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Hello!



And welcome back. Hopefully you all had a restful Easter break and are now ready and raring to go for the summer term! If you're feeling energised and all set for the next few weeks of school, we have plenty of ideas in this issue to help you make the most of the rest of 2024/25, like a wonderfully enjoyable and hands-on ICT lesson that turns your classroom into a disco (page 72) and a beautiful art project

exploring our seas and the importance of keeping them clean (page 31).

If, however, you're feeling a little less ebullient, we've got plenty of help for that too. We all know that the sun (along with a full moon, for some reason) can often bring out the... shall we say... *exuberance* in children, and however wonderful that can be, it can also make it tricky to keep behaviour on track if you don't have the buy-in from families and carers. Luckily for us, experienced educator and leadership consultant Dr Jill Berry has shared her top tips from over 30 years of talking with parents, about how to get them on board with your decisions (page 38).

We also have a focus this month on that most enduring element of spring and summer to-do lists... assessment. Whether you're gearing up for SATs, or are just getting all your ducks in a row ready to hand your class over to their new teacher at the start of next year, we've got everything you need to evaluate your testing methods. Hear from Dr Julian Grenier about how the EYFSP can provide Year 1 teachers with a solid foundation to make sure pupils start 'big school' off on the right foot (page 49); and why a progress mindset might not actually be as good as it sounds, from Richard Selfridge (page 44).

As always, thanks for reading, and I hope you enjoy the rest of spring. Until next time,

Charley

Charley Rogers, editor

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*Don't miss our next
issue, available from
23rd June*

POWERED BY...



ANNE MCCONWAY

Asks why we're still fighting for clean air, years after the peak of the pandemic

"We know that Long Covid disproportionately affects education staff"

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PROF SARAH EARLE

On how you can assess science enquiry skills without spending hours on writeups

"The solution is to ask yourself 'so what?'. What do you want to focus on?"

p46



MARC BOWEN

Shares his joyous lesson plan mixing datalogging with physical activity... and disco

"When I started dad-dancing around the classroom, there was no going back"

p72



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We're all ears!

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

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We want to hear from you!

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



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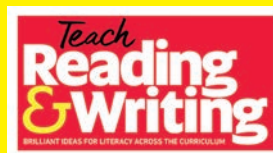


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Breaktime

News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research



Walk the walk

Thousands of children across the UK will get 'out of this world' during Walk to School Week (19-23 May 2025). Having run for over 20 years, the event encourages families to walk, wheel, cycle, scoot or 'park and stride' for the whole week to see the big differences that come from small steps, including improvements in health and fewer cars outside school gates.

This year's challenge will see pupils take on The Great Space Walk, encouraging them to travel actively to school every day of the week. Meeting colourful intergalactic friends along the way, children will learn about the important reasons to walk or wheel, and its benefits for individuals, communities and the planet. The campaign comes complete with free teaching packs for classes of up to 30 pupils, which are available in KS1/P1-3 and KS2/P4-7 variants, each featuring age-appropriate activities.

For more information on Walk to School Week and to get your classroom pack, visit livingstreets.org.uk/wtsw

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



NO ROOM FOR RACISM

Premier League has launched new education resources, featuring top players offering advice to school children on tackling racism, promoting inclusion, and becoming active allies. Resources include videos, lesson plans and guidance docs. Find out more at plprimarystars.com



PROTECT POLLINATORS

Pollinating London Together (PLT), an initiative to protect pollinators across the capital, has released free resources to help pupils understand the role of bees and other insects in local habitats, wherever they may live. Find everything – including lesson plans, activities and more info – at tinyurl.com/tp-PLT



KEEP KIDS SAFE

How well do you and your colleagues understand the KCSIE? It's an essential document, but not necessarily easy to assess. Luckily, LGfL has come to the rescue with a series of free quizzes and explainers. Find everything you need to help keep children safe at tinyurl.com/tp-LGfLkcsie

→→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



Handwriting practice sheets

Do your learners need to practise forming letters correctly? Are you looking for ways to ensure they develop fully legible handwriting? This resource pack provides simple and attractive pre-cursive and print handwriting worksheets; a set for each letter of the alphabet, using a pre-cursive font. Take a look at bit.ly/PlazoomPreCursive



Q & A



Bear Grylls

TV presenter, adventurer and writer

1. What was primary school like for you?

Primary school is where I have some of my fondest memories of school – low pressure, close friends, and caring teachers. It was secondary school where things got tougher for me and made me realise even more how lucky I was to have had a kind, positive first experience of the schooling system – never take primary school or kindergarten teachers for granted!

2. What's your favourite expedition memory from childhood?

Persuading a teacher to allow us to plan and do a winter mountaineering trip to Snowden in North Wales. We took so much gear in packs that we could hardly move. We finally made it to the top but it was almost dark, so we camped too high and encountered some truly terrible winds and rain – our tent ripped and collapsed, and we barely made it back to the car park the next day! Experience is the sum of all our near misses, eh?

3. If you could share one nugget of advice about exploration with teachers, what would it be?

Be humble in the outdoors or it will humble you! But go for things and never underestimate the power of the outdoors to transform young people in terms of pride confidence and friendships. As Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, said: *a week in the field is worth a year in the classroom.*

Bear Grylls' new book, *YOU Decide YOUR Adventure: Join Bear Grylls on the Ultimate Expedition* (£14.99, DK) is out on 29th May.



Hop, skip, and jump your way...

...to the first ever National School Sports Week, helmed by the Youth Sports Trust.

Taking place from 16 to 22 June, this event aims to inspire schools to support children to take part in physical activity, and to make Friday 21st June the largest-ever

school sports day in the UK.

The week will encourage schools to embed movement throughout the school day, not just in PE lessons, helping young people achieve the recommended 60 minutes of activity daily, and improve their relationship with physical activity.

Sign up to access exclusive resources, challenges, and the chance to win prizes, such as athlete mentor visits and Sports Direct vouchers, at tinyurl.com/tp-NSSW25

Build your own Britain

Ordnance Survey (OS) has attempted to break a world record by creating the largest real-world place to ever exist in Minecraft. The blocky Britain was built using OS's accurate cartography and detailed mapping data, and features everything from meadows and lakes to motorways and railways.

This new Minecraft world was developed by OS graduate and Minecraft enthusiast Jonathan Allsup. He said: "The educational aspect to it is strong. Kids relate to this game. It's still popular now and is a great way to communicate the idea of location data and geography. Playing and building on a Minecraft map of Britain is much more engaging than looking at PowerPoint presentations in a classroom."

Find out more and download the game at tinyurl.com/tp-OSminecraft



*Kapow Primary

90% of primary teachers believe cutting subject content would improve pupils' ability to master key concepts*

Look ahead | Book ahead



POETRY BY HEART

There's still time to enter this year's poetry learning and performing competition. Finalists will perform live at

Shakespeare's Globe on 7 July. Find out more at tinyurl.com/tp-PBH25

THE BIG BANG FAIR

Want to find out why cockroaches have such strong bones and other weird science facts? Get your free tickets to the Big Bang Fair (NEC Birmingham, 17 to 19 June) at tinyurl.com/tp-BigBang25



Come face to face



with nature

Transform classroom concepts into real-world understanding with a visit to Chester Zoo. Connect students with wildlife, spark curiosity, and inspire the next generation of conservationists.

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6 ways to engage pupils with nature

Why reinvent the wheel when you have these brilliant resources at your disposal, says **Barbara Henderson**

1 | RSPB

As a writer and as a teacher, I have a long history with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds - from family visits to nature reserves as a child, to volunteering for the organisation as a young person. Established in 1889, the RSPB now cares for much more than birds – they aim 'to bring people together who love birds and other wildlife, and who want to take action to restore the health and diversity of the natural world.' The charity also has plenty of resources that work well in a school context. Not sure where to start? Look no further than its annual Schools Birdwatch survey, and its bank of worksheets, data, and story activities: tinyurl.com/tp-RSPBSchools

2 | THE WOODLAND TRUST

My childhood was almost exclusively spent in the woods – nothing puts a smile on a child's face more than an afternoon clambering over roots and rocks. Up to 70% of ancient woodland in the UK has already been lost, but the UK's largest woodland conservation charity works hard to reverse this, with a vision for a world where woods and trees thrive. The Woodland Trust protects existing woods, restores damaged woodland ecosystems and creates new ones by planting. It also has a good range of free resources on offer, including an online learning hub called Tree Tools for Schools. You can source ideas for outdoor learning and even entire assembly kits there, too. See tinyurl.com/tp-WTresources

3 | NATURESCOT

As well as being a valuable timesaver for Scottish teachers looking for funding, Scotland's nature agency is a rich resource for all educators. The professional advice and outdoor learning page links to a wealth of information and brings it together accessibly in one place. For example, ready-to-use classroom resources that can introduce pupils from all over the UK to the wonders of Scotland's flora and fauna. Take a look at tinyurl.com/tp-NatureScot



BARBARA HENDERSON

is a teacher and writer. Her latest book for children is the eco-adventure *I Don't Do Mountains* (£7.99, Scottish Mountaineering Press).

4 | FORESTRY ENGLAND

Forestry England cares for the nation's forests and is the largest land manager in England. It also provides a fantastic range of teaching resources for a variety of ages and stages. I was incredibly impressed with the fun and engaging activities on offer on its website, which include videos and lots of downloadable activities and worksheets. From Forest Yoga to map-reading and numeracy skills, there's something for everyone. My favourite is a treetop trumps game – what a brilliant idea! See tinyurl.com/tp-FESchools

5 | THE WILDLIFE TRUSTS

Forty-six regional trusts across the UK seek 'to empower people to take meaningful action for nature'. In my experience, it's easy to enthuse young learners about wildlife that's on their own doorstep. Wildlife Trust's learning page, tinyurl.com/tp-WTlearning is well worth a look for its downloadable guides and learning programmes. The downloadable Nature's Climate Heroes programme is an inquiry-based resource that helps KS2 pupils understand the connections between nature, climate change and people, before giving them an outlet for climate activism. The seasonal programmes like 'My Wild Summer' are also very practical.

6 | THE WORLD WILDLIFE FUND

The WWF offers a world-wide perspective, seeking to 'sustain the natural world for the benefit of people and wildlife'. Children will love travelling around the world encountering tigers, sea turtles, polar bears and the like via the informative website. The jam-packed resource section also features more general materials on teaching biodiversity and endangered species. The page is extremely easy to navigate, with a wealth of lesson plans. One of the things I love most is that the material uses popular cartoon characters and films as hooks to engage young audiences – genius! tinyurl.com/tp-WWFresources

How one UK primary school is embedding sustainability into everyday learning with edding

At **Mill Lodge Primary School**, sustainability isn't just a buzzword – it's a way of life. With the help of edding, the school has transformed its classrooms into **eco-friendly learning hubs**, proving that small changes can make a big difference.



By switching to edding's EcoLine markers, made from **90% recycled materials**, the school cut down on single-use plastic without compromising quality. Better still, for every 120 markers sold, two trees are planted – **one in the UK, one in Africa**.



Teachers embraced **refill culture** by using refillable markers and setting up classroom refill stations. This initiative extends the life of each pen, with each pot being equivalent to 15 pens, whilst **slashing supply costs by up to 50%**.



To complete the sustainability cycle, students and teachers collect used pens in the edding Return Box – a **free** recycling solution for **all brands of pens and markers** – helping students learn first-hand how waste becomes resource.

“Sustainability is essential in education as it empowers students with the knowledge and values needed to protect the environment and build a more resilient, equitable future.”

Teacher at Mill Lodge Primary



“We used to throw away our old pens, but now I feel like I'm doing something cool for the planet!”

Pupil at Mill Lodge Primary

Together, these steps make **Mill Lodge** an example of how you can easily bring the topic of **sustainability** into your classrooms. With edding, going green doesn't mean a complete classroom overhaul – just a few thoughtful changes can plant the seeds for **lifelong habits**.



Want to see these solutions in action?

Watch our short video and start your sustainability journey today.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Please think of the children (and teachers)

Nobody expects us to clean our own water in schools, so why are we being asked to make sure our air is breathable?

I know, no one wants to talk about Covid anymore. But five years after the pandemic began, absence rates due to illness, for staff and pupils, are 40 per cent higher than pre-pandemic levels (tinyurl.com/tp-absence2025).

According to the 2024 GP Patient Survey (tinyurl.com/tp-GPsurvey), an estimated 3.1 million adults in the UK have Long Covid, with another 6.3 million suspecting they have it. We know that Long Covid disproportionately affects education staff, due to increased exposure (tinyurl.com/tp-CovidEdSector). Many have been afflicted, some losing their career as well as their health.

Contrary to popular belief, Long Covid affects children, too. The latest ONS data show that over 111,000 children have Long Covid (tinyurl.com/tp-CovidEdSector), a figure that doubled between March 2023 and March 2024. So, whose responsibility is it to take action?

Well, that's the problem. Ask the Department for Education (and I have), and they'll tell you it's up to individual schools to ensure that indoor air quality meets the expected standards. Ask schools (and I have), and their response is usually: what air quality standards? The result? Indoor air quality in UK schools is terrible; airborne diseases are allowed to spread unchecked, and illness is rife.

Predictably, the government's push for 'presenteeism', urging those who are sick to attend school and share their germs, has done nothing to boost attendance. Nor has ramping up fines and threatening parents with criminal records for unauthorised pupil absence. It's time to go back to the

drawing board and start focusing on *prevention*. According to the Department for Education's own data, illness is the leading cause of staff and pupil absence (tinyurl.com/tp-AbsenceIllness).

Many of the most common infectious diseases are airborne: Covid, influenza, RSV, whooping cough, measles, mumps, chickenpox, and even TB. Aerosol science tells us that good ventilation and HEPA air filters can remove viral particles from the air we breathe (Katz et al, 2025 tinyurl.com/tp-AirFilters), so why aren't we using this information to reduce transmission of these harmful diseases? Existing government guidance is also clear:

schools should be using CO₂ monitors, improving ventilation, and taking action when CO₂ levels are too high (tinyurl.com/tp-GovtAirGuide). But how many school staff even know this guidance exists?

The pandemic should have been a wake-up call for infection prevention and control. While other countries have invested heavily in improving indoor air quality, our government's approach has been to convince us that we can "live with Covid" by ignoring it. This is not a good long-term plan.


As a class teacher, I had no idea that I had any control over the number of viral particles floating in the air. I resigned myself to what I thought were 'inevitable' bouts of illness. Had I known then what I know now, I would have demanded better indoor air quality. Schools are often unfairly expected to solve society's problems. But in this case, school staff may well be saving themselves if they choose to take action to improve indoor air quality.

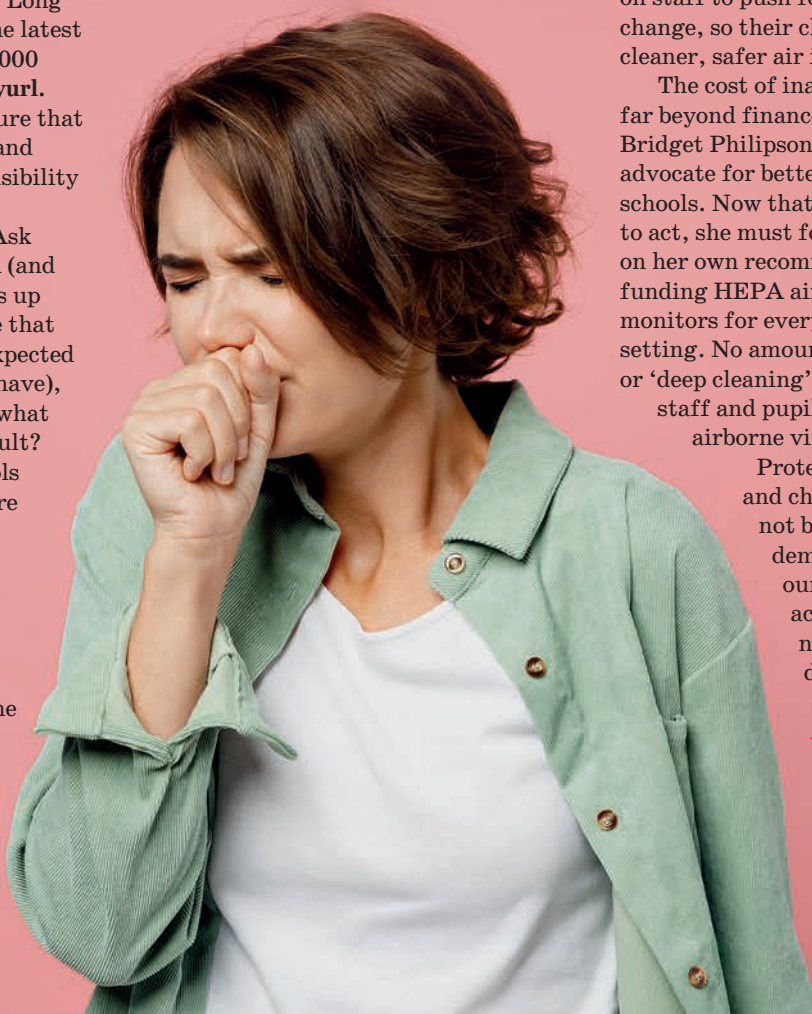
We don't expect teachers to clean the water they drink at school or to remove the asbestos from buildings. Yet, for now, we can only hope that school staff recognise how they are being failed and the solutions at their disposal. Parents, in turn, must rely on staff to push for this much needed change, so their children can breathe cleaner, safer air in their classrooms.

The cost of inaction extends far beyond finances. In opposition, Bridget Philipson was a strong advocate for better air quality in schools. Now that she has the power to act, she must follow through on her own recommendations by funding HEPA air filters and CO₂ monitors for every educational setting. No amount of hand washing or 'deep cleaning' will prevent staff and pupils from inhaling airborne viral particles.

Protecting school staff and children should not be optional. Let's demand that we (and our pupils!) have access to clean air now. Because if we don't, who will? **TP**

Anne McConway is an early education lecturer and clean air campaigner.

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5 REASONS TO TRY... Academy 21

How online alternative provision can deliver meaningful support and robust reintegration plans for your school



30 SECOND BRIEFING

As the number of primary children with identified additional needs increases across the UK, Academy21 is expanding its specialist support for primary-age learners, delivering live, adaptive teaching to Years 5 and 6.

1 EFFICIENT IMPLEMENTATION

When it comes to absence, time is of the essence. Delays in supporting pupils often lead to heightened anxiety and greater disconnection from learning, making reintegration increasingly challenging. Online primary AP offers a fast, flexible solution. Academy21's provision can be implemented at any point in the academic year, with swift enrolment and set up. Whether children need an interim solution or extended provision, schools can quickly provide live lessons and teacher support that give children real structure.

2 LIVE, ENGAGING LESSONS

Pupils benefit from a learning experience that keeps them moving and exploring. Academy21's KS2 curriculum has been shaped with these needs in mind. Lessons are chunked to suit developing attention spans, with interactive elements, regular breaks, and meaningful two-way communication with teachers. Delivered entirely live by qualified teachers, the curriculum includes core subjects alongside PSHE, wellbeing and oracy. Schools can choose from morning or afternoon sessions, five days a week.

3 CALM, SECURE LEARNING

For many children, the bustle of traditional classrooms can feel overwhelming, triggering anxiety and dysregulation. Online AP reduces



Academy 21
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some of these pressures, while keeping students connected to learning. At Academy21, children can join their class teacher in their live lessons from a calmer setting that allows them to focus. The KS2 provision is ideal for internal AP settings. The consistent, lower-stress online experience makes a significant difference in helping children enjoy learning, whilst also benefiting from the in-person support from their school community.

4 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Academy21 recognises the importance of developing the whole child, not just the academic learner. Writing lessons naturally combine with PSHE content, turn-taking, circle time and teamwork. Alongside the development of their writing, pupils join in with modelled and shared writing experiences and share their ideas with others. The maths curriculum is centred around engaging tasks that encourage sharing, movement and confidence in key areas of the national curriculum, and the reading provision equips pupils with skills needed for fluency, comprehension and inference and encourages dialogue about wellbeing, current affairs and values.

5 STRONG SUPPORT

Ultimately, alternative provision aims to guide children back to thriving in a mainstream environment. That means academic learning, confidence, self-belief, and readiness to return. Academy21 combines strong academic foundations with a focus on wellbeing, helping pupils build skills and routines. Regular communication, reporting, and real-time engagement data keep schools informed and in control so that reintegration planning can be responsive and effective. And when children are ready to return to their mainstream classroom, the transition is smoother because they've remained connected to their school community.

KEY POINTS

Live adaptive teaching with experienced, qualified teachers develops functional reading, writing and maths with oracy, wellbeing and PSHE interwoven throughout.

DfE-accredited provision designed to engage and support pupils in Years 5 and 6, ensures they are confident and secondary-ready.

Developed to integrate with flexible timetables or your schools' internal AP, Academy21 has a choice of morning or afternoon sessions.

Comprehensive tracking and reports give your school visibility on pupils' progress and engagement from day one.



Enough is enough. Why are we still dealing with SATs?

Now, more than ever, the government needs to listen to us about these damaging assessments

tinyurl.com/tp-MoreThanAScore

SATs week is just around the corner, which means the pressure on teachers and pupils will be reaching fever pitch. In most schools, the time Year 6 children spend on history, geography, art, PE, drama and other subjects will have dwindled over the last few weeks – even months – as teachers feel obliged to spend hours instead on practice papers and preparing for SATs.

You will, no doubt, be comforting anxious children and watching the confidence of some of them spiral downwards, whilst being aware that their own and their peers' performance during SATs week will have big implications for the school as a whole. Parents of Year 6s will be dealing with the fallout of all this stress at home, with some children feeling bored and frustrated and others struggling to sleep or not wanting to go into school at all.

At More Than a Score, we had high hopes that with a new government and the launch of the curriculum and

assessment review, these SATs week experiences would soon be consigned to history. We had hoped that the opinions of those who know children best – teachers and parents – would finally be listened to.

That's why last autumn, along with hundreds of teachers, headteachers, education experts, teaching unions and other teaching bodies, we submitted reams of evidence to the newly launched Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR), calling for substantial reform of the current primary assessment system. Like you, we believe in high quality and high standards in education. We're not against teacher-led tests, moderated assessments, or national sampling and we're not against holding schools to account.

However, with the recent publication of the review's interim report, and the subsequent pronouncement by Secretary of State for Education Bridget Phillipson that "Primary school exams are here to stay," our

hope for meaningful reform has turned to disappointment. For now, at least, the CAR panel and the government are refusing to take on board the views of the majority of primary school leaders, teachers and parents.

In our most recent research, when asked which statutory tests they would like to see removed, 70 per cent of school leaders said SATs. Three-quarters of parents say getting rid of SATs would either improve or make no difference to their children's education. And half of all secondary schools re-test at the start of Year 7 because they don't trust SATs data.

The tests are particularly damaging to pupils who are most disadvantaged. Last year, just 22 per cent of children with SEND reached the expected standard, compared to 72 per cent of those without SEND. And only 46 per cent of disadvantaged pupils reached the expected standard, versus 67 per cent of non-disadvantaged pupils. Taken together, these groups make up the bulk of the 40 per cent of children who were sent off to secondary school labelled as 'failures'. As teachers point out, being told you have failed at the age of 10 or 11 is a damaging and unpleasant experience. It's certainly no way to encourage or engage children in their future learning. Surely, the best way to prioritise the high and rising standards that everyone wants, is to do away with reliance on a system that has been proven to do more harm than good.

We hope that parents, school leaders and teachers will come together as a matter of urgency to make it clear that more work needs to be done before the final report is published. That's why we've launched a campaign asking everyone to email Bridget Phillipson and the review board, calling on the government to change its position. We need to send a strong reminder that the current system negatively affects the whole school community.

Simply go to tinyurl.com/tp-MoreThanAScore and fill in your details on the form provided. It will take you no more than a minute using our suggested wording, though if you can spare the time, a more personalised email would be even stronger!

It's time for the government and the review to listen to the views of those who are working within the primary system on a daily basis. The cost of inaction is too great. **TP**

Jess Edwards is a primary teacher in Lambeth, and a member of the More Than a Score coalition.

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

A letter to...

The curriculum review board

Let's stop just regurgitating facts and focus our teaching on skills that will actually prepare children for the world, says **Camilla Spurr**



Dear review board, Without Googling it, can you name the three claimants to the English throne in 1066?

No? So, how do you get by as an adult without knowing that essential information?

As teachers, we impart knowledge like this to our learners, serving as the foundation for their lifelong learning. But is it enough? The short answer is no. With advancements in technology, shifts in societal norms and the increasing interconnectedness of global communities, we must foster problem-solving skills and holistic competencies rather than expecting rote learning and regurgitation of knowledge. We're preparing learners for life, not just the next academic year.

One of the key drivers behind this shift is the recognition that the future job market will demand a different set of skills than those of the past. A huge number of jobs that existed 10 years ago are now obsolete. The same, if not more, can be expected to disappear in another 10 years. This means that our current Year 5 children may be applying for jobs that have not yet been envisioned. The same applies to society itself – we cannot predict how the world will connect and evolve. It is our responsibility to prepare our pupils for a future we cannot yet envisage.

So, what does a current Year 5 pupil need to know now, in order to be successful in their application for an entry level job in just a few years' time? Should they be expected to recount the events of the Battle of Hastings from memory? Would this information be helpful in their prospective role as, say, a data analyst at PWC? What if this pupil were

competing for the role and their fellow applicant, who is perhaps Italian, has never heard of the Battle of Hastings but is able to demonstrate active listening in the interview, which, in turn, enables them to manipulate and synthesise the information required to be able to answer the interview questions clearly and with purpose? Who then gets that job?

In today's digital age, where automation and AI have made information (about the Norman Invasion or otherwise) ubiquitous and instantly accessible, we need to reconsider how we deliver curriculum content. We must prioritise problem-solving skills and holistic competencies over rote memorisation.

Take my earlier question: knowing the names of the three claimants to the throne is

"In today's digital age, we need to reconsider how we deliver curriculum content"

a tiny piece of knowledge that, outside of the academic term in which it's taught, will probably never be needed again. So, let's shift the focus. Instead of asking who the claimants were, let's ask: "In 1066, three claimants believed that they 'owned' the English throne. Who had the most legitimate argument?"

Learners still need to have knowledge of the claimants and the Norman Invasion to be able to answer the question (national curriculum writers can rest easy as I tick those boxes), but they also need significant 21st century skills, such as evaluation,

considering different viewpoints, structuring a logical argument and considering bias.

We need to build opportunities for these skills to breed within our curriculum content. Instead of teaching the Norman Invasion for a whole term, let's shift the narrative. Take a step back from William, Harald and Harold and consider the umbrella under which they sit. How about the concept of ownership?

In history, this could relate to questions about whether power should be hereditary or earned. In science, RE and geography, pupils could explore ideas about who 'owns' the world's resources and whose responsibility it is to take care of the world. In English, a whole range of texts that explore contexts of

ownership might be studied, from *The Lorax* to *Stig of the Dump*.

How much better prepared would learners be if we followed these golden threads of learning instead of isolating content into subject silos? And how many of these skills transfer seamlessly to other relevant areas of learning, work and life?

It's important to emphasise that knowledge is still essential, as are discrete subject-specific skills. But we must deliver a rich curriculum that is contemporary, relevant, significant and empathetic, and drenched in transferable, transdisciplinary skills.

The curriculum and assessment review (2024) promises to deliver 'a curriculum that ensures children and young people leave compulsory education ready for life and ready for work'.

I wait with bated breath.

From, Camilla





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UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

Leaders, please think twice about throwing a supply teacher into the shark tank with your most difficult class – it doesn't help either of us

I'm ushered into the office, and a senior leader speaks in hushed tones: "They're our most difficult class." I'm not sure whether this is fair warning, an advance apology, or a plea that I don't judge the whole school by this one group of children. Perhaps all three.

Once I'm in the classroom, a member of support staff loudly points out the children I'm going to have the most trouble with – a lovely bit of public humiliation to start the day. Well, at least I know, and as it turns out, they aren't wrong.

I quickly discover that this isn't the kind of class you can work with without an established relationship. I learn all their names as fast as possible. There are a few that I'm still rusty with by the end of the day, but they aren't the ones I needed to know for behaviour management purposes.

Some children are clearly testing my boundaries; I go out of my way to connect with them, attempting that 'strict but kind' approach that kids used to mention in their thank you cards to me. I'm not sure it makes things better, but I think it probably means things get no worse.

At several points during the day, I wonder about the wisdom of putting a supply teacher in front of a class like this. I observe how some members of school staff are able to elicit marginally better behaviour from them, but not always using strategies I'm comfortable with. I decide to fall in line with the school's standard approaches. Perhaps consistency is better than conviction?

There are times where all I'm doing is trying to establish some decorum. I'm reiterating the same expectations over and over again. I'm not settling for anything less than 100 per cent compliance with the simple things I'm asking them to do: sit in your seat, put the equipment down, face this way. Stuck record doesn't begin to describe it. I console myself that these are the foundations that need to be built – they're

learning something, even if it's not the curriculum content that was left for me to cover.

We manage one cycle of 'I do – we do – you do' in maths, and then it's lunchtime and I have 50 minutes to regroup, check through the planning and steady myself for another two hours and 25

minutes of the most difficult class I've ever had to teach.

And, actually, the first hour of the afternoon goes pretty well. There's a video and they watch it with rapt attention. There are turn-and-talk tasks that they engage with. Many are keen to join in with whole-class discussion. The children have good ideas and they want to share them. It feels like the morning's labour of hasty relationship-building has paid off. Plus, one of the lads whose behaviour hadn't exactly been compliant offers to do the slides and that keeps him in line, as does my agreement with him that the presenter in the video is quite annoying.

I wish I could say the afternoon continues in the same vein, but it doesn't. I console myself that I have gained some ground, and that progress isn't always linear, but honestly, I feel like I've failed. Realistically, though, I know that the difficulties I'm experiencing are largely not to do with me at all: school leaders should carefully consider how they might cover such a class. It's

likely that someone who knows the children well is the best fit, and not a supply teacher. Although logistically a supply teacher might be a simpler option, it may not be right for the children in their care, or for the teacher. Sometimes the school, perhaps even the leaders, need to take the hit themselves.

I go home feeling like I never want to teach that class again, while simultaneously thinking that if I could just spend some more time with them, I could probably turn things around. If the call comes again for that class, I'll probably say yes. I like a challenge. **TP**



"I quickly discover that this isn't the kind of class you can work with without an established relationship"

The writer is a supply teacher in England.

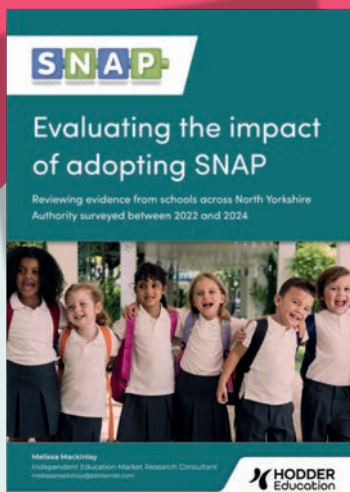
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Conversation CAFÉ

Discover how stopping for a casual chat can teach pupils crucial skills without them even knowing it...

SARAH WILCOX

We all know that the art of conversation is crucial for language and cognitive development in Early Years, as it forms the foundations for all future learning. For us at Linaker Primary School, with a higher-than-average percentage of EAL students, promoting an environment where children are encouraged to tell stories, share ideas and question with curiosity and sensitivity is crucial, particularly in a world of increasing technology and seemingly less social interaction for our children. So, we had to come up with an idea that wasn't too heavy-handed or cumbersome, but that encouraged our children to really communicate with one another, on their own terms. We found that a conversation café is the perfect spot to do just that!

Scaffold chatting

The café is open during rolling snack time, and there is only one rule... to dine here you must hold a conversation with your friends.

We offer our conversation café during continuous provision time twice daily, serving healthy food such as cereal, fruit, cheese, crackers and vegetables. We set clear rules for the café, too: no lone diners and lots of chat. Children are encouraged to invite a friend or sit with a group for their snack, and it often leads to both familiar and unfamiliar friendship groups sharing conversations.

Some children aren't necessarily confident in sparking up a chat out



of thin air, so we provide optional conversation prompts, sentence starters, images and props to ignite pupils' connections with each other. These often link to our current topic, our local environment, recent festivals and celebrations, or what the weather is like

A little help

We've now noticed that pupils have started to lead the conversation café themselves, and will often even bring in things from home to talk about, blending the traditional 'show and tell' with chat and oracy development.

“Children relish in the opportunity to host the chat, comparing opinions, likes and dislikes”

that day. Our favourite prompt is an unopened box and a question mark, which is enough to spark predictions, reasoning and curiosity with children discussing what could possibly be inside the box, and its size, suitability and relevance. We make sure that staff are there to provide support through high-quality modelling, which encourages children to become comfortable using a rich range of vocabulary and language structures.

This places ownership of the conversation with the children, and they often relish the opportunity to host the chat, comparing opinions, likes and dislikes with one another. All this happens during snack time, with low stakes and an infinite ceiling of language, vocabulary and confidence-boosting chat; it's a joy to see.

The opportunities for talk really are endless, but I would recommend that you

have staff on hand to support oracy skills. This has been particularly useful with our EAL children, so staff can subtly model vocabulary, dialogue and listening skills, and help pupils whose first language isn't English to feel more confident.

Most of the time children lead their own conversations with debate, opinion, empathy and understanding, however staff join in here and there to challenge children's opinions and encourage them to reason and justify their thoughts, while nurturing back and forth interactions, turn taking, active listening and understanding non-verbal cues. Communication and language interventions are often laborious in nature and time, but the conversation café is actually jam-packed with learning outcomes and oracy development without feeling like an intervention at all.

We have seen a significant increase in communication and language skills since we launched the café, and are really proud of our confident, chatty children. Life in Reception is busy, and there is always something to do, but stopping for a chat might just be the most valuable tool in our teaching kits. **TP**



Sarah Wilcox
is Early Years lead at Linaker Primary School

in Southport.

@_MissWilcox

@Linakerprimary

MEDIUM TERM PLAN

KS2 D&T

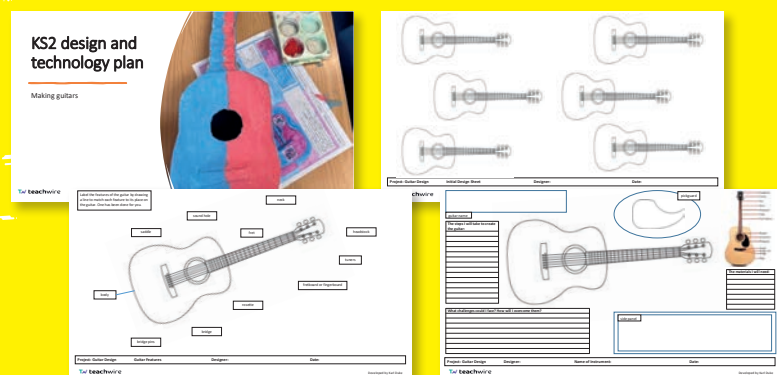
GUITAR HEROES

KARL DUKE

One of the best classroom experiences is when every child is buzzing with excitement, totally engaged in their task. For me, it's usually when they are absorbed in a creative project. A memorable example of this is guitar design; it is an utter joy to teach. The following plan will help children learn how to design and construct a small-scale guitar. Focusing first on research, they will explore designs from the past and present, learning the features of a guitar and the process of construction, before creating their own using a range of techniques and materials. I've found that given sufficient time kids get really invested, and the detail can be incredible! I've described six lessons, but it is a project well worth getting your teeth into. We often use the majority of a term and at least 12 hours of teaching time in total.

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WEEK 1 Learning objective

● What do guitars look like and how are they constructed?

Written by Kim Tomsic and illustrated by Brett Helquist, *Les Paul Guitar Genius* is a prime example of how a book can build knowledge of a key figure in history while simultaneously providing the stimulus to develop skills; in this case, the construction of a guitar.

For inspiration, begin by reading the book with the children (you can get a copy online for about £5). Look at the pages showing the construction of a guitar. Explain that the guitar consists

of the body and neck (including the fingerboard and the headstock), with added details to help to create the sound, including the bridge, frets and tuners. If possible, allow children to explore a real guitar (we use our class set of ukuleles to help with understanding) and identify the body, neck and the other features.

Next, watch a YouTube clip showing the construction of an acoustic guitar (like this one: tinyurl.com/tp-GuitarBuildVid). This is purely to help children understand the process and care needed during the construction, and how individual components are connected together. Talk through the clip, pausing to ask children to identify parts of the guitar as it is being made.

Discuss how the sound of a guitar is created – this may link to prior or current learning in science. What kinds of materials could we use to make a guitar structurally sound? Would we need different materials for the different parts of the guitar? Why?

Explain that the children will be designing and constructing a smaller scale version of a guitar, and that they will use cardboard instead of wood. Ask pupils what they think we could use to fix the pieces of card together. Is there anything that could be used to further strengthen the guitar and provide a surface to paint on effectively? Have they used any techniques in previous learning? There is the opportunity here to try out different techniques and resources to fix small pieces of card together, to strengthen the model and to get the best paint effect. Once pupils have shared their ideas, you can explain that papier-mâché could be used to further strengthen the guitar.

Finally, use the template in the downloadable PowerPoint linked on the left (**slide 5**) to label a guitar, and in preparation for next week's lesson, ask the children to think about a theme for their guitar design.

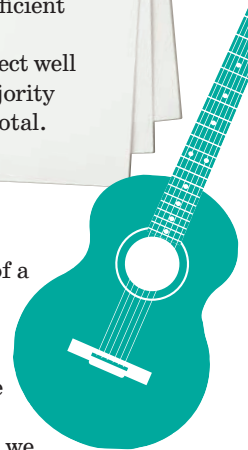


Assessment

Can pupils understand the construction process of an acoustic guitar?

Can children think of materials that could be used to construct a model guitar?

Can pupils use new terminology to describe and label the features of a guitar?





WEEK 2

Learning objective

- What will my design include?

Investigate the decorative design of guitars past and present (a quick internet search will pull up plenty of examples). Look at the colours and imagery used. Why might the artist/designer have chosen these colours, patterns and imagery? Reflect back on last week's lesson and the construction process. Did they see any guitars that look to have the same or similar construction processes?

Share some of the ideas children have thought about as inspiration for their guitar. Ask them to talk to a partner about how their design ideas might look on the instrument. Make some initial sketches of these designs on the template provided (slide 2) and encourage the children to try out a range of ideas. During the design process, encourage children to discuss the construction of their guitar, referring to week 1.

Next, using the template (slide 3), ask children to create their final design. There is a space for pupils to add the name of their guitar, being as creative as they wish. Modelling at this stage is important if you wish to show how to make the guitar really stand out from the page. The more detailed and vibrant the colour, the more eye-catching the design! View the examples shared.



Assessment

Can children create a design for a guitar following a specific theme?



WEEK 3

Learning objectives

- How will the main body of the guitar be constructed?
- How is the neck of the guitar constructed?

Making a smaller paper/masking tape prototype helps the children to understand the steps required to construct the final model, and identify potential challenges in the process. Using a ukulele as a template for the body and neck works really well.

Encourage pupils to think about what shaped pieces will be required to



construct the guitar. Allow the children to investigate the process and be prepared to make suggestions to support them. Here is a handy guide:

- The children will need two pieces of A3 paper for the top and bottom of the body. Measuring around the edge of one of the pieces will provide the dimensions for a side panel.
- Create the side panel – it should be approximately 8cm in depth and the length of the measure of the A3 paper from step 1. This could be made from strips of paper taped together.
- Attach the side panel to the bottom piece (or the 'front' of the guitar) using small masking tape pieces all around, and cut out a circle for the sound hole before adding the top piece (the 'back').
- Again, using the ukulele for measurement reference, create the neck. This could require up to four pieces: the top and bottom of the neck and two side panels measuring approximately 4 cm thick.
- Use masking tape to attach each piece of the neck together, then attach it to the body using more tape.

Making your own model with the children (we use a visualiser to share) really helps to pace this session carefully and to allow support if challenges during construction arise.

Next, ask your pupils if making the prototype highlighted any challenges for them. Do they think they'll face the same issues with cardboard? I prefer to have cardboard templates ready to draw around for the body of the guitar. Pupils will do all the cutting and sticking, but the template ensures an authentic guitar shape, and will also save time. The size of the template can be flexible depending on the time you have to

complete the project; I tend to go for a size that is approximately twice the surface area of a ukulele.



Assessment

Can children create a prototype of a guitar?



WEEK 4

Learning objective

- Can children construct the guitar using cardboard and fixing techniques?

Using the prepared template, ask children to cut out each section of the guitar's body. The top and bottom of the body use the same template. Use the design page to plan where the sound hole will be positioned and cut a hole in the top piece of the body (the children might need adult help for this part).

Encourage pupils to think about how they'll create the side panel. They might have already solved this during their prototype session, but remind them that more questions are likely to come up during the building. A long strip of card folded gently around the bottom piece of the body is effective. How could we ensure the card folds neatly? Discuss thoughts and share the idea of scoring the card. Use masking tape in small strips to attach the pieces together before adding the top piece.

You might want to use a template for the neck of the guitar, but I prefer to let children decide how long the neck will be. Four pieces are required for the top



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What are the most transformative projects for schools?

The impact of covered walkways is hugely underestimated. If you make them wide enough, they not only create a more comfortable way of travelling between classrooms, but they also create valuable ad-hoc learning spaces for undertaking outdoor creative work or science experiments. Another transformative project is installing a canopy over your multi-use games area (MUGA). Our canopies instantly elevate MUGAs into year-round facilities.



EXPERT PROFILE

Name: Stephen Toone

Job title: Managing director

Area of expertise: Providing innovative, versatile and affordable all-weather solutions for schools across the UK

Best part of my job: Working with schools to completely transform the quality of their daily school life

What are the emerging trends in outdoor structures?

Sustainability is the current watch word in design and construction, and there are some really simple and achievable wins you can make. Look for suppliers that use sustainably sourced and recyclable materials. And consider ways to weave environmentally friendly solutions into your design. For instance, we have helped schools create bike storage with solar panels on the roof, or covered walkways and learning spaces with green roofs that are not only beautiful to look at, but that also encourage biodiversity.

Are there any design considerations schools should think of?

Two key considerations are durability and aesthetics. Always team up with a supplier that offers a guarantee on the lifespan of your structure to ensure you achieve maximum return on your investment. It's also worth thinking about how your new canopy will blend with its surroundings. Look for hybrid wood and steel structures to blend with natural environments, or different coloured powder-coated finishes that enable you to tailor your new structure to your school's colours or landscape.

ASK ME ABOUT

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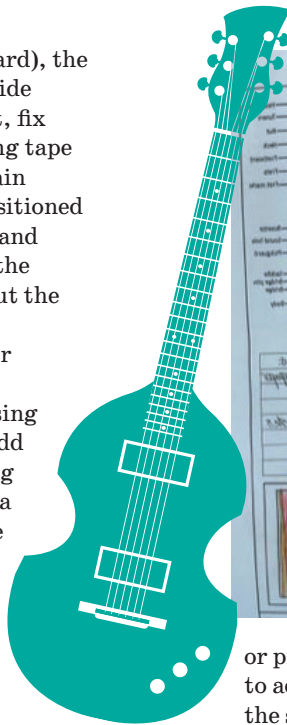
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(the finger or fret board), the bottom and the two side panels. When cut out, fix together with masking tape then attach to the main body. It should be positioned central to the guitar and level with the top of the body. You can then cut the headstock from card, again in four pieces or using folded card. Attach to the neck using more tape. You can add the bridge later, using folded card to create a raised surface for the bridge pins (more split pins).

Now you're ready for the really messy and fun bit! Use papier-mâché strips to cover the guitar. This will provide structure and help to fix the body, the neck and the headstock securely. Once dried, there is an opportunity to test the strength of the guitar. If the neck or headstock do not feel secure, then extra papier-mâché may be needed, or you might want to think about other fixing techniques (ask children for their ideas, based on what they know about different materials – another link to science).

Finally, cover the papier-mâché instrument in white poster paint; you might need more than one coat.



or printouts. Pupils might also wish to add a rosette (the circles around the sound hole).



Assessment

Can children begin to use finishing techniques to strengthen and improve the appearance of their product using a range of equipment?

.....



WEEK 6

Learning objective

- How will I create sound using my guitar?

.....

Now, there are of course some limitations as to the sounds that the instrument will make in this form. However, you can focus on the aesthetic rather than the science and still aim for the instrument to work. Children could explore a range of options: coloured fishing wire, string or wool can provide a great look, and elastic bands make a reverberating sound (and could stimulate questions around forces and tension). Guitars usually have six strings and ukuleles four, but I tend to stick to four for this project, as more than that can be tricky to attach.

Before we attach the strings, we need to add other details. How could we make frets? Card? Dowel? Metallic paint provides a wonderful effect, too. Fret markings could also be added for extra detail, as may the name of the guitar at the top of the headstock.

Now it is time to add the strings. Open a flap at the back of the headstock using scissors, to enable

fingers to get inside and separate the split pins that are pushed through from each side to create mock tuners. Adult help may be needed here. Add split pins to the bridge and split by using the sound hole to access the inside of the guitar. You can then secure your choice of 'string' by wrapping them around the heads of the split pins at the bridge and headstock.

After completion, children should evaluate their designs, comparing the final product with their initial design specification. Is it a successful product? Did they have to overcome any challenges? Were the materials and resources effective? What would they change if they made the guitar again? There's an evaluation template in the PowerPoint (slide 4).

Every year I look forward to this project and every year the children produce the most incredible outcomes. Have fun!



Assessment

Can children evaluate a product against the original design specification and by carrying out tests? **TP**

.....



Assessment

Do children understand how to reinforce and strengthen a 3D framework? Can children evaluate their products by carrying out appropriate tests?

.....



WEEK 5

Learning objective

- How will I add the detail to my design?

.....

With a bright white guitar in their hands, it is now time for pupils to really get creative! First, add the pickguard to the guitar. You could either use a template or get children to create their own using a suitable material (again, this can prompt discussion) and glue it on around the sound hole. Referring to their guitar design template, paint the guitar in the required colours. Once the base colours are laid down, children can enjoy adding their favourite characters and details using paint, coloured pencil



Karl Duke is headteacher of a school in Lincolnshire. He is passionate about the power of picture books to inspire learning across the curriculum.



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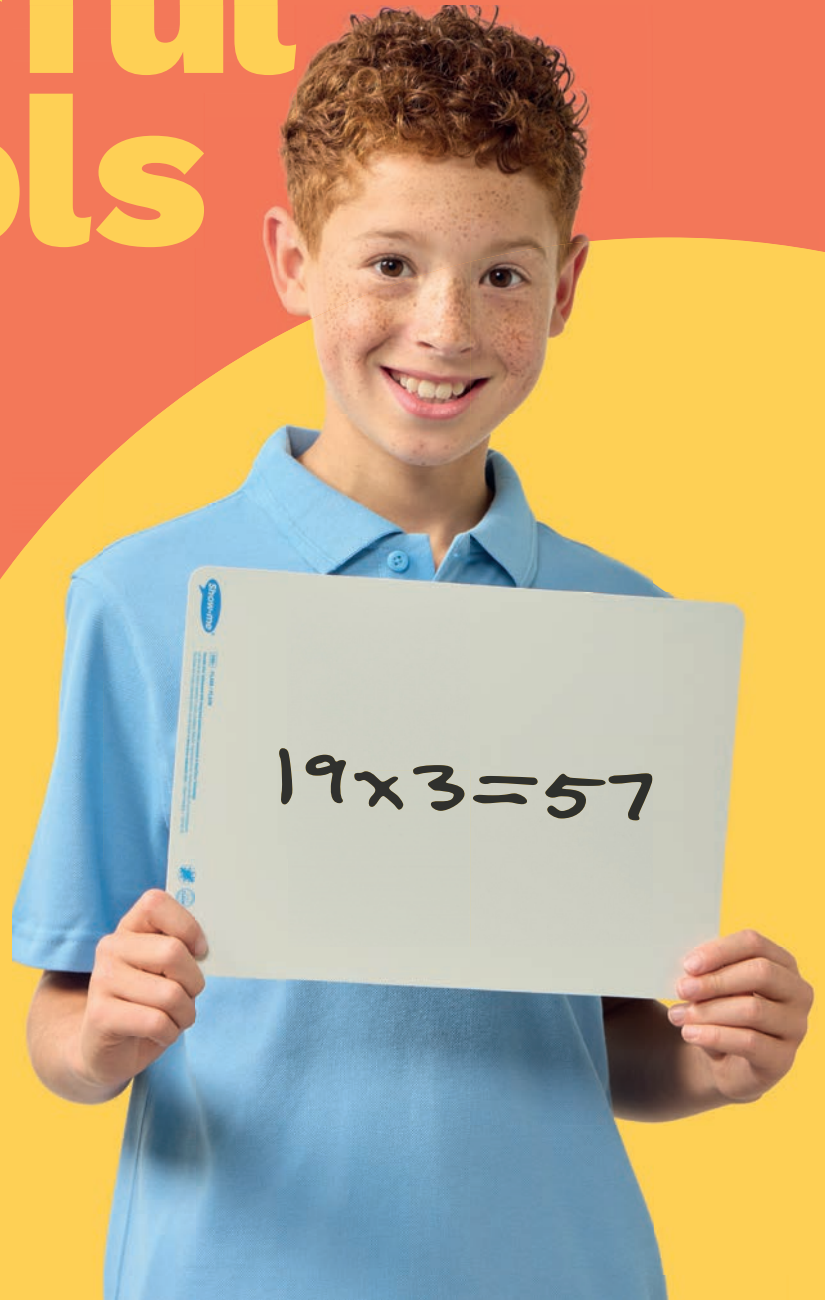
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Airflow Cap

How not to support DISABLED PUPILS

Talking is great, but look outside your classroom for examples, says **Cathy Reay**...

Running a classroom in today's world can be a tough challenge. As teachers and school staff reading this are all too aware, over recent years there has been a steady increase in the need for SEN provision in schools across the country. According to research compiled in October 2024, around 1.9 million children and young people in the UK have special educational needs (SEN); a whopping 11 per cent of the pupil base. Half a million children in the UK now have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and over a million children receive some kind of additional learning support.

This all means that in a typical classroom, there are a lot of needs to consider, and sometimes it can be challenging to know how best to support these pupils, while also managing the complexities of the everyday, bustling classroom. Here are some tips that might help.

1 Be the teacher you would want

Cultivating an approachable, kind and nurturing relationship with your pupils, especially with those who might need to lean on you more than others, will go a long way to ensuring they don't struggle in silence.

Often, disabled and SEN kids will mask and not express their worries for fear of being reprimanded or treated negatively. You could try asking pupils who aren't forthcoming what communication style they prefer and stick to it where possible. This might be a quick five-minute chat at



the end of each week, a journal in which you can write notes to each other, or messages through their parent/carer. Letting your class know you're there for them no matter what, and demonstrating that as much as you can, will help create an open relationship where kids feel unafraid to express their needs.

2 Don't use your disabled kids as examples

When I was a child in primary school, if ever disability was mentioned, teachers would often point me out as the example of The Disabled Kid. I was so mortified every time!

It's great to speak about disability in the classroom, and conversations have advanced so much since I was young, but it's important not to assume every disabled or SEN child wants to openly talk about their experiences of being disabled. It's important to remember this when it comes to thinking about school assembly topics, as well.

Sometimes we focus a bit too much on 'explaining'

disability, but it might actually be more helpful to explain ableism and inaccessibility, so children start to understand the systems that underpin difficult experiences their disabled friends have (and hopefully, help us to work against those systems in the future!).

3 Fill your classroom with disabled icons

As the popular saying goes, you cannot be what you cannot see; and this is true of all the pupils in our classes – disabled or not. It's important that all of our children learn and read about disabled changemakers and icons doing incredible work. People like Stella Young, Alice Wong, Ellie Simmonds, Julia Jay Charles, Rosie Jones, Simon Wheatcroft and Phil Friend are fabulous examples to start with, and there are plenty more out there, too. It's important that all kids learn that with the right attitude and support systems in place, disabled kids can follow so many of their dreams.

4 Encourage mobility and sensory aids

Lots of classrooms have a quiet corner or access to a sensory space for pupils who feel overwhelmed, as well as sensory aids and mobility aids. But some disabled kids might not feel confident enough to try out things that might help them.

Encourage pupils who you feel might benefit from them to explore these areas and aids, and be sure to get their feedback. What works for them? What doesn't? What time of day, or during what lesson do they feel they need this support? Do they have any suggestions for further changes that might make things easier? **TP**



© Alexa Loy

Cathy Reay is a disabled writer and journalist, and former teacher. Her first children's book, *How to Be Disabled and Proud* (£12.99, Penguin), is out now.

X @cathyreaywrites

Tackling MISOGYNY

Bringing the whole school together to challenge violence against women and girls can transform your culture... and your curriculum

SARAH WORDLAW



DEVASTATING STATISTICS

In the UK, a woman is killed by a man every three days (tinyurl.com/tp-FemCensus), and in recent years we have seen a frightening rise in hatred of women and misogynistic views (tinyurl.com/tp-StopHateMisogyny). Every time we switch on the news, or Netflix, we are confronted with a barrage of stories of violence against women and girls, both for information and entertainment. It needs to stop, and it starts with education. The definition of misogyny is 'a dislike of or ingrained prejudice against women' (tinyurl.com/tp-OEDmysogyny). This is a safeguarding issue affecting all people, and at Streatham Wells Primary, our journey began with a commitment to tackle this face on, to ensure that our children can be part of creating a safer and more equal world. For any project to be successful, it has to lie deep within the fabric

of the school's vision. Our curriculum vision statement is simple – to be actively anti-racist, anti-homophobic, anti-sexist, anti-ableist, and to acknowledge intersectionality.

CONSIDER INTERSECTIONALITY

This is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression, and we must consider everything and anything that can marginalise people – gender, sexual orientation, class, race, physical ability, etc.



violence, but also those who support and teach men to recognise and fight against VAWG. We used the information we found to develop teaching sequences that focus on critically thinking about consent, and gender stereotypes, considering the harmful messages we hear about what 'femininity' and 'masculinity' mean. We have also used the evolution of Disney characters to analyse ideas of masculinity and femininity, and bring parents into the conversation about online harms. We have also worked with organisations such as White Ribbon (whiteribbon.org.uk), that help men to tackle misogyny.



LEARNING OUR STUFF

Research is powerful. Teachers delved into our data: language used by children in behaviour incidents; pupil voice on happiness; whose voices are amplified in the classrooms; who represents the school, etc. This data was critical in looking at what we could do to make a change. I took on leading the Lambeth violence against women and girls (VAWG) forum, making links with professionals locally who work with and support women and girls who have been victims of gender-based



IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Developing your curriculum should be a team effort, with representatives from all groups: teachers, support staff, pupils and leaders.



ALL FOR ONE

A misconception when thinking about tackling misogyny is that it is a women's problem. It's not. It's everyone's problem. However, we need to be mindful when educating children about this issue, so that the message given to children isn't women = good, men = bad. It is important to teach pupils about harmful stereotypes about masculinity, however, if the first time we teach and name masculinity is calling it *toxic*, that could do more damage than good to our boys.

It is extremely important to teach about positive masculinities, and to encourage empathy, kindness, showing emotions, listening to alternative points of view, and developing emotional literacy. If we tell a child to "stop crying" when they are feeling upset,

we are teaching them that showing their emotions is bad. If we use language such as "toughen up", "man up" or "boys will be boys", we are setting boys up to fail. To overcome this, a school culture of being open to challenge and being challenged is imperative. Regular and targeted staff training around language, pedagogy and backing it up with relevant research is a way to battle to and to grow together. And of course, always linking it back to the overall aim of the curriculum is important, too. For example, in our school we are

TEACH POSITIVE MASCULINITES

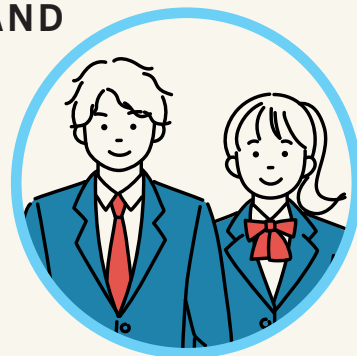
This helps to battle aspirational misogyny, which is where some boys and men aspire to be like those who are famous for misogyny, e.g. Andrew Tate.

"We need to be sure not to suggest that women = good, and men = bad"



ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Undoing the deeply ingrained gender stereotypes in our society takes time and is certainly not a quick fix. We have seen a significant improvement in children's awareness of key issues surrounding gender equality, and how to use their voice to advocate for others. Children ask each other for consent regularly (to use equipment, play games, give high fives or hugs, etc), and understand that no means no. This development in children's oracy means that we are seeing improvement in children's speaking and listening, and in their happiness at school (we measure this through pupil voice surveys). But there are always gains to be made, and so moving forward, we are going to continue to work on representation in our curriculum; not just representation of the amazing, strong women who have shaped global history, but also representation of positive



ASIEL

"It is important to learn about misogyny so we can stop it and be great allies to each other. We are the people who can make a difference in the future!"



LILY

"We learned that consent is when you ask for or give permission, freely. The word freely is really important because consent has to be given without threat and helps us to protect ourselves."



FILIPPA

"On White Ribbon Day everyone is encouraged to wear white to symbolise their respect for all women. This shows our allyship, which helps to respect and protect people. It feels good to know that we've got each other's backs."

masculinity, showing that to be a man is not to be simply one thing. To do so we highlight well-known figures such as Harry Styles and Elliot Page, showing that masculinity can mean softness and strength, and everything in between.

AUDIT YOUR CURRICULUM

It's not simply about highlighting an equal number of women and men, but delving into what messages the role models you choose communicate. Do they perpetuate stereotypes, or fight them?



Sarah Wordlaw is the headteacher of Streatham Wells Primary,

chair of the Lambeth VAWG Forum, and author of *Time to Shake Up the Primary Curriculum*.

[streathamwells.lambeth.sch.uk](https://www.streathamwells.lambeth.sch.uk)

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How I do it ➡

Take your class on an imaginary trip to the ocean by utilising the sculptural capabilities of paper

ADELE DARLINGTON

1

To begin, bring the ocean into your classroom, watching footage of waves ebbing and flowing on the whiteboard. We talked about the lines and shapes we could see in their movement, the heights they reach and the way they crash on the shore. Try closing your eyes and listening to their soothing sounds, imagining you're in front of them, water lapping round your ankles and salty spray splashing on your skin.



My class created these paper wave sculptures to complement our week's focus text, which was *Clean Up!* By Nathan Bryon and Dapo Adeola. The story sees the loveable main character, Rocket, travel to the Caribbean to visit her grandparents. While there, she's shocked to see the local beach is littered and the sea is polluted. She decides to take action and organises a big beach clean-up. The front cover of the text shows Rocket surfing, smiling and enjoying the waves, and this inspired the creation of our own mini oceans using just card, paper and glue!

Next, explore the idea of sculpture as a three-dimensional artform, and that sculptures can be made from a wide range of materials using a number of different techniques. Tell children they'll be making their own wave sculptures, and provide card, paper and glue. To turn the 2D paper into 3D form, support pupils to bend it into curved shapes, reminiscent of the majestic waves of the ocean.

2

Use A3 blue card (white would work as well) as a base for your sculptures and have a selection of strips of paper for the children to choose from to create their waves. A variety of blue, silver and white paper adds interest to the final creations; we even used newspaper and squared paper for ours!

3

4

Next, practise making waves in the air with your paper, holding up strips and bending and curling them, before doing the same on the card base. Pupils should choose where the start of a wave is going to be, place a blob of glue there and stick it down. Then they can bend the strip up and over and glue it again. Continue this until pupils get to the end of each strip. Remind the children that the number of wave curls each strip creates will depend on the height and width of each bend (you can link this to maths, if you like).



Once your paper wave sculptures are complete, clear a space on the floor in the classroom and join them all together to make an ocean installation; we laid ours out in a rectangular shape. You can play the sounds of waves in the background to create a multi-sensory experience, and even invite other classes and school staff in to enjoy the waves with you and experience your wonderful artwork.

5

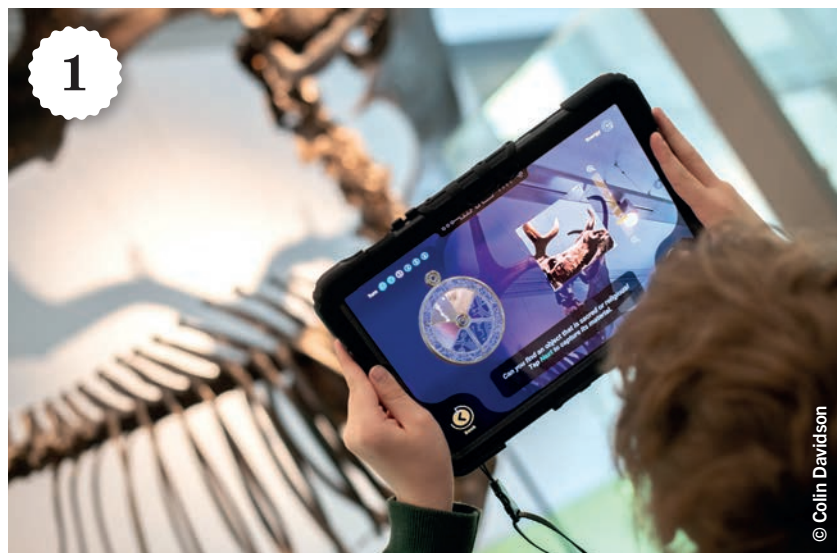


Adele Darlington is an experienced primary teacher and art consultant. She is the author of *100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Art* (£15, Bloomsbury).

Summer school trips

Start planning your next educational adventure...

1



© Colin Davidson

Journey back in time!

Time Odyssey is an exciting new interactive digital learning adventure that takes 7–11-year-old schoolchildren on a quest through their local museum. Created in partnership by Art Explora and The British Museum, using pioneering technology, pupils engage with museum collections in a completely new way.

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With experienced, friendly staff ensuring a safe and inclusive environment, and with plenty of space to accommodate large groups, AirHop delivers school trips that are both memorable and educationally valuable. Visit airhop.co.uk/schools



2

3



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4



Future makers

The Royal Albert Hall's annual schools music competition, Future Makers, is here to find tomorrow's music talent.

Acts aged 14-19 from all across the UK will perform original music in front of a panel of judges and an enthusiastic crowd of KS2 and KS3 students for the chance to win a year of music support.

This high-energy show will get your classes cheering as they experience the thrill of live music at the Royal Albert Hall, and tickets are just £3 per pupil. Plus, add a pre-show 30-minute tour of the Royal Albert Hall for an additional £3 per person.

A specially written resource pack, containing lesson plans and top tips from the stars will be available to support the trip. Book now at

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5



6



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7



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Get a **MOVE ON**

Encouraging our littlest learners to embrace physical activity will bear fruit far beyond the early years, say **Tim Richards** and **John Parsons**

Physical development in early years is much more than just getting children active. It can lay the foundation for a lifetime of confident movement and joyful activity. Young children naturally love to move, and the flexibility within EYFS gives us a golden opportunity to build on this innate enthusiasm. With thought and planning, we can also use physical activity as a vehicle for developing all other prime and specific areas of learning.

Research shows that developing fundamental movement skills (FMS) during these formative years plays a crucial role in children's current and future physical activity levels, directly impacting their health outcomes. By taking a proactive approach now, we're giving children the springboard they need to fully engage in both structured and spontaneous activity throughout their lives, positively impacting their physical literacy journey.

1. Inclusive movement

Design your space and activities to accommodate different ability levels, ensuring every child can participate successfully. Consider using visual cues, adaptable equipment and flexible challenge levels to help all children, including those with additional needs, and take an active role in movement sessions.

2. Use storytelling

Transform physical activities into adventures by



incorporating storytelling elements. To make movement meaningful and memorable, rather than working on balance, children could become explorers on a pirate ship; instead of practising footwork and spatial awareness, they might pretend to go off for a ride on their bikes or scooters. This approach aligns with how young children learn and makes physical development an organic part of their day.

Using a thematic approach of stories, games and songs has provided a great hook for all our pupils to develop their learning.

3. Celebrate progress

Implement a celebration system that recognises each child's unique journey. Focus on personal improvement rather than comparison with peers, highlighting not just their physical achievements but also positive learning behaviours. This approach helps to build confidence and creates a supportive atmosphere where every small step forward is valued.

4. Playful skills

Structure activities that develop fundamental movement skills while maintaining the joy of play. For example, you could turn jumping practice into a game of exploring the moon, or develop sending and receiving skills through imaginative scenarios like being jugglers in the circus. Moving to music and adapting well-known nursery rhymes also brings a new dimension. The key is to maintain the balance between skill development and playful engagement.

5. Partner with parents

Create a movement-positive culture that extends beyond your setting by actively involving parents and carers. Share simple activity ideas they can try at home (like those at tinyurl.com/tp-EYFSrealPEactivity), celebrate physical achievements during parent meetings, and communicate the value of movement in early development. This partnership helps reinforce

positive attitudes toward physical activity.

Our children have enjoyed the opportunity to continue developing their FMS in the comfort of their own home. This innovative approach has helped keep them engaged and active beyond the classroom.

6. Follow their lead

While structure is often important, it's best to remain flexible enough to follow children's interests and spontaneous movement opportunities. This might mean turning an impromptu balancing game on a log into a focused skill-development activity, or using children's fascination with animals to inspire new ways to move and travel.

These approaches have proven successful at Burnham-on-Sea Infant School. They have offered more structure, and have removed teacher preference when planning for PE sessions. This consistent approach for each year group has had huge benefits for both teachers and pupils, allowing them all to thrive. **TP**



Tim Richards is deputy headteacher at Burnham-on-Sea Infant School.



John Parsons is director of innovation for real PE, supporting primary schools to deliver an outstanding PE curriculum.

 tinyurl.com/tp-realPE

“I’m just not good at it”

The perpetual myth that there are ‘maths people’ and ‘not maths people’ is damaging our pupils, says **Katy Pike**, so we need to nip it in the bud, now

“I’m just not a maths person.” We’ve all heard it from pupils (and maybe even colleagues or parents), but this seemingly innocent phrase can lock doors for children before they’ve even had a chance to open them.

Recent polling from Mathletics found that 56 per cent of primary teachers believe the perception of ‘natural talent’ prevents pupils from achieving their potential in maths. But research consistently shows that mathematical ability develops through practice rather than being innate – so how can we tackle this misconception head-on?

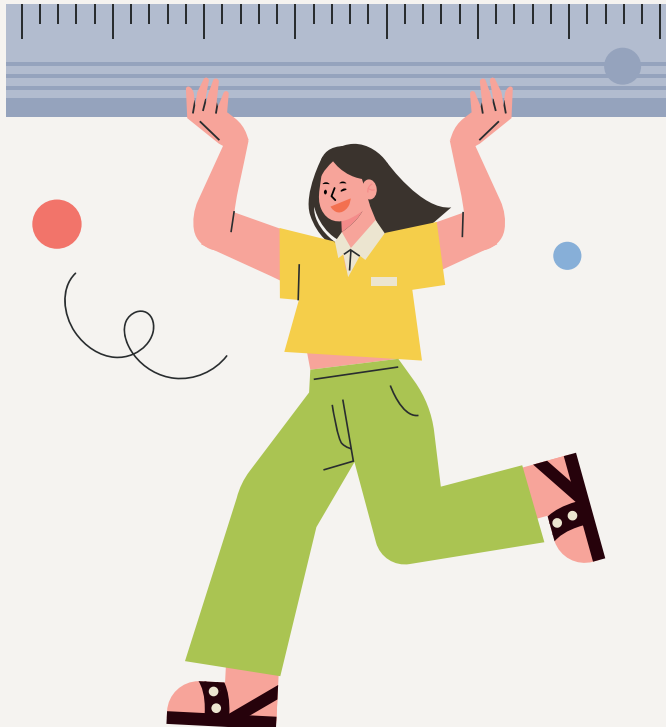
Growth in action

Pupils need to understand that mathematical ability isn’t fixed – it develops with practice and persistence. The more children understand this notion, the more likely they are to engage, try – and try again.

Try this: Draw a ‘progress path’ with stepping stones on a poster. When teaching a new maths skill, mark the starting point on the poster. Once a week, take a minute to discuss progress, asking questions such as: “Remember when division was hard? Look how far we’ve come!”. Move the marker along the path each time the children master a skill or activity, to show pupils that practice leads to improvement.

Make maths meaningful

When maths connects to pupils’ interests and real-world applications, engagement naturally increases. Where you can, try and link learning to real



situations or ask pupils how what they’ve learnt applies to things they’re familiar with. You’ll undoubtedly notice a boost in curiosity.

Try this: Collect data about things pupils care about – favourite games, pets or weekend activities. Use maths in fun projects like designing a game with scoring, or planning a class party with a budget. These real-life examples help children see that maths plays an important role in things they enjoy.

All roads lead to Rome

There’s rarely just one way to solve a maths problem. By encouraging different methods to get to the end result, you’ll help children build deeper understanding.

Try this: Ask pupils questions with many possible answers: “How many ways can we make 20?” or “How can we work out the area

of our playground?” Have pupils explain their thinking to classmates using “I solved it by...” or “My strategy was...” Display different methods side-by-side on a wall chart so pupils can see the many different ways that reached the same conclusion.

Turn mistakes into opportunities

Mistakes are valuable learning tools, not failures. Help pupils see that errors can often spark other ways of thinking, leading them to the correct outcome.

Try this: Present worked examples with deliberate errors that highlight common misconceptions. Say to the class: “I need your help with this tricky problem. Can you spot where I went wrong?”. Have pupils discuss what happened and how to fix it. This helps children see mistakes as stepping stones to understanding, not things to fear.

Remove the spotlight

Encouraging group working can take the pressure off individual children and builds skills like teamwork.

Try this: Create a maths treasure hunt around the classroom or school, where each problem solved gives a clue to find the next one. When children work together to solve problems, they share ideas and build confidence as a team – all while having fun.

Challenge stereotypes

We need to allow pupils to see all kinds of people succeeding with maths to improve self-belief and help them understand just how diverse maths careers can be.

Try this: Create a ‘maths jobs’ board showing diverse people using maths in different careers. Include fashion designers using shapes, musicians using patterns, sports coaches using statistics and builders using measurement. Invite parents or local businesses to talk about how they use maths at work.

While these activities aren’t one-time fixes, it’s a good way to start the building blocks for a classroom culture where every pupil believes they can succeed. The message we need to reinforce is simple but powerful: maths really is for everyone. **TP**



Katy Pike is head of education at Mathletics, the hosts of World Maths Day.

tinyurl.com/tp-WMD25

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THIS WAY!

School improvement advice
for headteachers and SLT

MIDDLE LEADERS | CPD | SUBJECT LEADERSHIP



Improve community relationships? CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Cornwall Education Learning Trust (CELT), along with many schools across the country, is focusing on improving attendance rates, bringing them back to pre-Covid levels.

Keen to make a real change, we dug straight in with some data analysis, and found we needed to investigate SEND children's attendance before we developed an overall strategy. Essentially, we knew we needed to do things differently.

First things first

We challenged ourselves with the following theory of change: *If we foster trusting, respectful relationships with our communities and families focused on a shared commitment to the children, then we will be better informed, and develop deeper, more effective relationships to provide support and challenge. More children will feel a sense of belonging, be motivated to access school and achieve highly.*

Our work has initially focused on the town of St. Austell, which includes one of our primary schools and one secondary school. Although, when we shared our theory with our SENDCos, several other schools within our Trust were keen to engage.

The first step was to really listen to our parents of children with SEND. We did this in a variety of ways. For example, we met parents individually, held parent/carers cafes and thought carefully about matching staff who had

positive existing relationships with parents so that we ensured they felt comfortable enough to be honest. We asked what was going well, what wasn't going well and any potential next steps to improve things. The feedback was interesting and gave us lots to think about. Some comments were hard to hear, but this just motivated us further to improve things for our families.

Another point of interest is that when we properly unpicked parent concerns, many were related to factors outside of our control, such as delays in processing education healthcare plans (EHCPs), the lack of specialist placements, and waiting lists for educational psychologists and other professionals. However, we realised

that despite a wealth of information regarding SEND processes published on our school's websites, several parents were unaware of how they worked. This enabled us to review how we communicate. For example, parents suggested that we feature various support staff in our newsletter to explain their role in school. We also held short information sessions from staff, sharing how they work with children, while parents enjoyed a cup of tea and a catch-up with each other.

From here to there

The first key area we decided to focus on was improving our transition processes for children with SEND from primary to secondary school. We were

able to action suggestions made by parents and further develop existing practice.

Our pilot secondary school, Poltair, further developed its tailored transition to include a universal, targeted and bespoke tiered approach including offering weekly transition sessions. All Year 6 children were invited to 'Easter Super Sixes', which were fun sessions held at Poltair during the Easter holidays to support children to familiarise themselves with the school site while it was quiet. The universal offer invites families to attend a session on Friday afternoons at the school. Children are asked to attend with a parent/carer so that the family can familiarise themselves with the school and build relationships with staff. The school hosts thirty families each week throughout the summer term.

“Essentially, we knew we needed to do things differently”



We need to talk about...

During my 30-year career working in schools, (from teacher to headteacher), I have had many conversations with parents concerning the behaviour of their offspring. Some of these conversations have been very positive; I've loved sending emails, or making phone calls home when a child has impressed us with their conduct, not just with their learning. However, I have had my fair share of conversations with parents when I have had less positive news about how their sons or daughters have reacted in school. I fully understand why some parents can be defensive in this situation – they may feel their parenting is being in some way criticised, or it may simply be that their love for their child leads them automatically to try to find excuses for behaviour that doesn't meet our expectations.

There are several strategies I remember using when talking to parents about pupils' behaviour. If the parents were unhappy

about how the school had dealt with a behaviour incident involving their child, I always invited them in to talk to me, and I started by saying, "I'm sorry if you don't agree with the decisions we've taken, but I'm pleased we're having this conversation. Please tell me what you're thinking and feeling." And I would listen, without interruption, to all they had to say. Once they'd finished, I would then explain our perspective, and the reasons behind any steps we had taken. If they tried to interrupt before I got to the end I'd point out (calmly) that I hadn't interrupted them, and I needed them not to interrupt me, but promised we would discuss it all after I'd said what I needed to say. I found this usually defused the tension and allowed us all to explain our point of view.


I've also said to disgruntled parents, "I recognise your child is the most important thing to you, and that's just as it should be,

and I care about them too. But I also care about every other child in the school, and that gives me a wider perspective. I need you to trust my professional judgement on this."

I strongly believe that we have to find a way forward which demonstrates clearly that we are all on the child's side. Encouraging each individual to take responsibility for their actions, to learn from their mistakes, to apologise if they have got something wrong, and to determine to do better next time, is a crucial part of their education. What do we model if we only try to defend those we care about? Just as a good friend tells you (sensitively and kindly) the truth, rather than agreeing with everything you say and do, a good school, and a responsible parent, work together to support the child as they grow into adulthood.



Jill Berry is a former headteacher, and is now a leadership development consultant.

 @jillberry102.bsky.social

Staff were conscious of possible cognitive overload for children at transition events, so they enlisted the support of the Cornwall Council ASD Advisor. The advisor attended events with families and worked with parents at a separate session to share strategies to support their children through the transition.

After meetings between primary and secondary staff, children who would benefit from enhanced transition support were identified and given a golden ticket. The children and their parents were invited to smaller sessions with a maximum of eight other families to enjoy practical sessions such as pizza-making, with a higher ratio of staff in attendance.

We prioritised peer and staff relationship building activities during the summer term, too. Targeted children were allocated a mentor, who checked in regularly. There were also opportunities for the primary staff to join transition events and a check-in with children and staff during the first half of the autumn term.

Looking up

For example, a new Year 7 SEND student with prior school anxiety attended weekly transition events, which reduced their concerns significantly. This was complemented by regular check-ins at the Inclusion Hub, leading to an attendance rate of 97%. The family reported the transition as “seamless” due to tailored support.

Impact highlights included improved attendance, where Year 7 SEND attendance matched overall rates at 97%, demonstrating effective anxiety-reduction strategies, and enhanced parent and student voice. Parents also praised proactive communication, including individual meetings, cafés, and tailored support plans, and families reported feeling connected and well-supported through regular updates and accessible SEND teams.

As far as pupil feedback goes, our learners said they valued opportunities to familiarise themselves with staff, peers, and the school environment



through enhanced transition days, safe spaces, and targeted visits.

The SEN Year 6–7 Transition Project demonstrated measurable success in improving attendance and fostering a supportive environment for families. Ongoing refinements, such as earlier planning and more inclusive activities, will strengthen future transitions.

However, the most valuable takeaway is the true power of really listening to our families.



Claire Bunting has been a primary headteacher for over 10 years. Since September, she has been leading the Trust's Cradle to Career project working with Reach Foundation, Feltham.

🦋 @celtacademies.bsky.social

📧 celtrust.org



Tricky topics

Parents and carers worry about their children — of course they do. They really care and want the best for their child. They are bombarded with information from so many sources and it's often the frightening stuff that sticks. Parents and carers want to keep their children safe and they can't always be sure of the best way to do that. As teachers, we can help and reassure parents by providing them with information they can trust.

In so many cases, a parent or carer with concerns about LGBTQ+ education in school has been misinformed somewhere down the line. Maybe they're concerned that their children will be turned gay or trans by hearing a story, maybe they're concerned that children will be labelled by adults and forced to adopt a different gender, or maybe they're concerned that their reception-age children are going to hear age-inappropriate things that, in actual fact, aren't taught until teen years. Many young parents lived through the Section 28 era themselves and never experienced quality LGBTQ+ education in school at all, so it's understandable that sometimes they are afraid, misinformed or confused.

Here are my top three ways to have effective conversations with concerned parents about LGBT+ education:

1. Inform — Invite parents in to see resources used for teaching across all protected characteristics, including in RE and PSHE, plus work you do around encouraging children to be kind and thoughtful and celebrate difference as a good thing.
2. Listen — Listen to the concerns of parents on an individual basis — what exactly is it they are concerned about?
3. Educate — Help parents to understand the value of inclusive work for all children. When children see that everyone is welcomed at their school, regardless of their differences, everyone benefits.

Download a free 'Discussions with parents' pack for SLT, including all the latest legal info and stats, at tinyurl.com/tp-LGBTQchat

Mel Lane (she/her) is a former primary school teacher and teacher trainer, and is now head of education at education resource provider Pop'n'Oilly.

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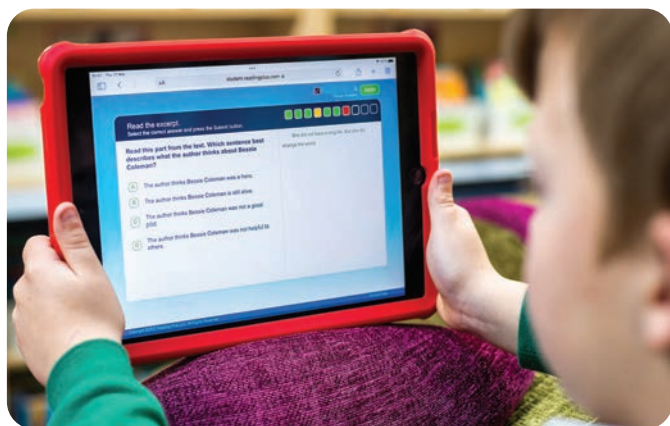
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What's your ASSESSMENT STYLE?

Old-fashioned methods of evaluation are still surprisingly prevalent, and dragging our pupils down; it's time to move on, says **Richard Selfridge**

“By the end of each key stage, pupils are expected to know, apply and understand the matters, skills and processes specified in the relevant programme of study.”

This statement, which appears in the current national curriculum Key Stage 1 and 2 framework document, might seem a bit odd to many of you, particularly if you have at any point been encouraged to see learning as a series of small steps in which children learn a little bit more of the national curriculum each term.

Learning's not linear

For a long period between the introduction of the national curriculum in England in 1999, and the point when a revised, new national curriculum was introduced in 2013, there seemed to be a general assumption that all children could regularly be placed onto different rungs of a ladder, which led inevitably upwards.

What's more, there was an assumption that teachers and their schools could have a high degree of certainty about which step on the ladder children were on at any given point in time.

Until 2014, pupils'

development through primary school was split into a series of linear 'levels' of attainment, through which the children were expected to progress. This requirement, ultimately, is the root of what might be called a 'progress mindset', the legacy of which pervades the primary landscape.

The levels system had the best of intentions. It was designed so that all children – and their parents – could see that they were becoming

DfE accountability measure until 2015". The update made it clear that Ofsted inspectors were advised not to use this term when referring to 'progress' from 2016. And yet the mindset lingers on.

What is a progress mindset?

Assessment systems based on a progress mindset require learners to move through a series of steps of some kind. The steps lead inevitably

upwards from a lower point to a higher point and pupils tend to move regularly from one step to another, usually a term at a time. Autumn is often, for example, 'emerging'; spring is when students are 'developing'; and summer is when they

“A progress mindset can distort assumptions about how children develop academically”

more proficient during their time in school.

Unfortunately, this soon transformed into an expectation that children should progress uniformly through a series of regular smaller 'steps of progress' across school years. These expectations then became measures of 'expected progress', and the system of levels began to collapse under the pressure placed on it.

An official School Inspection Update in March 2017 informed schools that, “‘Expected progress’ was a



become 'secure', or words to that effect. Extra steps are often added to allow the system to show 'more progress'.

Where a curriculum is based on a progress mindset, complex subjects are broken down into small steps, often with attempts to demarcate differences in interrelated concepts. A maths curriculum may, for example, be summarised using statements for 'working towards', 'at expected' or 'at greater depth' in each year group, with separate statements for concepts such as 'number and place value' and 'fractions'.

There are a number of problems with curriculum and assessment based on a progress mindset. One issue is that those working in schools may not realise that their assumptions about

how children develop academically are distorted by it. Children build up knowledge over time, frequently developing (and then, we hope, resolving) misconceptions as they go, rather than starting with a base of misconceptions or lack of understanding, and ticking them off in order (tinyurl.com/tp-CCschema).

Another is that the progress mindset can compromise data about pupils, as those working within the system are often forced to ignore the limitations of assessment. This can easily happen in cases where systems for keeping track of children make implicit assumptions about the accuracy of assessment (by requiring pupils to be placed on a rigid, steps-based numerical scale, for example).

What else can you try?

Luckily, English schools currently have a great deal of discretion when it comes to assessment between the ends of Key Stages. You can use this freedom to create assessment systems that work for you. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) suggests that schools should focus on high quality teaching, targeted support and wider strategies to support pupils (tinyurl.com/tp-EEFquality). This gives you freedom to place students into broad categories, such as those needing support and those for whom no extra support is needed, for example (which we call an 'action mindset').

Once this rough filter has been applied, those in the second category can be lightly monitored using a variety of assessments (monitoring attainment in core subjects, and teacher assessments of efforts and behaviour in class, for example) to check whether there has been any change in their circumstances. This frees up more time for you to use a fine filter to focus on those pupils who do need additional support to make the most of their time in school.

Breaking out from the progress mindset requires a recognition that teaching and learning is complex, and that learning happens over years rather than months. It also requires an understanding of what a progress mindset looks like, and an honest assessment of the extent to which it might underpin thinking in your school. If you are fortunate, you will have read all this with a wry smile, knowing you have moved on. If not, you might want to consider what underpins your thinking about curriculum and assessment and make a break for freedom. **TP**

DO YOU HAVE A PROGRESS MINDSET?

Use this quiz to figure out if your school is leaning towards a progress mindset.

- 1** How is your curriculum structured?
 - a. Subjects have broad outlines
 - b. Subjects are broken down into small steps
- 2** How do you track learning over time?
 - a. Using small steps of learning
 - b. Using point-in-time assessments
- 3** How do pupils progress over the year?
 - a. Building their understanding over time
 - b. Ticking off learning objectives as they go
- 4** What does good progress look like?
 - a. Pupils know more and can do more
 - b. Pupils make more steps than expected

Score your answers as follows:

1: a 2, b 5

2: a 5, b 2

3: a 2, b 5

4: a 2, b 5

If you scored more than 15, you might have a progress mindset.



Richard Selfridge is a primary teacher, writer and Insight Education

data consultant. His latest book, *A Little Guide for Teachers to Using Student Data* (£10.99, SAGE), was published in 2024.



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SO WHAT?

Is your assessment getting lost in the chaos of primary science enquiry?
One simple question might set you on the right track...

PROFESSOR SARAH EARLE

There are cars zooming down ramps, markers on the floor, metre rulers and tape measures, different surfaces being tested as 'run-off lanes'... it's a lot. Primary science enquiry lessons are hectic, and with 30 children and stuff everywhere, it can feel impossible to even consider assessing what learning is going on. But thinking about assessment can actually make the lesson more manageable, as you appraise what you're really trying to teach.

Teaching and assessing children's ability to work scientifically is challenging because it is often happening in the moment; observing the woodlouse hide, measuring the temperature of the drink, counting the number of stirs until the sugar has dissolved, changing one thing about the parachute and keeping everything else the same... learning events that happen, and are then gone. Classroom management considerations take over and any sort of write-up doesn't seem to capture what happened, making it feel like we need to look at everything, everywhere, all at once.

Pull focus

The solution is to ask yourself 'so what?'. What matters? What do you want to focus on? Pick one part of the plan-do-review enquiry cycle to be the focus for the lesson. For example, if testing how waterproof different materials are

for teddy's coat, the focus of the lesson might be on the planning phase, with discussions around how we could test how waterproof the various materials are, and the children drawing diagrams to explain the best method once they have done some trialing. If the focus is on concluding, when investigating whether longer legs jump further, this might be planned as a class, carried out in groups with the children recording their own conclusions. Full write-ups of method, results, and conclusion are not needed; pupils should only be

Assessment in Primary Science (TAPS) project, supports the teaching and assessment of working scientifically (tinyurl.com/tp-Focus4TAPS). A wide range of lesson plans and pupil work examples can be found on the TAPS section of the Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT) website (tinyurl.com/tp-PSTTtaps). Focused recording means that there is more time within the lesson for discussion and investigation, as well as making it easier to judge where the children are in their learning.

“Responsive and adaptive teaching will make the most difference to the children's learning”

recording on the focus of the lesson.

Focused recording is a key feature of two Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) trialled programmes, which have found a positive impact on children's science learning outcomes. Thinking Doing Talking Science promotes the importance of talk in science and was the inspiration for many of the activities that are freely available on the Explorify website (explorify.uk). Focus4TAPS, the professional development programme emerging from the Teacher

WAGOLL

Making age-appropriate judgements about children's learning in science is also more manageable when you have a tight focus, because it is easier to see 'what a good one looks like'. For example, if you are running cars down ramps with a focus on recording results, then you would be looking to see if the children's tables make sense: are they clear and labelled, with units for measurement? Whereas, if you are investigating string telephones and focusing on drawing conclusions, then you are looking to see if they can describe patterns and use





the word *vibrations* accurately. Each enquiry takes place within a conceptual context, meaning that sometimes (e.g. when drawing conclusions) you can make judgements about both working scientifically and the science topic content. At other times, the focus will be on teaching and assessing a particular 'working scientifically' skill.

Assessment is part of teaching and learning, not a separate bolt-on.

Responsive and adaptive teaching will make the most difference to children's learning. This is where you will have the impact, so put your energy into the formative use of assessment. What we are looking for is to see whether the children have been able to do the thing that we were focusing on, and if not, then to do something about it. For example, if they are drawing how shadows are made and have no light source, or they have mixed up the words for *reflections* and *shadows*, then we need to do some more exploring and talking before moving on to measuring shadows. We can tweak the next lesson or the next question we ask them, so that we can address the gaps that we find.

Sharing is caring

Building a shared vision of progression in primary science is not something that we do alone. Talking to other teachers in your school, sharing what the children are doing in your lessons and seeing what has been done in other classes are all great for professional development.

As well as the TAPS examples, the Pan-London Assessment Network (PLAN) also has a wide range of pupil work examples freely available on their website to support discussions with colleagues (planassessment.com).

The busyness of a primary science enquiry lesson is a good sign that pupils are exploring, discussing and investigating. Being clear about the focus for your lesson, and sharing this with the children, makes it more manageable and productive, as there is a shared focus on the science learning, making it easier for you – and the children – to see if they've grasped it. **TP**

Effective evaluation

If you're wondering if your assessment is working, remember these top tips:



This is permission not to write everything

down. No full write-ups please – that's a handwriting lesson.



Pick a focus for an enquiry lesson (e.g. plan, do or review);

that is what you are going to be paying attention to. Don't worry about anything else for now.



Use what you see and hear to tweak your

next question or instruction – there's no need to wait to impact the learning (it is not a test, it is teaching).



Consider what the children were able to do in the lesson,

and use this knowledge to make a judgement about their learning at that specific point and to help decide what to do next time.



Different foci across the year build

up into a picture of how the class are developing their working scientifically skills – you don't have to do it all at once. Breaking up your assessments will allow you to focus more clearly.



Sarah Earle is professor of primary science education at Bath

Spa University. Previously a primary school teacher, she now leads national research projects such as *Focus4TAPS* and the *Nuffield practical work project*.



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Ready OR NOT?

Start off on the right foot and help propel your pupils towards their best chance of school success...

JULIAN GRENIER

'School readiness' is a hot topic right now, but it seems it can mean different things to different people.

At the end of 2024, the prime minister announced the target of 75 per cent of five-year-olds reaching a 'good level of development' (GLD) in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by 2028, explaining that this will ensure children are "starting primary school ready to learn".

At almost the same time this target was announced, Kindred Squared shared findings that whilst 90 per cent of parents consider their children to be 'ready for school', teachers think that 33 per cent of pupils are not.

'School readiness' is a very contested subject.

EYFSP

The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) is the statutory measure of children's attainment at the end of Reception. The GLD measure means that a child has achieved all 12 Early Learning Goals in:

- communication and language
- physical development
- personal, social and emotional development
- literacy
- mathematics

There are also other Early Learning Goals in the areas of understanding the world and expressive arts and design.

Children are assessed either to be at either the 'expected' or the 'emerging' level, with the 'exceeding' level removed in the 2021 EYFS reforms. The assessments are based on teacher judgement, without any statutory moderation.

Understanding the EYFSP and school readiness isn't straightforward. For a

start, whilst it is described as a measure of 'school readiness', children have been in school for a full year by the time the EYFSP is carried out. Secondly, the binary nature of the assessment can make it hard to interpret. For example, a child who understands a lot about number, but can't yet 'automatically recall (without reference to rhymes, counting or other aids) number bonds up to five (including subtraction facts)', will be assessed at 'emerging'. Another child who isn't yet able to count to 10 will also be assessed as 'emerging'. Clearly, these two children are at very different levels of development, despite both being described as 'emerging'.

However, that's not to say the GLD isn't important. There is a strong association between children achieving the 'Good Level of Development' and going on to achieve well throughout school. For example, the DFE-funded SEED Study (Study of Early Education and Development; Gardiner and Melhuish, 2021) found that:

- children who achieved GLD were more likely to reach expected levels in reading and maths at the end of Key Stage 1
- achieving the GLD is associated with better language, cognitive, and social-emotional outcomes up to age seven, which is as far as the study currently goes


"The binary nature of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile can make it hard to interpret"






EYFS – Y1 TRANSITION KIT

It's crucial to have a sound process for transition between Reception and Year 1. Think about:

 Involvement of the Year 1 team in reviewing or moderating the EYFSP. This will ensure that everyone is clear about what the assessments mean.

 Ensuring that precise assessment information is shared when a child is 'emerging'. It is important for the Year 1 teacher to know exactly what a child knows and can do, and what they still need to learn. For example, if a child is 'emerging' in literacy, they may not be able to 'say a sound for each letter in the alphabet and at least 10 digraphs'. The receiving teacher will need to know which letters and digraphs they can say a sound for, and which they can't, so that teaching can build on the child's existing knowledge.

 Procedures to enable children to consolidate EYFS learning in Year 1. It is important to apply the Year 1 programmes of study flexibly, so that pupils build on the learning they secured in Reception. The EYFS is called the 'Foundation Stage' for a reason! It isn't helpful to skip over foundational knowledge and skills: without strong foundations, children are likely to struggle.



Julian Grenier
CBE is the
co-author
of *Putting
the EYFS
Curriculum
into Practice*
(£25.99, Sage).

Inequalities

It is also notable that children's outcomes are already very unequal by age five. For example, in summer 2024:

- 51 per cent of children eligible for free school meals achieved the GLD
- 72 per cent of children not eligible for free school meals achieved the GLD
- National gap: 20.5 percentage points.

On average, according to the Education Policy Institute (EPI), the gap at the end of the EYFS will double by the end of primary school, and double again by the end of secondary.

There are also significant gaps between children of different ethnicities and between boys and girls.

Acting early, to prevent these gaps from opening and widening, is a key priority for all schools.

Acting on outcomes

So how should teachers and educators in schools make sense of the EYFSP and put it to good use?

First, staff in Reception need to bear in mind that the EYFSP only samples some of what children need to know and be able to do. A good Reception curriculum needs

“Bear in mind that the EYFSP only samples some of what children need to know”

to be much broader than that. For example, there is no Early Learning Goal to check children's mathematical understanding of shapes and measures, but this is a vital element of a strong maths curriculum. As the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching for Mathematics (NCEM) comments, 'spatial skills are important for understanding other areas of maths and children need structured experiences to ensure they develop these'.

Secondly, it is more important to check that children securely understand key aspects of the curriculum, rather than rushing them towards the goal. To take maths as an example again, repeated 'drilling' in number bonds to promote automatic recall is not sensible if a child is still struggling to understand composition of number (that numbers are made up of other numbers, like 5 being made up of five ones, 1 and 4, or 2 and 3).

Similarly, the goal for the end of Reception is that

children can 'write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed'. However, for long-term success, it is important that children learn correct letter formation, which requires systematic handwriting instruction. So, it makes sense to help children develop the large and small motor skills they need first and then teach them correct letter formation later. Otherwise, poor pencil grips and writing habits can become embedded whilst children are still very young – and hold them back later.

Schools need to think long-term rather than putting an undue focus on the ELGs. Additionally, when it comes to thinking about whether a child is 'ready for school', it's always worth asking ourselves whether school is 'ready for the child'? High-quality, inclusive teaching and curriculum planning is about ensuring that Year 1 is a place where every child feels that they belong and can thrive. **TP**



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Revamp your APPROACH

Adapting how you use assessments can result in less work and more insight for both you and your pupils, says **Sue Cowley**

Assessment is fundamental to adaptive teaching, because unless we can figure out what a learner knows, understands or can already do, we can't work out what they might need or want to learn next. It's important, of course, for teachers to be aware of where their learners are at any given moment, but it is also key for pupils to understand where they are in their own learning.

It can be tempting to associate the word 'assessment' with tests and exams such as SATs, sat in silence then marked and graded. However, assessment comes in many different forms both formal and informal, and it happens all the time in a classroom. It is an ongoing process that plays a vital part in your everyday teaching.

Creating

When you are thinking about creating assessments, it is helpful to consider the following questions:

- Which bit of knowledge, skill or understanding do I plan to test for – what is the specific learning objective I am testing?
- Am I checking to see if a target was achieved? How will I define the target?
- What skills or concepts am I assuming the learners have already?
- How will I use the information I get from the assessment to move everyone forwards?
- How will I use this

information to move individuals forwards?

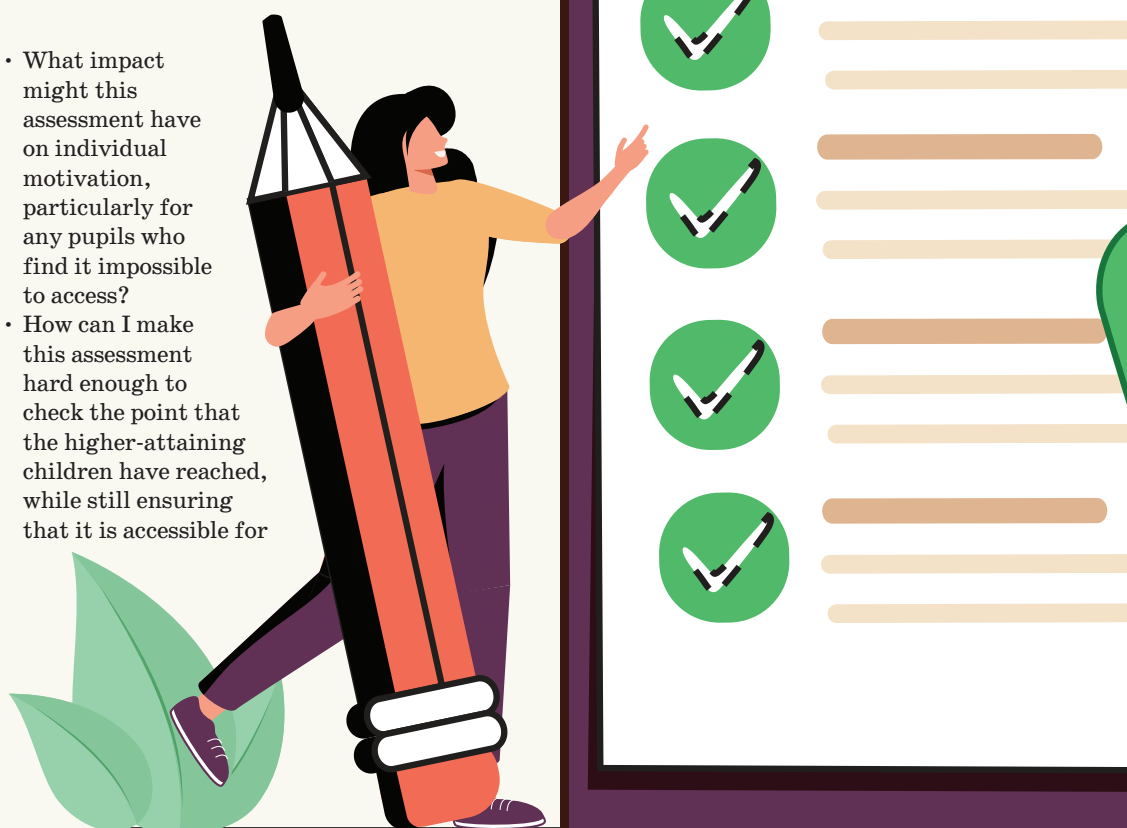
- What is the main or overarching purpose of the assessment?
- How am I going to track progress over time – what method of data collection will I use?

those who struggle?

(A nice, simple idea that you can use to adapt for your highest attaining learners is to finish any test by asking them to write down 'Everything I know about this topic that wasn't asked in the test'.)

“Bear in mind that any written assessment tests your pupils’ knowledge of English as much as their knowledge of a subject”

- What impact might this assessment have on individual motivation, particularly for any pupils who find it impossible to access?
- How can I make this assessment hard enough to check the point that the higher-attaining children have reached, while still ensuring that it is accessible for



Bear in mind that any written assessment will test your learners' knowledge of English as much as it is testing their knowledge of a subject or an area of skill. If you are working with a class that has lots of children with EAL, or if you work with pupils who have specific types of SEND, then you may well need to adapt the tests you set, or give additional support so that they are able to access them. For instance, you might read the questions out loud to some learners, or offer a translated text. It could be that you even need to offer some of your pupils the chance to opt out of an assessment, or to complete it with individual support.

Finding

There is no point in replicating work that has already been done. It may well be that you can find a suitable assessment without needing to design your own, or that you can adapt something that someone else has already made.

You can source ready-made assessments from various places, including:

- in a textbook that you have been using with the learners in class, or one that covers the area you have been studying in a similar way to your lesson plans;
- from a fellow class teacher within the same year group
- online (although make sure that you source these from reputable organisations and check them for content before using them with your learners);
- in past papers from exams such as SATs.

Designing

There will be times when you feel that your best bet is to create an assessment of your own. Perhaps you want to test for something specific, and you can't find a template that matches it, or maybe the range of attainment in your class is too wide for a premade assessment to work. When you design your own assessments, remember to:

- ensure that the instructions are clear and unambiguous. Just as giving instructions in class is a bit of an art form, so too is writing clear test instructions;
- be very clear about the timing of the test. How long will the learners have to complete it as a whole, and what might this indicate for how long they should spend on each answer? It can be tricky to strike a balance between some children finishing very early and others having enough time to complete the test. It is worth considering whether, if the assessment is easy enough for some pupils to finish it early, you are really testing for the same thing when other learners need lots of extra time on top;
- make sure that the wording of questions is clear and simple. For instance, ensure that you steer clear of idiomatic language that might confuse those with EAL;
- consider setting easier questions at the start of the test, and gradually increasing the difficulty. This will help ensure that all your learners set off on a positive track;
- think ahead about scoring and what form this will take; will you use marks, percentages, grades or a mixture? Are you going to give partial credit for a partially correct answer? Are you going to give credit for showing working out?

- consider asking a colleague to check the assessment over for you. They might well spot issues, confusions or pitfalls that you hadn't noticed.

If your assessment is designed to be objective (i.e. to lead to a yes/no answer), then the following tips should help you design it effectively:

- are you 100 per cent sure that what you are asking is not subjective and based on opinion? For instance, in a subject such as grammar, definitive answers can be tricky, because grammar changes over time, and because it is partly about interpretation;
- phrase your questions so that there is only one best and 'correct' answer. This can be surprisingly hard to do;
- make sure that you randomise the position of the correct answer when using multiple choice questions. For instance, varying whether it falls as A, B, C or D on alternate questions;
- for clarity of communication, phrase your questions in a positive way, rather than using negatives, such as 'which one is not an example of x'.

When we understand what individual learners know and can do, and how they might build on their learning, we put ourselves in the best possible position to support and challenge them. **TP**



Sue Cowley is an author and early years teacher. The sixth edition of

her book, *The Ultimate Guide to Adaptive Teaching* (£20, Bloomsbury), is out now.



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Get to the POINT!

Cut the waffle and jump right into the heart of a story, by making sure your pupils can pace their writing properly, says **Chris Youles**

Alfred Hitchcock once said, “Drama is life with the dull part cut out.” I wish we’d all teach our budding writers this. I’ve lost count of the number of stories that start at the breakfast table and recount the protagonist’s entire day in painful detail. Or stop mid-action just for the characters to go to bed, or for everything to be ‘alright in the end’.

Pick your moment

The fabled screenwriter William Goldman (1983) said, “You always attack a movie scene as late as you possibly can. You always come into the scene at the last possible moment.” This is also true of story writing; we don’t need a two-page preamble running through the main character’s breakfast, a television show they’ve watched and their journey to school before we get to the exciting part. In essence, stories need to be carefully paced. We sometimes need to slow down to tell the tale in the detail it requires, and sometimes we need to skip whole hours, days, weeks or even years so that we can get back to the part that needs to be told.

We often start by telling children that stories have a beginning, middle, and end, but we also need to teach them some basic rules and

strategies so that they are able to plan these stages well. Here are some strategies I’ve found useful to do just that.

Break it down

If we use the Ancient Greek tale of Perseus and the Gorgons, we can break down the narrative into scenes.

Plotting out a story into scenes is a great starting point when teaching pacing. Once they’re all laid out, like in *Fig. 1*, you can ask pupils which scenes they think they should slow down, and which they should speed up. You can mark the scenes with SD

scene, you can make an argument to slow down the pace or speed it up, depending on the effect you want.

I find it’s useful here to share examples of what writing can look like if we speed it up or slow it down too much; both will have a detrimental effect on how we read the story. For example, if we tell the story of Perseus and the Gorgons too fast, it can look like this:

Perseus set out on a quest to kill Medusa, a terrifying creature with snake hair and the power to turn anyone who looked at her into stone. With

rolling hills and azure seas, there existed a small coastal village. Its whitewashed houses gleamed under the warm Mediterranean sun, their terracotta roofs adding a splash of vibrant colour to the picturesque landscape. The villagers, going about their daily routines, created a symphony of bustling activity, their voices mingling with the cries of seagulls soaring overhead.

Do pupils find this engaging, or is it a little boring? Are we waiting for more pertinent information at any point? What words could we leave out?

Stop and go

After a brief discussion, you can then model how to speed up and slow down a scene.

For example, to slow something down, pupils could:

- write in the third or first person
- add descriptive language (sights, smells, sounds, taste and touch)
- add dialogue
- add in what a character is feeling
- add in what a character is thinking

Slowing a scene down could look like this:

“Plotting out a story into scenes is a great starting point when teaching pacing”

and SU respectively, to show where you’re going to apply specific pacing (see *Fig. 2*).

To figure out which parts of the story should be told more slowly, ask the children which parts they really wouldn’t want to miss out on. Prompt them with a discussion, and explain that, for example, in this story, Perseus wants to kill Medusa, and if we speed up Medusa’s death there won’t be any tension in the story, and the ending will fall flat. However, for every other

the help of the gods, Perseus got a shield from Athena and winged sandals from Hermes. He went to the lair of the Gorgons and beheaded Medusa. Victorious, Perseus returned home.

Ask pupils what they think the effects are here. Is the story engaging? Do we want to know more? Where could we expand the information? Conversely, if pacing is too slow, the story can end up like this:

In the mythical land of ancient Greece, nestled amid

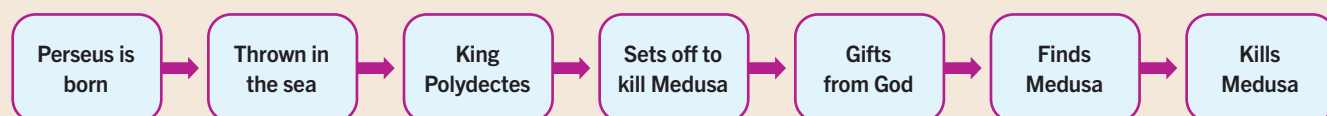


Fig. 1



Story beats

If you're not sure whether something is essential to your story, ask yourself:



Is it a part of the plot?



Is it a setting or character description that adds to the story?



Does it reveal the character's goal?



Does it build tension?



Can we cut it and skip to the important parts?

Before: When Perseus reached the Gorgons' lair, he was scared, but picked up his shield and entered the chamber.

After: Finally, he reached the desolate lair of the Gorgons. The air hung heavy with an eerie silence, and the hair on Perseus's neck stood on end. Fear gripped his heart, threatening to paralyse him. But he remembered Athena's words and reached for the reflective shield she had bestowed upon him. He steeled himself and entered the chamber, sweat trickling down his forehead.

If, instead, children need to speed up a scene or skip time, they could:

- switch to an omniscient narrator to give the reader information
- use adverbials to jump in time, e.g. *days passed*; *years passed*; *week after week*
- add dialogue, including a quick back-and-forth including conflict
- use short sentences and paragraphs
- cut unnecessary adjectives and adverbs

Skipping time might look like this; look at the contrast between the third paragraph and the previous two:

Long, long ago, back when gods and goddesses ruled the world, in ancient Greece there lived a leader whose name was King Acrisius. Desperate for a son to become his heir and carry his name, one misty, moonlit night, he travelled to visit the oracle. In the dark cave, where the shadows danced on the wall, he met the old hag and paid her three gold pieces to foretell his fate.

"You will not have a son," the fortune-teller told him, "But you will have a grandson and he will be the one to bring your death."

The words stabbed the King in his heart and a cold

fear gripped him. Many years passed and to the King's horror, he discovered his only daughter was pregnant.

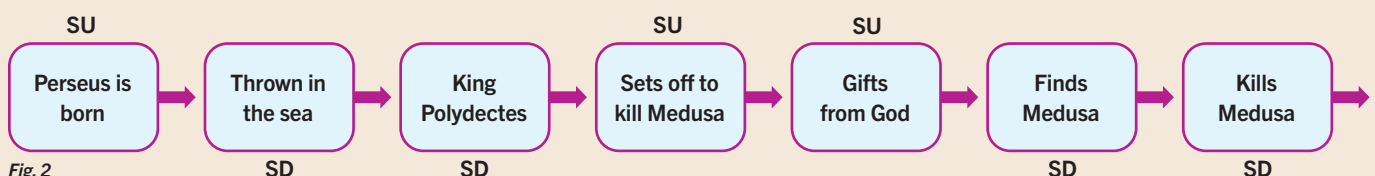
Give these ideas a go and see what difference they make to your pupils' writing. Maybe everything will be alright in the end. **TP**



Chris Youles has 19 years of experience in class teaching and

leadership, and is the author of the bestselling books *Sentence Models for Creative Writing* and *Teaching Story Writing in Primary*.

 @ChrisYoules



How to teach RELATIVE CLAUSES

Help pupils pin down the who, which, and when of this
oft-misunderstood grammatical concept, with **Sarah Farrell**

The level of grammatical understanding needed rises significantly between Lower Key Stage 2 and Upper Key Stage 2. One area that requires a very strong level of grammatical understanding, is relative pronouns and relative clauses. Introduced in Year 5, the national curriculum descriptor states that children should be ‘Using relative clauses beginning with *who*, *which*, *where*, *when*, *whose*, *that* or with an implied (i.e. omitted) relative pronoun’.

Most children already use relative clauses without realising it, but may find the punctuation of them difficult. This is where understanding the different types – defining and non-defining relative clauses – is beneficial.

The difference between defining and non-defining relative clauses essentially refers to whether the relative clause needs to be contained within commas, brackets or dashes, or not. Children do not necessarily need to know the exact terminology here, but it may be useful for them to help understand when commas, brackets and dashes are required.

Defining relative clause

The defining relative clause contains information that is essential for the sentence to make complete sense. The information is not contained within punctuation and cannot be removed. E.g:

Footballers who practise regularly are more likely to be picked for top teams than those who do not.

It is best not to approach dogs that you do not know.

Non-defining relative clause

The non-defining relative clause contains additional information that is not essential for the sentence to make sense. This information is contained within commas, brackets or dashes and can be removed from the sentence without impacting the meaning:

Mangos which are grown in hot countries taste delicious.

Teaching relative pronouns and relative clauses

As well as relative clauses, it is important that children know when they should use different relative pronouns (*which*, *that*, *when*, *where*, *whose*, *who*). After explicitly teaching each one through modelled examples, you could show incorrect examples for children to correct, or provide the entire sentence without the relative pronoun and ask children to select the correct pronoun.

See the online version of this article for an extensive list of how to model each relative pronoun.

To introduce children to defining relative clauses (where commas, brackets and dashes are not required), you could give them the

*“Most children already use
relative clauses without
realising it, but may find the
punctuation difficult”*

My sister, who is called Laura, is really annoying.

My dog, which is always hungry, munched the sofa.

In the following example, the first sentence suggests that all mangoes taste delicious and additionally are grown in hot countries, which is unnecessary information added by the relative clause. However, the second sentence suggests that only mangoes grown in hot countries taste delicious:

Mangoes, which are grown in hot countries, taste delicious.



beginning part of a sentence and a relative pronoun and ask them to complete the sentence. Here are some examples that you could provide for children to complete:

- There's the dog that...
- Here's the man who...
- This is the park where...

Pupils can then be creative in adding their own endings to the sentences. For example, you may end up with *There's the dog that stole my ball*, or *This is the park where I fell over*.

To introduce children

to non-defining relative clauses (where commas, brackets and dashes are required), it would be beneficial to look separately at adding relative clauses to modify nouns and clauses.

Modifying nouns

When teaching relative clauses to modify nouns, it's a good idea to provide children with sentences containing nouns (or proper nouns or pronouns) and accompanying information to use.

Example:

*My dog, _____,
dug holes in the garden.*

Added information:

My dog is really naughty.

You can then model taking the additional information and using it to form the following relative clause:

My dog, which is really naughty, dug holes in the garden.

Children can be creative with adding information to modify the noun in their own ways.

Modifying clauses

When teaching relative clauses to modify clauses, provide children with main clauses containing an easy-to-describe event and ask them to think of either the consequence of that event or their opinion on it.

Maggie's grandma gave her £10 for her birthday.

Opinion: *Maggie's grandma gave her £10 for her birthday, which was very generous of her.*

Consequence: *Maggie's grandma gave her £10 for her birthday, which meant that she could afford to buy the book that she really wanted.*

Supporting less confident writers to use relative clauses

Here are some suggestions for supporting children who may be struggling to understand relative clauses:

- Provide cloze sentences with a space for including a relative clause (either with or without the relative pronoun).

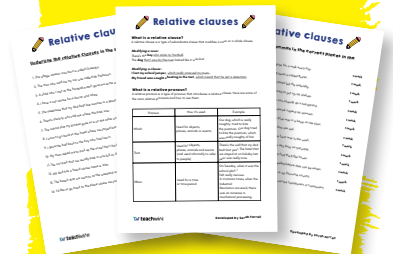
*My cat, _____,
curled up with me.*

*My cat, which _____,
curled up with me.*

- Provide a range of main clauses and relative clauses for children to match up.

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- For children struggling to understand how to add a relative clause, you can write a sentence on a strip of paper and cut it into two parts so the child can physically move them apart and insert the relative clause themselves.
- If you want children to use relative clauses to modify nouns, highlight or underline suggested nouns:

The cat fell asleep on me.

- Regularly look at different sentences together and discuss how the meaning has changed. E.g:

The children, who loved reading, enjoyed the trip to the library.

The children who loved reading enjoyed the trip to the library. TP



Sarah Farrell is a KS2 teacher in Bristol who makes and shares resources

online.



@SarahFarrellKS2



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WAGOLL

Dragon Riders of Roar, by Jenny McLachlan

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When I was 11, I found school a dreary and unfriendly place where I had to spend a lot of time doing things I wasn't good at, like netball and long division. When I got home, I'd cheer myself up by designing my own school. I drew maps of the classrooms, made up the timetable (there was A LOT of crafting and looking after animals) and I even invented a dorm room for myself with a four-poster bed and a tap that poured out hot chocolate or lemonade, depending on which way you turned it. How I longed to go to my amazing imaginary school.



Dragon Riders of Roar, by Jenny McLachlan, ill. Alla Khatkevich (£7.99, Farshore), is out now

Dragon Riders of Roar makes this dream come true for Arthur and Rose Trout. At the start of the book, the twins are about to visit their beloved Land of Roar, a magical world hidden inside a camp bed in their grandad's attic. Roar is amazing: it has ninja wizards, merwitches, and dragons they can ride! But a surprise visit from their auntie and cousin means their trip is delayed.

Rose decides that if she can't visit Roar she will write about it instead. Scribbling in a notebook, she invents a school hidden in the north of Roar called Dragon Rider Academy, where children are trained to ride ferocious dragons. She designs terrifying

lessons, makes herself the star pupil and gives herself an amazing dorm room (with a hot chocolate tap, of course!). She even invents a wicked witch king called Jago Skua. She doesn't worry about how fierce the dragons are or the terrible things Jago does. After all, it's just a story.

But then Arthur reads Rose's story, and in the fight that follows the notebook is shoved into the magical camp bed. In a flash every single word that Rose has written bursts into to life – the dragons, the school, even Jago Skua – and Rose and Arthur have to travel to Dragon Rider Academy and enrol at the school Rose has invented...

FIVE TIPS FOR DESCRIBING AN IMAGINARY PLACE

1. POWER SENTENCES

I try to keep my descriptions short, but powerful, by including three pieces of information in one sentence that together paint a vivid and clear picture for the reader. These sentences are like a click of the fingers: just like that, a scene is in the reader's mind.

2. USE DIALOGUE

If characters reveal what they can see through dialogue, you avoid having long descriptive scenes, which can become boring for the reader. It also means you

can reveal what a character is like, by their reactions to what they can see.

3. LEAVE THINGS OUT

Readers don't enjoy being bossed around by a writer and told exactly what to think. They want to join in the fun of using their imaginations, so leave some things unsaid. For example, you don't need an adjective before every noun.

4. SENSIBLE SIMILES

If you're writing in the first person, you need to make sure that any figurative

language you use (similes, metaphors, personification) could believably come from the lips of your narrator. Arthur is 12, so he's unlikely to compare golden windows with citrine (an unusual gemstone), but he might say they look like gold pennies.

5. KEEP IT REAL

It can be tempting to make everything seem incredible – trees are blue, grass is made out of chocolate! I find adding magical touches to otherwise ordinary things is more effective, though.



Extract from

chapter 15, p76

These two sentences get readers excited about what is about to come. They build anticipation.

Win cries out, 'I can see Spindrift! I can see the school!'

I call this a power sentence. It's useful to get a lot of key information across quickly, so the reader can visualise a scene before you go into detail.

When I use a simile or metaphor I try to keep them simple. If they are too obscure the reader will have to pause to work out what comparison is being made and this can interrupt the flow of the story.

I look ahead and my heart leaps. The island is like something from a fairytale. It's crammed full of cliffs, mountains and thick forest and perched at the top of the southernmost cliff is the school itself. It has four dizzyingly tall towers connected by a tangle of walkways and bridges. Balconies and turrets spring from the sides of each tower like branches on a tree and the windows dotting the walls shine like gold pennies in the afternoon sun.

A character asking a question is a neat way to provide more information about a scene. Just make sure it's a believable question, so the conversation feels natural.

This is another power sentence. You can practise writing them yourself. Just pick something – your school, a dragon, a castle on a cloud – and try and describe it in one sentence.

'It's perfect,' Rose sighs as we fly closer. 'Even better than I imagined!'

'Is that what your school at Home looks like?' asks Win.

I think it's good to leave lots left unsaid, so the reader can get involved in the story. Rose could tell Win more here, but because she only says, 'Very', the reader's mind will be buzzing with all the terrifying possibilities!

I picture Langton Academy with its boxy grey buildings and fenced-in playgrounds.

'Not exactly,' I say.

Here, Rose is acting like a tour guide, pointing out the key features of the scene. This allows me to neatly swap who is narrating, to provide a new point of view.

Rose starts pointing out everything she can see. 'That field in the middle of the towers is the meadow and you see how the top of the North Tower is filled with water? That's where the swimming pool is. Mitch should be there! And that forest behind the school is where the dragons live.'

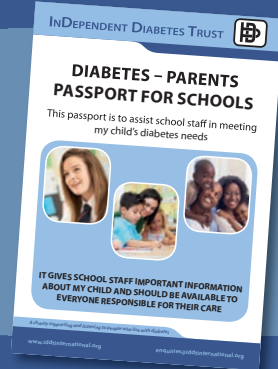
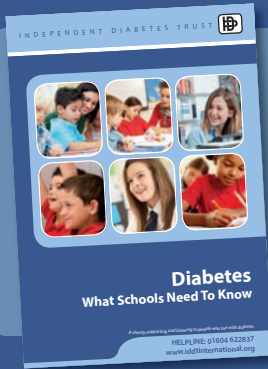
'Fierce ones?' asks Win.

This is a very simple description and that's fine. Sometimes all the reader needs is to be told what they can see in the clearest way possible. Adjectives and similes can be very effective, but too many will slow down the pace of a story.

Rose laughs. 'Very! But the island is enchanted with magic that makes the dragons a bit friendlier so we should be safe. Hang on . . . What's that?' Rose is staring at the roof of the East Tower where little figures are doing somersaults on a trampoline.



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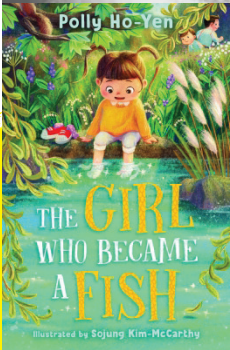
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Published by Knights Of,
November 2023



The Girl Who Became a Fish

Tune into your senses and experience the wonder of nature with Polly Ho-Yen's magical tale of transformation

KAREN HART

Ita is afraid of a lot. She's afraid of talking to her classmates at her new school. She's afraid that her family is drifting away from her. But most of all, she is afraid of water...

Ita has just moved into a new house in a new town, and everything feels very strange to her. It wouldn't be so bad if Dad were around more, but since Nan became unwell, he's been spending a lot of time at her house. Then one day, Ita gets separated from her brothers on the walk home from school and discovers

a mysterious river. Although afraid of water, Ita feels compelled to dip her hands in, and when she does, to her amazement, they grow perfect little fish scales. If Ita enters the river, will she turn into a fish?

This is a great little book for reading aloud to Key Stage 1 and using as a basis for literacy activities with Key Stage 2. The book covers the subjects of moving home, caring for older relatives, making friends, and facing your fears. It's a lovely story, with lots of beautiful illustrations.

Talking about the book

There are many opportunities for sparking thoughtful conversations with this book. Some ideas to get your class started include:

Ask pupils if anyone has moved house before and if so, how they felt. Did everything feel strange to them? Were they excited about the move, or a bit worried about leaving their old home behind? Ask children to think about Ita turning into a fish. If this happened to them, how do they think they would feel about it – excited, scared, or a bit of both?



Do pupils have any good suggestions for ways that Ita could start to make friends at school? It can be really difficult to make that first connection with others, especially when you're the new boy or girl and everyone else already has their friendship groups.

Why do children think Ita's scales disappeared at the end of the story?

After reading the book, ask the class if they liked it and if they felt that the story contained a message.

Activities

Write your own opening chapter

After reading the first chapter as a class, talk about Ita's first journey to the river, how she comes upon the water by accident after getting lost on her way home, and how the river's location is portrayed as secretive and mysterious. Talk about the way Polly Ho-Yen uses particular vocabulary to build this picture, such as: *The alleyway was uncomfortably narrow, even for Ita, and felt unused and forgotten.* Does this make children think of a secretive place – maybe it's difficult for some people to fit through the alleyway? Might this be a place



Illustrations © Sojung Kim McCarthy

“The book addresses moving home, caring for relatives, and facing fears”

where a person might find magic? Working as a class, ask pupils to contribute to a list of words or phrases they think could be used to describe this secretive, mysterious place. Some suggestions with simple definitions could be:

Enchanting – magical or something that seems magical

Bewitching – fascinating, as if magic has been used to attract you to something

Ethereal – delicate and light as air, like a fairy's wing or spider's web

Secluded – private, not on show, or hard to see

Shadowy – full of shadows or something unknown

Eerie – mysterious and strange, sends a shiver down your spine

Captivating – something that is hard to look away from; it holds your interest.

Children can make a note of suggested words, or they could write them up as a list to display in the classroom while working on this book topic.

If possible, take the class to a quiet outside space where they use all their senses to experience nature – if there is a local area that includes a lake or river, even better. Let children just sit quietly in their own space, first looking at what they can see, then listening carefully with their eyes closed – there is always something to hear, even if it's only your own breathing. Then, paying



attention to what they can feel, maybe a breeze on their face or grass tickling their legs. Finally, they can focus on taste, which could just be the cold air on their tongue.

Back in the classroom, talk about all the things you experienced, with children making notes in their workbooks, maybe under separate headings for each of the senses.

Using all the collected information, instruct pupils to write their own first chapter of *The Girl Who Became a Fish*. They can start it in the same way as the book:

The first time Ita became a fish, she was in the middle of trying to remember the way back home. She'd become lost amongst the houses...

Instruct children to find some interesting vocabulary to describe the river's location, using the list

Take it further → → →

FACTUAL WRITING EXERCISE

Tell the children that today you will be looking at writing a factual report. Explain that this means a piece of interesting writing that explains the facts about a subject in a clear way, with information that readers will understand.

Explain that the subject of their reports will be 'River Life'. Next, talk about how newspaper reports use factual writing to tell us accurate news stories. Have a few newspaper stories – pre-chosen for suitability – ready to show the class. Go on to explain

that the gathering together of information used in factual writing is called research.

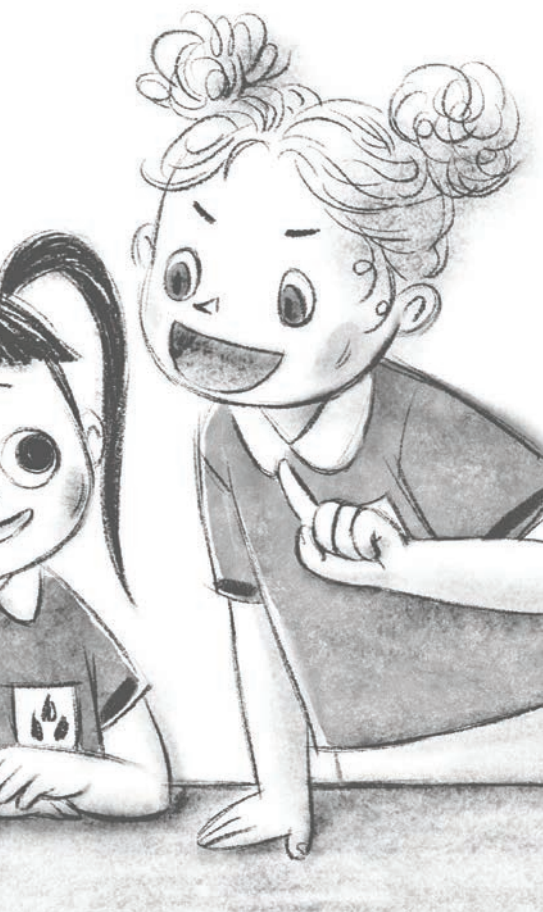
Ask children how they think they can research and find facts about this subject. Some ideas could be:

- books from the library
- eBooks
- websites
- asking people who know about the subject well
- doing your own investigations (such as going to the river and looking around)

Tell children they do not have to look at the whole subject of river life, but can choose just one part of it for their report. Some ideas here could be:

- Is climate change affecting UK river life?
- Are water voles in decline?
- The reintroduction of otters to UK rivers.

If you can organise a trip to your local library this would be a great opportunity for children to look for some books, along with the use of online research. Also, if pupils have any books or reference materials at home that they can bring in to use at school, that would be lovely.



Ita managed a small nod although she was feeling frozen, absolutely rigid with fear. She couldn't believe that she had agreed to this. Now that she was there, in front of the lapping water, Ita felt in every bone that she couldn't go into the pool.

Ask the children if they can imagine how Ita felt at this time. Maybe they can remember a time when they were scared of the swimming pool. Talk about the smell of the chlorine, the noise of water lapping, children calling and shouting, and the lifeguards blowing their whistles. Then consider the taste of the bleachy water and the things they might have been able to see; all the bright bathing suits and arm bands, plus the things they could feel, such as a tight swimming cap, the hard edge of the pool and the cool water.

Next, give each child three slips of paper, and ask them to think of three words or phrases that describe the experience of being at a pool, being as imaginative as they like. Some ideas could include: *diving like dolphins, smells like a hospital, all the colours of the rainbow, the sound of my heart pounding, floor like cold bone.*

Mix all the slips of paper up and put them into a large jar or similar. Pull out a few random slips and read them to the class anonymously. You can add some of your own suggestions, too, to give children a few extra descriptive words and phrases.

Go on to ask the class to write a descriptive passage about a day spent at a public swimming pool, starting with the sentence: *I felt a little bit scared as this was the first time I'd ever been to a swimming pool...*

Let children take turns, one table at a time, to pick a few papers from the jar to give them some ideas to use in their writing and kick-start the

Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *My Other Life* by Polly Ho-Yen
- ❖ *The Boy Who Grew A Tree* by Polly Ho-Yen
- ❖ *The Great Snail Robbery* by Daniel Henshaw
- ❖ *Call Me Lion* by Camilla Chester
- ❖ *Brand New Boy* by David Almond

imaginative process. You can use the word jar idea for subsequent writing activities, linking it to any subject your class is working on.

My favourite food

In chapter 11, Ita has made friends with Olive and Faisal. The three friends are having fun imagining having a magic plate that would only refill with one kind of food, and what food they would choose it to be. Ask children to work in pairs to discuss what they would choose if they could only eat one type of food for the rest of their life, and their reasons for choosing it. Is it because it's something they think they will never get bored with? Or just because it's always been their favourite food? They can also pick a second choice that they can only have twice a year, as a special treat.

Next, tell pupils there's a famous film called *Stand By Me*, where a young boy is asked this question and he says, "That's easy, cherry-flavoured Pez!". What do they think about that suggestion? Would they get fed up with only sweets to eat every day?

Ask children to write a short piece in their workbooks about their chosen food. It might be a good idea to break this down using the following sub-headings:

- Name of favourite food
- Why I chose it
- The first time I ate it
- My second choice and why I picked it

For a bit of fun, children can draw their favourite food on a paper plate and label it – these would make a great wall display.



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

f @Karen.Journalist

of sensory words they collected, and thinking about times spent in nature. Pupils can end their chapter with Ita touching the water and seeing her hands covered in fish scales. Children can go on to illustrate their written work, too. Finish the activity by asking for volunteers to share their work with the class.

Pupils who may struggle with a lot of writing could instead create a stand-alone descriptive passage using the following story starter:

The alleyway opened up into a hidden grassy area that was...

Word jar

In chapter seven, Ita and her family are having a day out at a swimming pool. Ita has just met her new swimming coach; she feels very scared of the pool and wants to go home. Ho-Yen writes:

Once children have a good source of reference materials, ask them to look for the most important facts about their chosen subject, such as the area of the country a specific animal can be found (all across the UK, just in certain locations, or maybe in other countries, too); the size and appearance of an animal; facts relating to river pollution, etc. Pupils should make notes of these facts in their workbooks.

Ensure children give proper time to headings and sub-headings, and let them know that they can also include pictures and diagrams, which they can draw on separate plain paper, then cut out and glue to their

report in the style of a newspaper article.

The idea is not to produce lots of writing, but to work on developing their skills in non-chronological report writing. We want quality over quantity, here.

You can simplify the task for some children if needed, by breaking the task down into simple chunks – maybe just writing the heading before showing the facts by drawing pictures, and including a sentence under each image to explain what they show.

Use children's reports as an interesting display for your classroom, or gather them together in the form of a class book.

Look at it THIS WAY

Jumping into someone else's story not only improves writing, but helps develop pupils' all-round empathy, says **Jon Biddle**

Helping children to think, speak and write from a perspective different from their own can sometimes be a challenge in the classroom. However, it's an essential skill for them to develop and one that can, with careful planning, be taught. The national curriculum states that pupils should have 'opportunities to compare characters, consider different accounts of the same event and discuss viewpoints within a text and across more than one text'. Providing regular chances to do this will certainly have a positive effect on their writing; but, on a wider and more important level, learning about the value of understanding different points of view and exploring situations from more than one perspective will also help them develop their own levels of empathy.

Sharing stories

Much of our English teaching at Moorlands is based around books and stories. We deliberately select texts for all year groups that enable perspective-taking. The books we read during story time also provide a chance to 'jump into someone else's story' and think about multiple perspectives. This year, in my Year 5/6 class, we've enjoyed *The Wrong Shoes* by Tom Percival, *Front Desk* by Kelly Yang and *Boy in the Tower* by Polly Ho-Yen. They're all

wonderful stories, with rich and detailed characters, and have all appeared on the EmpathyLab Read for Empathy collection (empathylab.uk/rfe) booklists at some point. Pupils love exploring the life of the character 'outside' of the book and discussing their relationships with family and friends. It's always fascinating to see how these views evolve over the school year and how the books often give children the confidence to talk about their own situations.

When pupils have learned the skills needed to produce a piece of work constructed from a point of view different from their own, they become able to write with cognitive empathy, using their inference and perspective-taking skills. This will lead to them producing work that is genuinely appreciated and enjoyed by its intended audience. However, there can sometimes be a struggle to move beyond 'But I don't actually think that' and 'I don't know how they're feeling as I'm not them' conversations. Sometimes, simply acknowledging the difficulty and rephrasing the question can help (*I understand you're not them and don't know the answer, but how might you be feeling if you were?*).

If perspective-taking is embedded into the school's long-term approach to teaching English and RSHE – as it should be – there will be dozens of opportunities to help children develop this skill during their time at school.

Acting out

It often helps to start a task with a drama activity, which allows the pupils



to step into the shoes of different characters and see the world from alternative viewpoints. Using established drama conventions such as Conscience Alley (a pupil takes on the role of a character and walks between two lines of people offering their advice), Freeze Frames (children work together to 'pause' an image from a book, while considering body language and emotions) and Hot Seating (a child is interviewed in role) can all help underpin and reinforce understanding of a character and their motivations. When drama is part of regular classroom practice – it can be used effectively in most curriculum areas – pupils develop a deeper understanding of human behaviour and begin to

understand that people have diverse backgrounds, values, and motivations.

Creating an Empathy Emotions Map (tinyurl.com/tp-Emap) when reading a story is a useful way to keep a record of a character's thoughts, feelings and actions, as well as their relationships with other characters, in a visual form. We recently created one based around the character of Nate from *The Final Year* by Matt Goodfellow. It can be done as a whole class, but is also effective when completed in small groups or individually. Several members of my class choose to create empathy emotions maps in their reading

journals, which are based around characters from their independent reading books, and will sometimes develop this into a short piece of narrative or dialogue from that character's point of view.

Writing a Perspective Journal can also be helpful when reading a book together. Thinking about the main five or six characters in a story and then writing a short entry each day from multiple perspectives can help pupils understand how different people might view the same situation. There is a fight scene in *Wonder* by R.J. Palacio where this works wonderfully. Exploring the point of

final letters together and then tried to imagine what it would have been like to have been in his position. Thinking from the perspective of Scott, I started to write my own 'farewell' letter with input from the class. I made a point of talking through my thought process and articulating how I, as Scott, would have been feeling. I deliberately talked about the emotions I was experiencing (desperation, hopelessness, guilt and frustration, among many others), explaining what they meant, and tried to include these in my letter. The children picked up on the language I was using and were then able to apply this successfully to their own work.

When this is done several times across a year – it doesn't always have to be a letter, it could be a diary entry, a piece of dialogue, a poem, a comic strip, etc – it becomes something with which children are increasingly confident. As pupils get used to writing from different points of view, they also get used to understanding real-life situations from varying perspectives. An unkind comment in the playground, a tired parent or an upset friend become easier to cope with and understand when children have experienced similar situations in books, and explored them from the safety of a classroom environment. **TP**



Jon Biddle is an experienced primary school teacher and English

lead. Winner of the 2018 Reading for Pleasure Experienced Teacher of the Year award, he coordinates the national Patron of Reading initiative.

empathylab.uk/empathy-day

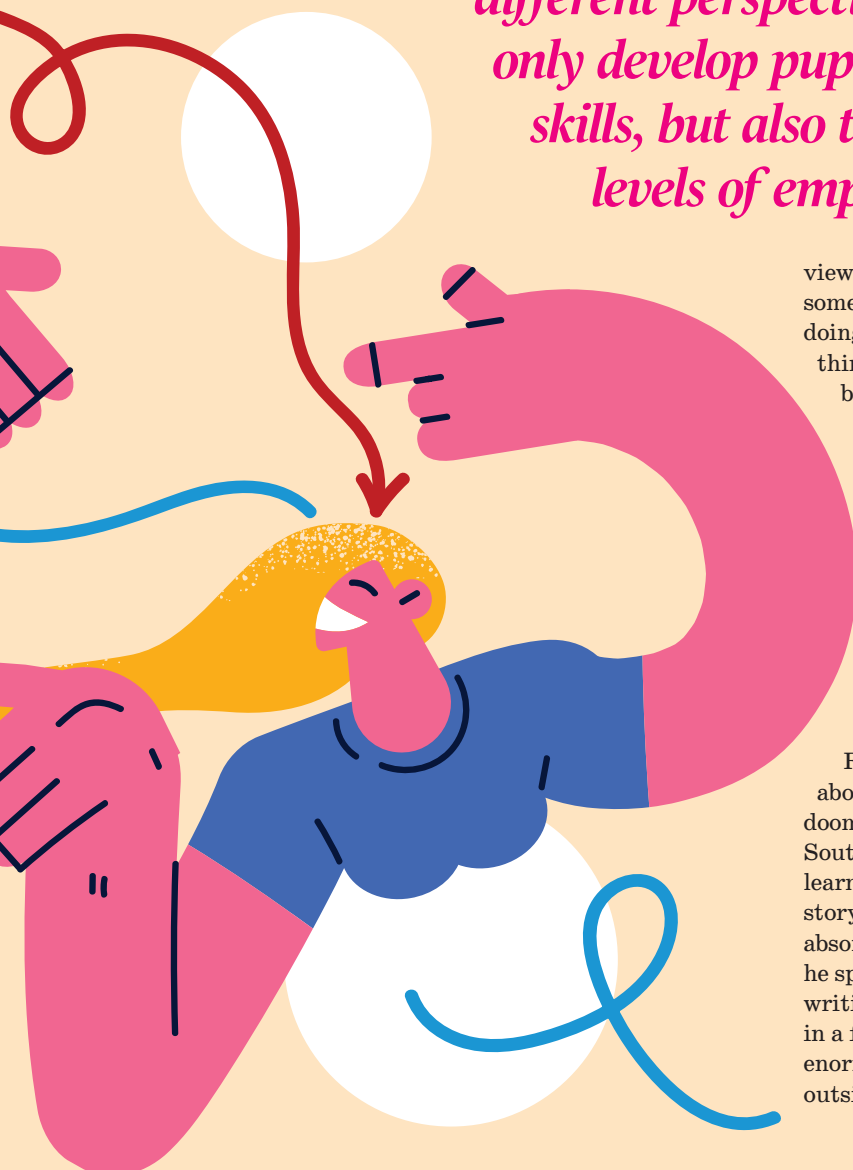
“Learning to write from different perspectives will not only develop pupils’ writing skills, but also their own levels of empathy”

view of the antagonists is something the children enjoy doing and helps focus their thinking about the reasons behind the behaviour of certain characters.

Do as I do

As is the case with most writing, modelling the process, creating your own example and writing alongside the class, can be extremely powerful.

Recently, we learned about Captain Scott's doomed expedition to the South Pole. Once they'd learned the details of the story, pupils were totally absorbed by the fact that he spent his last few days writing letters to his family in a freezing tent as an enormous snowstorm raged outside. We read some of his

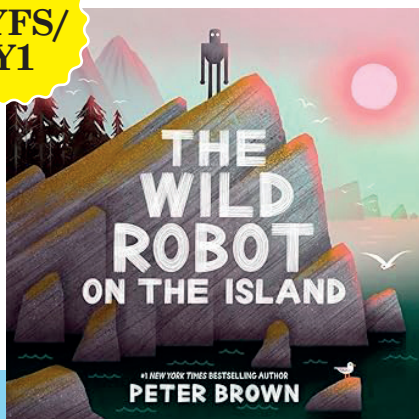


Book CLUB



We review five new titles that your class will love

EYFS/
Y1



The Wild Robot on the Island

by Peter Brown

(£12.99HB, Bonnier Books)

The beloved character from the New York Times #1 bestselling author, and Dream Works' smash hit movie, *The Wild Robot*, is back. Join Roz as she explores the island where she unexpectedly finds herself, and all the friends she meets along the way. As she travels across the island, Roz learns about the difficulty of adapting to a new place, as well as the joy and safety of chosen family. Filled with Peter Brown's sumptuous illustrations, the hauntingly simple text highlights issues that dive much deeper than face value. This stunning book is accessible for EYFS learners, who can follow along with the pictures, yet complex enough to dig into with much older children; truly a star volume for your shelf, whatever phase you're in.

KS1/2

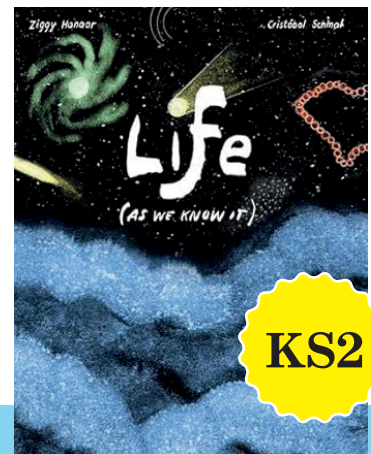


The Water Flower

by Yingting Chen, ill. Huaqing

(£12.99HB, Post Wave)

Beautiful soft illustrations and flowing text bring the story of the lotus into the realm of poetry. With a main story chronicling the journey of a sleepy seed that awakens in spring, and later blooms into a delicate flower, this book shows a transformation across seasons, and the cycles of nature. There are plenty of learning opportunities within the pages, too, from the science of plant growth and pollination – additional text provides scientific information, which is the perfect basis for a science exploration of flowers with older children – to art projects based on the various parts of a flower. You could even link to geography, since the book was first published in China, exploring the country and its flora.



KS2

Life (As We Know It)

***by Ziggy Hanaor,
ill. Cristóbal Schmal***

(£14.99HB, Cicada Books)

*'We know this much is true.
We know think this much is true.
We know think this much is true a
truth.'*

Exploring the Big Bang and delving into the domino effect of evolution that came after, this stunning volume is the perfect introduction to complex scientific concepts for young and old. In a world where knowing what is correct and incorrect is becoming more of a challenge, being able to present how science moves with the times, and that 'facts' and 'truths' deserve thorough consideration, is a teaching goldmine. Collage-like illustrations keep the complex ideas engaging for children, and the depth of the text means that even with several rereads, you won't get bored, either.

→→→ **RECOMMENDED**
RESOURCES

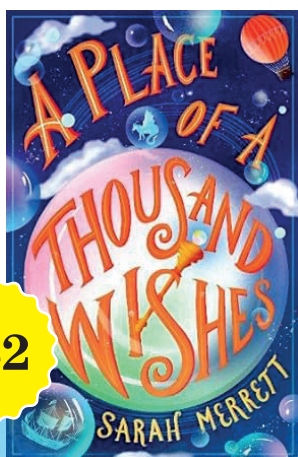


Essential Templates

ESSENTIAL TEMPLATES

Sometimes it's the little things that can make the biggest difference, and this collection of basic (but evergreen) templates will save you hours. From research sheets and writing frames, to lesson and unit planners, you'll find all those teaching tools you use over and over again, yet somehow find yourself designing from scratch every time!

Visit plazoom.com/collections/essential-templates



KS2

A Place of a Thousand Wishes

by Sarah Merrett,
ill. Holly Ovenden

(£7.99, Everything With Words)

Mason makes ice cream. Possibly the world's *best* ice cream, but it's 1899, and Mason and his Pa are in desperate need of a little help to bolster their business. When disaster strikes, thanks to a sinister stranger, Mason turns to Darlington the magical wish-maker (who can float wishes up to the stars in his special bubbles) to help him set things straight. Darlington has his own reasons for helping Mason, but his magic comes at a price. Can Mason and his friend Clem defeat the corrupt villain in time to save Darlington and their livelihoods? A thrilling tale of magic and vengeance, this is a wonderful book to share at story time. With touches of Roald Dahl-esque enchantment, and an excellently structured plot, hours of fun await.



KS2

Netta Becker and the Timeline Crime

by Jennifer Claessen

(£7.99, UCLan Publishing)

How would you feel if you were pulled back in time and then couldn't get home? When Netta goes on holiday to Crete with her family, she thinks she'll just be bored by her annoying little brother, Remy. But when Netta's dreams of Ancient Greece and King Minos' famous labyrinth start actually pulling her back in time, she feels her present-day self slipping away. Can she figure out what's happening before she disappears completely? The third book in the Netta Becker series, this is a fun twist on the classic time-travel portal story, and a historical jaunt that is sure to pique the interest of your KS2 pupils. Link it to history units on Ancient Greece, or just admire it for its beautiful storytelling. Either way, it's a winner.

Meet the author

JENNIFER CLAESSEN ON SCARY TIME-TRAVEL AND POWERFUL WOMEN

© Jack Barnes



What's your favourite fact about Ancient Greece?

I got SO excited about all the amazing things I

learnt about Crete in the Minoan period where the first Netta Becker book is set. For example, in the palace at Knossos, they found a terracotta vase in the shape of a bull's head and Netta and her friend Ari watch this being used to pour out wine – and think it's blood from a real bull's head. Gold is very important in the book, too (my amazing publisher has done a beautiful job of making the cover of this new book very shiny!). I loved learning about the importance of colour in Minoan culture, where it was such a signifier of social status – that's why we've got purple on the cover, too.

If you could go back in time to any period, what would it be, and why?

Wow, tough question! My main character, Netta, goes time-travelling without her body which I think – though it's a bit scary for her – might be the best way to do it! There's a lot of ancient history where I wouldn't want to be as a woman at all, but I would love to pop by and observe. I'd really like to have seen the first run of some of Shakespeare's plays or watch painters like the pre-Raphaelites at work.

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

Teachers have already been so generous and kind about the Netta trilogy. It follows the life of Theseus through the women he encountered – Ariadne, Antigone and Helen – and hopefully makes a great class read! I'd love to see extracts of it alongside different takes on the minotaur, Daedalus and Icarus to show the varied potential these stories have. Without encouraging outright theft, I really want to empower young writers to make these myths their own.

Netta Becker and the Timeline Crime (£7.99, UCLan Publishing), by Jennifer Claessen, is out now.

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Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration to your classroom

1

Holistic support

In September 2025, Academy21 will introduce its new Key Stage 2 provision for years 5 and 6. Delivered by specialist teachers, the flexible programme will help schools to accommodate a wide range of needs and supports internal alternative provision, flexible, and part-time timetables. Academy21 understands the importance of developing the whole child, not just the academic learner. Writing lessons naturally combine with PSHE content, turn-taking, circle time and teamwork; the maths curriculum is centred around engaging tasks that encourage sharing, movement and confidence in key areas of the national curriculum; and reading classes equip pupils with skills needed for fluency, comprehension and inference, alongside dialogue about wellbeing, current affairs and values. For more information, visit academy21.co.uk/primary or email contact@academy21.co.uk



2

Your new career awaits you

Tired of paperwork and long hours? Cook Stars offers a fresh, rewarding career where you can teach in a fun, engaging way, without classroom stress.

With over 40 branches nationwide, many run by former teachers, you'll join a thriving network. Cook Stars handles all lesson plans and recipes – no planning required! You can also enjoy flexible work around your lifestyle; full training and support; and low startup costs. Scan the QR code above to order an info pack and learn more about the UK's largest and fastest-growing children's cooking franchise. Visit cookstarsfranchise.co.uk



4

Affordable, quick solutions

If you're looking to enhance your school's outdoor spaces but are tight on budget or time, Fordingbridge's new range of off-the-shelf canopies offer a smart, speedy solution. Choose from two pre-designed timber structures and you can have your new canopy in place within just 8 weeks:

- Timber canopies (2-6m) – ideal for covered walkways and outdoor learning spaces
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Best of all? The shelters offer the same quality finish and industry leading warranties as all of Fordingbridge's structures. Find out more about Fordingbridge's off-the-shelf structures today. Visit fordingbridge.co.uk



3

Sustainability made simple

Mill Lodge Primary School is leading the way in eco-education, by partnering with edding to make their classrooms more sustainable. From switching to EcoLine markers made of 90 per cent recycled materials, to using refillable pens and a free return box recycling scheme, the school has cut waste and inspired pupils to take action. With every 120 markers sold planting two trees, pupils also learn about their global impact. Watch the full video case study and see how easy it is to make sustainable swaps in your school at tinyurl.com/tp-Edding and find out more at edding.com



5

Holistic support

MyLearning is a hub website that hosts free learning resources created by arts, cultural and heritage organisations from across England. Established for 16 years, it is a non-profit funded by Arts Council England, and works with museums, galleries and archives to bring together high-quality resources in one easy-to-use website. MyLearning's mission is to get all the wonderful objects and the fabulous stories they hold out of museum stores and archives, and into classrooms. Its content covers the whole curriculum, from KS1 to KS4, and includes accurate information, images, audio, video, downloadable resources and digital interactives.

Explore a world of free learning resources at mylearning.org and get it touch at info@mylearning.org





WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to combine basic coding blocks with the pre-loaded datalogger coding blocks
- How to select and set variables within the datalogger
- How to download and view the collected data in graphical form

Dance your socks off at the datalog disco



Studying statistics needn't be a slog. With the help of a micro:bit, it can become a boogie wonderland, says **Marc Bowen**

raglanciwwcprimary.co.uk

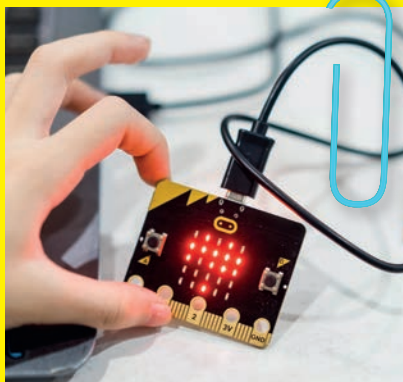
You realise you have struck of vein of educational gold when the children begin to spontaneously make links between areas of the curriculum and drive the learning forward themselves. That is exactly what happened with our datalogging disco. Having already investigated the link between physical activity and mental health, the children then wanted to explore which type of music would be best to trigger movement and boost their moods, as a result. So, that is what we did, and it became an authentic, rich, cross curricular experience that we all loved!



START HERE

First of all, make sure you have the most recent, Gen 2 micro:bits, as you'll need the additional sensors they have. Now, please take a breath if the

mention of micro:bits brings on a hot flush. You do not need to be a coding genius to engage with this activity. We used the pre-made datalogging code from micro:bit MakeCode website (tinyurl.com/tp-MBdl), which you just need to download. Then make sure you access the 'extensions' in the coding toolbar and turn on the 'datalogger' coding blocks. And you're ready to go! I would always recommend having a trial run of the code yourself first and, in this case, it is also a good excuse to have an after-school boogie!



MAIN LESSON

1 | DANCE YOUR SOCKS OFF

The first step in the process is to model how the code works. Now that might sound a little dull, so you need to add your own prancing, pirouetting pizazz! As attention-grabber for the lesson, I used my prepared code and the micro:bit strap (provided in the box) to attach the micro:bit to my wrist. This already piqued the interest of the class, but when I then started spontaneously dad-dancing around the classroom, there was no going back. They were hooked.

Before I triggered any serious medical conditions for

myself, I stopped and turned off the micro:bit, ending the data collection. We then discussed what it was I had just been doing and why. The children equated the micro:bit with a fitness tracker, which was a helpful means of them understanding what datalogging is. At that point, we downloaded the data that had been collected during my frenzied cavorting (achieved easily by downloading the data to a device, opening it and waiting for the datalogging website to automatically open and tabulate your data).

What the children witnessed was a really clear line graph, mapping my movements against time. The physical 'demonstration' at the start of the lesson helped the



“This became a rich, cross-curricular experience that we all loved”

children to then interpret the data as something meaningful. I then explained that we would be figuring out which type of music is the best to dance to, with our own datalogging disco. Cheers, whoops and hollering commenced... they were excited about data! That was a first for me and them!

2 | MEASURE YOUR BOPABILITY

We then looked at the actual code that I had used within my micro:bit, gradually working through each coding block to explain the purpose and impact of each instruction. We explored the need to use an ‘on start’ coding block to trigger the sequence of datalogging, which then encompassed a

datalogging block, allowing us to ‘set the timestamp’ (the frequency of data collection), as well as three axes of movement (vertical, horizontal and lateral). To add a little more sparkle to this aspect, we renamed the x, y and z axes as ‘headbopperivity’, ‘candleinthewindability’ and ‘hokeycokeyness’ (something I had picked up from the experts at Technocamps) to help the children understand the different movements we would track.

Beyond this, we simply had to select the variables we wanted to look at, namely the ‘sound level’ of the environment and the ‘acceleration’ of the micro:bit as it moved. Once the children

understood how the code came together, they were ready to get coding for themselves.

3 | BON JOVI VS TAYLOR SWIFT

Next, we decamped to the school hall to get groovy! I had selected a range of varying music examples from different decades, which we were going to move to in succession. However, we agreed that in between songs we would have one minute of stillness and silence. In a practical sense, this was to allow me to catch my breath, but educationally, it would provide a helpful ‘gap’ in the datalogging to make analysis of the results easier, as we would be able to delineate between the different tracks we played.

Then the disco started, and we all had a fantastic time, boogieing away with micro:bits strapped to our wrists. Once the dancing was over, we were able to immediately access the data and groups were able to discuss their results.

The ease and speed of this was incredible and led to really powerful discussions as the children examined the data, with the physicality bringing the graph to life for them. The final outcome was predictable, in hindsight. The dulcet tones of Bon Jovi proved ineffective at motivating Y5. The classic synchronised moves of 90s Steps failed to boost their mood. Shaking it off to Taylor Swift was ‘scientifically’ proven to be the best to boost your mood. The ‘Swift’ effect was now evident in our class, too!

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

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- There is huge potential for further datalogging investigations. We could have looked at whether the volume of the music made a difference too, which would be possible by turning on and off datasets in the graphing software with a simple click – which is a really powerful way to explore the data.
- The other sensor options within the datalogging open up even more possibilities. A few weeks later, I deployed the light, temperature and sound sensors while I moved from the school car park on a frosty, dark December morning, through the building and towards my morning coffee. I then challenged the children to read the data and map my movements and actions, which was a much more intriguing way of tackling the skill of ‘interpreting data’.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What would happen if we changed the X variable?
- How else might we use a datalogger to help our wellbeing?
- Can you design your own fitness tracker by adapting the code we have used for the datalogging disco?



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Connect with a friendly Viking, medieval character or archaeologist via videocall and bring the history to life in your classroom. Get the chance to put questions to your host too – perfect for shaping students' enquiry skills!



5 REASONS TO TRY... JCA residential

Help your pupils make memories that will last a lifetime, with these expertly tailored activity experiences



30 SECOND BRIEFING

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1 EMPOWER, UNITE, AND INSPIRE

JCA residential do more than just entertain – they empower. Whether it's building confidence on the climbing wall, improving communication through team challenges, or simply sharing a room for the first time, every experience helps pupils grow. Teachers say that JCA trips enhance classroom relationships, spark independence, and make a difference that lasts all year. It's more than a few days away – it's the start of something powerful. Let your pupils discover what they're capable of – and return stronger, together.

2 START STRONG

Set the tone for the entire school year with a JCA September residential. Build strong bonds, boost confidence, and empower pupils as they settle into their new class. It's the perfect 'hello' to the school year – better than a 'goodbye' in July! JCA instructors support teachers to shape classroom dynamics early, making teaching smoother and more effective. With the summer buzz still in the air, students arrive at JCA's activity centres in September ready to dive into fun, face new challenges, and grow together right from the start.

3 BUDGET-FRIENDLY ADVENTURES

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February and November – perfect for schools wanting maximum impact without stretching the budget. With everything you'd want from functional accommodation, warming meals, and engaging activities all day long, it's a chance to give pupils an enriching experience during quieter seasons. Enjoy all the benefits of skill building and activities, such as abseiling, archery and kayaking, at a price that

works. Whether you're early in the year or winding down for winter, this is smart planning that delivers more for less.

4 PERFECT PRE-SATS

Ease the pressure of SATs with a pre-test residential that blends focused classroom time with JCA's exciting onsite activities. Designed specifically for Year 6 pupils, JCA activity centres provide quiet study spaces in the mornings and exciting group adventures in the afternoons. This balance reduces stress, builds confidence, and helps students feel more prepared for the big week ahead. Plus, it's a great way to reward hard-working pupils and motivate them before exams begin. A calm mind and energised spirit – just what SATs need!

5 MAY'S YOUR MOMENT

Not all schools do SATs – and that's your secret weapon. Take advantage of amazing value and availability during the first two weeks of May at JCA's activity centres. Whether you choose Condover Hall Activity Centre set in the Shropshire countryside or Croft Farm Waterpark in the Cotswolds, the milder weather, blossoming landscapes, and full activity schedules allow pupils to benefit from everything JCA centres offer at reduced prices and without the crowds. It's a brilliant way to inject some energy into the summer term and create lasting memories.

KEY POINTS

Stronger starts

Launch back into school life in September with confidence-building adventures that cement friendships, boost morale, and make for a stunning start to the academic year.

Seasonal savings

February and November offer unbeatable value for budget-conscious schools – with full activity schedules and warm hospitality at JCA's lowest seasonal prices.

Pre-SATs power-up

Give Year 6 the ideal prep: mornings of focused learning, and afternoons of fun – a balanced way to approach SATs with confidence and calm.

May magic

No SATs? May is your moment! Enjoy top-quality JCA residential with exceptional prices, fewer crowds, and all the benefits of springtime adventures.



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- The difference between verbal and non-verbal communication
- What active listening looks like and why it is important
- How to use de-escalating language in conflict situations
- How to convey information clearly

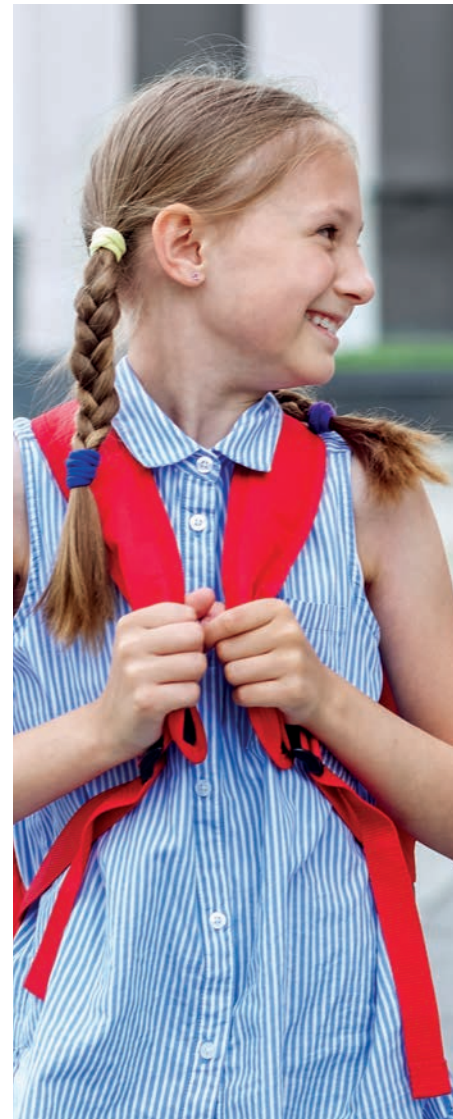
If you're happy and you know it clap your hands



Help your class harness verbal and non-verbal cues to become comms pros and resolve tiffs, with **Emily Azouelos**

[linkedin.com/in/emily-azouelos-227502220](https://www.linkedin.com/in/emily-azouelos-227502220)

Getting children to listen to you – and each other – can be a hurdle. Use this lesson to help pupils explore the importance of conveying information clearly and concisely, understand the concept of active listening, and learn how to use it in their relationships to better understand their peers and foster empathy. Additionally, they will investigate how strong communication skills contribute to building better relationships. The lesson will also cover both verbal and non-verbal behaviours, emphasising the need to consider both when communicating effectively with others.



START HERE

Hold a class discussion to create a definition of good communication, encouraging pupils to think about what makes something easy

to understand, e.g. precise language. Also, ask them what they think it might look like in action, e.g. providing helpful feedback. Next, set up an obstacle course in the hall and divide the class into groups. One child will be blindfolded, while the others give verbal instructions to help them navigate the course. Afterward, discuss what communication strategies worked well and what could be improved. Finally, ask the class if they'd like to change their definition of good communication, based on their experience of either explaining or following instructions.



MAIN LESSON

1 | WORDS AND ACTIONS

Discuss the difference between verbal and non-verbal forms of communication (can pupils think of things they can do, for example, that might mean 'yes' or 'no', without saying anything, such as giving a thumbs-up or shaking their heads?).

Explain that sometimes, non-verbal communication can be more powerful than words, and it is important to understand these cues as well. Sit the class in a semi-circle and place a chair in the centre. Invite children to come up to the chair, take a piece of paper and read the non-verbal behaviour, keeping

it a secret. The child must then act out the non-verbal behaviour, with the watching children writing down and discussing what they think that behaviour is communicating, and how they feel when watching it. Examples could include:

- staring around the room, avoiding eye contact
- smiling
- jiggling legs up and down
- rubbing forehead
- slumping down in the chair
- leaning forwards on the chair.

After the activity, ask pupils to share how each of the behaviours made them feel, and if they can think of any real-life examples of when someone's body language, eye



“Pupils will learn how to use active listening to better understand their peers and foster empathy”

contact or how they moved, communicated their emotions or thoughts. Bring the focus back to positive communication, and ask children to think of non-verbal behaviours they might show if they're feeling confident, relaxed or happy.

2 | LISTEN UP

Explain that active listening is an important cornerstone of communication – but what does it mean and what does it look like? Agree upon a checklist of good behaviours someone might show if they are listening to you (e.g. responding to what you have said, concentrating, asking clarifying questions to check they have understood what you have said). Ask the children to get into pairs and

face one another. One child should have a pen and paper, and the other child should think of a happy memory they have. Whilst the child with the happy memory is explaining it, the other child must draw the memory they are listening to, asking questions and checking in to ensure they are on the right track. They can then share their image at the end and swap, so that everyone gets a chance to share. Ask the children how it felt to have someone fully focused on what they were saying and responding to their memories.

3 | CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Use role-play to explore scenarios where good communication is needed to resolve a conflict, or prevent

it from happening. You can come up with some scenarios as a class, or you can prepare some yourself before the lesson. You could include instances like someone pushing ahead of you into a queue; being left out of a game by a friend; an argument about a decision in sport that meant the other team won, etc. Get the children into groups and give each group a selection of scenarios. Ask pupils to act out each scenario, and tell the watching children that they can say “freeze” when they want to pause the action and make a communication suggestion that they think could help the situation. They can also freeze the action at any point and ‘spotlight’ a character in the scene to reveal what they are thinking or feeling about the scenario unfolding. After the class has worked through the scenarios, encourage them to create conflict resolution posters. Have pupils work in groups to create the posters with practical tips for resolving conflicts. They can list effective communication strategies, like using calm words, staying open-minded, and asking for help. Prompt the children to think about the behaviours they've seen in the role-playing activities, and to think about what other circumstances they might be helpful for. Display these posters around the classroom as reminders for handling conflicts constructively, and positively reward children when they exhibit these behaviours in school.

Emily Azouelos is an experienced former primary teacher, and educational content creator.

EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Create a template of a person and ask children to write non-verbal behaviours to show positive actions on the inside of the person, and on the outside, write verbal behaviours that are supportive. Display in the classroom as a reminder for effective communication in friendship.
- After the drawing activity, get pupils to reflect on the experience of listening and sharing. Ask them to discuss with a partner how it felt to listen and focus on one person's words, compared to speaking. What made the listener seem involved? What made the speaker feel heard?
- Get the children to write positive affirmation cards based on the behaviours they observed in the role-play scenarios that they felt were good examples of friendship, and have them hand them out when they see the behaviours in action.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Why is good communication important?
- What makes someone a good friend, and can you think of some real-life examples?
- What advice would you give in [X] situation to help someone calm down?

MATHS



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Apply addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division
- Interpret and compare prices and financial options
- Work within a fixed budget and justify decisions
- Develop teamwork and communication skills through collaborative planning
- Understand basic financial concepts like cost, income, and profit

Roll up, roll up! Can you beat the budget?



Come one, come all, and explore real-world maths by helping pupils plan a school fair, suggests **John Bee**...

[@mbeeteach](#) [mrbeeteach.com](#)

This lesson gives pupils a purposeful way to apply maths to the real world, using budgeting to plan a whole-class school fair stall. It links directly to KS2 objectives on money, four operations, and problem-solving, while also building teamwork, reasoning, and financial awareness. Children will work within constraints and limitations, make informed decisions, and justify their choices. Whether they go for a tombola, lucky dip, or lemonade stand, this lesson helps pupils appreciate the value of money and understand how to manage a budget – core skills they'll carry into adulthood.



START HERE

Begin by showing pupils a few simple stalls they might run at a school fair: a tuck shop, a lucky dip, or a craft table, for example. Split the class into groups, and tell them each group has £20 to spend on raw materials, and their goal is to design a stall that stays within budget and raises the most money. Show example prices for common items (e.g. 10 paper cups for £1.50, glitter glue £2.25, small prizes £3.00 for 10). Discuss key concepts: What does 'budget' mean? Why do businesses (and schools) need one? Emphasise that good budgeting involves planning, prioritising, and problem-solving.



MAIN LESSON

1 | THE BUDGET MEETING

First, you need to hold a budget meeting with your class and explain they are going to work in teams of four or five during the school fair. I've found that putting £20 in a gold envelope for each group gives a sense of occasion to the budget meeting. Hand-delivering these, and allowing children to open them at the end of the meeting, makes the theoretical budget become real. Explain the challenge to the children: to design and run a stall at the school fair – and make as much profit as possible.

Model how to approach the task. You can do this using a bar model or part-whole diagram to show how a £20 budget might be split. For example, if they spend £6 on cups and £4.50 on prizes, how much is left for decorations or extras?

Ask questions like:

- What could you spend less on and still have a great stall?
- What's your essential spend?
- What is a 'nice to have?'

Make it clear that this isn't just about being the cheapest, but about being smart. E.g. could plain cups be ordered but then designed and personalised by children? This might even add more selling appeal.



“Help pupils appreciate the value of money, and understand how to manage a budget – core skills for life”

collaboratively, too. This builds reasoning as much as fluency. This is also a great opportunity for pupils to use trial and improvement: if their total cost is too high, can they reduce quantities or substitute items?

This part of the lesson is dynamic and full of discussion. It's where maths becomes visible, purposeful, and persuasive; I've even had children doing their own market research on devices in the classroom.

3 | PRESENT AND REFLECT

Once all groups have completed their plans, bring the class together to share ideas. Each group should present:

- their chosen stall type
- a summary of what they'll buy and how much it costs
- how much they plan to charge per item
- an estimate of total income and profit

There's scope to present this in a graph of total spend verses potential profit, based on estimated amounts of customers. As each group shares, invite peer questions, such as “Do you think you'll sell out?”, and “Could you have earned more with a different pricing strategy?”.

End with a reflection, including considerations like, what made budgeting hard? What did you learn about managing money? What would you do differently next time?

John Bee is a former deputy headteacher and maths leader, and is now a school improvement adviser, and mastery specialist for the Maths Hubs Programme.

2 | TEAM PLANNING

Next, hand out a budget planner worksheet to each group (you can find a template in the downloadable resources – link on the right). Each group should begin by deciding what kind of stall they want to run. Will they go with a classic like a lucky dip or lemonade stand? Or something more inventive?

Once they've agreed on a stall type, each group should use the planner to itemise their purchases. Encourage written methods for calculations, including:

- column addition to total up the spend
- subtraction to check they stay within budget
- multiplication and division to work out unit costs and potential earnings

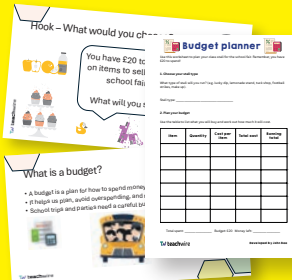
This is a fantastic opportunity to use mathematical models, too. Children could use a bar model to show a breakdown of how much has been spent (and on what) out of £20. They could also represent expected profit using a comparative bar model (cost vs profits).

The idea here is to support discussion and reasoning, and to allow children to arrive at their own decisions and argue (politely) within their teams as to the best way to approach the task. Encourage pupils to justify their choices, using mathematical arguments such as, “We're choosing glitter over balloons because we get more uses for less money.” Let them encounter dilemmas and problem-solve

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Let pupils run their stall as part of Enterprise Week and track actual profit – there can be lots of follow-up analysis after the event to see which teams made the most profit.
- Introduce spreadsheets for cost calculations and profit projections with simple formulae.
- Have children design a price list or even consider special offers – buy one get one free; three for the price of two, etc, and consider the best pricing structure of their stalls. These can be displayed around school or included in the school newsletter advertising the event!
- Add ethical considerations, such as sustainability.

tw teachwire



Download your **FREE** resources at

**tingurl.com/
tp-BudgetLesson**

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What should we prioritise in our budget?
- How can we make more money with less spending?
- What if prices change? How would we adapt?
- Is our stall good value for our customers?

SUSTAINABILITY

Kapow Primary Sustainability Collection

Kapow
Primary™



A must-have for supporting your school's sustainability teaching and strategy

AT A GLANCE

- Highly engaging sustainability lesson plans for Reception to Year 6
- Packed with practical resources to prepare children for a sustainable future
- A cohesive and interdisciplinary approach for maximum impact
- Full of deep-dive questions and activities to promote eco-thinking
- Brilliantly compiled content



REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

Developing and implementing a sustainability curriculum across the school is an enormous undertaking. This is a multifaceted topic full of complex concepts scattered across different subjects that are difficult to grasp with many hidden components, and so age-appropriate resources are key. Sustainability has to be taught in authentic contexts and connect with the real-world experiences of children.

Fortunately, Kapow Primary has a Sustainability Collection admirably fit for purpose that serves the whole school using a holistic, cross-curricular approach that fosters a sense of responsibility and global citizenship. It is well-rounded and offers engaging, clear, and highly relevant lessons that progressively build understanding to help children become change makers.

The Sustainability Collection provides children with plenty of opportunities to link their learning to a variety of issues that mean something to them, their families and communities. It is solutions and action based. The sustainability concepts covered include appreciation of nature, interdependence, resources and waste, climate change, individual and collective responsibility.

This broad and balanced collection has been very carefully structured and provides creative and engaging lesson plans along with supporting resources. They contain pre-lesson videos and prep, key vocabulary, teacher notes, activities, support and challenge.

Each of the lessons have been well set up. Learning objectives and success criteria are followed by engaging videos for teachers and children and they are the perfect introduction to the topic. They are clear, engaging and well presented.

Before the lesson, there is a teacher knowledge

section that highlights the key need-to-know bits along with cross-curricular links and pointers. There are lots of exciting downloadable 'print in advance' resources to furnish each lesson, too, so you have everything to hand. These are integral to the main lesson and have been well thought through with high engagement and collaborative endeavour at their heart.

Each lesson has been brilliantly constructed with recap and recall sections, presentations, attention-grabbing slides and inspiring videos, main event activities and further slides. Wrapping up activities are included with 'during the week' activities to focus on, and there are also tips for adaptive teaching and notes on assessing progress and understanding.

These lessons help children to weigh evidence, form opinions, present their thinking, draw conclusions, and consider how and why others might see and do things differently. They also encourage empowerment over fear and so have the potential to activate pupil leaders to drive sustainability, steer change, and become advocates for a greener future.

The Sustainability Collection helps children understand why they are studying the topic and its relevance to their own lives. It teaches them how to debate, listen and assess alternative points of view, and judge for themselves the relative merits of different views.

Sustainability is commonly seen as an add-on that must compete for time within an already crowded curriculum, but Kapow makes teaching it a key competency and an integral part of the curriculum. This is a must-have for your sustainability lead and your school's sustainability and climate change strategy.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Accessible and engaging
- ✓ Promotes autonomous critical thinking and collaborative problem solving
- ✓ Inspires hope and helps children have agency and take action
- ✓ Promotes safeguarding and wellbeing by combatting eco-anxiety
- ✓ Supports a holistic view of sustainability
- ✓ Develops responsibility and global citizenship
- ✓ Bolsters confidence in teachers
- ✓ Perfect for auditing and setting up a Sustainability Club

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...you are looking for a coordinated, comprehensive and creative whole-school approach to teaching sustainability and creating a sustainable school eco-culture and community.

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MATHS →

Sumdog Maths

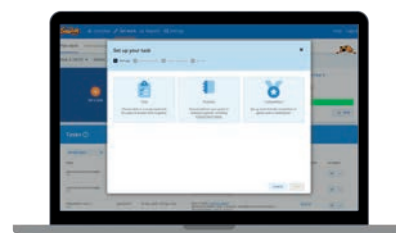


An engaging, game-based maths practice platform that motivates pupils while generating valuable insights for teachers

AT A GLANCE

- Aligned with the national curriculum and White Rose Maths
- Adaptable to the needs and abilities of all pupils
- Allows teachers to set targeted maths practice tasks in minutes
- Automatically generates data for monitoring progress and identifying learning gaps
- Known to increase maths fluency

REVIEWED BY: TP REVIEWER



Even when you love what you're doing, whether it's sport, music or reading, practice can be a bit of a grind. For those who lack confidence or motivation, that mental obstacle can seem almost insurmountable. Yet, as we all know, new skills have to be diligently practised for the knowledge to become embedded.

The trick, then, is to make it as fun or engaging as possible. When it comes to maths or aspects of literacy, that can be easier said than done. However, given the endless hours many of us seem happy to dedicate to largely unproductive tasks, such as playing computer games, it is no wonder that interactive approaches to practising core subjects have flooded the market during the internet age. Finding one that meets your school's needs, though, can be a challenge.

For many, the answer has been Sumdog. Since its humble beginnings over 10 years ago, Sumdog has been dedicated to developing and refining an inclusive, absorbing platform where pupils of all abilities and backgrounds can practise their taught skills. The aim was to create a safe, inclusive space where everyone feels represented and no longer believes that there are some areas of the primary maths curriculum in which they cannot enjoy success.

So, how does the reality match up to the ambition? First and foremost, it does objectively have a positive impact on maths fluency,

according to research. And, as many a teacher will affirm, children often know what to do – the challenge is for them to do it accurately and efficiently enough, i.e. with sufficient fluency to perform well in the tests.

The tasks can be fairly easily tailored to the age and ability levels of the pupils. Also, the questions are designed for use with the national curriculum and White Rose Maths, so they will be aligned with your classroom teaching. Furthermore, the automatic marking and data analysis functions mean that you, as a teacher, can easily monitor progress and spot gaps in understanding.

From the pupil's point of view, it is genuinely entertaining. Turning learning into a game is a time-honoured technique for improving outcomes. And which child these days doesn't enjoy computer games, given the chance to play? In case you need reassurance, however, Sumdog does include mechanisms to prevent users from rushing the tasks in order to focus on the gameplay.

Used sensibly, Sumdog is clearly an effective tool for incentivising and rewarding maths practice, whilst giving teachers valuable intelligence as to how their pupils are doing. Considering how it also removes the headache of setting and marking constructive maths homework, you might find your colleagues sitting up and begging to give it a go.

teach PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Fun and engaging
- ✓ Promotes fluency
- ✓ Inclusive and customisable
- ✓ Convenient for teachers
- ✓ Generates valuable insights

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...you want to provide targeted maths practice in a way that motivates and engages your pupils.

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Q & A

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...

1 What's your idea of perfect happiness in your job?

It's a day spent outside, in sunny weather, playing sports and games with the children. Physical activity is a must for me, and I get cabin fever if I'm in the classroom too long, so you'll often find me and my class outside!

2 What is your greatest fear at work?

My biggest fear is definitely not being listened to. Even though I am in my 15th year of teaching, and consider myself to be good at managing behaviour, I have a recurring dream that my class won't listen to me, and I've lost control!

3 What is your current state of mind?

Well, I've literally just come back from having root canal work at the dentist, so I'm feeling a mixture of gratitude that I'm still alive, and a dash of feeling sorry for myself. But as far as work goes, I'm feeling a bit stretched, though in control. I've got a lot on at the moment – I'm editing a book on ECT wellbeing, marking university assignments, and teaching in KS1

this term (I haven't been down there for many years!), so it's exciting and challenging. But I like being outside my comfort zone.

4 What do you consider the most overrated teacher virtue?

I can't stand martyrdom in teaching. It's not big, it's not clever, and it sets a poor example to new teachers coming into the profession. We'll never get over the recruitment and retention crisis if we don't stop it.

5 On what occasion do you lie to your class?

When I have no TA in the room but really need a wee, I tell my class I'm stepping outside to speak to the headteacher for a moment, and that we'll definitely be able to hear if they're messing around. And then I leg it to the loo and back faster than Usain Bolt.

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

"No, you don't need an icepack for that". You would not believe how often that phrase is relevant.

7 What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

I have been a member and supporter of Action for Happiness since their launch in 2011, so back in 2015, when the director, Mark Williamson, asked me and three of my pupils to speak at their Creating a Happier World event at the Lyceum Theatre with the Dalai Lama – in front of no less than 2,500 people – I couldn't say no. The Dalai Lama is one of my heroes, but I was most proud of the children. They spoke so eloquently; especially a boy called Karam, who, two years before that, didn't speak any English! It was an amazing experience.

8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

My USB clicker. It enables me to move the lesson on from anywhere in the room, so I can walk round to *that* child and let them know they need to focus without breaking my flow.



NAME: Adrian Bethune

JOB ROLE: Teacher, lecturer, governor, author

EXTRA INFO: Adrian is the author of *Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom* and *A Little Guide to Teacher Wellbeing and Self-Care*.

"I get cabin fever if I'm in the classroom too long, so you can usually find me and my class outside!"

This is more than just a Glue Stick...

It's a *lifeline**

A *birthday card*

A *dream coming true*

A *science experiment*

A *piece of art with a tree*

It's a *group experience...*



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- Thousands of **free curriculum-linked classroom videos**.
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- Classroom projects including **Ten Pieces** which opens up the world of classical music and **Moodboosters** videos to get children moving for mental wellbeing.

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