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MEETINGS

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THAT MATTER

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> WHY ORACY IS A SOCIAL JUSTICE ISSUE

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# Hello!



nd welcome to another issue of *Teach Primary*. Summer is now well and truly over, and most of you will already be knee-deep in teaching for Autumn 1. As the leaves change, so, no doubt, will you experience alterations in the way you work – not only in starting a new school year, possibly with a whole new class, but perhaps also drawing on past learning, and altering, adding to, or even

stripping back your pedagogy.

These 'new beginnings' often feel so full of possibility, and so exciting, however it's easy to become overwhelmed with the amount of choice on offer, especially when it comes to teaching and learning; how many meetings do you really need? Is there a right way to wrangle 'those' parents? And what does a 'good' lesson plan actually look like? Well, luckily our education experts have explored these topics, bringing you the sage advice they've learned over their years of teaching. In the pages ahead, Matthew Lane breaks down how to run a truly useful and productive meeting (and when to just send an email), on page 38; Nick Hurn, OBE, discusses how and why the Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust decided to implement a code of conduct for parents (p12); and Sue Cowley explains the various steps required to produce a great lesson plan – particularly useful for ECTs (p36).

There are also some changes going on here at *Teach Primary* HQ. This is my final issue before heading off on maternity leave, and so I shall be leaving you in the very capable hands of a new editor, Lydia Grove, for the next 12 months. Thank you so much for all your support for *Teach Primary* so far, and I look forward to returning in 2024 and continuing the journey with you all. Until then, please feel free to get in touch with your story and resource ideas, at lydia.grove@theteachco.com

Wishing you all the very best for the year ahead, and until next time...

Charley

Charley Rogers, editor

Don't miss our next issue, available from 3rd November

### POWERED BY...



AMANDA CORRIGAN on why oracy isn't just for future lawyers, but a social justice issue for every pupil

"Oracy is a life skill, and is just as much about confidence as about words" p15



### GINNY BOOTMAN discusses the training that changed her entire

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"Put on your metaphorical Dorothy shoes, follow the empathy road, and see the difference" p32



### GABRIEL DYLAN

Goes through his process for creating scary scenes, and how to develop pupils' descriptive writing

"The technique I find most useful in bringing things to life is using the senses" p56









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### Get the picture

Hot on the heels of its three-year refurbishment programme, the National Portrait Gallery has launched a schools hub featuring 150 newly commissioned curriculum-linked resources developed in consultation with teachers, artists, art historians and education experts. The resources aim to address aspects of identity that have traditionally been neglected in arts education, exploring avenues such as sidelined histories, 'missing' portraits, and stories of migration and colonisation. The team behind the hub has also focused on giving children direct connections with artists whose works are displayed in the gallery, including artist interviews.

As well as a bank of free online resources, there is also an on-site schools programme. All in all, it's a fabulous opportunity to teach history and art through portraiture that allows all pupils to relate and feel represented. Explore what's on offer at **tinyurl.com/tp-NPGhub** 

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



### TAX THOSE BRAINS

HMRC has created a comprehensive range of KS2 resources, including a lesson plan, classroom presentation, activity sheets and a series of videos to help you teach financial education. You can even invite a special Tax Facts ambassador to come into school. Find out more at tinyurl.com/ tp-TaxFacts



#### CONVERSATION STARTERS

Educator, producer and storyteller Laura-Henry Allain MBE has launched a set of free resources for pupils aged five+, based on her new non-fiction book *My Family, Your Family, exploring* themes of family and belonging. Find them all at **tinyurl. com/tp-MyFamily** 



#### MEET THE ANCESTORS

Genealogy company Ancestry has launched a new service to help pupils personally connect with history. As well giving free access to thousands of historical records, AncestryClassroom includes a range of resources aimed at tackling bigotry. Sign up at tinyurl.com/tp-AncestryClassroom



### Handwriting practice sheets Do your learners need to

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



### 2024 World Book Day roster revealed

The authors of next year's World Book Day £1 books include Rosie Jones,

David McKee, Tolá Okogwu and even LadBaby, with titles ranging from re-imagined classics and adventure tales to comic and graphic stories. A new Welsh-language £1 book will be unveiled next month. In 2023, over two million £1 books were gifted to children – more than 90,000 of which made their way, via World Book Day's network of partners, to children in areas of high deprivation and low literacy across the UK and Ireland.

Between 15 February and 31 March 2024, children will be able to use their £1 token to get one of the 15 newly announced books. Find the full list at **tinyurl.com/tp-WBD-books** 

### Help battle burnout

Would you like to take part in a study into the links between school culture, compassion, wellbeing and burnout? A researcher at the University of Southampton is inviting teachers to complete a short survey about mental health and working environment. Jenny Gu's research is aimed at finding new ways in which teachers' mental health and wellbeing at work can be improved, and



understanding how much teachers' social and emotional competencies and systemic school climate matter in maintaining good mental health among teachers.

All surveys are completely anonymous, and should take around 30 minutes in total. You can also complete it in several sittings if necessary. The first 207 respondents will receive a £5 Amazon voucher. Read more and take the survey at tinyurl.com/tp-WellbeingStudy

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### Look ahead Book ahead

ADVENTURES WITH NUMBERS Maths Week England will run from 13–18 November this year, with daily events and puzzles. Sign up for reminders at tinyurl.com/ tp-MWEngland

### **GET READY FOR BETT 24**

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### Matt Lucas Actor, comedian, presenter and author

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

I went to Aylward First and Middle School in Stanmore. The teachers there were kind and patient and very dedicated. I lost my hair when I was six, and the teachers did their best to help foster an environment of understanding, which I will always be grateful for.

### 2. How have you found moving

from TV comedy to writing for kids? I enjoy acting, but writing is my true passion, and working on *The Boy Who Slept Through Christmas* has been an incredibly rewarding project. I write for children in the same way that I write for adults – which is to amuse myself and hope that others come along for the ride! In addition to writing, I've always loved musicals, and I wanted to bring those two passions together with this book. I've written 20 original songs to sing along to while reading Leo's story!

### 3. What would you like teachers to know about your book?

Well, it's wholesome, for a start, which is something that might surprise teachers, given my previous output! I have worked really hard on this book, and I hope it delivers a lot of festive fun this Christmas. I took my time to write it, and consequently it is exactly what I wanted it to be. The accompanying collection of songs provides an extra interactive element, which I hope will inspire readers. One number in particular – 'The Singalong Song' – is perfect for young children to perform.

The Boy Who Slept Through Christmas, by Matt Lucas, illustrated by Forrest Burdett (£12.99 HB, HarperCollins) is out now.

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### FEATURES WELLBEING



### **8 WAYS to** tackle teacher stress

Take a deep breath and find your happy place with these on-the-go tension-busting techniques



VIV TRASK-HALL is head of product and innovation at Thrive, which trains teachers and other education professionals to support children's wellbeing.

### **1** PAUSE A MOMENT

Taking a minute to 90 seconds can help regulate your emotions when things get stressful. That pause can give you time to acknowledge your stress response and consider how you're going to respond. It can be useful to have a visual aid to help you in these moments; if you're in the classroom, put a sand timer on the whiteboard to give you and your class a minute. Watching the sand flow through can help to bring those stress symptoms down. You can do the same at home by setting a timer on your phone and watching the seconds pass.

#### **2** | THE POWER OF BREATHING

There's a lot to be said for the short sharp intake of breath and a long exhale. This helps to aid the regulation of stress symptoms by stimulating the parasympathetic branch of the nervous system. The 4-7-8 method can be particularly effective: inhale for four seconds, then hold your breath for seven before exhaling for eight seconds.

### 3 GROUNDING

Grounding is simply recognising where you are. If you're standing up, then it's about making sure that you are aware of which parts of your feet are actually touching the ground, pushing each one of your toes down, so that you feel them purposefully. It's designed to help you get a sense of where you are in in time and in space. You can also stand against a wall, feet apart, pushing your back flat against the wall.

### 4 HAND ON HEART

Putting your hand over your heart and feeling your chest rise and fall can help to calm and soothe. If you use this approach alongside breathing techniques, try to be conscious of your slowing pulse. This can be a really helpful way to control stress.

#### 5 SWAYING

A very gentle, rhythmical swaying releases endorphins in our brain and can be very soothing. It works for babies and it's no different for adults. Even a very subtle rocking motion can help to regulate your emotions, so it doesn't have to be a full-on, rock concert sway! Some studies have shown that it also promotes better sleep – and therefore can also aid memory consolidation –, so try it at the end of a long day to ease into your evening calm.

### 6 HAND MASSAGE

Our hands are the best prop that we've got. Gently rubbing your thumb on your palm in a slow circular movement helps to release the hormone oxytocin, which calms you, and also provides a feeling of safety. Try using your left thumb in your right palm (or the other way around) for about a minute, and see if it slows your heart rate and makes you feel less stressed.

### 7 | CONSIDER YOUR HAPPY PLACE

Having something near you that takes you into a moment where you feel wonder and a sense of connection can really help. It could be a photograph of people that really matter to you in your life, or a holiday photo or souvenir. You can use these 'props' during a minute's pause; use them to ask yourself questions such as, "When I'm there, what can I see? What can I hear? What does it feel like?"

#### 8 GIVE YOURSELF AN ANTHEM

Having your own theme tune or anthem can give you a burst of confidence whenever you're feeling stressed or your confidence is knocked. If it's not appropriate to play that music out loud (it often isn't!) then play the song inside your head — it might just be enough to give you the boost that you need.





### Why we're asking parents to behave

Though most families are respectful, a number of incidents of abuse towards staff have led us to implement a behavioural code for our Trust

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n these days of unfettered access to social media and messaging platforms, it's easier than ever to keep in touch – great for teachers updating pupils' parents and carers on their progress and providing important information from school. However, on the flip side, this also opens us up to aggressive messages and abuse.

Although the majority of parents and carers at our 48 schools across Northeast England are respectful and follow the ethos of the Trust, there have been some isolated instances of unacceptable behaviour towards staff that have triggered a need for a code of conduct.

We have a duty to protect our staff, and this progressive initiative aims to establish a framework of behavioural expectations for anyone interacting with the school; promoting collaboration, respect, and a positive educational environment.

### **Resolving disputes**

I fully appreciate and accept that disputes involving someone's child and their school can often become fraught and emotive. Unfortunately, this can then manifest in the form of confrontational, unreasonable behaviour. That said, I also believe that it is right and proper for any parent or carer with a genuine grievance or dispute who does not believe they have been justly treated to be able to access an independent body that will hear, judge and rule on their complaint.

It is paramount that we emphasise that a large proportion of parents are respectful, however, what is not acceptable but seems to be increasingly common is the growing number of hostile and abusive people who believe they can write, post or say whatever they like about whomever they like, when they do not get what they want or are told 'no' by a school.

Having a code of conduct gives everyone associated with the Trust a guideline on how to behave, and sets fair and reasonable boundaries of behaviour. The idea is that it acts as a guiding compass, emphasising the importance of respectful behaviour within the school community. By setting clear expectations, the Trust ensures that parents and carers understand the significance of their conduct in creating a nurturing and inclusive environment. This approach not only benefits the pupils, but also enhances the overall atmosphere of the school, promoting empathy, understanding, and a sense of belonging amongst us all.



### **Respect for all**

We've found the code also sets a positive example for pupils. Children learn best when they witness consistent behaviours modelled by the significant adults in their lives. When parents and carers adhere to the code of conduct, they demonstrate to their children the value of respect, collaboration, and responsible citizenship. This shared commitment to positive behaviour reinforces the Trust's mission of holistic education and equips students with valuable life skills beyond the classroom.

Among other criteria, our code outlines that we expect parents and carers to:

- understand that parents and teachers need to work together for the benefit of our children;
- work with the school to build relationships with its staff;
- talk to us if you have any concerns about any part of your child's education and development – we want to hear from you;
- demonstrate in your own behaviour that all members of the school community should be treated with respect by setting a good example in your own speech and behaviour;
- understand that even if divergent views exist, all should remain calm and respectful and be mindful that we are all working together for the child's best interests;
- approach school staff to inform them of any issue and allow them time to investigate and then resolve issues according to school policy.

It is clear to us that having this framework within our schools promotes a safe and respectful environment, helps prevent bullying and harassment, encourages responsibility and accountability, fosters ethical and moral development, and prepares pupils for future success.

In fact, I think if the UK introduced a nationally backed code of conduct, to which all parents and carers were expected to adhere, we'd have a much more effective and respectful education system.

You can view the entire BCWET code of conduct at tinyurl.com/tp-BWCETcode TP

Nick Hurn OBE is CEO of Bishop Wilkinson Catholic Education Trust (BWCET).

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### Why oracy is a crucial social justice issue

Speech skills aren't just for future lawyers, entrepreneurs and politicians; they are a secret ingredient to a successful life for all pupils

X @ajcorrigan

ach year in the Strathclyde Institute of Education, we welcome new students from industry and further education colleges onto a course designed to support their quest to become teachers. I lead the academic skills modules that support their transition. You can imagine, then, that I felt more than a little downhearted when I read the comment 'Amanda uses too many big words' in one student's evaluation of one of the modules. The first reason for feeling morose was because I had created a barrier for the student. The second was because I was reminded again of the societal issue we have where 'big words' are only for some people.

As a child from a working-class Glasgow family, words were always mine. My parents left school at 15 to get on with their lives, but brought us up with books and opinions and lots of talk at home. We had a good vocabulary made up of English and a healthy smattering of Scots. When I started school, I revelled in further developing these skills and using them to describe my life and my learning. There are many examples of this captured in family tales of my descriptions of the Norway Spruce I hid behind when I was six, or the gory details of the scab on my knee that I shared as my news in Primary 3 (Y2). I had the words I needed, but, more importantly, I was given the space and the encouragement to use them.

So, when I heard Kier Starmer talking about oracy on the radio recently, I cheered. However, I was surprised at the number of journalists who either didn't know what 'oracy'

was, or mistakenly reduced it to 'being able to talk in a way that helps you fit in'. You see, oracy does not only allow young people to debate in school. It's more than a skill to be developed by future lawyers, entrepreneurs and politicians. Oracy is what will help the children in your class who end up in the criminal justice system to represent themselves well as they explain their circumstances. It is for the children who will have to fight deportation, or for the rights of their brothers and sisters, or for the care their parents need in later life. Oracy is a life skill, and is just as much about confidence as about words. Oracy is a social justice issue.

Back in 2014, the gap in vocabulary use between the richest and poorest children in Scotland at age five was 13 months; my colleagues Edward Sosu and Sue Ellis wrote a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation about it. This marked gap from the outset of a child's education is unlikely to have improved since Covid. For some children, school is the only place where they will encounter a dedicated effort to boost their spoken vocabulary and their ability to confidently use those words in the world.

Many of you will remember having a word tin when you were learning to read. Mine was an old tobacco tin of my grandpa's. That wee tin was the way I learned new words to add to my vocabulary. The books I read now and what I can do with words on paper grew from that tin. It is useful to think of spoken language in your classroom in the same way. Children's vocabulary is built using words. New, interesting and complicated words can be taught and explored and practised in class. When I was a primary school teacher, my classes enjoyed showing off their vocabulary and even the youngest children could use sophisticated words when they were introduced well.

So, as you embark on your lessons this year, remember that hidden tin of words that lies deep within each child in your class. As you add to their vocabulary, consider the outcomes of all the children you teach – the good and the bad. Think about when they might be required to use their words to explain their actions, define their emotions and defend themselves, then plan diligently and teach enthusiastically to grow their vocabulary and their confidence to speak.

So, yes, Amanda does use big words... on purpose. **TP** 

Amanda Corrigan is principal teaching fellow at The Strathclyde Institute of Education, University of Strathclyde.

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SCHOOL ADVENTURES

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

### A letter to... School leaders

We must stop insisting that all teachers be shackled to a full-time contract in a misguided attempt at conformity, says **Kevin Harcombe** 



hen I started at my current school back in the 20th century there were only two part-time teachers, job

sharing in one class. I regarded this with a little suspicion and felt – as did many of my headteacher colleagues - that it was both an outlandish administrative inconvenience and sub-optimal for the children, who had a right to one massively stressed teacher five days a week, for goodness' sake. I thought this despite the fact that both were (and remain) knowledgeable, skilled and extremely hard-working professionals. That was simply the received wisdom, i.e. prejudice, at the turn of this century. Cut to 2023 and nearly half of all the classes in my school are staffed by part-timers. So what happened in the intervening couple of decades?

A pandemic for one. Economists refer to the phenomenon of people quitting jobs during or just after the lockdowns as 'The Great Retirement'. 'The Great Reduced Hours' isn't quite as snappy or dramatic, but is just as significant. When the whole of the globe goes through something as traumatic as lockdown amid the fear (misplaced or not) of imminent death, people re-evaluate what is important to them and, unsurprisingly, work comes way down the list of good ways of spending your allotted three score years and ten. Of course, we all have to eat and have somewhere to live so need to earn cash, but full-time working is not as important to most people as, well, having a life. No one lies on their deathbed thinking, 'I wish I'd spent more time at work'.

They just don't, no matter how much some politicians and newspapers urge us to slave away into our seventies. If you can get by on less money and increase your me-time, then why wouldn't you?

Another reason for this flurry of part-time workers? A continuing recruitment and retention crisis. The supply of teaching assistants has already dried up completely – supermarkets pay better, and you don't need to teach turgid phonics schemes, do playground duty or, in most branches, wipe bottoms. Teacher supply is heading the same way, with government targets for teacher training falling markedly short year after year.

### "The phrase 'part-timer' is still used across society as an insult"

And even if they do the training and qualify, research in 2020 found that an astonishing four in 10 teachers leave within five years of getting started. And one in five leave after just two years, often citing excessive workload. How much better to enable a better work-life balance through part-time working (which may include occasional later starts and earlier finishes to accommodate ruinously costly childcare arrangements) than to lose skilled staff with further potential for development and excellence. Having two teachers job share is better than having no teacher at all - obvs! - and often much, much better. Even if the pipeline of teacher supply weren't clogged up with the sludge of burdensome



bureaucracy and the increasingly unrealistic demands of parents, and you actually had a choice of whom to employ, frankly, it makes sense to retain a great teacher for two or three days a week rather than take on an okay teacher for five.

The naysayers might grudgingly agree that part-time is just about ok for teachers but never for senior leaders. Why this should be the case I have no idea, apart from 'we've always done it that way so why change?' Logic insists it is perfectly possible to have a highly effective, indeed outstanding,

> management team staffed by part-timers if those part-timers are of sufficient quality. Aren't executive heads effectively part-time in their groups of schools?

So, what's actually in it for the school? Nearly all part-timers work more than their contracts. I know this because they tell me.

Regularly. Wellbeing for those staff members goes up (as do energy levels) and stress and sickness come down. Children get two different subject specialists, who are also occasionally available (though not contractually) to cover sickness absence.

The phrase 'part-timer' is still used across society as an insult; a synonym for 'uncommitted' or 'slacker'. Let us rebuff this derogatory misconception, cast off the chains of full-time wage slavery and embrace a new future – PART-TIMERS OF THE WORLD UNITE! (But only Mondays to Wednesdays.).

From, Kevin

Kevin Harcombe is a Teaching Awards winner and headteacher at Redlands Primary, Fareham.

X @kevharcombe



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### FEATURES ART

How I do it

Absorb pupils in the beauty of nature and learn about Frida Kahlo and Georgia O'Keeffe by creating delicate wire flowers

### LESLEY ARMSTRONG



Have a look at some of Georgia O'Keeffe's artwork and discuss the importance of colour. Can the children identify how colour could portray emotion, movement, or texture? Next, look at the same works in black and white and ask the same questions. In my class, we all agreed that it was important but not vital to have colour in art; monochrome is still creative and



typically start every term with a new concept for my class. Recently, we looked at 'relationships'; specifically, our links as humans with the natural world. For the art portion, I wanted to try something a bit more adventurous than clay or papier mache, like wire. The class was tasked with designing a collaborative piece for our new meeting room; something that could be hung on the wall but still have a 3D element to it. We had been reading about Frida Kahlo and her love of flora, so had the idea to create wire flowers inspired by her visuals and Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings.

beautiful. However, we did agree that a world without colour could be dull, depressing and less creative.

Next, a photography session; encourage the children to use different angles and to zoom in to pick up the fine details of flowers (if you have some in your school playground, great, otherwise perhaps you could bring in a bouquet from the supermarket). They can then manipulate the colour in the images and replicate them in monochrome. We observed that both images were of the same thing but when looking at them, you concentrated on different parts

of the flower; it prompted a different discussion.



Following this, get pupils to experiment with drawing and sketching different types of live flowers from different perspectives, so that they can understand and explore form and shape. We chose to keep these as pencil explorations, but you could introduce chalk, pencil crayons or pastels. You could also make watercolour paints available so that the children can experiment with adding splashes of colour if they wish.





Give pupils an opportunity to create a small-scale composition using flexible florist wire. They can experiment with making one petal and then using tissue paper and glue to cover it. We found it was important to keep the compositions small, as tissue paper and PVA glue don't play together well! Some children may decide to use their collage skills, exploring what happens when they layer different colours together.



Once the children have created their wire and paper petals, they can begin their own compositions by twisting wire together to create flowers. As we were concentrating on making larger flowers, my class worked in pairs. The key here is to use flexible craft wire and aluminum foil tape. While the tissue petals are drying, pupils can create the centre of the flower, including stamens and fine details. Some of my class chose to add small beads and pieces of organza, whereas others used coloured paper. Once they're finished, you can affix the flowers to a display board using pins, ready to show off!



Lesley Armstrong is a Year 6 teacher and Key Stage leader at a primary school in Hampshire.

@KujayhawkLesley



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### UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

### Introducing pupils to the basics of online etiquette is all very well... but won't someone please think of the parents?

eaching Year 6, it has become an increasing part of my job to help manage children's initial, clumsy attempts at stepping into the world of social media and group chat. Many of them get a phone for the first time and are instantly thrust into the 'wild west' of online interaction where it appears anything goes – and sure enough, without proper guidance, anything does go: phones ping long

into the small hours of the morning; children set up WhatsApp groups named things like 'Anyone but [insert unpopular child's name here]'; there has been racism, sexism and frequent homophobic insults. In fact, there have been more fixed-term exclusions issued for online bullying than for any other reason during my five years as a Year 6 teacher. In short, we've learned that our pupils need support and instruction to establish some ground rules of online etiquette.

What is more surprising, is how it isn't just the kids' group chat featuring on my professional radar; increasingly, their parents' groups need to be carefully managed, too. In fairness, these groups do have the potential to be a force for good: when was the last time you were asked for a

copy of this week's spellings, or whether children are supposed to wear their PE kit tomorrow? Generally speaking, the group will do this work for you.

However, these same spaces also have the power to inflame; they are a potential source of misinformation, fuelling bad feeling that sometimes reaches incendiary proportions before the official school channels are aware enough to intervene. For example, the claims of every child who starts a sentence with, 'My teacher said...' are now shared with scores of other parents who seem to take them at their word, rather than believing the official communications from the school.

Online parents' groups can also take on a mob mentality; we were on the receiving end of this with the cancellation of Sports Day in summer 2022, due an unprecedented heatwave. After missing out on a host of performances, assemblies and parent evenings through Covid, the cancellation of this event seemed to be the last straw for a number of (normally

philosophical and measured) parents; they were enraged! However, rather than quietly seething, this rage was shared through the group and the result was a co-ordinated campaign of emails and phone calls to the school, sending the office into meltdown.

Elsewhere, users appear to have even less awareness of online etiquette than the Year 6 children I teach! I recently spent a day dealing with an



"Parents' groups have the power to fuel bad feeling" emotional child after a friend's parent used the group to invite a choice selection of children to her daughter's birthday party: the potential for divisive moves like this really sours any sense of community the groups may otherwise bring.

I am in the rare position at my school of being both teacher and parent. Whilst I took the political decision to stay out of the parents' WhatsApp, I am kept abreast of the goings-on via my wife, and am often used as a 'phone a friend' to answer queries posed by other parents. She is also able to informally warn me of any unrest in the group and I can act undercover ("The name's Bond; James Number-Bond") to give colleagues a heads-up on parent rumblings before they become a big deal.

I suspect that every group has a spy like me. These large groups are, by their nature, public forums, and yet people are willing to say things here that they wouldn't say to your face – but just about every complaint, snide comment or personal vendetta finds its way to the teacher one way or the other. To my knowledge, I have been called a '*jumped-up ar*\*\*\*!*e*' and have been accused of having '*short-man syndrome*' as just a couple of examples I can't help but remember.

Others have had it far worse: for one teacher in my school, this was a source of great stress as they became aware of what the parent body thought of them. They are now signed off from work for stress-related reasons and I am in little doubt that this was a contributing factor.

With some concerted effort, by the end of Year 6, my pupils have generally learned how to behave on group chat; perhaps their parents could use some guidance, too? **TP** 

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The writer is a primary teacher in England.

# BUBBLE BATHS

Sick of hearing vague platitudes about quick-fix workshops, or treats in the staffroom? For a real improvement in teacher wellbeing, a more practical approach is required...

### EMMA CATE STOKES

magine this: it's a cold Monday morning. Mrs Thompson, a Year 4 teacher, is bustling around her classroom preparing for the day. She spent most of her Sunday marking books, planning lessons, inputting data and thinking about how to help Toby, a pupil who seems to be struggling with his emotions lately. At the same time, she's been grappling with the weight of her wellbeing; she hasn't seen her friends outside of work for weeks and can't even spare the time to wash her hair. Sound familiar?

If that narrative strikes a chord with you, you're likely a teacher in the UK's highly demanding universe of primary school teaching. Many of us, when asked, would exclaim without hesitation that primary teaching is unequivocally the best job in the world. And for good reason! It's a role where you're not just a teacher but a mentor, a guide, and often a beacon of hope and inspiration for young, impressionable minds. The joy of witnessing the 'light bulb' moments, the classroom giggles, nurturing young minds and laving down the building blocks for lifelong learning is incomparable.

And yet, behind all that lies a more sobering reality. Recent years have seen a noticeable uptick in teacher stress levels, an overburden of administrative tasks, extended work hours, an increase in children's mental health issues, ever-declining budgets, and the eternal struggle of achieving that elusive work-life balance.

So let's address the elephant in the room – the well-intentioned but often superficial attempts to alleviate these stresses. Handing out chocolates in the staffroom, or those

### Termly wellbeing surveys

What if, every term, you were handed the microphone in the form of anonymous wellbeing surveys? And what if

something was actually done with the information? It's one thing to listen; quite another to hear, understand, and then pivot accordingly. A proactive approach is far more effective than a reactive one. For these surveys to truly resonate, two

### A dedicated team

Sometimes after a tough day in the classroom, you need someone who isn't just going to offer a cup of tea and a chat (though those help) but can provide real, actionable strategies. Here's where a school's dedicated wellbeing team steps in, symbolising more than just a title on a door or a monthly meet-up.

"That hour of mindfulness once a month? It's nice, but won't solve the root issue"

generic 'wellbeing' workshops that are more tick-box than transformative, although a nice idea, are mere short-term fixes. That hour of 'mindfulness' once a month? It's a welcome break, but it doesn't solve the root issue.

What teachers truly seek are not mood-lifters but lasting, impactful strategies. We need tools and systems that don't just offer temporary solace but reinforce the scaffold of our day-to-day lives, making each day more manageable and rewarding. Below are some ideas you can raise with SLT, as well as smaller steps you can take yourself... fundamental prerequisites are essential: safety and sincerity. Staff need to know they're in a safe space where they can speak candidly, and that they will be listened to.

A dedicated staff meeting should be scheduled to dive into the survey results. Have an in-depth conversation about the good, the bad, and the steps you'll take next. It is an opportunity for the staff to gather, not only as professionals but as allies. When everyone sees their input shaping decisions and impacting policies, it sends a resounding message: your wellbeing isn't a footnote; it's the headline. They are a particular group of strategies to support their individuals equipped to offer more than just kind words. is a must. They aren't simp

This team should be a patchwork quilt of the school's community, stitched together by members from every part of the institution. While including a senior leader might seem tempting, their absence might actually be the key. While broader issues or emerging patterns can be shared with the SLT, the specifics of who said what – barring any critical safeguarding concerns - must remain guarded, ensuring the safety of the space.

The wellbeing team should be well-versed in the nuances of mental health, the art of communication, and the strategies to support their peers effectively, so training is a must. They aren't simply colleagues; they are lifelines, ensuring every staff member knows they're not alone and their wellbeing is a top priority.

### Sensible marking policies

Rather than trudging through deep marking 30 books for every subject – which can sometimes mean over 120 books a day – how about embracing methods that genuinely serve you and your pupils? Imagine harnessing the power of collective feedback, where you address common misconceptions, and praise shared achievements. Gone would be the days of writing the same comment repeatedly, replaced by a system that communicates effectively and saves time.



And speaking of time-savers, have you ever tried verbal feedback instead of those long comments? Wouldn't it be great to be in a classroom where students actively engage in the feedback process, eagerly absorbing your insights and immediately applying them rather than waiting to read what you've written? Let me tell you from experience; it works a lot better with a class of Year 2s than comments in books!

### Saying no

The vibrant bustle of school corridors often sees teachers juggling multiple responsibilities. In this challenging sphere, you must master the art of tactfully saying 'no'. The blurred lines between the demands of teaching and personal life can sometimes make you feel you're in an endless loop of acquiescing to every request. Yet, there's power in understanding your limits.

When faced with an

additional task, a strategy I have found really effective is to respond with a proactive approach; "Of course, I'd be willing to help with that. However, I'm currently operating at capacity. Could you suggest which of my existing tasks I could set aside to accommodate this?" This response is transformative for several reasons.

First, it conveys willingness and a positive attitude, showing that you are not opposed to assisting, but are mindful of your workload. Secondly, it places the ball back in the requester's court, prompting them to consider your current commitments and the feasibility of the new task. It encourages a re-evaluation of priorities. Lastly, it fosters a culture of open dialogue about workload and capacity, emphasising that every staff

#### 5 STEPS TO FOCUS ON POSITIVES

We all get caught up in negative spirals sometimes, and the process can be hard to break. Try these steps to realign your thinking, and reduce stress:

Shift your focus: engage in a different activity, like reading or solving a puzzle, to divert your mind from the recurring thought.

2 Mindfulness exercises: try deep breathing or grounding techniques. Focus on your breath or your surroundings, anchoring yourself to the present.

Physical movement: even a short walk or a few stretches can help reset your mind. A change in our physical state often influences our mental state.

4 Jot it down: writing down what's bothering you can offer clarity and a fresh perspective.

S Positive self-talk: remind yourself that everyone makes mistakes. What's crucial is the learning and growth that follows.

member's time is valuable and finite.

At the end of the day, while gestures like staffroom cake are well-intentioned, it's the systematic changes that show teachers' time is truly valued that really make a difference. TP



Emma Cate Stokes is a freelance writer and former primary teacher.

🤇 @emmccatt







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1 Emerging evidence reported by Professor Richard Joiner, Principal Investigator for Hamish & Milo Studies, University of Bath, Department of Psychology. More at hamishandmilo org/university-of-hath-research @ Hamish & Milo Itd 09/2023. All Richts Reserved. Hamish & Milo is a trade mark





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inging is an important part of both the early years framework and the national curriculum 2014. We, as teachers, are required to give children opportunities to sing in music lessons, and also to use their voices with increasing skill.

Not only should we be giving children the opportunity to sing regularly, we also need to know how to teach singing effectively, including posture, breathing, and pitch control. There are many physiological and psychological benefits to singing, such as a reduction in cortisol (the stress hormone) and increase in dopamine, oxytocin and endorphins. Building pupils' understanding of posture and breathing can also support their physical development.

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WEEK 1 Learning objective:

• Can I explain the parts of my body that help me sing?

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#### Key vocabulary:

• Diaphragm - n. a wall of muscle that separates the chest and abdomen. • Posture -n. position of or manner of holding the body. • Vocal folds -n. the folds at the top of the windpipe that produce the sounds of the voice. When air passes over the lower pair, it vibrates, and sounds are made.

We will start with introducing the singing posture, or what I call 'choir position'. See video 1 (download link above) for intro ideas. Talk the children through why it is important that they stand a certain way to sing. Start from the feet and work up. Ask the children to stand with their feet slightly apart

(shoulder-width) with relaxed knees. Explain that it is important that their body has a good foundation but is not stiff.

Next, talk through each body part that plays a role in this posture, and what impact they have on sound:

1. Diaphragm: your diaphragm is a thin muscle/membrane that controls your lungs. Ask children to put their fingers on their collarbone, and feel down their sternum until they reach the bottom of their ribs. Ask them to breathe in and out and feel what happens when they do. The spongy part underneath their ribs is their diaphragm. Ask them to do quick breaths or vocal percussion (video 2) to move the diaphragm to demonstrate this.

2. Vocal folds: then ask children to move their fingers up to their vocal folds (vocal cords/voice box). Try some sound activities so that they can feel the vibrations (video 3). Explain that the right posture helps the diaphragm and vocal folds do their job properly.

3. Facial expressions: finally, talk through the importance of facial expressions/mouth shape for singing. A singing voice resonates throughout the oral cavities, so a relaxed face is important. Go through some facial warm-up exercises with the children (video 4).

### Assessment:

Can children name the parts of the body important for singing? (Diaphragm, vocal folds/cords, lungs). Can children demonstrate the choir position?

### **WEEK 2** Learning objective: • Can I control my breathing?

#### Key vocabulary:

• Pitch - n. high or low notes based on their frequency.

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### FEATURES PLANNING

• Resonate -v. resound or echo.

Start by recapping the previous lesson on singing posture and body parts. Ask children to stand ready to sing and point out any children using the correct posture. Remind them of the way we stand to sing (video 1).

Spend some time recapping the body parts, helping pupils to find their diaphragm and vocal folds, and repeating some of the activities that remind them what these body parts do (videos 2 and 3).

Explain to the children that when someone speaks or sings, air from the lungs is forced through the vocal folds, which vibrate, then the sound resonates in the throat, oral cavity and nasal passages. This allows the singer to control the pitch and dynamics of the sound. Explain that controlling your breathing is vital to being able to sing well.

Take pupils through some simple breathing exercises

(video 5). To start, ask them to breathe out, breathe in, hold their breath for a few seconds, then breathe out again. Explain that breathing ability can be built

up the same way that exercise builds up muscle strength. Have the children repeat the breathing, but this time count the breaths in seconds: out for three seconds, in for four seconds, hold for flive seconds. Ask the children to feel what happens when they do breathe. Explain that breathing deeply shouldn't involve shoulders moving; it's about the ribcage moving out and in.

Now get children to breathe out with different sounds (video 5). Holding a "shhh" sound can show children how long their breath can be held for, and also how to control how quickly they breathe out. Breathing out on a "ch ch ch" sound can allow them to count how many beats they can make before they run out of breath. Show that thinking about their breathing can improve the length of time they can hold their breath.

Finally, sing a simple song such as 'The Big Ship Sails' (tinyurl.com/ tp-BigShip) and ask children to think about at which points in the song they breathe.



### Assessment:

Can children recall the important body parts? Can children explain how they can control the flow of their breathing?

### WEEK 3 Learning objective:

• Can I explain how the pitch of my voice changes?

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Start by quickly recapping the singing posture and breathing from previous lessons. Remind children of the importance of controlling our breath. Explain that when we speak or sing, the air is forced through our vocal folds. When we are singing, we can change the pitch of each note to create a melody.

Sing 'The Big Ship Sails' and point out that the melody moves in pitch. Ask the children to use their hands to show the changes in pitch (video 6). As the pitch rises, their hands go up; as it falls, they go down.

Explain that the vocal folds are like thick elastic bands. When their voice changes pitch, they are tightening or loosening the vocal folds. When we want our voice to get higher, we stretch our vocal folds, making them thinner. This creates a higher pitch. Use the example of a violin or guitar. When you play a guitar, the thick strings make a low sound, and the thin strings make a high sound. Ask children to stand in choir position and try some simple vocal warm-ups which involve pitch changes (video 7). As you carry out the warmups, stop repeatedly to ask children what they can feel when they change the pitch. Ask them to think about their vocal folds and how these are changing.



Can children recall the important body parts? Can they recall how to control their voice? Can they explain how the vocal folds change pitch?

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### WEEK 4 Learning objective:

• Can I sing a song about the sea, recognising pitch?

Do a short recap of the choir position and breathing games. Remind children of the key body parts: diaphragm, vocal folds, lungs.

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Next, introduce the class to a new song they're going to learn; 'Cape Cod Chantey'/ 'Cape Cod Girls' (tinyurl.com/tp-CapeCod). Ask pupils why the song might have two names. Explain that it is a traditional song, meaning that we do not know who wrote it, and that it has been sung and passed down over time so there are different versions. Next, talk about the fact that the song was traditionally sung by sailors sailing from North

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### FEATURES PLANNING

America to Australia, and that Cape Cod is a bay near Boston, Massachusetts. Explain that chantey/shanty songs were rowing songs, and that they had a strong rhythm so that all the rowers could pull at the same time. Often shanty songs were sung about the sailors' home to remind them of what they had left behind and could either be sad, such as 'My Bonny Lies Over the Ocean', or funny, like 'Cape Cod'.

Teach the children the main verse: "Cape Cod Girls they have no combs...". This would be sung by the lead/main rower. Explain that the "sail away" would be a response from the rest of the crew. Next, split the class in two. Have half the class sing the "Cape Cod..." and the other sing the "sail away", then swap roles. Remind the children of their posture and the pitch. 'Cape Cod' is good for recognising pitch as it rises and falls. Point out that in the first line, "Cape Cod" is in the middle, "girls they" is high and "have no" is lower, with "combs" being the lowest note. Ask them to feel how they create each pitch using their body.

Assessment: Can children apply breathing skills to their performance? Can children control the pitch of their voice accurately?

### WEEK 5 Learning objective:

• Can I sing a song about the sea, using my breath to control sound?

Recap the now-familiar choir position and breathing techniques.

Practise the verse of 'Cape Cod' in two parts that pupils learned last week, then add in the extra verses, that start "Cape Cod boys...", "Cape Cod men...", and "Cape Cod wives...".

Introduce the chorus, which begins "Go sail away...", and is sung chorally (all together). Can pupils work to start and finish at the same time? Can they coordinate so that they each take a breath at the same time? What impact does this have on the sound? Finally, put the song together. Practise the song multiple times, and remind children of



the impact of their stance and breathing. Can they figure out how these different techniques help them in each verse?

### **Assessment:**

Can children apply breathing skills to their performance? Can children control the pitch of their voice accurately?

### WEEK 6 Learning objective:

• Can I sing a song about the sea, perfecting my performance?

Recap the choir position and breathing techniques one last time. These need to become second nature, so that children do this naturally when singing. Give pupils a chance to perform 'Cape Cod' with all the parts. They may need the words on a whiteboard so that they can perform confidently, however, memorising words on such a repetitive song should be straightforward, and actions can help.

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Next, introduce 'My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean' (video 8). Explain that this song is another traditional song, this time originally from Scotland. The song is about missing someone (your 'bonnie', which is a Scottish word for a loved one) who is across the sea. Some stories claim that this is a song about Bonnie Prince Charlie, but this is unclear. The song is simple and has two parts. To begin, introduce the first section that starts "My Bonnie lies over...". Point out the changes in pitch and remind the children how we manage pitch changes in our voices. Then introduce the second section: "Bring back, bring back...".

There is also an action game you can play with the song once the children know it. Perform the song and when a word starting with the letter 'b' is sung (My Bonnie lies over the ocean, my Bonnie lies over the sea), the children bob up and down. Sing the song again, but this time add waving hands on the letter 'm' (My Bonnie...) then touching your nose on the letter 't', patting your head on the letter 'o' etc. As well as this being a fun activity, it also means the children sing the same song multiple times, embedding the skills and developing their voices without getting too bored.

### Assessment:

Can children apply breathing skills to their performance? Can children control the pitch of their voice accurately? Can children perform a song with confidence? **TP** 



Ben Connor is a deputy headteacher at a primary school in Bury, Greater Manchester. He is a trained music specialist and has

been teaching for 13 years in various schools.

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### Japan: Myths to Manga

'Japan: Myths to Manga' is the Young V&A's first exhibition! Opening on 14 October, journey through the sky, sea, forest and city and explore how design, folklore and storytelling have influenced Japanese popular culture, technology and design. Key highlights include films from Studio Ghibli, a manga-inspired coat by Comme des Garçons, and historic and contemporary examples of manga. Find out more on our website: tinyurl.com/tp-MythsToManga Schools can book for free from October.

# The training that CHANGED MY LIFE

Following the 'empathy road' transformed the way **Ginny Bootman** approaches her SEND pupils, all thanks to the PACE approach...

Judge

few years ago, I was sent on some training. I bet you know that feeling: it was a full day far, far away. Parking was horrendous, as was the traffic - and that's not even considering the amount of time it had taken for me to plan all my lessons for a supply teacher who had never visited our school before. In short, I definitely did not arrive in the right frame of mind to invest in something new.

But as soon as the session began, and I started to learn about PACE, I was hooked. A brainchild of Kim S. Golding and Daniel A. Hughes, outlined in their book Creating Loving Attachments: parenting with PACE to nurture confidence and security in the troubled child (2012), PACE is essentially an approach, or a way of 'being', to support children who have experienced trauma. However, it can certainly be used throughout your school, whether pupils have been affected by trauma or not.

### What is PACE?

PACE is based around the idea of building secure attachments between adults and children. This is done by using the four pillars of playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy, and it is a way of being, not an intervention. I will go so far as to say it is a culture that needs to be adopted by everyone within a school. Although traditionally seen as an approach for children, it works equally well with colleagues and parents too; it is all about human connection. PACE is not a script; it is a feeling that develops between individuals. So, let's look at each pillar, to see how they can work in our classrooms.

### **Playfulness**

To begin, let's consider the idea of playfulness. This is about reading a child's body language and thinking of something that might help connect us as an adult to them as a child. This is often not related to education, and ideally will be something perceived as low threat. For example, I once found myself seeing a child with crossed arms and an equally cross face walking past the room I was working in. I said, "That looks like someone who is either angry or upset", to which the child replied, "Yes I am." Rather than interrogating her like

Judy, I spied some empty cardboard tubes we had collected for junk modelling, took my shoes off and started rolling the tubes under my feet. The child looked on, interested, uncrossed her arms and preceded to pick up one of the left-over tubes, take her shoes off and roll it under her feet and her back. We carried on both rolling our tubes in silence, just 'being'.

After a couple of minutes, she then gave me a detailed account of an

"Put on your metaphorical Dorothy shoes, follow the empathy road, and see the difference it can make"

### FEATURES SEND

after-school gymnastics lesson that she had really enjoyed the previous day. "I can't see an angry face now," I said. She then told me about the incident that had caused her to feel angry. and proceeded to go back to her lesson. I think timing was key here; allowing some silence while engaging in a tactile activity like rolling the tubes gave her the mental space she needed to process her feelings, prior to chatting with me. As teachers, we are all so busy and finding this key time is, admittedly, difficult. If I'm honest, I didn't really have time for this to occur on that day either, however I knew it would pay dividends for the child for the rest of the day.

She will come back and see me again; I just know it.

### Acceptance

The second pillar of PACE, acceptance, can be tricky. How can we as adults accept something that a child has done if they have hurt someone? I see this as understanding what brought them to a place in which they felt the need to act as they did. I find that when I 'accept' it, I can understand the situation more and then the child and I can work together to make sure that they try not to do it again. This wording is important, as they can only *try* not to do it again. A child can't promise they will never do it again, as that is a very tall order indeed and a promise that may be broken. But often, if we can isolate what led to the incident, we can figure out interventions the child can make before getting to breaking point. I can often be found sat on the floor in a corridor with a child sat next to me and us chatting more about what happened before than the actual 'event' itself.

### Curiosity

1)

I love this aspect of PACE. Playing detective and being curious helps us to understand children better. The more we understand our pupils, the better our relationships will be.

Years ago, I had a child who used to frequently lash out at others. She was new to the school and these outbursts were causing lots of friendship issues. When I looked into it further, she told me in a very articulate way that she didn't like people being in 'her space'. The two of us chatted about this and we decided that the best way forward was to tell her friends that she didn't like people coming into 'her space' without being invited. Once this was explained to the rest of the class, relationships grew. I also learned about 'windows of tolerance', which you can read about in Psychology Today, at tinyurl.com/tp-WoT

### Empathy

The wonderful Brené Brown has some great YouTube clips about the difference between empathy and sympathy (tinyurl. com/tp-BBempathy). The important distinction for us is that when we empathise, we walk alongside others and put ourselves in their shoes. The moment we do this. we see the world through a different lens. If in doubt, pause, reflect and then go back to the situation. That time of reflection helps us to consider the full situation and not be immediately reactive - very useful when dealing with difficult behaviour in school.

### 5 WAYS PACE CAN IMPROVE RELATIONSHIPS

• Helps us understand the children far more than we could ever imagine.

- Builds relationships with children through an empathy-based approach.
- Costs nothing apart from your time.
- Helps us slow down; to be playful, accepting, curious and empathetic.
- Makes us reflect on our everyday practice in a way that supports us as educators.

The PACE approach is a way of being and a way of doing. It costs nothing and yet achieves so much. So put on your metaphorical Dorothy shoes, follow the empathy road, and see the difference it can make to you and others. Let me know how you get on! **TP** 



Ginny Bootman is an experienced teacher and SENDCo with

responsibility for four primary schools, as well as a regular speaker at national SEND conferences and author of Independent Thinking on Being a SENDCO (Independent Thinking Press, 2023).

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# DO AS I SAY...

Focusing on punitive measures instead of teaching children self-control is doing untellable damage, says **Graham Chatterley**. So why not help pupils learn from their actions instead?

ne of the views I am regularly met with is that because I am anti-punitive, I must let children do whatever they want. But this is not even close to being the case. I have high behaviour expectations, no different from any other educator, but I also understand that threatening punitive consequences in order to get children to meet them is rarely effective.

Now, there will of course be *some* children who do respond to punitive measures. However, I am interested in creating a culture of safety and quality learning, and that requires more than just getting children to conform. There were times early in my career when I did take a more disciplinary approach, but I found that it almost guaranteed that behaviour would deteriorate. Not that I claim to have perfect behaviour now; children aren't robots, and when they express themselves, they will sometimes get it wrong. My job is to help them learn from their mistakes.

Preventing selfexpression and forcing children to suppress their feelings because they are 'bad' can be dangerous. Failing to separate the feeling from the behaviour is as far from what we need to be doing as we can get. It is why zero-tolerance approaches are sending many children into shame cycles (see figure 1), and why we are creating young



human element in teaching and relationships. In too many cases, the system dictates that when a child doesn't follow the rules – whether because they *won't* or *can't* doesn't matter – they will be met with a punitive response.

adults who are both scared of their feelings and unable to control them. If we have never taught children to understand that it is feelings that cause behaviour, then how can they learn to control their feelings? We should be teaching the child self-control, and this means learning from their mistakes; and, if they do something wrong, expecting them to put it right.

I favour logical consequences because that is what happens in real life. In the real world, verbally lashing out at your partner and then going and sitting in silence in your bedroom for half an hour doesn't make it all go away. Actions have consequences, but actions also need to be repaired. In many schools, the consequence is more about payback. Punishment without repair doesn't prepare children for life after school, and it compounds the shame they already feel. With enough repetition, 'I have been bad' becomes 'I am bad.' It creates an

inevitability for some children about their future that we should be doing everything we can to prevent.

### Reliance on punitive systems

Even with so much in the news about vulnerable pupils, the continuing impact of the pandemic and the widening socio-economic divide, there are those in education who still favour a zero-tolerance approach.

The language used in these approaches is very often focused on training behaviour; with the adult modelling it for children to copy, rather than teaching it so children learn how to change. This 'us and them' is a dated approach to education. 'Doing to' rather than 'doing with' will always exclude a minority of pupils who weren't taught to behave in their formative years.

Systems are important, especially in large schools where they play a vital role in consistency, but the system can't replace the This will often follow a set pattern, possibly associated with codes like C1, C2 and so on:

- Reminder of expectation
- Warning
- Name on the board
- Tick next to name, probably signifying a sanction
- Asked to leave the room or removed by a member of staff

The problem is that each punitive step is unlikely to deter a dysregulated child; therefore, they are going to be withdrawn pretty quickly. Rattling through these consequences leaves them with no place to go.

### FEATURES BEHAVIOUR

### Actions and consequences

Consequences perform a vital role in using behaviour as a learning opportunity. If they are part of the teaching, they have an important role to play. If the consequences

give no repair opportunity, they are meaningless; if they are designed to appease a system or to be a deterrent to others, then they will have little impact. Therefore, whenever a consequence is issued, we should be asking three questions: 1. Does the consequence match up to the behaviour and take motive into account?

2. Does the consequence teach the child what the behavioural mistake was and help them to understand what to do next time? 3. Does the consequence teach the child how their action has affected others and motivate them to behave differently in the future?

If an honest answer to these three questions is no, then the consequence isn't fit for purpose.

There will, of course, always be a large cohort who are driven by the need to please adults and therefore do the right thing. It is easy to point to these children and deem the system successful, but these pupils would obey the rules under any system. They have the necessary skills and intrinsic motivation and don't require the fear of a deterrent or extrinsic reward to behave well. A minority of children will never be successful in systems like

these because they don't have the necessary skills and because their motivation is directed

towards matters like survival. If the

child is in a shame cycle, then poor behaviour will be what they know and what people expect. It stands to reason, then, that they will behave poorly.

Ignoring the needs of this minority isn't inclusive. Repeating the same process with the same children isn't inclusive. Encouraging children's parents to take them to another school because this school's expectations will be too much for them isn't inclusive. Inclusive means all children. It means an approach to consequences by which we teach every pupil to cope effectively within our school system. This requires us to look at how we use consequences. If we apply these approaches consistently, we equip children to manage their own behaviour and we don't get stuck in a shame loop. **TP** 

### RECIPE FOR LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

#### Ingredients:

- Safety
- Unconditional care
- Curiosity
- Individual approaches
  Don't:
- Use generic consequence systems.
   If you must, find a way to link it to the behaviour.
   The system might dictate a detention or missed playtime, but you control
- Feed shame by making the child bad.

the content.

- Think that tough love will work. A narrative that tells children they only deserve your care if they do what you want is coercive and controlling.
- Use withdrawal to punish.

#### Do:

- Link the consequence to the behaviour.
- Separate the behaviour and the feeling. The action may be bad, but the child isn't.
- Make sure that care isn't conditional on certain behaviour. The child must be wanted and liked for who they are, not what they do.
- Use withdrawal to teach better behaviour.
- Watch out for quiet children who are masking – they probably aren't OK.



Graham Chatterley is a former school leader and author of Changing

Perceptions: Deciphering the language of behaviour (£17.99, Crown House Publishing).

# What makes a great LESSON PLAN?

You've landed a teaching job – congratulations! But where to start with planning your lessons? Use these pointers and you won't go far wrong, says **Sue Cowley** 

f you've ever been in the situation where you need a quick lesson plan template, you'll know that a search online reveals a multitude of potential formats, with a range of different layouts and approaches. But what the search won't tell you, is what actually works well. What factors do you need to consider to create a 'good' lesson plan, and what level of detail should you include?

First and foremost, a 'good' lesson plan is one that works in a busy primary classroom. An effective plan ensures that you establish your learning objectives for all the children in your class and assess whether these have been met. It also allows you to adapt 'in the moment' where the plan is not working as intended.

Below are some ideas I've gathered over my years of teaching experience, that I hope will help to make the process a bit clearer.

### What to include

The key starting point for any lesson is a clear learning objective - what are the children going to learn as a result of participating in the lesson? What will they know or be able to do that shows they have learned what you intended? On the back of this, you'll also want to consider assessment, and how you'll decide whether they've met the objective. Success criteria are a good way to check whether the children have learned what you intended to

teach, and consider what 'success' looks like.

Consider adaptive teaching as well – how will you check for different levels of prior knowledge and skills in the class? This could involve doing a quick quiz or activity at the start of the lesson. What are the needs of different learners in your class and how are you going to adapt your approach to meet them? If you have children with English as an additional language (EAL), or with specific learning needs, make notes about how you will adapt pedagogy and resources to support them.

Think about how you will assess progress after the lesson, too, linking this into your marking or oral feedback. How will you know that the children have mastered a skill or retained a key piece of knowledge? This links into future planning, for instance, doing retrieval practice at the start of the next subject lesson, to ensure that pupils have remembered previous learning.

With vocabulary development, a key feature of all curriculum areas, you are likely to want to identify the words that children will know and understand as a result of the lesson, – for example, any vocabulary that relates to a specific topic or book. If you have additional adults available to support learners in your classroom, identify how you will utilise their time. A key feature of 'quality-first teaching' is to ensure that the adult with the highest level of qualifications or skills works with the children with the highest level of needs.

### A working document

Another important thing to remember is that plans are not an exact blueprint, nor are they set in stone. View them instead as a working document that acts as a jumping-off point for the
lesson. This means that bullet points will serve better to remind you of what to cover, rather than blocks of text.

If you are planning for EYFS, you need to consider continuous provision and how the different areas of learning appear within it. In our early years setting, for example, we use a large overall setting plan, which shows the different activities on offer. We then add enhancements and staff write notes on the plan during the week, to identify next steps and children's interests.

#### **Reflecting and** developing

Perhaps the most important part of effective lesson planning is that it allows you to develop and improve as a teacher. This happens through a process of

"View your plan as a working document that acts as a jumping-off point for the lesson"



reflection and development. Clearly you want to reflect on lessons when a plan turns out badly. However, it is equally valuable to reflect on lessons that go well, because you can aim to repeat those aspects that worked.

Don't be afraid to scribble notes on your plans, especially after a lesson, to identify what worked well and what might be better done differently in future.

#### Planning as a new teacher

A question I am often asked by new teachers is whether they should plan lessons over the summer holidays, before they begin their new job. At this stage, when you haven't yet met your class, any detailed planning tends to be of limited value, so I normally advise against it.

If you do visit your school ahead of the summer break, ask about any schemes of work or textbooks that are in use, any curriculum maps that the school has developed, and any lesson plan format they want you to use. This is a great way to save you time in your ECT years and you can be sure that your plans match the overall curriculum progression within the school.

You might also be able to find out about specific topics you will be teaching, allowing you to do research and reading around the subject, for instance in history or geography. Another useful tip is to source some interesting resources to help you engage your class, for instance in charity shops. You can find things like old keys to inspire story writing about treasure, or an ornate picture frame in which to display your 'artwork of the week'.

Once you're employed as a class teacher, with all the additional workload that this involves, writing detailed lesson plans for every single lesson is probably not appropriate and will certainly be difficult to manage in terms of workload, so learning how to do the basics well is best.

#### Common planning errors

When it comes to effective lesson plans, there are some key areas where mistakes typically happen. It is often the case, for example, that we underestimate how much time each activity requires, such as needing longer than anticipated to model a skill for the children, before they can practise individually. If you then end up having to rush through lesson content, this can lead to behaviour issues, as pupils try to get your attention or go off-task because they do not understand.

Timings often go wrong towards the end of a lesson, too, especially where you aim to cover too much. Rushing through the lesson to 'get through' everything on a plan is counterproductive. It's far better to complete part of a lesson in detail to ensure the children understand, than pushing on to 'cover' the curriculum. Leave more time than you anticipate for clearing up, especially for activities such as painting or modelling.

I hope these tips go some way to making your planning more straightforward, but the best advice of all is to ask experienced colleagues what works for them, then build on this to find out what works for you and your children – no two classrooms are exactly the same. **TP** 



Sue Cowley is an author, early years teacher and teacher

trainer. Her latest book is the fourth edition of How to Survive your First Year in Teaching (£18, Bloomsbury).

# This could have BEEN AN EMAIL...

We're all short on time, so being able to run well-structured, essential meetings is a key skill to develop, says **Matthew Lane** 

h staff meetings. A great time to get together, drink tea and... count the minutes of your life away. You sit there at 4pm – already eight hours into your working day – while someone drones on, absorbing very little of what they're saying. Then you hold your breath hoping nobody asks questions so you can escape as quickly as possible.

How often have you left a meeting mildly (or very) disgruntled, muttering, "Well that could have just been an email"? Time is a precious resource in schools. We always have more to do than we have time for, and having that essential resource wasted saps morale and goodwill.

So, how do we run an effective meeting that actually makes an impact?

#### Do you need a meeting?

Maybe an odd place to start in an article on running meetings. But whilst our rationale for meeting might be important to us, even providing us with a sense of importance or worth, it just might not be necessary. The average person calmly speaks at 130 words per minute. If your item is a one-way broadcast of information and needs fewer than 500 words (which is how many fit on an A4 sheet in a size 12 font) then you don't need a meeting. You need an email. Your 'meeting' was really

a five-minute transmission from you to staff.

#### How to prepare

Having assessed that you do really need a meeting, then, how do you get ready? Ironically, with an email. Major companies such as Amazon, which brought the idea to global attention, prepare staff for a meeting with a memo. This document is the basis for the meeting, curating and fencing in what will be discussed during the time together. Staff will then arrive with a grounding in the content vou wish to discuss, and ready to share ideas; which is what a meeting should be: a meeting of minds, not the downloading of information. Preparing a document in advance also means that time (and therefore energy and attention span) is not spent on giving staff knowledge of the subject matter, because they arrive prepared.

There are many ways to structure your memo (I've suggested one idea in the panel to the right) and the details will alter a little depending on need. The end product is not really the important part; it is the process of writing that matters. By putting your ideas down on paper, you are rehearsing and coalescing the content. You will find those blind spots or logistical snags that were not initially or superficially apparent. It was for this reason that Amazon took the move back in 2004 to ban PowerPoints

at meetings and move over to its six-page memo structure. Executives could no longer offload their presentation prep to juniors and wing the delivery. These very busy and highly paid people were made to sit, think, write and craft their ideas; ideas that would then be challenged and discussed at the meeting.

This approach does fundamentally shift how we deliver meetings. Instead of distilling our points into a string of slides using pictures, key words or bullet points for speed and brevity, we are now crafting a story;

guiding our attendees through our thought process and asking for feedback.

Think about the attendee list, too. Do you need all teachers? Do you need TAs or support staff? We do not need spectators at meetings;



everyone needs to bring a contribution.

#### How to run a meeting

First, start on time. If most attendees have arrived, begin rather than sap goodwill by awaiting stragglers. This also deflates someone who has decided to arrive late as a power play. You cannot deploy the 'thank you for waiting for me' line if you're sneaking in the back.

Ensure everyone has a paper copy of the briefing memo. If people have brought computers with them, ask them to put these away. Devices bring distractions. Allow time for staff to re-read the memo and then begin the discussions.

Using the structure of your memo as an agenda, discuss each part in turn. Take staff views on the problem you are highlighting. Did they agree with your background assessment? Did you miss something? Talk through the possible solutions, fostering debate. If new ideas are given, note these but then come back to your points. This part of the meeting can get tied up in knots of tangents if not led with purpose. Try to keep everyone in the same discussion, and if the group breaks into hustles of

chatter, bring everyone back together again. End with summing up and assigning actions or tasking as needed.

Afterwards (the next day is best), send everyone an email thanking them for their time and codifying the decisions made and the actions to follow. This will sound very different from staff meetings where teachers sit in passive silence and are talked at. If someone is there but not contributing, did they need to attend at all? If you do not need every teacher at the meeting, ask SLT to provide tasks for non-attendees so the directed time calculations are not upset. Just remember

"We always have more to do than we have time for, and having our time wasted saps morale and goodwill"

> to put all teachers on the post-meeting email, to avoid those not invited feeling undervalued.

#### Teamwork

Time, energy and optimism can be in short supply in schools. Supporting colleagues with purposeful meetings where they have their voices heard builds morale and permits teachers to do what we came into the profession to do: make a contribution. **TP** 



Matthew Lane is a teacher from Norfolk. His new book

Wayfinder: leading curriculum vision into reality (£16, John Catt), is out now.

🔬 @MrMJLane

theteachinglane.co.uk

#### MEETING MEMO STRUCTURE



• Introduction: this provides a brief overview of the topic

of the meeting, including the purpose, the goals that are being set, and the audience for the memo.



• **Problem:** identify the problem that the meeting is addressing. This

could be a challenge that the school is facing, an opportunity that the school wants to capitalise on, or a new initiative that the school is considering.



• Background: context for the problem. This could include

information about the history of the problem, the factors that are contributing to the problem, and the impact that the problem is having on the school.



• Solutions: an outline of the possible solutions to the problem.

This could include a variety of options, such as new policies, tools, or initiatives. Provide no more than three possible options.



• Recommendation: this section should make a

recommendation

for the best solution to the problem. This choice should be based on the information that has been presented in the memo, as well as the author's judgment and experience.



#### • Appendix (optional): this section can be

additional information that is not essential to the main body of the memo. This could include data,

research, or other

supporting materials.



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# Holism and HULA HOOPS

How **Sally Goodridge** went from being a reluctant participant in sport to winning a national award for leading PE, and transformed the curriculum along the way

hen I was first offered the role of PE curriculum lead, I asked myself, "Why?" I have never been 'sporty', and certainly did not feel confident in leading the subject. However, not wanting to let the school down, I realised the way into any subject is finding personal passion. For me, that is PE's ability to drive wellbeing for body and mind, so I set about using this as the basis for reforming our curriculum in a holistic way. Here's what I learned...

#### **PE confidence**

Before the new approach, PE felt like a separate entity from the rest of the curriculum, and staff surveys showed our teachers lacked confidence in

delivering it. So, one of the first things I did was to instigate a programme of bespoke CPD for all staff. This was wide-ranging, but included mentoring coaches using the Sport Premium funding. We ran sessions on how to plan and develop a pedagogy for PE, as well as developmental drop ins on PE lessons with supportive and constructive feedback. A key message throughout was the focus on giving students skills that would help them throughout life, including resilience, confidence, and leadership.

All our teachers are now much more confident in delivering PE. I would also suggest getting your SLT on board early, and using external tools to help evaluate your journey. Having engaged the leadership team in the whole-school approach from day one, I used the Youth Sports Trust's online Quality Mark audit tool to show impact, demonstrating commitment to best

practice.

#### Healthy bodies

Our 'healthy minds, healthy bodies' approach brings together many aspects of PE, PSHE, and wider personal development, connecting them to all subjects. As part of a new PE curriculum, we introduced core strands of learning that flow through each year group.

Each term the PE curriculum focuses on building the skills around six concepts, including personal, social, creative, cognitive, health and fitness, and applying physical education (we used a paid service - Real PE - for this, but you can always decide on your own pillars). Whatever skills are being applied in sport, teachers can affirm and apply in other curricular areas and make links; we have posters in all classrooms exploring the six concepts so teachers can easily reference connections.

This enables children to see the 'why' behind PE, which helps them to engage in their lessons, as well as extracurricular sports. It also provides teachers with the confidence to integrate movement into non-PE lessons.

#### **Active uniforms**

Inspired by discussions at the Youth Sport Trust Annual Conference, I championed an active uniform policy, which means our children are now ready for physical activity at any time, in any lesson (we often explore maths outside, for example, using hula hoops to understand fractions).

No one forgets their PE kit when they are wearing it all the time! No time is wasted getting changed, either; PE is now a full lesson, not 20 minutes of changing time plus whatever is left. We have used some of our Pupil Premium to provide elements of the active uniform for disadvantaged learners and, as a result, have seen participation by disadvantaged pupils in lunchtime sports clubs increase by 100 per cent and in after school sports clubs by 80 per cent.

These may seem like small changes, but there is now a buzz around PE, sport and physical activity; one that has been noticed by the Trust, by parents and also by Ofsted – we received an outstanding judgement for personal development in 2022. Crucially, our pupils now go to secondary school ready for the next stage as healthy and active citizens.

My advice to others leading primary PE is to find their point of passion and be open to constant learning – no matter what your starting point. Impact is everything. After seeing how PE is shaping our whole school community, I'm now delighted I've had the opportunity to lead this wonderful subject. **TP** 



Sally Goodridge is PE curriculum lead at Summerhill Academy, and was recently

named Primary Curriculum Leader of the Year at this years' Tes Schools Awards. Find out more at tinyurl.com/ tp-PrimaryLeader23



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#### **REASONS TO TRY...** The Crown Estate sustainability resources

Inspire pupils to learn about sustainability in a new Minecraft Education world and develop the green skills they need to take action on climate change

#### **30 SECOND BRIEFING**

The Crown Estate has teamed up with Microsoft UK to develop a new sustainability education initiative featuring a Minecraft Education world based on the iconic Windsor Great Park. The world comes with curriculum-linked lesson plans and teaching materials co-created with teachers. The initiative inspires pupils to build their knowledge of biodiversity and renewable energy and develop the green skills to take real-world action.

#### **NET-ZERO FUTURE**

1 Do you want to tackle climate change in the classroom? As we learn more about its potentially catastrophic consequences, it becomes more important than ever that the UK meets its sustainability targets. The Crown Estate sees firsthand the implications of biodiversity loss across its urban and rural holdings, including Windsor Great Park, and the UK seabed and coastline it manages. It has launched this initiative to help young people develop the green skills and sustainability knowledge they need to thrive in a net-zero future.

#### A POSITIVE $\mathbf{2}$ **APPROACH**

There is growing eco-anxiety amongst young people, with 95 per cent of pupils in the UK saying they're worried about climate change. Schools, of course, want to help, but 70 per cent of teachers haven't been equipped or feel confident to cover it in lessons. That's where this initiative comes in. By framing climate change through the lens of biodiversity, it provides a positive, solutions-focused way to engage pupils, and the resources include all the information teachers need to feel confident with the topics without adding to your workload.



#### THE POWER OF 3 VIRTUAL WORLDS

The Crown Estate has partnered with Microsoft UK to create a world for Minecraft Education – Conservation Quest at Windsor Great Park, for 7-11-year-olds. Pupils take the role of a conservation apprentice to bring sustainability themes to life from the comfort of the classroom. They can explore complex, real-world topics, taking a hands-on role managing meadows and protecting woodlands to understand how different decisions impact biodiversity. Through a series of quests, they learn about the water cycle, environmental management and more; even shrinking to the size of an insect to understand a pond's unique ecosystem!



Find out more and download resources at thecrown estate.co.uk/ minecraftedu

#### CURRICULUM-4 LINKED LESSONS

To accompany the world, The Crown Estate has created a series of free, fun, curriculum-linked lesson plans to help you and your pupils get the most out of this immersive experience, and develop skills such as problem-solving. Building on the challenges pupils complete in Conservation Quest, the lesson plans provide everything you need to get started – including a teacher guide, lesson slides, worksheets and guidance videos. Created with teachers to align with the national curriculum, the lessons cover topics from science, geography and even engineering to help you include sustainability and green careers across your curriculum.

#### **INSPIRE REAL-**5 WORLD ACTION

Studies show that young people's fears about climate change are associated with a lack of agency - where they're not sure how to make a positive difference. That's why these lessons culminate in taking real-world action, supported by the Taking Action Toolkit. It supports pupils to take the skills and knowledge they learned in the virtual world and apply them in their community. By showing young people they can take meaningful action for nature recovery, you can grow their confidence and empower them to be changemakers.



You can access the lesson plans and Minecraft Education world at education.minecraft.net (Minecraft Education license required for world)

The resource pack comes with free guidance films, which tell you more and give top tips for using the lessons and **Minecraft Education world** with your class

The lessons were co-created with science and geography teachers alongside biodiversity experts at The Crown Estate

The flexible Taking Action Toolkit can be completed in a few hours, or over the course of a term, so you can use it in whatever way best suits you and your pupils

# WAGOLL

#### Finding Bear by Hannah Gold

Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to create an engaging sense of place

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-LB

hen I first sat down to write *The Last Bear*, I knew, deep within my heart, that there was a story I wanted to tell. A story of friendship, of love, of hope – but most of all, a story about making a difference.

*The Last Bear* was inspired by my deep love of animals, and I couldn't have foreseen everything that was to follow – not only awards and sales, but also how intensely children (and grown-ups!) around the world would take Bear to their hearts. And there was one question I kept hearing: will April and Bear ever see each other again? The answer was yes!

In *Finding Bear*, April has returned home from her adventure on Bear Island, but over a year later, she can't stop thinking about Bear. When she hears that a polar bear has been shot and injured in Svalbard, she's convinced it's her friend and persuades her dad to return with her to the northernmost reaches of the Arctic. So begins an unforgettable journey across frozen tundra and icy glaciers.

But along the way, April discovers much more than she bargained for -atiny polar bear cub, in desperate need of her protection. Set in the thick of an Arctic winter, the story reunites us with April's father and her old friend Tör, plus we meet some new friends, including an entire team of gorgeous

Text © Hannah Gold. Finding Bear (£12.99 HB, HarperCollins) is published on 28th September, 2023.

husky dogs.

It was a joy to immerse myself in the Arctic landscape – a place of final frontiers and breathtaking beauty – and to bring this stunning scenery to life for the reader.

As with my first two books, *Finding Bear* touches upon the environment. In truth, it's impossible not to write about polar bears without paying heed to the melting sea ice. Children don't need preaching to, however. My goal remains to write big-hearted adventure stories full of emotion and excitement. But also, tales that act as a gateway into the natural world; that beg us to fall in love with it, to care for it, and ultimately to protect it. **TP** 

#### **5 TIPS FOR CREATING A SENSE OF PLACE**

#### **IMMERSE YOURSELF**

To capture a rich location like the Arctic, I like to watch videos — either documentaries or short videos on YouTube or Instagram etc — as part of my research. Not only does this bring a location to life, it helps me to depict more of the raw essence of the place.

#### LISTEN

To imagine key sensory scenes, like the Arctic storm or whales singing to each other, I find audio that I can listen to while writing. This brings me fully into the scene and reminds me to bring in auditory sensations and not just rely on visual elements.

#### VISIT

You might not be able to visit the Arctic, but are there any museums or exhibitions local to you that you can check out? When I was writing *The Last Bear*, I visited a small polar museum which contained lots of photos and Arctic equipment. It also featured diaries of Arctic explorers, which I found utterly fascinating and a brilliant way to get into the explorer mindset!

#### READ

As part of my research, I read books or articles on the location I am writing

about. Some written descriptions of the northern lights and the sheer solitude of the Arctic helped shape April's interpretation of it.

#### IMAGINE

Once you have collected all your research and immersed yourself, sometimes the best thing to do is just use the power of your imagination! Feel the cold on your face, the taste of salt on your lips, hear those gulls crying and see the vastness of the tundra stretch out before you. Our imaginations are wonderful, rich spaces and the best place to explore!

#### **TEACH READING & WRITING**

Time doesn't really slow down, but there are certain situations or experiences that can seem to lengthen or shorten our perception of it. In this case, April's extreme peril makes her feel every single second, thus making time appear to feel endless.

Weather is one of the most powerful forces on earth; sometimes so powerful it can appear to be a character all of its own in books. Here the wind is almost deliberately snatching away April's voice. I like the idea of the storm having its own personality!

Using animal verbs such as 'howling', and later 'burrowing', to describe non-animal actions is particularly evocative as they function like imagery, and give the Arctic storm character, suggesting that it is wilful or purposeful.

#### **Extreme weather**

experiences, like an Arctic storm, can have a truly visceral effect on humans. That's why I like to use all the senses when I am imagining a scene like this rather than just being reliant on sight and touch. How can we make the storm as affecting as possible?

The repetition of April being no match for the powerful landscape of the Arctic in this final line is deliberate. We see April finally accept Hedda's warning, and repeating this sentiment gives the moment more power.

#### **Extract** from

chapter 18, pages 164-166

Arctic Storm

The snow was falling so thick and fast that it took all of April's concentration just to hold on. Time became nothing but a blur. It was impossible to see or hear anything. Her goggles were clouded, all the exposed parts of her face were raw and her fingers and toes completely numb. Even with all her winter clothes on, she was still no match for an Arctic storm.

After what felt like an eternity, although she had no way to measure it, the dogs stopped, panting and heaving with their exertion.

The snow was dense, so absolute, she couldn't even see her hands or feet. It was not so much a blizzard – more of a wall. Something solid and impenetrable. April wiped her snow goggles, only for them to coat up almost immediately.

'DAD!' she cried. 'TÖR!'

But it was no use. No matter how loud she shouted, her voice kept being snatched away by the wind. A howling screech that pushed and buffeted her from all directions.

Now they had stopped moving, she could feel the cold seep into every pore of her body.

#### [...]

#### She swallowed hard.

The wind was relentless, battering her from all angles, the harsh sound of it burrowing into her head and drowning out all thoughts except one.

Hedda was right.

The Arctic wasn't a place for children. <mark>It wasn't</mark> even a place for humans.

164-66

One of the recurring themes is the idea that the Arctic is more powerful than humankind. It's something that Hedda has warned April about, but here April realises it viscerally. This theme is picked up again in the final sentence of the extract.

> I love using senses to bring scenes alive. Here we have the panting of the dogs, the raw cold of the storm seeping into every pore of April's body, her goggles snowing up so she can't see, and the screeching of the wind. By bringing in all the senses descriptive writing becomes three-dimensional. We can almost feel ourselves right there in the Arctic alongside April.

There's not much dialogue in this scene as April is alone with the husky dogs. But even if a character is alone, you can still have them speak – either out loud to themselves or even to inanimate objects. I find that adding a line of dialogue in a descriptive scene breaks up the text and brings a more dynamic quality.

I love using single-line paragraphs such as this one. I always think about how the text will look on the page, a bit like creating a painting, in a way. If the text comprised all long paragraphs, then it could feel a bit boring. By introducing single line paragraphs at pointed moments, it creates variety and a dramatic effect.

# Inside the **ACTOR'S STUDIO**

From pretending to eat chocolate cake to navigating Narnia in their imaginations, exploring literature as performers will fuel pupils' creativity and inspire deeper textual understanding

#### SAMANTHA MARSDEN

ometimes, thinking about the study of literature can conjure images of quiet libraries, filled with students poring over books. However, reading and writing both involve the study of people, relationships, and what it means to be human - just as with acting. It's no coincidence, then, that there are many actor-writers; Phoebe Waller-Bridge, Matt Damon, Tina Fey, Spike Lee and William Shakespeare, to name just a few.

Bringing drama games and acting techniques into your classroom is a great way to make the study of literature more active, and inspire pupils to engage with literature in a practical, and character-driven way. Larraine S Harrison, author of Drama and Reading for Meaning Ages 4-11 (Routledge 2022), explains how this can work. She says, "Stepping into an imaginary context encourages children to view texts through the lens of different perspectives. It fosters an emotional engagement that can motivate and inspire children to peel back the layers of a text and dig a little deeper."

Acting techniques can build a bridge between text and imagination, maybe

even inspiring

a love of reading for life. Here are some ideas to help you apply this approach in your classroom...

#### Acting activities for literature

Yes, Let's Yes Let's is a simple, well-known drama game

that can also be adapted to help students connect with a book or script. To play, explain that

everyone acts out what the

"Bringing drama games and acting techniques into your classroom is a great way to make literacy more active"

idea-caller (you, the teacher) calls out. For example, if you are studying *Matilda*, you might say, "Let's all be Bruce and eat a chocolate cake," and the class would reply, "Yes, let's!" Then everyone pretends to eat chocolate cake. Give it about a minute before you call out the next idea.

Next you might say, "Let's all copy sums from the board, Ms Trunchbull is watching!" and the class would reply, "Yes, let's!" before pretending to do this. ideas, you can ask pupils to volunteer to share their ideas for things that everyone can do related to the text. Yes, Let's can work

Once you've shared a few

with any text. For example, if you're studying *The* Lion, The Witch and The *Wardrobe*, students are likely to love it if you say, "Let's all walk through the wardrobe into Narnia!" To extend this, you might like to read out a description of Narnia from the text

as students walk around, imagining the world you've called out.

#### Character studies

One way to study literature is to help students get inside the characters' minds and worlds. Konstantin Stanislavski is one of the most influential acting teachers in the world, and he coined the term 'given circumstances'. This refers to the environmental, historical, and situational conditions in which a

character finds themselves. If you're studying a book or script, you can ask pupils to choose one of the characters, and a particular point in the book, and to write out their given circumstances at that time.

For Stanislavski, six questions make up a character's given circumstances:

- Who?
- When?
- Where?
- Whv?
- For what reason?
- How?

You can reassure the children that for some of the answers, different people will have different interpretations, and that's great. See the panel on the right for a character sheet template that I like to use with pupils. You can ask them to choose a character from the text that's being studied, and then they answer the questionnaire in first person. Encourage them to draw the answers from the text when possible, and to fill in blanks with their imaginations.

#### **Objectives**

Actors and directors spend a lot of time thinking and talking about objectives (the character's wants). You can ask pupils to write down, discuss, or improvise

#### **TEACH READING & WRITING**

the character's objectives. This can be done on a per sentence, per scene, or whole-story basis. According to Stanislavski there are two types of objectives: the objective and the super objective. The objective is the want in the scene, or sentence. The super objective is the character's main want – their life ambition perhaps – or the overarching desire that drives the story.

Opinions may vary on what a character's objective

and super objective are, which is all part of the fun when investigating a text together. You can ask your class to share parts of the text that support their argument.

You can also split students into pairs and ask them to create an improvisation from objectives. For example, if you're studying *Alice in Wonderland*, you could ask them to create an improvisation with Alice and the White Rabbit. Give the actor playing Alice the objective of trying to get home. The actor playing the White Rabbit is running late, and their objective is to arrive for a job for the Duchess. You can give the pairs five minutes to come up with an improvisation, and then ask them to share with the rest of the class, if they feel comfortable doing so.

#### Hot seating

To help students get into the minds of the characters you're studying, you can try hot seating. Place a chair (the hot seat) in front of the class. Ask for a volunteer to sit on the hot seat, and task them with thinking of a character from the book, or script, you are working on. Then ask them to try and think of all the character's given circumstances, including their age, name, job (if they have one), place that they live, their friends, family, likes, dislikes, fears and wants. Explain to the child that they can make up some of this information if it has not been given in the text. Now, in character, the improviser answers questions from the audience. If they don't know the answer to a question, they can make up an answer, or say, "I don't know". The audience can ask any questions they like; see the character sheet template for ideas. If you think some children might need a little more support before jumping into this, together as a class you can put together information about characters from the text you're working on. You can write

> each character on the board and under their name list their

#### CHARACTER SHEET

🙂 Name:

C Age:

Where do you live?

Uhat's your bedroom like if you have one?

 Have you had any life changing events? If yes, what happened and how did it change you?

Who do you have significant relationships with?

Who's your favourite person?

Who's your least favourite person?

If you had three wishes, what would you wish for?

Unat do you most want from life?

What scares you the most?

What's your life philosophy in a nutshell?

given circumstances, wants, fears, habits, relationships, and so on.

Explain to pupils that it's okay for the same character to be played and hot seated more than once and that different interpretations are exciting!

I hope these ideas help make your literacy lessons a bit more lively... Action! TP



Sam is a former drama teacher at schools and youth theatres

She is the author of 100 Acting Exercises for 8–18-Year-Olds (£16.99, Bloomsbury).

# Collins

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## SCAN TO TAKE A LOOK INSIDE





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rand Hotel Feelings

Check in with emotions and explore what makes your pupils tick with Lidia Brankovic's beautifully illustrated picturebook

#### **JO CUMMINS**

work as a teacher in a specialist provision where we follow a therapeutic, emotions-based curriculum. Due to this, I am always looking for high-quality picturebooks around which to base our sessions – they are quick to read, engaging, and highly accessible regardless of literacy levels. One of the objectives we spend a lot of time on, is building the children's emotional vocabulary and developing an awareness of where in our bodies we might feel those emotions. When pupils can accurately express what they are feeling and recognise the physical warning signs, they are more able to self-regulate and avoid escalations in behaviour.

There is now a wide range of fantastic books that explore particular emotions and invite discussion around strategies to manage them. What I particularly like about *The Grand*  Hotel of Feelings is that it not only names a wide range of emotions, but it also promotes that idea that all emotions are normal and welcome; that uncomfortable feelings don't need to be pushed to the backs of our minds, and sometimes we might just need to sit with them a while.

The Grand Hotel of Feelings would lend itself brilliantly to a wide range of curriculum-based activities, including PSHE, literacy, DT, art, and even music.

#### Book topic

#### Activities Know your nouns

This starter activity is a good way to reinforce previous grammar learning and to begin to introduce the vocabulary of emotion.

Give the children a variety of words to sort. These should be a mix of concrete, collective and abstract nouns; for example: table, herd, love. Initially, ask the children, in groups, to sort the words into categories without any kind of guidance as to how, or how many should go in each category. After five minutes, ask pupils to share their criteria for sorting them and compare that to how others have sorted them. Are there any common themes?

Have any of the groups noticed that the words are all types of nouns or sorted any of them together in that manner? Discuss what is meant by a concrete, collective, and abstract noun. Ask the children to sort the words again according to these categories. What do they notice about all the words in the 'abstract' category? (They are all – or mostly – emotions.) Challenge pupils to add three more words to each group.



#### Warm fuzzies and cold pricklies

It can be tempting to classify emotions into 'good' and 'bad', but this sends the message that there are some emotions that we shouldn't feel, whereas actually, it is perfectly healthy and normal to feel many different types of emotions. Even a combination of several at the same time! Using the terms 'warm fuzzies' and 'cold pricklies' relates more to how these emotions feel within your body and when you share them with others. Later activities will encourage children to sort and discuss emotions in a range of ways, so developing a shared vocabulary through which to do so is key.

*Warm up* – What do we mean by warm, fuzzy and cold, prickly emotions? Have two different bags of objects to share – one with soft, fluffy objects (a pom-pom, a cotton wool ball, a small teddy, etc) to represent warm fuzzy emotions, and one with harder, spikier objects (a thistle head, pinecone, prickly conker shell, etc) to

represent cold prickly emotions. Activity – How does it feel? Pass the warm fuzzy items around. Ask the children to say how they feel in their hands. Do they hurt? Are they worried about holding them? Throw a pom-pom or similar to a child to catch. Did it hurt? Explain that these objects represent warm fuzzy emotions. They are nice to hold and don't hurt someone if we share them. Can any of the children name an emotion that may be a warm



fuzzy? For example: happy, excited, proud, loved.

Now pass the spikier objects around. How do these feel when the children hold them? Do they want to hold them for a long time? Explain that these represent cold prickly emotions such as anger, sadness, or fear. How would it feel if you were thrown one to catch? Discuss that although it is important to share our emotions with someone we trust as it can help us, we all need to be very careful when throwing cold prickly emotions around as they may hurt someone else.

#### As you are reading

While reading, ask children to note down all the emotions they hear, then

#### **Take it further** → <del>→</del>

#### HAPPINESS IN A BOTTLE

Making a sensory bottle can help a child relax and self-regulate; they are also very easy to make yourself. Each student will need access to an empty plastic bottle, water, and assorted craft materials (glitter, sequins, beads, pom-poms, etc).

Use the illustrations of joy and calm to prompt a conversation about the people, places, colours, and sounds that inspire those emotions in the children. Talk about how these things could be represented in a sensory bottle – blue glitter could represent the ocean or pom-poms could represent hugs with a pet. Try not to overfill the bottles with items or they won't be able to move around inside. For extra security, add a layer of electrical tape or similar around the lid to seal it.

When finished, swirl, roll or shake your bottle and remember all your favourite things!

#### **EMOTION WHEELS**

When the hotel manager is sitting with sadness, she notes that, "If I don't listen carefully, I won't hear what Sadness is telling me and then he will stay for a very long time." Ask the children what they think that

means. What might someone's sadness be

telling you? Consider that there are lots of reasons someone might feel sad: being lonely, or feeling guilty for example. Can the children think of any further reasons or use a thesaurus to find synonyms for 'sadness'? Try doing a similar thing for 'surprised.' Why is it important that we understand what someone's emotions are really trying to tell us? How might we react differently depending on what we think an emotion is saying? How would your response differ if someone were lonely as opposed to bored? Create an emotions wheel to help explore what might be behind different emotions. How to make your own emotions wheel: 1. Find the centre of a paper plate. 2. Draw three lines to divide the



add them to a class list. You could write these onto separate cards so the words can be moved around and sorted for later activities, if you like.

Each class or individual child will have different emotional needs to address, so adults might need to decide which emotions would be most beneficial to focus on and explore at any particular time. As you're reading the story, take time to pause and reflect on the strategies used to support each emotion in the book and what strategies adults and children use themselves when they feel that way.

*Emotions sort* – Recap on how the warm

fuzzies and cold pricklies made us feel; which felt good to share and which we had to be a bit more careful with. Link this to the list of emotions collected from the story. Which do the children think are warm and fuzzy and which are cold and prickly? Can pupils name any other emotions to add?

The emotions could be sorted in a variety of ways: into a simple table; written on post-it notes and sorted into hoops; or into a Venn diagram, for example. Are there any emotions that could be sorted as either category? Discuss how being excited or surprised could be classified as either warm and fuzzy or cold and prickly. Why do the children think this is? Can anybody think of a situation when they've felt like this? What sensations did they feel in their bodies? For example, did their heart start pounding or their ears start ringing? Or can a child think of a time when they've felt two contrasting emotions at once? For example, happy to be moving up to secondary school but sad about leaving Year 6.

#### Welcome to our hotel

It would be lovely for each child or each class to produce their own hotels. You could do this quite simply by drawing characters onto a printed pro-forma or in a more three-dimensional form using junk modelling and peg dolls.

In the story, the manager of the hotel takes time to sit with each of the emotions and work out what it needs. An adult should share an example of when they felt a certain emotion and what they did to help work through it. For example, "When I was upset that I had lost my temper with someone, I went for a walk outside and that helped me feel better."

#### Loved this? Try these...

- A Shelter for Sadness by Anne Booth, illustrated by David Litchfield
   An Emotional Menagerie: Feelings from A-Z by The School of Life
   Barbara Throws a Wobbler
   by Nadia Shireen
- The Colour Monster by Anna Llenas
- Feelings by Libby Walden,
- illustrated by Richard Jone

Encourage children to share examples of when they've felt a certain way and what they did to help themselves. Create a list of class strategies for each emotion. Does anyone do the same thing as someone else? Does anyone do something different? Reflect that not all people need the same thing when they feel a particular way and that we should be mindful of that. These ideas could be used to create tags or a 'top tips' label to go with each emotion that checks into the hotel. The children will need to create visual representations of each character. They may like to look closely at the illustrations of the book for inspiration or use their own interpretations. For example, anger may be a red, spiky shape or happiness could be a pink, fluffy cloud. You can use a range of media to make the characters, including clay, playdough, peg dolls, card, paint, etc. **TP** 



Jo Cummins is an advisory teacher for a specialist provision, an experienced English lead, and a children's book blogger.

#### plate into sixths.

 Draw a circle in the centre like a bullseye.
 Write one of these emotions (happy, sad, surprised, angry, frightened, disgusted) into each sixth, inside the bullseye.

5. Cut out the bullseye, and affix it with a split pin in the middle onto another paper plate, also split into sixths.

6. In the outer ring of the bottom plate, list some of the other emotions which could be behind the main feeling (as discussed earlier).

7. Add an appropriate emoji face to each section or shade them different colours. Ask children to take turns spinning the smaller circle, and lining up emotions with their possible causes on the larger wheel. Discuss as a class (different pupils might have different ideas).

#### **MIXING EMOTIONS**

Colours and emotions are inextricably linked. Try asking the children which colours they associate with anger or sadness. Use a technique called 'slow looking' to study the book's illustrations for sadness, anger, or peace. Pupils need to look at their selected illustration for a minute, then note down three things they can see. Do the same again and note down three more things, paying particular attention to the colours and shapes used. Repeat the process again with a different illustration. When the children have had the opportunity to use slow looking to study all the illustrations provided, share what everyone spotted. Did anyone see anything that nobody else did? Which colours and shapes were used for the different emotions?

Next, ask children to use what they have observed to create illustrations for other emotions which could be highlighted in the story. Think carefully about what shapes they are going to use and what colours they are going to mix to represent their characters. Use the illustrations created to compile a class book of emotions or a display. The children's work could be compared to that of other artists who used colour to portray emotions, for example Picasso's Blue Period.



## Agents of history Partners in mystery Sisters in solving crime

A note from J. T. Williams, the author of The Lizzie and Belle Mysteries:

The Lizzie and Belle Mysteries is my historical fiction series set on the dark and dangerous streets of Georgian London. My heroines, Lizzie and Belle, are based on real historical figures! Elizabeth Sancho lived with her family at their tea shop in Westminster, and Dido Belle was brought up at Kenwood House by her aunt and uncle. I wanted to put two Black British girls centre stage and invite them to tell their own stories. Meet Lizzie and Belle to find out more about our shared past ...

If you would like to bring The Lizzie & Belle Mysteries directly into your classroom and immerse your pupils in an inspiring and thoughtprovoking journey through the book's themes of identity, storytelling and resistance, Literacy Tree have developed an exciting and comprehensive teaching resource for The Lizzie & Belle Mysteries: Drama and Danger for Upper Key

Stage 2 based on their evidenceinformed Teach Through a Text pedagogy. Scan the QR code to find out more.



Tree

Read an extract from The Lizzie and Belle Mysteries: Drama and Danger

M y mother says that until the lions have their own storytellers, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.

She has a proverb to suit most situations. She says that proverbs are 'jewels from the ancestors' to guide us through the challenges of life.

I can definitely see myself as a lion. I am strong. As strong as anyone my age.

I am fast. Superfast, some say. No one I've met can outrun me.

I am loyal to my pride. My family – my mother, my father, three sisters and a brother – are my world.

For every proverb my mother offers, my father has a quotation.

'All the world's a stage!' he claims. 'And all the men and women merely players!' He believes that we each have a role to play in the great drama of life. That different situations call for different performances. The important thing is to be true to oneself in each performance.

Am I a performer? Or a storyteller? Can I be both? The heroine of my own story?

Mama says that if we don't tell our own stories, someone else will do it for us. And if we let them do that, how can we trust them to tell it right?

Until the lions have their own storytellers, the story of the hunt will always glorify the hunter.

When this story began, almost everything I knew about the world I had learned from my parents. These events changed that forever.

I decided to write them down so that I could be a storyteller for the lions. I did not yet know that this was the story of a hunt.

The Lizzie and Belle Mysteries: Drama and Danger and its sequel, Portraits and Poison by J. T. Williams are OUT NOW!





# How to teach PHASE 4 PHONICS

Conquer blending and segmenting with this guide to building on previous learning, from **Emma Spiers** 

hase 4 phonics can feel trickier to teach than phases 2 and 3, because there are no new grapheme-phoneme correspondences to learn. This teaching phase is designed to consolidate and build on all previous learning, challenging children to read longer words, and a larger bank of tricky words, 'at a glance'.

#### **Activity ideas**

All phase 4 phonics activities should include lots of opportunities to blend-to-read, and segment-to-spell words including adjacent consonants, and words of more than one syllable, including:

#### $\cdot$ CVCC words

consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant For example: *milk*, *desk*, *went*, *last*, *soft*, *chest*, *shelf*, *toast* 

#### CCVC words

Consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant For example: *from, stop, plan, frog, flag, grab, green, brush, sport, crash* 

#### $\boldsymbol{\cdot} \textbf{CCVCC words}$

 $Consonant\-consonant\-vowel\-consonant\-consonant\-vowel\-consonant\-conson$ 

For example: *stand*, *spend*, *trust*, *twist*, *blink*, *crunch*, *shrink* 

#### CCCVC words

Consonant-consonant-

consonantvowel-consonant For example: *splash*, *spring*, *street*, *string*  It's important to remember that the vowel and consonant digraphs taught in phase 3 are included in these words as a single unit. For example:

b-r-u-sh is a CCVC word. The digraph sh is considered a single consonant unit.
g-r-ee-n is a CCVC word. The digraph ee is considered a single vowel unit.

#### **Blending and segmenting**

We also need to show pupils how to hear adjacent consonants in words. They can find these tricky to determine, as some phonemes are more dominant in words. For example: hearing *went* as *wet*.

Pupils also need to know how to say the adjacent consonants in words. This can be tricky, depending on clarity of speech. For example: saying *jum* rather than *drum*; *chain* rather than *train*; or *vat* rather than *that*.

Begin by orally blending and segmenting the chosen words as a class, following the 'I do, we do, you do' method (the adult models the blending process first (I do); children and adult blend aloud together (we do); children blend independently as a class (you do)).

Keep the number of words limited to no more than eight, using the focus consonants for the session. Repeat this process by segmenting to spell the same words, using the same methodology.

#### **Phonics in context**

It's important that children learn to apply phase 4 phonics beyond the isolated word level, too. Every phase 4 phonics lesson should therefore include explicit teaching of how to read or write a sentence, including some focus words. This could consist of shared sentencereading, or dictated sentence-writing, using the 'I do, we do, you do' strategy.

Another useful strategy is to read or write together as a class, blending or segmenting one word at a time. As each word is read aloud or written, the group should be guided back to the

beginning of the sentence to reread previous words. This will significantly improve memory, training the children to check that



what they are reading or writing makes sense.

#### Things to avoid:

• Asking the children to think of their own sentences to write

The objective is for the children to apply the words taught in a sentence, with a high degree of accuracy in spelling. Thinking of a sentence requires the children to consider much more than just that, stepping beyond the purpose of the lesson.

• Expecting the children to read or write without a model

This part of the teaching sequence is not an opportunity to assess the success of the lesson. It's a chance to over-model and clearly demonstrate how learning can be applied in reading and writing beyond the phonics session.

Securing phase 4 phonics will allow children to have a good foundational knowledge of the basic alphabetic code. This means that they will have a solid basis for successfully exploring the complexities of the alphabetic code taught in phonics phase 5 and beyond. **TP** 



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# How to write FOR THE READER

Sick of lists of success criteria, or the suggestion to let pupils 'just be creative'? You're not alone. Improving writing actually starts with considering the audience...

#### ZOË PARAMOUR AND TIM PARAMOUR

o quote Lisa Simpson, "Writing is the hardest thing ever". Well, teaching writing can seem even harder. However, part of the problem is a tendency to overthink it and build it into something more complicated than it needs to be.

It can be tempting to think that all children must, eventually, learn to write through osmosis - that if we simply expose them to enough examples of competent writing, they will learn to pick up the tricks of the trade without effort. We might be inclined to treat writing as an inherently creative, personal and subjective exercise, but this is not always the case. There is a methodology to it, and this sometimes needs to be taught explicitly. This is especially true for children who may not speak English at home. So how do we genuinely and meaningfully improve their writing? How do we get them writing sentences that sound good? How do we get them writing whole texts that someone might genuinely want to read? Like any steep climb, it isn't easy, but it's also not impossible.

#### **Centre the reader**

Unfortunately, generations of teachers have been let down by a lot of very questionable guidance and advice. The national

curriculum never really gets it right, whoever is in government, and Key Stage 2 assessments rarely incentivise the right things. Some people will tell you that if we can just find the right checklist of magic ingredients that children must include in their writing, then we'll finally nail it. These self-appointed experts would have you take up half the space in your children's English books with detailed lists of objectives and success criteria like use *powerful adjectives* and *use* personification to describe a setting. At the other extreme, a different but

equally questionable group of experts will tell you that if we stop telling children how to write completely and just let them '*embrace their creativity*', then all sorts of wonderful things will happen by magic. For these irrepressible free spirits, your job as a teacher is merely to inspire your pupils – to give them something that they'll want to write about.

Instinctively, most practising teachers know that neither of these groups of experts has got it quite right. The problem with both the 'exhaustive list of success criteria' approach and the 'just let them be creative, dude' approach, is that they ignore the role of the reader. To really enhance our pupils' writing, we need a realistic, practical path that places the reader at the centre of everything.

Here's what that might look like in practice:

#### **Clear and concise**

As teachers, it's easy to find ourselves incentivising our pupils to deploy 'powerful adjectives' or 'advanced vocabulary' even when they don't enhance the clarity of their sentences. Good writing is simple; punchy and easy to read. Try sharing



a sentence such as 'The big, grey elephant walked through the jungle' with pupils, and challenge them to remove unnecessary words. (Whilst there is nothing wrong with this sentence, the words *big* and *grey* are superfluous, as the word 'elephant' immediately conjures up the image of a big, grey animal. Extra adjectives are a distraction.)

#### Writing for an audience

The purpose of writing is to do *something* to the reader – to entertain, inform, persuade or explain. As far as possible, you want your pupils to see the impact of their writing on someone else, even if it's just a classmate. You will need to support your students in providing feedback to each other; we suggest using scaffolds or sentence starters to prompt the discussion. E.g.: 'Something I enjoyed about your writing was...'; 'Something I think could be clearer is...'; 'A question I have is...'.

#### The right examples

When we explain the process of writing to children, we need to be able to show them what we mean. As such, it's worth taking the time to find and discuss examples of writing that demonstrate

"The problem with both the 'exhaustive list of success criteria' and 'just let them be creative, dude' approaches, is that they ignore the role of the reader"



the skills you're trying to teach. It can be very helpful to write your own model texts if you're confident enough to do so, as you can explain the process you went through from first-hand experience.

#### Specific, targeted feedback

The best way to provide feedback to a child is almost always by talking to them. Even though it requires some imaginative classroom management, it's worth making the time to read a child's writing in their presence, and explain the impact it has on you as a reader in real time. It's also much less of a hassle than taking 30 books home to mark!

#### Time to edit

When we, as adults, write anything, we edit obsessively. We constantly tweak our sentences, and we can spend several minutes agonising over a particular choice of word. This is the most important writing skill that children can learn, and it can be very hard for them to do. A good way to start is to give them a piece of writing they did a long time ago. Spotting the mistakes in a piece of work you've just completed can be quite tricky. Criticising your own work after a long time has passed is much easier. If you've ever stumbled upon poetry you wrote as a teenager, you'll know what we're talking about...

#### **Plan backwards**

To decide on a killer first line for a story, you need to know what is going to happen. To introduce a non-fiction text in a way that makes information accessible for a reader, you need to know what information the text is going to contain. When asking your students to plan, encourage them to start with an 'end goal' and work

#### 3 QUESTIONS THAT FOCUS ON THE READER

Ask your pupils to consider these questions when reading an example text, to help them focus on the role of the reader:

1. What do you think is the purpose of this text? Is the author trying to persuade you of something? Are they trying to inform you about something? To entertain you? To frighten you? To make you laugh? Does it have another purpose? Has it succeeded in its purpose?

2. Do you think that this piece of writing is the right length? Are there any unnecessary words or sentences? Can you find any particularly succinct phrases?

3. What did you think of the opening? Did it make you want to read on? Do you feel that it was a suitable opening now that you've read the rest of the text?

backwards from there. These are just a few simple suggestions that we've found useful in the classroom during the years we've been teaching. We hope they'll be useful for you, too! **TP** 



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a well-known independent school in Northeast London. The Writing Book (£20, Bloomsbury) is out now.

@ZoeParamour

@timparamour

Step into the dark depths of scary scene-setting, and help pupils develop their descriptive writing skills by tapping into the senses...

Cobwebs

**AND CREAKS** 

#### GABRIEL DYLAN

hen I sit down to write one of my scary stories, it's usually the setting that pops into my head first. When I'm out and about, I'm always on the lookout for creepy-looking places where I can set my stories - overgrown canals, derelict factories, remote beaches. I always try to have a phone with me, or a camera, so that I can grab a couple of quick pictures to inspire me later. In fact, there's a spooky farm that I walk past most days that fuelled my imagination for the main location for Shiver Point: A Tap at the Window, but more on that another time!

#### Using the senses

I enjoy pretty much all of the writing process, but crafting a scary scene is the bit I like the most, and it's here that I always try to focus on setting, and making the scene as atmospheric as I can. If you can convey the setting well, so that the reader experiences a little of the characters' fear and uncertainty, I think you're on the right tracks. When I'm first drafting a scene like this, the technique I find most useful in bringing things to life is using the senses - trying to zoom in on what the characters can see, hear, smell, taste, and touch, and how they're feeling about where they've

found themselves – I even have a sheet that helps me if I'm struggling! You can download the template for your own class at **tinyurl**. **com/tp-SensesExtract** 

As well as a writer, I'm also a teacher, and there are a few techniques for teaching descriptive writing and setting that I use again and again. One that I start with when I'm trying to teach eerie, crumbling, sinister, shadowy, gloomy, etc). What the character doesn't see can work well here too: shadows, silhouettes, movement at the corner of their eye.

Hearing is right up there too. I find that when I write, there's lots of dripping, scuttling, whispering, and unseen footsteps; all the kind of sounds that create a

"For most readers, the thought of what might be out there is worse than what they finally see, so I try to play on that"

setting to my KS3 classes (but will work equally well for UKS2) is to get my pupils to take apart an extract where you can see the senses in action. For example, take a look at an extract from *Shiver Point: It Came from the Woods* (download at tinyurl. com/tp-SensesExtract), and see how many of the senses your pupils can spot.

I'm a very visual person, so I always find myself focusing on what the character can see first, and how I can use that to convey mood and atmosphere to the reader. Often a word bank can help here, to capture the mood of the story and its location (e.g. *abandoned*, foreboding atmosphere, while hinting that something else is out there, waiting to pounce on the characters. For most readers, the thought of what *might* be out there is worse than what they finally see, so I try to play on that too, and bring in the reader's worst fears.

I don't use the other senses as much, but I try to dip into them all to create a rounded, vivid picture. The feel of rain running down a character's neck, or a creature slithering up their arm; the smell of a derelict building... all these things can help to make the reader uneasy.

## Hearing the character's thoughts

Although technically not one of the senses, I've included what the character feels on my senses chart. This is a good one to use in a scary scene, whether in the first or third person, as it can let the reader know exactly what is going through the character's mind, and how they're feeling. Again, playing on the character's imagination can crank up the tension and

suspense. Sometimes I use an inner monologue, so we can actually get inside the character's head: 'He wished he wasn't on his own. He wished he'd brought a torch.

But more than anything, he wished he'd gone to the toilet before he left home.'

This can be a useful exercise for your class; can they jot down some ideas about what a character might be thinking or feeling when in a scary scene? You could use the extract from *Shiver Point*, or pick a scene from any scary book your pupils enjoy.

#### Using visual cues

Another thing that helps with my English classes is to use visual cues to help them get started, such as photographs (I have some from the spooky farm I mentioned earlier, but you can also find stock images online). I always imagine an abandoned tractor from the spooky farm coming to life at night, once no one is around!

Often, when we're looking at an image, I split my class into groups and get them to imagine they are part of the scene. I give them a sense each, and then they feed back to the rest of the class with their ideas on what descriptive words and phrases they associate with the image. Film clips can work well here too - I've lost count of howmany times I've watched the opening of *Raiders of The* Lost Ark and got my pupils to write a short piece of descriptive writing where they imagine the traps waiting for them, and the tarantulas crawling over their clothes.

#### Suspenseful vocab

A tool I often use to build suspense is the weather: the moan of the wind, the hiss of falling rain, the rumble of thunder overhead. One thing I've found useful with my classes when writing scarv stories is to play YouTube clips of storms or bad weather, and get the pupils to come up with a bank of words that they can use in their subsequent writing to give their stories a foreboding mood. Nothing sets the scene for scary writing like a stormy night! To scaffold, you could start by giving them some ideas such as howling, rumbling, flashing, deafening, etc.

#### Make things competitive

The last tactic I find useful when teaching setting and descriptive writing is to make things competitive. Once



we've read some examples and then looked at some images or clips to feed their imagination. I set my pupils off to write the scariest or most suspenseful piece they can. Even pupils who aren't naturally inclined towards English can do really well here, and they are usually super keen to share their work and read it out. You can employ the senses chart again perhaps using it as scaffolding for children who might be a bit apprehensive about writing from scratch. Ask them to plot out three senses they'd like to use in their scene, and then think about what in their image or clip could prompt these senses to fire up. TP



Shiver Point: It Came from the Woods by Gabriel Dylan (£7.99, Piccadilly Press) is out 14

September. The sequel Shiver Point: A Tap at the Window is out 1 February 2024.

# Book CIUB

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



#### Bear & Bird: The Stars and Other Stories by Jarvis

(£9.99 HB, Walker Books)

The heartwarming friendship between Bear and Bird is explored through three short stories in this new collection. Although the pair experience some mishaps and breakdowns in communication, their love and affection for each other shines through. With situations children will find both amusing and surprising, this book offers opportunities to reflect on life skills such as patience, acceptance, understanding, and forgiveness, and will open up communication about friendship. What could Bear have done after accidentally eating the cake he finds? What would they write in their letters to find a new best friend? Gentle text with short chapters makes this an ideal step up from picturebooks as children become more independent with their reading. It's also fantastically fun to read aloud!



Raewyn Caisley Gabriel Evans



#### Count the Stars by Raewyn Caisley, ill. Gabriel Evans

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(£12.99 HB, Walker Books)

Maddie has a love for patterns, shapes and numbers, which she notices everywhere. There are the parallel lines made by the blinds in her bedroom, the arrangement of petals on daisies, weights and measurements when baking, and her joy in exploring geometry when making paper snowflakes.

In this delightful new book, mathematical concepts are explained in story, through the lens of everyday experiences. It also touches on friendships, with Maddie's interests impacting on her ability to connect with others. With mathematical words throughout, including on the end papers, children can extend their language as well as enjoy the story. Stunning illustrations, with double-page spreads, really bring this magical book to life, offering points for discussion beyond the text. Radzi's Incredible Facts by Radzi Chinyanganya (£8.99, DK Children's)

.....

Packed full of interesting facts on a variety of topics, this book will really get children thinking. From bonkers bones and unusual sports to brilliant brains and magnificent mammals, there's an abundance of facts to suit all interests, even about poo! Children will love astounding their classmates with the most weird and wonderful facts, improving their reading and understanding skills at the same time. The illustrations are striking, adding humour and keeping children engaged.

Targeted at children aged 5-9 years, this is the perfect book for them to dip in and out of; not to mention being useful for teachers to add exciting facts into their lessons! This book is a definite mix of the fun and educational, with lots to inspire curious minds – what will you find out?



#### **EXPLORE OLIVER TWIST IN UKS2**

Part of Plazoom's powerful Unlocking Inference collection, this resource pack includes a fully annotated extract, with close vocabulary work as well as questions designed to elicit sophisticated, evidenced inferences from all pupils. A complete course of video training explains the layered reading approach that will ensure deep understanding of the text for the whole class – try it today, at **bit.ly/PlzOliver** 



#### How to Talk So People Will Listen by Lizzie Waterworth

(£8.99, DK Children's)

Packed full of valuable advice and tips, this engaging book offers techniques to help pupils calm their nerves, consider the speed at which they talk, learn how to make connections through speech, and find ways to discover the power of their voice. There's even information about communicating using tech. It's the sort of book that children can reach for as and when they need a moment of inspiration. What makes this so appealing isn't just the content but the way in which it's presented; with a mixture of fonts and cartoon illustrations, as well as 'tips from the top' throughout - including words of wisdom from the likes of Stephen Fry and BBC presenter Ben Shires children will be empowered to develop their communication skills. There are numerous pointers that adults will find valuable, too, whether for personal or professional use.



#### Who Let the Words Out? by Joshua Seigal (£7.99, Bloomsbury)

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Inspire children to have fun and get creative with words thanks to this new offering from poet Joshua Seigal. With topics ranging from cats and sick buckets to fleas and conkers, there's something for everyone to enjoy. There are words and styles with which children will be familiar, and others that are completely new, with the poet urging the readers to look up the meanings; providing a great way to develop vocabulary and explore talking points on a variety of subjects. The collection includes silliness, points for reflection and experiences pupils will relate to, meaning children (and grown-ups!) will love reading aloud from this book, choosing their favourites and sharing them with friends. It's definitely one to add to your bookshelf, whether you're teaching poetry or just keen to see your class laugh out loud.

#### Meet the author

#### JOSHUA SEIGAL ON SERIOUS WORD PLAY AND POETIC CURIOSITY



How does poetry help develop children's vocabulary? Poetry tends to be quite short,

so it is ideal for people like me with limited attention spans! It can also be highly rhythmic, so it enables children to become attuned to the flow of language. Poetry can really come alive when it is performed, and to hear words spoken out loud can bring a new dimension. Children who may have otherwise glossed over or ignored a word on the page, or even felt frustrated because they could not read it, can hear it spoken and become interested and curious.

#### How can made-up words help pupils to develop reading skills?

I know that made-up words are often used in the context of phonics teaching, where they can help with decoding. I am not an expert on that side of things! Again, I think it comes down to curiosity. If a child encounters a made-up word, then their imagination might latch onto what the word could possibly mean, and a whole litany of interesting thoughts might follow. My interest is in playing with words, and really experimenting with the joy of language. The poet Richard Flynn called poetry "serious language play", and I think I agree with that!

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

I would love it if teachers could read poems aloud to their class, and encourage pupils to pick up the book and read the poems themselves, and even perhaps to each other. It would also be wonderful if children felt inspired, on the basis of my book, to give their own poetry writing a go, and experiment with stretching their vocabulary.

Who Let the Words Out? (£7.99, Bloomsbury) is out now.

# Maths SPECIAL

**INSIDE THIS SECTION** 



Foster curiosity, collaboration and enjoyment of maths with these estimation activities, sure to be a hit with your class...



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# Making sense OF MATHS

Think you know what maths is all about? Think again... your assumptions might be muddying the waters of your teaching, say **Alf Coles** and **Nathalie Sinclair** 

ave you ever spoken to a maths-loving colleague about why for the subject, only to hear that "maths is always right or wrong – there are no confusing grey areas"? You wouldn't be the first.

Such views go along with the idea that mathematical truths are timeless and absolutely certain, which can be appealing. On the flip side, when pupils' only experience of maths is about getting ticks or crosses, the subject can lose its appeal. It contributes to making many children anxious, which doesn't just affect their capacity to learn, but also contributes to long-term negative attitudes towards situations that involve numbers and quantitative reasoning, such as calculating bills, reading graphs and measuring.

The funny thing is, maths isn't about a singular truth at all. Take geometry as an example; what we learn in school about angles and lines is only true if we do our geometry on a flat surface (such as that there are 180 degrees in a triangle). There are, however, many other kinds of geometry, including geometry done on a sphere. And if we drew a triangle on a sphere, we might get different results. A triangle drawn from the North Pole, down to the equator, around a quarter of the equator, and back up to the North Pole, for instance, will have three right angles and so an angle sum of 270 degrees. So, our seemingly unshakeable

'truth' that there are 180 degrees in a triangle, turns out to be something a little more contingent on context. The idea of maths being about singular truths is one of several misleading but common assumptions, or dogmas, about the subject and its rules. There are several ways we can address these dogmas, which will both reduce anxiety about doing maths and make the subject seem more relevant along the way...

#### **Absolute truths**

One of the reasons, perhaps, that many people come to believe that maths is always right and wrong,



is that a lot of questions asked by teachers have single answers (and these are often questions that can be answered more quickly by machines!). A simple change in the kind of questions we ask can make a significant difference; if I shift my attention away from whether the answer I get from a pupil is correct or not, and onto the method they have used to get that answer, I am immediately out of the right/wrong paradigm. For example, instead of asking, "What is 7 x 8?", we might start to shift our questions in ways that invite multiple correct answers, such as: "What methods do you have for working out 7 x 8?". As teachers, we are actually more interested in methods than answers, so the latter is, for us, a more useful question. It gives us more information about how pupils are learning, and crucially, is more engaging for the children than being



#### **Block by block**

Another common misconception is that maths should be taught in a building block manner. This assumption is frequently made by teachers, who will say that a pupil cannot understand the material in, say Y4, if they haven't yet completed 'simpler' learning in Y3. However, just because maths can be arranged in a hierarchy from simple to talking and expressing themselves, getting feedback from the environment. They do not get restricted exposure to simple words, like monosyllabic ones, before being exposed to more complex words and grammar. But that's what we sometimes do in maths; we expose children to a restricted set of numbers (1-20) and shapes (plane,

"The idea of maths being about singular truths is one of several misleading but common assumptions"

complex, it does not mean this is the most effective order in which to teach it. If we look at other

areas of learning, starting

simple is not what we do.

mostly regular ones). We need to stop assuming that children need simplicity.

In fact, research shows that children can thrive on being offered 'the big picture', or a sense of a coherent 'whole', or structure of a mathematical topic. They can learn when the complex situation provides immediate feedback on their actions, just like they do when they learned to speak. The National Centre for Excellence in the **Teaching of Mathematics** (NCETM) professional development materials offer some excellent examples of working with bigger structures from the start of a topic. For instance, the NCETM suggests working with children on naming the numbers 20 to 99, before working on 11-19. This works well, because the numbers above 20 are named relatively regularly and children can use their powers of pattern-spotting and structuring to figure them out. After becoming successful with this structure, they can then work on the exceptions. We'd also advocate a dual

naming of 11-19 (also proposed by the NCETM) to work alongside their usual names, to make the structure apparent (e.g., reading 13 and 'one-ty-three', just like 63 is read 'six-ty-three').

The dogma of maths as a building block subject, then, leads directly to practices of grouping pupils according to their prior attainment and, for some children, offering them a repetitive cycle of number-dominated skills to learn. We see no reason, just because a pupil struggles with aspects of early number work, to deny them the opportunity to work with bigger numbers (or, indeed, to learn algebra). In fact, it may be precisely working on big numbers that helps make number structure become apparent.

Teaching maths is a complex and fascinating task and there aren't necessarily any easy answers for how to help children who are struggling. However, when maths is no longer seen as purely right or wrong, it becomes more human, more approachable, And, when students come to appreciate a mathematical structure (such as how number naming works, or how addition and subtraction are related) this can open up worlds of interest and engagement. Give it a go... TP



Alf Coles is professor of mathematics education at the University of Bristol. Nathalie Sinclair is distinguished university professor at Simon Fraser

University.







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#### MATHS SPECIAL

# Approximation STATION

Foster curiosity, collaboration and enjoyment of maths with these estimation activities



#### NICOLA ADAMS

any years ago, I took part in a maths fluency project which required some pre-assessment. I was teaching Year 2 and one task involved children plotting numbers on to a blank number line marked with 0 at the beginning and 100 at the end.

I told them I was going to call out six numbers, fairly quickly, and they were to position them correctly. I read out: 2, 9, 15, 37, 51, 85.

Try this with your class and see what happens. My class tended to spread out the first few numbers quite considerably, leaving the larger numbers bunched up at the end of the line. This, I later discovered, was called 'logarithmic representation' (Siegler, R. S. & Booth) and is common, as young children are not very skilful estimators.

#### Why are these skills important?

So, why does this matter? Well, estimating is a key human skill. We use estimation regularly as adults, e.g. 'It's roughly 150 miles away'; or 'This shopping is probably going to cost around £70'. The more experience we have with estimating and comparing our estimate with 'the actual', the better we become.

Across the 47 pages of the maths national curriculum for KS1 and KS2, 'estimation' is referred to 15 times. This would appear to give it little credence. However, when we begin to consider how skills of estimation can open doors

6

into all other areas of maths, we see how crucial it is. Estimation plays a key role in several areas, including (but not limited to):

developing number sense and secure understanding of magnitude to enable informed checking of answers to calculations;
understanding of

measurements such as time, distance, and volume.

So, how can we explicitly teach these skills? To make estimation more than just a guess, we need to base our judgement around experience and knowledge.

#### Regularity and repetition

Try making number magnitude and estimation a regular part of your fluency sessions. Over time, this can increase children's self-efficacy, and is especially powerful for children with poor attendance, English as an additional language (EAL) and children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND). To start with, provide plenty of real life, concrete experiences and connect the language of estimation and comparison. For example, place three containers on a table, and put different amounts of plastic balls (or counters, or whatever manipulatives you have) into each one. Label the one with the most (e.g. 15 counters) and with the least (e.g. 5 counters), but leave the middle container unlabelled. Model your inner monologue to children: "I think the middle tub has

about 12 balls because 12 is between 5 and 15 but closer



to 15. What do you think?" I've included some useful estimation vocabulary in the panel to the right to help pupils verbalise their thoughts.

For differentiation, try changing the size of the objects in the containers, the shape of the containers, and which containers are labelled (if any).

Then, start to make connections to abstract representations of number (such as number lines). For example, provide children with a strip of border roll (pre-cut so it's the same length as a 0-100 bead string) and ask them to label a selection of numbers on the line in the right positions (with 0 on the left, and 100 on the right). They can then line up the bead string to see how accurate they were with their estimates.

To increase accuracy, model benchmarking. Fold the border roll in half, and give pupils vocabulary such as 'the midpoint'. This will enable children to place their numbers more accurately. For example, "I know that 39 is between 0 and 50 but is closer to 50." Folding the border roll again will increase accuracy further as quartiles are introduced.

You can also try building a maths challenge board. Start with a familiar



structure – maybe a line split into 10 equal parts to mirror your counting stick. You can then add lines of the same length separated into five sections, four sections, and three sections.

Label one end of one of the lines with a value (say, 2,500) and the other end with another (2,900). Pop an arrow on the line, and ask pupils to estimate what number they think it might point to. You can move the arrow around the differently sectioned lines over time to consider different benchmarks. For example, for the quartile line, responses may include:

- I can see that 2,500 is at the start and 2,900 is at the end, so the midpoint will be 2,700.
- [The arrow number] couldn't be 2,800 because that's more than the midpoint.

move towards higher values. Pupil confidence will then develop over time, leading to positive emotions associated with maths, including enjoying a challenge, and wanting to keep trying, even when they find things difficult.

#### Estimation in context

Next, show children why and how this knowledge is so useful. For example, predicting and checking answers. When pupils have arrived at a solution to a problem and they are asked to 'check their answer' (likely because someone else has noticed it's not correct), do they know what that really means or how to do it?

Children who struggle with maths often find it difficult to make use of estimates due to a lack of remembered experience and

#### "Estimation plays a key role in several areas of maths, including, but not limited to, number sense and the ability to check calculations"

• It could be 2,648 because that's close to the midpoint

between 2,600 and 2,700. Use sticky notes to quickly change the values at

either end of the lines. Some easy changes for

- differentiation: - Change the start and end
- numbers. Only provide the number
- the arrow is pointing to what could the start and end numbers be?
- Include units of measure, e.g. for money, time, or length.
- Include fractions / decimals where appropriate.

My top tip would be to start with a low number range, no matter which year group you are teaching. This will get every child on board and understanding what they're looking at before you

/ or knowledge. They will tend to rely on unthinkingly applying taught procedures. This inhibits their ability to know if their solution to a problem is likely to be correct or incorrect.

For example, consider this calculation:

 $4 \ge 604 = 240.016$ .

A child who lacks understanding of number magnitude and rounding (two of the underpinning elements of successful estimation) will be less likely to notice an issue. However, a child who has an estimated product in mind (somewhere around 2,400) will know that there's no way this can be correct and so will go back to see what went wrong:

If  $4 \ge 6$  ones = 24 ones, then  $4 \ge 6$  hundreds will be 24 hundreds. That's 2,400.

**ESTIMATION VOCABULARY** Sentence frames • I can see that... so... • I know that... so... • I think... because... • If... then... • It could be... because... • It couldn't be... because... Useful words

USEFUL

- Roughly
  - About
  - Around
  - Approximately
  - More than
  - Less / fewer than
  - Between
  - Close to
  - Midpoint
  - Quartiles
  - Equal parts
- Whole

It couldn't be 240.016 because that's WAY bigger than 2,400.

604 is around 600 so the answer is likely to be approximately 2,400.

Having this regular discussion with a different calculation each time will build children's capacity and motivate them to think about this more independently. In time, it will become a more natural part of their problem-solving process. **TP** 



Adams is advisor for

@NicolaAMaths hertsforlearning.co.uk

## A REASONS TO TRY... Catch Up® Numeracy

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#### THE COST

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#### A SCHOOLS FEEDBACK

4 Schools have said the following about their experience: "Very happy with the training and delivery... the supporting documents are excellent." "It complements the curriculum, is easy to follow and students respond/engage well. It has proven results."

"After three months of Catch Up® Numeracy intervention, Child B made 20 months' progress."

#### At a glance

- + Achieve double the normal rate of progress in students' number ages
- + Maximise effectiveness of support staff and tutors, trained to deliver proven interventions
- + Improve learners' confidence, behaviour, and
- engagement with the whole curriculum.



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Supporting Dyscalculia

## Dyscalculia and maths catch-up

Dynamo Maths is an award-winning standardised dyscalculia assessment and evidence-based intervention to support children with dyscalculia and maths developmental delays. The programme supports children with complex maths difficulties or falling behind to get back on track. This specialist resource offers a small step, cumulative approach using a triple pathway approach of lesson plans, online activities and worksheets that provide multiple contexts for learning. It is seeing gains far greater than previously thought possible. The program has also been adapted to Puffin Maths, which supports BSL (British Sign Language) and provides ICT based curricular maths access to children who are deaf and hard of hearing. The programme won the BETT AWARD 2022 - HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. For a free trial, visit dynamomaths.co.uk (BSL: puffinmaths.co.uk) No child with

dyscalculia will be overlooked.

#### Numberblocks from Learning Resources®

Bring maths learning to life with the Numberblocks, as seen on TV. These hands-on maths teaching resources from Learning Resources® include The MathLink® Cubes Activity Sets (1-10 and 11-20), which have all pupils need to build the Numberblocks One to Ten, and Eleven to Twenty, using special edition MathLink Cubes. Character Cards about each number, and 15 double-sided Activity Cards with activities related to selected episodes. Recreate the Numberblocks One to Ten on windows and whiteboards in your classroom with new Numberblocks Reusable Clings. This set is ideal for demonstrations and working walls. Learn more at learningresources.co.uk





### The power of pattern

The power of pattern – patterning in the Early Years, by Alison Borthwick, Sue Gifford and Helen Thouless includes activities for those working with young children to develop awareness of pattern and structure (the foundations of mathematics), using fun, creative activities that develop collaboration and mathematical thinking. Helen Williams (Early Years specialist) says: "It is not often that a book lands in our laps which manages to blend research with practice so effectively and engagingly. This book, on how mathematical pattern awareness is linked to wider numerical understanding, is certainly one." Find out more at atm.org.uk/shop/ACT133



Originating in the Netherlands and used effectively in several other countries, Rekenreks or 'number racks' have recently risen to fame here as part of the DfE / NCETM Mastering Number programme. They are a fabulous resource for encouraging progression from counting to subitising and then on to calculating. Autopress Education has supplied these resources to UK schools for 20 years and has the widest range of related resources. In addition to the child's Rekenrek. Autopress supplies two different demonstration versions including screens for 'hiding' beads, as well as two support books written by Rekenrek

specialists. Find out more at autopresseducation.co.uk

#### MATHS SPECIAL

# 

Getting to grips with maths can evoke images of tediously repeating times tables, but implementing a mastery approach will take children's learning much deeper...

MALCOLM WATSON

ver the last few decades, there has been a significant shift in how we approach maths, drawing on learning from international educators. This has made the teaching of the subject both more exciting and more effective.

Teaching for mastery has been a large part of this move; the aim of which is for pupils to develop a deep understanding of maths, rather than just being able to memorise key procedures or resort to rote learning. It consists of Five Big Ideas (tinyurl.com/ tp-FiveBigIdeas): coherence, representation and structure, mathematical thinking, fluency, and variation. (See more in the panel on the following page.)

Almost a decade after first being introduced to teaching for mastery, I've learned so much about primary maths instruction, and I've seen children's confidence, enjoyment and understanding of the subject grow beyond measure. Although the process is one of continual learning, here are the five key steps I've found most useful in implementing it...

The first step is agreeing a whole-school approach. Part of this is understanding the culture, vision, systems and philosophy that underpin teaching for mastery, which can be done in different ways. For example, one school I worked with had all staff write ideas on sticky notes, answering questions such as, 'What should be in our maths lessons?' and 'What will the

One for all

culture be in our maths lessons?'



You can find an introduction to all this via your local Maths Hub, and NCETM's free 'Mastery Readiness' programme (tinyurl.com/ tp-NCETMmastery). Preparing to implement teaching for mastery consists of your Maths Hub's readiness lead supporting your school to strengthen five key areas of teaching and learning, including:

- the vision and culture underpinning maths learning
- mathematical mindsets
- subject expertise
- school systems
- arithmetical proficiency. As the years go by,

you can move from the preparatory phase through development, building, and refinement phases, but the important part is to make sure the whole school is on board at each point.

Building your curriculum to ensure that the sequence of lessons works for your children, and that they are able to build upon prior knowledge as they progress through school, is essential. Pupils in every year group need to be able to apply their knowledge practically before moving on to more abstract contexts. All your lessons should feature pre-developed stem sentences to ensure consistency and clarity of language and terminology for all children. For example, 'a fraction is an equal part of the whole', and 'the inverse is a reverse operation'.

Each lesson should also ensure that all pupils are exposed to fluency, reasoning and problem-solving tasks. At our schools we've looked carefully at our use of language. For example, we've stopped Year 2 teachers saying, 'Subtraction

with the number that has the greatest value,' as this sets up a misconception for when children reach Year 4 and encounter negative numbers.

Building up mathematical knowledge and skills from Reception all the way through to Year 6 develops confidence and efficiency: and you need to be realistic about timeframes – teaching for mastery is not something that can be completed in a year. Quite often, it takes two, three or even four years to really see the impact. This might sound slow, but it's worth it – and reinforces why a whole-school approach is so important.

Often, one of the biggest obstacles in implementing a new approach is changing mindsets. A little bit of

for mastery, we've also had a change in culture, and growth mindset is now at the heart of everything we do. Learning to celebrate mistakes and not label pupils using fixed tags of ability has had an enormous impact on staff and children alike.

CPD is a big part of teaching for mastery, so maintaining a programme of training is key (and might even help you reduce staff turnover). Ongoing training means that staff are kept up to date with the pedagogy behind teaching for mastery, and have the opportunity to collaborate with teachers from other schools who are also refining their practice (see the 'refinement phase' of the NCETM's breakdown of teaching for mastery, linked above, to learn more about

#### "Learning to celebrate mistakes and not label pupils using fixed tags of ability has had an enormous impact'

training every now and then allows staff to see the potential of teaching for mastery, and linking up with teachers and schools in your area who are at a similar point in their journey is invaluable. Sharing good practice between schools and observing high-quality lessons will improve confidence in the process.

Teaching for mastery should be seen as a continuum. We are nine years into it and are still developing the Five Big Ideas. The difference is that children now have a much better understanding of maths, and are able to confidently apply what they've learned. A large part of the success of this is down to the fact that alongside the change in pedagogy that's come with teaching

its impact). Keep it up, and you'll reap the benefits in the long term.

Finally, remember no scheme can fully implement teaching for mastery for you. High-quality schemes of work can provide you with some of the tools needed to teach a lesson using the approach, but unless you fully understand the lesson and have adapted it to meet the needs of your children, it will not work. You are leader of learning in your classroom; and what a privilege and joy that is.



@MathswithMalcolm

#### Five Big Ideas

**Coherence:** curriculum

sequencing is key. Each lesson should be the next 'small step' in understanding a concept, and within each lesson, each question acts as an even smaller step.

#### Representation and structure: use equipment or

images to support children in understanding the structures behind maths ideas. For example, use Base 10/Dienes to show why when we exchange three tens for 30 ones in short division, the dividend stays the same.

#### Mathematical thinking: just

asking children to repeat key vocabulary back to you is not going to build understanding. Instead, make sure you have plenty of stem sentences available, which correctly define key words. Ensure you repeat these terms with actions and in context throughout the lesson. For example, 'A fraction is...', 'The inverse is ... '.

Variation: showing children one way to do something will not develop deep understanding. Instead,

try to expose them to variation in all lessons. Show concepts in different ways, and slightly tweak questions to focus on the element that is changing.

> Fluency: this should go beyond learning facts. Developing a

number sense so that children have the tools to find answers is a much more robust system. For example, if a child understands the calculations behind the seven times table, rather than just memorising it, they'll be more likely to be able to calculate the 14 times table later on.

#### THE NEXT BIG THING



# **ADAPTIVE LEARNING**

Discover how Sumdog creates a personalised learning experience for all pupils

#### [ THE TREND ] PERSONALISED LEARNING

Adaptive learning is the delivery of education through a digital platform that uses technology to create a personalised learning journey for each child. Working to address the unique needs of individual learners, adaptive learning aids classroom teaching and provides a greater educational experience for both pupils and teachers.

#### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

As more schools begin integrating technology into lessons. teachers are seeking digital platforms that can complement their teaching and help to understand the individual needs of pupils. We've designed Sumdog with this exact goal in mind. When children first log in, they're presented with a diagnostic test, which uses a series of multiple-choice questions to determine their abilities and place them at their correct working level. Once completed, the adaptive learning engine uses the results to tailor future questions as they progress through their school's curriculum, providing a personalised learning journey. Teachers can view the results of the diagnostic test in three simple reports that show their whole class, individual pupils and current working level charts. From this, teachers can easily identify gaps in learning and understand areas that pupils may require additional support.

#### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

Developed with the help of teachers and educational experts around the world, Sumdog has been independently proven to have a significant impact on maths learning. A recent study revealed that the maths fluency progress for pupils who used Sumdog on a regular basis was almost double that of non-regular users. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) describes an effect size of this magnitude as 'high impact'; equivalent to having a six-month educational advantage. Additionally, teachers have found that Sumdog's low-stakes, auto-marked tests help to reduce maths anxiety surrounding traditional sit-down assessments, while building children's confidence in their maths skills.



#### WHAT'S NEXT?

Incorporating adaptive learning games into the classroom is not merely a trend, but a strategic decision that fosters academic growth and empowers children to overcome mathematical challenges. With the needs of pupils and teachers at the forefront of our mind, we're constantly developing our platform to help support schools as best as we can. With Sumdog, teachers can access detailed insights into each child's journey, understanding their strengths, weaknesses, and evolving areas of

mastery. This data-driven approach enables informed decision-making and targeted strategies that cater to the individual needs of struggling maths learners. Through continuous updates, our team is dedicated to narrowing the attainment gap by helping each and every child reach their full potential.

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#### **GET INVOLVED**

Sumdog is an adaptive learning platform that helps children build their primary maths skills through engaging gameplay. With over 30 interactive games to choose from, our platform makes learning a fun and enjoyable experience for pupils. Covering all essential skills mapped to your school's curriculum, Sumdog's adaptive learning engine tailors questions to meet the unique needs of individual children. Our low-stakes, ready-made tests and auto-marked reports save teachers valuable time, allowing them to easily identify gaps in learning and areas for additional practice.

# Accentuate the NEGATIVE

Are your pupils getting their plusses and minuses in a twist? Help them gain confidence to move back beyond zero with these activity ideas and worksheets

#### JAMES GROCOTT

ave you ever sat down to plan a maths lesson, and absolutely dreaded the thought of figuring out how best to describe negative numbers? You're not alone.

Teaching negative numbers is crucial as it enables understanding of real-world situations like temperatures below zero and financial transactions. It also develops mathematical skills for operations, problem-solving, and algebraic reasoning. But it can be a tricky concept to describe, especially for those pupils who already struggle with number sense.

The primary national curriculum introduces the concept of negative numbers in Year 4. It's useful, then, to have some strategies in your back pocket ready to help pupils navigate that murky world of 'less than zero' whole numbers.

Here are some ideas I use...

#### **Initial concepts**

Introducing children to numbers below zero opens up a new world to them, and provides a totally new way of thinking about maths.

One of the challenging things to get pupils to remember is that when we use negative numbers, the larger the digit the smaller the number. Naturally, because they've had seven or eight years of experience of learning

about numbers gaining value as conceptualizing the concept. the digits get bigger, children often initially see larger digits as being a bigger number, even within the negative context.

This is where using a number line is very helpful. Teaching children on a number line and recognising that when numbers get further away from the zero (on the negative side) the smaller the number is, should be one of the first things to think about when we address the Year 4 objective to 'count back through zero'.

Another new concept for the children is recognising

It helps with:

- Visual representation: a number line provides a clear visual representation of numerical order, including positive and negative numbers.
- Sequential order: it helps pupils understand that numbers are arranged in a specific order. They can see that as they move from left to right, the numbers increase, and as they move from right to left, the numbers decrease.

111

"Teaching negative numbers develops key mathematical skills such as problem-solving"

the negative symbol (-) to represent negative numbers and not just when used for subtraction. This is where mathematical language is especially important, as the children should begin to use the word 'negative' when using the – symbol in this context. It is therefore important that you continue to model that language in class (-5 is 'negative 5' for example).

#### **Number lines**

A number line is a really helpful visual tool that aids in understanding and • Relating numbers: the number line helps children understand the relationship between different numbers. They can easily see that numbers to the right of zero (positive numbers) are greater than zero, while numbers to the left of zero (negative numbers) are less than zero.

- Adding and subtracting: the number line is useful for teaching addition and subtraction of negative numbers. Pupils can physically move along the number line to understand the effect of adding or subtracting a specific value.
- Real-world examples: by using a number line, teachers can provide real-world examples that children can relate to and link to abstract learning in class, such as temperatures, bank balances, and elevations.

1

#### Common early misconceptions

It's common for children to get confused about the concept of negative numbers, especially when they're introduced for the first time. Below are some of the more common misconceptions, and how we can go about helping pupils overcome them.

#### Adding a negative number

makes the value smaller Children may struggle to understand the concept of adding negative numbers. Some pupils may mistakenly believe that any calculation involving a negative number always results in a smaller value. However, it's crucial to clarify that it depends which way round we do it. For example, if we start with a negative number and add a positive number, the answer is larger than the original negative value: -4 + 3 = -1. (Negative one is larger than negative four.)

But, if we start with a positive number and add a negative number, the answer is smaller than the original positive value: 4 + -3 = 1. (One is smaller than four.)

#### Activity example:

To begin with, start on the 'right' side of the number line (on the positive side) and carry out a few calculations where you start with a positive number and add a negative number. Don't cross through zero for the answers yet as this can be done once the children are more confident. The children will spot a pattern that each time a negative number is added to a positive number, the answer gets smaller (e.g. 8 + -3 = 5). They will assume that when adding a positive number and negative number together, you will always get a smaller answer. You can then 'test' this by starting on the 'left' side of zero (the negative side) and take a negative number and add a positive number to it (e.g. -6 + 3 = -3). They will quickly notice that this way round the answer actually gets bigger. Once they're confident with this

concept, you can move through zero (e.g. 2 + -5 = -3).

It's important to think about the number line and explain how when negative numbers have a whole number added to them, the answer moves closer to (and through if required) the zero (e.g. -3 + 8 = 5). Do not underestimate how important the number line element of negative numbers is! Spend plenty of time getting pupils confident this way first.

#### Negative numbers don't exist in real life

Pupils may find it difficult to relate negative numbers to real-life situations. They might think that negative quantities are impossible or have no practical significance. It can be helpful to provide examples such as temperatures below zero, or the concept of debt, to demonstrate real-life applications of negative numbers. Contextualising negative numbers is important to add more meaning and use to learning.

#### Activity example: To address these misconceptions, we should use visual representations

use visual representations and real-world applications to help pupils develop a solid understanding of negative numbers. You can do this via examples such as:



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- Show the class some temperature charts (of different places during winter, for example) and compare real-life negative numbers.
- Show the children how money can actually go below zero when talking about 'debt'.
- Use Google Maps to compare elevations above and below sea level.

Real-world applications are what really allow children to move forward with their understanding of negative numbers. It shows them how applicable these numbers are, rather than just seeing them as patterns on a number line, or figures on the page in class. **TP** 



James Grocott is a Year 4 teacher, maths lead, and deputy head in Suffolk.

@DeputyGrocott

# **5 The National Theatre Collection**

Experience the joys of theatre from your own classroom with filmed plays and resources to inspire pupils

#### 30 SECOND BRIEFING

The National Theatre Collection offers the best of British theatre, making it available to stream in the classroom. Each production is accompanied by tailored resources to help enhance your teaching and learning. The service is also free for all UK state schools.

#### 1 THE MAGIC OF THEATRE

All children should have the opportunity to experience the magic of theatre, and the National Theatre Collection allows them to do so from within the classroom. Completely free for UK state schools, the collection includes a broad range of worldclass, age-appropriate productions from the National Theatre and the Unicorn Theatre, from Greek myths and traditional tales to Shakespeare and musical theatre. There's something for all primary-aged children to enjoy.

#### 2 DEVELOP ORACY AND LITERACY

Taking part in drama activities can help with language development and improve written and oral communication. Why not stream a Shakespeare play specifically adapted for children, with supporting resources to help you actively explore language in the classroom?

#### 3 SEE WELL-KNOWN STORIES COME TO LIFE

The dream literacy lesson awaits! The National Theatre Collection features adaptations of well-known children's stories, from *I Want My Hat Back* to classics like *Treasure Island* and *Peter Pan*. Delve deeper into the worlds of these stories with creative literacy resources developed in collaboration with the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE).

# <image>

#### 4 SPARK CREATIVITY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Theatre isn't just about acting. With the National Theatre Collection, you can explore the whole theatremaking process, as well as study characters and themes within the plays, to enhance cross-curricular learning. A wealth of supporting resources is also available to embed the productions across different subject areas, taking in literacy, history, art and design, design technology and PHSE. There are no limits to its use in the classroom.

**KEY POINTS** 

#### National Theatre Collection

Contact: Visit: nationaltheatre. org.uk/ ntcollection Email: ntcollection@ nationaltheatre. org.uk

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Stream a broad range of age-appropriate theatre productions direct to the classroom for all the fun without the logistics A wealth of supporting resources is available to accompany each production, enhancing your experience and making planning easier

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# Take PE to the next level with a superhero game



Turn circuit training into a thrilling adventure, and see pupils' stamina, strength and flexibility soar, says **Marc Bowen** 

### 🕻 @raglanvcprimary

When facing the prospect of teaching another round of circuit training, I could already hear the echoing moans and groans of my class as they protested against burpees, star-jumps and mountain-climbers. To be fair, I wasn't looking forward to becoming their drill sergeant either – which is what inspired me to maximise the DC/Marvel-factor by creating my own Academy of Champions 'board game'. Now, we can still experience the vital physical activity that children (and adults) need, but have a lot more fun while doing so. The plan is to be sweating but smiling!

MAIN LESSON

1 | ACADEMY OF

activities that are

appropriate for and

When designing your

Academy of Champions,

achievable by your class.

I wanted to include core

stamina-focused tasks

I invented some truly

ludicrous Superpowered

strength activities, cardio/

and stretching/flexibility

activities. From this point,

Champions to represent each

activity. For example, the

star-jump station became

as The Abdominator. I

Captain Supernova, and the

sit-up station was rebranded

developed 12-15 different

start with the physical

**CHAMPIONS** 



activities/characters, quickly making simple station cards featuring the character name, a clipart image of the character, a diagram of the activity (both sourced online using copyright-free image searches) and a simple bio to bring them to life; 'The Abdominator – Real Name: Stacey Smith / Champion Power: Adamantium core and enhanced strength'.

To create the board game element of the Academy of Champions, you'll need to develop a small number of Wretched Rogue and Wild Card stations. These are essentially the same as the main activity stations, but include either a bonus or a consequence for the players. For example, as children complete each Champion station, they earn one point,

## START HERE

First, explain to pupils that you will be undertaking some circuit training, but with a difference! Ask around the class to see if anyone knows of some activities they might encounter in a circuit to help them keep fit and healthy. Offer



some suggestions if needs be, by asking them how they might exercise different muscles and organs (e.g. how do your lungs feel when you run around the playground? Do you feel the effects of running more in your arms or your legs?). Next, introduce the concept of healthy minds and bodies being like superpowers – does anyone have a favourite superhero? How might they keep fit? Explain that you're going to combine these two ideas in this lesson... can the children guess how?

WHAT THEY'LL

LEARN

• How to coach and

mentor their

peers

 How regular exercise

can improve

physical

fitness and performance

• The

importance of

mental health,

as well as physical

health

# *"Experience the vital physical activity that children need, and have a lot of fun while doing so"*



awarded by their coaching partner, if they sustain the given activity for the agreed 30-50 seconds. However, if a pupil lands on a Wretched Rogue card, featuring the villainous Professor Burpee, for example, they still have to complete the burpees but without scoring points. Similarly, the Wild Card station might offer a welcome breather bonus (a chance to take a 30-second break) or might move a child and their partner back a few spaces on the game board. You can mix up the consequences and bonuses to make sure each team gets a taster of a few different ones.

### 2 | READY, SET, GO!

With the station cards ready to go, the setup of the

activity is simple. Place children into their coaching pairs, who will then travel around the board together. Our 'game board' was simply a circle of cones arranged around the hall/playground, with pairs given random starting points. As the 'Games Master' (all teachers love a good title!), you then roll a large-scale die (you could equally use an electronic version) so that all the players know how many spaces (cones) to move. When they arrive at their destination, children have 30 seconds to review the activity card, followed by 30–50 seconds of activity per partner. While one partner is active, the other should act as a coach by encouraging their partner or offering advice.

Upon the completion of each station, the team needs to quickly tally their points on a table (you can provide a template for this) while you roll the die again. And so the session continues. To provide added motivation and to save your voice when signifying the start and finish of each burst of activity, why not play the Avengers theme tune, which also helps to set the scene? I was impressed to see a number of enthusiastic children build superhero poses into some of the activities!

### 3 | COOL DOWN

To conclude each session, end with Mind Control Masterclass, explaining that our brains have superpowers that need training, too. This is essentially a cool-down and mindfulness session that you lead, with the children lying on yoga mats. Focus on moderating breathing and relaxing through guided visualisations or yoga nidra recordings for children, which you can source from YouTube.

We were able to run our Academy of Champions for a number of weeks, during which time the children were pleased to see that their weekly scores were improving as their stamina, strength and flexibility was growing - and not a negative moan or groan to be heard! You might like to do the same, perhaps swapping out different Champion, Rogue and Wild Card stations each week, so that the children experience a different combination of 20 or so elements, and don't get bored with repetition.

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



 The children could devise their own Academy of Champions by researching appropriate physical activities, designing their own champions, rogues and wild cards, and creating their own version of the game. I noticed some of my class had developed their own version to play during breaktimes.

• We also put our families through their paces by incorporating our Academy of Champions into an interactive learning showcase, with the children acting as the Games Masters and their relatives as the trainees!

 Taking it even further, the game characters could become the focus for English tasks; create their backstory, write an adventure starring the character, or create a newspaper report about a new champion sighting.



• What health and safety considerations do you need to factor into each station? Do you need mats? Is there enough space around the players for each activity?

• Do you need to increase or decrease the challenge? If so, simply vary the number of stations or add/ remove the rogue and wild card stations.

• What are the most appropriate activities for the age/ability of the children? Make them too easy or too hard and they will likely lose motivation quite quickly.

## EYFS AND KS1 LESSON PLAN

# Ancient stories and modern celebrations



Explore the vibrancy of Diwali and get to the heart of what it means for Hindus, with **Julie Childs** 

### X @JulieChilds12

Diwali – also known as the festival of lights – is often a popular choice for primary teachers to cover in RE lessons, and for good reason. The engaging story of its origins captures the imagination of pupils, and the vibrancy of the ways in which it can be celebrated are fun to explore. This lesson has been designed to help you encourage your children to really get to know the origin story of Diwali, why it is such an important festival for Hindus, and how it can be celebrated in a range of ways, whether locally, across the UK or further afield.



## START HERE

Start with a powerful visual hook to introduce the Diwali story. You can do this using a persona doll, or a picture of a child (though be careful to avoid stereotypical



images if you choose this option) and some objects to act as props to tell the story and show how Hindus celebrate. Explain the story of Rama and Sita (using this BBC Teach video to support if you'd like: **tinyurl.com/tp-BBCDiwali**). The props can include items such as a Diwali lamp, a Diwali card, a small, wrapped gift, some coins and some sweets. Finish off by asking what the children might already know about Hindu worldviews and traditions, or the festival of Diwali.

## **MAIN LESSON**

### 1 | THE STORY

Recap the main ideas of the story, providing plenty of opportunities for silence and reflection. The retelling of the tale is an important part of Diwali celebrations and young Hindu children would revisit this story each year. Once the class is familiar with the key points, get them to support another retelling, posing 'I wonder' questions about key events and characters (e.g. "I wonder why Sita left her magic circle of safety?"). Next, send the children off in groups to retell or explore the story amongst themselves. This could include:

 acting out key events in small groups using masks or puppets

- retelling in pairs using images to sequence the story beats
- creating story maps
- creating artwork in response to a part of the story.

#### 2 | DELVING DEEPER

Once pupils are familiar with the story and key characters, begin to unpick the themes and character motives. This can be done by freeze-framing parts of the story and exploring how characters might be feeling at a particular moment, or why they acted in a certain way. You could also lead hot-seating activities where children take a role and are questioned by their peers about various aspects of character action. Support the children to explore:

· Sita's feelings when she

RE

WHAT

THEY'LL

**LEARN** 

 That Diwali is one of the most

important festivals

for Hindus and focuses on the

story of Prince

Rama and Princess Sita

 Why the story is important to

Hindus and the

lessons they learn

from it

• The ways in which Diwali may

be celebrated

locally, across the

UK, and globally



and Rama where exiled. when she met Ravana disguised as the old man. when she was kidnapped, when she was saved, and when they returned to their homeland. What kind of a person was Sita?

- Rama's feelings when he and Sita where exiled, when Sita was kidnapped, when she was saved and when they returned to their homeland. What kind of a person was Rama?
- Hanuman's feelings when Rama asked him for help, and when they saved Sita. What kind of a person was Hanuman?

Now help the pupils to consider the key themes of good vs evil and the theme of dharma (duty). How did good win over evil in the story? What was each character's

duty within the tale, and did they fulfil it?

Pose questions that encourage pupils to think about why this ancient story is still relevant and important to Hindus today. Why are good winning over evil and doing your duty seen as important in different Hindu worldviews and traditions in modern times?

## **3 | WAYS OF CELEBRATING**

Going back to the props from your starter activity, look at each item in turn, and explore the significance of some of the key aspects of how a Hindu family might celebrate Diwali. For example, rangoli patterns and lamps are left out for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, who they hope will leave them gold and bring good fortune for the year ahead. Other celebrations

include cleaning and decorating the house, the giving of cards and presents, the giving of sweets to family and community members. fireworks, and parties. Can pupils think of how these activities might be similar to celebrations that they know of or celebrate in their own families and communities?

If there is a Hindu community local to you, explore how they celebrate Diwali using images from local media, if they're available. If not, you can look at how communities in other parts of the UK, such as those in Leicester, celebrate (an internet search should turn up plenty of visuals). Make sure that you stress the diversity within Hindu worldviews and faith traditions, and that not everyone will celebrate in the same way.

Finish by gathering together as a class and reflecting on what pupils have learned. What do children think are the most important parts of the story, and why? What are some of the ways in which Diwali can be celebrated? Ask the children to think about what the most important part of Diwali might be: the cards and presents, the special food, the decorations, the fireworks, the parties and time with family, or telling the story of Rama and Sita (encourage them here to think about what the story means, touching on ideas such as good vs evil, and duty). This should open up a lot of discussion and debate.

Julie Childs teaches at Utterby Primary Academy, leads the primary network for RE in her MAT, serves on the NATRE executive committee and her local SACRE, and is an REQM assessor and an Associate RE adviser.



• Make connections with any Hindu communities you have locally and invite a faith member in or even visit a local Hindu community centre or Mandir. How do people in vour area celebrate Diwali?

Explore what Hinduism looks like in the UK and globally, making use of high-quality online resources (such as from NATRE: tinyurl. com/tp-NATREhindu or this **CBeebies video on Diwali:** tinyurl.com/tp-CBdiwali). What similarities and differences are there?

Hold a Diwali day or afternoon where you have multiple activities set up to explore the key story further, and the ways in which Diwali can be celebrated. Be brave and invite parents in to see how vibrant your RE curriculum is!



• What celebrations are important to you or to those you know and why?

 How does celebrating a festival impact on the individual faith member and on the wider faith community?

• How might religious festivals be celebrated in different parts of the world, and why might there be differences?





• Understand the basic principles and importance of a healthy and varied diet

• Discover the different food groups through sorting and categorisation

 Develop an understanding about where food comes from

• Use simple cooking vocabulary to describe food preparation

## KS1 LESSON PLAN

# Prepare your own Harvest-themed lunch box



Explore the different food groups to design a nutritious autumnal meal full of taste and texture,

with Emily Azouelos

## in tinyurl.com/tp-EmilyALinkedIny

Harvest time is almost upon us! This lesson introduces children to the different food groups and how a varied diet provides a healthy start for their bodies. They will explore a variety of produce, using drama to make it memorable, and learn more about where food comes from. They will try their hand at preparing a healthy lunch box and bring it to life by exploring the different tastes and textures of food. They will also be introduced to key cooking vocabulary so they can describe the process of food preparation. Let's dig in!



#### videos such as CBeebies' 'Harvest Time with Down on the Farm' (tinyurl. com/tp-HarvestTime) to illustrate these processes.

### 2 | GET ACTIVE

Using drama to consolidate their knowledge, get the children to pretend they are farmers getting ready to harvest, and assign areas of the classroom to different areas of their farm. One wall could be fields where they dig crops like onions, carrots and potatoes (perform a digging action). Another wall could be orchards where they pick fruit like apples, blackberries and pears from trees or bushes (perform a picking action). The back wall of the classroom could be a cow shed where

## START HERE

Sitting in a circle with pupils, introduce the five food groups, explaining how they help the body develop. Pass around one example from each food group



so the children can examine it. List the different food groups on the board, or on a large sheet of paper on tables, and ask the children to place each food item into the correct category, justifying their reasons. Once correctly sorted, run through the headings, attaching a drama action to explain how the food group helps the body; for example, dairy contains calcium for strong teeth and bones (get the class to show their biggest, cheesiest grins).

## **MAIN LESSON**

## 1 | HARVESTING FOOD

Introduce the term 'Harvest' and discuss its meaning. Draw out that it is both an important time of year when crops are harvested, and that events happen in various communities that celebrate and give thanks for food grown. Using images, explore the question, 'Where does my food come from?'. Focus on pictures of food and the food groups from the starter activity, then explore images online that show how these different foods are grown and harvested, before being sold in supermarkets. You could also use



cows are milked (perform a milking action). The front wall could be wheat fields that grow grain for cereal, bread and pasta, where the combine harvester collects the produce (perform winding action with hands and arms), and the middle could be a pumpkin patch where pupils try to carry the biggest pumpkin (perform plucking and lifting action). Stand in the middle of the classroom and shout out an area of the farm to go to, and all the children must perform the assigned action in the correct area of the farm. You can also ask the class to freeze in their position and then 'bring to life' a child by tapping them on the shoulder to explain what food they are harvesting.

### 3 | LUNCH TIME!

Explain that once the food has been harvested and sold to the supermarkets for us to buy, we need to take it home and prepare it to be eaten. Introduce some kev cooking vocabulary, such as wash, slice, cut, grate, peel and *pour*. Next, set up each table as a different station with the food item displayed alongside the key cooking vocabulary and the cooking equipment needed to prepare it, e.g. carrots could have a grater and a knife with a chopping board. If you can, have the actual food item at hand so the children can have a go at grating and slicing under supervision. Provide time for the children to touch and taste the food item once they have prepared it, and hand out sticky notes

## "Explore a variety of produce, using drama to make it memorable"

or small whiteboards for them to write down words and phrases to describe the food item. Encourage them to use the key cooking vocabulary when they discuss and write down their thoughts, to embed the knowledge further.

Next, explain to pupils that they're going to create their very own healthy lunches. Provide each table with an A3 sheet showing a variety of food items already explored in the lesson, as well as some unhealthy food options. Cut out the images and ask the children to place them face down on the table. They must take it in turns to turn over the image and discuss in their group if it is something they want to add to their lunch box. or something they will discard. Encourage them to think about creating a varied and balanced lunch box by reminding them of the different food groups they have explored and encouraging them to choose something from each group. When all the images have been talked about and the group is happy, stick them onto a blank lunch box template. Encourage the table groups to walk around, looking at other groups' choices.

When they have finished looking at each other's lunch box choices, ask the class to vote for one they liked the look of best. Sit the children in a circle to examine the food choices more carefully.

Emily Azouelos is an experienced former primary teacher. She creates educational content for a variety of settings.

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

Start a Harvest collection by playing 'family photographs' when exploring different food groups, Present a food group, such as protein. Get the class to arrange themselves as 'The Strong Family' to show how protein helps build muscle. Take a picture and print it. Use a display board and encourage children to bring in food items from that food group to place underneath the 'family photograph'. Repeat for each food group. Write up the preparation of the healthy lunch boxes as a series of instructions, extending the sticky notes to support their writing. Involve the community by reaching out to local garden centres and supermarkets for mini trips so the children can see how food is sorted and sold in the supermarkets and learn more about how to grow and care for plants and crops.



Why is it important to have a varied and balanced diet?
What should we think about when handling food to be prepared?
Can you describe where this food item has come from using the key vocabulary we have explored?

## MUSIC **A Hint of Snow White**

A feel-good panto sure to bring the Christmas spirit to your school, from Out of the Ark Music

## AT A GLANCE

• A vibrant, feel-good panto

- A wonderfully fresh and colourful
- reimagining of a classic tale • Original script with 13 scenes and 11 songs
- Available as a digital eSongbook online or book and CD

 From the best-selling writing team that brought you Peter Pan, Cinderella & Rockerfella and Aladdin Trouble

**REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL** 

#### Panto's back. Oh yes, it is!

You can't beat a good panto at Christmas, but it's quite the undertaking. Fear not though, as Out of the Ark Music has served up a showstopper for you and yours to perform, and it is refreshingly different. Panto is like a set of familiar Christmas decorations that gets unboxed every year; although the decorations are the same, they're never hung on the tree in quite the same way. Similarly, A Hint Of Snow White presents a familiar tale while maintaing its own style and omitting some of the more problematic elements of the story.

Many pantos are much of a muchness with familiar characters, jokes and well-worn routines, but not this one. A Hint of Snow White is set in the multi-coloured, mystical kingdom of Duluxembourg where wicked magic seeks to overthrow the good. And this is quite the quest!

Panto is like a set of familiar Christmas decorations that get unboxed every year. Although the decorations are the same, they're never hung on the tree in quite the same way and A Hint of Snow White has its own style, while some of the more problematic elements of the story have been omitted. Every panto needs a funny script with real adventure, danger, drama and jokes and this has all those in spades.

Every panto should also have an array of colourful characters ready to steal the show and this one is full of quirky larger-than-life characters old and new. There are 54 speaking parts, from the small to the very large, including Queen Malodorous, Lickspittle, Snow White and Fairy G with plenty more for all speaking abilities. There are also suggestions for increasing and decreasing the cast size with ideas for staging and props.

Part of the joy of watching panto is seeing the eclectic array of costumes, and those suggested in this production are full of bold colours, bright patterns and plenty of glitter and glam. Another of the most enjoyable parts of watching a panto is being able to get involved in the show. Luckily, A Hint of Snow White provides the audience with the opportunity for a good chunk of booing, hissing, cheering and applauding.

The songs are all panto-ready and 'singchronised', too, and the brilliant lyrics will easily get stuck in the heads of the audience - always a sign of a good song sheet. The quality of the music and singing is always top-notch with Out of the Ark and the creativity is second to none, so you are guaranteed high production standards.

This panto stands out head and shoulders above the rest. The script is hilarious, the songs are catchy, and everyone will leave with a big smile and plenty to talk about. A Hint of Snow White is a full-on show where the pace is maintained throughout, providing golden moments of fun and laughter. A lot of creative thought has clearly gone into presenting a well-worn story with a thoroughly modern, up-to-date script written for a target audience of family, friends and the wider school community.

Panto is very often a child's first exposure to theatre, and to have the chance to perform is something they will never forget.





## VERDICT

- Bags of fun and a generous serving of songs to make you smile
- Lots of opportunities to show off
- Plenty of audience participation
- A very clever, slick, and imaginative production
- Easy-going, accessible musical theatre at its best
- A variety of parts to suit every pupil, no matter their confidence level

## **UPGRADE IF...**

You are looking for an 18-carat, vibrant, relevant and inclusive crowd-pleaser that works for three generations, and will take everyone on a thrilling adventure this Christmas.





## HISTORY

# Kapow Primary history scheme

Find a wealth of specialist content to support and supplement high-quality history teaching across Key Stages



## AT A GLANCE

- Web-based history lesson plans
  Designed to help pupils progress and support teacher workload and
- professional development
- Developed by subject specialists
- Huge range of content for Y1-Y6
- All resources are rooted in successful, proven pedagogy

Develops love for the subject

## **REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES**

Kapow Primary history is the latest updated offer from the legends of resource creation. Boasting a plethora of content specifically designed to reduce workload and encourage pupil progress, Kapow Primary history is an exceptional addition to any school curriculum, whether it be as supplementary resources or as a replacement for existing schemes of learning.

Written by subject specialists, the content is second to none. Consisting of lesson plans, knowledge organisers, assessments, supporting resources, displays and embedded wider content, you really don't need to look any further for your history planning provision. Taking the proven ingredients from previous packages, Kapow Primary has built upon its successes, developing the content of the course while staying true to their key values and strengths. The results are more than impressive.

History can be a tricky subject to deliver at primary level given the range of topical content required for success. Kapow Primary focuses on select substantive concepts: power, invasion, settlement and migration, civilisation, tax and trade, beliefs, achievements and follies of mankind. These concepts allow learners to sequentially begin to understand some of the intricacies of historical study and plant the roots for sustainable progression in topical understanding of the subject. The resources are detailed enough that you don't have to be a history specialist to get the most out of them. The integrated CPD also helps here.

Coupled with the substantive concepts,



Kapow Primary also builds pupils' understanding of disciplinary concepts. Exploring change and continuity, similarities and differences, chronology, cause and consequence, historical significance, sources of evidence and historical interpretation, pupils are able to quickly and confidently begin to understand how to be a proper historian.

What stands out in the resources is the gearing toward progressing pupils as historians and building love for the subject. The content is centred around posed historical questions which encourages learners to gather, organise and evaluate evidence. This is coupled with the skills of interpreting findings, analysing and making connections, and evaluating and drawing conclusions, creating real sense of discovery and reasoning.

Kapow Primary knows how to create resources. The content on the platform is centralised around simplistic and proven pedagogical approaches, and the series of lessons for each topic is geared towards pupil progress and minimisation of workload for teachers. Comprising of individual lesson plans and resources, coupled with knowledge organisers and clear overview maps, Kapow Primary history is ideal for the high pace of the busy classroom.

In a time when it is of pivotal importance to be effective and efficient, investing in Kapow Primary history is a smart move. Teachers and pupils alike will significantly benefit from this well thought-out content.



## VERDICT

- Content is well mapped and easy to navigate
- Resources are all incredibly well prepared
- Online functionality and usability is second to none
- Full package of planning from start to finish
- Integrated primary and secondary sources, including an exclusive transcription of Elizabeth I's visit to Worcester

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for exceptionally well designed and written history content that is adaptable and versatile. Also consider if you have no history specialists to help your teachers plan.



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

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

For me, it's essential to know I'm working in a fair and professional system where I feel valued, trusted, supported, challenged and am offered opportunities. On a day-to-day basis, it's in those moments where I can do my best work, and in turn, I'm more likely to see the children flourish.

## 2 What is your greatest fear at work?

I'm not sure I actually *fear* anything at work, as I'm really lucky to teach at such a great school. But if there's anything that gives me anxiety it's the photocopier not working or some other ICT issue for which switching off and on again doesn't fix it. More seriously, I do really worry about the damage mobile phones and social media are doing to our young people's mental health – there is just so much for them to navigate, and the technology progresses so quickly. I also worry about the growing challenges with retention and recruitment in the education sector.

# **3** What is your current state of mind?

I'm feeling very positive right now! I'm writing this at the beginning of the new school year, and I've got a really clear vision for the 12 months ahead. My new class have been a delight so far, too. Additionally, we put a huge amount of work into curriculum development last year as a school, so I'm hoping we reap the benefits of all that in 2023-24, and I can't wait to see the impact the changes will have on the children.

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

It grates on me somewhat when 'doing a lot' is praised or esteemed more than the actual impact of actions or the quality of thinking. Everyone works in different ways, but I don't think 'working hard' should only be understood purely as constantly being on the go. I think this can contribute to unsustainable workload practices, which we know is a huge issue for many teachers at the moment. It'll also lead to people feeling they are less effective as teachers, just because they seemingly don't 'do' as much as others. Quality over quantity!

# **5** On what occasion do your class?

I teach in Year 6, so I'm not quite sure the children in my class quite believe me when I tell them before Christmas that the sensor detector in the corner of the room is a CCTV camera with a direct link to the North Pole and Santa Claus... but it's worth a go! I usually catch most of them out on April Fools' Day with a fib or two, as well.

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

For some reason, I say 'OK, OK, OK...' a lot. A *lot*, a lot. And I cringe every time I hear myself utter it out loud. During lockdown when I was teaching remotely, any videoed lesson I made seemed to be littered with OKs, and I just can't seem to shake it, no matter how much I end up annoying myself. That phrase will haunt my dreams!

# **7** What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

I'd say it's when I hear from previous pupils or their families about things they learned from me, which have helped them to be successful at secondary school. I find it really touching that so many pupils hold on to those memories and I feel privileged to have been able to have made a difference for them, especially when it relates to their personal confidence or their determination to achieve as best they can. Being able to make that kind of impact on someone's life is one of the main reasons I became a teacher.

# 8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

I don't know where I'd be without a visualiser. I use one in every lesson and think every teacher should have one. I definitely couldn't teach as effectively without being able to model, share work and demonstrate to children the way a visualiser allows me to. I find I just can't achieve the same outcomes with a typical interactive whiteboard. **TP** 



NAME: Marc Hayes JOB ROLE: Assistant headteacher and Y6 teacher EXTRA INFO: Check out Marc's website, marcrhayes.com, for articles about curriculum design, and summaries of Ofsted research reviews.

# CARE SUPPORT Service

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