

VISIT TEACHWIRE.NET/PRIMARY

teach PRIMARY

Outstanding advice from the UK's top education experts

teach
co

**6-WEEK
DT PROJECT**



**BUILD AN
EGYPTIAN
STONE LIFT**

THE MATHS LESSON

every class needs

SEND

**DO WE NEED
TO RETHINK
INCLUSION?**

Word play

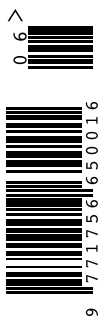
Creative ways to
make grammar stick

**HOW
TO MAKE
MAPS
MATTER**

History on your **DOORSTEP**

The school that became its own curriculum

artichoke



ISSUE: 20.6
PRICE: £4.99

ART

DESIGN YOUR OWN VIKING JEWELLERY

ASSESSMENT

WHY WE MUST GO BACK TO BASICS

RE

PREPARE FOR THE NEW CURRICULUM

**Make a
difference.**



**Join the
NEU.**

neu.org.uk/join

“A strong and powerful NEU group can have an amazing impact in the workplace.”



“NEU reps understand and have first-hand experience of the challenges that education workers face.”



**Join us
today**

**0345
811 8111**



“Being in the NEU empowers me as an individual at work.”



NEU4470/0726

Terms and conditions at neu.org.uk/neu-membership-tcs

In maintained schools, only the local government unions (GMB, Unison and Unite) are recognised to collectively bargain on behalf of support staff.

“The NEU represents hope for the future of the education system.”



Hello!



And welcome back! Whether the new school year has begun with military-grade organisation or a frantic hunt for glue sticks and missing PE kits, September always brings with it a sense of fresh possibility. New lesson ideas, new routines and new opportunities to inspire are all waiting just beyond the classroom door.

I'm proud to say that *Teach Primary* will be here with you every step of the way. So, let's get to it!

If you're looking for ideas to kick-start the term, you'll find plenty in this issue. On page 23, Gareth Metcalfe explores how comparing pairs of questions can help engage every child in maths, regardless of ability. It's a deceptively simple approach that encourages rich discussion, develops mathematical thinking and ensures everyone has a way into the learning.

Meanwhile, in our humanities special, a history feature on page 60 takes us to a Barry school, where the Welsh concept of *cynefin* opened the door to an exploration of local history with truly joyful results. It's a wonderful reminder that some of the most meaningful learning begins close to home, helping children develop a stronger sense of identity, belonging and connection to their community.

Elsewhere, if your grammar lessons could use a little creative spark, don't miss our entertaining feature on grammar poetry from the one and only Pie Corbett on page 80. Discover how playful poems can help children distinguish their prepositions from their conjunctions, and their verbs from their adjectives, proving that grammar can be every bit as memorable as it is meaningful.

Wherever the new term takes you, we hope this issue provides practical ideas, fresh inspiration and a reminder of the creativity that makes teaching such a rewarding profession.

Thanks, as always, for reading *Teach Primary*. Here's to a happy and successful start to the new school year!

Charley

Charley Rogers, editor
 @TeachPrimaryEd1  @charleytp.bsky.social

*Don't miss our next
 issue, available from
 5th October*

POWERED BY...



NICKI JAECCI

on why schools shouldn't be afraid to go back to basics to improve outcomes in every year

"We didn't expect our teachers to love the approach as much as they did"

p43



MATTHEW LANE

shares his top tips for future-proofing RE, as its addition to the national curriculum draws near

"We should be teaching about religion and worldviews as living, breathing entities"

p56



ANJALI PATEL

explores two CLIPPA-short-listed collections to bring poetry into your class and engage learners of all ages

"This year's shortlist includes something for everyone across your school"

p70



START THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR BY

Becoming a Thrive School

A whole-school approach to strengthen behaviour, wellbeing, SEND and inclusion in primary schools.

- ✓ Thrive Licensed Practitioner Training and access to the award-winning Thrive-Online platform
- ✓ Evidence-informed approach
- ✓ Trusted by thousands of schools

Two pathways:

- Levy-funded Thrive Apprenticeships
- Thrive School Package



Explore the **comparison guide**
thriveapproach.com/thrive-school-routes



Contents

ISSUE 20.6



REGULARS

- 8 BREAKTIME**
- 11 6 WAYS...**
...to celebrate poetry in the classroom
- 26 MEDIUM-TERM PLAN**
A six-week week D&T unit on building an Egyptian stone lift
- 31 HOW I DO IT**
Turn your school fair's waste cardboard into a making experience for everyone to enjoy
- 35 THIS WAY!**
School improvement advice for headteachers and SLT – this issue we're looking at retirement

VOICES

- 13 RACHEL HAWKER**
The government's renewed focus on enrichment is welcome, but we need to ensure we're reaching all pupils
- 14 EMMA SANDERSON**
If attendance were purely about behaviour, then improving it would be easy...
- 17 A LETTER TO...**
...primary teachers. In the midst of a children's mental health emergency, could a play-rich curriculum be the cure?
- 19 UNDERCOVER TEACHER**
Why, when we teach our pupils to call out troubling behaviours, can't we do the same ourselves?



SPECIAL SECTION

HUMANITIES SPECIAL

- 54 MAPPING WHAT MATTERS**
Localised, personal knowledge can show children the subject's real-life relevance
- 56 HOW TO FUTURE-PROOF RE**
As the subject goes through its biggest changes since the 80's, Matthew Lane explores how to ensure your RE curriculum is still fit for purpose
- 59 HOW TO BUILD A COMMUNITY**
Citizenship is a great part of PSHE, but to make lessons really stick, children need to actively take part in its process
- 60 THE PLACE YOU BELONG**
How the Welsh concept of cynefin helped a Barry school open the door to its own history, and reveal a joyous outcome
- 63 A NEW HORIZON FOR GEOGRAPHY**
With the DfE's new draft curriculum imminent, Steve Brace discusses the practical implications

We're all ears!

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

**teach
PRIMARY**

We want to hear from you!

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



teachwire.net

facebook.com/teachwire

twitter.com/teachprimary

charley.rogers@theteachco.com

PUBLISHERS:

Joe Carter
Richard Stebbing

EDITOR:

charley.rogers@artichokehq.com

ADVERTISING:

samantha.law@artichokehq.com
01206 505499
hayley.rackham@artichokehq.com
01206 505928
demi.maynard@artichokehq.com
01206 505962
jude.coverdale@artichokehq.com
01206 505992

ART EDITORS:

Richard Allen, Sarah Barajas

CUSTOMER SERVICES:

primary@artichokehq.com

ACCOUNTS:

artichokemedialtd@integral2.com

PUBLISHED BY:

Artichoke Media,
Suites 2 & 4, Global House,
Global Park, Eastgates, CO1 2TJ



The views in this magazine are not necessarily those of the publisher. Every effort is made to ensure the veracity and integrity of the companies, persons, products and services mentioned in this publication, and the details given are believed to be accurate at the time of going to press. However, no responsibility or liability whatsoever can be accepted for any consequence or repercussion of responding to information or advice given or inferred. Copyright Artichoke Media Ltd.

†AI - Image modified with AI assistance



FEATURES

21 IT'S A WILD WORLD

Here's how to start conversations, not concerns, when teaching current affairs

23 MIX AND MATCH

Comparing pairs of questions can help engage pupils of all abilities in a maths lesson

33 BUILDING BELONGING

Fostering a sense of community for families of SEND pupils doesn't have to be complicated – but it can be transformational

40 BEYOND THE GATES

All the info you need to find your next thrilling school trip

43 CRACK THE EGG, THEN MAKE THE OMELETTE

Schools shouldn't be afraid to go back to basics to improve outcomes

51 TURNING ADAPTATION ON ITS HEAD

As more children with complex needs are placed in mainstream provision, a rethink of what 'inclusive teaching' really means is key

LESSON PLANS

88 ART

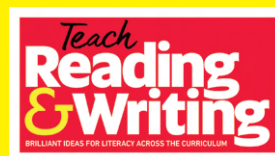
Reconstructing ancient art: Viking jewellery

90 MATHS

Turn maths problems into creative enquiry

92 HISTORY

Introduce pupils to hieroglyphs by decoding mysterious hidden messages



69 WHERE WORDS MEET THE WILD

Head outside to blow the cobwebs off stagnant literacy lessons

70 POETRY PLAYTIME

Use two CLiPPA-shortlisted collections to explore imagery, proverbs and oracy

73 BOOK TOPIC

Investigate what really makes a great pal, and build persuasive writing skills with Darren Chetty's *I'm Going to Make a Friend*

78 WAGOLL

Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to write an action scene with Cressida Cowell's *Fight of the Flamestrike*

80 LEXICAL FESTIVAL

Sort your prepositions from your conjunctions and your verbs from your adjectives with entertaining and creative grammar poetry

84 BOOK CLUB

We review five new titles that your class will love



TAKE YOUR PUPILS
ON A JOURNEY

THEY'LL NEVER FORGET...

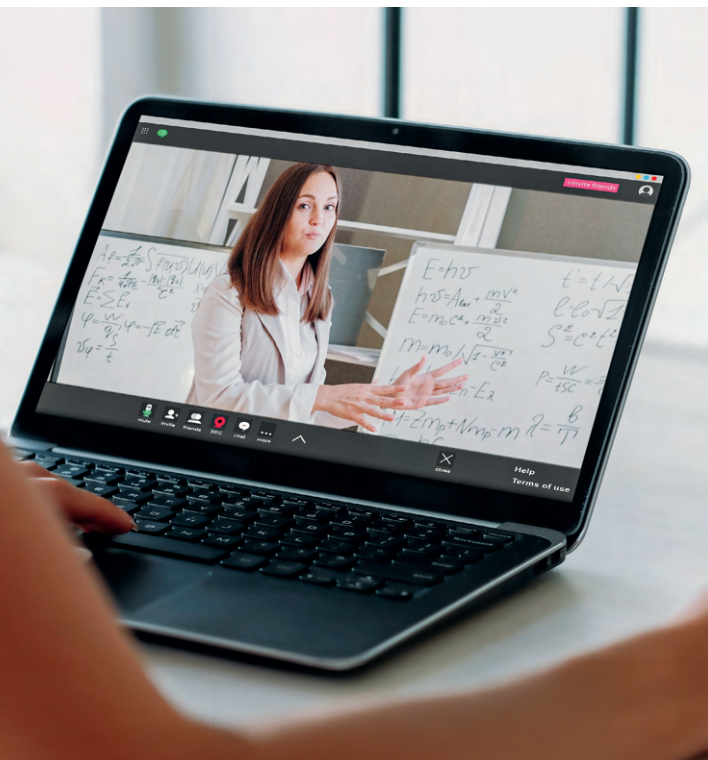


Disney
THE LION KING

LYCEUM THEATRE ✦ thelionking.co.uk

Breaktime

News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research



Virtual visits do the job

A recent National Institute of Teaching trial found that observing real-life teaching by video-link was no less effective for trainee teachers than being there in person. The research – published in *Teaching and Teacher Education* – compared the effectiveness of virtual modes of observing expert practice on teacher trainees' learning and development, against the more traditional use of in-person visits.

The study involved a randomised-controlled trial with groups of trainees on the National Institute's Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme, with one group using livestreamed observation alongside a tutor to help them link theory to practice and understand what they were watching. The results showed that the virtual method was not less effective than in-person observation. While the study has limitations, and the trial was conducted within a specific programme moment (during Intensive Training and Practice), the findings should give confidence to policymakers and other teacher education providers who are exploring the use of livestreamed observation to facilitate trainee development at scale.

Read the full study at tinyurl.com/tp-VirtualObs

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



FREE SEND PLANNING

SENlife is a SEND support platform, completely free for parents, carers, schools, SENCos and professionals. Keep daily evidence organised and turn it into clear support packs with the online platform that works like an app. Visit senlife.co.uk to start your planning journey today.



BOOKTIME

Booktime provides free stories in more than 12 languages, covering everything from fairy tales and mythology to science, wellbeing, and feelings. There are no ads, and the experience is very much like reading a book online. Take a look and find your new favourite story at booktime.org



AUTUMN PLANNING

This free planner is designed to help you organise your term and inspire your lesson planning. It's filled with important dates, including Black History Month and World Mental Health Day, plus links to free cross-curricular activities and lesson ideas. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-PLPplanner26

→→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**

Your new favourite podcast

Smart and refreshingly honest, *No Running in the Corridors* is a podcast that unpicks the rules shaping your school day. Every episode, host Helen Mulley

invites two guests into her special secret meeting room and reveals a long-standing school rule that's up for debate – from extreme hairstyles to term-time holidays. Listen wherever you get your podcasts.





“I couldn’t be a teacher”

Brits are calling for teachers to receive more recognition, as new research reveals almost one in three admit they could not do the job themselves.

The Teacher Impact Report, commissioned by Blue Light Card,

found 63 per cent of Brits believe teachers should receive more recognition for the impact they have on society. Six in 10 Brits say they wish they had thanked a teacher for the difference they made, while 59 per cent confirm that they appreciate teachers more now than they did when they were at school. Many also believe that teachers are undervalued, with 53 per cent saying they do not get the credit they deserve. Curiosity emerged as the top quality teachers give the nation, named by one in five Brits. Confidence followed closely behind, chosen by 19 per cent, while 16 per cent said resilience was the most important quality they took from a teacher. The research also found 30 per cent of Brits say it would be “impossible” to do a teacher’s job for just one week. Read the full report at tinyurl.com/tp-TIR26

Beloved author is new Laureate

Award-winning author Patrice Lawrence MBE has been announced as the Waterstone’s Children’s Laureate 2026-28. Lawrence’s debut YA novel, *Orangeboy*, was published in 2016 and went on to win The Bookseller’s YA Book Prize and the Waterstones Children’s Book Prize for Older Children’s Fiction, and was shortlisted for the Costa Children’s Book Award. Lawrence has since published 16 widely acclaimed books, which have also been frequent visitors to prize lists. She said of her tenure: “My aim is to create a national conversation that champions the benefits of shared reading and sociable reading experiences. Alongside BookTrust, I’ll explore how books and reading together help communities connect and cohere, especially in times of fragmentation. I’ll work with children and adults with diverse experiences and from diverse backgrounds, children and adults who may feel undervalued in our society, to tell their stories. I want to celebrate the unsung heroes who bring joy and nurture reading communities through their work.”



© David Bebbier

68% of children said books make them think about how they treat other people*

Look ahead | Book ahead



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Taking place through October, this year’s theme is Honouring Our Communities, highlighting individuals, local groups, and unheralded changemakers who shape and sustain Black life across Britain. Find free resources at tinyurl.com/tp-BHM26

IMAGINE AWARDS

These awards recognise classroom activities, projects, workshops and collaborations that help children explore the places around them and imagine better futures. Deadline 23 Oct. Enter at bit.ly/tp-IA26

IMAGINE



Liam Dutton

Meteorologist, weather presenter and author

What was primary school like for you?

I loved primary school. I enjoyed learning about things - especially maths and science, which have really helped in my career becoming a meteorologist and weather presenter. I also used to look forward to playtime outside, so I could look at the sky and spot different clouds and see what the weather was doing. I was always fascinated by how things worked. I think that’s what made me interested in weather from an early age - wanting to understand what was happening around me.

What’s your favourite weather fact?

Probably that every snowflake is unique. If you were to look at lots of snowflakes under a microscope, each one would be different. This is because as they fall from the sky, each one grows in a slightly different way, with the ice crystals forming their own patterns.

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

I’d like the book to help children learn about the weather so that they can understand what is going on around them and why - especially with climate change and extreme weather happening. It’s something that affects us all and we’re always talking about it as a nation, so empowering children with knowledge to navigate these conversations is very important.



Weather, Camera, Action! by Liam Dutton, ill. Giordano Poloni (£10.99, Templar Books) is out now.

your school
Advantage

plus
FREE
next day
delivery†

15% OFF*

CLASSMATES®
with code **DAYONE15**



gls. Schools.
We get you.

✓ **Trusted
quality**
✓ **Better value
for your
school**

†T&Cs apply.
Offer ends 30.09.2026.

Helping you create confident classrooms from day one | glshed.co.uk



6 ways to celebrate poetry

Dust off your thinking cap and use topics as inspiration to create vibrant verse

1 | THE POETRY CLASSROOM

Put simply, a poetry classroom is one that celebrates poetry on an ongoing basis. It will have a permanent poetry display in a prominent place, with poems of all kinds – modern and classic, and by a diverse range of poets – and all forms, too: shape poems, riddle poems, funny poems, quiet/reflective poems, memory poems. Or poems on the class topic. And of course, the display will be changed regularly and feature work by the children! There will be a poetry corner or box that will contain a lovely variety of poetry collections and anthologies. There may even be little notebooks on every desk, where children can put their great ideas whenever they arise.

2 | EYES AND EARS

Poems need to be heard AND seen! A three-form entry primary school near me reads a poem each day. Every day, every class, EYFS to UKS2. The teachers tell me the children love it, even reluctant readers; plus, it's a great daily boost of oracy and literacy. Alternatively, you could read a poem to end the day or even start the afternoon, and it could be read by volunteer children. At the end of the week, why not vote for the favourite poem of the week and discuss why everyone enjoyed it so much? Top tip for reading/performing? DOUBLE the volume, HALF the speed! Practise reading it slowly in your head a few times first.

3 | ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Poetry is inherently cross-curricular. Moreover, there are poems on every topic under the sun. Why not try a rainforest or dragon haiku, an animal or space cinquain, a Viking or ancient Egyptians / Greeks kenning, a pirate or a fairy tale rap, an acrostic on the rainforest or the Victorians or castles, a metaphor list poem on the ocean, or a poem in the shape of a river, dinosaur, or tree or volcano? Or any combination of the above? (All these forms are easily Google-able!) Once written, why not make a display to celebrate the poems or put on a class assembly in which the children perform them?



© Anya Goldenberg

JAMES CARTER

is a children's poet and non-fiction writer. He has visited some 1500+ primary schools all over the UK and is an ambassador for National Poetry Day.

4 | KENNINGS

kennings are such fun and children really enjoy doing them. Moreover, they can be done on any class topic. They have two words per line, and the second word often ends in -er. So, a cat is a *sofa-snatcher*, a cloud is a *rain-maker*. The Egyptians are a very popular topic, and make great kennings – *pyramid-builders* / *hieroglyphic-inscribers* / *brain-removers* and so on. A tree could be a *leaf-dropper*, *fruit-producer*, *sky-reacher*. The kennings can also be turned into whole pyramid- or tree-shaped poems and displays.

5 | TO RHYME OR NOT TO RHYME?

Children love rhyme! They have heard it since they were born – in lullabies, nonsense rhymes, all kinds, and will expect to rhyme in their poems. But writing rhyming poetry is hard, as it requires a good sense of rhythm and a wide vocabulary. If you're tackling rhymes, try and start simply: *I've got a friend / his name is Sam / his favourite food / is strawberry jam*

Now do this rhyme with a new name: *I've got a friend / her name is*

Try a version with near-rhymes too, e.g. *I've got a friend / her name is Lottie / painting pictures / is her hobby* Children need to learn how to use near-rhymes in their poems rather than forcing rhymes that make no sense!

6 | MAKE IT REGULAR

An Oxford primary school I visited recently does three whole-school poetry weeks a year. These end with a poetry slam in which every class puts on a performance. Impressive! If you don't have the time for this, you can introduce poems into weekly assemblies, or photocopy poems and put them up all over the school – down the corridors, in the halls – even in the loos! Get teachers visiting each class to read a favourite children's poem, or contact a contemporary children's poet (via their website) and send them a short list of questions, asking if they have any writing or performing tips. Or invite a poet in for the day to do performances, workshops and a finale – most children's poets love visiting schools.

Not a member?

Join us at neu.org.uk/join to gain access to our CPD offer as well as other benefits including workplace representation and support.



CPD with the NEU

Professional development

The NEU (National Education Union) is the largest education union in Europe - representing teachers, lecturers, support staff, and school leaders in maintained and independent schools and colleges across the UK.

NEU members have access to professional development opportunities throughout the year, designed to help you grow professionally and thrive in your role. We have CPD for support staff, leaders and teachers - including ECTs.

Our no-cost webinar programme covers a wide range of topics for those working in primary and early years settings, covering:

- > behaviour
- > curriculum and assessment
- > SEND
- > creativity
- > equalities and much more.

All sessions are recorded so you can access them at a time that suits you, within 14 days of the live session.

We also run a variety of leadership programmes for aspiring, middle and senior leaders.



NEU members can register here for these sessions
neu.org.uk/courses/national-cpd



Why are so many missing out on extra-curriculars?

The government's renewed focus on enrichment is welcome, but we need to ensure we're reaching all pupils, not just the confident ones

 rocksteadymusicschool.com

Ask a class who wants to perform, join a club or try something new, and you will often see the same hands go up first. The confident ones. The children who already know they are good at something, and who have learned that school is a place where they can succeed. But enrichment should not only belong to them.

At its best, a school's enrichment offer is one of the highlights of a child's week. Whether through making music, performing on stage, joining a sports team or exploring a new creative pursuit, enrichment gives children a change of pace; a chance to make new friends, discover new interests and experience success in a different way. That is why the government's new Enrichment Framework is such a welcome step. Done well, it can build confidence, belonging and engagement, while helping children develop skills and interests that complement their formal learning. But as we begin to consider what the framework means in practice, there is an important distinction to make: availability is not the same as access.

A school may have a wide range of clubs, activities and experiences on offer, but that does not mean every pupil feels able to take part. For many children, particularly those who lack confidence, or have additional needs, participation can be the biggest barrier. If enrichment is most

accessed by pupils who already feel comfortable putting themselves forward, it risks widening the very gaps it is designed to close.

This is where the design of enrichment matters. High-quality enrichment needs to create low-pressure routes in, especially for children who are hesitant to take part. It should give pupils permission to try, make mistakes, learn alongside others and experience progress without feeling judged.

Group-based activities can be particularly powerful here. Whether children are playing music together, taking part in drama, joining a sports team or working on a creative project, the group – or in my experience – the band, can provide a

sense of safety. Pupils are not singled out, but contribute as part of something shared. That might mean keeping a beat, singing one line, passing a ball or adding one idea to a group project. Small moments matter and, over time, can help children take risks, build resilience and develop self-belief.

This is especially important in primary schools, where children are still forming their views of what they are good at and where they fit in. A positive enrichment experience can give a child their first real experience of feeling successful at school. The framework also rightly recognises the importance of when and how enrichment takes place. Scheduling is not a minor logistical detail; it can determine who gets to participate. After-school clubs can be brilliant for some pupils, but they do not work for every family.

Transport, caring responsibilities and parental work patterns can all affect whether a child can stay behind. Lunchtimes can also be difficult, particularly when pupils need a break, staff are stretched or activities compete with already busy school routines.

Embedding enrichment into the school day can help remove some of these barriers. It sends a powerful message that it's not just for the children whose parents can manage the logistics. It becomes part of the shared school experience.

That does not mean every activity must happen during lesson time, or that schools – already facing immense pressure on time, staffing and resources – should be expected to deliver everything alone; but it does mean that when planning enrichment, leaders should ask not only "what can we offer?" but "who are we not reaching?"

The framework gives schools a valuable opportunity to move

beyond counting opportunities and towards understanding impact: who is gaining confidence, and who feels more connected to school.

For enrichment to deliver on its promise, it must be designed not just for the pupils who already put their hands up, but for those who need a reason to believe they can. **TP**

Rachel Hawker is chief of education at Rocksteady Music School.





Why are there so many empty seats in our schools?

If attendance were purely about behaviour, then improving it would be easy...

With national absence currently at over six per cent during the 2025/26 academic year according to the latest Department for Education statistics, we are still a long way off pre-pandemic levels (4.7 per cent). And persistent absence is even higher, affecting approximately 18.6 per cent of pupils. Roughly one in five children are missing at least 10 per cent of their schooling.

But added into the mix are higher expectations, harsher penalties and more fines for families – and this makes attendance now one of the biggest challenges facing school leaders, teachers and parents.

As an educator myself, I know why we focus so much on attendance, because getting children to school is one of the biggest levers we have to improve outcomes. But the problem is, we have normalised talking about it in terms of compliance. The conversation often goes straight to sanctions, parental responsibility, enforcement. Perhaps if attendance were solely about behaviour, then this would be enough. But it isn't.

So why aren't they coming?
We need to flip the attendance model

to stop sanctioning and start with belonging. The reasons for a child not coming to school are complex and go far beyond just not attending. They may be experiencing anxiety or lack confidence, or perhaps they are struggling to make friends or finding relationships challenging.

Factors outside of the classroom – recent or from years ago – can also have an impact. A child could be dealing with challenges such as bereavement, illness, lack of finances, caring responsibilities or moving home. These can all affect attendance. There is also the increasing impact of SEND and neurodivergence (both diagnosed and undiagnosed). Longer wait times for diagnoses means many pupils are falling through the net and struggling in an environment that wasn't designed with them in mind. These are complex issues that rarely develop overnight. Small things begin to build up for a pupil until they start to feel like they aren't able to succeed at school. Left unchecked, they can develop into what schools term emotional-based school non-attendance (EBSNA) or emotional-based school avoidance (EBSA).

Of course, no one disagrees that clear expectations around attendance are important. Schools should – and do – have robust systems in place, and families should understand the expectations. But tough sanctions on families when children are absent isn't going to change behaviour if the root cause is something else. When children are experiencing anxiety, unmet needs or simply don't feel like they belong at school, sanctions or punishment can often exacerbate the problem. Parents who may already be at their wits' end supporting their child can feel blamed or judged. Home – school relationships break down. And the child who is at the centre of it all becomes even more disengaged.

So, what's the answer? This is where I see the most effective schools tackle attendance: by working with families and focusing on understanding and engagement instead of punishment. When I work with schools nationally on attendance, we always start by looking at the data. Is it certain year groups? Is it holidays? Does it spike at certain points in the year? Are there particular groups of pupils who are struggling more than others? Lateness is also a good indicator of future absence. It's important to look at the data, but you also need to talk to the people who see the pupils day in, day out. Teachers, TAs, SENCOs, parents, and, crucially, the pupils themselves. Their insights can help you identify the barriers your data is showing. Once you know where your challenges lie you can put the right support in place – and this is where belonging comes in.

When children feel like they belong at school, they turn up. And often it's the small things that can make a big difference. Lots of children with attendance issues love routine and knowing what to expect each day. Having strong relationships with familiar and trustworthy adults helps. I've seen schools dramatically improve attendance by getting curious about the pupils who struggle and using small interventions to help them attend more regularly, including peer mentoring and buddy systems.

If we want children in school, first and foremost, we need to make sure school is somewhere children want to be. **TP**

Emma Sanderson is an experienced educator, and managing director of Momenta Connect, which is part of Outcomes First Group, providing attendance and clinical services.



Bring creativity to every lesson

WITH HUE CAMERAS & CLAY



HUE ANIMATION STUDIO PRO STOP MOTION BUNDLE

Bring the power of **stop motion animation** to your classroom. Enhance **learning**, inspire **creativity**, and engage your students in a **fun** and **interactive** way.



SCHOOL OFFER*

Regular Price

~~£1090.25~~ ex. VAT

Bundle Price

£925 ex. VAT

*Prices/offers subject to change

SAVE OVER 15%!

WHAT'S INCLUDED



- 10 x HUE Animation Studio Pro kits
- Stop Motion Studio for HUE software - **Site License** (for up to 500 students)
- 5 x 500g bars of HUE Clay



Creative & educational



Plug & Play
and easy to use



3-year warranty & support included



Scan for our school bundles or visit
huehd.com/schools for more deals

@HUEcameras

huehd.com



Young V&A
Bethnal Green

Available Summer & Autumn Term
Book now



School Visits!



Play, imagine and design with your class at Young V&A. Our workshops and self-guided visits for EYFS-KS2 build creative confidence, bring learning to life through museum objects, and support the national curriculum.



V&A

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

A letter to...

primary teachers

In the midst of a children's mental health emergency, could a play-rich curriculum be the cure?



Concerns about children's mental health are rising at an alarming rate. Across the UK, an increasing number of young people are experiencing anxiety,

emotional distress and difficulties coping with school (tinyurl.com/tp-MHstats). Whilst there's no single cause, one factor receiving growing attention is the structure of early education, and whether it aligns with how children actually develop.

In England, children as young as four are introduced to increasingly formal, desk-based learning. This approach is often rooted in well-meaning beliefs about discipline, structure and academic rigour, but from a psychological perspective, it may be missing the mark, especially given that research consistently shows that young children learn best through active, hands-on experiences (tinyurl.com/tp-PlayfulLearning).

In countries like Finland, Sweden and Ireland, play-based learning is embedded for longer, often until the age of seven. These systems prioritise children's social development, emotional regulation and curiosity, alongside academic learning. Crucially, the evidence suggests they're not sacrificing academic standards to do this. In fact, children in play-based systems achieve literacy and numeracy outcomes that are equal to – and sometimes better than – those in more formal systems. But perhaps more importantly, they're often happier, more engaged and better able to manage the demands of learning as they grow older.

In England, by contrast, the transition from early years education into Key Stage 1 can be abrupt. England remains the only UK nation not continuing child-led, play-based learning into Key Stage 1, despite growing evidence that starting formal education at age four or

five can harm children's mental wellbeing. Pupils move from a play-rich environment into a more structured system that expects them to sit still, follow instructions and engage in largely passive learning. From a developmental standpoint, that shift can be significant and for some children, pretty overwhelming.

We're increasingly seeing the consequences of this mismatch. Many children struggle with the transition, and for some, particularly those with anxiety or additional needs, the demands of a highly structured classroom can be difficult

“Play doesn't mean sacrificing standards”

to manage. This emotional distress can manifest as disengagement, behavioural challenges or refusal to attend school.

Play-based learning is more aligned with children's natural development. It allows pupils to move, explore and learn at their own pace, in an environment that feels safe and familiar. Importantly, it doesn't mean a lack of structure or intention. Instead, it involves integrating learning into meaningful, engaging activities, with adults scaffolding, supporting them to build on what they already know through prompting, questioning, demonstrating and guiding.

Some believe play is a distraction from learning, but it is in fact one of the primary ways children explore, experiment and make sense of the world. Yet in many classrooms, play is still seen as something separate, a reward for work completed, rather than the method through which learning happens. Through play, children don't only develop



cognitive skills, but also social competence, emotional regulation and resilience. They learn how to collaborate, solve problems and cope with challenges, all of which are foundational for both learning and mental health.

There's also growing recognition that play-based learning can help to address wider inequalities. Because play is universal and doesn't rely on prior knowledge or expensive resources, it can create a more level playing field for children from different backgrounds. However, adoption remains uneven, and is often limited by training, and deeply embedded beliefs about what 'proper' learning should look like.

Momentum for change is beginning to build, however. I'm part of a national campaign group seeking to make play-based learning and continuous provision statutory in Key Stage 1 in England. A recent petition surpassed 100,000 signatures and was debated in Parliament, reflecting growing public concern about the current primary education system.

Ultimately, this is about aligning education with what we know about child development. A play-rich curriculum doesn't mean children learn less. It means they learn differently – in ways that are more engaging, more sustainable and more supportive of their mental health.

If we're serious about tackling the children's mental health crisis, we need to look beyond support services and consider the environments children spend most of their time in. For many, that starts in the classroom.

From,

Holly Amber

Holly Amber Stokes is a senior lecturer in psychology at Arden University.

Transform Your School's Reading Culture!

Boost reading for pleasure in your primary school with **free literacy resources and teacher training worth £1,000 every year.**

Join our School Network Programme to receive:

- ✓ Brand new books and reading resources worth £300
- ✓ CPD, online training and partner school networking
- ✓ Family engagement tools and reading-for-pleasure support

Find out if your school is eligible and register your interest:
bookmarkreading.org/snp



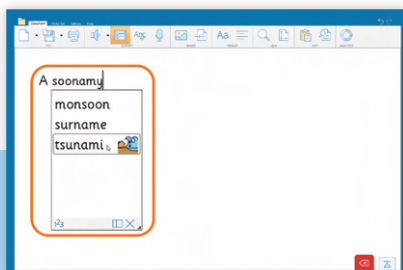
Registered Charity No. 117768

clicker

unlocking writing **word** **by** **word**



“ *I can get all of the words that are inside of me out.
I can write now, and I couldn't before.* ”



Do you have learners who struggle to get their ideas down on paper?
Visit **cricksoft.com/clicker** to find out how Clicker can help.

UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

Why is it that we teach our pupils to stand up for what's right, and call out troubling behaviours, but we can't seem to do the same ourselves?

There are some words that those of us in education seem reluctant to use...

Spend enough time in a primary school and you'll hear plenty of difficult conversations – about behaviour, attendance, safeguarding, workload. But there is one word that often disappears from our vocabulary, even when it feels like the most obvious fit. Misogyny.

Instead of calling it out for what it is, we reach for softer vocabulary. We call it banter, or a personality clash, or a misunderstanding. We've become remarkably skilled at explaining away behaviours that, in any other setting, we'd have little hesitation naming for what they are. I don't mean one individual or isolated incident, but the everyday interactions that can arise between colleagues, from pupils or parents, and the way they pervade our space without us really calling them out.

Education likes to see itself as progressive. We teach equality, and ask children to challenge stereotypes, to speak up when something doesn't feel right. Yet we don't

always practise what we preach. Sexism and misogyny don't often arrive wearing a name badge; they're hidden behind humour, or 'just the way things are done'. It might be a boy who repeatedly ignores the instructions of female

staff but immediately responds when a male teacher speaks, or the description of an assertive female colleague as 'bossy', while praising a male colleague for strong leadership and decisiveness. It might even be a parent who automatically directs questions to a male teacher, assuming he is the senior member of staff. None of these moments might feel significant on their own, but together they shape workplace culture. They influence whose authority is respected, whose decisions are questioned, and – perhaps most importantly in primary schools – the messages children absorb about gender, long before they are old enough to recognise and question them. Somewhere along the way, we've stopped scrutinising those who enact these

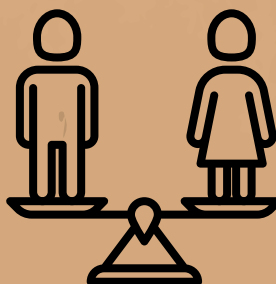
behaviours and instead, we're turning out attention to the person who dared to question it.

So why does the word misogyny feel so much more uncomfortable than the behaviours that make us consider using it? I don't think it's because education is uniquely misogynistic. Far from it. I think it's because those of us within education are deeply uncomfortable with the idea that misogyny could exist within a profession built on care, inclusion and respect. We want to believe we're different; that the values we teach our pupils naturally extend into our workplaces. And most of the time, they do. But believing we're different isn't the same as being immune.

Perhaps that's why we're so quick to soften the language. Calling something banter feels less confrontational than calling it misogyny. Describing it as a misunderstanding feels kinder than asking whether sexism played a part. It's easier to reassure ourselves that someone 'didn't mean it' than to ask why those comments were acceptable in the first place. Compassion and understanding are strengths of our profession, but they should never come at the expense of accountability. In trying to avoid labelling people, we sometimes forget to label their behaviours.

And that distinction matters. Labelling behaviour is not the same as condemning a person. Rather, it creates space for reflection, accountability and change. If we cannot describe behaviour honestly, we make it far harder to challenge it honestly, too.

Because choosing softer language doesn't simply change the words we use. It changes the response we believe is necessary. Behaviour that is explained away is rarely challenged, but, when repeated, is the kind of thing that can shape a workplace culture. Individually, each moment may seem insignificant; collectively, they establish what is acceptable, what is tolerated and, perhaps most importantly, who is expected to adapt. **TP**



“None of these moments might feel significant on their own, but together they shape workplace culture”

The writer is a teacher in England

Let's get Christingle in the calendar.

Save the date for your Christingle!

Christingle is a candle-lit celebration that's perfect for bringing communities together. Whether you are new to Christingle or join in the fun every year, it's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate together.

Christingle runs from Advent (29 November 2026) to Candlemas (2 February 2027).

Why not get your date in the diary now?

You can celebrate with your community, friends, and loved ones. We will support you with lots of incredible free resources to help you get started. To find out how you can get involved, visit **christingle.org**.



**The
Children's
Society**

© The Children's Society 2026
Charity Registration No. 221124
MCB629/0826

It's a wild WORLD

Teaching children about current affairs doesn't need to add to their anxiety, says **Katie Harrison**. Here's how to start conversations, not concerns

The news is everywhere, and at the tap of a screen it's accessible for all of us – including children. With one third of eight-to-17-year-olds encountering worrying content online (according to Ofcom), as teachers we can sometimes feel at odds with the volume of content and headlines that is readily available. Yet the news doesn't need to be something from which to shelter children.

Current events can become the focus of meaningful classroom discussion, which builds pupils' understanding of themselves, their peers, and the world around them.

So, here's a series of activity ideas to support children to figure out how they feel about what's happening in the world without adding to anxiety.

Centring wellbeing

Many teachers find beginning news exploration with simple breathing techniques useful. 'Square breathing' works well for primary pupils: breathe in for four, hold for four, out for four, hold for four and so on.

You could complete

this starter with a five-senses exploration: children name one thing they can see, hear, feel, smell, and share one thing they're grateful for.

This introduction supports children in observing and regulating how they feel, before engaging with topical, and sometimes sensitive, information. Returning to the same breathing routines each time you discuss the news gives children tools they can use independently when they need to, whether in school, at home, or if they see worrying content online.

Media literacy

When you're exploring the news, encourage children to become investigators. Together, work through the news story and then set some age-appropriate challenges.

For KS1 pupils, you might ask: *Who do you think wrote this? Is it telling us something that happened or what someone thinks?* For KS2, you might take this further: *How is the writer trying to make us feel? What information is missing? Would someone else tell this story differently? If so, why?* This analysis supports

children to actively engage with news content, learning key skills to separate fact from opinion, spot the intentions behind headlines, and notice bias.

Engaging critically in this way can help children feel empowered, rather than overwhelmed by information.

Gratitude in action

Even when news stories are sensitive, we can see examples of people showing compassion and support, whether it's helpers like emergency services workers, neighbours, charities,

or volunteers. Set children the challenge of thanking the people who take positive action in light of difficult news. We have seen brilliant examples from schools including class poems for NHS staff, artwork for charities, thank you letters for rescue workers, and class pledges to tell people at home about what those helpers did.

By taking action in this way, children can feel like contributors, demonstrating empathy and active citizenship to spread hope amongst the headlines. It's a great opportunity to remind them that no action is too small.

Emotion logs

You can support emotional articulation by asking open questions that prompt emotional reflection and analysis. Bringing this focus into your news session

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT

tw
teachwire

Download the accompanying teaching pack at

tinyurl.com
/tp-CriticalThinking

can support children to navigate their feelings and prevent emotions becoming bottled up.

You could challenge pupils to record entries in a simple emotion log. For example: How I feel now, after we've talked together, after one hour, by the end of the day, and by the next morning.

You might find that this reflection shows children that difficult emotions can soften. A child who is worried at 9am may be able to recognise that talking helps and that feelings can change over time. As well as boosting their emotional literacy, it's a good tool for you to pinpoint which children may need extra support and comfort. **TP**



Katie Harrison is a former teacher and founder of Picture News,

which provides schools with resources to create engaging and exciting lessons about current affairs.

 picture-news.co.uk



WHICH SCHOOL RULES ARE WORTH BREAKING?

A smart, honest podcast debating the rules that shape school life.



Scan to listen or search
No Running in the Corridors

LATEST EPISODES...



No extreme hairstyles

Are strict hair policies really about maintaining standards, or simply about control?



No sweets in lunchboxes

A lunchbox might seem like a simple part of the school day, but who decides what belongs inside?



Summer-born kids must stay put

Should kids move through school simply because of their age?

Mix and MATCH

Comparing pairs of questions can help engage all pupils in a maths lesson, regardless of ability, says **Gareth Metcalfe**

Throughout the course of my career, I have observed hundreds of maths lessons. Over time, I have seen teachers become increasingly skilled at modelling key mathematical ideas. Equipment and images are used to bring concepts to life; misconceptions are identified and addressed; sentence stems are used so children can use appropriate mathematical language.

However, one of the most difficult parts of crafting an effective maths lesson is how we can engage *all* children in meaningful mathematical discussions. How can we take the focus away from finding correct answers to noticing key ideas? How can we set up discussion tasks that are accessible and challenge pupils? And how can discussion prompts create open-ended discussions?

One of my favourite tools for designing talk tasks is to use pairs of questions. This involves giving children two example questions to compare, where there are *subtle but significant differences between the questions*. Discussions then arise from spotting and talking about those specific differences.

Let's have a look at some example questions, and how they could be used to generate mathematical discussions:

$$\begin{array}{r} 6 \square \\ - \square 4 \\ \hline 37 \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{r} 6 \square \\ - \square 4 \\ \hline 35 \end{array}$$

Fig. 1

Spot the difference, rank by difficulty

For the missing digit problem (see Fig. 1), discussions began with children spotting the difference between the pair of questions. For one calculation the answer is 37, for the other it is 35. This gives everyone an entry-point into the conversation.

I explained to the class that when we came back together, they would all vote on which question they thought was more difficult. Everyone was expected to respond, and all children were active in comparing the questions.

We identified that for the question on the right, the ones column can be completed without needing to regroup. This is because $9 - 4 = 5$. However, a regroup is needed for the question on the left: $11 - 4 = 7$. By listening to the children's conversations and then getting a 'mass participation' response, I

got a sense of their level of understanding.

Many of the children calculated the answers to the questions. However, the emphasis in our discussion was placed on explaining the key differences between the questions. What makes the left-hand example harder? I drew the children's attention to the significance of the small difference between the questions, and used visual representations to model the solutions.

To extend the challenge, I asked some pupils to design

their own pair of questions: one question that was easier, and one that was harder. Here, children could demonstrate their own understanding.

Compare correct and incorrect

Sometimes, rather than two questions, we can ask the children to compare correct and incorrect examples. For example, can pupils spot the difference between two clock faces? And can they identify which clock correctly shows 9:15? (See Fig.2).

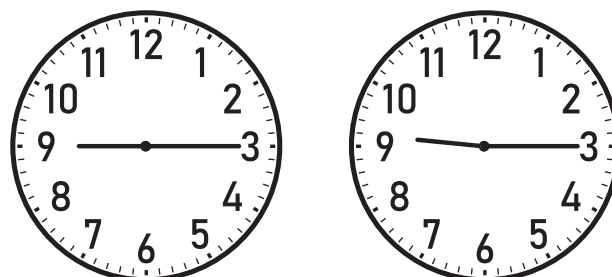


Fig. 2



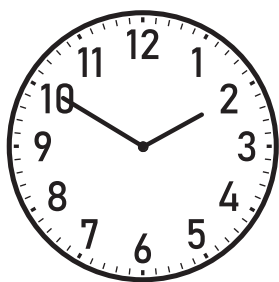


Fig. 3

The key idea for the children to understand is that the hour hand only ever points directly at a number at an o'clock time. This can lead to children reading clock faces at times after half-past, when the hour hand points closer to the next hour.

As a follow-on task, you could show the children the clock face in Fig 3, and ask them to identify the correct answer. Then, can children explain why 2:50pm is the most common incorrect answer?

The principle of comparing two examples can apply in so many areas of the maths curriculum.

For instance, when comparing angles, children must recognise that the size of an angle is not defined by the length of the lines, but on the amount of rotation between those lines. To explore that 'big idea', ask them to compare two angles (Fig. 4).

Again, the starting point for pupils can be noticing the

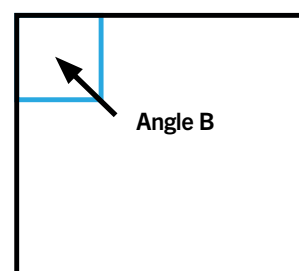
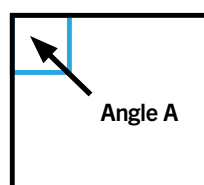


similarities and differences between the examples. Then, do they agree with the statement? Can they justify their opinion? To extend the challenge, you could ask children to create their own pair of identical angles, done in their own way. E.g. they could use a pair of scissors and two pencils to create two identical angles.

Which question is harder?

I will always remember the conversations that were had by the children in a Year 2 class when they discussed the two questions in Fig. 5.

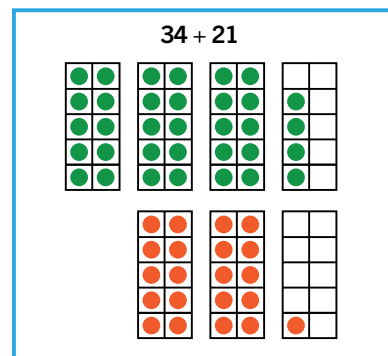
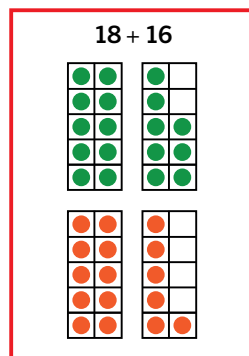
The children all participated by voting for the harder question. Then, different viewpoints emerged. Some children thought that the question in the blue frame was harder: 'It's harder when you are adding larger numbers, there are more dots to count.' However, other children disagreed. They thought that



Angle A is a smaller right-angle then angle B

Fig. 4

Fig. 5



the red question was harder: 'The ones make an extra ten'.

Again, the focus of the conversation we had was not about the answers to the questions. Instead, children were thinking about the 'key idea' as they compared addition questions that did and did not border 10.

Designing questions

In designing a pair of questions that can be used to generate a discussion, there are few guiding principles to consider: What are the key ideas that I want to draw attention to? That will guide what you will change between

the examples. Then, can you keep the other parts of the questions the same?

In talking about the differences between pairs of questions, we train children to make mathematical connections. Pupils will come to experience mathematics as a sense-making subject, where ideas are explored and conversations can flow. Mathematics is about so much more than answering questions. In using pairs of questions, whilst building conceptual understanding, we enable all children to discuss big mathematical ideas. I hope that you enjoy exploring this technique in your classroom.**TP**



Gareth Metcalfe is the director of I See Maths and author of the I See Reasoning and Deconstructing Word Questions eBooks. He

works with schools nationally to develop mathematical reasoning and problem-solving.

iseemaths.com

I See Maths: Gareth Metcalfe

Gareth Metcalfe

NumberWorks
'nWords
40 YEARS OF TUTORING

Love teaching but want to move to a new career outside of the classroom?

**NumberWorks'nWords
English and maths tuition
centre for sale in popular
area of South West London.**



NumberWorks'nWords centres support children of all abilities to gain confidence and understanding as well as work towards SATS, 11+ and GCSE exams

This an exciting opportunity to acquire a tuition centre (including clients) which has: a track record of supporting local children for over 20 years.

Incredible teaching resources from Reception - GCSE linked to the National Curriculum plus robust accounting and organisational tools to support those new to running a business.

A great opportunity for someone who has a teaching background and is ready to move into something new.



PRICE AVAILABLE
ON REQUEST

For full details
contact surbiton@numberworks.com | tel: 020839901234

JCA

Where learning is adventure

**A JCA Adventure aims to be more than your
run-of-the-mill residential.**

Our ethos of getting young people out of their comfort zone and building their confidence is embedded into every aspect of your stay with us, from smaller groups of 12 or less students to each instructor, to our unique promise of the same instructor for the duration of your groups' stay at our centres.

We do the activities, you provide the encouragement.

jca-adventure.co.uk | 01273 647200



**Experience
Education**
Student Travel Group

MEDIUM TERM PLAN

KS2

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

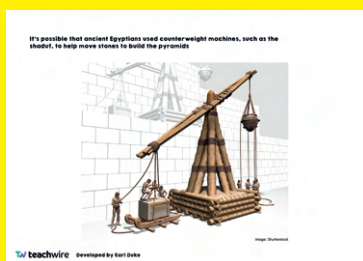
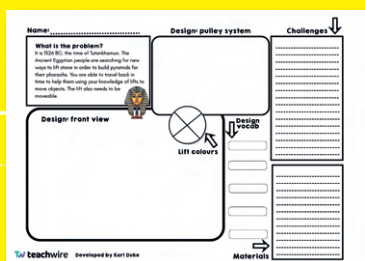
3D MODELS: Egyptian stone lift

KARL DUKE

Immersion in learning through strong curricular links opens the door for so many creative opportunities. A focus on ancient Egypt is a favourite for many children, and one of the puzzles linked to that time is how the Egyptians created The Great Pyramid of Giza. In D&T, our children have the chance to solve that problem through their first experience of construction using wood and age-appropriate tools. The following lessons will help your class learn how to design and construct a working machine to lift a weight representing Egyptian stones. You can make many historical, mathematical and scientific links throughout the process. I have described six lessons here, but I would always suggest some flexibility, particularly during the construction process.

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT

tw teachwire



Download your **FREE** accompanying resources for this unit at

tinyurl.com/tp-StoneLift



Assessment

Can children show an understanding of how tall buildings are constructed in the present day?

Can children identify the challenges faced by builders in ancient Egypt?



WEEK 2

Learning objective

● When creating The Great Pyramid of Giza, what kind of challenges did the ancient Egyptians face to move stone along the ground and to a higher level?

Be prepared with a large cube or cuboid cardboard box for the main task and a number of small cardboard boxes for pupils to use in pairs or groups. Ask the children to imagine the large box is a giant limestone block (weighing as much as two and a half adult elephants!) and carved, ready to be part of the pyramid structure. They need to move it from the quarry to the site of a new pyramid. How could we move it from one side of the classroom to the other using technology from the present day? Their responses may include vehicles and cranes. Without modern technology, how might the ancient Egyptians have moved the stones? Ask the class to work in pairs or groups to share ideas.

Using the smaller boxes (roughly cereal box size) and a collection of resources resembling materials from the day, ask the children to move the box from one side of a table to the other without picking it up with their hands. Available resources may include string



WEEK 1

Learning objective

● How did the ancient Egyptians build The Great Pyramid of Giza and what problems did they face?

Share an image of one of the tallest buildings in your local area. We use Lincoln Cathedral, which was once the tallest building in the world. Ask the children a series of questions about its construction, such as: *What is it made from? How do you think it was constructed? What would the steps of the process be?*

Next, look closely at an illustration of The Great Pyramid of Giza. Do pupils recognise it and know (roughly) when on the historical timeline it was built? Briefly discuss the purpose of the pyramids and why they still create such

interest today; this may include the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb by Howard Carter and the fact that The Great Pyramid stands about 140 metres tall and was made using two million blocks of limestone by 4,000 stonemasons and thousands of workers.

Ask the children to work in pairs or groups to consider how The Great Pyramid was built. Encourage them to draw labelled diagrams to express their ideas. Ask the children to use LEGO (ideally the 6x2 or 8x2 bricks) to construct a small pyramid shape with a number of layers.

In preparation for Week 2, ask the children to think about a LEGO piece they have used. Imagine each one was huge in size and made from limestone. Think about how the giant stones were moved at a time when the technology we now use to build skyscrapers was not available.

for rope, pencils or dowel for wooden poles, and books for wooden sledges. Think carefully about the weight of the object, the subsequent friction that would restrict movement and how the resources could help. Encourage children to draw diagrams, make notes and share their ideas. Share images showing how historians believe ancient Egyptians moved the stones, via the use of wooden sledges on poles of wood.

In preparation for Week 3, show children The Great Pyramid again. We may have seen how the stones were moved but how did they reach a height? This is our challenge!



Assessment

Can children move an object a short distance using limited resources on a flat surface?



WEEK 3

Learning objective

• How could heavy stones be lifted upwards to another level of the pyramid?

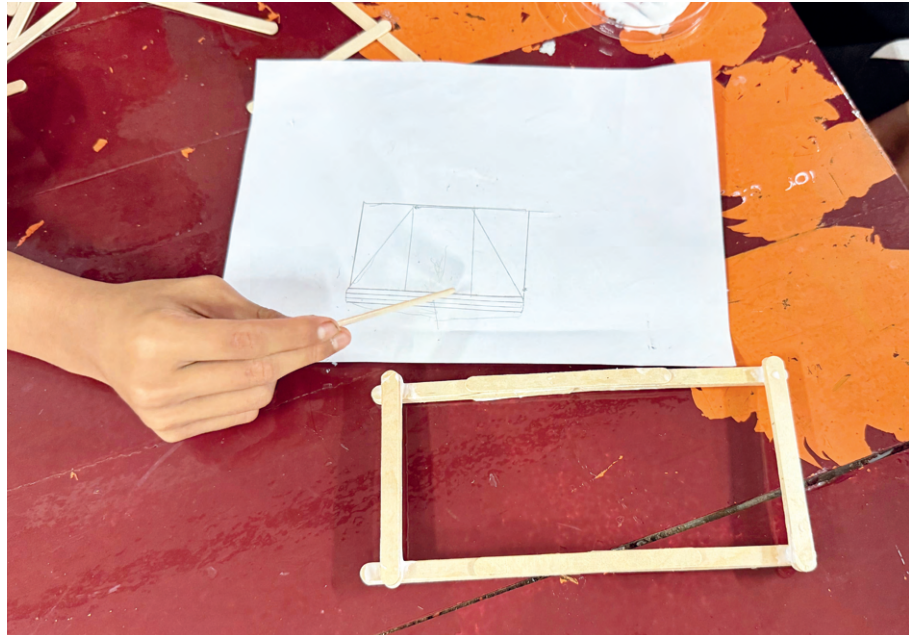
Look again at an illustration of The Great Pyramid. Take note of the many levels and remind the children of the number of stones that had to be moved (an estimated 2.3 million!).

Work in pairs or groups, using the knowledge acquired in Week 2 to consider how the blocks could have been moved to each level creating the height of the pyramid. What problems did the builders face? How could they overcome them?

Now for the real challenge! Explain to the children that their task in the sessions ahead is to design a mechanism to lift 'stone'. They will initially use LEGO, before moving onto wood construction and learning to use the tools needed to saw, drill and join.

First, in pairs, they will experiment with LEGO (to construct the block or frame) and use available resources including string (rope), and grooved wheels (sheaves) to create a mechanism to lift an object. There is no limit on size, but you can provide the weights to be lifted.

When the children have designed their mechanism, give them an opportunity to share their idea with others around the classroom – or even



with another class – to help build confidence in explaining something with clarity using technical vocabulary (*design, accuracy, materials, prototype, etc*).

Share diagrams of fixed-pulley systems (such as this one from BBC Bitesize: tinyurl.com/tp-BBCpulleys). Have they used a similar system in their mechanism? If not, could a pulley system help them?



Assessment

Can children use appropriate terminology relating to their construction?



WEEK 4

Learning objective

• Can children design a structure made from wood and a pulley system to lift an object?

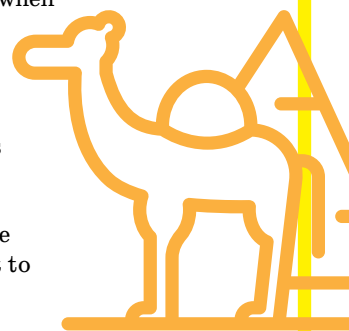
In preparation for the next three sessions, you will need to have (bumper) construction material kits available, and a primary tool kit consisting of junior hacksaws, hand-held drills with rotating handles (not electric!), and bench vices. These can be acquired from a number of primary resource catalogues (including Hope Education and ESPO) within the design and technology section, and are all similar in content, packed full of resources including a variety of wooden sticks, joining pieces and grooved wheels. You will also need plenty of string and

masking tape. The children might have their first experiences of drilling and sawing during this unit, but this will hopefully ignite a light for future projects; they will only be required to drill a handful of holes, and the sawing will be through pieces approximately 1cm in thickness.

Showcase the range of materials and resources that are available in the kit to create a fixed-pulley system built into a block or frame. I like to have a resource table for easy access.

Share clips of fixed-pulley systems in action (there's a video in the BBC link above). Which forces are at work? How would the system be controlled by the builders of the pyramid? Would an extra wheel or extra wheels help to lift the load? Share images of fixed, moveable (both diagrams appear in BBC link), compound, and block and tackle pulley systems (tinyurl.com/tp-BBCpulleys2) so that children build up a wider knowledge store, but emphasise that this project requires a fixed-pulley system. Explain that now they're going to design and build their own stone-moving machines!

Model how to use a saw to cut wood carefully and accurately and a simple drill to create holes for dowel. Emphasise the need for safety when using tools. With guidance, provide an opportunity for children to develop their skills with the tools. This could be on a carousel around the room with an adult to support. Also talk about accuracy of



dreambox®

READING PLUS



Join 1,700+ schools using Reading Plus

“Our reading results rose from **63%** to **92%** EXS after introducing Reading Plus.”

Assistant Head, Spencer Academies Trust

Reading Plus is a personalised online reading programme for pupils who are secure in phonics but need to develop reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

- ✓ Develop confident, independent readers
- ✓ Target intervention where it's needed most
- ✓ Track progress and measure impact



Limited September pilot places available

Scan the QR code to enquire about a free four-week pilot



measurement. For example, if a design requires four wooden pieces to create a structure, do they need to be the same length? Why?

Provide pupils with the design template (see the link for downloadable materials on page 26). Model how the machine could look including diagrams, annotations and technical vocabulary. Also include terminology linked to structure, fixings and support to encourage discussion opportunities and verbalisation of ideas and appropriate vocabulary (e.g. *frame, reinforce, stable, truss, support, foundation, hinge, etc.*). Children should spend the session completing their design using the knowledge they have acquired.

It may be helpful to have questions as prompts displayed, for example: *Does the mechanism need support to enable it to remain in position and for strength? Does the base of the mechanism need extra weight considering its purpose?*



Assessment

Can children design a mechanism to lift a heavy object using a fixed-pulley system?

.....



WEEK 5

Learning objective

• Can children use construction techniques and woodworking skills to build a mechanism?

.....

The next two sessions are heavily focused on the construction of the lift, with the framework taking priority in this first session. It is important to remind pupils of how to stay safe when using the tools. Ask children to collect the resources needed from the resource table and work in pairs to build, sharing the responsibility for the use of tools. I have found it useful to have specific areas of the classroom set aside for sawing or drilling so that adults can monitor and guide accordingly.

Emphasise the need to refer to their design initially; however, they may adapt it during the construction if the original plans do not appear to be successful.

The framework needs to be the first step, with many children likely to choose a structure with four wooden rods standing vertically at each corner joined by four shorter horizontal pieces linking the four at the top and bottom. Essentially, the children may be constructing the framework for a cuboid. The size of the long pieces is

dependent on the designs, but approximately 30cm in length would be a good guide, with 15-20cm for the shorter pieces.

Triangular card pieces are ideal for joining and securing the structure. Some designs may have wheels to help move the lift along the ground, so dowel for an axle may be secured in position using triangular card pieces at either side before attaching wooden wheels.

The final session will focus on the pulley system, so now is the time to evaluate the strength of the framework and add further pieces for extra stability, for example, pieces of thin wood as walls on two of the sides.



Assessment

Can children use construction techniques to build a strong and stable structure?

Can children use tools to saw, join and drill wood correctly?

.....



WEEK 6

Learning objectives

• Can children use construction techniques and woodworking skills to build a mechanism?

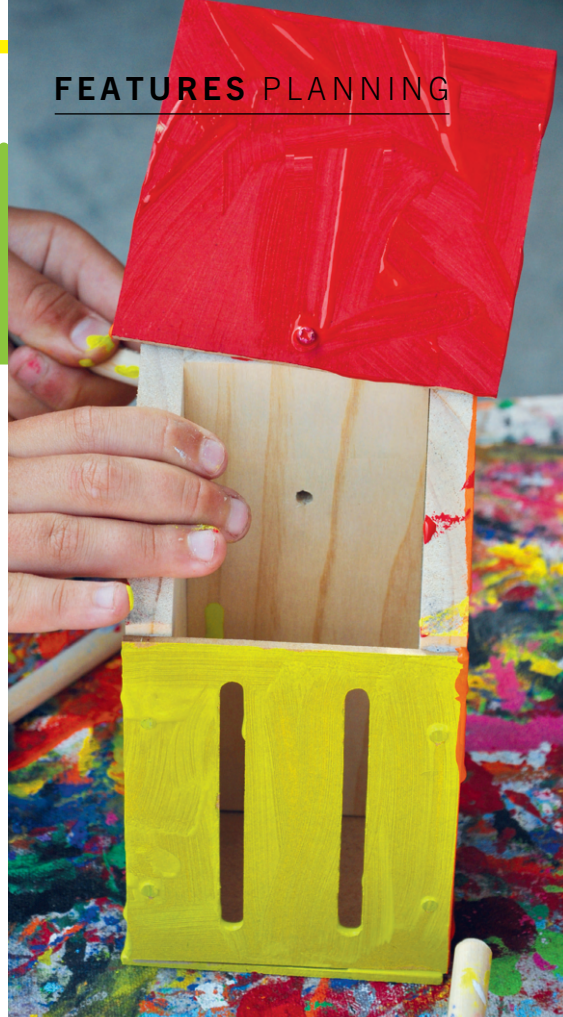
• Can children create a working pulley system?

.....

The final session focuses on the pulley system and is dependent on the designs. This will require dowel – for the grooved wheels to attach to – and string. There are a number of options for how to attach the pulley. Flat wood pieces secured on the top parallel sides of the framework will provide strength for the dowel to carry the weight. Alternatively, two parallel horizontal structural pieces may be drilled with a hole. Finally, triangular wooden or card pieces could be used attached to the horizontal frame. In all cases, children will need to drill a hole in each piece for the dowel to pass through. A grooved wheel or wheels (to add more lifting power) can be added to the dowel and positioned centrally. Some designs may include a hook connected to the wheel. Children may decide to add a wooden handle to turn the wheel, as well.



FEATURES PLANNING



Pupils should then attach wool or string to the wheel. The length needs to be approximately twice the height of the frame, so that it can be wound up and down to carry a load. It is now time to attach the string to a weight. Can the mechanism lift a weight? Does the structure need further strength? Is a platform required to position the weight on? Remind children that they can add an extra wheel if they need more lifting power.

After completion, pupils should evaluate their designs, comparing the final product with their initial design specification, and consider whether the purpose has been met.



Assessment

Can children build a working fixed-pulley system?

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

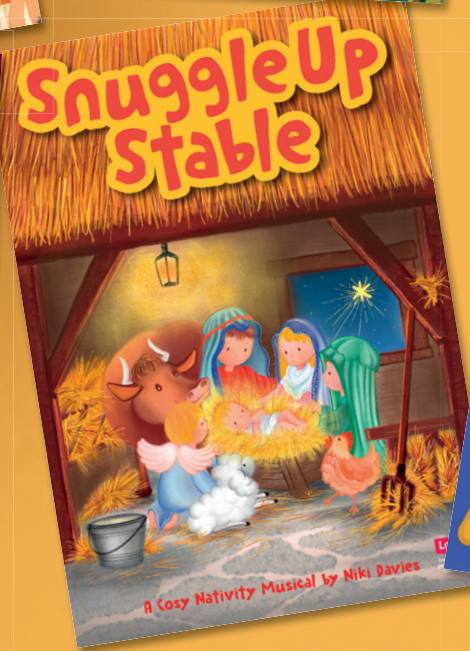


Karl Duke is headteacher of a reading-inspired school in Lincolnshire.



@karlduke8@bsky.social

LEAP INTO AUTUMN!



Order online or school invoicing available
theschoolmusicalscompany.com
info@theschoolmusicalscompany.com

THE
SCHOOL
MUSICALS CO.
theschoolmusicalscompany.com

How I do it ➡

Turn your school fair's waste cardboard into a making experience for everyone to enjoy

ALICE DALZIEL

1

In the weeks leading up to the fair, ask families and staff to set aside clean cardboard – boxes, tubes, packaging, corrugated strips, anything. On the day, work with stall holders so that cardboard from setup comes to you rather than the bin. You'll get a steady stream of fresh material arriving throughout the day, which keeps the invitation to create feeling alive. Children notice when new things appear and it draws them back in.



Our school fair generates something every year that nobody talks about: a huge amount of waste cardboard. Whether that's boxes from stall setups, packaging from transporting all the toys, or offcuts, all of this waste is headed straight for the recycling bin. But there's a better place for it. The Cardboard Factory is a drop-in making space running throughout the fair, open to the whole school, with no instructions and no end product in mind. Just materials, tools, and whatever the children decide to do next...

Sort materials into open boxes at child height – flat pieces, tubes, corrugated strips, scrunched packaging – so children can see and reach everything without asking. Lay tools out in trays: scissors, hole punches, split pins, kraft brown tape, pencils. The idea that these materials and resources are laid out to look like treasure makes it even more inviting for the children to start creating. I chose kraft tape and split pins deliberately – both go straight back into recycling at the end, with split pins magnetically sorted in the process.

2

“Laying materials and tools out like treasure is even more inviting”

Keep the invitation to make open. I'd say: "Have a play with the materials and see what your ideas turn into." No demonstration, no suggestion of what to make. Some children dive straight in. Others freeze – not from lack of ideas, but fear of not making something good enough. For those children I had decision dice: one die with a person to design for, one with a category. It starts their ideas flowing, but doesn't restrict them to make something specific.

3

4

Children made beds for teddies won at the fair, transport devices to carry toys home, rocket ships, and robot heads from cardboard boxes – using split pins to create moving eyebrows that gave them expression. Some children didn't make anything in particular. They spent the time manipulating, testing, and understanding the limits of cardboard. This matters, too. We need to help children build confidence in using their fine motor skills and creativity without the pressure of an end goal.



Talk with children and parents about where the cardboard came from. Show them that you don't need expensive resources to get children's imagination flowing. Encourage children to take their creations home and keep playing – extending their creativity beyond the fair. Explain that everything used – kraft tape and split pins included – goes straight back into the recycling bin and can be easily sorted. This is a simple cycle to repeat at home, or at any future fair.

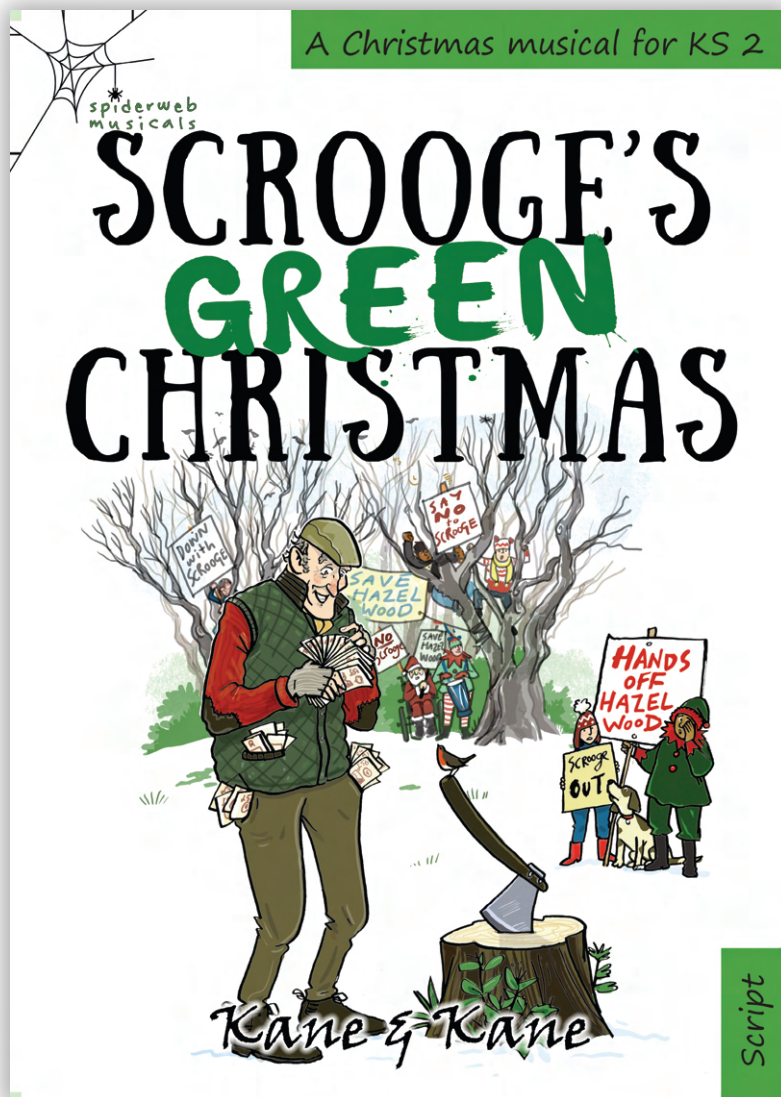
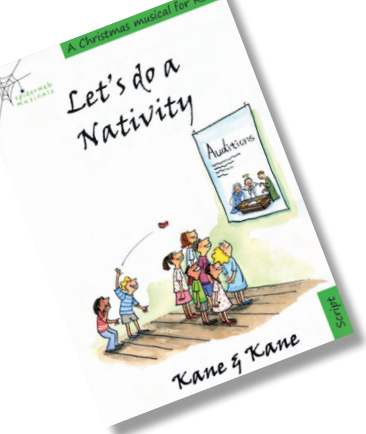
5



Alice Dalziel is the founder of *Wonder Create Play*, a children's STEAM education business based in Godstone, Surrey. She won a 2026 *She Can Code Emerging Educator* award.

@wondercreateplay

wondercreateplay.co.uk



spiderweb musicals

Come and explore our
much-loved KS1 & KS2 shows
at **www.spiderwebmusicals.co.uk**

- ✓ Backing tracks
- ✓ Digital downloads
- ✓ Flexible cast sizes
- ✓ Wonderful songs
- ✓ Warm, funny and inspiring scripts

Building **BELONGING**

Fostering a sense of community for families of SEND pupils doesn't have to be complicated – but it can be transformational, says **Alison Eason**

Have you noticed an increase in anxiety levels among parents of children with SEND over the last year? I certainly have. Many families are navigating uncertainty around SEND provision, specialist placements and the future of EHCPs. At the same time, they are carrying the everyday worries that come with wanting the very best for their child.

Whilst the government has pledged to improve outcomes for children with SEND, any uncertainty is hard to bear. When parents are lying awake wondering how their child will cope with school life, it can feel overwhelming.

The good news is that there are things schools can do to help. Through clear communication, strong relationships and a sense of community, we can help families feel informed, supported and less alone. These are some of the approaches that my team has found the most effective:

Before starting school

An important element of parental support starts before the child even walks through the school gates. Many SEND parents and carers arrive carrying the weight of previous experiences; they may have spent years advocating for their child, navigating complex systems and

repeatedly explaining their child's needs. Schools therefore have a valuable opportunity to build trust from the outset.

It's our job to reassure parents that their relationship with school will be supportive, not adversarial. That reassurance comes not from promises, but from consistent actions and open communication. We can show families that we are all on the same side by simply listening to concerns and taking them seriously. A parent who knows you understand that their child needs a quiet space to eat lunch is a parent with one less worry on their mind. Ideally, I like to arrange a chat over coffee with new SEND parents. It gives us a chance to talk through any worries, explain how the school can support their child, and establish clear communication from the outset. If this isn't possible, then it's important to make it as easy as you can for parents to ask questions. We encourage families to email, message or phone us to share their worries.



had benefitted from spending time with horses. This inspired us to explore equine therapy for some of our pupils, which has had a wonderful effect on their emotional regulation.

On special occasions

So many parents of children with SEND tell me how isolating it can be. Theirs is often

the child who is not invited to birthday parties, or is left out of activities and outings. It's something schools are increasingly aware of, and it's probably why a recent survey from VenturEd Solutions showed that one of the most important aspects of parental engagement is to create a sense of community.

One way to do this is by providing opportunities for parents to meet and share experiences. We do this by holding SEND coffee mornings, where we invite specialists such as speech and language therapists to meet with parents. If there are families that don't usually join in, it's worth giving them a quick call to reach out and invite them along. **TP**

During school

Many parents of children with SEND want frequent updates on how their child is managing at school. However, you don't want to add to teachers' workloads, so it's important to use communication channels that work for parent and teacher alike.

Our approach is to use an online journal. We encourage everyone in the team to record snapshots of the children's day, which the teacher approves. This could be a quick post about how a child managed to put their shoes on unaided, or a photo of a child working towards one of their targets. The journal doesn't take long to update, but for parents it can make a huge difference; being able to see a photo of their child learning, playing or smiling often provides the reassurance they need without having to pick up the phone.

Parents can use this platform to share ideas with us easily, too. A while back, one parent posted that their child with SEND



Alison Eason is head of the **Additionally Resourced Provision** at **Chalgrove Primary**

School. and is a contributor to a VenturEd Solutions report on parental engagement.

tinyurl.com/tp-VenturEdPE26

Built on trust. Refreshed for today's schools.

Gain clearer insights on pupil performance with NFER Tests.

- **Updated national benchmarks** reflecting today's attainment landscape.
- Identify strengths and gaps quickly with the **new NFER Reporting Tool**.
- **FREE Teacher Guides** aligned to the latest benchmarks.
- Standardised assessments **trusted by thousands of schools**.

Get free sample materials: nfer.ac.uk/tests

Let's chat: schoolspartnerships@nfer.ac.uk

EDUVENTS
THE HOME OF TRUSTED EDUCATION EVENTS



JOIN THOUSANDS OF **EDUCATORS** SEARCHING FOR CPD EACH MONTH.

- ✓ ONLY EDUCATION EVENTS.
- ✓ SEARCH BY ROLE, SUBJECT, FORMAT, & LOCATION.
- ✓ FREE TO SEARCH. ALWAYS.





THIS WAY!

School improvement advice
for headteachers and SLT

MIDDLE LEADERS | CPD | SUBJECT LEADERSHIP

What the retirement card tells us about **LEADERSHIP**

If you're like me, when a retirement card does the rounds for a much-loved teacher or headteacher, you'll take a sneaky peek at what others have written. You might see messages like, 'You knew every family,' 'You always knew what to do,' or 'You made this school feel like home.' It's often a reminder of just how greatly this person will be missed across the whole school. But from a leadership perspective, those messages also tell us something else.

If all that knowledge, confidence and culture sits with one person, what happens when they leave?

Beyond the handover notes

When a long-serving headteacher retires, the knowledge that leaves with them is far from just practical memos. It might be the relationship with the parent who finds school difficult because of their own childhood experience. The quiet understanding of which member of staff needs a nudge, and which one needs space. Knowing why a particular tradition means so much to the community, or why a decision made five years ago still affects how people feel today.

Alongside relationships, personalities also lend themselves to a particular school culture. You will probably recognise a few of these characters in your own corridors:

The Parent Whisperer: can calm a tricky conversation before it becomes a complaint.
The Pedagogy Mastermind: in a quick classroom visit, can influence better learning opportunities.
The Fix-it Felix: can sort the timetable, or the glitchy parents' evening booking system.
The Agile Alchemist: helps the team adapt, think differently and create a more inclusive environment for pupils.

These are all valid qualities that every school needs. So, if those strengths only sit with one individual, the school can feel very different when that person is no longer there.

At the Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust, we often ask our governors: if that person left tomorrow, what would we struggle to do?

When to start planning

Succession planning should be led by ongoing staff development, not by a

leaving date. In any school or Trust, this means looking beyond job titles and asking where talent, confidence and potential are already showing up. This might be through leadership pathways, mentoring, coaching, CPD or wellbeing support. People are much



more likely to step forward when they feel both challenged and supported.

We also need to look honestly at performance and potential to make sure we are investing in the right people, in the right ways. Talent management tools, such as a 9-box grid, can help show where colleagues may benefit from further training, development, or secondment opportunities. The aim is to notice potential early and grow leaders who can continue a school's vision, values and ethos, not simply fill a vacancy.

We learnt the importance of this through experience. In one difficult-to-recruit area, we moved too quickly to replace a headteacher and later

realised the fit was not right. It took time to rebuild relationships and restore confidence, and it taught us it is better to make no appointment, than the wrong one. Now, we don't wait until there is a gap before looking for the people who could fill it. We tend to grow our own leaders, so if someone retires, their successor is likely to have been developing within our Trust for years.

Scouting future leaders

One thing I have learned is that future leaders rarely identify themselves, particularly women. This is reflected in the Sustainable School Leadership: Final Report, 2026, which found that a large proportion of heads (between a quarter and a third in each UK nation) describe their pathway to headship as accidental. I know mine was.

Looking beyond the leaving do

I was a head for 10 years, at the end of a 30-year career teaching and leading. I found my job fulfilling, and I loved headship most of all – though there were some challenging times and difficult days, I remember. However, on balance, I'd say I found more satisfaction, reward and joy in headship than any other role.

For me, though, 10 years as a head in one school felt like enough. I didn't want a second headship or further full-time paid work in education, but I was still fascinated by educational leadership, and keen to find different ways in which I could continue to think and learn about the professional arena in which I had spent the last three decades, and to contribute to the professional development of others.

I fully appreciate that not all retirees will want to do this, and we all need to find our own path, which suits our particular circumstances and our individual context. But if you do still wish to be involved in education in some capacity, there are a number of different routes you might take...

Writing

I blog about education, and write articles for different online and print media. There has been an explosion of edu-books written by serving and recently serving educators in the last couple of decades, so contacting one of the main educational publishers (such as Crown House, Hachette Learning, Bloomsbury Education or Sage Publishing) and writing a book proposal would be the way forward if this is something in which you are interested.



Consultancy

Social media, in addition to using the contacts you will have built up over your time working in schools, can also benefit those who are interested in educational consultancy work. LinkedIn, for example, can generate opportunities to engage with those who may wish to make use of what you have to offer. I have worked with individuals, schools and larger organisations, supporting aspiring and serving leaders at all levels. I have helped governing bodies to appoint headteachers and senior leaders, and conducted professional reviews for senior staff. I carry out coaching, face-to-face and online, speak at staff days and conferences, and run training sessions on different aspects of educational leadership. If this is something you wish to explore, consider doing the groundwork and making the most of the contacts you currently have. Find out which of your areas of expertise align with areas where schools might value support.

Governing

If you prefer working in a voluntary capacity, serving as a school governor can be an excellent opportunity to use your insights, skills and understanding to support other schools. You will know from your time as a school leader that governors with experience of education can be invaluable. What you have to bring to the table can be instrumental to ongoing school improvement.

Whatever you decide to do next, it will be the start of a whole new adventure – enjoy it!



Dr Jill Berry is a former head, now a leadership development consultant, who works with aspiring and serving leaders at all levels.

jillberry102.blog



“When a long-serving headteacher retires, the knowledge that leaves with them is far from just practical memos”

To me, this is where coaching, mentoring and secondments can be so powerful. Spending time with colleagues helps us recognise potential that may otherwise have been missed. We can see who has the judgement, care and integrity to take the next step, and while leadership skills can be taught, values cannot. Sometimes this leads to ambassador roles or new responsibilities; just as importantly, it helps people understand the kind of leader they are becoming rather than trying to copy someone else. A recent example is a senior teacher who was seconded into our improvement team and developed a strong relationship with one of our schools. When the school later needed deputy headteacher cover, she was ready to step in, and is now preparing to take on the role of head of school.

Protect what must stay

When a headteacher leaves, the aim is not to find someone exactly the same. New leaders need room to be themselves, but schools must be clear about what should stay consistent. At one of our smaller schools, the

headteacher changed, but we had a very clear understanding of what needed to stay. We listened to staff, children and families, who told us how important German, Forest School and the wraparound care club were to them. These might sound like small details from the outside, but to that community, they were part of what made the school feel like itself. So, we made sure they remained under new leadership. That, for me, is the balance. Protect what makes the school special, but give the next person room to lead in their own way.

So, perhaps the retirement card can offer more than a lovely keepsake, with its sentiments reflecting not only the difference a leader has made, but the legacy they leave behind.



Emma Wigmore is CEO of The Diocese of Chelmsford Vine Schools Trust, where she leads 21 primary schools across Essex.

 vineschoolstrust.co.uk



How to prepare

1 DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Start with My Pension Online. Check that your service history, salary and details are correct, as gaps or errors can affect your estimate. Bring other pensions, savings and investments into the picture too, alongside a State Pension forecast. The key question is not simply ‘What is my pension worth?’ but ‘Will my total income support the retirement I want?’

2 KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE BUILT

Many experienced school leaders have benefits in both the final salary and career average sections of the Teachers’ Pension Scheme, potentially with different Normal Pension Ages. Taking benefits early will usually reduce your annual pension because it is likely to be paid for longer. You may also be able to exchange some pension for a tax-free lump sum, but your yearly income will be permanently lower. Compare the long-term impact before deciding.

3 GET TO GRIPS WITH MCLOUD

If you are affected by Transitional Protection, you will receive a Remediable Service Statement when you apply to retire. This shows whether your service between April 2015 and March 2022 is better treated under the final salary or career average scheme. You can request a Benefit Statement RSS through My Pension Online to start considering the options earlier. There is no universally ‘best’ choice.

4 RETHINK THE FINISH LINE

Retirement need not mean leaving leadership overnight. Phased retirement can allow eligible members to take part of their pension while continuing to work, provided pensionable earnings reduce by at least 20 per cent. That could mean working fewer days or stepping down from leadership. Look at the effect on your pension, salary, workload and wellbeing together.

5 DON’T MISS THE DEADLINE

Teachers’ Pensions currently advises applying six months before your proposed retirement date – but not earlier. Start planning well ahead of that window. Ultimately, good planning is not about leaving at the earliest opportunity. It is about having the freedom to finish your career – and begin retirement – on your own terms.

Darren Mills is an education specialist financial adviser at Wesleyan.

 wesleyan.co.uk



Take a seat at the
narrators' tea party
- they've got a great big story for you



Once Upon A Nativity

AGE
3-6



Gaynor Boddy & Rebecca Kincaid



Listen at
outoftheark.co.uk/onceupon

Out of the Ark.com

With **Makaton** signing!

New nativities from Out of the Ark

BUCKLE UP FOR A
COUNTRY
KINDA
CHRISTMAS

A ROOTIN' TOOTIN' NATIVITY!

Age
5-9



Listen at
[outoftheark.co.uk](http://outoftheark.co.uk/rootin)
/rootin



MARK, HELEN & NAOMI JOHNSON

BEYOND THE GATES

Help pupils make memories they'll never forget, and extend learning with a well-planned school trip...



EXPERT VIEW

Maximising value for SEND

A trip can be an exciting experience or a terrifying one. New spaces, smells and sounds can quickly overwhelm children, particularly those with SEND. Giving them key information in advance helps to minimise stress. All students should have the key facts of the day given to them, via parents, at least one week before the trip. These should include:

- The journey, including mode of transport and travel times
- Location, including images of the outside and inside of any places to be visited
- Timetable, so they know both planned activities and when to expect breaks and lunch
- Information about facilities, such as toilets, gift shops and spaces where pupils can rest if they need a break

- Which staff will be on the trip and in what groups if the cohort is split

Encourage parents to look at the trip on Street View or any relevant website, too, so pupils can journey remotely and get a feel for where they will be visiting.

A clear, agreed list of needed items for each SEND child should be printed and checked, before leaving and returning. Sensory items such as fidget toys, noise canceling headphones, sunglasses or an item that has a comforting smell can all be used to help pupils manage the day.



Hannah Day is an art specialist based in the West Midlands

CURRICULUM LINKS



History

Learn about the inspiring myths and legends of Stonehenge through expert-led workshops.

Visit tinyurl.com/tp-Stonehenge



Geography

Experience a bird's-eye view of London, and learn to locate and categorise the city's main features.

Visit londoneye.com/schools



Computing

Excite pupils with curriculum-based sessions, e.g. Rollercoaster Forces, Ride Programming, and more. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-PaultonsPark

OUR BEST SCHOOL TRIP

"During a 38°C heatwave, the Boundless Outdoors team adapted the visit throughout to keep pupils safe, comfortable and fully engaged. The heat barely registered, and the group had one of their best residential yet. We're already booked in to return next year!"
- Mr Stokes, St Peter's Academy

Visit boundlessoutdoors.co.uk/primary-schools to book your own trip!



memories

WHAT'S ON...

✓ **THE JUNGLE BOOK** (13 Nov 26 – 6 Feb 27)
The National Theatre, London. tinyurl.com/tp-NTJB

✓ **THE GRUFFALO** (29 Oct – 1 Nov 26)
Royal & Durngate, Northampton. tinyurl.com/tp-RDTG

✓ **DIWALI DANCE SESSIONS** (6-10 Nov 26)
VG Dance Workshops, England. tinyurl.com/tp-VGDD

✓ **BLACK HISTORY MONTH WORKSHOP** (Oct 26)
One Day Creative, UK. tinyurl.com/tp-ODBH

RESOURCE CORNER

Get parents on board!

Gordon Cairns examines that tricky task ahead of many a school trip – recruiting willing helpers...
tinyurl.com/tp-STparents



Understand chronology

Helen Kerry explores how to use a school trip to explain to pupils how historical events link together.
tinyurl.com/tp-STchronology



Stress-free planning pack

With sections on stress-free risk assessments, planning an ethical school trip and more, this is your one-stop-shop for trip prep.
tinyurl.com/tp-STplanning



VENUE SPOTLIGHT

Where education meets adventure

A JCA Adventure isn't your run-of-the-mill residential.

Their unique approach to active learning, with one instructor leading small groups of 12 or fewer students for the duration of their stay, is designed to build confidence and get youngsters out of their comfort zone.

Across their flagship centre, Condover Hall, and Croft Farm, their unique

watersports site, school groups can take part in dozens of activities they won't have had the chance to try before.

If your school's feeling extra adventurous, groups can visit their sister centre in Normandy, the Chateau du Molay, for a quintessentially French residential.

Find out more at jca-adventure.co.uk

4 REASONS TO TRY... A universe of learning at the Science Museum

Fuel imaginations this academic year with a visit to the Science Museum's exhilarating experiences

1 SPACE
Discover iconic spacecraft and inspiring stories of human achievement in our free *Space* gallery. Download our curriculum-linked gallery guide to lead your visit and see the spacesuit worn by Helen Sharman, the first Briton in space, plus a three-billion-year-old piece of the moon!

2 WONDERLAB
Unleash your inner scientist in our hands-on gallery packed with experiences. Exploring everything from sound to space, your class will play with over 50 exhibits, watch live experiments and learn from Explainers who facilitate engagement. KS2 go free during term time!

3 DOCUMENTARIES IN OUR 3D IMAX CINEMA
From experiencing life on the International Space Station in *A Beautiful Planet 3D* (U), to diving beneath the seas in *Antarctica 3D* (U), we show educational stories on a screen the size of four double decker buses! Explore curriculum links on our website.

4 MANAGE YOUR BOOKING ONLINE
With our online group booking system, teachers can check availability, plan an itinerary and book a visit. You'll just need the date of your visit, the number of adults and children in your group, their age range and any specific requirements.

SCIENCE MUSEUM



Contact:

Visit: sciencemuseum.org.uk/groups/formal-education-groups

Email: Info@ScienceMuseumGroup.ac.uk

Call: 033 0058 0058

Key points

- + We host *Wonderlab* days for SEN schools to enjoy a quieter experience. Learn more on our website.
- + Looking for an activity sheet or resource to guide your visit? Download in advance from our website.

SCHOOL SESSIONS AT

THE ROALD DAHL
MUSEUM AND
STORY CENTRE

“It's easy to say ‘use your imagination’ but this has given me the tools to do that.”
Teacher



Illustration © Quentin Blake 2026

Start planning
your visit



Onsite or online sessions | SEND visits | Self-led sessions | Years 2 to 8

Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, roalddahlmuseum.org

Registered charity no: 1085853

Crack the egg then make THE OMELETTE

Schools shouldn't be afraid to go back to basics to improve outcomes in every year group, says **Nicki Jaeggi**...

You know that moment, when you're doing SATs revision with your Year 6s and a horrible realisation seeps into the pit of your stomach... that these 11-year-olds, who can successfully multiply fractions, have to use their fingers to answer a simple mental maths question.

It seems befuddling. How can children demonstrate complex arithmetic skills, but they can't tell you what seven times four is without methodically writing out the entire times table on a piece of paper?

Pupils learn to follow processes, which can make it seem like they've mastered a topic, but this learning is often built on wobbly foundations. Left unchecked, the entire structure will eventually topple.

At a primary school I worked at in North London, I used to be drafted in to run Year 6 revision groups because of my Early Years background. I discovered many children who were flying under the radar without the basic foundational knowledge they needed to achieve their full potential. Not only

does this limit outcomes at primary level, but when they start secondary school the attainment gap widens. So, I went back to basics with them, covering topics like number bonds, times tables and common exception words.

Once the foundations were stable, children grew in confidence and were better able to recall knowledge and grasp the more challenging topics. They started to truly understand their learning. I realised that we needed a way of tracking this foundational knowledge for every child, at every stage of their education, to make sure that no one was falling between the cracks.

A national problem

As it turned out, there were loads of teachers just like me, all trying to find a solution to the same problem.

In 2025, nearly one in three children in Early Years were not working at the expected level nationally. Our Nursery and Reception teams were struggling with the impact of Covid and finding that many children lacked basic skills. Our KS2 teachers were frustrated that pupils were joining their classes with significant gaps in their learning, and Ofsted's Strong Foundations document had just been released, which further reinforced the importance of securing foundational knowledge.

When talking with colleagues, one showed me a spreadsheet that he had created to track this knowledge. He had written a list of key areas that children needed to have grasped by the end of each year to ensure that they could access the curriculum in the next one, and he was beginning to use it for assessment at his school.

Bringing in specialist knowledge and expertise from across the Trust, we decided to develop this spreadsheet into something that could have a far-reaching impact. First, we spoke to teachers across the Trust and asked them what they wished all their children could come into their class being able to do. From this, we identified non-negotiables in handwriting, reading, spelling, oracy and number and we set ourselves a target that 90 per cent of our current Reception children would be secondary-ready by the time they left us.

"We hoped our teachers would understand the benefits. What we weren't expecting was just how much they loved it."



A teacher-friendly solution

We looked for an off-the-shelf product we could use to track foundational knowledge, but we couldn't find anything that met our needs. So, we decided to develop our own bespoke tracker (which we have now called Fundamentals) to give teachers a clear understanding of each child's current learning level and the key foundations they must master before progressing. Understanding that KS2 teachers may not have any Early Years experience, we added practical information and guides for each concept, as well as measurable targets, and trialled Fundamentals at four of our schools.

Asking busy teachers to implement yet another initiative can be challenging. And could we really engage our Year 5 and 6 staff to give some children number bonds work when everyone else was working on decimal fractions and SATs, or when Ofsted inspections were looming?

We hoped our teachers would understand the benefits of Fundamentals. What we weren't expecting was just how much they loved it. Teachers have access to loads of information, and the tracker gave them much-needed clarity.

Effectively it decluttered the curriculum, cut out the noise, and gave teachers confidence to revisit the basics to close any gaps. One teacher told us it allowed them to focus on what the children really needed, because they had to master doubles and halves before they tackled fractions. Previously, you might have walked into a Year 4 classroom and seen children

struggling to keep pace, but now, highly targeted feedback and responsive teaching ensure those gaps are effectively addressed.

We involved parents in their child's learning journey, too, by giving them access to individual data. This helped them to understand where their child was in their learning and how to support them at home, all in bite-sized, accessible ways.

The trial helped us iron out the glitches before we rolled the tracker out to all our primary schools. We are now using it as a core assessment for Early Years and KS1 across the Trust, and schools are beginning to use it all the way up to Year 6. It has effectively replaced other, external assessments.

The impact

Our foundational knowledge approach has resulted in a 17 per cent increase in the number of our Early Years children achieving GLD between 2023 and 2025.

For our disadvantaged pupils, the impact has been even more significant, with a 21 per cent increase in Pupil Premium children achieving GLD.

Our outcomes are significantly above the national average, and feedback from Ofsted has been positive.

We had seven successful inspections last year, with one inspector praising the effective assessment system.

Going back to basics has made it easier to learn and to teach. Our staff feel more empowered and our children are more confident. Now that they've learned how to crack an egg, they can go on to successfully make that omelette. **TP**

How to go back to basics the right way



Don't be afraid to strip back the curriculum and look at the minimum expectations for each year group.



Set the right number of non-negotiables (10-15 per year group is ideal).



Be clear about how you will teach and assess these (changes to feedback, timetable, curriculum etc).



Bring teachers on board by showing how this will declutter the curriculum, make it easier for them to target the most important areas and provide a smoother transition into the next year group.



Engage parents by sharing data on their child and giving them easy tips on how they can support them at home, for example counting shoes, or dice games.



Engage Ofsted by showing why you have gone back to basics, explaining your assessment process and demonstrating how this is improving outcomes.



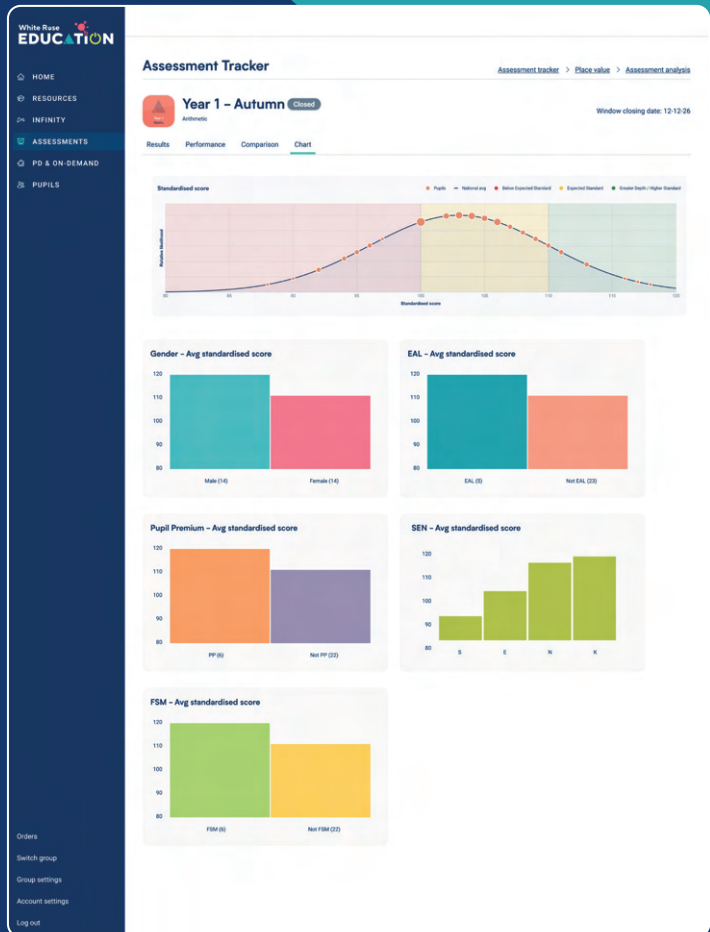
Nicki Jaeggi is executive headteacher and EYFS lead at Ivy Learning Trust, a

group of 17 primary schools in North London and Hertfordshire.

ivylearningtrust.org

**SEE
WHERE
THEY ARE.**

**PLAN
WHERE
THEY'RE
GOING.**



Get a clearer picture of pupil progress with our new assessment tracker — **Included FREE** for all our primary maths subscribers.

- ✓ Online assessment data
- ✓ Clear analytics dashboards
- ✓ Standardised scores
- ✓ Performance benchmarking



**Scan to find
out more**

Beyond KNOWLEDGE

Authentic, real-world contexts help pupils make meaningful connections between ideas – and with the right resources, remarkable places can be explored both in and beyond the classroom, says **Helen Mulley**...

One of the first things we teach children when they start school – intentionally or otherwise – is that learning can and should be separated into subject strands. We ‘do’ maths and literacy in the morning; art and PE in the afternoon. When we are talking about a topic, we point out the specific links to history, geography and science. We insist that newly-acquired knowledge is stored in exercise books with a different colour cover for each subject. And later on, of course, we ask students to choose between subjects as they discover where their particular skills and interests lie, until their learning is completely focused on just two or three. It’s an entirely reasonable way to organise a curriculum. But it’s not how the world works.

Outside the classroom, learning happens in a rather less streamlined fashion. Every authentic place, every real experience, tells several stories at once, depending on the questions we ask of it. The challenge for us as educators, then, is to help pupils move confidently between disciplinary knowledge and the complexity of the real world, finding the right questions to bring together not only what they know,

but how that knowledge can help them make sense of the places, systems and people around them.

Getting real

This is the thinking that sits behind *Built for Learning* – an exciting new series of multimedia resource packs for KS2 and KS3 from Teachwire. From rollercoasters and castles to immersive storytelling experiences and iconic landmarks, Merlin

and illuminating.

Teachers routinely use real-world examples to help students understand complex and sometimes abstract ideas that they are required to cover for their subject or subjects. Merlin attractions offer something uniquely powerful: environments that have been deliberately imagined, designed, engineered and realised using the same scientific, historical and narrative principles that underpin those ideas.

“The educational value of a place doesn’t come simply from the excitement of being there; it comes from the opportunities it creates to ask better questions”

Entertainment attractions have long provided exciting opportunities for children and their teachers to create memorable experiences, weave subject strands together and bring knowledge to life. Now, with Merlin as its first partner, *Built for Learning* adds an additional layer for schools, positioning these places as powerful contexts through which key curriculum knowledge can be explored, and making the link between classroom learning and the real world even more explicit

Through *Built for Learning*, they become not just destinations, but rich case studies that can be brought into teachers’ planning for English and science, history and geography, citizenship and more.

This is an important distinction, because the educational value of a place doesn’t come simply from the excitement of being there; it comes from the opportunities it creates to ask better questions. A rollercoaster at Alton Towers Resort is an exhilarating ride, yes; but

also a precisely engineered system that demonstrates forces, energy transfer and motion. A medieval castle, such as Warwick Castle, reveals fundamental truths about the people who built and lived in it over the centuries, and power and hierarchy within their societies. The London Eye – now, amazingly, over a quarter of a century old – encourages exploration of how public spaces reflect the changing needs, values and identities of communities, while the actors and settings





in the London Dungeon invite pupils to think more deeply about character, perspective, and the choices authors make when constructing a narrative.

These are resources that start not with the attraction itself, but with the curriculum. Each lesson has been built around clearly defined learning objectives, with the real-world context used to deepen pupils' understanding rather than distract from it. Instead of treating a visit as an enjoyable and occasional addition to classroom learning, *Built for Learning* integrates authentic environments into sequences of teaching that can stand alone or complement an educational trip. They can be used as part of teachers' everyday planning - to

introduce a new idea, revisit prior learning, or create links between different subject areas.

Sights and sounds

Of course, the gold standard for pupils will always be experiencing these environments first-hand. Standing beneath the walls of a medieval castle, or coming face-to-face with a Sand Tiger Shark, creates an immediacy that simply can't be replicated in the classroom. But the reality is that even schools that place the highest priority on educational visits can only organise a limited number of trips per year.

Built for Learning has been designed with both those truths firmly in mind. Alongside detailed teacher notes, worksheets and

vocabulary cards, each resource pack includes a PowerPoint presentation that includes exclusive video footage, especially for the classroom. These clips feature the people who know the environments best – engineers, historians, designers, performers, aquarists and other specialists – explaining key curriculum concepts from within the places where those ideas come to life. Recorded in situ, they capture not only the expertise of the people behind the attractions, but the atmosphere and scale of the environments themselves.

For pupils, that means hearing directly from professionals who apply curriculum knowledge in their everyday work. For

Explore the resources

To find out more about Built for Learning, and download the first two resource packs, which look at Warwick Castle (KS2) and the London Eye (KS3) through the lens of 'understanding society', just scan the QR code!



teachers, it means immediate access to authentic explanations and real-world examples that can spark curiosity, deepen understanding and enrich classroom discussion. Whether used before a visit, afterwards or as a lesson in their own right, the videos help bridge the gap between abstract concepts and the remarkable places where those concepts become visible. The first resources focus on understanding society through Warwick Castle (KS2) and the London Eye (KS3), with further curriculum lenses and attractions planned as the library grows.

Unlock the potential

Authentic contexts, whether a local park or woodland or a national landmark, bring together ideas, disciplines and perspectives in ways that classrooms alone rarely can; they give knowledge somewhere meaningful to live. *Built for Learning* provides a practical framework for unlocking that potential, helping teachers harness the richness of real-world environments to create learning experiences that are engaging, connected and firmly rooted in the curriculum. **TP**

Fit for A KING?

Castles are more than a collection of historical features, argues **Emily Weston** – they're a lens through which pupils can learn about society both past and present. . .

Too often, castles feature in lesson plans as static monuments: impressive buildings with thick walls, high towers and dramatic histories, but disconnected from the people who built, defended and lived within them. Children are taught how to identify battlements, drawbridges and keeps, yet still struggle to understand why those features mattered, or how castles were adapted alongside the ever-changing society they served. For a much richer learning experience, pupils should be encouraged to explore this relationship, being curious about the castle not just as a building, but as an asset which was able to change the lives of those connected to it.

Children are naturally fascinated by castles. The towering walls, hidden passages and dramatic stories immediately capture attention. Yet this fascination is too rarely used to inspire deeper investigation. Pupils will learn that a moat surrounds a castle, but not understand how it was designed to deter attackers, or why not all castles need them. They may recognise arrow slits, but not connect them to the soldiers who fought using them. And all the while, the real question remains unexplored: how did these hubs of activity affect society?

Why Warwick?

Warwick Castle boasts a history that spans centuries. The castle has watched society unfold outside its walls, whilst experiencing adaptations within them.

By studying a specific example of a castle like this, we can bring it to life through both facts and stories. In this way, the castle ceases to be an isolated structure; instead, connections can be woven to the people from the era – or eras – being studied. We, as teachers, can use it as a lens through which children explore changing monarchs, shifting power and the importance of status in historical eras both within a local area and the country as a whole.

Traditionally, school visits are often positioned at the end of a unit, seen as a kind of reward after the 'real' learning has taken place. However, a destination like Warwick Castle has far greater potential when used as the starting point for enquiry. By immersing children in the topic from the outset – either through a visit or carefully

“By studying a specific castle, we can bring it to life through both facts and stories”

curated video clips that can be shared in the classroom – they will immediately begin asking questions inspired by awe and wonder, for which you can help them discover answers throughout the rest of the unit.

For example, pupils can investigate why early Norman castles prioritised defence and control, whilst later developments included grand halls and luxurious living spaces that reflected status and wealth. They can examine how changing monarchs

influenced architecture and power structures, asking questions such as: *why did castles become stronger under certain rulers? Why were some features designed to impress rather than defend? What does this tell us about society at the time?*

When pupils ask these questions, they move beyond simple recall and begin to think like true historians. But how can we demonstrate their learning in a fun and meaningful way?



Purposeful learning

One of the most effective ways to connect children with historical structures they have seen is to give them a meaningful purpose for their learning. History and literacy are a perfect pairing, and one that can be used effectively in many ways. An especially enjoyable approach to combining these



two subjects, particularly when studying historical homes, is through the creation of persuasive adverts – specifically, those of an estate agent. Framing Warwick Castle as a property that must be ‘sold’ allows pupils to combine historical understanding with persuasive writing in a highly engaging context, giving them a clear way to apply the knowledge they have attained from experiencing the monument through a visit or video.

In this activity, children take on the role of medieval estate agents tasked with advertising Warwick Castle to a wealthy noble or royal figure. First, they must know some context:

- Who actually lived in this castle?

- What were their roles and responsibilities and...
- ...how did this give them status and power within society?
- What features did they add to the castle?
- How do they compare to an owner from another era?

Once they have answers to these questions, pupils can use them to conjure their ideal ‘buyer’ for the castle and begin writing the advert – to do this successfully, they must understand both the physical features of the castle and the needs of the people who might live there.

Suddenly, features of the castle become purposeful, and not just labels on a worksheet. Children can see, for example:

- The towers provide excellent visibility against approaching enemies.
- Great halls are a display of power and wealth.
- Jousting tournaments provide not only entertainment, but training.

They may also begin having empathy for those who live in, or near, the castle. By understanding who can buy a castle, they will also realise who can’t. This will then inspire questions beyond the era, perhaps, in older year groups, even naturally making comparisons with our own experiences. The conversation could link to PSHE by asking questions like: *does it compare to the society we recognise today? Are social class and status still dividers? Are there still*

people wealthy enough to build a castle?

A reason to write

Turning your pupils into mini estate agents also provides the opportunity for a purposeful persuasive writing task. Often, such tasks can feel artificial for children due to the generic or predictable prompts we give them. For example, how many of us ask our pupils to argue for no school uniform, or being able to use phones in school, knowing whatever they write, nothing will change? Guilty as charged. But, whilst the ‘purpose’ is still imagined in an estate agent advert, it is one that can become more exciting using ‘real life’ examples. Perhaps you could even have a local estate agent in to visit and judge the adverts. Whose do they think is the most persuasive?

Overall, immersing children in the physical reality of a castle at the start of a unit, and allowing their curiosity to flourish, will allow them to explore the society beyond the structure. And perhaps most importantly, pupils will start to see Warwick Castle not as an isolated monument from the past, but as a living gateway into the story of

Assessing the advert

Teachers can explicitly model the key features of persuasive writing while continually linking them back to historical content.

To be successful, children might explore:

- Emotive language to convey the power of the potential owner
- Direct address to appeal to the buyer
- Expanded noun phrases to describe key features
- Flattery to appeal to noble status
- Opinions presented as facts

For example, rather than simply writing, ‘The castle has strong walls’, and demonstrating a fact, pupils might produce:

‘Enjoy complete peace of mind behind Warwick Castle’s towering stone walls, expertly designed to protect even the most powerful noble family from potential usurpers!’

Britain beyond 1066, through to the modern day. What lessons can we learn from the past, and apply to our lives today? **TP**

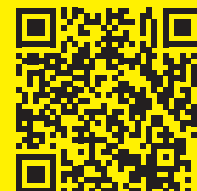
TRY IT TODAY

FREE lesson plan and video content!

Built for Learning is a growing library of classroom-ready multimedia resources from Teachwire, currently using Merlin Entertainment attractions – including Warwick Castle, Chessington World of Adventures, SEA LIFE and more – as real-world curriculum case studies for KS2 and KS3.

Every resource includes specially filmed, exclusive video clips of the featured attraction, enabling teachers to bring the excitement and wonder of these real-world environments into the classroom.

To download the resources and video content for a KS2 lesson plan using Warwick Castle as a lens through which to explore society (including the estate agent advert activity) and to access the full Built for Learning library, just scan the QR code!



OUR

ACTIVATE
FOR KIDS LTD

Corgi Classroom Chair

Special Needs Chair



Support for children with mild postural instability whilst maintaining an appropriate classroom appearance.

The Corgi Classroom Chair is available in a range of sizes and can be easily adjusted to accommodate growth, providing long-term postural support throughout the school years.



Tried & Tested Chairs



**FREE
DELIVERY &
COLLECTION**



**RANGE OF
SIZES
AVAILABLE**



**ACCESSORIES
AVAILABLE
TO TRIAL**



**NO OBLIGATION
QUOTATION
AFTERWARDS**

Request Your Free Trial

✉ trials@activateforkids.com

☎ 01722 340 600

🌐 <https://activateforkids.co.uk/corgi-classroom-chair/>



ADJUSTABLE



CLASSROOM
FRIENDLY



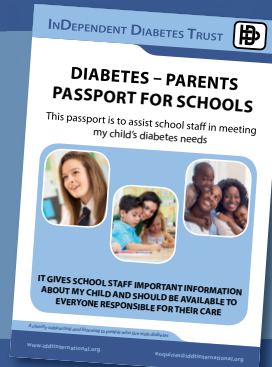
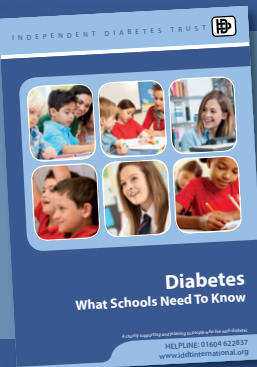
GROWTH
ACCOMMODATION



FREE 1-WEEK
TRIAL



INDEPENDENT DIABETES TRUST



DO YOU HAVE A CHILD IN YOUR CLASS WITH DIABETES?

DIABETES - WHAT SCHOOLS NEED TO KNOW
DIABETES - PARENTS PASSPORT FOR SCHOOLS

ASK FOR YOUR FREE COPIES TODAY

EMAIL: enquiries@iddtinternational.org

or TELEPHONE: 01604 622837



InDependent Diabetes Trust
P O Box 294, Northampton NN1 4XS

www.iddt.org
Charity Number: 1058284
Registered Number: 3148360



Installation Available



**YEOMAN
SHIELD**

RELIABLE WALL & DOOR PROTECTION SOLUTIONS

✓ Reduce Maintenance Costs

✓ Keep Classrooms & Corridors Looking Fresh

✓ Protect Against Everyday Wear & Tear

✓ Fire Door Services - Inspections, Installation, Maintenance & Remedials

Tel: 0113 279 5854

email: info@yeomanshield.com



Turning adaptation ON ITS HEAD

As more children with complex needs are placed in mainstream provision, a rethink of what 'inclusive teaching' really means is key, says **Caroline Kearney**

My teaching career has taken me down several fascinating avenues, one of which included time leading a specialist school. That experience, of course, brought me into day-to-day contact with many pupils who had extensive and complex educational needs. It was a very rewarding role, but one that was highly specialised. These days, I'm seeing increasing numbers of pupils with similarly complex needs now being educated in mainstream settings. On one hand this is marvellous – it reduces the instances of separating children from peers, and curbs the need for children to travel miles each day to go to a good school that can meet their needs. This is set to increase, too, as the government has set out recommendations for more children with SEND to be educated in mainstream schools as part of its *Every child achieving and thriving* white paper.

Much of this guidance seems to be positive. However, it will also place additional stresses on the staff in mainstream schools, who may not have had access to the kind of training you need to be able to effectively

support children with complex needs. But my experience shows that the right tools and strategies can transform learning for all pupils, not just those with diagnosed needs. These days I work in mainstream provision, and I've seen inclusive approaches that are actively benefitting more than 14,500 pupils across the Westcountry Schools Trust. Here's what works...

A different way to adapt

In the past, teachers designed lessons for the majority, then adapted them for those who struggled. This was time-consuming, ineffective, and created barriers if pupils were offered solutions that singled them out as 'different'. We therefore pivoted to make accessible materials the standard – this supports pupils with SEND needs, but without making a point of it. We 'chunk' all text in our teaching materials, and use dyslexia-friendly fonts with pastel backgrounds to reduce visual stress. Schools in a MAT still want to retain their individuality, of course,

so this isn't set in stone. We advise schools about accessibility and agreed formats (such as dyslexia-friendly), and schools can take ownership, so long as everything is accessible. We also opt to display symbols and images to make life easier for children with extra communication needs, or those who use English as an additional language. As a result of these simple changes, we have found that pupils who previously struggled with text are developing a wider vocabulary. Reluctant readers are engaging more confidently with the curriculum and can explain their ideas and opinions more easily.

Better comms

We have also extended these approaches beyond the classroom, particularly in communication with families. Not all our parents are fluent readers, and some have limited English, while others may be neurodivergent. Some don't have the time or skills to absorb the content of text-heavy letters, full of school news, key dates, and information about events.

To improve engagement, we have experimented

in the past with what we call 'Quick Reads', which give readers just the main information in as few words as possible. The full version fits on one side of a sheet of paper, while the other side presents double-spaced key points. Quick Reads also help staff; I used AI to generate a Quick Read version of an email for all my SENCOs and it proved popular. It's not just for those who struggle with reading, it also helps people who are short of time, stressed or distracted.

A community approach

Professional development is key. We run regular SEND twilight sessions, open to staff across all schools, and popular sessions include supporting demand-avoidant behaviours. Waiting times for assessment can be lengthy so, rather than delaying support, we use materials from the PDA Society, which have proved to be highly effective (training.pdasociety.org.uk). In addition, we run training for families to support their understanding of strategies that can be implemented at home. 'Ordinarily available, inclusive provision' is our mantra, allowing all pupils to achieve without reducing expectations. **TP**

Caroline Kearney is inclusion lead practitioner at Westcountry Schools Trust (WeST).



Collins

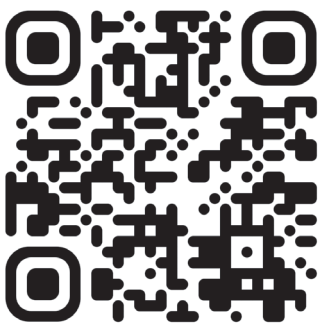
UNBEATABLE VALUE PRIMARY PRACTICE

Boost skills in maths and English with **confidence-boosting practice workbooks** for every year of KS1 and KS2

TARGETED PRACTICE WORKBOOKS

- **Secure knowledge** with repeated practice for all topics
- **Build confidence** with progress checks, test-style questions and opportunities to review learning

SCAN TO TAKE
A LOOK INSIDE



FROM
ONLY £2.50
PER COPY



Order at
collins.co.uk

HUMANITIES SPECIAL

54

Mapping what matters

While conventional geographical skills are important, more localised, personal knowledge can show children the subject's real-life relevance



INSIDE THIS SECTION

56 How to future-proof RE

As the subject goes through its biggest changes since the 80s, Matthew Lane explores how to ensure your RE curriculum is still fit for purpose

59 How to build a community

Citizenship is a great part of PSHE, but to make lessons really stick, children need to actively take part in its process

60 The place you belong

How the Welsh concept of cynefin helped a Barry school open the door to its own history, and reveal a joyous outcome

63 A new horizon for geography

With the DfE's new draft curriculum imminent, Steve Brace discusses the practical implications, and why you don't have to throw out your existing plans

Mapping what MATTERS

While conventional geographical skills are important, more localised, personal knowledge can show children the subject's real-life relevance, says **Dr Paula Owens**

‘Using and making maps’ is a phrase that can conjure up delight, or alarm, depending on your point of view. Yet it is arguably an essential life skill, and inherently geographical. Engaging with mapping can enhance and support the whole curriculum – and below are a few exercises that I’ve found can explore the skillset thoroughly, while maintaining children’s attention and interest.

Communication and ideas

Maps help pupils explain, investigate and connect ideas across the curriculum; they provide a powerful way to organise thinking, explore evidence and communicate understanding.

Mapping is also a valuable communication tool for developing oracy, encouraging pupils to describe locations, sequence experiences, discuss patterns, justify choices and explain relationships. As a visual stimulus, maps inspire creative work in the arts, helping learners represent places, journeys, stories and ideas in imaginative ways.

So, where and how do we start developing this skill in the classroom? If we want to stretch our learners’ horizons, we need to start with what they know and build on their concrete and everyday experiences.

Children already come to school with a good deal of everyday, geographical knowledge. Research tells us, for example, that children aged three to five are remarkably adept at recognising and using landmarks to navigate a route, and that young minds can internalise mental maps of places they know.

Memory maps

I asked groups of four- and five-year-olds to make some maps from memory to help describe their playground and school field. The children used a range of found materials, from construction bricks to pieces of felt and pipe-cleaners, buttons and paper and, with a little support, they built a 3D map of their playground and the features they remembered and obviously thought were important. Then between them, they talked me through a journey from their classroom door, across the field to a large oak, to where many bright yellow buttercups grew, and to a tarmac area with play equipment. The children’s speech was animated, explaining their representation through symbols and colour, and it told me so much about the school grounds as seen through their eyes. They constructed their description like this:

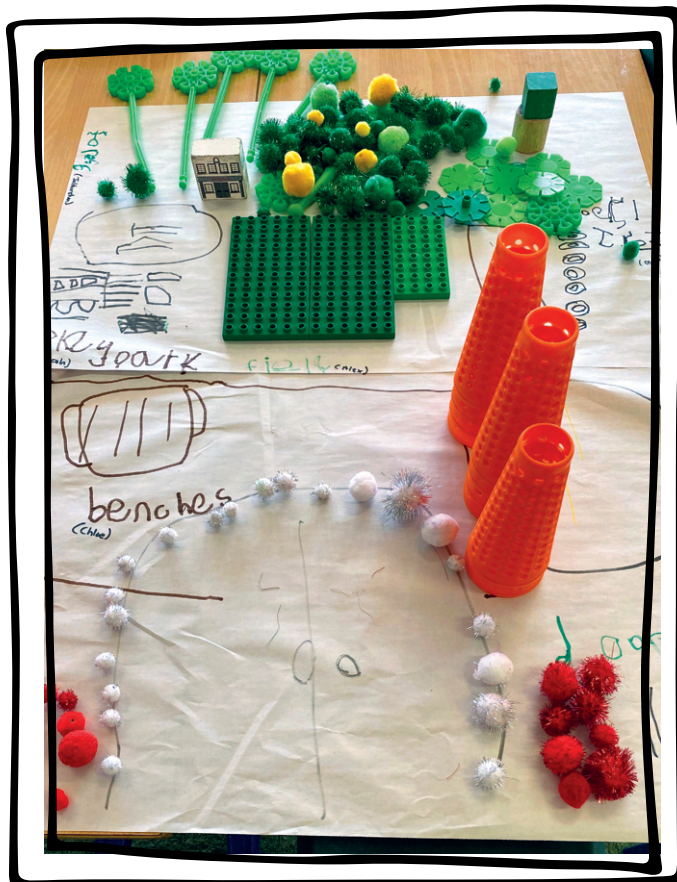
Child 1: “We went out the door ...”

Child 2: “That’s the field, and that’s the forest, and that’s the classroom” (pointing to areas on the 3D map)

Child 3: “And that is the playground”

Child 2: “And these are the trees at the forest!”

“This personal approach ensures that children view maps as having a purpose”





I went out with them afterwards with a bird's eye view snapshot of their map to find the large oak tree and bright buttercups. It's fascinating how young children can internalise layouts of familiar places from concrete experiences, and recall it through abstract, mental-mapping and talk.

Imaginative map play

Photographs of 3D maps can be used as a reference on the board, too, so that you can revisit features and routes together to develop spatial and positional language, which are essential for geography, mathematics, English and oracy. Imaginative play using 3D landscapes with building blocks, sand, and similar artefacts, provides fertile ground for children to practise using such language, particularly when aided by careful questioning and prompting: which way are you going? Are you crossing a river? Climbing over a hill? Walking through the woods?

Talking partners

I asked a mixed class of Reception and Year 1 pupils the same question about their school grounds, but this time asked them to work with a talking partner to create a map from memory together, sharing one piece of paper but with a pencil each. The conversations were noisy but rich, purposed, and fruitful. We had some brilliant maps! Children proudly took their maps out into the grounds to check for accuracy and see if they'd missed any of the features that mattered to them. This is where you could introduce a compass and begin some conversations using more formal directional language.

Mary Poppins-style

In a visit to another school, I worked with a mixed Year 1/2 class who were learning to interpret aerial imagery from Digimap for Schools, a digital software

programme that uses Ordnance Survey mapping formats for its Great Britain maps. The children recognised features such as their school, the local church and a nearby pond quite easily in aerial, and then in the more formal, map view.

I took a different approach here and took the class, in groups of five or six, out into the playground. Each group had a chalked rectangle on the floor, orientated to North (something we checked using compasses) along with a printed large-scale map of the local area (they had previously learned that on these more formal maps, North is always 'at the top'). We made sure we all had our maps facing North and then identified where the school was on the map and where it would be inside the rectangle. Children 'jumped into the map' and marked where their school was and were then left with a box of coloured chalk to create their own map of the area.

Chips are paramount

Although the children could use their printed maps for reference, it was fascinating to see so much added that was not shown on the formal map. Pupils' maps revealed their wealth of additional, local, geographical knowledge and meaning. As well as remembered play and meeting places, everyone drew the local chip shop for example. This was obviously a feature of prime importance – and why not!

I remember doing some CPD with an academy chain in London and a teacher was exasperated that when children were left to their own devices to draw maps of the local area they all wanted to add places like McDonalds instead of what

4 USEFUL RESOURCES

- 1 Mapping in the Early Years: tinyurl.com/tp-Osefys
- 2 Teaching Map Skills in Primary: tinyurl.com/tp-OSprimary
- 3 Place Detectives from the Historic Towns Trust with free downloads for the primary classroom including maps and detailed teacher notes: historictownstrust.uk/placedetectives
- 4 Digimap for Schools has a wide range of mapping ideas for the classroom for you use as they are or ready to adapt to your school: digimapforschools.edina.ac.uk

the teacher perceived to be the more essential, local landmarks. But it's a valuable part of critical thinking to recognise that we can have individual, sometimes different, landmarks, as well as shared, local and national ones.

Mental mapping activities value what children already know and bring to school, are helpful for preceding the use, and creation, of more formal maps, and are a valuable assessment tool. It is essential that children learn how to develop accuracy and conventions in maps; but this graduated and personalised approach ensures that children learn to view maps as having purpose, value and meaning. **TP**



Dr Paula Owens is a former primary teacher and leader, has been a

curriculum lead for the Geographical Association, and is currently an independent consultant.

How to FUTURE-PROOF RE

As the subject goes through its biggest changes since the 80s, **Matthew Lane** explores how to ensure your RE curriculum is still fit for purpose...

Take it from someone who spends a lot of time writing and thinking about RE: the subject is going through a renaissance right now, and there is a lot to consider in how we can futureproof our planning and apply best practice.

To start with, we have the exciting prospect of the first ever RE curriculum, which will be part of the 2028 national curriculum. This was a recommendation from the government's recent curriculum and assessment review, and Dr Vanessa Ogden has led on its development, with NATRE supporting the Teachers Reference Group (TRG). I was a member of the TRG and am very excited by what I have seen and what this means for RE into the future. At the time of writing this article, the draft is due to be published in September 2026.

It's also important to consider the developing pedagogy surrounding religion and worldviews, and what this means for curriculum planning.

Religion & worldviews

While not yet universally adopted, religion & worldviews is now a common approach to teaching RE, seen in many locally agreed syllabuses and Academy Trust curriculums. There are a

few different strands to this approach, each of which needs consideration and planning for in our curriculums.

First, there is the shift in mindset and starting point. Religions are explored in parallel and in comparison, rather in isolation. A key question is posed, such as "What does it mean to be good?" and then pupils will explore how different religions may try to answer this question. Developing and planning for

just 'social sciences', (for questions about the lived experience). Some SACREs and providers have now broadened these three headings to include specific social sciences such as sociology and psychology. Some have also included science or scientific enquiry to better understand the ideas of non-religious worldviews, too. This means that the same question or content can be revisited, but with a different focus. For instance, we could

"We should be teaching about religion as a living, breathing entity that is a tapestry of concepts, rather than following lots of unconnected threads in isolation"

this type of learning means looking for connections and common themes and delving deeply into the subject matter. There is also the legally confirmed place of non-religious worldviews within RE to consider.

This depth of learning is reflected in the academic disciplines (sometimes called lenses) used to frame learning. Initially, three disciplines were given in religion & worldviews: theology (or questions about believing); philosophy (or questions about ideas); and a broad catch-all title of 'human and social sciences', or sometimes

explore the features and architecture of places of worship and how they reflect the theology of their religions. We can then explore them again as a sociologist, thinking about their functions within the societies they are part of. Same content, different focuses.

Learning more, with less

A key theme that is seen in best practice, is learning more from less content; finding the breadth of a religion or religions through



the depth of study in a few areas. I think of this like digging a hole: by nature of digging deeper you must widen the hole and cover more ground over time, rather than starting off broad. We should be teaching about religion as a living, breathing entity that is a tapestry of concepts rather than following lots of unconnected threads in isolation. This means we can follow the best practice of exploring two religions in parallel rather than jumping between different

religions in isolation from each other.

There are various ways to approach parallel learning, and all have their place. It could be within one lesson, such as comparing similarities between two religions' festivals of light. Or via doing the same lesson 'twice', i.e. repeating the lesson structure but for a second religion. Or you could teach two religions in parallel across a unit, with the first half of the unit for one religion and then repeating the same three or six lessons for the second religion or worldview.

You may be wondering how many religions we should explore per year or key stage. In general, two religions, plus a non-religious worldview, works as a good framework. We need to be mindful of legislation when choosing these two religions, which means that one of these two will most often be Christianity. Many schools keep the partner religion the same for at least two years, often exploring Judaism in KS1; Islam in Years 3 and 4; and a Dharmic religion in Years 5 and 6. The Dharmic religions are often explored later due to the starker contrast with the Abrahamic faiths, but there is no reason why they could not be explored earlier. There are not usually rules about which faith is explored at which age, but do check your locally agreed syllabus.

While I have only spoken about the 'Big Six' world religions so far, it is best practice to add in learning around all sorts of other religious and non-religious worldviews, too. This is to build an awareness of the breadth of human faiths and enrich the planning. For instance, when discussing animal welfare, veganism is an interesting non-religious identity to explore. Or, when discussing initiation into a faith, Wicca offers a counterpoint, as children do not automatically join their parents' faith unlike in most other religions.

Checking coverage

I recently helped audit and update Norfolk's locally agreed syllabus. As part of this process, I applied the work of Ann Taves and her 'Six Big Questions' (tinyurl.com/tp-6BQ) to

KEEP ON KEEPING UP

Best practice in any subject is always a changing landscape. New trends can wither or, like religion & worldviews, evolve through years of development and shaping. The following websites are great sources of info and guidance on what is considered best practice:

- NATRE (natre.org.uk)
- RE Council (religiouseducationcouncil.org.uk)

check the content and coverage. Her model poses six questions about the world that all religions and non-religious worldviews help their followers to answer. This helped us check our thinking and pose audit questions such as: Do we have too many theology units? Have we focused enough on the path through life a religion gives for their followers? Are non-religious worldviews given opportunities for coverage?

Having a model or framework like this is brilliant for checking your curriculum for blind spots. You could even use a simple ticklist to double-check that each academic discipline, and a variety of (but not too many) religions, are being explored. **TP**



Matthew Lane is an RE Lead, SACRE member and author. You can read more

comparisons of RE knowledge in his new book, *Religious Education: A Subject Knowledge Handbook*, coming soon from Bloomsbury.

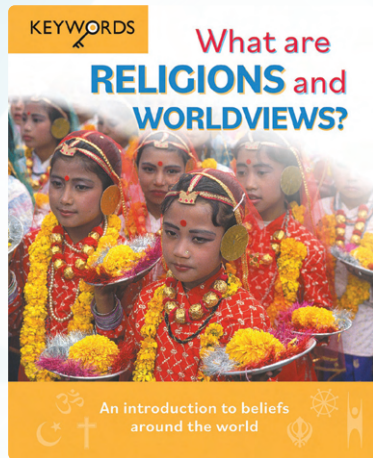
theteachinglane.co.uk

@MrMJLane

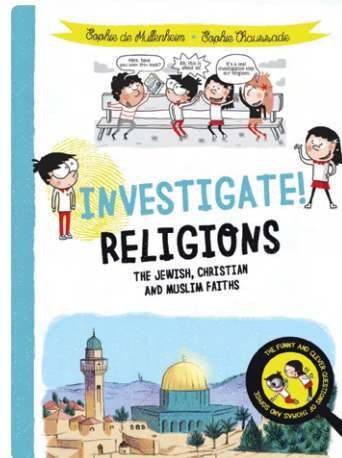
@the_teaching_lane



EVERYTHING YOUR PUPILS ASK ABOUT FAITH, ANSWERED



£9.99 | HARDBACK



£11.99 | PAPERBACK

GET **25% OFF** WITH **DISCOUNT CODE: TEACHPRIMARY**



AVAILABLE FROM SPCKPUBLISHING.CO.UK
AND **ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS**

Teach Primary RE with ease & confidence

A complete Primary RE
curriculum. Ready to go.

Every lesson, resource and tool you
need, so you can spend your time
teaching, not planning.

Built by specialist RE teachers, the Primary
RE Curriculum – Enhanced Edition includes
everything clearly structured from EYFS to
Year 6. Fully resourced, ready-to-teach,
including adaptable PowerPoints, knowledge
organisers and assessment materials.



Book your place on
our free curriculum
walk-through webinar.

teach
PRIMARY
AWARDS 2025
HIGHLY
COMMENDED

Classroom-ready resources you can trust.
By RE experts, for RE teachers.

RETODAY
Educate • Equip • Empower

How to build a COMMUNITY

Citizenship is a great part of PSHE, but to make lessons really stick, children need to actively take part in its process, says **Sarah Brough**

The Curriculum and Assessment Review brought citizenship into sharp focus, but since its publication there has been no further information, leaving teachers unclear about what needs to change and concerned about fitting more content into an already full PSHE curriculum.

However, most schools are already natural seedbeds for citizenship. Every time pupils vote on a class decision, settle a disagreement, or work together to improve their school community, they are learning to put the key principles at the heart of citizenship into practice, from fairness and inclusion to social responsibility and empathy.

What's needed is to build on what schools are already doing, so that citizenship becomes a more explicit and consistent part of everyday school life.

Real voices, real power

Democracy is at the heart of citizenship in schools, particularly when pupils have a genuine say in decisions that affect them and their learning. Most schools already have structures in place for capturing pupils' views on things like uniform changes, playground policy or lunchtime routines. However, for children to experience democracy in action, they need to see what happens *after* they share their ideas.

School councils are often the most familiar democratic structure in schools. But they can lose impact when the same pupils are selected or come forward to represent their peers, or when discussions are shaped too heavily by the priorities of staff.



In schools where pupils' voices have real influence, children feel empowered to identify issues, suggest solutions and see how decisions are made. They might request assemblies, suggest fundraising for a cause that matters to them or raise issues affecting their peers.

We are all more likely to accept decisions when we have had a genuine opportunity to influence them, even if the outcome is not what we hoped for. Giving pupils that same experience helps them understand that democratic decision-making involves balancing different needs, priorities and practical and financial constraints.

Beyond PSHE

Much of the foundation for citizenship is already covered in PSHE, where pupils explore fairness, responsibility and relationships. But these ideas become more meaningful when pupils see them modelled in everyday school life, in how adults manage disagreements, how behaviour expectations are agreed and how decisions are implemented.

Schools can keep the focus on citizenship by bringing about change in partnership with pupils. A learning charter for all could come out of a collaboration with pupils, which would set out what a positive learning environment should look like and what everyone needs in order to learn well, from support and equipment to the environment itself. The charter should then be revisited regularly as pupils and priorities change.

When citizenship is embedded in routines, relationships and policies, pupils experience it as something they do to help shape their school, not just a subject they are being taught. That's much more meaningful and memorable to everyone in the school community.

Accessible and available

A culture of citizenship should help all children feel they have a role to play, so that opportunities are not only taken up by pupils who are already confident, outspoken or willing to put themselves forward.

Not every child will be happy to put their hand up in a discussion or volunteer for a leadership role, but you can offer different ways for pupils to contribute. Some children may be more comfortable sharing ideas through group conversation. Others prefer to contribute through writing, drawing, creative activities or anonymous suggestions. With more options, you have more opportunities to gather a range of views. This also helps to ensure that pupils with different communication styles, lived experiences and additional needs all have the opportunity to contribute. Decisions are more likely to be accepted as a result.

Roles such as playground, or subject ambassadors are great for developing leadership skills. Making these opportunities available to everyone will help pupils understand that leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room. It's about listening, showing empathy, working with others and considering the needs of the wider community.

Primary schools are already full of opportunities to experience citizenship. The next step is helping them to recognise how their discussions, decisions and responsibilities prepare them to make a positive difference in the wider world. **TP**



Sarah Brough is a former teacher and now programme lead for

PSHE 3-11 at Jigsaw Education Group.

 jigsaweducationgroup.com

THE PLACE YOU BELONG

How the Welsh concept of cynefin helped a Barry school open the door to its own history, and reveal a joyous outcome

SHELLIE BROWN



BEGINNING AT HOME

The project was born as part of whole-school enquiry, planning for our cynefin enquiries in the autumn term. In the Curriculum for Wales, *cynefin* (pron. kuh-NEV-in) is a key concept that helps learners understand their identity, sense of place and community. It does not translate neatly into English, but it broadly means ‘the place where you feel you belong – your roots, your community, environment, experiences, and the connections between them’.

Enquiry-based learning starts with a question and we drafted ours as: “What is the story of Cadoxton Primary School – its past, present and future?” This question provides an anchor the children can return to, and nurtures thinking skills, and genuine curiosity.

When children see themselves reflected in the curriculum – their families, streets, dialects, and heritage

– their confidence and engagement grow. We knew that exploring the school, its place within the community and beyond would be exciting and personal; this wouldn’t be a history topic looking at far away dead kings and queens, but investigating the very walls around them, and the people in front of them sharing memories.

To use the concept of cynefin as a starting point, ask ‘where do you feel you belong?’ and ‘where are your roots?’. If you feel you’re part of a community, you can then find out how this community started, and has changed over time.



DIGGING FOR DATA

To turn the idea into action, we began by establishing what all good historians start with: a need for evidence. Our pupils helped design a public survey aimed at former students, teachers and community members. This wasn’t a token exercise – the children debated every question, discussed what ‘good data’ looks like, and took ownership of how their findings would shape the project. The survey was shared across social media, gaining traction and interest

in our local area and beyond. Pupils were invited onto the local radio to share the findings of the survey up to that point. Within weeks, more than 100 responses had come in, offering vivid, humorous and occasionally unexpected glimpses into the school’s past.

Next, we created our ‘human library’, inviting local residents, past pupils and a local historian (who showed children how to check sources) to share their stories in person. This came from a desire to give pupils access to living primary sources, and offered a great opportunity to encourage cross-generational relationships and connect with our community.

Museum Wales provides an online guide featuring step-by-step instructions for primary pupils, on how to explore the history of their local area and map how the past shapes their cynefin. You can download the toolkit on the Museum Wales Hwb Portal at tinyurl.com/tp-HwbCynefin



VOLUME AND STRUCTURE

As with any ambitious project, plenty of challenges surfaced along the way. The first was managing the sheer volume of information that arrived once our survey went live. Over 100 responses sounds exciting – and it was – but it also meant we needed to teach pupils how to sort and interpret evidence without overwhelming them. We solved this by modelling historical thinking in small steps, allowing children to categorise responses, identify themes and spot contradictions.

It was messy, but in the best possible way. At times, coordinating visitors presented logistical hurdles – fitting in sessions around timetables, ensuring

safeguarding measures, and balancing the needs of younger and older pupils. Budget constraints meant we relied heavily on goodwill, but the community's enthusiasm offset what we lacked in funding.

Another unexpected challenge was the mystery of the missing school bell. What began as an amusing detail quickly became the focus of intense pupil interest. The challenge wasn't the mystery itself, but how to handle the levels of excitement it generated. Children formed theories, debated possibilities and even asked family members to help investigate. We had to channel that energy productively, guiding them to use the bell as a case study in evidence reliability. We would regularly return to our key concepts and enquiry question to make sure that we didn't get carried away with tangential stories.

BBC Bitesize has a great introduction to interview questions when learning about local history at [tinyurl.com/tp-BBCevidence](https://www.bbc.com/primary/tp-BBCevidence). It covers things like the difference between open and closed questions, and how acting like a historian means being a detective.



One of the most meaningful outcomes has been the intergenerational connections formed. A former pupil now volunteers as a weekly reading supporter, and many families have begun sharing their own school memories at home.



HISTORY IN THE MAKING

The impact on teaching and learning has been transformative. Most visibly, pupils now talk about themselves as historians. They use vocabulary like 'primary sources', 'evidence', and 'interpretation' with confidence – not because they were taught definitions, but because they lived the processes those words describe. Their ability to question, infer and hypothesise improved dramatically, and we saw a noticeable rise in confidence among children who often hang back during whole-class discussions. They weren't completing an activity. They were doing history.

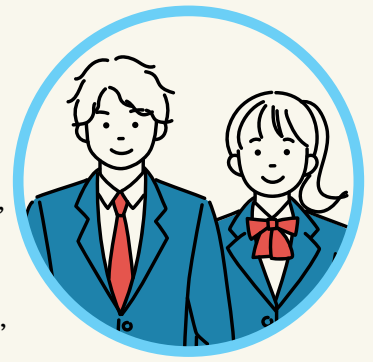
The project also had powerful cross-curricular effects. In literacy, pupils produced richer, more purposeful writing – including interview questions, display captions, reflective recounts.

Our digital competency work flourished through audio recordings, survey analysis, and online publishing. We created a walking tour around the school, displaying artwork inspired by the memories shared in the survey, and QR codes were made of the children narrating the walking tour, encouraging those who were not involved in our project to enjoy it. **TP**



Shellie Brown is a class teacher at Cadoxton Primary School in Barry, South Wales. She was awarded the inaugural Inspirational History Teacher Award for Wales from Historic Royal Palaces.

[cadoxtonprimaryschool.com](https://www.cadoxtonprimaryschool.com)



ASHTON

"I loved going to St Fagans Museum of Welsh History because we could see the cane and all the stuff they had. It was fun to touch the objects"



ESME

"People came in to tell us stuff. They used to tell us what life was like in the olden days. I think this is important because they can tell us things we can read about"



ALBA

"It was great to put all my stuff in a time capsule. I can't wait to see if I am taller and if my feet have grown!"



PENNY

"It was interesting to go to the museum because we saw all the things people had been telling us"



The benefits of membership

Joining the **Geographical Association** gives you access to a range of benefits including:

- ✓ access to member-only Teaching Resources
- ✓ receive termly GA journals, packed with new articles
- ✓ 10% discount off all consultancy fees
- ✓ benefit from expert advice to raise achievements
- ✓ stay up to date with the latest news in *GA Magazine*
- ✓ collaborate and share with professionals in your field

and much more...



Your membership. Real impact.

With expert support, practical guidance and professional learning at your fingertips, you'll be empowered to lead curriculum change and create better outcomes for your pupils.



Build your confidence as Geography Lead



Stay informed and curriculum-ready



Drive meaningful change in your school



Improve outcomes for your pupils



Geographical Association

For details on how to join, visit geography.org.uk/join-the-ga or email membership@geography.org.uk

A NEW DIRECTION

for
Primary Arts

656

schools were registered on the booking platform in 2025 to brighten up their curriculum with one **free** programme and **unlimited possibilities.**

Join us for our **final year** of the **creative arts programme** for **all** London state primary schools and SEND settings. Includes performances, trips, learning, inspiration and wellbeing for pupils and staff.

All free of charge!

Booking opens Wed 9 Sept 2026

anewdirection.org.uk/primary-arts



Primary Arts is generously supported by The City of London Corporation City Educational Trust Fund (Reg. Charity 29084)

A new horizon for GEOGRAPHY

With the DfE's new draft curriculum imminent, **Steve Brace** discusses the practical implications, and why you don't have to throw out your existing plans

The DfE announced this summer that in autumn 2026, they would publish draft programmes of study for a revised geography national curriculum – alongside the other reformed subject areas.

The development of the curriculum follows the publication of the final report of the Curriculum and Assessment Review, (November 2025), and the final version will be published in Spring 2027. Schools will then have until September 2028 to prepare for its first teaching.

Develop gradually

Overall, the review has taken the approach of 'evolution not revolution'. This has required working from the existing curriculum, whilst addressing a range of key recommendations – which all maintained schools, including academies, will be required to implement. For example, in geography, we will see new requirements that introduce teaching about climate change and sustainability.

The review also identified that the curriculum should include stronger representation of the diversity that makes up our modern society.

In geography, this largely means that schools will have to ensure that schemes of work and case studies are up-to-date, accurate and (as Ofsted highlighted in 2023 through its Getting our bearings: geography subject report) avoid telling single stories about different places.



The new geography curriculum may also require stronger consideration of geography's 'disciplinary knowledge'. This is the 'how' of the subject.

In essence, it is helping pupils to 'think like a geographer', such as through the use of geographical skills and fieldwork, geographical enquiry and the application of geographical concepts. Such disciplinary knowledge complements the subject's much more familiar 'substantive knowledge'. This is the 'what' of geography, and includes case studies such as named continents, regional case studies, and study of human and physical processes (e.g. settlement, weather and climate).

It is the connection of disciplinary and substantive knowledge in geography that will give greater depth and coherence to your schemes of work and your pupils' geographical learning, rather than considering them as separate units of study. So, for example,

a study of the local area's geography might integrate the following aspects:

- Asking geographical questions about the place and the use of geographical information, potentially collected through fieldwork, to answer them. (Disciplinary knowledge).
- Identification of its key features such as its human geography – different types of housing, local businesses and how people use the land; and its physical geography – local rivers, hills, green spaces or woodland. (Substantive knowledge).
- Geographical concepts such as place and/or scale. (Disciplinary knowledge).
- How people interact with and change their local environment, and how their lives are influenced by this. (Substantive knowledge)

Start small

Once the draft primary curriculum is published, I would advise that you don't start making immediate and

detailed changes to schemes of work. Rather, it may be more useful to complete a higher-level analysis and reflect on how the changes might influence the structure and range of your existing schemes of work.

For example, the introduction of climate change and sustainability may come with specific requirements for how this should be included in the primary curriculum. Similarly, any greater attention to disciplinary knowledge may prompt reflection into how best this might be developed in your existing schemes of work – so that it might be properly combined with and enhance the 'substantive' case studies.

Curriculum change can feel daunting, but it does provide the opportunity to update and revise units of work that you may have been using for a while. Additionally, I would encourage you to draw on the expert advice and guidance of your specific subject association. These bodies will be providing extra support to help your school to get up to speed with and implement the new curriculum. **TP**



Steve Brace is the chief executive of the Geographical Association and has been

appointed by the Department for Education as the curriculum drafter for geography.

Oh, the humanities

A roundup of resources to support RE, geography and history teaching

1 *Preparing primary schools for the future of geography*

The Geographical Association has supported geography education for more than 130 years and is proud to be helping shape the future of the subject through supporting the development of the new geography curriculum with the Department for Education.

Our new Primary School Membership has been created to give geography leads the confidence, knowledge and expert support they need to lead curriculum change successfully in



their schools. With expert-led CPD, curriculum guidance, practical resources and regular opportunities to ask questions of our specialists, membership provides year-round support that helps schools achieve better outcomes for every pupil.

Find out more at geography.org.uk or email membership@geography.org.uk



3

Warwick Castle

Travel back in time with a school trip to Warwick Castle and see history leap from the textbooks into vivid reality.

From towering battlements to dramatic live shows and immersive exhibits, pupils can explore nearly 1,100 years of history in one unforgettable day. Inside the castle walls, they'll hear tales of battles, kings, knights and everyday life, discovering how courage, strategy and innovation shaped the medieval world. Interactive workshops use props, authentic artefacts and costumes to spark curiosity across topics such as medieval history, creative writing and literacy, tailored to all key stages.

With dedicated SEND support, it's an inclusive, hands-on journey through time.

Find out more at

www.warwick-castle.com/schools

4

Reliable, affordable CPD

Ready to refresh your RE teaching, without stretching your budget? Whether you teach primary or secondary, are new to RE, an experienced subject leader or a member of SLT, we have dozens of CPD courses designed for you! Our affordable programme includes dozens of practical CPD courses from leadership updates to deepening your subject knowledge... and much more! Boost your confidence, develop your expertise and bring exciting new ideas into the classroom, all at a price designed to make high-quality CPD accessible. Discover our full programme today and take another step towards Chartered Teacher Status.

Any questions? Contact us today!

Call 0121 458 3313, email admin@retoday.org.uk or visit tinyurl.com/tp-REtoday26



Grow Your Confidence. Grow Your Practice.
Professional Development for Every Stage



2



Accessible Christian education

SPCK is the UK's biggest independent Christian publisher and a UK-based charity founded in 1698, working for over 300 years to make the Christian faith accessible in the UK and worldwide. With a strong heritage in Theology and Christian Spirituality, SPCK is a recognised market-leader in Christian children's books, publishing accessible titles that help children explore faith and belief, including resources supporting RE teaching across key world religions.

Find out more at spckpublishing.co.uk

5



Trusted whole-school provision

The Collins Primary Geography scheme is a complete programme for pupils aged 5 to 11. Written by experts, it provides all the reassurance you need that this is built on a firm foundation, adding heft and credibility to the classroom practitioner's existing subject knowledge. It nicely balances knowledge acquisition and skills development while staying focused on key concepts and highlighting essential vocabulary. And, because it is a coherent, whole-school scheme, you can expect full curriculum coverage plus clear progression.

Visit collins.co.uk/primarygeography



BBC 500 WORDS



A fun, creative story writing competition.

Opens for entries

Tuesday 29 September – Friday 6 November, 9pm 2026

No need to worry about spelling,
punctuation or grammar!

Prizes for
the bronze, silver
and gold winners!!



Write a
STORY
you would
love to read

Ages
5 – 11



Find out more and enter at
bbc.co.uk/500words

BBC
BITESIZE
FOR TEACHERS



CONFIDENCE STARTS WITH BIKEABILITY

93% of Bikeability pupils
say it makes them more
confident*

cycletoschoolweek.com



*93% of riders feel more confident riding on today's roads after Bikeability Level 2 cycle training – The Bikeability Trust, June 2025

My Science Club

Looking for inspirational, tried and tested science club ideas that really work?

Want to run a club without the hassle? Let **My Science Club** do the hard work for you...

Every session is
carefully crafted by
award winning
science educators



Join our newsletter today for top
tips, free resources, discount
codes and more





Themed packs full of
hands-on ideas
designed to inspire
curiosity

So what do I get for my 12 month membership?



Your membership includes 6 themed
packs - choose from Biology,
Chemistry, Physics or Earth Science



Next, select the age phase of your
club ranging from Early Primary to
Lower Secondary

Flexible sessions
for a science club
or to enhance
science lessons





Each pack contains 6 one hour
sessions, plus exclusive access to our
members only resource area





A WHOLE YEAR OF MY SCIENCE
CLUB FOR LESS THAN £50!

*My Science Club provides everything you need,
just add the kit and the kids!*

@my_scienceclub







5 REASONS TO TRY... National Autistic Society

Create truly effective learning environments for all pupils with the Neuroinclusive Education Network



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Build confident, consistent inclusive practice through evidence-based training, practical strategies and lived experience, helping school teams embed effective adaptations into everyday teaching and help all learners to thrive.

1 UNDERSTANDING ADAPTIVE TEACHING

Walk into any primary classroom and you'll see a wide range of learners, each with their own strengths, needs and ways of engaging with learning. The challenge is making sure every child can access the curriculum without adding unsustainable workload. That's where adaptive teaching comes in. At its heart, adaptive teaching is about planning with diversity of need in mind from the start, removing barriers so all pupils can succeed together. When done well, it strengthens outcomes for everyone, not just pupils with SEND.

2 SIMPLE ADAPTATIONS

In primary classrooms, some of the most effective adaptations are the simplest. Many schools are seeing impact through approaches such as:

- breaking instructions into clear, manageable steps
- using visual prompts or 'now/next' boards to support understanding
- regularly checking in with pupils during learning, rather than waiting until the end
- modelling tasks clearly so children can see what 'success' looks like

These strategies aren't complex, and they build confidence, reduce confusion and support independence across the class.

3 ADAPTIVE ENVIRONMENT

Changes to the classroom itself can be just as powerful. Factors like noise, layout and visual clutter can have a direct impact on learning. In practice, this might include:

- creating a quieter corner or calm space
- reducing unnecessary displays
- offering different seating options to support focus and regulation
- using visual timetables to make the day more predictable



Contact:
naslearn.org.uk
nen.org.uk

These small adjustments can improve engagement – particularly for neurodivergent pupils – while making the classroom calmer and more productive for everyone.

4 EMBEDDING CHANGE

In many primary schools, leaders are embedding adaptations school-wide. Staggered transitions to reduce busy corridors, structured play and lunch options and clear whole-school routines show how inclusive practice can shape the wider environment.

The most effective adaptations are not add-ons. They are an embedded part of how the school works.

To achieve this consistently, staff need more than one-off training. They need a shared understanding of inclusive practice, a common language and practical strategies

that can be applied day to day across the school.

5 CONSISTENT PRACTICE

The Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN), part of the National Autistic Society, works with schools, trusts and local authorities through evidence-based training and collaboration. Central to this offer is the Inclusive Practice Development Programme (IPDP), designed for system-wide upskilling of the education workforce. This helps settings move beyond awareness into confident, consistent classroom practice. Bringing together research, practical strategies and lived experience, it supports staff teams to embed inclusive approaches into everyday teaching and create environments where all learners, including neurodivergent students, can thrive.

KEY POINTS

Plan with different needs in mind from the outset, removing barriers without creating separate lessons or lowering expectations, so every pupil can access learning together

Break instructions into manageable steps, use visual prompts, check in regularly and model tasks clearly to build confidence, reduce confusion and support pupil independence

Consider noise, layout and visual clutter, alongside quieter spaces, seating options and visual timetables, to support engagement and create calmer, more productive classrooms

Embed adaptations across the whole school through shared routines, understanding and practical strategies, helping staff apply inclusive practice consistently as part of everyday school life



START THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR STRONG WITH OUTDOOR LEARNING & PLAY!



INCLUSIVE OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT SAFER SURFACING SHADE & SHELTER MARKINGS MAINTENANCE



01702 291129
info@sovereignplay.com
sovereignplayequipment.co.uk



CONTACT US
TODAY FOR YOUR **FREE**
CONSULTATION & DESIGN

Where words meet **THE WILD**

Step outside and blow the cobwebs off stagnant literacy lessons with **Natasha Farrant's** outdoor writing exercises

Endless research tells us of the mental and physical health benefits of spending time in nature; how it improves focus and attention span, and enhances emotional wellbeing. Children with ADHD who regularly play outside in a green area with lots of grass and trees have been shown to have milder symptoms than those playing wither in built-up environments or indoors. And yet, other research shows that children are spending less and less time playing outside, with one in three children in the UK playing outdoors fewer than four times a week, and sometimes only at the weekend. But though our children may be more alienated from the natural world than previous generations, their capacity to wonder at it and to love it are still there. Making stories together can help make that connection.

You don't need vast swathes of land or have your Duke of Edinburgh gold award to make the most of the outdoors.

If your environment allows, take your class outside throughout the year. These simple exercises can help develop vocabulary, descriptive writing, and paragraph structure.

As I walked through the woods...

First, ask children to use their senses and list the things they can see, hear, smell and touch. Once they have a list of their immediate surroundings, encourage them to consider beyond concrete senses, such



as the feelings we associate with being outside. If it's autumn, have they noticed it getting darker earlier, recently? What else does the outdoors make pupils think of? Perhaps rain reminds them of boots, puddles and the smell of damp earth. Autumn could conjure images of Halloween, Bonfire Night, fireworks, pumpkins and witches. Make lists of all these words on a flipchart.

Next, pick three words from the list, and start again, making lists of related words for each one. For example, If you've written 'leaves', you could expand this to colours, smell, crispiness, crinkliness, carpets underfoot, slippery when wet, trying to catch them as they fall. You can also bring in animals making nests in leaves, leaves decomposing into soil, etc.

Finally, invite pupils to write a paragraph, or

story, featuring those three words and their associated descriptions. You could give the class a prompt to start them off, like 'As I walked through the woods one autumn night...'.

There's a spider in the bath

To expand descriptive writing to include writing from a different point of view, try asking children to start off with a list of places that mean something to them (I like lists – they're a great warm-up exercise). Then get them to choose one place on the list – ideally somewhere outside, and quite specific, such as their garden at home, the local park, a beach, or a woodland.

Next, guide them to describe the place using all five senses. Encourage them to explain why they like it,

what it means to them, and how it makes them feel. Then, ask pupils to think of an animal – ideally something small like an insect, bird, mouse or spider. They should then describe the same place they've just written about, but from the animal's point of view. What's different? Imagine how the place feels to the animal, and in what way the place might be different for them. Are certain things much bigger? What different smells can they experience? Do they have a sense of danger?

Other ideas

- Bring outdoor treasures into the classroom – blossom, acorns, leaves, seashells, interesting branches, moss. Make up stories about them. Who lived in that shell? Used that moss to line their nests? What fruit will the blossom turn into? Might the leaf's tree have magic powers?
- I hate apps usually, but I do love Merlin, which identifies birdsong. Study the birds the app picks out. Look at migration, courtship rituals, nestbuilding. Write about the birds' lives and journeys.
- Read a poem a day from *I Am the Seed That Grew the Tree* by Fiona Waters and Frann Preston-Gannon. **TP**



Natasha Farrant is an author of children's books. Her new title, *The*

Children of Wolf Rock (£7.99, Faber), is out now.

Poetry PLAYTIME

Use two CLiPPA-shortlisted collections to explore imagery, proverbs and oracy with learners of all ages

ANJALI PATEL

Now in its third decade, the CLiPPA is the UK's leading award for published poetry for children, and highlights the year's best new collections. This year's shortlist includes something for everyone: there are irresistible new finger rhymes for the youngest poetry fans, imaginative and informative poems about bugs, a playful debut collection inspired by video games, a superb anthology by Black poets from the US, Caribbean and the UK, plus a sumptuous, illustrated anthology featuring favourite poems from a poet who has been entertaining and inspiring children for over 40 years.

Here are a couple of ideas inspired by two of our shortlisted books, which we hope will help you bring to life the power of poetry from EYFS to Y6:

Playing with performance

Five Little Friends: A Collection of Finger Rhymes by Sean Taylor, illustrated by Fiona Woodcock (Walker Books)

This joyfully interactive poetry book features original action rhymes with

easy-to-follow illustrated instructions, inviting very young children to use their fingers, hands and bodies to bring the poems to life. This approach enables our youngest readers to embody and connect with the poetry more closely, while chiming in with the playful, relatable

and memorable language. The book is truly child-focused, leading readers to experience moments of bonding and sharing with their adults – a wonderful introduction to the world of poetry.

Begin by inviting the children to explore the cover



Fig. 1

“This year’s CLiPPA shortlist includes something for everyone across your school”

illustration (see fig.1); what they notice, what it makes them feel or think about. The children might comment on the bright, cheerful colours matching the smiling face and think about what is making the depicted person happy, relating this to personal experiences.

They might infer movement or sound from the sparks coming from the outstretched hands. Ask the children to replicate the child’s stance in a freeze frame, before trying out some movement that makes them feel happy. This is

a fun opportunity to introduce descriptive language related to movement, position and body parts.

Pupils might also notice the finger puppet glove in the cover image, and connect this to finger rhymes and songs they know or enjoy at home and in the setting (e.g. *Two Little Birds Sitting on a Wall*). Read the title – *Five Little Friends. A Collection of Finger Rhymes* – along with the names of the poet and the illustrator. Share ideas about who the five little friends might be,

Fig. 2



and whether the children know any finger rhymes involving five characters (e.g. *Five Little Piggies*).

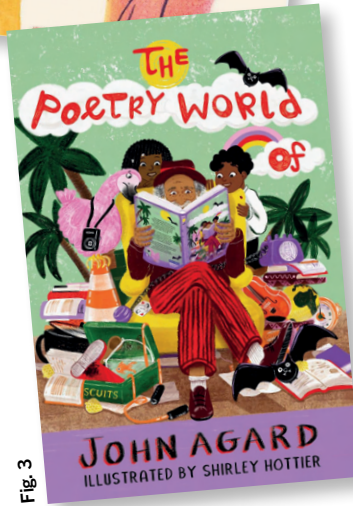
Spend time enjoying the children's favourite finger rhymes in which the fingers represent characters in the rhyme, often a feature of counting rhymes, such as: *Five Little Fish*, *Five Little Ducks*, *Five Little Aliens in a Flying Saucer*, *Five Little Monkeys*.

Now turn to the spread featuring the poem *Five Little Friends* (pages 8-9). Spend time exploring and enacting this new illustration (see fig.2) before sharing and responding to Sean's performance of his poem on the CLPE website (tinyurl.com/tp-FiveLittleFriends).

Sing the poem to the children, pausing at each stanza for the children to look carefully at the illustration and have fun trying out how to move their bodies, arms, hands and fingers to re-enact the friends 'sliding', 'hiding', 'watching a movie', 'dancing a boogie', 'swimming' and 'diving'.

Soon, the children will become confident enough to share the recital and chime in with the counting and numbers, progressing to joining in with the first line and perhaps even matching the words and phrases to the rhythm of the corresponding actions.

Once the children know the poem by heart, encourage them to recite it independently or with



friends, inviting them to play around with the energy and pace of their actions or the dynamics of their voices to lift the story scenes from the page.

Children could create small puppets to slip onto each of their fingers depicting the five friends that they are imagining.

Playing with proverbs

The Poetry World of John Agard by John Agard, illustrated by Shirley Hottier (Otter-Barry Books)

John Agard is one of our most celebrated poets and this is a gift of a book (fig.3), drawing from his most well-loved collections to showcase his legacy. As you'd expect, it contains a wide variety of themes, encompassing everyday experiences, the natural world, family, folklore and more, and roundly celebrates Agard's talent for humour, wordplay, observation and reflection.

His poems are joyful invitations to build connections between cultures, languages and generations. This is exemplified in John's introduction to his poems from *Say It Again, Granny* (p.24), a perfect chance to share personal connections and anything that ignites the children's interest.

One such poem does just this. Watch Shirley Hottier read the poem, *Hurry Hurry Mek Bad Curry* (p.30), on CLPE's website (tinyurl.com/tp-HurryHurry), inviting children to share initial thoughts, feelings, questions and ideas about what they have heard, before re-reading and responding to the poem and its illustration on the page.

Revisit John's introduction and what it brings to pupils' understanding of the poem and the title.

Have they heard of the phrase 'more haste, less speed' before? How does it relate to the proverb 'hurry hurry mek bad curry'? Explore how both mean the same thing, but look at how 'hurry hurry mek bad curry' is distinct to Caribbean Creole through the spelling of the words and the imagery used. Reflect on what Shirley says about how this evokes the image of her mother and how language can connect us to people, places and memories.

Begin a collection of familiar sayings, such as 'Look before you leap', discussing their meaning and how the imagery in proverbs relates to the meaning in the advice behind them. Give the children chance to share their personal stories and connections to these proverbs. They might note particularly memorable or vivid proverbs in their personal poetry journal, accompanied by sketches

The CLiPPA shortlist 2026:

- *Five Little Friends: A Collection of Finger Rhymes* by Sean Taylor, illustrated by Fiona Woodcock (Walker Books)
- *A First Book of Bugs* by Simon Mole, illustrated by Adam Ming (Walker Books)
- *The Poetry World of John Agard* by John Agard, illustrated by Shirley Hottier (Otter-Barry Books)
- *Press Start to Play* by Sam Gayton, illustrated by Jack Noel (Andersen Press)
- *This Is Not a Small Voice: Poems by Black Poets*, selected by Traci N. Todd, illustrated by Jade Orlando (Nosy Crow)

Download free accompanying teaching sequences at tinyurl.com/tp-CLiPPA26

of the imagery they bring to mind.

Give the children time to choose and explore another poem from this section, identifying the proverb in the title, what this means, whether they know it (or a variation of it) and how the poem relates to the meaning of the proverb.

If they are inspired to do so, pupils can begin to craft ideas for their own poem based on the proverb in free writing time or as a home learning activity. **TP**



Anjali Patel is lead advisory teacher at the Centre

for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE).

clpe.org.uk

Listen on
 Apple Podcasts

 Spotify

 YouTube

Brought to you by
teachwire



Browse
30+
authors

PLAY THE PODCAST
SHARE THE RESOURCES
SEE PUPILS' WRITING SOAR!

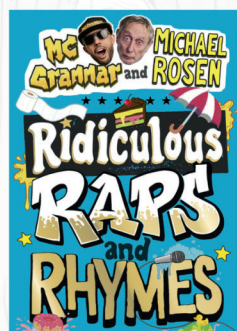
MC GRAMMAR

MICHAEL ROSEN

SHARE A VIRTUAL AUTHOR VISIT
WITH YOUR CLASSROOM!



Writing a rap with Michael
Rosen & MC Grammar



Scan to get your free
Author In Your Classroom
resource pack



Published by
Little Tiger, 2025

I'm going to make a friend

Investigate what really makes a great pal, and build belonging, confidence and persuasive writing skills in your class with **Darren Chetty's** adorable picturebook

JO CUMMINS

The start of a new school year can sometimes be a tricky time for children, especially those who find changes difficult. New teacher, new classroom, new class... all that newness can just be too much! A powerful way to help pupils find a sense of belonging and turn an unfamiliar space into something which feels more comforting is to encourage them to make a new friend. Friends can provide an emotional safety net, encourage exploration and positive risk-taking, and support regular school attendance – children want to be where their friends are.

As educators, we are in prime position to facilitate this process through careful planning and the use of excellent books, such as *I'm Going to Make a Friend*. This title centres around a child who has moved to a new home in a new neighbourhood. Their key dilemma is: *Just how do you make a new friend?* Whilst adults try to reassure them that friendships will form naturally, our protagonist isn't so sure and decides to take matters into their own hands. They decide that they are going to build their own friend from scratch. But now the question is... what kind of friend should they make?

This book provides the opportunity

for plenty of discussion around what makes a good friend and how you could be one, and lends itself to plenty of core and foundation activities.

Activities

I love using picture books as a prompt with children of all ages. *I'm Going to Make a Friend* is no exception – the text may be simple but the underlying themes and the conversations it promotes are rich. There are obviously strong links to PSHE themes, but I want to begin by exploring how this book can be used as a springboard for writing across the whole school.



Key Stage 1

Instruction writing: How to build a friend

Literacy focus: write an ordered set of instructions to help the reader build their very own junk-model friend.

Literacy objectives:

- Consider what they are going to write about before beginning
- Compose a sentence orally before writing it
- Encapsulate what they want to say, sentence by sentence
- Sequence sentences to form short narratives
- Writing for different purposes

Children often write best when their work is based on a concrete experience they have had. With that in mind, before any writing begins, the class should be provided with a range of junk modelling materials and invited to select what they need in order to build a friend. You may want to explore the different shapes and qualities of the materials available to help spark some ideas.

Taking photos of the models as they progress step-by-step will act as a visual prompt to support the children with sequencing their instructions correctly. You could encourage pupils to match an imperative verb (*cut, glue, decorate*) and time connective (*first, next, then*) to each photographed stage as a writing scaffold.

The last stage is to use their photograph scaffold to write out their instructions as numbered points in full sentences.

For a PSHE link, discuss with children how it's impossible to physically build a real-life perfect friend, but that we can think about what kind of personality traits or interests we might like them to have.

Senses poetry: what does friendship feel like?

Literacy focus: writing poetry with a simple repetitive structure.

Literacy objectives:

- Participate in discussions about what has been read to them
- Discuss their favourite words and phrases
- Write poetry to develop positive attitudes towards stamina for writing
- Use adjectives for description to create poetic imagery

In the book, the author explores what it feels like to move to a new place where you don't have any friends yet.

Pupils could work as individuals or in small groups to compose a senses poem about making a friend or entering a new classroom for the first time.

Start by talking with the children about their personal experiences of having to make friends or enter a new space for the first time. How did it make them feel inside? What sights and sounds can they remember?

Provide the children with the following structure:

Friendship looks like... (two people playing)

Friendship sounds like... (giggles on the playground)

Friendship feels like... (a warm blanket wrapped around you)

Character conversations

Literacy focus: writing in simple sentences. Using a range of punctuation at the end of sentences. Understanding the purpose of a speech bubble.

Literacy objectives:

- Begin to punctuate sentences using a capital letter and a full stop, question mark, or exclamation mark



- Link what they hear or have read to their own experiences
- Learn how to use sentences with different forms

Start by looking at pages in the book where the main character and their friend are either working together or arguing. Encourage the children to discuss or role play what the characters might be saying to each other. Note down some of their suggestions and explore which punctuation marks might go at the end and how they would affect how the sentence is read aloud.

Show, on a whiteboard or visualiser, an illustration from the book where the characters are talking. Model how to add the phrases of speech devised by the children onto the page using speech bubbles. Talk about why and where we might use them. Have pupils seen them before in any books or comics they have read?

Provide each child with a copy of one of the illustrations and ask them to write a sentence for what each character is saying in that moment.

Take it further → → →

FEELING PHILOSOPHICAL?

Author Darren Chetty is a prominent practitioner in the Philosophy for Children (P4C) movement and this picturebook lends itself to a range of interesting questions for children to discuss. You could encourage pupils to 'pick a side' and argue for or against a particular idea, or encourage a more balanced approach. Some prompts to get you started are: *Can you ever truly 'make' a perfect*

friend? Is it better for a friend to always agree with you, or to have their own ideas?

BUILD A BUDDY

Key Stage 1 children could use a range of junk modelling materials to build their perfect friend and practise basic joining techniques such as gluing, split pins, or using masking tape. Key Stage 2 children could create a more complex model; incorporating moving

mechanisms such as a slider, lever, or a simple axle would allow older pupils to make their friends blink, smile, or wave.

MATERIAL PROPERTIES

Younger children could practise naming and grouping a selection of the materials in the book (cardboard, plastic bottles, foil, fabric). They could sort the materials according to their properties (rough, smooth, shiny, flexible, rigid, shiny) and discuss why cardboard is better for building the body rather than fabric.



They could write these around the stuck-in illustration in their book, then add a speech bubble around what they have written, or they could rehearse the sentences then write them directly into pre-cut speech bubbles.

Key Stage 2

Ideal friend wanted

Literacy focus: writing a persuasive advert.

Literacy objectives:

- Draft and write by organising paragraphs around a theme
- Plan to write by identifying the audience and purpose for writing and selecting the appropriate form
- Evaluate and edit writing by proposing changes to grammar and vocabulary to increase consistency
- Use expanded noun phrases to convey complicated information concisely
- Use organisational devices to structure the text and guide the reader (e.g. bullet points, headings, underlined text)

Older pupils could investigate which materials are biodegradable or recyclable. They could even run a waterproofing test with different materials to see which 'friend' would survive a rainy day on the playground!

WHAT'S INSIDE MY HEAD?

Draw inspiration from Sandhya Prabhat's vibrant illustrations, paying particular attention to the spread where the child's thoughts and anxieties appear to literally burst out of their head in a chaotic swirl (pages nine to 10).

- Use relative clauses beginning with *who*, *which*, *where*, *when*, *whose* or *that*.

Start by reading the book together and asking the class to note when the narrator asks a question about what their new friend might be like. For example, "Will they want to play how I play? Or have their own ideas?" Ask the children why they think the author may have included questions like this. Did it make pupils start to think of their own answers to these questions as the story was being read?

Record the questions asked by the narrator. Let the children do some paired talking around other questions they might ask if they were trying to build a friend. What would be important to them? For example, "Would they prefer football or hockey?" or "Will they be quiet like me or more outgoing?" Add these questions to the list. Now guide the children to formulate a persuasive advertisement for a new best friend using the list of questions.

Key features to include:

- A catchy headline (use alliteration, word play, or a rhetorical question)
- A list of essential criteria (must be kind, must like adventures)
- A list of desirable criteria (they might support the same football team as me or love funny stories)
- A persuasive paragraph explaining why the author of the advert themselves would make a good friend

Chapter extension

Literacy focus: writing an extension for a known story.

Literacy objectives:

- Draft and write by creating settings, characters, and plot

Have the children draw a self-portrait or perhaps create a paper silhouette of themselves. Leave space around the portrait so that out of the top of their head they can use a mixed-media collage technique (using coloured papers, magazine cut-outs, wool, sequins etc) to show their own thoughts, hobbies, and worries about starting a new school year. This would be a fantastic visual way for their teacher to learn about their new pupils' personalities.

Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *The Tour at School (Because You're the New Kid!)* by Katie Clapham, illustrated by Nadia Shireen
- ❖ *Meesha Makes Friends*, by Tom Percival
- ❖ *Rock and Roll* by Ruby Amy Thompson
- ❖ *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold, illustrated by Suzanne Kaufman
- ❖ *The Worst Class in the World* by Joanna Nadin, illustrated by Rikin Parekh

- Describe characters and settings to convey action and advance the action
- Draft and write by organising paragraphs around a theme
- Use inverted commas to demarcate direct speech
- Use adverbials of time, place, and number to build cohesion within and across paragraphs

Look at the end pages of the book, where the narrator and their new real-life friend are playing happily together. Imagine, as a class, what might happen if a third child arrived at the park or in the classroom and looked unhappy. What might happen if the two friends have a disagreement?

The children should then write a short narrative sequel to the story based on one of the scenarios above and the reactions of the two friends.

Key features to include:

- Shift inner thoughts and anxieties to spoken dialogue with inverted commas and accurate sentence punctuation
- Imply how the characters are feeling via their actions rather than by directly telling the reader **TP**



Jo Cummins is an experienced primary school teacher and English leader with a passion for children's books and mental health awareness..

She currently works for a specialist educational provision in Hampshire, in a teaching and advisory role.

librarygirlandbookboy.com

[@librarygirlandbookboy](https://www.instagram.com/librarygirlandbookboy)

See the impact of Literacy Tree in 26/27

Choose **Literacy Tree** as
your trusted partner and
see improvements in
engagement, confidence
and attainment.



Expert CPD included



Aligned with DfE
Writing Framework

100%

of teachers reported increased
pupil engagement and curiosity

Read our
Impact Report



*“The impact has been transformational.
Pupils are highly engaged in writing lessons and speak
enthusiastically about the texts that inspire their work.”*

-Associate Principal, Grangehurst Primary School





PARTNER CONTENT

ASK THE EXPERT

Look beyond the physical infrastructure

Academy21's Mo Varley explains how flexible online provision can instantly scale your primary inclusion hub and prevent an attainment slide

How can schools practically manage the earlier interventions pushed by the new statutory SEND framework?

Mainstream classrooms are high-arousal environments. When a Key Stage 2 pupil begins showing early warning signs of disengagement or attendance drops, adding more tasks to a teacher's workload isn't sustainable. Partnering with a DfE-accredited online provider allows schools to instantly extend their inclusion hubs. Within 48 hours, vulnerable pupils can access structured, live learning from home, maintaining vital curriculum continuity while the school makes long-term on-site adjustments.

Can online learning truly offer the personalisation a primary child needs to develop?

True personalisation means adapting to a child's developmental baseline. Our primary specialists look at the whole child, tailoring tasks to support specific reading, writing, and cognitive goals. By controlling the environmental stimuli, we lower baseline anxiety, allowing pupils to focus entirely on their learning. Crucially, a consistent primary teacher guides them through structured daily routines, building trust and critical self-regulation skills in a safe, predictable digital setting.

How does an online platform ensure that KS2 pupils continue to build crucial oracy, speaking, and listening skills?

Oracy is baked directly into our primary curriculum. Our live lessons are small and interactive, providing safe avenues for verbal participation via audio and camera. Crucially, we remove the pressure of the 'public spotlight'. Pupils who are too anxious to speak immediately can start by using private chat, polls, and emojis, gradually building the psychological safety

required to find their voice and speak confidently among peers.



EXPERT PROFILE

NAME: Mo Varley

JOB TITLE: Head of student welfare

AREA OF EXPERTISE: Trauma-informed practice, safeguarding

BEST PART OF MY JOB: Watching students thrive in online education

How do you keep young learners engaged in front of a screen without causing digital fatigue?

We don't expect primary children to sit passively staring at a screen. Our KS2 provision is delivered in highly structured, 40-minute live lessons with built-in active breaks. Lessons are designed by primary specialists who interweave movement, gamified learning, and creative tasks alongside core reading, writing, and maths. It's an active, two-way dialogue where every child is continually prompted to respond, play, and interact.

If a primary school uses online AP for a vulnerable student, does it make eventual reintegration back into a mainstream setting harder?

The goal of Academy21 is always to act as a bridge, not a permanent destination. From 2026, we are introducing our successful reintegration and wellbeing sessions for KS2 to explicitly support this transition. Combined with our custom Individual Teaching Plans (ITPs) and theme-based curriculum, these sessions actively develop young active citizens. By encouraging deep thinking on social topics while intentionally building their emotional resilience, we ensure they are fully equipped for a smooth, confident return to the physical classroom.

ASK ME ABOUT

- Online education** – how studying online could be the key to breaking down the barriers a student faces when accessing education
- Student-centred learning** – an approach which puts a young person at the centre of their learning journey rather than asking them to fit a pre-determined mould
- Student welfare** – putting wellbeing front and centre and recognising that without this, learning will not happen

WAGOLL

How to Train Your Dragon School: The Fight of the Flamestrike

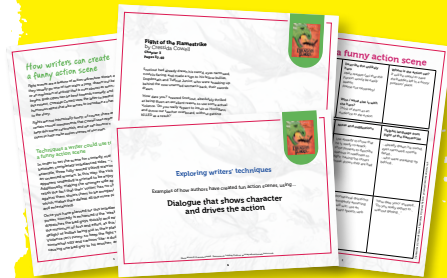
Peer inside the mind of the author and help pupils understand how to write a humorous fight scene



© heatherchuter 2025

The Fight of the Flamestrike, by Cressida Cowell (£7.99, Hachette) is out now.

DOWNLOAD
RESOURCES AT



Download your **FREE**, exclusive teaching pack to help you explore both this extract and the rest of the book with your class.

[tinyurl.com/
tp-Flamestrike](https://tinyurl.com/tp-Flamestrike)

How to Train Your Dragon School is my new adventure series, set in the Isle of Berk's Training School for Vikings and Dragons, where Heroes Are Made! However, Hiccup and his dragons, Toothless and Windwalker, are bottom of the class in pretty much everything.

In book two in the series, *The Fight of the Flamestrike*, we join Hiccup and friends, who are supposed to be learning about enemy ships at sea. But when they come across a mysterious vessel, Hiccup's heart sinks. There is something deeply spooky about this ship and they really, really shouldn't get on board... But like so many occasions before in Hiccup's life, they are going to do it anyway.

In this particular chapter, the Viking students have boarded the spooky ship as part of a Sneak Night Attack Exercise, without considering that there might be a crew hiding on board. Cue a chaotic fight scene between the Vikings, Dragons and Gladioli, a magnificent adversary who turns out to be Hiccup's long-lost aunt.

I'm creating a sense of chaos in this scene with characters talking or shouting over one another, long sentences and different fonts and

text sizes. There's a lot of movement in my illustrations (I do the pictures, too) which are deliberately child-like and scrawly so that young readers don't feel alienated. The direction of travel in my illustrations is mostly, and rather chaotically, from left to right, to encourage the child on and give a feeling of momentum and drive. I am using all of my creative powers to make you feel immersed in the fight scene while also hopefully making pupils (and mums, dads, and teachers) laugh out loud.

I always write my books with reading aloud in mind. I think about the books as a performance, and the mouth-feel of the words, the loudness or softness, or bellow-y-ness of the characters. It's why I gave Toothless a stammer, and why each character has his or her unique way of speaking – to encourage the adult to lose their inhibitions and make a fool of themselves while reading the book.

5 TIPS ON WRITING A FIGHT SCENE

- 1 Decide at the start what the fight scene is meant to show the reader: is it demonstrating the power of one side over the other? What will the outcome mean to the story, does it move the plot along?
- 2 Think about the characters of the people fighting and how they can be displayed. For example, here, Snotlout is as sneaky and bullish as he is in lessons. Hiccup would have tried to talk first...

- 3 Consider what weapons are being used – if you're writing a historical story, you might need to do some research. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the weapon? Are weapons even needed? One of Gladioli's weapons is her experience so that she doesn't even need a sword...
- 4 Fights almost always involve movement of some kind, which you will have to describe, using words that suggest

action. Sometimes it's helpful to sit and imagine what the fight looks like in your head (or perhaps even draw some rough sketches) before you write it down.

- 5 You don't always need a lot of words, as you can see in this extract. With fights – as with all writing – it's often best to write it down then edit it right back. Long fight sequences can become tiresome for the reader.



Extract from

pages 37-40

This physical description shows that Snotlout is not calm, unlike the woman, as we'll see in a moment

The use of this word makes it clear that the odds aren't in her favour, and that she's the underdog.

This casual action shows she isn't panicking

There's not a lot of description in this paragraph which shows how quickly the fight is over.

Dogs were the inspiration for these dragons!

Hooligans aren't very good at spelling...

Snotlout had already drawn his sword, eyes narrowed, **nostrils flaring**, and made a sign to his fellow **bullies**, Dogsbreath and Tuffnut Junior, who were sneaking up behind the now **unarmed** woman's back, their swords drawn.

'How dare you?' sneered Snotlout, absolutely thrilled at being given an excellent reason to use some actual violence. 'Do you really expect to insult us Hooligans, and throw our teacher overboard, without getting **KILLED** as a result?'

The **magnificent** woman **examined her fingernails**.

'Well, yes I do, actually,' she said consideringly. 'Think again,' smiled Snotlout, through gritted teeth. He winked at his cronies, and all three of them attacked.

The woman made three sharp wrestling cries, as she caught Snotlout by the sword arm, then bent double so that Snotlout's sword hilt landed on Tuffnut's helmet and her stuck-out bottom winded Dogsbreath entirely. They landed one, two, three, in a row on the deck, and the woman launched them neatly and precisely, one, two, three, over the side, in three gigantic splashes, the three little pug-nosed dragons howling and barking excitedly in triumph.

The small man she was handcuffed to made little cries of protest as he was dragged this way and that way with each brilliantly performed fighting move.

'**I DO, BECAUSE I AM A TROO-BORN HOOLIGAN MYSELF, YOU USELESS JELLYFISH!**' yelled the woman.

Confirming they're bullies adds to the comedy of the impending fight – they're not victims in this situation.

The word *magnificent* asks the reader to question again who is going to win this fight?

Repetition of *one, two, three* again showing how decisively the fight is won. Groups of three are also an effective way to emphasise a point and give a rhythm.

Introducing a bit of visual humour!

You can tell she's part of the Hooligan tribe because she communicates a bit like other Hooligan adults here, like Gobber the Belch or Stoick the Vast – the 'useless jellyfish' insult is very similar to something Gobber would say! I love a strong girl hero, and Gladioli of the Monobrow (for this is her) was great fun to write.

Lexical FESTIVAL

Sort your prepositions from your conjunctions and your verbs from your adjectives with entertaining and creative grammar poetry

PIE CORBETT

I've always thought that grammar can be taught through creative games. Children need to understand the function of a word in a sentence – its job. This is because words can fall into different word classes. So 'green' can be an adjective but also a noun, if you are a golfer! Also, children need to know what something is – but also how to use it effectively as a writer – hence the notion of 'grammar for writing'. These poetic games focus on word classes, are fun to play, and provide the dual purpose of deepening understanding about grammar as well as using grammar to create.

Nouns

We know that a word is functioning as a noun because you can put 'the', 'a' or 'an' in front of it, and it can be pluralised. The simplest game to start with is 'I Spy', to gain a sense that a noun labels something. Noun 'races' make a fun warmup – making lists of how many things children can think of. Animals, girls' names, and boys' names are three good categories. Provide a time limit.

Noun phrases

To work on developing noun phrases, put up an image of a setting. The children have to list as many 'things' as they can see. Then add 'the' and an adjective... but NO verb, so they describe somewhere just using noun phrases. In this example, I stood on Stroud station and simply made a list of what I could see, using 'the' plus an adjective. Funnily enough, it was quite hard not to use a verb!

Stroud Station

*The rusted chains.
The red brick housing. The sturdy bridge.
The metallic arches. The stern struts.
The bolts.
The scabbed paint. The peeling.
The grassy sidings.
The purple buddleia. The peck of pigeons.
The sandwich crumbs. The coffee steam.
The clenched hands. The prayer.
The platform shadows.
The brown wooden awning. The stripe of sunlit tarmac.
The silvered rails. The distant lines.
The Tannoy update.
The heads turning.*

*The discarded apple core; the faded newspaper;
the child's broken toy; the rough chippings;
the wooden sleepers; the shy rat.*

*The sudden voice. The pre-recorded voice.
The delay. The irritation. The distant shimmer of heat.
The willow's stoop. The brambles.
The summer poppy.
The anticipation. The waiting.
The tender silence.
The waiting. The blackbird's song.
The still station.
The waiting.*

© Pie Corbett

One of the key writing points about nouns is to do with the ability to 'name it'. Instead of '*The teacher stroked his dog*', it is more powerful to make the nouns more precise: '*Mr Jinx stroked the rottweiler*'.

Adjectives

Simply put, an adjective adds to the noun, changing our view of it by giving extra information. Its job in a sentence is to modify the noun by adding extra information. Provide a list of nouns for the children to choose from, e.g. *cat, thief, princess, king, snake, spider, tree, ocean, mountain, tower, mirror, blanket, hat, lion, tiger*, etc.

Select one, for example, 'cat', and write it on the board, leaving a space for an adjective, then invite the children to list the adjectives that might go before the word:

The cat.

Give them one minute to list as many possible adjectives as they can generate. The ability to generate rapidly is key to writing, e.g. *fat, small, large, skinny, slim, slender, stout, bold, brave, cunning, sly, shy, peaceful, desperate, shabby, shaggy, calm, quiet, awful, smelly, disgraceful, deliberate, dirty, dutiful, faithful, kind, gentle, angry, savage, snarling, barking, yapping, growling, unkempt*, etc.

When writing descriptions such as settings or character, provide key nouns and ask the children to list as many adjectives as they can dream up in a short period of time, e.g. two minutes. For character, you might ask for lists for – eyes, hair, hands, mouth.

Try an adjective alphabet to describe an animal, e.g.:

A is an angry cat,

B is a bold cat,

C is a calm cat,

D is a dull cat, etc.

'Change the mood' involves providing a sentence with no adjectives. Pupils have to add in adjectives to create different moods: *quiet, happy, angry, comic, frightening, heroic, peaceful, gloomy*.

The soldier walked into the room, picked up the sandwich and stared at the view.

Key writing points about adjectives include:

- Not using too many, e.g. *the enormous, round, red, spongy, inflated, drifting balloon...*
- Not using ones that mean the same thing, e.g. *the tired, weary, exhausted teacher....*
- Not telling the reader what is obvious, e.g. *the huge giant peered at the tiny flea.*

“Children need to understand the function of a word in a sentence”

Verbs

Verbs are the engine of sentences. They make things happen. Verbs are 'doing' words that show what someone or something is, has or does.

Make a list of possible subjects to write about such as *trees, rocks, clouds, snowflakes*, etc. For modal verbs you might choose one noun and use the opening phrase, '*If xxxx could xxxxx.*' Model some sentences together before the children write their own.

If trees could walk, there would be plenty of muddy footprints.

If rocks could fly, there would be grey clouds.

One very common problem involving 'could' is that children, and many adults, often say and write, '*I could of*' instead of '*I could have*'. Imagine that you hear a sound in the night. What 'could' it 'have been'? Here is a way to end the list poem by revealing what actually made the noise:

It could have been a police car zooming past.

It could have been mice fighting with cats.

It could have been a giant sneezing.

It could have been a tsunami crashing along.

But no, it was only Dad snoring.



Support early language development and communication

Story Talk is a research-informed, evidence-based language programme that comprises of an online subscription delivering resources and training plus wordless picture books to support rich adult-child interactions.

The Story Talk programme

The **Story Talk** subscription provides the resources and training required to implement the programme including guidance and support for staff and ways to engage families.



Adverbs

James Reeves wrote an excellent poem that is worth searching for online, which starts every line with 'Slowly' and lists slow things. This idea could be used with any adverb:

*Slowly, the clouds shuffle by.
Slowly, the snake sheds its skin.
Silently, the thistle grows upwards.
Silently, the sun sets with no fuss.*

Get children writing in pairs and swapping their ideas over to reply. Give them a starting point such as 'going to the zoo'. They then write a series of dilemmas and resolutions using *unfortunately* / *luckily*.

Partner A: *Unfortunately, the gorillas escaped.*

Partner B: *Luckily, the zookeeper had a gorilla costume and could mingle.*

Partner A: *Unfortunately, he had put on weight over Christmas and the costume was too tight and burst open.*

Partner B: *Luckily, the elephant gave him a lift so the gorillas could not catch him.*

Preposition

Prepositions are words that tell us where things are and sometimes when things happen. Think of two things that you can see, rather like looking at a painting, photograph or postcard of a place, e.g. *a tower on a hill*. Use prepositions of place and time to describe them, e.g.:

*Upon the distant mountain,
A stone tower glowers.*

*Upon the tallest tree,
An owl waits.*

*After the rain falls,
Silence gathers in pools.*

*After the stars glitter,
The moon stills the city.*

Common prepositions of place and time: *after, beyond, upon, beneath, above, below, beside, between, underneath, inside, among, before, against, around, outside, during*

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that stands instead of a noun:

The boy ate the porridge.
He ate **it**.

My favourite poetry grammar game is to create a list of similes or metaphors by playfully saying what 'he', 'she', or 'it' is like. This is Tim, aged seven, who writes to create an ominous mood.

*He is in a misty cloud
That floats through a bewildered sky.
He is in a swirling smoke
That bows at his honour.
He is in a sharp flash
of fierce lightning.
He is the sharp blade
Of a golden knife.
He is a buzzing fly
That shimmers in a velvet web.*

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are 'joining words'. They link things and actions. One little game is to work in pairs offering explanations using the word 'because'.

Partner A starts by saying something like, 'Jo was tired.'

Partner B repeats the sentence and adds an explanation such as 'Jo was tired because she had been running'.

Partner A repeats the explanation and adds another explanation such as 'She had been running because a dragon chased her'.

Partner B repeats the explanation and adds another explanation such as 'A dragon chased her because she had tried to steal its gold'.

The game continues until you run dry, then swap roles so partner B sets up the next round. It helps to start with a character in a negative position: *Jo was tired, hungry, sad, angry, moody, lonely, scared*, etc.

The more we use and refer to word classes while writing creatively, the more likely the knowledge is to stick. One-off lessons do not work well, as children forget. Weave the terminology lightly into lessons where the main focus is to create something meaningful. **TP**



Further ideas for all types of writing can be found in The Book of Dragons by Pie and Melanie Corbett. Get your copy now at

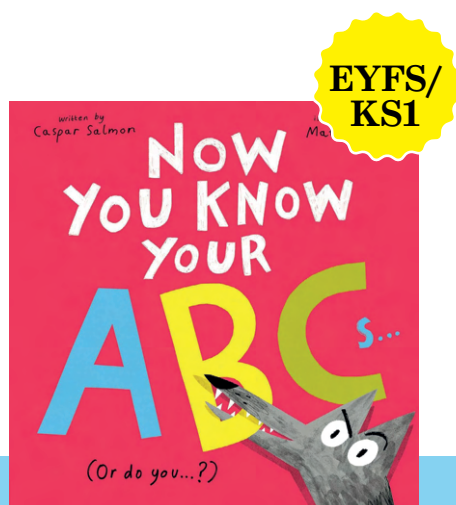
tinyurl.com/tp-BoD

Book CLUB



We review five new titles that your class will love

REVIEWS BY KATE HEAP



EYFS/
KS1

Now You Know Your ABC (Or do you...?)

***by Caspar Salmon,
ill. Matt Hunt***

(£12.99, Nosy Crow)

Clever and absolutely hilarious, this alphabet book goes beyond the usual 'A is for Apple' to something much more sinister! When we get to 'D is for Danger', a menacing wolf leaps out of the shadows to chase the reader through all sorts of unexpected places. Suddenly, the letters of the alphabet aren't just for nouns. Author Caspar Salmon branches out into conjunctions, adjectives, verbs and adverbs in an incredibly creative way. This engaging technique points young readers towards interesting aspects of language, and Matt Hunt's captivating illustrations keep them on their toes as the wolf creeps through the pages. This ingenious picture book is ideal for EYFS and KS1 read-alouds. Children will love trying to spot the sneaky wolf...



KS1

Star Kitties: Detective Kitty is on the Case!

by Laura Ellen Anderson

(7.99, Farshore)

From the author behind the hugely popular Amelia Fang and Rainbow Grey series, comes the charming world of Whiskery Paw where each Star Kitty has their own story to tell. From Reading Kitty to Artist Kitty to Inventor Kitty and more, readers ages five and up are sure to find their favourite. At the centre of it all is bold and curious Tabitha Flair. After finding a magical key in her garden, Tabitha steps through a sparkling door into Whiskery Paw. Here time stops and she can spend as long as she wants with her new friends. In *Detective Kitty is on the Case*, Tabitha must help Purrlock Holmes find the missing Queen Moggaline. Adventure and mischief take them all over the place, but will Tabitha be able to solve the mystery and still make it back in time for her birthday party?



KS1/
KS2

The Animal Detectives

***by Moira Butterfield,
ill. Merle Goll***

(£10.99, Buster Books)

Detectives Harriet Whiskerton and Vince Van Shell are on the case, discovering the truth behind nature's most puzzling behaviours. From damaged trees to sugar thieves to strange piles of slime, there are so many mysteries in the wild. Brightly coloured, completely captivating detective-themed case files reveal these intriguing natural mysteries. They're accompanied by important clues, fascinating evidence and scientific facts that back it all up. Interviews with suspects, analysis of crime scenes and wanted posters help readers to investigate strange animal behaviour and establish who is guilty of these unusual findings. Readers will love working through questions and evidence to come to their own conclusions.

→→→ **RECOMMENDED**
RESOURCES

plazoom



Full curriculum coverage Y1-Y6

HONE THOSE GRAMMAR SKILLS

Real Grammar provides you with everything you need to teach and embed all objectives from the grammar curriculum for Y1-6. Its five-step TEACH, PRACTISE, REVISIT, APPLY, REVISE approach has been designed to support you to deliver quality-first lessons and ensure consistent progress for all pupils.

Visit plazoom.com/real-grammar

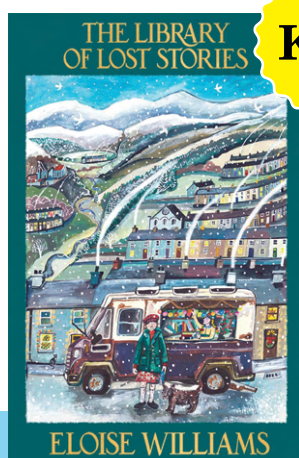


KS2

How to Steal the Future
by Christopher Edge

(£7.99, Macmillan Children's)

Overflowing with all the twists and alternative realities for which Christopher Edge is so notorious, *How to Steal the Future* is a cleverly plotted science fiction puzzle. Pacey, thrilling and cryptic, this book will have older middle grade readers completely gripped. Drew Blake enters a heavily guarded, always changing maze in search of secret technology that allows the finder to see the future. Many young people have attempted it before him, including his sister, Evie, who has gone missing. Determined to find her and discover a way to harness this potential power, Drew has only 67 minutes to make his way to the centre, but this is no ordinary maze and any logical solution fails...



KS2

The Library of Lost Stories

by Eloise Williams

(£8.99, Firefly Press)

This book is full of wonderful things: a vintage mobile library, the magic of Christmas, the joy of reading, and the power of friendship. This is a treasure of a book full of beautiful truths and healing broken hearts. Eleven-year-old Noni lives in a small Welsh town. Struggling with the loss of her mum and bailiffs at their door, she's desperate to help her dad. Discovering the abandoned mobile library van gives her an idea. A group of new friends (and a charming stray dog) work together to fix it up, each bringing their talents to the project. Eloise Williams has captured the vibrancy of life in 1970's Wales. Local expressions and the power of language bring life to the tale, emphasising the importance of sharing our own stories.

Meet the author

ELOISE WILLIAMS ON THE JOYS OF REGIONAL SLANG, AND WHY STORIES BELONG TO EVERYONE



Noni has a real passion for stories. Do you have a favourite from when you were her age?

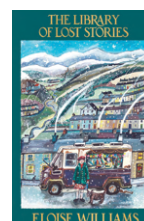
I was lucky enough to grow up opposite a library, so I enjoyed lots of books, but the stories I loved the most were the ones that were linked to the local landscape. These tales were passed by word of mouth and were exaggerated with each new telling! The witch who lived on the corner of our street; the ghosts who haunted the castle ruins; the giant who took a bite from a hill... The Welsh can tell a good story!

Language can be such a reflection of our identity and history – what's your favourite Welsh or Wenglish saying?

Wenglish has always been a part of my speech. I say, 'over by there' at least twice a day. But I think my favourite Welshism is to link people with the jobs they do. I've used Sian the Shop in the book, and my grandpa was known as George the Milk because he was a milkman.

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

The book is about how stories belong to everyone and how important it is that they are told. I hope it will inspire teachers and students to delve into lots of creative activities. Storytelling, writing, reading, discovering the history and legends of their local landscape, recording what happened on the way to school, celebrating stories in any and every way possible. I hope the book will remind people how interesting their own stories are, and will ignite a passion for telling stories in everyone who reads it.



***The Library of Lost Stories*, by Eloise Williams (£8.99, Firefly Press), is out on 3 September 2026.**



teachwire
talks

IF TECH IS SO
SMART, WHY ARE
**TEACHERS
SO BUSY?**

**A podcast exploring what
teachers need from tech to
stay, cope & thrive.**

**Practical ideas for
making edtech
work harder for you.**



Scan to listen or search
Teachwire Talks



Listen on
Apple Podcasts



Spotify

Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration to your classroom

1

Transform your school's reading culture

Through Bookmark's School Network Programme, primary schools in areas of greatest need receive ongoing annual support, including up to £1,000 of fully funded, high-quality books, expert reading for pleasure training and CPD, networking opportunities, and family engagement resources to help foster a love of reading across the whole school. In 2024/25, 96% of participating schools said the programme inspired improvements to their reading culture and reading for pleasure provision. Check your school's eligibility and apply by 30 September at bookmarkreading.org/snp



2



Protecting primary schools from wear & tear

Primary schools are vibrant, active spaces where walls and doors can quickly show signs of everyday wear and tear. Yeoman Shield wall and door protection systems help keep learning environments looking clean, safe and well maintained. Designed to absorb impacts from busy corridors, classrooms and dining areas, our durable solutions help prevent costly damage caused by bags, furniture and daily activity. Easy to maintain and available in a range of colours and finishes, Yeoman Shield products combine practical protection with a welcoming appearance, helping primary schools create bright, resilient spaces where young pupils can learn and thrive. Visit yeomanshield.com

4

Confidence starts with Bikeability!

Data from The Bikeability Trust shows that 93 per cent of Bikeability trainees say the programme makes them more confident riding on today's roads. The national cycle training scheme enhances schools' active travel ambitions, reduces school run congestion and creates ready-to-learn classrooms from the first bell. Keep up the confidence by pledging your school to take part in Cycle to School Week from 5 to 9 October (cycletoschoolweek.com), where participating schools can win a fleet of Squish bikes and helmets (T&Cs apply). Contact hello@bikeabilitytrust.org



©BikeabilityTrust

3

A new direction

Primary Arts is a free programme for London's state primary schools and SEND settings, unlocking creative potential, cultural capital and skills for staff and pupils. It supports curriculum development, enrichment, wellbeing, confidence, personal interests and professional development, with access and inclusion at its heart.

The 2026–2027 academic year is the final year of the Primary Arts programme, and we'd love for your school to take part this year. For each strand, priority will be given to schools that have not yet participated. Booking requests open Wednesday 9 September 2026. Learn more at bit.ly/4pLfSa9



5



Rooted in books

Literacy Tree is a whole-school, book-based curriculum and platform, designed to inspire a love of reading and writing. Our award-winning resources use high-quality literature to create meaningful opportunities for children to read, write and think.

One child in a Literacy Tree school recently commented: "We don't write because we have to. We write because we have something to say."

With carefully sequenced planning, expert CPD, assessment and implementation support, Literacy Tree gives teachers everything they need to build a consistent, ambitious English curriculum. Discover more at literacytree.com or call 020 3196 0140.



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To observe closely and identify key shapes, patterns and textures
- To use pencil techniques (line, shading, pressure, texture) to sketch accurately
- To break complex objects into simple shapes
- To evaluate and refine their work

Reconstructing ancient art: Viking jewellery



Take inspiration from beautiful, historical pieces, and hone realistic sketching skills, with **Sarah Farrell**

[@SarahFarrellKS2](#) tinyurl.com/tp-SarahFarrell

When we think of Vikings, images such as giant ships, impressive helmets, and other warfare paraphernalia may immediately come to mind, but this ancient civilisation was also home to expert crafters of delicate and stunning jewellery. From brooches and pins to rein-holders and rings, the Vikings produced all manner of useful and decorative pieces, using materials such as silver, bronze, glass, amber, and even animal bones. The range of textures and patterns in Viking jewellery is a perfect vehicle for teaching realistic sketching skills, and can tie nicely into both art and history units.



START HERE

To begin the lesson, show pupils a selection of items of Viking jewellery (e.g. brooches or pendants). Ideally, they would have real examples to look at; however, enlarged photographs of real artefacts work well, too. You can find lots of images of recreated jewellery online, and there are some great images of actual historical pieces from institutions like the British Museum (see tinyurl.com/tp-BMvikingjewellery). Encourage the children to observe the items and note down or discuss what they see. You can give prompts such as: What patterns or symbols can you see? What material is it made from? Is it rough or smooth? What is the purpose of this item?



MAIN LESSON

1 | OUTLINE AND SIMPLE SHAPES

For this lesson, you may decide that pupils can select their own item of jewellery to sketch, or you may want everyone to do the same one. Whichever approach you choose, model the process step-by-step using a visualiser so that pupils can clearly see each stage. Start by demonstrating observation of your chosen piece of jewellery and identifying the basic shapes (e.g. circles or triangles). Lightly sketch the outline with a pencil, explaining how the use of faint lines makes it easier to refine and adjust the drawing. For circular

shapes, demonstrate turning the paper to make curved lines easier and more controlled due to the natural movement of the wrist (there's a good visual of this technique from 1:10 – 1:40 here: tinyurl.com/tp-TurningCircles). Model placing key features such as a pin or a central pattern, but emphasise that at this stage, the focus is light lines and simple shapes. Once you have demonstrated, pupils can then complete their initial sketches.

2 | ADDING DETAIL AND TEXTURE

Show examples of line and shading to create depth and texture and task children with identifying which techniques have been used (e.g. hatching, stippling or cross-hatching) and why

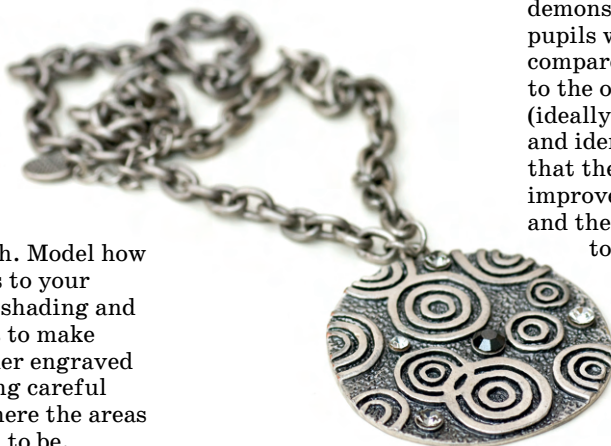
“The Vikings produced all sorts of useful and decorative things, using silver, bronze, amber and bone”



they are successful. This can be structured using sentence stems: ‘Using _____ creates a _____ effect well because _____.’ ‘Depth is created using _____.’

Depending on which lessons have led up to this one, you may need to demonstrate the different techniques and allow pupils to practise them away from their jewellery sketch. Model how to add patterns to your sketch and use shading and line techniques to make them seem either engraved or raised, paying careful attention to where the areas of shadow need to be.

This is where a visualiser is particularly useful, as it allows you to show your thinking and demonstrate artistic decisions and alterations. Allow pupils time to continue with their own sketches, focusing on detail, depth and texture.



3 | REFINING AND IMPROVING

At this point, show pupils both your drawing and the reference picture or artefact. Ask them to compare the drawing with the original artefact or image and identify its strengths and areas for development. You could provide sentence stems to structure this:

‘_____ works well because _____.’

‘The shape/ pattern/ depth is particularly accurate in the _____.’

‘The shape/ pattern/ depth could be improved on the _____ because _____.’

‘One alteration that I would make is to _____.’

Encourage pupils to share their feedback on your drawing. Using your own drawing allows pupils to practise giving constructive feedback and see how artists respond to it by making purposeful improvements. Decide as a group on what the two or three most important tweaks are and model editing the drawing. Focus on things that can be easily changed (such as darkening outlines, strengthening shading, correcting the shape or adding missing detail) rather than starting the entire picture again. When you have demonstrated this, provide pupils with time to compare their own sketch to the original images (ideally with a partner) and identify clear actions that they will take to improve their artwork and then allow them time to make corrections.

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

EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Pupils could label their artwork with the techniques that they have used and why they have chosen them.
- Children could select a small section of their drawing (such as a particular pattern or stone) and re-draw it (potentially larger) to add more detail and focus in on the texture and light and dark areas.
- To give pupils a chance to see their peers’ work, you could do a gallery where books are left open and children move around to see others’ drawings. This should be followed up by pupils sharing particular strengths in pieces that they saw.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Where should the darkest and lightest areas be?
- Which line techniques will help to create rough or smooth textures?
- Which shapes do you notice first?
- How can we make the pattern look engraved or raised?

Maths



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to use maths journalling to structure problem solving and mathematical reasoning
- How to activate prior learning before tackling a new mathematical challenge
- How to capture working, false starts, diagrams, jottings and explanations as valuable mathematical evidence

Turn maths problems into creative enquiry



Use a simple journalling technique, and a robot called Trev, to transform mathematical thinking, with **Marc Bowen**

raglanciwwcprimary.co.uk [f raglanciwwcprimary.co.uk](https://raglanciwwcprimary.co.uk)

For a long time, maths felt a little bit like something being delivered *to* the children, rather than being genuinely explored *with* them. Many pupils were procedurally confident, but less resilient in mathematical investigation. If they could see the calculation, all was well. If that same calculation was hidden within a problem, the mathematical mist descended. Having listened to Dr Kirsten Fenton and Holly Drummond discussing maths journalling, I realised this might be the missing scaffold: a structure with enough space for struggle, creativity and, in our case, a robot called Trev...

START HERE

The starting point is not the journalling itself, but the mathematical culture around it. My Year 5 class needed permission to slow down, make a productive 'mess', get things wrong and see all of this as valuable mathematical thinking. To support this, I created a simple visual structure built around a clip-art robot avatar, affectionately named Trev by the children. Trev appears at each stage of the process: download, investigate and communicate. These visual prompts are not the learning, of course, but they gave the children something concrete to hold onto while they developed a more exploratory mathematical mindset.



MAIN LESSON

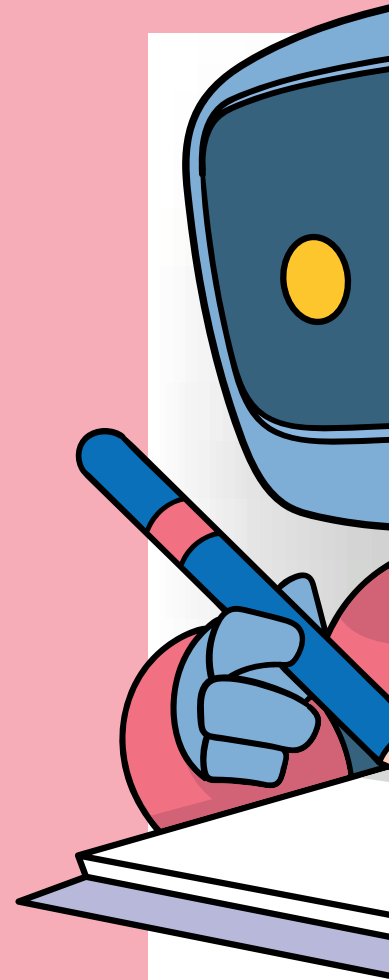
1 | FROM PASSIVE TO ACTIVE

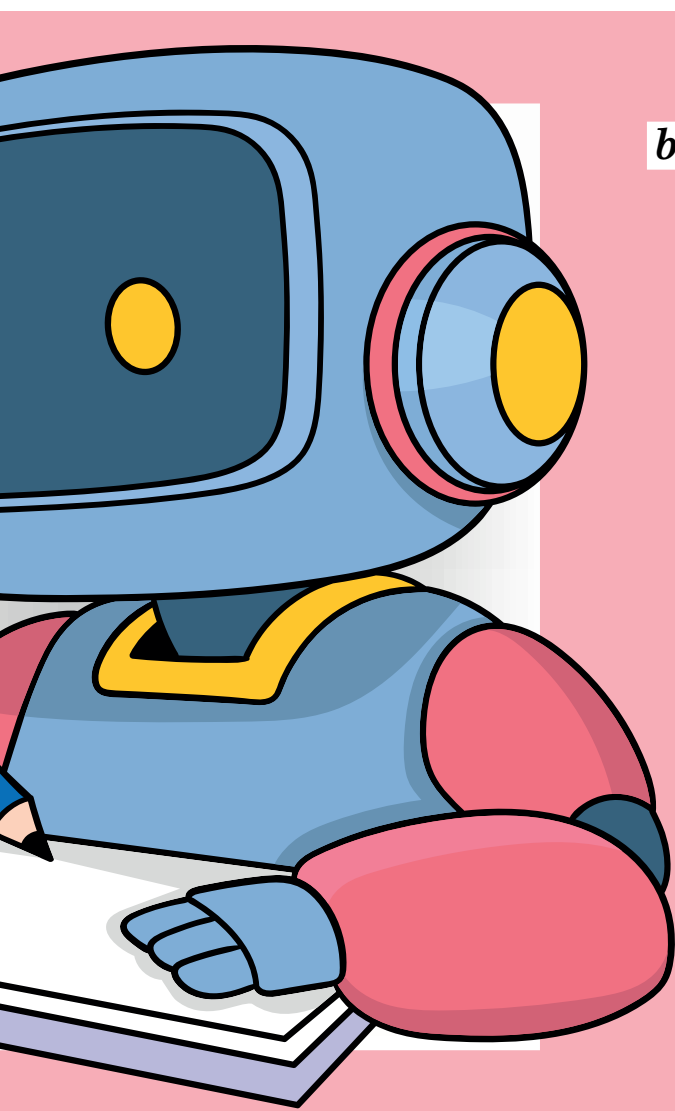
Prior to introducing Trev, I had been looking for a way to move my class away from passive maths behaviours. They could complete calculations, often quickly and neatly, but I wanted them to become more functional mathematicians: children who could find the maths within a context, reason around a problem and cope when the path ahead was not immediately obvious.

The first stage of our journalling is 'download'. This is where the children pause before rushing into the problem and quite simply unload what they already know. If we are revisiting area and perimeter, for example,

they might flick back through their books, recall formulae, jot examples, sketch a shape, note key vocabulary or identify previous mistakes that are worth remembering. This has been one of the most powerful changes. Exercise books are no longer a record of work that we have finished and abandoned; they have become a living resource for future thinking.

Alongside this prior knowledge, the children also download the question itself. What are we actually being asked? What information matters? What do we need to combine from our own knowledge and from the problem in front of us? This stage might look a little like the old 'underline the keywords' approach, but it is much less mechanical and far more thoughtful, warming up the mathematical cogs.





“Exercise books have become a living resource for future thinking”

Did they reach a dead end and need to rethink their approach? Could they represent their answer in another way? This stage has strengthened both written reasoning and mathematical talk, as children now have far more to discuss – because the journalling captures the process, not just the answer.

As pupils became more confident, I introduced my own adaptation: Freeway Trev. If, part-way through the modelling or after the ‘download’ stage, a child feels ready to fly free, they can take the freeway and continue independently. Crucially, this is not a one-way road. They may drive off, hit a roadblock, and come back to me. This has helped remove the quiet hierarchy that can so easily develop in maths lessons. Some days a child takes the freeway; other days they stay close. Neither is a badge of honour or a mark of shame. It is simply responsive learning.

The biggest lesson for me has been to slow down. A full ‘Trev’ journalling sequence does not need to fit neatly into one lesson. Sometimes the download stage reveals that we need to revisit prior learning before going anywhere near the main problem. Sometimes the investigate stage deserves to stretch into tomorrow. That is not lost time. In fact, we are busier mathematically while doing less. The depth is where the learning is.

My main caution would be not to introduce all three stages too quickly. I tried that. It was not my finest hour. In hindsight, I would spend time embedding download first, then gradually introduce investigate and communicate. Trev may be a small robot, but he needs careful handling!

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

2 | PROBLEM SOLVING

The second stage is ‘investigate’. This is where the problem solving really begins. At first, this was the point at which some children looked at me with mild panic. “What do we write?” was a regular question. The answer became: anything that might help. A drawing, a doodle, an array, a bar model, a number line, a table, a calculation, a sentence, a wrong turn, a crossed-out idea. All of it matters because all of it captures thinking.

For my most procedurally confident learners, this was initially unsettling. They liked columns, correct answers, and a pristine page. However, a pristine page is not always a thinking page. To support them, I used my own maths book under the visualiser and journalled alongside them. For the first

few weeks (and honestly for longer than I had expected) I modelled each stage repeatedly. Sometimes I worked before them, sometimes with them, and sometimes I paused the class to show how my own approach had changed. This was crucial. Simply telling children to be exploratory is not enough; they need to see what that kind of thinking looks like.

3 | REASONING

The third stage is ‘communicate’. This is where pupils return to the original question and make sense of the mathematical journey they have taken.

The expectation is not simply, ‘The answer is...’ Instead, they are encouraged to explain, prove, justify and reflect. What did they find? How do they know? What worked? What did not?

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Gradually reduce the visual support so that pupils move from ‘Trev’ stickers to simple journal headings: download, investigate and communicate.
- Build a class bank of sentence stems for the communicate stage, such as “I know this because...”, “At first I thought...”, and “I changed my approach when...”.
- Use anonymised journal pages for whole-class discussion about effective mathematical thinking, including wrong turns and revisions.
- Revisit the structure after holidays or when moving into a new maths focus, increasing the scaffolding before gently pulling it away again.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Are the children using their previous maths learning as a resource, or simply treating their books as a completed archive?
- Does the journalling capture genuine mathematical thinking, including uncertainty, revision and proof?
- Have I slowed down enough for the children to become confident with the process, rather than simply compliant with the layout?

History



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Ancient Egyptians used a formal pictorial writing system called hieroglyphs
- How to decipher encrypted messages using a hieroglyph translation mat
- Critical thinking and logical sequencing skills to decode and order instructions in the correct sequence
- Developing general language, reading and problem-solving skills

Ancient Egyptian code-breaking challenge



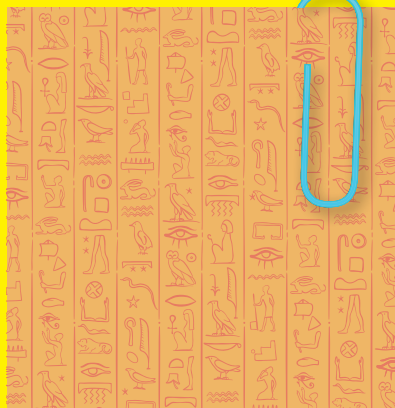
Introduce pupils to hieroglyphs by decoding mysterious hidden messages, with **Paul Ian Cross**

[@questfriendz](#) questfriendz.com

The ancient Egyptians remain one of the most fascinating and popular civilisations for pupils to learn about. In *SuperQuesters Mission: Desert Danger*, the main characters have to solve puzzles, including breaking a hieroglyph code, to stop Professor Vortec from destroying the desert. In this three-part cross-curriculum code-breaking challenge, children need to work together, just like the SuperQuesters. Pupils will learn about ancient Egypt, and how hieroglyphs impact communication today, and develop key critical thinking and sequencing skills, while having fun and being engaged.

START HERE

Tell pupils that they will be looking at hieroglyphs and show some examples on the board. Explain that hieroglyphs were a pictorial system developed and used by the ancient Egyptians. Unlike in today's modern writing systems, hieroglyphs did not only represent a single letter. The symbols could also stand for words, sounds, or even ideas. Show pupils images of different modern common symbols on the board (e.g. emojis, street signs) to reinforce that even today, symbols or images can be used to communicate meaning. Ask pupils what they think might be the benefits of using images or symbols as opposed to a letter system.



MAIN LESSON

1 | THE CODEBREAKER CHALLENGE

Tell children that the use of hieroglyphs began to die out after the Romans invaded Egypt, in 30 BCE. As such, people were unable to decipher hieroglyphs. Explain that an ancient Egyptian stone slab, known as the Rosetta Stone, was used to decipher hieroglyphs. Show pupils an image of the Rosetta Stone on the board, and explain that the stone has the same text carved on it in three different writing systems – hieroglyphics, demotic script and the Greek alphabet. By comparing the pictorial symbols to the Greek words they

already knew, historians were able to break the code and decipher the hieroglyphs.

Show children the hieroglyph translation mat (see download panel on the right). Ensure that pupils have a copy each, as well as displaying one on the board to refer to. Explain that historians discovered that the most common hieroglyphs, known as uniliteral signs, represented a single sound or letter. Explain that today, pupils will become codebreakers and will need to use the hieroglyph translation mat to decipher some secret messages. Ask pupils to look at the translation mat and see if they notice anything unusual. Highlight that, in some cases, the same hieroglyph is used to represent different letters.



“Pupils will become code-breakers and use a translation mat to decode secret messages...”

around 1:06 and lasts until around 2:20).

Once all the groups have completed the task, have the class regather to check their instructions. Begin by asking a group at a time to provide the translation for each one of the sentences. Then ask groups to take turns to reorder the instructions, ensuring that the final correct version is on the board for groups to self-assess. If there are disagreements between groups about which step comes next, encourage pupils to articulate their reasoning to solve the problem.

3 | CREATE YOUR OWN CARTOUCHE

Show pupils an image of a cartouche on the board. Explain that a cartouche was an Egyptian burial plate, shaped like an oval. The name of an important person, usually a Pharaoh, would be written in a cartouche. Normally, it would be vertical with lines at the bottom. It was believed that anyone who had their name written inside a cartouche would be magically protected by the gods for eternity.

Tell pupils that they will each create their own cartouche on paper, using the translation mats to write their names inside in hieroglyphs. Pupils can use coloured pencils, paints, or any other art supplies to make their cartouche.

Paul Ian Cross is a scientist and author of the SuperQuesters Mission books: River Crest Rescue, highly commended at the Teach Primary Awards 2025, Rainforest Magic and Desert Danger.

Show pupils a sentence written in hieroglyphs on the board. Model translating the hieroglyphs using the translation mat. When you encounter a symbol that can represent more than one letter, model how to problem-solve this by demonstrating using each of the possible letters in turn to see which one makes more sense.

Pupils can then work individually or in pairs to decipher a few hieroglyphic sentences, which you can provide on worksheets. To deepen links to the wider topic, you can give them sentences that reveal facts about ancient Egypt.

2 | MUMMIFICATION

Provide pupils with a series of sentences (in hieroglyphs) about the process of mummification.

Explain that each sentence refers to a step in the mummification process, but unfortunately, they are all in the wrong order. Tell pupils that they will need to work in pairs/ small groups to translate the sentences and then to sequence them correctly.

Remind pupils that they need to check that each step is in the correct order, reinforcing logical sequencing and reasoning. If pupils are not familiar with the process of mummification, or if they need additional support with the task, provide them with a basic visual order of the steps involved to aid them in their task (or show them a video like this one, from the BBC: [tinyurl.com/tp-BBCmummy](https://www.bbc.com/teach/primary/egyptian-mummies)). The explanation of mummification starts at

EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Pupils can use the hieroglyph translation mats to write their own messages for a partner to solve. The messages should be facts about ancient Egypt (e.g., about the gods, pyramids, or the River Nile).
- Children can make a papyrus scroll (tear up pieces of scrap paper and glue the strips together in layers – one of vertical strips, and one of horizontal strips). Then write a message on it in hieroglyphs.
- Get pupils to hide an object in the classroom. They should then write the location of the 'lost' object in hieroglyphs. Their partner must translate it and retrieve the 'lost' object.

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT



teachwire



Download your **FREE** translation mat at

tinyurl.com/tp-Heiroglyphics

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What happens when the same symbol is used to represent two different letters?
- Why did people stop using hieroglyphics?
- What are the benefits of using pictorials instead of words on road signs?

LITERACY

Story Talk

A vibrant, engaging book-based early language programme to help EYFS and KS1 readers advance their vocabulary



AT A GLANCE

- Engaging story books without words that will encourage children to add their own narrative
- Fabulous eye-catching illustrations that will captivate younger readers
- Handy parent and teacher guides to support language and vocabulary development of early readers
- Useful online resources to support teachers to get the most out of the books in school



REVIEWED BY: BEN WHITE

For those learning to read, story books with words can be a little daunting at times. However, with Story Talk, the vibrant and eye-catching illustrations will instantly captivate early readers. Stories can be told again and again, and each time a book is revisited, you will always find something new to talk about.

From the moment the first page is turned, the story is brought to life without the need to read a single word. The youngest of children will be able to 'tell you the story' by pointing out what they can see, sharing the story in relatable everyday scenarios such as a first day at school or a bus journey through the city and into the countryside.

The quality of illustrations cannot be ignored, and with each turn of the page there is a vast array of different things to see and talk about. In each book you will find characters that everyone can relate to as the Story Talk books contain a range of different ethnicities and family setups. As a result, children will naturally add their own narratives and ask questions, posing their own thoughts and ideas.

On the inside cover of each book, the adult reader will find the handy 'interaction strategies and language support tips' to support them in bringing the book to life. This includes simple activities such as 'point and name' – things to

spot throughout the book and ideas on how to extend children's language by further developing vocabulary through adjectives, emotions and correct spoken grammar. Not only will teachers find this useful during story time sessions at school, but so will parents supporting their child at home.

For those working in schools, the Collins Hub is a welcome addition. The online resources, planning and training provide a vast array of teaching resources and training materials that will ensure school staff can make the most out of the

"The story is brought to life without the need to read a single word"

Story Talk books. Videos and webinars demonstrate how to make the most of Story Talk sessions, and curriculum and assessment tools will support school staff to monitor the progress and language development of early readers. Everything has been considered including supporting those reluctant readers, SEND pupils who may be non-verbal and even

those children that love to rush through a story just to find out how it ends.

There is no doubt that Story Talk is a great way to introduce early readers to storytelling. There's lots of fun to be had naming characters, telling the story and rereading the books again and again, ensuring that story time is always enjoyable for both the child and adult alike.

**teach
PRIMARY**

VERDICT

- ✓ Both children and adults will enjoy telling their own story through vibrant and engaging illustrations
- ✓ Support for teachers and parents ensures children make progress with their language and vocabulary in every Story Talk session
- ✓ The online tools support teachers to get the most out of the story books through training, teaching and assessment resources
- ✓ Story time will always be fun, engaging and full of talk

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to engage early or reluctant readers in high-quality and fun story telling sessions which will promote vocabulary and language development.

NATIVITIES

The School Musicals Company: Nativities

Two, all-new musical takes on the nativity story for younger children from The School Musicals Company

THE
SCHOOL
MUSICALS
CO
theschoolmusicalscompany.com



AT A GLANCE

- Suitable for Early Years/KS1/LKS2
- Enchanting re-imaginings of the traditional Christmas story
- Comprehensive booklets providing editable scripts, song lyrics and sheet music
- Includes detailed staging and casting notes
- Audio files featuring vocal and non-vocal versions of each song



REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

Whatever your position on faith in general and Christianity in particular, Yuletide is an unshakeable pillar of our calendar in the UK. The many and varied traditions of the festive season are a key part of UK culture, not least the school nativity. What's more, there's no denying that it's a cracking story, packed full of symbolism, wonder and compelling characters.

Which completely justifies the approach taken in *Wise Guys*, The School Musicals Company's new nativity show for pupils aged five to nine. In many ways, the story is a fairly straightforward retelling of the original, complete with King Herod and Emperor Caesar Augustus. Why change the ingredients when you have a winning recipe?

Of course, they have lightened it up with child-friendly dialogue and a few knowing gags for the grown-ups. Maybe it's my age, but I particularly liked the running theme of references to the lyrics of traditional carols. It might go over the children's heads, but it should keep the grown-ups (especially grandparents, I suspect) happy while they wait, craning their necks for that all-important fleeting glimpse of their own little darling. But, as ever, it will be the specially written songs that steal the show. Each one is perfectly pitched for the content and age group – catchy, fun and easy to sing. The show's title song gets the performance off to a strong and lively start, but my favourite was the pretty lullaby *In a Lowly Stable*.

Not surprisingly, The School Musicals Company takes a few more liberties with the Christmas story for its latest production for younger children. After all, there's no need to bother them with ideas of governmental censuses or murderous kings at this stage.

Aimed at three-to-six-year-olds, *Twinkle the Little Star* concerns the redemptive story of a naughty little star who helps Big Star to find the three kings who, rather unwisely in this telling, set off to find the Jesus child without any guiding light.

Appropriately enough, the script is very simple, although it will need an adult or older child to be the narrator. Otherwise, the audience might end up as lost as the Magi! In any case, as we all know, the most important thing in this sort of production is for the proud parents to gush at their precious angels grinning and fidgeting on stage. That, and the songs, of course...

Once again, Niki Davies – a seasoned, best-selling veteran of The School Musicals Company's output – has hit that sweet spot of simplicity, accessibility and enjoyability in her songwriting. As a result, you can be sure that the children will be able to perform them with confidence and enthusiasm. *Follow Us*, for example, bounces along cheerfully and I challenge you not to bob your head in time with it. As for the first number, *Oh Twinkle*, I could easily imagine the spectacle: a host of little stars singing happily on stage while the audience turns to mush.

As fans of The School Musicals Company have come to expect, both productions come with different recorded versions of each song: one performed by children and the other as a backing track. There are also comprehensive booklets packed full of handy support materials such as scene breakdowns, staging suggestions and sheet music as well as a full script (an editable version of which can be obtained for a small charge). All that's left is for you to give your class the chance to sparkle and shine.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Sure-fire crowd-pleasers
- ✓ Well-pitched scripts
- ✓ Charming, catchy songs
- ✓ Adaptable for larger or smaller classes
- ✓ Reduces the stress of staging a production

UPGRADE IF...

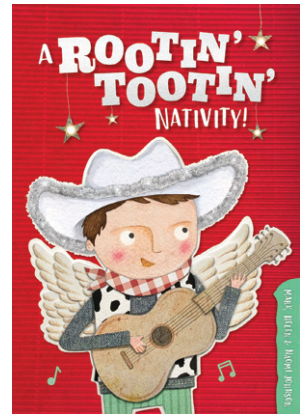
You want to take the stress out of staging a delightful, audience-pleasing nativity production for younger children.

Book and downloads or CD £27.95, plus £27 performance licence theschoolmusicalscompany.com

NATIVITY

A Rootin' Tootin' Nativity!

A lively, Western-style nativity packed with memorable songs, flexible casting and all the support teachers need to put on a brilliant show without the usual stress



AT A GLANCE

- Traditional nativity story with a cowboy and cowgirl twist
- Vocal and backing MP3s, scores and editable script included
- Cast can be adapted from 21 to 43 speaking roles
- Full staging, costume and tick-box props guidance
- Drama games, movement ideas and choreography videos included

REVIEWED BY: EMMA THOMPSON



It is that time of year again. The days are getting shorter and chillier, the school diary is filling up, and of course primary teachers are putting together the annual nativity.

Thankfully, Out of the Ark has done what it does best with *A Rootin' Tootin' Nativity!*, a lively Western-style take on the traditional Christmas story that gives you plenty of personality without losing the original heart.

The songs are an immediate win. They are catchy, full of character and easy enough for children to learn, but they still move the story along properly. *Buckle Up!* sets the tone straight away, *Get on the Road* builds brilliantly through repetition, and *Got No Room* has exactly the kind of chorus children will belt out with confidence. Then there is *Rootin' Tootin'!* itself, which is an absolute banger. I can already hear it being sung in corridors for weeks afterwards!

The script is funny, sweet and packed with moments children will love performing. Cowboy and cowgirl angels, saloon doors, a donkey who thinks this is his first rodeo and sheep launching into a karate-style routine give it something quirky and memorable. However, the key nativity moments remain firmly in place, so it still feels familiar for families watching.

As usual, Out of the Ark has done the hard work for teachers. The package includes vocal and backing MP3s, scores, a full script,

character guidance, costume ideas, staging suggestions, and a prop list with tick boxes. The costumes are imaginative without becoming a craft-project nightmare, and most could be sourced from school cupboards, home or simple parent contributions.

The staging is similarly manageable, with one basic backdrop adaptable across the saloon, inn, fields and stable. An editable script also makes it simple to allocate names and adjust speaking parts to suit the cast.

Casting is especially flexible. There are 31 speaking parts, with guidance for increasing this to 43 or reducing it to 21, plus plenty of non-speaking roles. That means there is room for confident performers, children who prefer a smaller part, and those who would rather join in through singing and movement.

The extras really make this package sing. *Buckle Up for Drama Games* gives you ready-made rehearsal and classroom activities, while the movement ideas and choreography videos for *Got No Room*, *One Star* and *Rootin' Tootin'!* take the pressure off anyone who does not naturally think in eight-counts. *A Rootin' Tootin' Nativity!* is fun, polished and packed with support. It lets teachers create something special for their cohort without spending every evening reinventing the wheel.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ A fresh take on the nativity that keeps the traditional story intact
- ✓ Songs children will love learning and audiences will remember
- ✓ Flexible casting makes it easy to include the whole cohort
- ✓ Practical resources remove hours of extra preparation
- ✓ Plenty of added activities to support rehearsals and performance

TRY IT IF...

You want a funny, memorable nativity with irresistible songs, flexible roles and all the planning support needed to give your class a performance they can feel proud of.



Transform Your Outdoor Space!

Timotay Playscapes, your access to award winning inspirational outdoor play spaces. Using imaginative thinking and natural materials to create an inclusive and nurturing environment specific to your school.

- Playground design and construction
- Outdoor classrooms and canopies
- MUGA
- Forest Schools
- Climbing frames
- Playground surfacing
- Playground equipment
- Mile a day track

Contact us for
your **FREE**
funding guide



Book your
FREE
consultation
today!

Call **01933 665151** or email enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk
to book your **FREE CONSULTATION**
timotayplayscapes.co.uk



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 is your idea of perfect happiness in your job?

When every child and every adult in school is happy. If everyone else is happy, I'm happy. The joy comes when everything is working effectively and efficiently, all the processes and procedures are running as they should, and the whole school community is thriving.

2 What is your greatest fear at work?

It's people being unwilling to change. When you're trying to introduce something new and people can't see the vision of where you're trying to go, or aren't on board with it. It's not about people questioning or challenging things, or having reservations – that's all fine. It's when you have that person who, outright, just says, "No, I don't want to do that". Some people aren't willing to come along on the journey, embrace change, look at the research, understand the vision and recognise how it could make things better for the children.

3 What is your current state of mind?

There's a lot of negativity around teaching and education in the media, but I remain really positive about what we're doing, what we can achieve and where the profession is heading. There's a real discrepancy between what's written in

the newspapers and what actually goes on in schools. I still feel hopeful that we can make a genuine difference to children's lives.

4 What do you consider the most overrated teacher virtue?

Perfectionism. Of course you should strive to do your very best, but teachers don't need to be perfect. Nobody is. What really matters is being responsive – to change, to the needs of your children, and to whatever is put in front of you. It's not about being perfect in what you do; it's about assessing each situation and responding appropriately.

5 On what occasion do you lie to your class?

I genuinely don't think I have ever lied to my class. As a teacher, you try to be honest and open with children – telling them how it is. Whether you're in class or working with a group of pupils, you want them to grow up to be decent human beings, and you model the behaviour you want them to see.

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

When I see children running when they shouldn't be, it's always, "Walking feet, please". Across our schools we also regularly use "Ready, Respectful, Safe",

which underpins our behaviour culture and helps to create a consistent approach for both children and staff.

7 What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

Watching children who, when they joined my class, were not in a great place, for whatever reason, leave at the end of the year in a much stronger position – academically or pastorally. As a leader, I'm equally proud of helping others develop. Seeing colleagues grow in confidence and become exceptional headteachers is incredibly rewarding.

8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

I've kept a few thoughtful gifts from children from the very beginning of my teaching career, including a quirky little wooden aeroplane. The gifts I've valued most, though, have actually been food. When families share food from their culture, it's incredibly special because they've taken the time to make it and are sharing something that's meaningful to them.



NAME: Rachel Lee

JOB ROLE: Executive headteacher, Great Learners Trust

EXTRA INFO: Rachel is executive headteacher across Elmhurst, Manor Farm and West Wycombe schools. She is passionate about play-based learning, continuous provision beyond the Early Years, and outdoor learning.

"There's a lot of negativity around teaching in the media, but I remain really positive about what we're doing"

THIS CHANGED A CHILD'S FUTURE.

Not on its own. But every
great lesson starts with
the right resources.

Everything schools need.
So teachers can teach.
Pupils can learn.
Futures can thrive.



20,000+ quality products



Exceptional value



Fast, reliable delivery



Trusted by schools

YPO®

Behind every
great lesson.

ypoco.uk



teach
PRIMARY
AWARDS 2026
SHORTLISTED

Everything your school needs to build children's social and emotional wellbeing

Hamish & Milo brings together evidence-based SEMH programmes, accredited staff training, family partnership and impact reporting into one integrated approach - helping schools improve outcomes for children.

Our integrated ecosystem includes:



Evidence-based programmes

Structured, ready-to-use resources that explicitly teach social and emotional literacy through small-group, one-to-one and whole-class SEMH provision.



Training and development

Free implementation training and a range of specialist and accredited professional development to strengthen staff confidence, knowledge and SEMH practice.



Parent and carer partnership

A programme to strengthen partnerships between school, home and child through shared language, practical activities and conversations that create understanding and connection.



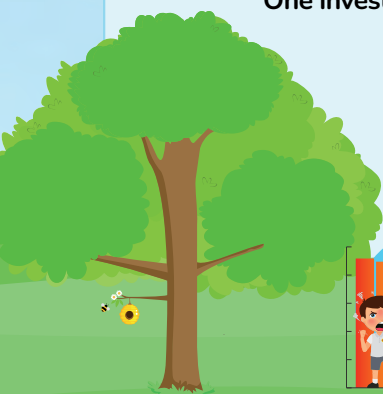
Impact measurement and reporting

Reporting at child, cohort, whole-school and trust level that evidences impact, monitors progress, identifies trends and supports strategic planning for inclusive SEMH provision.

One investment. One joined-up approach. Lasting impact for children, staff and families.

University of Bath research found that "the children found their voice"

Research found significant improvements in children's social and emotional competencies. Positive outcomes were observed across the whole school community including a reduction in school exclusions and behavioural escalations; improved relationships, learning engagement and wellbeing.



"Hamish & Milo has been transformative for many of the children who have taken part. We have seen noticeably calmer, more regulated, more confident children who are able to express their feelings to others..."

Ruth Clifford-Turner, SENCO, Exning Primary School, Suffolk

Scan for research evidence



Explore our complete approach to SEMH provision at hamishandmilo.org

Trusted by more than 850 schools, supporting thousands of children every year.