theatres to be closed.

## 3 more ideas for Shakespeare -related resources

1 'Who Was William Shakespeare?' UKS2 comprehension pack bit.ly/PlzBard1

Shakespearean idioms – worksheets and cards for sorting and display bit.ly/PlzBard2

Shakespeare's sonnets – Y5/6 poetry analysis and writing worksheets bit.ly/PlzBard3









## Print your own...

...shades of meaning worksheet templates!
Develop pupils' understanding of synonyms,
and expand their vocabulary choices, using these
resources, which encourage the investigation of
how words with similar meanings can subtly alter
the information given to a reader. Follow the link
to download your FREE pack.

Find them at bit.ly/PlzShades



The coronation of King Charles III is due to take place on Saturday, May 6th, 2023 - and for your pupils, it will mean the chance to witness an extraordinary display of pageantry and tradition. Why not take this opportunity to explore some of the details together, learning more about what will happen and why? For example, how much do you know about the Coronation Regalia that will feature as part of the ceremony? Plazoom has resource packs on this theme for KS1 and KS2 learners, as well as one for early years children, full of fascinating facts about St Edward's Crown, the Imperial State Crown, the Sovereign's Sceptre with Cross and the Sovereign's Orb. Find the packs at bit.ly/PlzCoronation

Help your class feel more involved in the coronation by asking them to write letters to King Charles III, celebrating his achievements as Prince of Wales and sharing their hopes and suggestions for his reign. Download a special resources pack at bit.ly/PlzLetterKC3



Before becoming an author, Dan was managing editor for The FA for seven years. Dan's first piece of published writing was a letter in Shoot magazine, when he was 13



As teachers know, tapping into pupils' interests and using them as a springboard for writing can be hugely motivating, and allows kids to focus on things they're confident about. In his episode of the *Author in Your Classroom* podcast, former sports journalist Dan Freedman, the man responsible for the much-loved Jamie Johnson books, talks about being a reluctant reader and writer as a child, and how his love of football eventually turned him into a professional storyteller, who's interviewed Cristiano Ronaldo – twice!

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

## Hack your class!



## Music time

Are your class a little slow to tidy up or get changed for PE? Use music as a timer. Change the songs so they get a little shorter every few weeks until pupils are completing tasks in your chosen time.



## Mark and sort

When checking pupils' work after a lesson, sort the books into piles: who needs to revisit or further support and who needs extending. That's your groups organised for the next lesson!



## Gather evidence

With end-of-Key-Stage assessments for Years 2 and 6 approaching, plan in opportunities for extended writing in foundation subjects to build up evidence of independent writing.

## SPECIAL

INSIDE THIS SECTION



Struggling to populate your SENCo vacancies? Think well-considered training and tweaking your vocab to make your best candidates stick...



Use these drama games to encourage your children with SEND to expand and explore what makes them unique...



Find out how one award-winning school is preparing pupils with SEND for the big wide world...



Check out our bespoke, engaging SEND resources at teachwire.net/primary/send

## When back to school stops working

Slashed SEND budgets and attendance targets have whipped up the perfect storm for school avoidance. Trying new approaches can make all the difference, argues **Liz Hawker** 

onday mornings: the chatter, clutter and chaos of coats and bags as children return to school for a day of learning. Except some pegs remain empty. While many children are thriving on the 'new normal', according to social enterprise Square Peg, 22 per cent of mainstream pupils were persistently absent in the autumn/spring term of 2021/22. That's a 117 per cent increase since 2018/19.

School avoidance or EBSA (Emotionally Based School Avoidance) is the new term for 'school refusal', a misnomer implying that pupils have made a controlled choice rather than being unable to attend due to high anxiety. It's a negative spiral – reduced attendance can lead to greater anxiety, with 'pull' factors towards home becoming stronger than 'push' factors towards school.

With attendance currently such a hot topic, it's time to explore what we can do to help.

## **Identify risk early**

EBSA risk factors take many different forms – but some are more obvious than others. Change or trauma, however small, has a profound effect on a child, so moving house, the death of a pet, or the relocation of a friend can be triggers as much as separation from a parent, illness, trauma or death. Even last-minute changes for drop-off or anxiety

during transport to school can increase risk.

Pupils with autism, sensory needs, ADHD and other SEND are at higher risk, with or without diagnosis. In the latest data from Square Peg, 37 per cent of pupils with EHC plans and 31 per cent receiving SEN support were persistently absent as of November 2022, compared with 22 per cent of all pupils.

Watch for patterns of absence or illness, too. Do they cluster in the run-up to tests or occur off your watch (perhaps in external PE lessons, lunch or after school club)? Check in with colleagues to pattern-spot problems in specific subjects and with specific staff. Look out for pupils who struggle or are solitary during breaks; EAL pupils and those with social communication difficulties are particularly at risk.

Stay abreast of family situations, too. Common EBSA triggers are a new baby, sibling jealousy or conflict, parenting difficulties, parental conflict or separation, and domestic abuse. Young carers are particularly vulnerable.

## Unpack the problem

No two children with EBSA are the same, so it's essential to meet one-to-one and unpack what is causing school-associated anxiety. One approach is to use blank cards in a 'diamond five' activity – a structured session to help establish the most effective

solutions to problems. Encourage the pupil to identify which aspects of school cause them most anxiety and write the top five on five cards. Place the biggest barriers at the top of a diamond-shape layout and those that are problematic but less so further down.

Discuss solutions and write them on the back of each card. Common adjustments could include going with a friend or named adult; early or later entry to the lesson; not needing to change into sports kit; working in a pair rather than a group; using assistive technology; or working with a desk partition.

If things worsen, co-develop 'What If?' cards. Establish which specific scenarios worry the pupil most, need to change the way we look at schooling for pupils with EBSA. This calls for some flex in the system from senior management. Agree reasonable adjustments and individualise the school experience in response to the child's needs and their triggers. Enable staff to do home visits to build a solid partnership with families and carers to inform strategies. You could also allow a reduced timetable with shorter days. later starts or earlier finishes. and a graduated approach to building back up at the pupil's pace. Familiar adults are critical. Provide pupils and parents with consistent staff to meet them in the car park, at the entrance, or outside the dinner hall.

'ladder' the pupil back in. Build attendance back up in tiny increments with pauses, where needed, along the way.

## Be universal and consistent

Create a one-page profile outlining personalised support and save it in an easily accessible, shared area. Communicate to all staff, not just teachers, how critical it is that they read and maintain the same strategies consistently and make them aware of the difference it can make. Stick rigidly to the child's new structure, ensuring predictability and consistency. Enable agency, too. If anxiety begins to build, have a dedicated circle of staff for the pupil to check in with, ensuring at least one is available at any point in the school day.

Ensure

whole-school

responsibility
As any aspect

problem, it's important that EBSA is understood at a whole-school level, with a supportive culture directing good provision.

Train all staff, not just teachers, in mental health, anxiety and school avoidance, and establish a culture of sharing concerns about children who may be at risk. Bring in ELSAs (Emotional Literacy Support Assistants) and specialist training on autism, ADHD and masking.

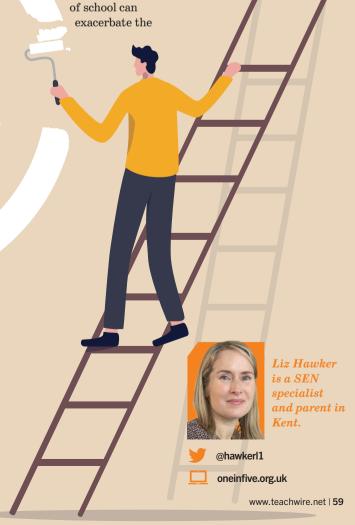
Finally, emphasise that all pupils are different but equally valued and that they belong. Increase and extend buddying, and ensure policies and procedures on behaviour, bullying and equality are clear and are followed. You can also increase pupil voice, targeting at-risk pupils; to understand EBSA better, their voices must be heard. TP

and explore
responses that
would help. Solutions
can go on the reverse side of
flashcards for a keyring or
on a foldout pocket resource,
such as these from Bromley
Education: tinyurl.com/
tp-WhatIf

## Flex the system

'Flexible' and 'individualised' should be your watchwords if you want things to improve. We There should also be a dedicated staff member for overseeing EBSA pupils. Plan adjustments to the environment and curriculum, modifying demands without lowering expectations (see the panel to the right for examples).

After extended withdrawal from school, plan how you can successfully





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## How to find (and keep) the best SEND staff

Struggling to populate your SENCo vacancies? Think well-considered training and tweaking your vocab to make your best candidates stick

## JEMMA IVE

et's be straight, teacher recruitment and retention is hard! Particularly in the current climate. Add to that the need for teachers with SEND experience or specifically SENCos, and you've reduced the available pool of teachers even more.

The best place to start when recruiting and retaining SEND staff is to understand why people choose a career in SEND to begin with. Once we understand this, we can try and tailor the approach.

I worked in a SEND setting for 15 years, and I came to understand that many of my colleagues (permanent and temporary) chose a career within SEND as they wanted to make a positive impact. However, people's ability to make this impact is currently being hindered.

In 2021, nasen revealed that 75 per cent of primary SENCos were being pulled away from their role to perform other duties. It's safe to say that situation hasn't improved. Now, more than ever,

schools need not only a solid recruitment plan in place to attract SENCos, but a solid retention strategy too.

## Attracting temporary staff

More often than not, pupils with SEND do not adapt to change quickly, so when people leave or are off, it can be an unpleasant situation for all. For us, it was really beneficial to have more than one person that is known to students and be able to

execute their individual education plans (IEPs).

One of the ways we dealt with this challenge was by employing teachers and learning support assistants (LSAs) part-time through our chosen agency.

When engaging workers on a temporary basis, consider a direct hiring model and use a managed service to run the payroll. One of the things I found out when working with schools was what LSAs actually took home after agency fees. By hiring temporary workers directly, you're omitting the middleman, allowing you to pay the worker more, whilst saving you on agency fees.

Attracting permanent staff

In the current climate, finding SENCos, teachers and/or support workers who have lots of experience can be extremely challenging.

Start the conversation
by exploring a
long-term
strategy on
how the school
could upskill
and support
potential
hires. For
example,
clearly

communicating the job requirements, expectations and what candidates could gain from working at your school is crucial. Be sure to make employees aware of the future training opportunities available, too.

Consider how your school(s) is perceived in the wider community. Does your school have a strong social media presence and does your website clearly communicate the school's ethos? Potential hires are likely to look at your website and social media to help inform their decision on whether to apply.

To inform the message you put out there, survey your current staff. This is a quick and easy way to ensure your message reflects the internal feeling.

Also think about the temporary workers that you use. If there are any who have been working with you for some time, you may be able to take them on, temp to perm, with no fees. For instance, agencies that are on the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) framework have agreed that after 12 weeks, no fees apply. Find out more at tinyurl. com/tp-CCSteachers

## Retainment

Keeping staff engaged in the education sector is becoming increasingly hard, let alone within SEND. With better pay and work-life balance being offered elsewhere, we can understand why.

In my school we used to try and cover roles internally if we had short-term absences. This worked for small amounts of time, but important that everyone is on the same page when it comes to that next career step. What CPD is available and is it relevant? Some of the best SENCos are people who have been in the school long-term and have tried different roles.

## "We can tackle this crisis, but to do so effectively, collaboration is key"

in the long term it put additional stress on existing employees. By tracking patterns of absence amongst your staff team you'll have visibility and data to help predict what to expect going forward. Using this insight to inform decisions could enable you to put a plan in place to take the pressure off existing staff.

The lack of people training to be in the SEND sector and lack of spaces for those children who need it most is concerning. Things must change on a system level, and it needs to happen quickly. But as much as we want it to, this won't be achieved overnight. We can however work together now to help change the narrative.

We can change the way the sector thinks about and treats temporary and permanent workers; for example, by using different terminology we can instil a sense of value and belonging in the extended workforce. By reviewing how we use data and technology, we can take back control of our workforce and find models and solutions that work for schools. We can tackle this crisis that we find ourselves in, but to do so effectively, collaboration is key. TP



Jemma Ive is a former SEND teacher, and is now operations

manager at Teacher Booker.

@teacherbooker





## THREE WAYS TO FIND AND SUPPORT STAFF

TURN TO TECH Have you thought about hiring directly via your own talent pool or even a collaborative bank with schools in your local area, MAT or local authority? This is neither expensive nor hard to set up. There are companies that offer software solutions that can help you manage and attract temporary workers, some can even handle the compliance and payroll for you, completely removing the administration burden whilst ensuring staff are being paid fairly. You can find yourself recruiting temporary staff with a click of a button, and if you're a SENCo, you can find temporary positions with ease!

## 2 INVEST IN STAFF MORALE

You don't always need to think big when it comes to retainment; sometimes the smallest gestures can make a big difference to staff morale. An informal "How was your day?" and showing an interest in staff members' life away from the classroom can be just as powerful as sitting down to plot out a detailed career development plan.

Regular check-ins and making sure time is set aside for staff to interact on a more informal level, where they can push pupil conversations to one side, can really help staff feel valued, listened to and supported.

And you never know, you could have just met with your next SENCo superstar.

## THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Some of the best Learning
Support Assistants I have ever
worked with did not have a
background working in
schools (let alone in a
SENCo role) and they e-xcelled!
Don't dismiss someone without
what is seen as 'relevant
experience'. I'm not saying
offer someone with no
experience a permanent
contract, but maybe
try that person on a
temporary basis.

## Tapestry, by The Foundation Stage Forum Ltd.

Record, share, and celebrate children's learning with this secure online learning journal



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

Created by educators, Tapestry is an easy-to-use, secure online learning journal helping staff and families celebrate and support their children's learning in both mainstream and specialist provision. Every subscription gives access to a wide variety of features designed to reduce workload and assist the development of each setting and school.

## 1 ENGAGING WITH PARENTS

Tapestry understands how important it is for parents and carers to be able to engage and contribute to their child's learning and development. Through the use of features such as observations and memos. Tapestry allows educators and families to collaborate in an equal partnership to support their children, encouraging consistent dialogue throughout a child's time at a school or setting. Educators can build meaningful relationships with families, strengthening their knowledge of the children and giving families the opportunity to provide valuable input.

## SUPPORT YOUR SEND PROVISION

All children are entitled to child-centred assessment, not just those who are developing typically. The Cherry Garden Branch Maps framework, available online exclusively with Tapestry, was created specifically by Ofsted Outstanding specialist school, Cherry Garden, as a resource to support educators working with children with learning differences and disabilities. Development doesn't necessarily look the same for all pupils, and the unique interactive orchard provides the opportunity to celebrate progress and engage children and families with their learning.



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that works for their cohorts
and team, whilst keeping the
child at the centre of their
practice. The thoroughness



## Find out more:

Visit: tapestry.info/features Email: customer.service@ eyfs.info screen also provides staff with an 'at a glance' view of what has been covered in their provision, aiding future planning decisions.

## 4 SETTING ACTIVITIES

Create, store and send custom activities. responding to children's unique learning needs with Tapestry's Activities feature. Educators can develop their own catalogue of activities, and choose existing ideas from Tapestry's activities catalogue. Relatives can view their child's set activities on their devices and respond to them with their own observations, providing staff with a full picture of the child's experiences.

## 5 CHILD LOGIN With Child Login,

children can sign into Tapestry securely from anywhere, allowing them to view and comment on existing observations and respond to set activities independently. Pupils can engage with their learning directly, giving them more autonomy and encouraging them to take pride in their own work. Educators can add assessments to observations uploaded by the children and provide meaningful feedback on their contributions, working collaboratively with them to add their voice to their journey.

## **KEY POINTS**

Each subscription includes all features, meaning no hidden costs or fees. Package prices are dictated only by the total number of child profiles needed. Tapestry has a friendly and knowledgeable customer service team, who are happy to provide assistance and guidance with any and all queries you may have.

Tapestry is supported by an experienced education team, dedicated to making sure service consistently suits the needs of the sector and customer base.

Free high-quality CPD, created in collaboration with sector experts, is included in all subscriptions, offering effective training to support staff with their ongoing professional development.

## **EXPRESS YOURSELF!**

Use these drama games to encourage your children with SEND to expand and explore what makes them unique, rather than shrinking to fit a non-existent 'norm'...

SAMANTHA MARSDEN

hile working as a drama teacher, I've seen many SEND students engage with the subject enthusiastically, even surprising those who know them.

Once, while working in a special school, I saw a non-verbal pupil speak for the first time ever! In class, we had been working with the picturebook Handa's Surprise for about four weeks, exploring the story with drama games, instruments, words, and movement, and often having great fun pretending to be the animals from the book. One week, I turned the page of the book, and a normally non-verbal student said, "monkey" while pointing to the monkey taking the banana from Handa's basket! Their TA and I were stunned (and a little emotional). Other pupils, teachers, and parents were delighted. From then on, the child became verbal in other areas of their life, too. They probably would have become verbal without drama, but I think our activities might have sped the process up, and others thought so too. This pupil loved drama, participating, and opening up in class more so than they did in other subjects.

Drama can be an experimental, playful, and creative space, where mistakes are not only allowed, but encouraged. This can be particularly liberating for SEND students.

## Drama for acceptance

Too often, SEND pupils are required to shrink themselves to fit in. But drama is a place that allows them to expand and express themselves.

Things I will often be found saying in the drama class are: "There is no wrong way", "Don't worry about what others think", and "Do the first thing that comes into your head". However, not all drama activities are helpful. There are some harmful drama games out there that can panic children and make them feel rejected.

When choosing content, I

to number one. It's a great activity to calm the energy and bring the class back to focusing on a common goal.

## Drama for inclusivity

When taught well, drama is a subject that offers a safe space to express creativity, to work in teams, all while increasing time, drama was the only subject I was good at. It was a place I didn't have to worry about words, or numbers, or remembering information. I could use my imagination, and verbal reasoning skills, which were my strengths. It was one of the few practical subjects where I could get up on my feet and do.

I'm not alone as I've taught

dozens of students

"Drama can be a plaful space where mistakes are not only allowed, but encouraged" \_\_

recommend making sure you choose games and activities that bring the class together. Avoid drama games that have winners and losers.

## Drama for focus

I've seen children who usually struggle with focus pay attention well in the drama classroom. Pupils with ADHD can find drama practically engaging. A well-planned drama lesson should be fast-paced, and engage students physically, vocally, creatively, and mentally. When performing a live improvisation in front of the class, there is no room for your attention to drift!

There are many drama activities to help students slow down and focus, too, such as relaxation exercises to music, Stanislavski's circles of attention, Lee Strasberg's imaginary object exercise, and counting to 20 as a group.

For counting to 20 as a group, each number is said by one person at random. If two people say the number at the same time, the group go back

confidence. But when taught badly, it can further exclude.

'Yes, lets' is one of my favourite warm-up games, as everyone's ideas are welcomed and executed. This involves proposing an idea to be mimed, and a positive response (think improv basics). For example, you might say, "Let's all read a book" and everyone shouts, "Yes, lets" – at which point you all mime reading a book. You might continue, "Let's all ride a unicorn". Pupils reply "Yes, lets", and you all mime riding a unicorn.

After you give a few examples, and when the game is in full swing, ask students to put their hands up if they have an idea. Explain that all ideas, except for violent ones, are welcome. Try and give as many pupils as possible a go, and encourage (but don't force), reluctant children to offer an idea.

## Dyslexia and drama

Drama can be very empowering for students with dyslexia. I have dyslexia and for a long



with dyslexia since, who also love drama as it's a subject where they get to use their strengths and forget about their weaknesses.

## **Explain activities** in several different ways

People receive information in different ways, and for inclusivity, I believe it's important for the teacher to

communicate using several methods. I often explain an activity in two different ways, or sometimes three, always using words, tone of voice, movement, and facial expressions to communicate. Because for some children, visual signals can really help them.

For example, if I have a SEND student in the class who responds well to pictures, I will make sure to include visuals

in my explanations

for the whole class. If

I ask the class to imagine it's snowing, for instance, I will pretend to be very cold, and may even hold up a picture of snow. I am likely also to play a piece of music that sounds snowy, so that pupils have audio and visual guides to improvise with as they go on their snowy adventure.

## What if a SEND pupil becomes overwhelmed?

If a pupil becomes overwhelmed, try and keep the class energy calm. Some focus drama games, breathing exercises, or mindfulness activities might help to bring down the energy of the group.

Offer the overwhelmed student a quiet place to sit, and explain that they may watch and join in when they are ready.

If the class is independently rehearsing short scenes or improvisations, some SEND students might benefit from rehearsing in a quiet

space, away from the rest of the class, so that other children practising doesn't become a distraction, or too overwhelming for them. TP

## FIVE STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL DRAMA LESSONS

Outline the content of the class at the start of the lesson to help SEND pupils who respond well to structure. Many children with SEND find it comforting to know what to expect. If possible, write this on a board to help anchor these pupils.

No idea is too silly in drama. Encourage and praise pupils when they share their creativity.

One way to start the class is to get children into a circle and then ask them to do a vocal warm-up. For example, ask them to moo, meow, or woof to the tune of 'Twinkle, twinkle little star'. Or you can do some tongue twisters, or funny sounds, all together.

Follow this up with a quick movement warm up. For example, ask the class to imagine chewing on a big toffee, or biting into a rotten apple, or that they are a tiny seed growing into a beautiful flower, slowly.

For inclusivity, never tolerate any unkind comments, looks, gestures, or laughs. If this happens, take the offending pupil aside and explain kindness and acceptance are essential in drama. If this doesn't improve the behaviour, you may need to remove them from the group temporarily.



Sam is a former drama. teacher at schools and Youth Theatres. She is the

author of 100 Acting Exercises for 8–18-Year-Olds, published by Bloomsbury.

## Life after PRIMARY

Find out how one award-winning school is preparing pupils with SEND for the big wide world

SARAH SUMNER

ith all the time and resource pressures put on teachers today, it can be really hard to keep track of what our jobs are fundamentally for: to get children ready for life beyond their years with us.

At Westlea Primary in Swindon, our children's journey is not about achieving the best test results, but encouraging the best attitudes and behaviour across the board. We therefore focus on teaching life skills that will help all our learners, whatever their abilities or background, to thrive long after they leave us.

benefited our pupils, and hopefully, following these ideas, could help yours too.

## Personal development

As educators, we must think about practical life skills that all children need to thrive in the long-term.

Each term at
Westlea, we look at
a different British
value that we link to
current affairs. This
term is 'individual
liberty' with a focus on
equality, liberty and freedom
for all. The children also
watch *Newsround* every
day, to encourage debate

"All our pupils learn to understand and celebrate difference, in school and out"

It's this commitment that saw us win the nasen Award for Primary Provision in 2022 (see our very proud team at tinyurl.com/ tp-nasenWinnersWestlea). With our child-centred approach, and an understanding that we all have different pathways, we're building confident and enthusiastic individuals who want to be 'good citizens' and achieve. The actions and activities we take part in each and every day have greatly

and discussion in every class

– and explore what life is
like beyond school; beyond
Swindon; beyond the UK.

For every year, we also create and promote year-group aspirations that are completely non-curricular. Whether that's walking in the woods, swimming lessons, or linking up with a local charity, these simple activities add exciting, practical milestones to the school calendar.

On a peer-to-peer level,

our prefects in Year 2 and Year 6, and our council reps from Year 2 upwards, collaborate to tackle topics like bullying and supporting the local community. Any pupil can put themselves forward for the role, and we have a real mix onboard. Leadership

are also able to develop their communication skills among peers, as well as learning more about their talents.



## Real role models

It is vital that pupils with SEND can see what they can aspire to beyond the school gates, too. As a result, role modelling is another approach we prioritise. We invite former pupils with SEND who have progressed beyond school, in both careers and education, into school to share their stories great and small. This has ranged from medalwinning Paralympians to inspiring Year 10s and 11s who are now navigating their next choices. We often invite university and college students back as well, so the children and their parents can see how they have moved on, and have exposure to varying goals and aspirations.

Whether in special Q&A

sessions or assemblies, we make sure we include a wide variety of speakers, especially those with SEND. This is a simple and powerful way to show that having a special education need or disability needn't hold anyone back. One day, perhaps, those children watching will return with tales of the exciting impact they have

made so far in their own lives.

On a broader level, we also work with the wider community, engaging with local police, nursing staff, firefighters and other professionals, to give pupils practical tools on how to be a better citizen. It's all about exposing them to new career pathways and other role models outside of school.

## Inclusion takes action

We've worked hard to build a school environment that is fully inclusive to all learners. Our on-site specially resourced provision for children who are physically disabled, plus our unit for children with complex needs, sits at the heart of Westlea. By actively making such resources highly visible

and integrating children with SEND into mainstream classes and extra-curricular offerings, all pupils can grow used to being around a whole spectrum of needs, such as attention deficit disorder, autism spectrum disorder, and more.

All our pupils learn to understand and celebrate difference, and do not have an issue with it either within school or outside the school gates. They see that this is how communities work, and that absolutely everyone brings their own special value to the table.

## **Full participation**

While we love the inclusive framework we have created at Westlea, we also recognise that the outside world is sadly not always as accommodating to the needs of children with SEND. Rather than accept the inequalities, our staff go above and beyond to eliminate segregation, and make sure everything necessary is in place wherever we go.

In an upcoming trip to the mayor's parlour, for instance, we have made detailed risk assessments, and worked hard to ensure that appropriate resources such as ramps are in place for pupils who have wheelchairs. The result is sure to be a fantastic day out for every pupil, with no one left behind. It also shows pupils that these kinds of adjustments can and should be made, so that all citizens can participate fully in community life.

Ensuring full participation can also mean modifying our approaches to tasks within the structure of our timetable - whatever it takes to respect the needs of individuals, and allow everybody to grow. In our nativity play last year, for example, one student who was challenged by the pressure of performing to a large group was invited, instead, to perform at the dress rehearsal - which their parents came to watch. As a result, they too developed confidence, courage and determination, in a situation made appropriate for their needs.

So, regardless of your pupils' starting points or disabilities, we truly believe that every young person has the potential to succeed at something. We have a moral duty to help unlock their future aspirations. By working together, building the crucial skills children and young people need today, they can all have a bright future beyond the primary school gates. TP



Sarah Sumner is headteacher at Westlea Primary School in

Swindon (westleaprimary.co. uk). In October 2022, the school won the nasen Award for Primary Provision. Learn more and register for the 2023 nasen Awards at nasen.org. uk/awards

## HOW TO PROMOTE SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Look at proactive inclusion through clubs, school trips and extra-curricular activities

Create bespoke timetables and adapted teaching, where necessary

Seat pupils in class with those outside of their normal group of friends

Encourage children of different ages and abilities to play together

Think outside the box and create your own in-school birthday parties so everyone can join in the fun

Have a playground buddy system where children are trained to support others who might be struggling

Have trained ELSAs in school who are available to support both in the classroom, 1:1 and out on the playground

Hold assemblies with a range of themes, and linked to a range of beliefs

Have a broad and balanced, outward-looking curriculum which is accessible for all

By modelling and encouraging social interaction we can help prepare all pupils for the future social aspects of their lives, as well as developing tolerance and understanding among children across school.

## Discover the early reading programme for children with SEND

## from Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised

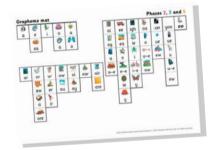
Deliver a consistent and highly effective approach to teaching phonics, and help all children learn to read with the right level of challenge and a graduated approach.



Little Wandle for Letters and Sounds Revised is the DfE validated early reading programme used in over 4500 schools.

Visit <u>littlewandlelettersandsoundsrevised.org.uk</u> to find out more





Discover the SEND classroom resources



## Supported by 254 fully decodable books matched to the Little Wandle progression from Big Cat





collins.co.uk/BigCatLittleWandleL&SRevised

## REASONS TO TRY...

## The WellComm Primary Speech and Language Toolkit

Practical help to identify speech and language difficulties in primary-aged children, and support better learning outcomes

QUICK & SIMPLE SETUP
No specialist knowledge or
expertise is required to use the
WellComm Toolkit - the easy-to-use
reporting system is there to help
everyone from teachers, SENCOs,
speech and language therapists
and teaching assistants. The
aim is to provide easy-to-use
support for everyone involved
with children.

## 2 EVERYTHING YOU NEED IN ONE TOOLKIT

The toolkit contains all you need to screen, support and help develop your pupils. Each kit also comes with The Big Book of Ideas, which contains 150 age-appropriate activities and strategies, as well as an optional Online Reporting Wizard.



## PERSONALISED APPROACH

The toolkit doesn't just focus on results, but also making sure that the individual needs of each pupil are met. The Big Book of Ideas provides play-based activities to help you understand a child's needs and ensure that appropriate action can be taken. Early intervention is vital in ensuring that a child does not fall behind.

## USE AS MANY TIMES AS YOU NEED

The WellComm Toolkit can be used repeatedly, allowing you to screen as many times as you need and measure the impact of what you've put in place for each pupil. Each section within the toolkit works together to create a structured and personalised approach to teaching and learning.

## Contact:

Find out more by visiting the website: gl-assessment.co.uk/ WellComm

## At a glance

- Developed by Speech and Language Therapists at Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.
- Devised for children ages 6 months—6 years (early years) and 6—11 years (primary).
- Also suitable for EAL (English as an Additional Language) learners, so you can determine whether the child's learning challenges are caused by a language barrier.

## 4

REASONS TO TRY...

## Finish This... from the ENO

Use opera and animation as a creative springboard for collaborative composition with the English National Opera's FREE nationwide music-making programme

THE OPERA
Finish This... invites pupils to
respond to, and resolve, a purposefully
unfinished operatic piece titled *Blue*, *Red, Yellow*. The programme invites
pupils to immerse themselves in the role
of a composer; children will receive a
mysterious letter and film, as well as their
own ENO composer badge!

## THE INCLUSIVITY

Finish This... offers multiple entry points to music-making using graphic scores, animation and freedom to make creative choices. Plus, the SEN version includes PECS visual aids, Makaton videos, and offers two learner pathways: a sensory strand and collaborative exploration strand. One teacher said: "It was the most exciting project, broke down so many barriers and was completely inclusive."



THE APPROACH
The Finish This...scheme of work
and resources have been co-created with
KS2 and SEND teachers, ensuring schools
receive a project that is packed with
curriculum links; offers flexibility within
a structured framework; is a meaningful
experience for your pupils; and practical
for classroom delivery.

## THE RESOURCES

You'll receive access to online CPD training, lesson plans, and a toolkit resource package delivered to your school. Plus, the online hub offers a suite of classroom video activities and supporting CPD films. One teacher said: "This is a high-quality teaching resource that brings wonder and imagination to the music curriculum in an inclusive and accessible way."



### **Contact:**

Find out more at eno.org/finishthis or get in touch at finishthis@eno.org

## At a glance

- 100% of teachers strongly agreed that pupils developed composition skills over the course of the project
- 100% of teachers said they would recommend this project to another school
- 90% of non-music specialist teachers felt more confident teaching music after completing the project



Sign up now to take part in Brake's Kids Walk 2023 on Wednesday 14 June.

Thousands of children across the UK will be putting their best feet forward to promote road safety in their local communities and the health and planet-saving benefits of walking.



www.brake.org.uk/kidswalk



of teaching resources, including posters, lesson plans and fun activities featuring Shaun the Sheep. Learn about road safety and take a walk near your school to shout out for children's rights for safe places to walk.









## 岩**WOW** FACTOR

Allow pupils to really enjoy outdoor play, and develop their physical, social, and cognitive skills with Timotay Playscapes' natural playgrounds



## EXPERIENCED EXPERTS

An experienced team of experts is available to guide you through the process, from the initial consultation through to installation. The team is bursting with innovative ideas and will help you to capture your playground vision and bring it to life. With Timotay, you are accessing a depth of knowledge and skillset, where your playground dream will become a reality.

## **DURABILITY**

All of the playgrounds and playground equipment are created by skilled and experienced woodcraftsmen using natural redwood timber. This can withstand long-term exposure to the elements while maintaining dimensional stability, resulting in safe, durable products with a long working life.

## UNIQUE PLAYGROUND

As each school is unique,
Timotay recognises that
teachers and pupils will have
specifc requirements, so
takes the time to understand
how you use your outdoor
space. The end result will
be an incredible, natural
playground that is unique to
your school and the children
in your setting.

## QUALITY AND REASSURANCE/

Timotay Playscapes will take care of the entire process for you, from initial consultation, through to design, manufacturing, installation and post installation playground care. The team will manage the entire process, to ensure longevity of your investment



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Generate, develop and communicate their ideas through drawing and modelling
- Create designs and mock-ups
- Select from a wide range of materials according to their properties
- Understand how some inventors and inventions have changed the world

## **Develop products** with famous inventors



Help pupils explore pitching, designing and prototyping their own inventions, with Abby Ball



abbyballwrites



abbyball.substack.com

In teaching, we often talk about preparing children to work in jobs that don't yet exist, and this lesson does just that. Linking famous inventors and inventions of the past with problems that need solving in pupils' own lives creates a stimulating, engaging context in which the children can generate new ideas. Learning to refine their thinking helps the children develop their own resilience and problem-solving skills. Meanwhile, pitching their inventions provides a motivating real-life application for this lesson.



Prepare for the lesson by creating two iigsaws for each table from pictures you've printed. Each group should have



an invention and the person who created it to piece together. Ideas could include:

Steve Jobs and an iPad; Gladys West and a satnav; Mary Anderson and windscreen wipers; John Logie Baird and a television; Ada Lovelace and a computer: and Edith Clarke and a calculator. Once the children have created their puzzles. share them with the whole class and talk about the inventions. Ask the children to think about how each invention makes life easier or solves a problem.

## MAIN LESSON

## 1 PITCH

Hook the children's attention by watching this short video clip from CBeebies' 'Pocket Money Pitch' (tinyurl.com/ tp-BBCpitch). Make sure the children understand the concept of a 'pitch' and then talk about Jack's product. Would they want to buy a rucksack like that? Why or why not? What problem does Jack's rucksack solve? What needs does his product meet? Remind the children that an invention has to be useful so that people will want to buy it. Refer back to the inventions the children

discovered at the beginning of the session and talk about how great inventors often start with a problem they want to solve. Ask the children to work in pairs and come up with some problems they might come across in their everyday lives. For example, carrying all their things home from school, getting the lid off a water bottle, keeping their toys tidy, help with homework, or getting to sleep at night. Do we think we could come up with some inventions to solve these problems?

## 2 DESIGN

By now the children should be highly motivated to get designing their own inventions to tackle some of the problems they face



in their own lives. It's important at this point to strike a careful balance between, on one hand, insisting on well-thoughtthrough designs that consider how an invention might actually work, but on the other hand, letting the children's imagination take them where they want to go. So you'll want to model carefully how to think through the invention and how it works. Give the children plenty of time to discuss and refine their ideas before committing anything to paper. Use the following questions to prompt their thinking: what problem does my invention solve? How will it work? What are the different parts

needed to make it work, e.g. buttons, power supply, sensors, materials, etc? Then ask pupils to design their ideas carefully on paper. Help the children to feel confident about refining their ideas by letting them start their designs again if they make a mistake or come up with a better concept. Explain that this is all part of the design process, and it doesn't have to be perfect the first time. If you want to show them some examples of finished designs, there are some brilliant ideas on the Little Inventors website (tinyurl.com/ tp-invent) - click on 'picks' at the top to see the best ones.

#### 3 PROTOTYPE

Once the children have completed their designs, you'll want to introduce the concept of a prototype - making a model of their design to show how it will work. There are loads of different ways to do this. You could offer a choice of using junk modelling; creating something out of Lego or playdough; using construction toys; or anything else you've got available in school. Again, you'll want to model this stage carefully and ensure the children have time to think through how they will represent their inventions as they move from 2D designs to 3D models. You might also want to take this opportunity to teach the children some very simple joining techniques, such as cardboard or paper hinges or flaps. As with the pitching stage, give the children plenty of time to adapt and develop their ideas as necessary, encouraging them to persevere if their initial ideas are unsuccessful. Asking the children to work in pairs will provide a useful scaffold for those who might appreciate some more support.

Abby Ball worked as a primary school teacher across both Key Stages for 16 years. She currently lives in Somerset with her husband Tim and their cat, Otta.

- Make links with the **English curriculum by** asking the children to create a short, written pitch for their invention. Getting parents or the headteacher to come and hear their pitches, or recording them on iPads for the school website and giving a prize to the best one creates a motivating, real-life context for the children's work.
- Develop the children's computing skills by asking them to create their inventions using graphic design and modelling software. This could provide an opportunity for all the Minecraft users in your class to shine as they share their skills with others!
- Set the children a research project to find out about other inventors and inventions. You could make links with equality and diversity by asking the children to explore the work of Black or female inventors.

## USEFUL

- What problem does this invention solve?
- How will your invention work? Which parts could you improve?
- Which materials might you need to use?
- How can you persuade people that they should buy your invention? What need will it meet?

Science & ICT



### WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to code a micro:bit to produce multiple visual outputs
- How to construct a parallel circuit incorporating a self-built switch
- How to use Flip (formerly Flipgrid) to digitally edit a documentary
  - How to collaborate in a team and proactively problem solve

# Put building skills to the test with robots



Combine coding, creativity and construction to bring a robotic head to life, with **Marc Bowen** 



@raglanvcprimary

Can I build another me? is the title and premise of the wonderful book by Shinsuke Yoshitake, which humorously explores the concept of what it is that makes a human being. Is it biology? Is it personality? Is it the opinions of others? As the main character discovers, it is much more complex than expected when he tries to build a robotic clone to give him some time away from his chores. For us, this was the launchpad for a fantastically engaging project, where the children were challenged to build their own, interactive robot head.

### START HERE

To start, share Can I build another me? with the class, setting the context for the challenge. From this point, provide the children with



a detailed design brief for their robot head, including the need for the robot to communicate three different emotions, have the ability to blink its lightbulb eyes, and feature in a self-made documentary. Returning to the portion of the book that displays the character's different emotions is a great lead in to selecting the feelings that the finished robot head will share. At this point, allow time for pupils to talk about their ideas with the rest of their project team.

### **MAIN LESSON**

Prior to this project, the children had already explored the theory of series and parallel circuits using a digital model, and developed their block coding skills within the online Scratch application. The goal of this project was to provide an opportunity for the children to apply their understanding in context.

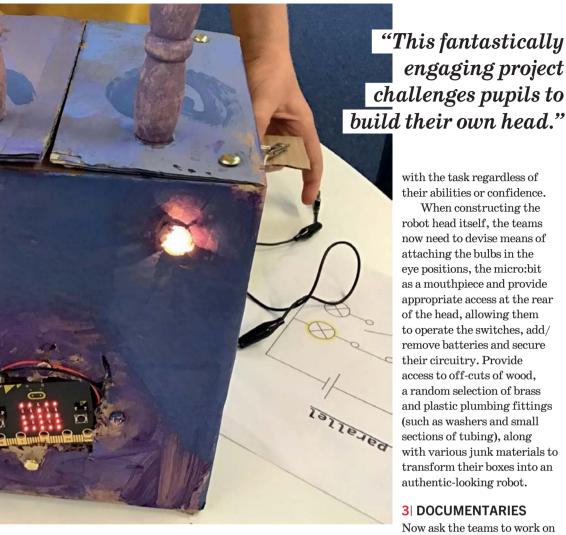
### 1 CIRCUITS

Firstly, rearrange the classroom – if you can – to create a series of resource stations (electrical components, junk modelling equipment, small hand tools and various craft equipment), as well as group workstations. Make sure

each team has access to a laptop and iPad. The basic framework for the robot head is a cardboard box; it's best to offer a range of sizes to ensure each team must consider a unique design.

From this point, the teams are responsible for organising their individual roles, developing a construction strategy and solving any problems that arise. Needless to say, the adults should be constantly on hand to offer well-placed hints, ask leading questions and mediate where necessary, helping to ensure that all the teams are able to make appropriate progress.

To construct their parallel circuits, provide children with crocodile clips, battery packs and bulbs which they need to arrange in a stacked formation, allowing the current to flow continuously, even when a switch is used to deactivate a single bulb. To construct their



switch, pupils should embed two split pins into a small rectangle of card, with a paper clip crossing the gap between them. The crocodile clips can then be attached to the underside of the split pins to complete the circuit.

Once tested and fully functional, pupils simply need to pierce two holes in the face of the robot to allow the bulb holders to pass through and secure their circuit to the inside of the head/box using tape. If the parallel circuits don't operate immediately, pupils then have to identify and solve the issue through a process of elimination; swapping out bulbs, checking the batteries, tracing their wires, etc. Whilst this might be initially frustrating for them, I found pupils were visibly elated when their robot's eyes lit up and their switches triggered the required blinking action.

#### 2 CODING

Using micro:bits to convey the robot's emotions is another opportunity to creatively problem solve. Direct pupils to focus their coding on controlling the array of LEDs on the surface of the circuit board. Ask them to code three different LED displays, which will be triggered when three button combinations are used. You can achieve this by linking three output visual coding blocks within the 'make code' editing software, which is freely accessible on the internet and is recommended for use with micro:bits. See makecode. microbit.org. Some groups in my class chose to code emoji-style icons to represent the robot's feelings, whereas others created scrolling messages within the array. All the children used the 'make code' visual code editor, which enabled everyone to engage

with the task regardless of their abilities or confidence.

engaging project

When constructing the robot head itself, the teams now need to devise means of attaching the bulbs in the eye positions, the micro:bit as a mouthpiece and provide appropriate access at the rear of the head, allowing them to operate the switches, add/ remove batteries and secure their circuitry. Provide access to off-cuts of wood, a random selection of brass and plastic plumbing fittings (such as washers and small sections of tubing), along with various junk materials to transform their boxes into an authentic-looking robot.

### 3 DOCUMENTARIES

Now ask the teams to work on their Flip documentaries. It might be worth setting up the Flip space in advance (info. flip.com), to allow recordings of up to 10 minutes. This is as simple as creating a free teacher account and 'adding a new Flip'. All recordings should be moderated by an adult. Give children the freedom to add their own filters, background effects and on-screen text, using the common on-screen options which sit below the recording window for the Flip; whilst also ensuring that they talk through their build process and demonstrate the robot head in operation. You can then view the documentaries as a class in the days following the project, with opportunities for peer feedback and evaluation.

Marc Bowen is a deputy head and primary teacher in South Wales.

- The resulting documentaries could be used as a focus for the pupils writing their own explanations or non-chronological reports; the practical experience of building the robot head. combined with the recording for reference, should make writing about it in detail all the easier.
- The micro:bit portion of the build could be further developed to challenge the children to also code audio for the robot (with the addition of an audio output device).
- The use of Can I build another me? could launch a broader series of PSHE-focused activities, as the book explores themes of diversity, acceptance, anxiety and personal identity.
- The outcomes of this project would provide a wonderful vehicle for a parental/guardian showcase; documentaries could be played on loop whilst the visitors have a chance to interact with the robot heads themselves.

### USEFUL **QUESTIONS**

- Am I. as a teacher. confident with micro:bit coding? It is possible to simulate the coding of the circuit onscreen within 'make code', without needing any of the hardware?
- Have I provided opportunities, prior to the project, for the children to develop the necessary understanding of electrical circuits? Without this, the parallel circuits might prove a significant stumbling block within the project.

Maths



## THFV'I I

- To make an estimate
- To analyse real-life data
- To create bar graphs and pie charts
- Investigate how many plastic bags are used each year
- Find out how much money is spent on plastic bags
- Learn what happens to the money made on purchasing plastic bags

### **Mathematics and** the problem with single-use plastic



Explore Earth Day from a mathematical perspective and delve into the numbers of plastic bags with Catherine Casey





Earth Day is back on 22 April, so why not take the opportunity explore our world in terms of numbers and data? This lesson will help you to look at important issues affecting the Earth right now – such as single-use plastics – whilst covering key aspects of the maths curriculum in a practical real-world way. It will also get kids thinking about issues that can affect their everyday lives, like 'how many plastic do we use each year?'.

So, without further ado, delve into real data and test out their numeracy skills in context...



Begin by explaining that we use plastic every day, and that it is all around us. **Encourage pupils** to look around the classroom and see how many items they can find that are made from



plastic. Explain that some items, such as plastic bags, plastic bottles and straws, we often only use once and then throw away, and that they're called single-use plastics. Next, discuss the fact that plastic doesn't naturally decompose, so when we throw it away it fills up landfills, litters the Earth and even ends up washed into the ocean. Approximately 80 million tons of plastic are currently destroying our oceans, and animals can become tangled in plastic or swallow it.

### **MAIN LESSON**

For this lesson, you will need:

- Graph paper
- Compasses
- Protractors
- Rulers
- Calculators

### 1 HOW TO MAKE AN **ESTIMATE**

First of all, ask pupils how many plastic bags they think are sold in a year in England. Discuss what they could base their estimate on, for example how many supermarkets there are in England; how many plastic bags they think each person uses each week; and what the population is in England. Explain that an

estimate is usually based on approximate numbers that are rounded up, and rough calculations, for example: five bags a week for 50 million people. Look at what one million and one billion mean (1 million = 1.000.000: 1 billion =1,000,000,000)

#### 2 WHAT DOES THE DATA MEAN?

Explain that the government in England releases data on the number of single-use plastic bags that are sold each year. Show pupils a copy of the data for 2022 (tinyurl.com/ tp-SingleUse).

Discuss with the children what the data shows. Explain that the table provides information from 2016 to 2022, including



the number of retailers (companies) reporting data, the number of plastic bags sold in total, and the number of plastic bags sold by the main retailers (this means the big companies such as Asda, Tesco, Lidl and Morrisons).

Ask pupils questions to check their understanding of the table. E.g. How many plastic bags were sold in 2016-2017? How many plastic bags were sold in 2021-2022? Demonstrate how to find the information in the table by selecting the correct column along the top and reading across from the correct row. Ask more complex questions such as: in which year were the most plastic bags sold? Is the number of plastic bags being sold increasing or decreasing

each year? Why do you think this is? Challenge pupils to work in pairs or small groups to discuss the table further and write three questions they could ask about the table. Then swap with another group to have a go at answering each other's questions.

### 3 CREATE BAR GRAPHS

Show pupils some examples of bar graphs, and point out the features, such as the Y axis (vertical axis) and the X axis (horizontal); the scale/ regular intervals; labelled axis and a title (the title tells you what the graph is showing).

Demonstrate how to create a bar chart on graph paper, drawing a Y axis and an X axis. Discuss what the different categories are

(2016-2017, 2017-2018,2018-2019) and how to create regular intervals for the amounts, using a ruler. Next, talk about whether the data is continuous (an infinite number that can be measured in an ongoing process, such as time, height etc) or discrete (a finite number of possible values that can be counted, such as a scale of 1-5). In this example, the number of plastic bags is discrete.

Next, provide pupils with graph paper or squared paper, and ask them to create a bar chart to show the total number of plastic bags sold between 2016 and 2022. Remind the children to label their axes and use a ruler.

Ask pupils to check their bar chart, too. Is it clearly labelled? Are the intervals equal? Have they used a ruler? Did they remember a title? How could they improve their bar chart?

Finally, discuss which representation of the data the pupils prefer – the table or the graph - and why. Can pupils compare the table and the graph? Which do they think shows the information most clearly? Which is easier to read? Can they think of another way to present the information? Does the whole class agree? Can they decide which format they would use to present data to the public?

Catherine Casey is a former teacher, and is currently a freelance educational resource writer.

### EXTENDING

- Look at the amounts donated by retailers to good causes in 2021-22, from gov.uk (tinyurl.com/ tp-SingleUse) and ask pupils questions such as: "What percentage of the money went to environmental causes?", "How much money was donated to health or heritage?", and "Which type of good cause received the most money from plastic bag sales?". Can they use their maths skills to work this out?
- Model how to draw a pie chart, and ask pupils to use the data on percentages of money donated to good causes to create their own. Follow these simple steps: convert the percentage into a decimal fraction (40% = 4/10 =0.4); multiply by 360 (the number of degrees in a circle) to calculate the amount of degrees in the pie chart: draw a circle with a pair of compasses; and use a protractor to draw on the segment.

### USEFUL **QUESTIONS**

- How much do you think a single-use plastic bag should cost and why? Do you think costs should be applied to other single-use plastic items? If yes, which items and why?
- If you use eight bags for your weekly shopping, every week, how much would you spend each vear?
- How can we reduce our use of plastics?



### Jolly Phonics Read and See books

Simple, attractive first reading books for children who are learning with synthetic phonics





### AT A GLANCE

- Part of the popular, DfE-validated Jolly Phonics scheme
- Separate books for specific graphemes or spelling patterns
- One word per page with the corresponding illustration on the following page
- Displays sound buttons to mark each grapheme

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES





If learning to read is hard, then writing books for those who are just beginning their literary journey must be almost as tricky. It's certainly littered with possible pitfalls, so it is not nearly as easy as it might seem.

For a start, you have to find words that are meaningful to the reader, which for younger children, automatically rules out a surprisingly large number of possible contenders. Maybe it was my sheltered upbringing, but I remember being baffled as a youngster by the picture of a nail accompanied by the word 'tack', for example. You also have to make sure that each word contains only graphemes that the children will recognise and no others. And then, of course, you need to include illustrations that are appealing yet precise, meaning they have to illustrate that word and nothing else.

See, I really have thought about this!

To that end, these Read and See books from Jolly Learning walk that narrow tightrope as sure-footedly as any. Furthermore, as part of the DfE-validated Jolly Phonics suite of resources, they come with an impressive and trusted pedigree.

There are two packs of books in the series, each offering one word per page with a separate page for the accompanying image. Pack 1 (14 books) introduces graphemes relating to the seven sound groups in order. Each book in Pack 2 (14 books) focuses on a particular digraph as well as having a separate one for double letters.

For those who are just beginning to make links between spoken sounds and the funny squiggles we have chosen to represent them,

these books are a solid starting point. That said, I did struggle somewhat with one significant design decision here. While I completely understand the rationale of challenging the child to read a word, then providing the corresponding picture over the page for them to confirm its meaning, the result is that each new word appears on a double-page spread alongside an image that bears no relation to it. Of course, any teacher or parent worth their salt will be able to work around this, but even so, I did find it a little bit of a stumbling block.

Nevertheless, I did like the concept of having a series of books that exemplifies grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) in a precisely targeted way, and in the order in which they are taught. Furthermore, I appreciated how each example offers a varied range of words rather than just one or two. This avoids the risk of children associating spelling patterns with only one or two words — cat on the mat, goat on a boat, and so on.

It is also very useful to have sound buttons for each grapheme under each word — not an unexpected feature but an important one, nonetheless. The way each word is then rewritten under the image on the following page, broken into separate graphemes, is another bonus, and a great opportunity to practise revisiting information — something children will need to learn to do throughout their school journey. By the end of each book, the reader should have a pretty clear idea of how to match each target grapheme to the spoken word. Sound practice indeed.



### **VERDICT**

- ✓ Offers targeted decoding practice
- Suitable for small hands
- Bright, colourful and appealing, with precise illustrations for words
- Presents grapheme-phoneme correspondences in the order in which they are taught
- ✓ Develops sound-blending skills
- ✓ Suitable for use in school or at home
- Includes useful tips for teachers and parents
- Uses carefully chosen words

### UPGRADE IF...

You want to spark children's interest in reading by helping them apply their developing phonics knowledge to a precisely paced, fully decodable series of books.

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# STABILO EASYoriginal pens & EASYgraph S pencils

Ergonomic pens and pencils developed by experts specifically for both left- and right-handed children

### AT A GLANCE

- Skilfully designed pens and pencils based on ergonomic principles in penmanship
- Left- and right-handed versions
- Focused on comfort and efficiency
- Tested by expert scientists
- Pencil wood is sourced from responsibly-managed forests





#### REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

How much do we think about handedness when we consider children's needs?
Handedness is the preference for using one hand over another and when it comes to the school environment this really matters.

Left-handed children often struggle when the resources aren't there to support them. This is often the case when it comes to writing utensils and scissors. Left-handed pupils can often appear uncoordinated or disorganised as most equipment is set up for right-handed children.

STABILO has thought long and hard about the user experience to cater for everyone and its product range is impressively inclusive. Every operational characteristic has been considered from the size, weight, shape and length of the instrument to the surface texture and hardness of the shaft, ink flow, smoothness, writing fatigue and more.

The EASY Start range is a vibrant and ergonomic family of writing equipment specifically designed for learning and improving handwriting skills at a young age. Led by the latest research in handwriting ergonomics, these are clever products that put writing comfort, legibility, efficiency and motivation right at the centre of design so that children can have fun improving their skills.

STABILO's EASYorginal pens are a joy. These really attractive wide-barrel refillable

pens have been ergonomically moulded so that children use the lightest grip possible while writing. The slightly arched shape helps pupils to achieve the recommended tripod grip, eliminating strain. It also features a rubberised grip around the pen barrel for increased traction.

The STABILO ergonomic pens use a rollerball design which flows freely. This helps reduce writing pressure which can lead to pain over longer pieces of written work. The nibs are broad and flexible and use royal blue erasable ink, ideal for school use.

STABILO's handwriting pencils with break-resistant 2.2mm lead have also been designed specifically for left- and right-handers. EASYgraph S pencils have a brilliant triangular design and non-slip grip moulds which magnificently support a relaxed hand posture. They also have a subtle yellow and red colour coding at the end of the pencil to indicate whether it is a left- or right-handed version.

They come in a range of five shaft colours and the S (slim) versions have a slenderer barrel than the original, but still with a space for inscribing your name.

Every child should benefit from adopting an ergonomic way of working and STABILO has given us the tools to work in a more efficient and child-friendly way. These are writing resources that truly break the mould.

## teach

### **VERDICT**

- ✓ Sophisticated, intelligent and intuitive designs to tackle handwriting issues
- ✓ Non-slip, comfortable to hold and prevents stress, tiredness and potential damage to hand posture
- Revolutionary, fun and attractive designs
- Quality through and through for a great price
- Takes the stress out of handwriting

### **UPGRADE IF...**

You are looking for writing resources that truly cater for left-, right- and mixed-handers.



## **Money Heroes**

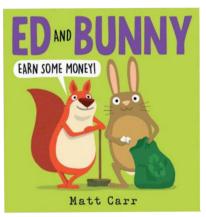
A free, fun and accessible programme that seeks to educate primary children about the sound management of their personal finances





### AT A GLANCE

- Created by Young Money and supported by HSBC UK
- Well-pitched resources for KS1 and KS2 children
- New SEND resources and accessible, adapted books available supported by BBC Children in Need
- Resources & books launching in Welsh
- Storybooks written by well-established authors
- Includes activities and a board game
- Easily available via a bespoke online platform





#### REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

As Mr Banks from Mary Poppins will tell you, being sensible and careful with money is not a particularly enchanting subject for anyone, let alone children. Nevertheless, it is extremely important that all young people, no matter their circumstances, receive an appropriate financial education. This reflects our new, adaptable approach to SEND, and the launch of new, accessible versions of our books and resources.

Of course, schools are now required to make sure their curriculum prepares children for the realities and responsibilities of life. So, how can you make this topic appealing for children who might not give tuppence for saving but happily blow their cash on bird seed and kites?

Fortunately for teachers, Young Money, part of Young Enterprise, has a long track record of offering the knowledge, resources and training they need to bring money matters to life for primary children. Backed by HSBC UK, they have now developed Money Heroes to help parents and teachers develop children's financial capability skills.

Money Heroes comprises books and activities that deliver important financial lessons about things like saving and budgeting for young people. The team have even teamed up with Orchard Toys to create a shopping board game to accompany some of them. In 2022, they also partnered with BBC Children in Need to create ability-focused versions of all their resources, and five new accessible versions of all the books—

now available in braille, BSL sign language, audio-books, large print and early readers. Accessibility is key for Money Heroes, who are also about to launch Welsh versions of all the resources, too.

For KS1 children, they offer Ed and Bunny books which look at earning and spending money. As you would hope, they are bright, cheerful and very accessible. Somehow, author and designer Matt Carr has managed to convey all the right messages without being too preachy. He has even managed to weave in some helpful thoughts on kindness and friendship.

KS2 children get three stories in two lively and appealing books—the newest with a climate spin . I really liked the way the author conveyed difficult issues, including families falling on harder times, in such a positive yet realistic light. I imagine there are many difficult and even angry conversations within households that could have been avoided by sharing these well-pitched tales beforehand.

When it comes to potential savings, time must come close to the top of the wish-list for teachers so they will, no doubt, find the ready-made, full activities particularly attractive. Nevertheless, schools will also be delighted to discover that the books, games and activities are all free if acquired through the programme's website.

In one of the stories, it is very wisely pointed out that if something seems too good to be true, it probably is. Money Heroes might just be the exception that proves the rule.

### teach PRIMARY

### VERDICT

- Created by financial education experts
- ✓ Helps to develop good financial habits from an early age
- ✓ Free teacher training available both mainstream & SEND versions
- ✓ Saves teachers' precious time
- ✓ Further free resources available online
- ✓ Fun and engaging stories
- ✓ Related, free shopping board game available from Orchard Toys, and a digital game for KS2
- ✓ SEND accessible versions of books
- ✓ New, accessible activities make the programme suitable for all pupils

#### UPGRADE IF...

You need to offer your children a quality introduction to financial matters in an appealing and accessible way.

Money Heroes resources are available for free through their online platform at moneyheroes.org.uk



### Cloud9UK

Make sure your pupils grow into happy, responsible humans with this whole-school online programme



### AT A GLANCE

- A whole-school programme focused on social-emotional skills and values
- Supports self-regulation through character exploration
- Develops self-confident, cooperative children, capable of making responsible decisions
- Literacy-based activities contribute to positive growth in language acquisition
- Supported by online resources







Good education is good character education, and each child has a right to this kind of development. Cloud9UK is a great place to start this process.

Cloud9UK understands that positive character development empowers children and it is liberating. The company's mission is to 'provide all children with the knowledge, strategies, and the tools they need to adopt positive character strengths and wellness habits throughout life'.

To resource this mission, it offers a Primary Solutions product consisting of engaging literacy activities that centre around 50 character-strength development traits.

It provides schools with a programme and platform to teach character education and provides the rationale, language and tools to use for empowering virtues and developing these attributes elsewhere in and out of school.

These core moral, civic, performance and intellectual virtues stretch from acceptance, citizenship and commitment to tolerance, unity and wisdom, and have been specifically selected to develop specific dispositions, inform motivation and guide behaviour.

They have been cleverly constructed using animal characters to help children make conscious decisions about their thoughts, actions and deeds. Every character strength is matched to an animal with a story set in a different country around the world.

A robust e-platform provides you with a wealthy collection of highly flexible resources to furnish your teaching of a particular character strength. It's easy to use, and you can select from video clips, an animated book and curriculum, scenarios, intervention tools, interactive teacher tools, digital games, printable resources, tools for the classroom, lesson plans, parent resources,

academic activities, printable posters and more.

You can also access a number of assessments relating to each character strength, including self-awareness, self-management and social awareness. There are also quick quizzes that check for understanding of the stories along with pre- and post-assessment tests.

Cloud9UK recognises that children are a work in progress and their characters are always under construction. Taken as a whole, these excellent resources help children to learn the meanings of key virtues and identify appropriate practices in which to apply them in their lives, respecting themselves and being of service to others.

Packed full of engaging activities and texts for pupils to explore and enjoy, the Cloud9UK resources can help pupils decide the kind of person they wish to become, and is suitable for pupils from EYFS through KS4. It enables them to develop practical wisdom and the capacity to choose intelligently between alternatives. These are resources that will enable pupils to live well in a world worth living in because they teach the traits that sustain a well-rounded life and a thriving society.

Every child should leave the school at the end of the day feeling better about themselves than when they came to school in the morning. They should feel enabled, empowered and well-equipped to respond to the world around them. Through Cloud9UK, children will become more understanding of others because they will understand themselves more.

The first and most fundamental aspect to any character education programme is the development of virtue literacy skills, and this intelligent and balanced platform advances these with considerable flair and self-confidence.

## teach

### VERDICT

- Helps children build an awareness of others, increase relationship skills, and make responsible decisions
- ✓ Empowers pupils to increase their own self-awareness and self-management skills
- ✓ Dynamically supports reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills
- Promotes the development of 21st-century strengths
- Cultivates critical thinking and positive personal responses
- Can help improve pupil behaviour, attitude and achievement

### **UPGRADE IF...**

You are looking for values-driven resources that aim to develop confident and compassionate pupils, who are effective contributors to society, successful learners, and responsible citizens who are happy human beings.



We take the famous Proust questionnaire and pose eight of its questions to a fellow educator. Take a peek into the deepest depths of a teacher's soul...

## What is your idea of perfect happiness in your job?

For me, happiness in this job is all about feeling you've made a small difference to the trajectory of a child's life. Whether that is helping them discover a talent they didn't know they had, supporting them to regulate their emotions in a more effective way, or learning how to add two-digit numbers mentally. Each day, we're in the business of future-navigational assistance. When I think about what I want to be able to look back and say at the end of my career, I think it will be that I made life's route a little clearer for the children in my class, or that I showed them there was a whole new path they could take instead. I'd be happy with that.

### What is your greatest fear at work?

Without a doubt my greatest fear is missing a deadline or forgetting a meeting. My memory isn't the greatest – my desk has a lot of Post-Its! I wouldn't get by without my extremely patient colleagues and a large, printed calendar hidden in my classroom cupboard.

### What is your current state of mind?

I'm pretty pumped up in my job at the moment. At St Modwen's, we're really trying to think deeply about curriculum design and how to ensure the tasks we create are the most effective they can be. That's exciting stuff. I'm also a part of some brilliant professional development, too, which allows me to work with our support staff team as well as our teaching staff.

### 4 What do you consider the most overrated teacher virtue?

Without a doubt it's the pride some people take in working the longest hours in the school building each day. The one-upmanship game some people feel they must play makes me think there are probably far more effective choices they could be making in their working day. In short, spend less time moaning about what you must get done and just get it done instead.

### On what occasion do you lie to your class?

It usually has to do with the amount of chocolate I consume over a given week. We recently had a healthy-eating assembly where they highlighted the amount of sugar in various cereals. As we were asked what we had had for breakfast that morning, I felt it probably best to keep it to myself that I'd had a Kit Kat Chunky.

## 6 Which words or phrases do you most overuse with your class?

I had a maths teacher at secondary school who would always command the class's attention with a quick bark of 'Listen in'. I'm ashamed to say I've adopted the same phrase and I hear Mr Walsh's voice every time I say it. Other than that, I have a habit of starting every sentence with a 'so', which I'm trying hard to break.

## What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

Yesterday, I used the phrase 'The cranium holds the brainium' in my

science class, which I was pretty chuffed with. But I guess more seriously, it's the first class that I taught in my NQT year, many of whom still regularly communicate with me via email. In a year when I was still learning the ropes, I am incredibly proud that I managed to make a difference to those young people's lives. We all have that special teacher who made a difference, and it feels so lovely to know that I am now that person for a few young people entering adulthood.

## 8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

I'd love to say something sentimental and heartfelt, but it is my personalised biscuit tin. It's always heavily stocked, never leaves my desk, and has seen me through many a mammoth marking session or parents evening stint! Written on the front are the words, 'Tom, you're not that crumby' and on days when things don't go quite to plan, I look down at that little phrase and it still makes me smile. **TP** 



NAME: Tom Brassington
JOB ROLE: Curriculum lead
and class teacher at St Modwen's
Catholic Primary School
EXTRA INFO: Co-author,
with his brother Jo, of Bottled
— a picture book that seeks to
help children discuss how they are
feeling, with people they trust.
Bottled (£8.99, Unbound)
is available now

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