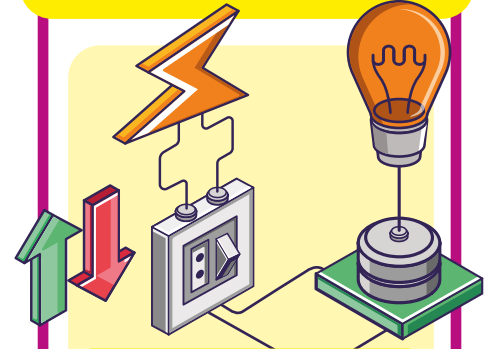


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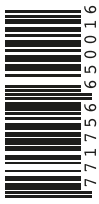
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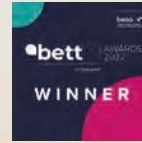
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Hello!



And off we go again. I do hope you all managed to get some peace and relaxation over the holidays.

In this issue we're in a techy sort of mood, with a preview of Bett 2024 (p68) and a STEM special. On page 60, Laura Di Pasquale takes a (very entertaining) look at what the BBC micro:bit could do for you, while on page 58 there's a useful deep dive into the EEF's new science recommendations.

Thomas Bernard's interesting KS1 lesson on renewable energy (p74) is well worth a look, and Abby Ball's six-week plan to make an electric buzzer game (p24) is super fun. On a seasonal note, Adele Darlington's snowflake activity (p31) brings science, maths and art together in a very charming way.


As usual, we've got lots of literacy ideas for you. Jon Biddle has had real success in the classroom with Gill Lewis' *A Street Dog Named Pup*, and on page 47 he shares his ideas for how you can use the book for topic work. Stuart Rathe offers some encouraging advice on how to teach Shakespeare (p52) and Lucy Starbuck Braidley explores the versatility of comics as a teaching tool (p50).

I really enjoyed reading about the pastoral strategies that some of our contributors have implemented, and the changes they still seek to make. Sue Cowley and her colleagues have been thinking laterally about how they can tweak the curriculum to tackle 'problem' behaviour, and their solutions have really paid off (p12). Stuart Guest's thoughtful piece on using a trauma-informed approach to create classrooms that make care-experienced children feel safe and confident is full of invaluable advice too (p20).

Finally, Jeffrey Boakye's letter to white educators on the everyday things they can do to tackle systemic inequality (p17) was a real highlight for me this issue, and provides much food for thought.

Wishing you lots of sunny days this January.

Lydia

Lydia Grove, editor
 @TeachPrimaryLG

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

POWERED BY...



JEFFREY BOAKYE
 discusses the subtle
 power of whiteness
 in primary education

"How refreshing it would have been for my racial identity to be acknowledged"

P17



STUART GUEST
 gives advice on supporting
 care-experienced children
 in the classroom

"Stop thinking a child is being disruptive and, instead, see that a child is struggling"

P20



LAURA DI PASQUALE
 encourages us to harness
 the surprisingly mighty
 power of the micro:bit

"Aside from transmitting rescue signals, what place does this tiny device have in a primary classroom?"

P60





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We're all ears!

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

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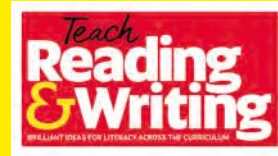
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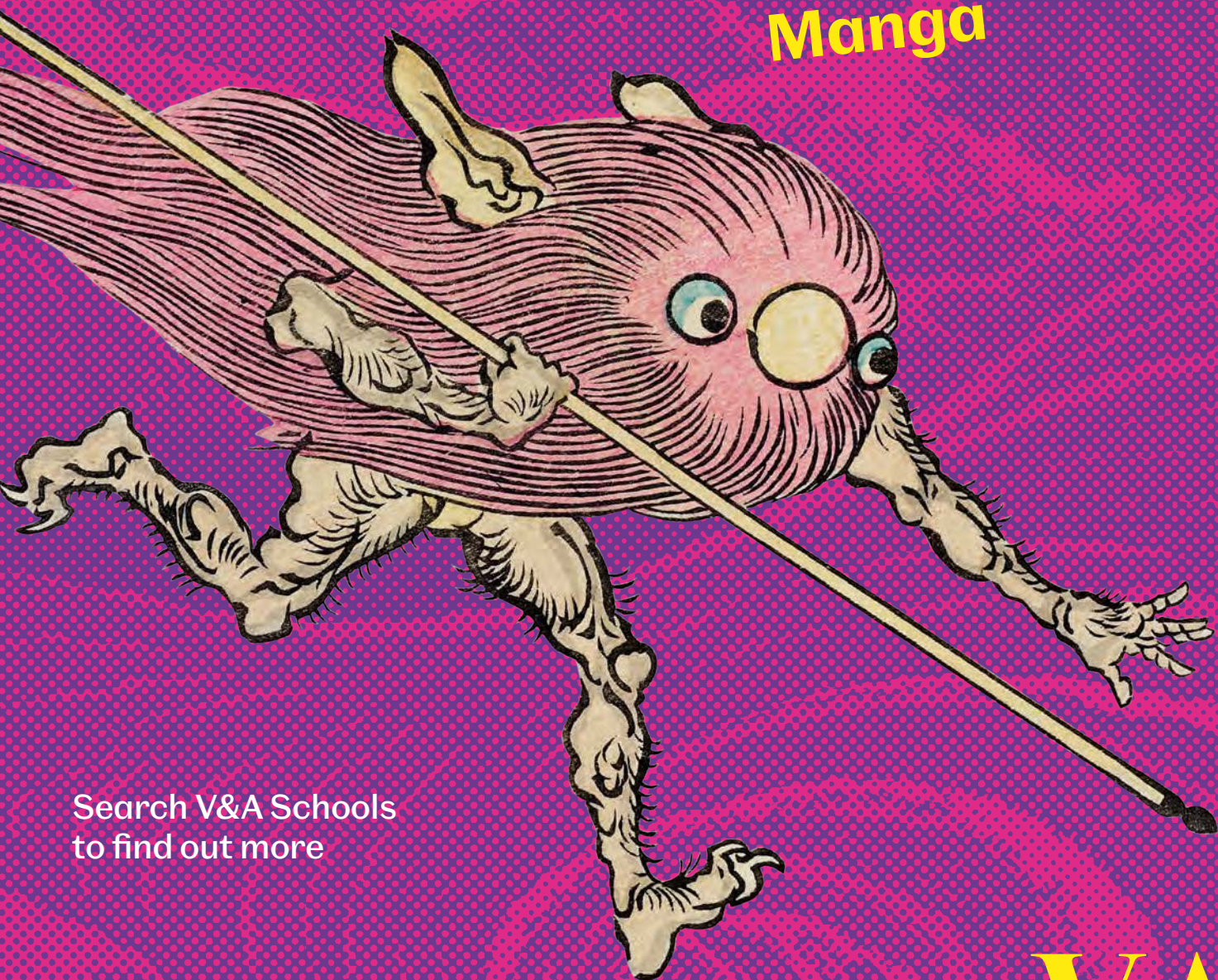


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New tech to tackle bullying

After successful implementation at secondary level, the Creative Education Trust is rolling out its innovative safeguarding tool, The Student Voice, to primary schools.

The Student Voice offers visual maps of all the contexts pupils spend time in, including school, home and the local community, parks and bus routes. The software enables children to rank how safe each space feels to them, and to easily report any issues they encounter in each of the mapped contexts.

Their school can then offer the most appropriate and effective response and implement necessary safeguarding measures before situations escalate, also helping to prevent future harm occurring in these spaces.

It was created by Jason Tait, an active designated safeguarding lead, and Stephen Willoughby, who suffered severe bullying at school himself.

You can find out more, including how the software has been adopted across MATs, at thestudentvoice.co.uk

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



HEALTHY HABITS

Team GB and Birds Eye's Green Cuisine have created Get Set to Go Green, a collection of KS2 resources that promote sustainability and the benefits of incorporating plant-based choices into a balanced diet. Find out more at tinyurl.com/tp-GetSet



CITY PLANNING

The Wonderverse is a free education programme that brings science to life through relatable curriculum-led activities. The linked interactive game CuriousCity challenges pupils to provide enough energy to power a whole city. Get started at tinyurl.com/tp-Wonderverse



SAFETY FIRST

Global cybersecurity firm Fortinet has made its entire Security Awareness Curriculum free to download for primary schools. With a strong focus on problem-solving skills, the scheme aims to help develop the cyber-aware workforce of the future. Register at tinyurl.com/tp-Fortinet

→→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



Handwriting practice sheets

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





Access free online SEND CPD

The Whole School SEND training programme from Nasen is easy to access and, with each of the 18 available units taking just 20 minutes to complete, you can fit

your learning neatly around the rest of your schedule. Each unit is supported by a live online networking session, facilitated by a regional SEND leader. (Places are limited so book ahead!)

The topics covered include creating a physically safe environment, understanding behaviour as communication, person centred working, and an introduction to speech, language and communication needs. Two more units are still to be added, and as a whole the programme will provide the information and understanding practitioners need to make the best choices for their pupils.

Register at tinyurl.com/tp-SEND-CPD

Grow your gardening funds

If you're hoping to make your school a greener place this summer, make sure you register for Westland Horticulture's New Horizon Fund, which aims to create a greener future for all.

Throughout 2024 the fund will support community garden projects, from schools, allotments, hospices, and care homes, across the UK and Ireland. A series of prize packages will be awarded, comprising of a collection of gardening essentials from Westland, from compost, seeds, tools, plant feed, and much more, to the value of £1,000. Each prize bundle will be individually created based on the project's needs to help them transform their space.

There will be multiple prize draws throughout the year, with at least five bundles being awarded at each stage. The final closing date will be 1st September 2024.

Nominate your school at gardenhealth.com/new-horizon-fund



23.8% of pupils in England were eligible for free school meals last year

* British Nutrition Foundation, in partnership with the charity Magic Breakfast

Look ahead | Book ahead

A HORRIBLY ROMAN DAY OUT

The British Museum has partnered with the creators of the *Horrible Histories*

books for a new children's exhibition, *Legion: life in the Roman army*, that will run from 1 February. Book now at: tinyurl.com/tp-Legion



MENTAL HEALTH WEEK IDEAS

Now and Beyond is an annual online festival of wellbeing held by the mental health charity Beyond.

Ahead of the event on 7 February, the organisers have made lots of resources and lesson plans available to schools. Sign up at nowandbeyond.org.uk



Anthea Turner

The TV presenter and personality drops by for a chat

1. What was primary school like for you?

I loved it! We had a fabulous teacher called Mrs Moss, who adored music and putting on plays. I was in all of them: singing, acting and generally prancing around on the stage. My dyslexia had started to show by then, and I'd discovered this was a useful deviation. The school was walking distance from our home, which meant I lived close to all my friends. Because our middle sister Ruth had Spina Bifida and couldn't walk, Mum was very encouraging when it came to having other children over, so the house was always party central.

2. You recently wrote a new *Underneath the Underground* book with your sister, Wendy. What made you decide to work together again?

We wrote the first series in 1995, so already had a relationship with the mice that live on the London Underground. After many years away from them, we had to spend hours travelling between London and Stoke on Trent together, visiting our mum in hospital and then closing down our family home and moving Dad down to London. So we used the time getting to know the mice again.

3. What's your favourite thing about writing for children compared to adults?

When writing for children, your imagination can run wild. Nothing has to be 'normal'.

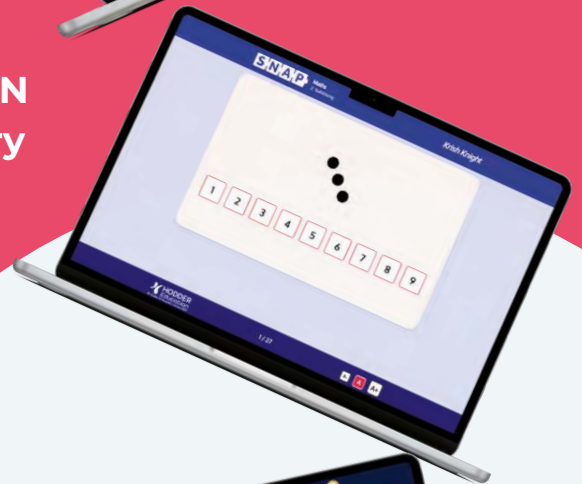
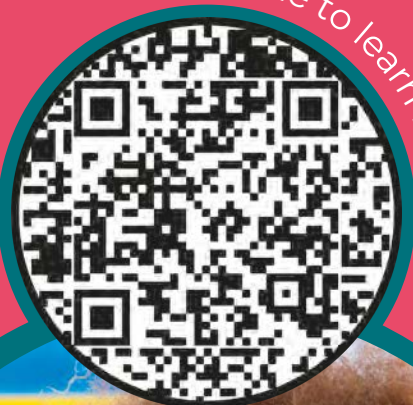
The King's Coronation and the Kohinoor Diamond, by Anthea Turner and Wendy Turner, illustrated by Rufus Thomas, is available now (£8.99, Splendid Books).

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8 WAYS to bring coding into the classroom

How can you keep digital natives engaged enough to teach them the essentials of coding?

1 | UNDERSTAND THE ASSIGNMENT

The best way to get children coding enthusiastically is to be led by their interests. Allow them to code resources about their favourite topics – whether that's sports teams, ponies or pugs. Or let them emulate in code a computer game they enjoy playing. If they're coding, they're learning. Do make sure that before you set them off coding you are thoroughly familiar with the software they'll be using, including all its capabilities and limitations. If you're using Scratch, there are a whole range of tutorials and how-to guides available at scratch.mit.edu/ideas

2 | GAME ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

The possibilities of topic-themed games are almost endless. You could, for example, organise a virtual sports day for a rainy summer. From chariot racing games when studying the Romans to self-marking spelling tests where answers are given by shooting the correct letters, coding can augment every area of the curriculum.

3 | BRING IT BACK

Ensuring that your pupils have understood a topic is key to building learning, and coding is a great tool to embed and revisit new concepts as children learn them. A summative presentation is a common activity, but add greater ownership and depth by asking children to create an interactive presentation on the topic from scratch. Ask them to add clickable items to navigate the information; they can even create self-graded quizzes to test their peers, or a themed game based on what they've learned.

4 | GET ANIMATED

Creating animations is a great way for children to show what they know, taking creative writing to the next level, and honing acting skills. The children can use the 'motion' blocks to move characters and props, add speech and thought bubbles using 'looks' blocks, and even add recorded voices and Foley artist sound effects using 'sound' blocks. Let them go a step further and use 'sensing' blocks and the device's camera to create a digital puppet show.



MARTIN BURRETT

is a primary teacher, EdTech specialist, editor at UKEdChat, and author. See ictmagic.co/books to view his books on computing and coding, and visit ictmagic.co/8-ways to find lots more classroom coding activities.

5 | EMBRACE THE ARTS

Create simple 'paint by number' activities by changing colours of a picture using 'looks' blocks to add colour when a section is tapped, or ask your learners to design a digital 'dot to dot' activity, which adds lines when the next number is tapped. Create digital on-screen musical instruments which produce sound when tapped. Ask your learners to record their own novel sounds for their instruments. Ear defenders may prove essential!

6 | TRAIN NEW TEACHERS

Providing a real audience for your pupils' coding will motivate them to perfect their code and keep them engaged. Getting them to make classroom resources for learners lower down in the school is a great way to promote cross-year cooperation. Younger learners can be interviewed about what features they would like in the coded resource and product-test the prototypes to give feedback to improve later iterations.

7 | GO BEYOND THE SCHOOL WALLS

Design real-world resources for an audience outside school. Share coded products online for parents to access. Delegate re-coding an online homework page to your learners, so parents know what the weekly tasks are. The same can be done for a class diary of events, a class news page, or a class FAQs page.

8 | KEEP IT REAL

As with all primary school tasks, if your learners (not to mention teachers!) see a clear goal for what they are doing, they are more likely to work hard to see it to fruition. So, design some simple tools that can be used in the classroom. Making basic interactive behaviour charts is a good introduction to creating classroom resources. Create number variables that change when an image or text, such as a learner's name, is clicked on, to increase the learner's score. Pupils could also create a volume monitor for quiet work times by using 'sensing' blocks of code to develop a visual response to the sound level in your classroom.



How to create a needs-based curriculum

Look at behaviour issues from a different angle to find simple and effective solutions

suecowley.co.uk

The most recent SEND data shows that 1.5 million pupils in England are currently identified as having a special educational need: an increase of 87,000 from 2022. Even where children do not have a diagnosed special need, teachers report increased difficulty in areas such as social communication and resilience. Recent government data shows a 30 per cent increase in school suspensions since 218/19, which disproportionately affect specific groups of children: those from poorer backgrounds, those with a social worker, and children with SEND.

Clearly, we need to think about how we can meet the increased levels of need we are seeing. However, it can be difficult for teachers to remain flexible and responsive to the needs of their children, particularly with Ofsted wanting to see a tightly sequenced primary curriculum and 'fidelity' to particular schemes.

Adaptive teaching has therefore become ever more important to help all children access learning. Although we tend to think about adaptive teaching as responding 'in the moment' to children in lessons, it can also include wider adaptations and flexibility of provision, to meet children's social, emotional and learning needs.

Lateral thinking

In our setting, we've found that these wider adaptations are a practical way of dealing with what might sometimes be termed 'behaviour issues'. By thinking about children's behaviour through the lens of their needs, and how our provision can meet these, rather than as something to manage with policies and systems, we can adapt our provision to be as inclusive as possible.

For instance, directly after lockdowns we noted an increase in behaviour issues after lunchtime. We talked in detail about what might be done, considering options for tweaking policies or incorporating motivators. Thinking laterally, we decided to trial a 'daily walk' in the local area each day after lunch.

Our walk fits neatly within our wider curriculum, as the children learn about nature and build their self-regulation and road safety skills. This activity supports physical development, and boosts language and communication as well through

talking and singing as we walk. It has also solved those 'behaviour issues' we thought were intractable, but which were apparently an expression of the children's need for an additional physical outlet.

We'd also been seeing problem 'carpet behaviours' – a common issue for teachers in Key Stage 1. The issues always seemed to revolve around personal space, with children pushing to keep their favoured spot on the carpet. It seemed to us like this might be an expression of their need for a 'space of their own', to give them a greater feeling of safety and security.

Again, we thought laterally, and removed the carpet – replacing it with a set of mats. These are spare carpet samples from a local carpet store, that are just the right size for one child to sit on. We chose muted colours, such as browns and greys, to stop children focusing on which mat they wanted.

After morning registration, we ask one of the children to ring a handbell and the rest of the group breaks into song: *Find a mat, find a mat, find a mat!* By putting the 'carpet space' directly in the children's hands and giving them the chance to mark their own spot with a mat, we have again solved our apparent behaviour 'problem'.

Putting power in pupils' hands

Another issue that has cropped up recently is difficulty in sharing, particularly outdoors. To support this skill, we introduced small sand timers, with adults modelling how these can be used to time each child's turn using the equipment. Within a few weeks, the children took over use of the sand timers themselves. They now tell each other politely when they've turned the timer over and are waiting their turn.

One of the keys to adaptive teaching and inclusion is to think about children's behaviours as a form of communication; they're telling us something about how our provision does not yet meet their needs. If we are open to seeing behaviour and learning in this way, and willing to take steps to be flexible, we can create a curriculum that truly helps all children learn. **TP**

*Sue Cowley is an author, teacher and trainer who helps to run an early years setting. For more, see her book **Learning Behaviours: A Practical Guide to Self-Regulation.***





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Plotting a path to SATs success – but backwards

The KS2 tests will soon be upon us, so it's worth putting aside some time this month to plan out your strategy, says **Ruth Astley**

[X @bwcet](#) [bcwct.com](#)

The expectations of SATs have changed in many ways during my 16 years as a Year 6 teacher and phase leader, but the importance of preparing children for that final goal has not.

A child's achievement at the end of KS2 is the collaborative responsibility of everyone who has crossed their learning path; but it's the Year 6 teacher who holds the glue-stick that fixes all that learning together.

To prepare children fully for what they'll encounter during their SATs, it's essential for Year 6 teachers to have an extensive knowledge of the whole KS2 curriculum. It's a misconception that SATs are based on the Year 6 curriculum alone: questions are drawn from right across KS2, which can be tricky if you haven't taught the whole Key Stage. This is where drawing on printed practice books and revision guides, such as *The Scholastic Learning Journey* (available at WHSmith), can help. In addition, knowing the history of your class and any gaps that have occurred in their coverage of this curriculum is important.

Knowledge of the test structure itself is also an essential part of the SATs toolkit, and familiarisation with past papers is a must. Knowing and recreating frequently used question stems and structures,

replicating them in class learning, knowing which content domains come up frequently, which areas are asked in greater percentages, and which skills and knowledge haven't appeared recently, will all help with preparation. There are many education consultants who analyse SAT papers year on year and publish these statistics online to support Year 6 teachers.

Successful Year 6 teachers are forward thinkers. I recommend planning the year in reverse: start with the end goal, add in the SATs week and your final moderation of writing date, and then create a timeline, working backwards. Put in past paper practice and decide when you want to start a revision period. Your timeline will then begin to appear. If you have a revision period date plotted in, then you know when you need to have completed your coverage of the curriculum by.

This is where the knowledge of the curriculum and tests is essential. I used to map every week of the spring and summer term, ensuring I had time to cover the whole maths curriculum and to revise the key areas that I knew always appeared in the tests. I would then repeat this process with reading and SPaG.

In terms of writing, knowing the End of KS2 Teacher Assessment Framework will enable you to plan writing provision that allows opportunities for children to show their skills. Plotting out a range of different text types for writing (both fiction and non-fiction), with a range of different audiences and purposes is essential. The text types chosen should allow children to write in different styles and levels of formality, and apply different grammatical skills, to ensure a wealthy portfolio of writing evidence for moderation.

Any experienced Year 6 teacher will tell you that pace of learning, repetition of learning and opportunities to practice and apply learning are essential for SATs preparation; and indeed, being 'secondary ready'.

In order to achieve this, a Year 6 teacher has to be clever with their time. Dual duty learning, where children can apply and practice reading, writing and maths skills within other curriculum areas, is invaluable. Likewise, using up those minutes of 'dead time' when, for example, assemblies or visitors are cancelled. During the spring and summer term, I would always have a tray of revision questions that I could grab for quick practice moments, at times like these.

And a final thought: SATs may be a suite of tests (with the exception of writing), but in every successful

Year 6 classroom, assessment for learning underpins all the tools in the toolkit outlined above. Knowing children, their

learning strengths and areas for development, enables teachers to personalise the preparation journey. **TP**

Ruth Astley is a former assistant headteacher, SLE for assessment and English, and former LA moderation manager.



Get your year 6s from
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23/24



“In January we had 40% age-related expectations in maths. By May we had 84% and 20% greater depth!”

Jon McNamee, Deputy Head, Brownhills West Primary



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

A letter to... *White teachers*

Do *all* your colleagues feel accepted and equal at school? Take a little time to give it some thought, says **Jeffrey Boakye**



When I started teacher training back in 2007, I was the only black student on my course. Armed with

a tweed blazer, leather satchel and head full of bright ideas, I wasn't going to let my minority status get in the way of making a difference – it was going to be just like the recruitment campaigns said it would be. But looking back now, there are conversations that I think I would have benefitted from, and that would have helped me in my journey to the classroom.

I'm talking about my blackness. How refreshing it would have been for my racial identity to be acknowledged, considering how much of an anomaly it made me at the time. What I needed was recognition of my identity in full, especially the parts that are referred to as marginalised.

We all need this kind of recognition. Sixteen years after I first stepped up to the whiteboard, I now visit schools and meet teachers across the country. It's a community of my peers – like you, if you are a teacher reading right now. One recurring theme is the responsibility held by schools and the wider educational system to celebrate identity and recognise lived experiences, plural, from our various and differing perspectives. It sounds obvious, but many (maybe all) of us have parts of our identity that can be side-lined by dominant society, be it ethnic heritage, race, sexuality, disability or unspoken trauma, to list just a few examples.

It's not controversial to suggest that every sector needs to be inclusive, but what

does that really mean? A useful metaphor is that of the host of a dinner party; because there's a huge difference between the host who neglects to consider the needs of their guests, and the host who actively builds those needs into the evening's shared experience.

At its best, inclusion is this process of welcoming the whole person out of the margins and into the centre. As a teacher marginalised by race, I know what it's like to be the 'guest'. And in terms of my black identity, I initially did what any good guest fearing for their safety in an unknown context would do: I left it at the door. I kept a low profile. I decided not to say anything that might upset the host and lead to me being thrown out. Assimilation as survival.

Teachers who are racialised as white will never have to leave their racial identity at the door in order to survive the system. Their safety within dominant society is not jeopardised by the colour of their skin. This is a fact of how white supremacy has been constructed in modern western society, in the exact same way that my maleness will never be a problem in a sexist patriarchy, and my heterosexuality will never be questioned in a homophobic context. Equally, my Britishness means that I will never be a 'foreigner', while my able-bodiedness allows me to live freely without any issues of accessibility. For white teachers, the task becomes recognising how whiteness aligns you to social dominance that you didn't ask for. Whiteness will always make you welcome and comfortable – so much so that you might not have spent any real time thinking about it at all.

In a profound sense, the modern west is

built out of values that are inextricably tied to white supremacy, seeded way back in the 17th century for reasons of colonialism, European imperialism and global economic exploitation. We can see this echoed in the curriculum, which historically fails to include narratives outside of a white, western, European paradigm.

It's not about feeling guilt or shame. None of us designed this society or its structures. But education provides an opportunity to address structural inequality and seek truth. Over 85 per cent of current UK teachers are white and British; we can't allow for blind-spots regarding the history of race politics. With disproportionate exclusion rates, higher levels of stop and search, attainment bias, and discrimination that can sit at policy level and beyond, racism is a safeguarding issue. And safeguarding, as you know, is a shared responsibility.

So, challenge the curriculum. Disrupt the party. Question the hosts and seek a greater breadth of representation within your specialism. If it helps, start with what you notice from the perspective of your most marginalised identity, then consider how these insights might illuminate your approach overall. If you can do that, then you might be able to do the same thing from perspectives outside of your lived experience too, creating empathy in a system that can so often pull in the opposite direction.

From, Jeffrey



Jeffrey Boakye is an ex-teacher turned writer, speaker, broadcaster and educator, with a particular interest in issues surrounding race, masculinity, education and popular culture. His books include Musical World, Kofi and the Rap Battle Summer and I Heard What You Said.

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ABOUT ME:



NAME:

Katie Freeman

JOB ROLE:

Primary RE leader, and chair of the National Association of Teachers of RE (NATRE)

SCHOOL: Bickleigh Down Primary School, Devon

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UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Now is the winter of our disillusionment

“Right now, many people in education are at their lowest point”



It's probably already a distant memory by now, but the second half of the autumn term is always tough. There is a lot going on: productions, data deadlines, extra days off the timetable... And that's before we even get to the excitement levels of the children, plus inevitable sickness, stomach bugs, and high levels of absence making everything that little bit more stretched. Despite all of that, though, Christmas, particularly in a primary school, is usually a magical time. There is wonder and excitement everywhere. The decorations are out, and if you can't have fun at Christmas, when can you?

But this year felt a bit different. Right now, it feels like the education system is buckling under the weight of a burden it simply cannot continue to bear for much longer.

An increasing number of people are becoming more and more disillusioned with education and teaching in general and, unfortunately, I have been one of these over the last term. I can't remember a time when working in schools has been quite so hard as it is now, and headship in particular is becoming a less and less appealing option. Recruitment and retention remain challenging. And then, along with all of this, we have the findings of the inquest into the tragic death of headteacher Ruth Perry.

Some of the things that came out of the inquest have been on teachers' and leaders' minds for a number of years. So what impact will this have? It should be seismic. This should be the opportunity to completely refresh and encourage a whole profession to reengage with a remodeled accountability system that has an onus of real school improvement and builds real partnerships between schools and whatever model is implemented.

I just can't see it happening though. On the day of the inquest came the statement that inspections were being delayed for 24 hours to allow inspectors to gather to 'address the issue of anxiety', among other things. However, it wasn't long before it came to light that this would be an online-only session lasting just

90 minutes. I know it will be a starting point, but given the seriousness of the findings, surely more was needed? This was the chance for an organisation to show it was serious, but I can't help but feel it was an opportunity missed.

Which, to be honest, leaves me feeling very flat and disillusioned with the whole thing.

Everyone who works in a school works exceedingly hard – harder than those outside education know. I'm sure lots of us have been where I have recently: searching for other careers, wondering what else we're qualified for.

We are working in a broken system and one that seems to be making it harder and harder to succeed in what we all want. Most of us entered education for the same reason: to make a difference to the children that we work with. That part of the job is still the thing I cling to in the darkest moments, but it's getting harder to do that whilst trying to function in an education system that seems to be falling down around our ears.

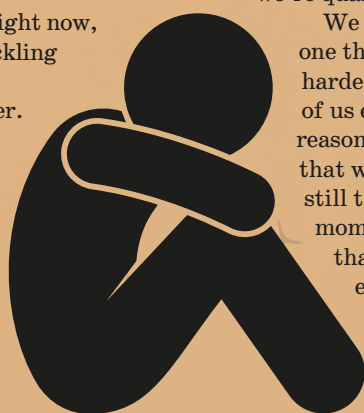
What I have learned to do though, is look for little chinks of light. These are what we live for. The moment the penny drops for a child, the times you know you've really made a difference, those lessons when your class makes you laugh uncontrollably.

This is why we went into teaching, and this is why, despite everything, we love our job.

I have often heard it quoted that 'The darkest hour is just before the dawn.' Right now, many people in education are at their lowest point, beaten down by everything that has been thrown at us over the past few years. But there is always hope, and

in teaching a moment of light is never far away. What we do is incredible: we make a difference; we help children thrive.

And if this is the darkest moment, then it simply means better times must be close at hand. Despite my current disillusionment, deep down I still believe in education, and I still believe in the people who can make the biggest difference – all of us. **TP**



“This was the chance for an organisation to show it was serious”

The writer is a primary headteacher in England.

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If you are struggling with your mental health, you can call The Samaritans for free on 116 123, or email jo@samaritans.org

Keeping PACE

Taking a trauma-informed approach can create a truly nurturing environment for care-experienced pupils, says **Stuart Guest**

New data from the charity Adoption UK has found that almost two thirds of adoptive parents (61%) say that finding a trauma-aware school would make the biggest positive difference to their family.

A trauma-aware school is one where there is an understanding that a child's early life experiences can have a profound impact on how they view the world around them. This is particularly important for care-experienced children.

Trauma can manifest itself in many ways throughout our lives, but early life experiences are usually about an event, or series of events, that have overloaded the child's stress response system.

From birth, our brains are building connections based on our experiences. If, as infants, we are sung to and receive physical affection, our brain develops these connections. This is the world we expect and feel prepared for. In contrast, a child who has experienced trauma will have built up connections in their brain in response to a world that feels unsafe and unpredictable.

To an infant, going without food, being left in their cot alone for long periods of time, or living in an environment filled with shouting and aggression can feel life-threatening. These brain adaptations mean many care-experienced children are primed for danger. Feelings of stress

and hypervigilance may remain, even when the child then moves into a safe and nurturing environment.

Encouragingly, trauma-informed practice has become more common in schools. Teacher Tapp reported recently that a third of teachers have now had some form of training, but that still means many have limited awareness, or experience.

As a headteacher, I've spent the past 12 years working with my staff to embed a trauma-responsive approach in all we do. Most of our work is led by class teachers and support staff throughout the normal school day. This means that even if your school hasn't prioritised a trauma-informed approach, you can still apply the thinking within your own class. Here are some suggestions for getting started.

Build your understanding

Developing your own understanding about care-experienced children and the impact of trauma is essential. You may already have a child in your class who is adopted, or currently looked after. It's useful to reflect on what you've learned from being their teacher. What has been rewarding? What has been more professionally challenging?

Care-experienced children often have low self-esteem and confidence, and they find it harder to self-regulate. Things like turn-taking, sharing, or

not shouting, can be areas where they need additional support. These children often require, and deserve, additional attention, support and consideration in our approaches.

Understanding more about the PACE approach, which was developed by psychologist Dr Dan Hughes, can provide a useful lens through which to think about the needs of care-experienced children (see panel).

Understanding of early childhood trauma, and how it impacts children, is critically important if support for children who have suffered is to be effective. I recently worked with BBC Teach to create a new teacher training resource, *Supporting care-experienced children*, which provides a good introduction. There are

three videos covering some of the key topics, and three animations featuring the real-life experiences of care-experienced children.

Classroom practice

Care-experienced children can feel shame deeply due to the trauma they have experienced. Something like sharing spelling scores with the whole class, or rewarding children who have good attendance, can trigger a strong shame response.

As teachers we want to praise children's successes, but it's important that this



works for all pupils. Ask yourself, “What does this policy or approach feel like for my most vulnerable children?”

Behaviour charts, and other performance boards, are not helpful in supporting care-experienced children. They often have to work harder just to cope with day-to-day school life, so it’s vital they are not disadvantaged further by policies that are in place.

It may feel daunting to adapt some of the tools you’ve relied on previously to manage your class. My advice is to try a more PACE-like approach. Even starting out with a curiosity sentence stem such as “I’m wondering if…” can make all the difference. For example, if a child is struggling to focus in class, say to them, “I’ve noticed you are looking around the room a lot today. I’m wondering if you have something else on your mind right now?” This approach can also help you to find out new information, which can make things better for the child (and you) in the class.

Of course, this doesn’t mean you get rid of rules, expectations and consequences.

Boundaries and limits are just as important for care-experienced children as for their peers. For example, having strong routines develops a sense of safety for many children, as they know what will happen.

“Stop thinking a child is being disruptive and, instead, see that a child is struggling”

Consequences for actions need to focus on exploring the impact, build repair, provide support, and help a child to develop the new skills they need. Ultimately, we want to reduce the likelihood of repeated incidents.

Changing your mindset

Care-experienced children are likely to live with far more stress than other children in your class and that can manifest itself in many ways, including how they behave in class.

Probably, one of the most powerful things you can do as a teacher is to stop thinking a child is being disruptive, and, instead, see that a child is struggling. It may feel like they are being deliberately difficult, and a ‘real pain’, but children rarely act up just for the sake of it; there is usually an underlying reason.

A trauma-responsive approach asks:

- What is going on here? Why might this child be struggling now?
- What do I know about this child and their needs?
- What do we need to put in place to support this child and the situation?

Understanding things in advance about what might trigger a child can help you to put in place strategies that can support them.

A trauma-responsive approach ensures a child feels supported and that they can rebuild trust in adults. A nurturing and stable environment allows a child who has endured early life trauma to learn how to develop healthy, dependable relationships.

THE PACE APPROACH

- **Playfulness** – keep a warm tone and show joy in the classroom. This doesn’t mean having a joke when a serious incident has happened, but rather, having a day-to-day sense of enjoyment with the children. Take time to think about what your body language and approach communicate to the children, and adapt if necessary.
- **Acceptance** – acknowledge each child’s needs, and ensure they know you care and that they are a valued member of the class. Accepting the way a child is, and the challenges they may face, helps create a more considered and compassionate response and approach.
- **Curiosity** – aim to get into the cared-for child’s world and understand where they struggle. What is the trigger, or underlying need, that a behaviour is showing?
- **Empathy** – see things from the child’s perspective and don’t assume you understand the motives for their actions.

Your classroom may well be the first place a care-experienced child has felt safe. Most importantly, as their teacher, you may be an important trusted adult – even if the child pushes your care away. By adopting a trauma-responsive approach, and using PACE, you will be making a huge difference to their chances of success. **TP**



Stuart Guest is headteacher at Colebourne Primary School in the West Midlands. To access the BBC Teach free resource Supporting care-experienced children visit [tinyurl.com/tp-Care](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-Care)

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The Inside Story

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There's a new name for the best-kept secret in edtech solutions – introducing Dreambox Reading Plus...



2024

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2003 – 2023

Since 2014, Reading Solutions UK has been a trusted provider of Reading Plus under this logo, providing an industry-leading service for schools and educators.

Since 2014, Reading Solutions UK has been a trusted provider of the adaptive, online reading development programme Reading Plus, empowering UK educators to bridge the gap between phonics and reading comprehension.

Our journey began with a chance encounter between Michael Walker – the visionary behind Reading Solutions UK – and the pioneering developers of Reading Plus in the US. Michael was captivated by the programme's adaptive technology and unique ability to address the challenges of low vocabulary levels and disengagement with reading.

Understanding the crucial need for a programme that explicitly focused on reading fluency through enhancing efficiency and automaticity, Michael was determined to bring Reading Plus to the UK. Later joined by a former colleague and fellow edtech expert, Ian Fitzpatrick, the two embarked on a mission to enhance the education of children across the UK.

Now, as MD of Reading Solutions UK, Ian continues to evolve the company to suit the changing conditions of the education sector, with our latest advancements now happening under DreamBox Learning – the leading education technology provider that pioneered intelligent adaptive learning.

In 2021, DreamBox acquired

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Contact:

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Our Journey

2003

Mark Taylor develops the original web-based version of Reading Plus, based on extensive research conducted by his family since the 1930s

2014

Reading Solutions UK is created. With its first adopting school in London, Reading Plus is now implemented in 1,300+ schools nationwide

2021

DreamBox Learning – a leading education technology provider that pioneered intelligent adaptive learning – acquires Reading Plus

2024

Reading Solutions UK unveils its refreshed DreamBox Reading Plus logo – providing the same unique programme with a new look

MEDIUM TERM PLAN

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ABBY BALL



This medium-term plan is a cross-curricular unit covering science and DT learning objectives. It offers an exciting and inexpensive opportunity for students to apply their scientific knowledge of electrical circuits in a real-world context, by creating a game for their peers to play.

Before beginning the unit, you'll want to make sure that the children can name different household appliances that are powered by electricity. It's also important that they understand how to work safely with electricity and electrical components. Shoeboxes make an excellent base for the children's games, so you'll want to collect these, too.

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equipment that doesn't work, no matter how carefully you check it all before the lesson. Use this as an opportunity to teach the children how to troubleshoot. Demonstrate changing each component in turn, until you have identified the problem.

Finish the session by asking the children to draw their complete circuit. Make links between the word 'circuit' and 'circle' to help them remember the circuit must be completely joined up to allow the electricity to pass through.



Assessment

Can the children name each component in the circuit, and create a complete circuit? Show a range of different circuits from Resource 1. Can the children identify whether each circuit will light the bulb and explain why?



WEEK 2

Learning objective

● Recognise that a switch opens and closes a circuit, and associate this with whether or not a lamp lights in a simple series circuit.

Before this lesson, you'll need to make sure that each pair of children has access to the equipment needed to create a circuit that lights a lamp, as well as four split pins, three paper clips, two small pieces of card and some masking tape.

Begin by recapping on the previous session, ensuring the children know how to create a circuit that lights a lamp. Is there ever a time that we would want to turn the lamp off? Make links to the lights in the classroom or at home, and



WEEK 1

Learning objective

● Construct a simple series electrical circuit, identifying and naming its basic parts including cell, wires, bulbs, buzzers.

Before the session, make sure you've got enough wires, cells, bulbs and buzzers for the children to use in pairs. It's worth checking that all the equipment works correctly if you want to avoid chaos in the lesson!

Start by recapping what the children already know about electricity. Which household appliances or toys use electricity? How can we make sure we

work safely with electricity? Then, show the children the different components that make up a circuit and tell them what each component is called. Explain that a battery can have one cell or several cells that convert chemical energy into electrical energy. The more cells, the more power that will be produced.

Give out the equipment and ask the children to see if they can make the bulb light up, or the buzzer sound. Those who work it out quickly can either support other pairs to create their circuit, or be given the further challenge of creating a circuit that can simultaneously light the bulb and sound the buzzer.

Inevitably, there will be some

to other commonly used electrical items (phones, TV, etc). How do we turn them on and off? Talk about the role of the switch in a circuit. Explain that we're going to create some different types of switches in this session.

Model how to create the three types of switches. First, attach split pins to each side of a folded piece of card. Tape one wire to each split pin. When the card is folded, the split pins should connect to complete the circuit. Second, attach one paper clip to each wire in the circuit. When the paper clips touch together, the circuit will be complete and light the bulb.

Finally, attach two split pins to one piece of card. Tape the wires to each paper clip. Next, hook a paper clip around one of the split pins. When the paper clip is pushed over the second split pin, the circuit will complete and light the bulb. Ask the children to create each of the switches in pairs and discuss which is the most effective and why. If the children are confident in making switches, you could extend the lesson by experimenting with different materials to create switches, to explore which materials conduct electricity.



Assessment

Can the children explain why switches are needed in circuits? Can they create functional switches? Taking pictures of the switches and asking the children to annotate them is a helpful way of evidencing your assessment.



WEEK 3 Learning objective

- Investigate a range of existing products; communicate ideas through annotated sketches and exploded diagrams.

For this session you'll need to source some simple wire loop and operation-style games, including one that you can take apart if possible. You'll also need some wire strippers, and some wire.

Start by showing the children the games and explaining that we're going to be making our own electrical games. Who do we think they are for? Why do people want to play them? Then move the discussion on to considering how they might work, drawing on the children's prior knowledge of circuits and switches. If you can take one of the games apart, it will be helpful at this



point. Point out that the electrical components are hidden in some type of box. Why do they think this is?

Explain that to make our own games, we'll need to create a careful plan and make sure we've got the skills we need. Ask the children to work in pairs and think about what kind of game they would like to create. If there are children who need more support, limiting them to creating a wire loop game is a more accessible option. Children who need a greater level of challenge may want to create an operation-style game.

The imaginative possibilities for the games are endless. For example, a child in my class once created a game where you had to 'steal' fish from the cat's dish. The cat's dish was made out of foil and the cat's 'nose' lit up when the circuit was complete.

Model how to create a labelled plan for the game using Resource 2. Make sure you cover both the practical elements of making the game, using an exploded diagram of the circuit, and the aesthetic elements, considering who the game is for and how it might look.

Then set up four activities round the room that the children can rotate round: investigating and playing the games; practising using wire strippers; practising bending wire into a variety of shapes; and designing their games.

Finish the session by asking the children to share their designs with another pair, explaining who they are for and how they will work.



Assessment

Can the children explain who their games are aimed at, and how they will work? Have they labelled their designs appropriately and thought about how their circuit will work?



WEEK 4 Learning objective

- Create a prototype and adapt own design as necessary; understand and use electrical systems in their products.

Hand out the children's designs from the previous session. Explain that engineers often create prototypes to check their ideas will work, and that's what we're going to do today. Model how to create both types of game.

For the wire loop game, use two large paper clips, or two pieces of thin wire, to create a shaped loop and a 'wand' with a hook that will travel round the loop. Demonstrate connecting the end of the wire shape to one end of the circuit and the end of the 'wand' to the other. If the 'wand' and the loop touch each other, the switch is closed and the circuit will complete, either sounding the buzzer or lighting the bulb.

To model the operation-style game, substitute the wire loop for some shaped foil, and the wand for a tweezing tool. Crocodile clips work well for this, or you could use metal tweezers if appropriate. Ask the children to create their own prototype circuit.

Once they've got their circuits working, explain that the next step is to consider how to hide the electrical workings while keeping the wire loops and wands, or tweezers and foil accessible, so the game can be played safely and looks aesthetically pleasing. Explain that the children will have shoeboxes to work with when they make their games, but for today, they can practise using upturned paper bowls. Let the children experiment with how to do this, supporting them as needed.

This is the hardest part of making the games, so it's well worth taking time over. Once the prototypes are complete,

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ask the children to return to their original designs and make any changes they need to, using what they have found out in this session.

Finish the lesson by deciding on some success criteria as a class for the finished products. A simple list of three success criteria works well. For example: Does the game work? Is it sturdy enough to be played with? Does it look good?



Assessment

Can the children create circuits with switches to make a prototype? Can they identify any changes that need to be made and adapt their designs accordingly? Can they problem-solve if something doesn't work?



WEEK 5

Learning objective

- Use a range of materials and components to create a game with an electrical circuit.

In this lesson, the children will finally get to make their games. It's a highly engaging process, so there will be a lovely, excited buzz in the room. Begin by asking the children to look back at their designs and think carefully about what their game needs to look like. You'll also want to remind them of the success criteria for their games, all the skills they have practised so far, and what they learned by creating their prototype. Encourage them to think about how they will problem-solve if anything goes wrong with their circuit.

Give a shoebox to each pair and ask them to decorate it. You could use paints, thick felt tip pens, different papers stuck on with glue or any other type of material to cover the box. Get the children to sketch their design on the box in pencil to start with. This will give them a good idea of where to colour, and they can start again if they make a mistake. They'll also need to think about where the visible parts of their game will go. You can give the children the option of attaching the lid to the longer side of the box to create a background for the game.

Once the decorations are complete, it's time to put their circuitry together. If the children are making a wire loop game, you'll want to use wire that's thick enough to be sturdy. If they're struggling with bending the wire, get

them to draw the shape they want on paper and then shape the wire to match their drawing. Masking tape will be helpful to stick the components underneath the upturned box.

Throughout the lesson, keep encouraging the children to solve any problems that occur with their circuits. You'll certainly need to do this more than once. By the end of the session, the children should be happily playing with their working games. Take pictures of their finished games as evidence for their evaluations in the following lesson.



Assessment

Have the children's games been successful? Does their circuit work? Does it look aesthetically pleasing? Have they been able to solve problems they may have encountered?



WEEK 6

Learning objective

- Evaluate products according to their own design criteria.

Talk to the children about their experiences in making the games. What went well? Did they encounter any difficulties? Were they pleased with their end result?

Discuss the fact that engineers always evaluate their products and processes to see what they have learned and to find out if there is anything they could do to improve their final product. Explain that we're going to help each other evaluate our games today.

Ask the children if they can remember the success criteria established in Week 4. Explain that we're going to play each other's games and then give some feedback.

At this point, you'll want to model exactly how to give appropriate feedback. Start by giving examples of unhelpful feedback, such as "It's rubbish" or "It's good". Ask the children to tell you why these statements aren't helpful feedback. Establish that we need to give specific feedback based on our success criteria, and that we need to do that in a respectful way; everyone has put lots of time and effort into their game, even if it hasn't turned out as they had hoped.

After this discussion, model giving effective feedback. For example, "Your



game looks like it would be really fun to play because it has bright colours." Or, "I think the game could be improved if the circuit was working." For children who need more support with this, it can be helpful to have some sentence stems on the board, such as *Your game is good because...* and *It would be better if...*

When you feel confident the children are able to give effective feedback, allow them a short amount of time to play each other's games. Then stop the class and give them five minutes to feed back to each other.

Once this process is complete, the children will be ready to reflect on their own experiences and evaluate their own games. Model how to complete the evaluation sheet (Resource 3) and ask the children to complete their own evaluation, supporting them as necessary.



Assessment

Can the children identify what went well and what could be improved next time? Use the children's evaluation sheets and/or discussion with them as evidence. **TP**



Abby Ball has 16 years of experience working across the primary age range. She lives near Manchester with her husband and cat.

@abbyballwrites

abbyballwrites

Drawing A BLANK

Struggling to meet the needs of a class with different levels of language development? Perhaps it's time to try a new model, suggests **Louise Ryves**

A busy classroom, children with varying language and communication levels, and an immense curriculum to follow – just an average day, I hear you say. It's not surprising, then, that I frequently get asked by teachers, "How can I meet the needs of all my pupils with one task?" My answer: discover the Blank Levels of Questions model.

What is it?

The Blank Levels of Questions, also known as the Language of Learning model, is a practical framework informed by studies of the language used within classrooms. It's based on the idea that children's language and reasoning skills develop alongside each other, and as that understanding and vocabulary increase, the ability to figure out and reason in more complex situations develops. The framework consists of four levels of language skills, and questions of increasing complexity.

Level 1 – Naming/nouns

This level focuses on the here and now, with questions such as, "What are you doing?", "What is it?", "What did you see?", and "Who is that?"

Level 2 – Describing/verbs/concepts

This level encourages

children to think and search. The answers will be in front of them, but they will have to think about it. Questions may include, "What's happened?", "Who?", "What?" and "Where?", as well as questions that ask children to describe the differences between two objects, or identify the characteristics of an object. Understanding and use of

concepts and descriptive language are rooted at this level. It is expected that 60 per cent of three-year-olds have competent skills at levels 1 and 2.

Level 3 – Re-telling

This level prompts children to think outside of the here and now – the answer is no longer in front of them, so they will need to look for clues and start to form their own assumptions and thoughts. This includes being able to answer questions like, "What will happen next?" and "What might he/she/they say?"

Level 4 – Justifying

This level is where children's most abstract language skills will be used. Children will need to draw on their previous knowledge to form their own thoughts and opinions, using their existing understanding to predict and solve problems. The hardest questions fall into this level, e.g., "How do you know...?" and "Why does X happen

when we do Y?" It is thought that 65 per cent of five-year-olds are able to understand and use level 3 and 4 skills.

In the classroom and beyond

The Blank Levels of Questions model is an ideal framework to keep in mind when lesson planning, as it can help you differentiate learning tasks.

Understanding where your pupils lie within the Blank Level framework means you can group them together according to the complexity of the task. This can support

children at lower Blank Levels to achieve, and encourage those at higher Blank Levels to extend their language in a supportive way.

When you're in the classroom, not only do the Levels allow you to reflect on a learning activity that a pupil was able, or unable, to engage with, they can also be helpful in challenging and unexpected situations, by providing a sliding scale of questions that can be used to support pupils.

Often, when children are feeling upset, their ability to process and hear language decreases, so even pupils who are confidently at Blank Level 4 can benefit from being asked questions at a lower level. Just swapping a few words in a question can make it easier and more accessible, e.g., "Why

are you feeling sad?" could be changed to, "What made you feel sad?"

What's more, the framework can be used across the curriculum. Whenever spoken language is being used, the Blank Levels can be applied.

Identifying challenges

There are four key signs that may highlight whether a pupil is having difficulty understanding language in the classroom:

- They may ask for repetition of verbal information.

- They may watch others to see what they do, before starting the activity.
- They may be unable to start a learning task after instructions have been given, or carry out part of the task and get stuck.
- They may be described as a 'quiet child', or may try to avoid tasks by using behaviours that draw attention away from what they need to do.

One quick tip that is really easy to put into practice is to make sure you plan learning activities to include a selection of questions from each of the Blank Levels. Watch your pupils respond to these questions to get an idea of which level they may be at.

You can also make a keyring of questions you ask in the classroom, colour coding them to different Blank Levels to make an easy reference source that you and other adults can carry around. Some teachers find it useful to put a poster of the different Blank Levels on the wall, to provide a visual reminder that can be referred to quickly.

Children learn language by seeing, touching and hearing first, and then through social interaction with the world around them.



Louise Ryves is co-director and speech and language therapist

at Commtap CIC. Find more information about Blank Levels, and a free classroom guide, at commtap.org

The model in brief

- ? Can provide any primary school teacher with a solid framework to support pupils' language development
- ? Consists of four easy-to-use levels of language and verbal reasoning development, spanning from concrete to abstract
- ? Can be used by any adult in the classroom to support pupils with skills at different levels
- ? Helps educators to plan and differentiate learning activities
- ? Allows pupils to feel empowered when they can achieve, stretching them and encouraging them to develop to the next level of language and reasoning skills
- ? Can be used across the whole curriculum
- ? Children who are involved in an unexpected or challenging situation can be supported by using different levels of questioning

Visit commtap.org for free, downloadable Blank Levels of Questions resources.

This is supported by adults considering the language learning environment and making changes in the language that they use.

A good understanding of your pupils' language levels will not only enable you to pitch activities at the correct level, but it will also give you the tools you need to make adjustments as required throughout, responding to individual children's need for additional challenge or support. The Blank Level model provides a quick and effective way to do this. **TP**



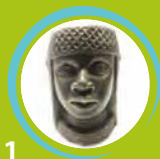
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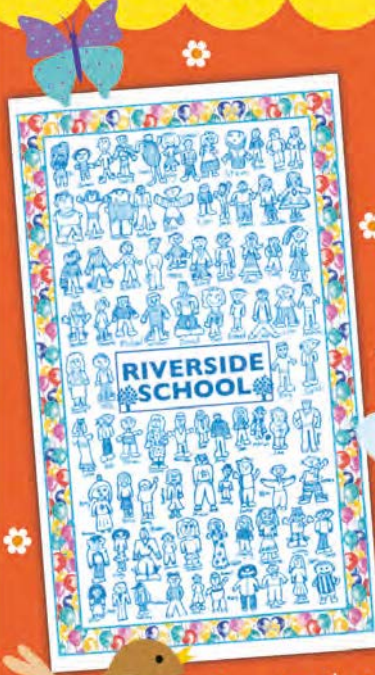
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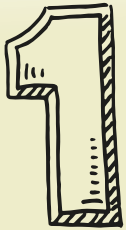
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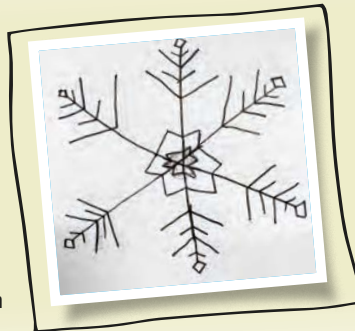
Embrace the chill of winter and explore the beauty of snowflakes with this fun project combining science, maths and art

ADELE DARLINGTON

As well as cold and shivers, the winter season brings with it some beautiful examples of nature at its finest: frosty patterns, glistening spiderwebs and sparkling ice crystals. This teaching sequence focuses on the wonders of snow, and the intricate details that make up each individual snowflake. The complex, exquisite patterns created naturally as the flakes fall from sky to ground are both astounding and mesmerising. Here, inspired by real-life snowflakes, pupils create their own designs, exploring symmetry, shape, line, and pattern along the way.



If you're lucky enough to be carrying out this sequence on a snowy day, take your pupils outside and immerse them in the subject matter. Wrap up warm in hats, coats and gloves, and explore the snow using the senses. How does it look, feel, smell, sound, and maybe even taste? Encourage pupils to pick the snow up, let it fall through their fingers, observe it closely through magnifying glasses and watch as it melts from the warmth of their hands.



Back in the warmth of the classroom, share some artworks depicting wintry scenes. Think and talk like artists, discussing the compositions, lines, shapes, textures, patterns, and colours used in the paintings. Then move on to sharing likes and dislikes with one another. Which painting is their favourite/least favourite, and why? Famous wintry paintings to consider sharing with your class include Claude Monet's *The Magpie* (1869) and *Landscape with Snow* by Vincent Van Gogh (1888).



Now, move on from the winter landscapes to zoom in and look closely at individual snowflakes. A web search for "snowflake macro photography" will bring up some breathtakingly beautiful images of single flakes of snow, all completely unique in identity. One thing they do all share, however, is sixfold rotational symmetry. Each flake has six arms, with symmetrical patterns on each. Look closely at examples on the whiteboard and discuss the patterns on display. Can your pupils spot the symmetry?



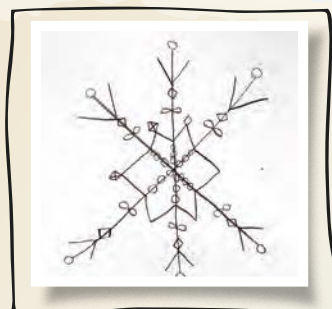
Next, it's time to create some snowflake artwork. Armed

with paper, rulers, pencils, and the knowledge that snowflakes need six-fold symmetry, let your pupils loose to design their own. They may find it useful to have some printouts of example flakes to inspire, and some children may need the support of simple templates with six empty arms on to add detail to. The snowflakes will look most striking if drawn in silver pen on blue paper and, just like in nature, each snowflake should be unique.




Finally, let your children share their snowflakes with their friends, encouraging discussion of the similarities and differences between their creations. What did they find easy? What did they find tricky?

If they were to create another snowflake, what would they do differently? The finished snowflakes can be displayed on the wall or cut and hung up together as a wintry curtain. They can also be used to inspire snowy poetry or story writing.

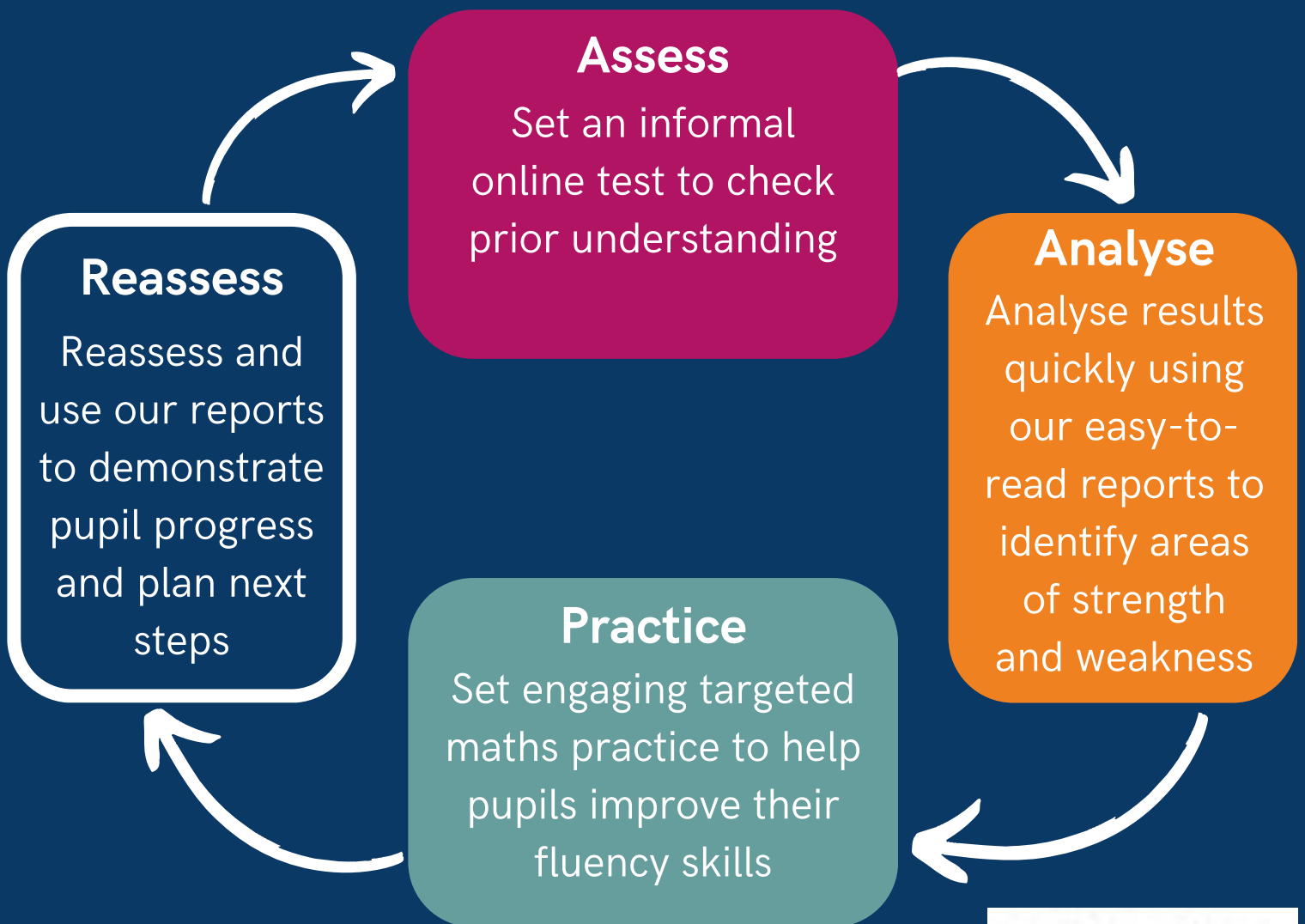


Adele Darlington is an experienced primary teacher and art consultant. She is also the author of *100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Art*, published by Bloomsbury.

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Be the CHANGE

Bringing social action into the classroom is both beneficial and achievable, says **Keren Mitchell**

As educators, we have the opportunity to shape the next generation of changemakers. And one of the most powerful ways we can do this is by bringing social action into the classroom.

Social action helps children to develop important skills like critical thinking, empathy and collaboration. It also gives them agency and helps them believe they can make a difference to big world issues. So how can teachers encourage and scaffold social action while hitting curriculum objectives?

Encourage pupil voice

As we face issues from plastic pollution to the cost-of-living crisis, how should you decide what to focus on?

Begin by asking your class what they would like to

change in the world and why. Then inspire them to believe that they can achieve it, by sharing the stories of young changemakers. Greta Thunberg, Marcus Rashford and Malala Yousafzai are role models that children can relate to and recognise, and there are scores of unsung young heroes too.

Use autobiographies, videos and media reports to bring stories like these to life as part of circle time, PSHE lessons or school council discussions. Ask your pupils about their own social action heroes too. Giving your pupils agency over the change they want to see in the world is the first step towards inspiring them to take action.

Scaffold social learning

Even if your pupils are passionate about social action, they'll need your support to harness their efforts. As their teacher, you can guide them towards achievable outcomes.

The best way to do this is by providing a clear structure for pupils to follow, and to scaffold their learning so that they can see next steps. The TASC wheel, which helps pupils to work independently,

develop research skills and apply problem-solving approaches, is a great framework for this.

TASC stands for Thinking Actively in a Social Context,

and its eight stages – gather and organise, identify, generate, decide, implement, evaluate, communicate, and learn from experience – lend themselves brilliantly to social action projects. By scaffolding social action learning, you can guide pupils from simply talking about problems towards action, evaluation and reflection.

Find curriculum links

The national curriculum opens doors to learning about lots of important problems, and it's easier than you might think to teach about the world's problems while hitting curriculum goals.

Take KS2 geography, where children learn about 'the distribution of natural resources including food, minerals and water' – a perfect segue to discuss problems of poverty, hunger, and water scarcity. Similarly, science lessons that cover the 'the production of carbon dioxide by human activity and the impact on climate' offer an opportunity to discuss what pupils can do to address environmental issues.

Maths is another subject that can easily be taught alongside big-picture issues. For KS2 children you could, for example, introduce the concept of poverty by challenging them to budget for three meals within a strict budget.

Start a club

Even with clear curriculum links, it can be challenging

to give social action the teaching time it deserves. To overcome this, some primary schools are setting up after school clubs to give pupils the space to explore how they can make a difference.

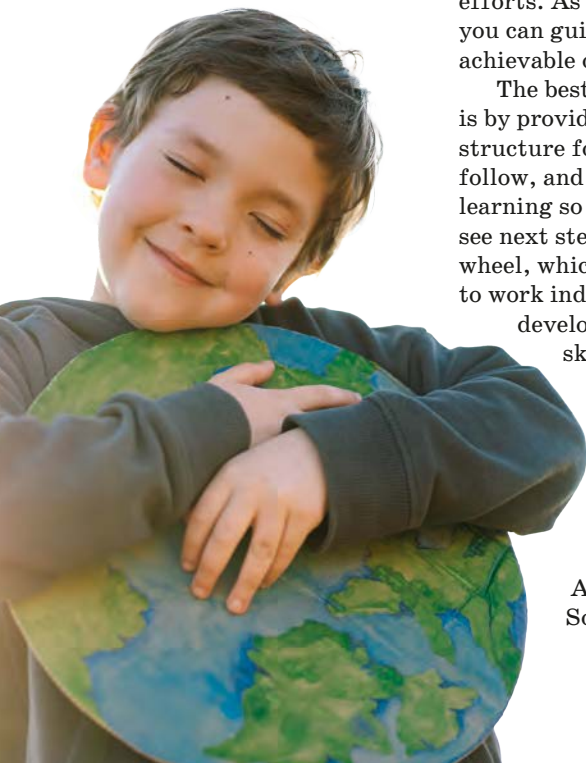
Changemakers clubs are a great way to start young people on their social action journey. Use your club as an opportunity to explore the different ways children can take action, from writing letters and signing petitions to volunteering and changing behaviour. Give the children a clear framework they can work within identify the causes they want to support and decide on the action they'll take. Help them to think beyond cake sales and fundraising, by teaching about democracy. You might even invite your local MP or councillor to hear their views and answer questions. Finally, make sure children's efforts are recognised – perhaps by entering a social action award.

Remember, social action need not be 'just another thing' to squeeze into lessons. There are endless opportunities to embed it into school life. In doing so, you'll enrich pupils' learning experience while helping them make a positive impact on the world. **TP**



Keren Mitchell is a former Year 3 and Year 4 teacher and founder of

SuperKind.org



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The power of PRIMARY TEAMS

The key to your school's success may be right in front of you, says **Sam Crome**

We invest tremendous amounts of effort and resource into creating the best schools that we can. But what if we've been missing a vital component?

Every school is full of teams, and they have the potential to be improved in numerous ways. We can turbocharge huge aspects of school life by helping our staff teams thrive together.

Successful teams

There are many principles of teaming that we know can contribute to high-performing, thriving teams. In my experience, some of the most applicable and well-evidenced are:

1. A clear, shared vision, purpose, and set of values
2. High levels of belonging, psychological safety, and trust
3. Ambitious, clear team goals
4. Crystal-clear role clarity, mental models, and systems
5. A culture of evaluation and debriefing
6. Commitment to learning and development

Of course these could sound idealistic, and somewhat divorced from the hectic reality of primary schools. After all, staff are members of many teams, and have few opportunities

to contribute to them beyond their allocated meeting time. The good news, though, is that small teams making small changes can create impressive results.

So, let's turn our attention to how primary school teams can practically harness their potential, even amidst packed schedules and teachers wearing many hats.

Communicate

Thriving teams agree how they will communicate, and codify this for both convenience and clarity. Discuss when and how often your team leader will send out communications. Explore whether the team should use email for discussion, or if a shared system, such as those offered by Microsoft and Google, would be a better place to communicate.

Streamline infrastructure

The team should ensure that all resources are easy

to find, relevant for their work, are high quality, and are centralised to the point where it reduces workload and allows members to stay on track with their core work (with room to adapt, if required). Collaborative planning time and an agreed approach to centralisation will improve the team's efficiency, cohesion, and the quality of both their teaching and learning.

Develop

The best teams learn together; they view one of their core functions as being to grow and improve as a group. This permeates the way they meet, their CPD programme, and the way they help each other in day-to-day interactions through using a coaching approach and exhibiting helpful behaviours. Learning as a team improves expertise, which in turn improves processes, but, beyond that, it helps bind the team together in a powerful shared experience. Team debriefing can have a 20 to 25 per cent improvement on team effectiveness, so team learning opportunities should involve reviewing processes.

Always prepare

In a small team, you might only get one chance to meet per half term, or even term, so you need to spend

that time efficiently.

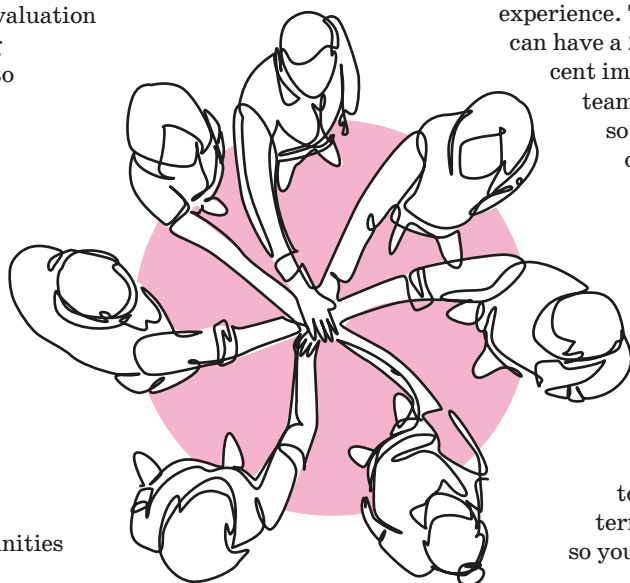
The agenda needs to be shared in advance, and the items on it should link to the team's core purpose and mission. Try to get admin and most logistical items covered out of the meeting time, so that meetings can be used for meaningful discussion, sharing of expertise, and collaborative work.

Follow up the meeting with actions and resources, so that ongoing work is frictionless until the next meeting. Every minute counts for team meetings.

Bring it all together

Combined, these ways of working will result in your team making the most of its time together, with clear methods of working, clarity over communication, and purposeful meetings that are packed with learning and useful discussion.

There is plenty more that can be done, but this foundation will help your primary teams begin to build into cohesive groups who embrace coming together, and get fantastic results. **TP**



Sam Crome is a school leader, currently a deputy headteacher and director

*of education for a multi academy trust in Surrey. His book **The Power of Teams: How to create and lead thriving school teams** is out now.*

Try before YOU BUY

Not sure you're ready to teach? Maybe dip a toe into the classroom first...

LUCY DANIELS

I've always wanted to become a teacher; I just wasn't sure when would be the right time to enter the profession.

When I graduated with qualified teacher status in 2020, the world was a very different place. It was peak covid and I'd missed a big chunk of in-person learning. So I decided not to apply for a teaching post immediately; I didn't want to risk becoming overwhelmed and then be put off a classroom career.

I took the longer view, I guess, and decided to look at teaching assistant jobs first, so that I could get a bit more school experience under my belt before I committed to life as a teacher.

That's when I learned about the TA into Teaching route being offered by Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT), which runs eight primaries across Warrington, Widnes and Halton. I lived near Evelyn Street Primary School in Warrington and was familiar with the trust, so I approached them and was offered a place on the scheme.

Getting more comfortable in the classroom

After the first year, WPAT asked me if I wanted to carry on as a TA. I was loving the role, so I agreed to continue for another year. My headteacher knew I still wanted to become a teacher

eventually, so I was confident they would support me when the time was right.

Sure enough, the first time I had to cover for a teacher, I realised that it really was the job for me. I had received so much support and encouragement during the TA into Teaching scheme that I was confident in my ability in the classroom.

I learned so much about the teaching assistant role and teaching itself

working with them.

I loved that I could work so closely with the kids one to one, as well as with small groups of children who needed my support, and see just how much this helped them to progress. The class teacher I worked with as a TA was a Key Stage lead, so she was out of the classroom quite a bit. This meant I was able to teach from time to time, keeping up with the national curriculum and planning, with support

I'm now in my second year of teaching, receiving support as an early career teacher.

I have regular meetings with my teacher mentor to discuss my progress and any issues. She also teaches with me and observes me in the classroom. The aim is always to highlight my progress and identify any areas of teaching where I might benefit from help and support. It's a really nurturing environment, and I feel that I'm guaranteed success. I can raise what seems like a million questions every day and it never feels like I'm asking too much.

Building on the experience

For the moment, I'm very focused on the day-to-day of my role and learning as much as I can. Looking further ahead, I do have ambitions in terms of middle leadership or senior leadership. Obviously, that's a long way off yet, but I would like to lead a couple of subjects in the future, perhaps music.

When I went for the TA role some of my friends asked me why I didn't want to go straight into teaching, but it was perfect for me. I was in the classroom every single day, observing teachers at work and building a strong relationship with the children.

Then, when I started my teaching, I drew constantly on my two years as a TA. I'd be thinking, 'That teacher did

"When I graduated with qualified teacher status in 2020, the world was a very different place"

during the two years I was a TA. I'd always had respect for teachers, but I hadn't grasped just how hard they worked during the day and all the effort that's needed behind the scenes.

Learning lots on the job

The TA role also gave me a valuable insight into just how important teaching assistants are to the running of schools. It's not just about working with a group of children; you really get to know them. It also meant that once I became a teacher, I had a better understanding of what teaching assistants could do and the best way of

from other teachers.

When I started at Evelyn Street, I'd never delivered the scheme of phonics that they use at that school, but the teaching assistant role meant that I became very familiar with it through experience and plenty of CPD. I also had the opportunity to observe a lot of teachers in the teaching of writing and maths.

Everyone always says that writing is the hardest part of the curriculum to teach, especially when you have to get around the whole class, but my observations as a TA, coupled with online CPD, gave me a valuable insight into techniques and strategies that really worked.

this and it worked really well, so I'll try and do it that way. I already knew the children too, and was familiar with how the school operates – and their high expectations. I was able to hit the ground running.

I would definitely recommend this 'try before you buy' type route into teaching as a way to make absolutely sure it's the career for you. It's put me where I am today. **TP**



Lucy Daniels is Year 1 and 2 teacher at Evelyn Street Primary, part of Warrington Primary Academy Trust (WPAT).

TA into teaching – how does it work?

- WPAT's TAs into Teaching is a 'try before you buy' route into teaching, which involves offering potential teachers a teaching assistant role in one of the trust's schools for 12 to 18 months. It's designed to give participants an understanding of the classroom teacher's role as well as how TAs work with teachers.
- "It's a safe space, where prospective teachers can dip their toes in the water of teaching," says Louise Smith, CEO of WPAT. "They can find out where their strengths lie and in which areas they will need that extra bit of help to develop. If they're ready after 12 months, then we will offer them a teaching post. If they aren't then they can carry on as a TA, all the while providing a vital supporting role for children's learning."
- WPAT has been developing this route into teaching for the past five years and it has produced several practising teachers, including Lucy.
- WPAT's Generate Teaching Hub also offers a range of other teacher training routes alongside the try before you buy options, including a popular School Based Teacher Training programme.

For more information about TA routes and other ways of getting into teaching at WPAT, contact CEO Louise Smith at ceo@wpat.uk, or visit generateteachinghub.org



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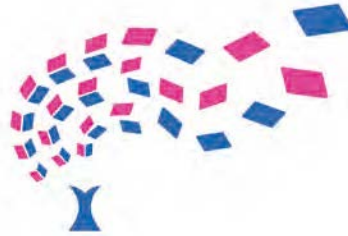
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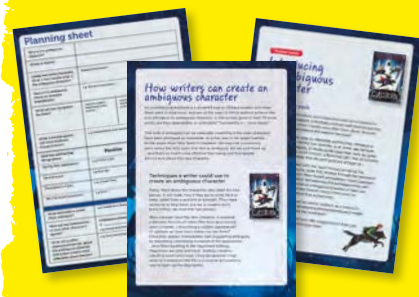


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Fairykeep Cottage is full of wonder: enchanted objects, Mama's old fairytales and fairy spells. Soon the four children find themselves drawn through magical doorways into a dangerous adventure in Fairyland. They must use their wits, cunning and stories to take on the Fairy Queen and Death himself, to save their family and the whole of England from a horrible magic curse.



Text © Peter Bunzl. *Glassborn* (£7.99, Usborne Publishing Ltd) is out now.

The seeds for *Glassborn* grew from my interest in two things: the Narnia stories of C. S. Lewis, which I loved when I was growing up, and the childhood of the Brontë siblings.

The Brontës were the best example of real Georgian children I could find who, like Lewis, lost their mother when they were very young. The Brontë children's early lives, like Lewis', were filled with drawings, paintings, stories, fairytales, and their own invented imaginary worlds, all of which were a precursor to their novels and art. I wanted to combine those ideas: the fantasy other-lands of Lewis' children's books, and the self-possessed and unique imaginations of real-life Georgian children like the Brontës.

My intention was to write a story about siblings in a big family: how they fit in and how they create their own unique identities. How they have their own skills and talents, and how they learn to share those abilities to help one another on an adventure.

The scene below takes place near the start of the book, where the siblings arrive at Fairykeep Cottage and meet their aunt – a stranger to them, and to us – for the very first time. It's important as part of building that atmosphere of intrigue, and possibly even danger, that it is not immediately obvious what kind of person Aunt Eliza might be. Here are some ideas to think about when introducing your own ambiguous characters...

5 TIPS TO INTRODUCE AN AMBIGUOUS CHARACTER

FIRST IMPRESSIONS COUNT

Readers should enjoy spending time with key characters, but they don't have to like or trust them – finding a character intriguing or mysterious works too.

LOOKS AREN'T EVERYTHING

To present a character as ambiguous, their looks, clothes and possessions are very useful (as explained in the resource pack). We can't know how they think yet, but we can make their actions and words unexpected, confusing or potentially misleading.

STRENGTH VS WEAKNESS

Demonstrate the character's good and bad traits – and try to pick things that could contradict each other. Sporty? Have them running. Bookish? Have them tell a story. Funny, brattish, fussy, spiky, easygoing, bossy, a peacemaker? Pick actions for them that show their personality.

A DIFFERENT VIEW

Try introducing a new character through the eyes of someone with whom the reader is familiar. How does the character we already know react to this person?

Do they trust them, or have some doubts about their motivations? If they've just met, do they notice anything unexpected about this person's behaviour or actions?

BACKSTORY

Give hints about the character's past. What are the events that led to them being part of this story and made them who they are today? In the extract here you'll notice hints about Aunt Eliza's history are given in several different small ways.

Extract from

Chapter 3 Pages 33–34

When I describe someone new I try to remember there's more to people than appearance. I want my description to feel real rather than like a photo. So I try to add multiple senses: sounds, smells, movements. Here the extra detail is how Aunt Eliza speaks, both in her dialogue and how she sounds.

Mentioning her black mourning dress hints at Aunt Eliza's backstory. It tells you she is still in mourning for her lost sister, the children's mama, who died recently, before the story starts.

Cora is the point of view character in this scene. So it's important I bring it back to her every so often, and describe how she sees new things in relation to her thoughts, feelings and past experience.

The page ends with a little mystery hook. To keep you reading. Their brother Acton was here a moment ago, and now he's gone, without them noticing. So both the reader and the characters are wondering where he is.

...The front door swung open to reveal Aunt Eliza standing in the flagstoned hallway, holding a lantern.

"Happy Christmas, little Glass-Belles! Merry Winter Solstice Eve! Welcome to Fairykeep Cottage!"

Her voice was flute-like and clipped. Her hair was blonde and her cheeks, mottled with the cold, were dusted with rouge. The flickering lamplight made her smile look sharp as a broken mirror. She was only a few years younger than Papa, which put her at around forty, though her black mourning dress made her seem older.

"Good evening, Eliza," Papa mumbled.

"Good evening, Pat! Good evening, children! Put those things down over there, would you, please?" she said to the coachman. Then to Papa, Cora and the rest, "I've waited so long for this moment. I'm so glad you're finally here. It'll be nice to have family about the place. A chance to forget the sorrows of the past year. It was hard for me to lose a sister, but worse for you, dear children, and you, Pat. You must be in desperate need of a fresh start."

Cora remembered how Mama used to say: "There's cosiness in a crisis that some folks enjoy." Aunt Eliza was definitely one of those people. It'd been years since they'd last seen her, but Cora was already remembering how much of a gossip she was.

Aunt Eliza leaned forward and examined everyone. "You've grown into a fine young gentleman, Bram. And you into handsome young ladies, Cora and Elle... But where's Acton?"

An opening door is a great way to reveal a character dramatically in a story. It is like the curtain raise in the theatre, especially with the moody lighting.

This is a key descriptive detail. You don't know yet if Aunt Eliza will be good or bad in the story. I wanted to keep the reader guessing by adding a tiny hint of menace in her description.

I wanted Aunt Eliza to speak ten to the dozen. She is anxious to meet the children as she hasn't seen them since they were babies. So she talks too much to cover the awkward silences, as nervous people do.

This is one of Mama's old sayings. Cora remembers details about Mama throughout the story. We get to know her through the children's memories of her. It is also a plant, so I can call back to it later, and the reader will find the phrase familiar. Call backs are good in stories. They imitate the quality of memory, or the mind putting things together.

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Out of ORDER

Want your Year 6 pupils to write great non-chronological reports?
Start early, says **Aidan Severs**

It might surprise you to find that the term ‘non-chronological report’ doesn’t feature anywhere in the national curriculum. Nonetheless, it’s become a staple of primary teaching; and even though some schools have moved away from a genre-based way of teaching writing, you’re still very likely to find yourself being required to teach children how to produce one.

What is a non-chronological report?

The purpose of a non-chronological report is to inform the reader, and it can be about anything that doesn’t require a time-ordered account. Subjects might include an introduction to a hobby, an overview of a place, or a piece about a child’s family.

Writing not suited to the non-chronological format would include things like a recount of a visit, a set of instructions, or a write-up of a science experiment.

Linking writing to previous learning

To remove the need to recall facts, pupils can also write non-chronological reports about fictional topics, for example, mythological beasts that they’ve created. However, in primary schools it’s often the case that you’ll link the piece of writing to some current (or

previous) learning in another curriculum area. The benefit of this is that children may be very knowledgeable about the subject if you’ve taught them well, and links to other subjects can give the writing some further purpose.

There are drawbacks, however. Children may get bogged down in trying to accurately represent their learning in other subjects to the point that demonstrating their writing ability takes a back seat. Make clear to

“Remember that the main purpose of a non-chronological report is to inform the reader of something”

them that they are not being assessed on their recall of the subject, but rather on the English knowledge and skills they can demonstrate. Try to ensure that’s where your feedback is focused.

That said, because non-chronological reports do not follow a sequential order, but instead focus on presenting facts and details in a structured manner, they can be a useful way to teach pupils how to organise their thoughts and understanding across the curriculum.

KS1 – laying the foundations

As previously mentioned, the national curriculum

doesn’t specifically require pupils in KS1 to write non-chronological reports. However, it does require you to teach pupils in Year 2 to ‘develop positive attitudes towards and stamina for writing by writing for different purposes’.

The purpose, as we have discovered already, of a non-chronological report is to inform the reader; so this should be the focus of any non-chronological report writing in Year 2. Beyond

this, any piece of writing in Year 2 should be a means of practising and showcasing other writing skills, as set out in the national curriculum under the headings of spelling, handwriting, composition, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.

KS2 – refining the technique

In KS2, the national curriculum hints at what might be useful for pupils who are writing a non-chronological report. It says that pupils in Years 3 and 4 should be taught to draft and write by organising paragraphs around a theme, and in non-narrative

material, using simple organisational devices (for example, headings and sub-headings).

The non-statutory guidance given in the national curriculum says: *Pupils should continue to have opportunities to write for a range of real purposes and audiences as part of their work across the curriculum. These purposes and audiences should underpin the decisions about the form the writing should take, such as a narrative, an explanation or a description.*

In the guidance for teachers of Years 5 and 6 it states: *Pupils should be taught to plan their writing by identifying the audience for and purpose of the writing, selecting the appropriate form and using other similar writing as models for their own.*

It also says that pupils should be taught to plan and draft their writing using further organisational and presentational devices to structure text and to guide the reader (for example by using headings, bullet points and underlining).

Progression through year groups

In Year 2, children can create simple non-chronological reports about topics they are familiar with, such as pets or favourite toys. Their focus can be on basic sections.



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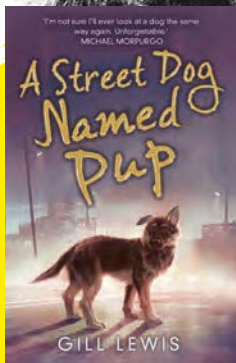
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David Fickling Books, 2021

A Street Dog Named Pup

Gill Lewis' emotional story offers a memorable opportunity to explore characterisation and relationships in depth

JON BIDDLE

Every so often, teachers are fortunate enough to read a book with their class that leaves a lasting impression on everyone, children and adults alike. I've always been a fan of Gill Lewis' writing, but with *A Street Dog Named Pup*, she has created something truly special, a book that will be enjoyed for years to come.

It was the final novel I read with my most recent class when they were in Year 5, and when they returned to

me in Year 6, it was a unanimous decision that it would be the first book we would read together. The children enjoyed it even more the second time round, because they were already so emotionally invested in the characters. It really is that good; if you haven't yet read it, you should definitely consider doing so at the earliest opportunity!

At its simplest level, it is a story about a young dog, Pup, trying to survive as a stray after being abandoned on the streets by 'the big man' for being

too difficult and time-consuming to look after. However, beneath the surface, there is so much more going on. It is a book about friendship, loyalty and love, as well as delivering an extremely powerful message about the unequal relationship that exists between people and animals.

Pup desperately wants to find his way home to 'his boy' but has no idea about how to find him. He is taken in and accepted by the Street Dogs, led by the tiny but ferocious Lady Fifi. Each of the

dogs in the pack has their own tragic story about how they ended up living on the streets. Pup soon forms strong friendships with the other dogs; relationships and loyalties that the entire pack need to rely on when their home is threatened by the terrifying Fang and his gang of menacing Sewer Dogs.

I've read dozens of books to children over the years, and very few have the emotional impact that *A Street Dog Named Pup* provides. It's definitely a book that needs reading before sharing it with a class, partly because there are so many character voices to think about. The last time I read it, Frenchi, the loyal bulldog, was a combination of Ray Winstone and Danny Dyer. Clown, the impetuous boxer, was based on Boris Johnson, and Merle, the anxious border collie, shared quite a few similarities with Jodie Whittaker's recent incarnation of Dr Who.

More importantly, though, it also contains scenes of animal cruelty, which some children may find distressing, and so it is important for adults to know what is coming.

Activities based around the book

A Street Dog Named Pup is a book filled with opportunities for further exploration. We had endless discussions as we were reading it about the backstories of the main characters and the relationships between them.

Character web

The relationships between the various characters in Pup's pack are complex and nuanced. The animals work well together as a group, but there are some particularly strong friendships that evolve as the story progresses. There are also some less secure relationships,



perhaps caused by jealousy or a lack of trust. Creating a visual representation of these relationships as a class is a really good way of helping the children understand them.

We started by simply listing the dogs in the pack on a large piece of paper and drawing lines between them in different colours, which varied according to how close we thought the relationship was. We then added one or two words describing the friendships. If something similar were displayed in your classroom, it could easily be added to and built on as you reach the end of each chapter.

Individual profiles

We learn a lot about each of the eight dogs in Pup's pack (Pup, a German Shepherd cross; Frenchi, a French bulldog; Rex, a pit bull cross; Saffy, a Labrador; Lady Fifi, a Jack Russell cross; Clown, a boxer; Reynard, a foxhound; Merle, a border collie). At the start of the book, there are some wonderful character portraits, each

with a short description, which would be a great starting point for a character profile, as well as being perfect for further expansion. The children could include details about each dog's background, strengths and weaknesses, fears and aspirations, and friendships, both within the group and with other key characters.

Backstories

Each of the dogs has their own backstory, explaining why they are on the streets. Some of these are given in detail, some are just alluded to. Creating a short comic strip or piece of narrative around the early adventures of a favourite character is an exciting way to bring them to life for readers. My class were absolutely intrigued by some of the less prominent members of the pack, Saffy and Clown in particular, and were very excited to have the opportunity to add more depth to their lives.

Take it further → → →

PERSUASIVE WRITING

As well as being a phenomenal read-aloud, *A Street Dog Named Pup* asks a lot of important questions about animal welfare, including issues around selective breeding, hunting, puppy farming, dog fighting and whether it is too easy to purchase a dog or other animal to keep at home.

Later in the book, Pup also spends some time with a homeless man. Although being sensitive around these issues is obviously crucial, they provide fantastic opportunities for persuasive writing. A letter to a local politician about one of the questions addressed in the book would give the pupils a real sense of purpose for their work.

PROLOGUE

The prologue tells the story of Sirius, the 'Dog Star', the brightest star in the night sky, recounting the myth of how it acquired its nickname. The tale of Sirius is referred to regularly throughout the book, especially when the dogs are scared and need reassurance. They believe that, however bad things appear to be, Sirius will provide them with guidance and help. Comparisons can be made to how humans often use myths,

Story comparison

Several of my pupils were very keen to point out the similarities between *A Street Dog Named Pup* and another one of their favourites, *The Outlaw Varjak Paw* by SF Said. They really enjoyed comparing the antagonists (Pup and Varjak Paw), exploring the relationships between the secondary characters and debating whether Sally Bones' gang would ally themselves with Fang's pack if there were ever a crossover story.

I wouldn't suggest reading the books immediately following each other, but covering them at different times in Key Stage 2 would provide a fantastic opportunity for comparison. One of my class Reading Champions told me she was going to contact Gill Lewis and SF Said to ask them to write a crossover adventure, although I am not sure if she ever got around to it. However, she did create a wonderful



piece of dialogue between Fang and Sally Bones, where they discussed their respective plans to take over the city. This might also be a handy way to 'integrate dialogue in narratives to convey character and advance the action', as mentioned in the KS2 teacher assessment framework.

Figurative language featuring dogs

We enjoyed exploring the meanings of several examples of figurative phrases and sentences which were based around dogs. There are lots to choose from: *it's a dog's life*, *like a dog with two tails*, *barking up the wrong tree*, *dog eat dog* (which originally comes from an old Latin proverb), *better to be the head of a dog than the tail of a lion*, *let sleeping dogs lie*, *working like a dog* and someone's bark being worse than their bite are just a few. We thought about what they could mean and then tried to use them in conversation, often with very entertaining results. This

Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *The Way of Dog* by Zana Fraillon
- ❖ *Moon Bear* by Gill Lewis
- ❖ *I, Cosmo* by Carlie Sorosiak
- ❖ *Until The Road Ends* by Phil Earle
- ❖ *The Boy Who Saved a Bear* by Nizrana Farook

could easily lead to creating a class list of animal-related similes, metaphors, idioms and phrases that the pupils discover in books they are reading.

The boy

The boy is the objective of Pup's quest to return home. Pup loves his boy. He misses his boy, and he understands that his boy loves and misses him in return. Interspersed between the main chapters, there are occasional short chapters written from the point of view of the boy. These work really well, partly because they help remind the reader about Pup's ultimate goal and give the reader something to hope for, but also because they reinforce how strong the relationship is between Pup and his boy. At the end of the story, when Pup follows the Great Sky Wolf up into the sky and is reunited with his entire pack, there is an excellent opportunity to create one final chapter from the boy's perspective, perhaps an account of their last great adventure together. **TP**



Jon Biddle is an experienced primary school teacher and English lead. Winner of the 2018 Reading for Pleasure Experienced Teacher of the Year award, he coordinates the national Patron of Reading initiative.



legends and stories from holy books to console and comfort them during times of difficulty. The prologue also links well to any work being done around creation stories.

SLOGANS

The majority of my class were aware of the slogan 'A dog is for life, not just for Christmas', and enjoyed discussing what they thought it meant. We then looked at other animal welfare slogans such as 'True beauty is

cruelty-free' and the RSPCA motto, 'A world where all animals are respected and treated with kindness and compassion'.

The pupils then planned, designed and produced slogans and posters of their own, which were intended to deliver a similarly powerful message.

My personal favourite showed two photographs, one of a very cute puppy and one of the same breed of dog when grown to its full size. It had the caption 'Do you really

want it?' under the photo of the puppy and then 'Really?' under the photo of the fully-grown dog.

There were also a few that perhaps lacked some subtlety, including 'A cat is until you die, unless they die first'. I guess it got the message across though!

When exploring these campaigns, do operate with caution, taking extra care to ensure that children aren't exposed to distressing or graphic content.

Bring some **‘KAPOW!’** to the curriculum

Comics are a much more versatile teaching tool than you might think, says **Lucy Starbuck Braidley**

With homegrown comic artists like Jamie Smart flying off the booksellers’ shelves, it’s easy to see that comics and their chunkier counterparts, graphic novels, are experiencing a renaissance amongst readers in primary schools across the UK. But how can schools harness this excitement for the greatest impact across their curriculum?

Something for everyone

As a starting point, get some comics into class and see what’s out there that interests your group. If you aren’t sure, ask the children – you are likely to have a budding comics fan in your class, who is just bursting to share the joy of their reading passion with you.

Comics are a brilliant way to support less engaged readers in developing a love of story and confidence in independent reading. Many children find the combination of word and image a satisfying way to access stories independently, but comics shouldn’t be limited to the less engaged readers. They cover all genres and challenge levels, and should be available to form part of everyone’s reading diet – including teachers’!

With the launch of the

government’s latest Reading Framework (July 2023), the importance of a reading for pleasure pedagogy has been placed firmly alongside phonics as a key part of a school’s reading provision.

Building a comics and graphic novel collection as part of your book stock is a great way to start making use of this fun and accessible format. Weekly subscriptions to comics like *The Phoenix* and *Beano* are a great way to build excitement in the library or reading corner, and

“Silent comics can open a world of complex and subtle narratives to a much broader range of children”

often present great value for money, as the copies are passed around the class again and again.

From great starter series like Mark Bradley’s *Bumble and Snug* or Ben Clanton’s *Narwhal and Jelly* (great for Year 2), right up to complex and heartfelt autobiography like Pedro Martin’s recent publication *Mexikid*, there is a wide range of titles out there to both entertain and challenge all levels of reader.

Say it loud!

Comics’ reliance on dialogue provides an ideal way to develop a group’s understanding of how well-written dialogue can be used to both develop character and move the action forward in a scene.

Take a look at some famous duos: Calvin and Hobbes, Tintin and Haddock, or even Batman and Robin. If you looked only at their dialogue, would you be able to tell who was speaking? How has each character’s identity been shown in their speech? This line of questioning can stimulate some powerful discussions and help demystify for children what ‘good writers’ do.

Alternatively, flip this task and prepare a comics page with the speech balloons blanked out. Ask the group to complete the speech, thinking about both character and what’s happening in each panel. These tasks can

be more challenging than you'd expect, and offer a great segue into developing the quality of dialogue in prose writing as well.

A space for silence

In recent years, wordless picture books have grown in use in the primary classroom, and the importance of developing appreciation of visual literacy and its role in reading and writing should not be underestimated. The comic equivalent of a wordless picturebook, the silent comic, offers another opportunity to explore the rich offering of visual narratives.

Silent comics can open a world of complex and subtle narratives to a much broader range of children. Though easier to access, the level of discussion that can be garnered from visual texts has the potential to be in-depth and high-level. Without the barrier that written words can sometimes create, discussion can focus on the richness of the material, the intent of the creator, and character motivation.

For a starting point, take a look at works such as Gustavo Duarte's *Monsters*, or Peter Van Den Ende's stunning comic *The Wanderer*. Although they contrast in style, both these titles excel in silent storytelling.

If you're interested in teaching art using silent comics, Little LICAF's free downloadable planning for *The Wanderer* is a great place to start (bit.ly/3QeAsyb). The sessions develop approaches to mark making inspired by Van Den Ende's iconic black and white illustrative style and build from there to produce a collective artwork based on the story.

Comics in the wider curriculum

Across the curriculum, graphic narratives can be a great tool for both acquiring and demonstrating knowledge. Various studies working with different age groups have shown that material presented in comic form boosts engagement and information retention when compared to reading a standard text.

There are more and more non-fiction comic titles available to support use of the form across the foundation subjects. Titles like Emma Reynold's *Drawn to Change the World* and Mike Barfield and Jess Bradleys' *A Poo, a Gnu and You* series, are just two examples of comics being used to convey complex non-fiction information in an accessible and memorable way.

Writing non-fiction comics in order to

demonstrate subject knowledge is another way to challenge a class. Elements of history, science and geography all lend themselves to being depicted in a sequence of words and image. You may be surprised by how details in the pictures demonstrate subject understanding. For example, children may pick up the wider historical context in the illustrations, or demonstrate the concept of a sequence by displaying progression between panels.


These ideas are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of the possibilities for comics in the primary curriculum. Comics are a form that covers all genres: they can be silly and anarchic, and deeply poetic, they can present complicated information in an accessible form, or themselves be incredibly complex to make sense of. This versatility and range offers huge potential for educators. **TP**



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Just for fun



Comics clubs and dedicated 'writing for pleasure'

time, either in or outside of school, can provide a great opportunity to nurture reading for pleasure.



Use comics as a hook to bring groups of children together to collaborate on a creative project. This offers a perfect opportunity to involve children who don't see themselves as writers, or artists, in the process.



Embrace children's exploration of

existing characters from their favourite books, games and TV shows. When writing for pleasure, they should have the opportunity to draw from the stories and pastimes they love, to create whatever they wish. There's no need to start from scratch if they're feeling overwhelmed by the idea. This freedom to reinvent characters or storylines from existing stories and put them together in inventive mashups is well-used throughout the history of comics, and offers another way to break down the barriers that might put children off writing in their own time.

Breaking down **THE BARD**

There's still a school of thought that says Shakespeare is too tricky for primary pupils, yet my experience tells me otherwise, argues **Stuart Rathe**

The other week, I told my Year 5 class the story of *Cymbeline* by William Shakespeare. It's a lesser-known late work that plays out as a sort of 'Shakespeare's Greatest Hits'. There's a wicked queen, a girl disguised as a boy, a faked death, mistaken identities, war, romance and an audacious and unexpected last-minute appearance from the god Jupiter. You name it, *Cymbeline's* got it. My class were blown away.

From the gruesome (*Macbeth*) to the fantastical (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Shakespeare can be a huge hit even with very young children. And with the right resources, a Shakespeare story can make a fantastic English unit of work, lending itself to drama, reading and writing outcomes.

Telling tales

There's a difference between reading a story and being a storyteller. I remember, as an early career teacher, telling the story of Hamlet to a lower

Key Stage 2 class. Conjuring up castle battlements and an armour-clad ghost as if from nowhere immersed my class in the story – even though we were in that dreaded post-lunch-slump timeslot.

If you're not familiar with the story you're going to introduce, use a simple plot summary to write key points on cue cards before you start. When I prepare for a storytelling session, I usually grab some rudimentary props

as well (a paper hat for a crown, a beaker for a poisoned chalice). I then give these to some of the children and encourage them to help me act out the story.

Often, I find pupils are still acting out the story at break and lunch times, putting their own spin on a classic tale. Investing time in immersion at the start means

pupils are engaged in their learning outcomes for the remainder of the unit.

Freeze-framing

Ian McKellen once said, "I've never heard anybody say, 'Oh, we had the most wonderful class where we read Act I, Scene 3.'" He was right.



“Conjuring up castle battlements and an armour-clad ghost as if from nowhere, immersed my class in the story”

After an initial storytelling immersion, a good way to create ‘instant’ Shakespeare productions is to use short summaries of the plot, in 10 numbered points, to produce freeze-framed dramatisations. BBC Teach has animated versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest*, including accompanying teacher resource packs that contain 10-point plot summaries.

With pupils in groups of five or six, divide plot point summaries amongst groups and give the children a short period of time to devise a frozen tableaux representing each plot point. Watch the freeze frames back in chronological order, prefaced by one member of each group reading out their plot point summary. In 30 minutes, your pupils will have successfully retold a Shakespeare story.

Afterwards, I like to blow up the 10 points onto 10 A4 sheets – one point per sheet – and display them chronologically on the classroom working wall to give pupils a

sense of the shape and structure of the story. This also works as a great visual prompt in class, allowing you to ask questions like, “How do you think Lady Macbeth feels at this point in the story, and why?”

Tackling language and rhythm

A mention of Shakespeare’s blank verse, also known as iambic pentameter, might trigger vivid and panicked flashbacks to your own school experiences. But it really needn’t be scary or dull. In fact, it can be a lot of fun.

A blank verse follows a 10-beat pattern – five pairs of beats, with a weak stress on the first beat and a stronger stress on the second beat. (Say it out loud: De-DUM, De-DUM, De-DUM, De-DUM, De-DUM). If you clap out the rhythm with a group of Key Stage 2 pupils, I guarantee they will tell you it sounds like (a) a heart beating and (b) a horse galloping. Every time.

Iambic pentameter is found in some of Shakespeare’s most famous lines such as: “Once more unto the breach dear friends once more” or “I never saw true beauty till this night”. But it follows a natural rhythm that we still find in modern English, as with: *This play is perfect for my Year 5 class*.

I introduce iambic pentameter with clapping games. Have pupils sit in a circle and clap some simple rhythms for them to echo back, then introduce some examples from Shakespeare. Key Stage 2 children love to identify and play with this rhythm once they’ve got to grips with it. I ask pupils to write their own iambic pentameter poetry, based on stills of key moments from Shakespeare animations. These make a wonderful incidental written outcome in the middle of a Shakespeare unit.

Watching different interpretations

Shakespeare’s work is timeless, with modern retellings sitting side by side with the classics. I like to show pupils stills and clips from different versions. Try watching the catchy pop video animation of *Romeo and Juliet* from Shakespeare in Shorts ([tinyurl.com/4ht8wppa](https://www.tinyurl.com/4ht8wppa)) alongside the new BBC Teach animation ([tinyurl.com/bddhdx43](https://www.tinyurl.com/bddhdx43)). Is the storytelling clear? What impact does a modern setting have? What age range is this version suitable for? Engagement with different versions of a Shakespeare text is good training for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 study, where pupils will be expected to explore stagecraft and performance choices in depth.

Examining key scenes

I use slightly abridged versions of key scenes (with original Shakespearean language) to get pupils to study scenes in detail and develop their performance skills. I usually choose examples with only two characters. I put pupils in groups of four, and use a technique called ‘ghosting’. This involves two pupils taking on the roles. Another two pupils stand at the performers’ shoulders, holding the script and quietly feeding lines to them. These ‘ghosts’ allow the performers to be hands free, making their performances more expressive. You will find that the performers soon become familiar with the text and require less feeding from the ‘ghosts’.

Another fun script activity is to pretend the scene is being played out on *Eastenders*. Take the essence of the scene, improvise, and play around with it in modern language. I like to take pupils back to the

HOW TO FEEL CONFIDENT TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

- Use a simple plot summary to write key points on cue cards and become a storyteller.
- Create ‘instant’ Shakespeare productions by using short summaries of the plot in 10 numbered points.
- Introduce pupils to iambic pentameter with simple clapping games.
- Make use of play extracts for acting and showing back. You’ll be surprised how prepared pupils are to take risks with Shakespeare’s language if they have a prior understanding of the story. BBC Teach animation resources include adapted script extracts.
- Don’t be afraid to draw on modern references. Modern dramas or soap opera clips could be great ways to help children access a melodramatic Shakespearean acting style.

original script after this improvisation exercise, but ask them to remember the ‘modern’ emotions and feelings they had when delivering the Shakespearean lines.

By acting out key scenes, pupils empathise with characters and can then produce more expressive and impressive writing in character. **TP**



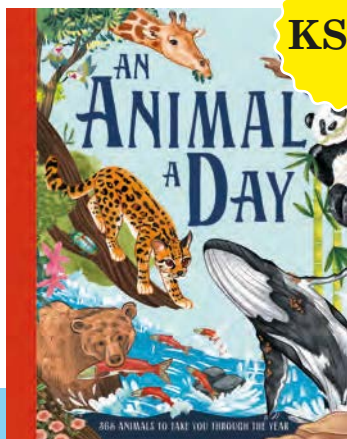
Stuart Rathe is a primary school teacher and education consultant. A new BBC

Teach animation of *Romeo and Juliet* can be found at [tinyurl.com/bddhdx43](https://www.tinyurl.com/bddhdx43)

Book CLUB



We review five new titles that your class will love



KS1/2



KS1/2



KS2

An Animal a Day

by **Miranda Smith**, illus. **Kaja Kajfez, Santiago Calle, Mateo Markov and Max Rambaldi**
(£22.00 HB, Red Shed)

In this year-long journey around the world, we travel through the incredible habitats of our beautiful planet and meet some of the most fascinating animals that call them home. Dive into the oceans to find whales and giant squid, journey across the icy poles with penguins and polar bears, race across the African savanna with lions and wildebeest – and so much more. This is the perfect book to dip in and out of from the bookshelf. Alternatively, discover a new creature a day as part of your morning registration routine. It's such a novel way to learn about both familiar and new animals, including their size, diet, location and survival status. Children will love flicking through the breathtaking illustrations too.

Say My Name

by **Joanna Ho**, illus. **Khoa Le**
(£12.99, Harper Collins Children's Books)

Names are important to us all, but this book highlights the need to ensure we are saying them correctly. The significance of this is underlined as we learn how our names carry hopes, dreams and traditions, all holding value. In this enlightening book, six children proudly celebrate their names and backgrounds. The lyrical text and beautiful illustrations will prompt conversations on the importance of acceptance, pronouncing names correctly, diversity and inclusion. The message within *Say My Name* is of the generational ties and histories that names hold, weaving a picture of the past, and as such it offers a chance for children to think about their own names and family histories.

The Egg Incident

by **Ziggy Hanaor**, illus. **Daisy Wynter**
(£14.99 HB, Cicada Books)

Remember, Humphrey: never run, never jump, and NEVER. EVER. sit on a wall!
Humphrey's childhood is focused on him being constantly reminded of the need to be careful and cautious. He shouldn't run or jump, or leave his shoelaces untied. And he should never, ever sit on a wall – especially not after what happened to his uncle... The Egg Incident is a reversal of the traditional Humpty Dumpty tale that will delight readers aged 8 to 12 years. Told through the format of a comic strip, it provides laugh-out-loud moments children will love. Fabulously detailed illustrations add to the humour, bringing the story to life with facial expressions and emotions. It's an absolute triumph.

→→→ **RECOMMENDED**
RESOURCES



BUILD WORD POWER

Word Whoosh, from Plazoom, is designed to clarify and extend children's understanding of tier 2 words from Reception to Y6+, enabling them to make more ambitious and accurate language choices when speaking and writing. Each resource pack explores six words through a series of four mini-lessons: read and visualise, associate, understand, and define and master (based on the Frayer model). Find out more at bit.ly/PlzWords

Meet the
author

EMMA REYNOLDS DISCUSSES THE MESSAGE BEHIND HER ROUSING GRAPHIC NOVEL



What made you decide to write *Drawn to Change the World*?

In early 2019, the Fridays For Future

school strikes came to the UK in a big way, and it angered me that these amazing young people weren't being taken seriously in the media. I thought about what I could do within my field as a children's author-illustrator to make a difference and show our support for the young people we make our books for. I came up with a solidarity campaign called #KidLit4Climate and asked people to post an illustrated protest online. Within two weeks I'd received over 1,000 illustrations, and within six months there were thousands more from over 50 countries in every continent, even Antarctica.

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

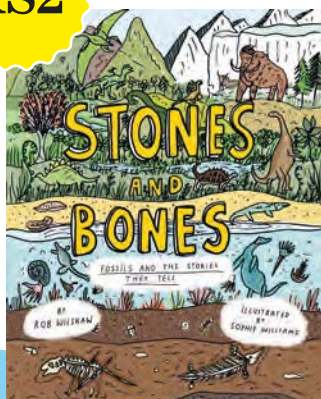
As learning tools to show everyone is needed, and to promote real tangible actions everyone can take. Start with Ayana Elizabeth Johnson's [climateevenn.info](https://www.climatetv.com/) to help students find their specific climate action. There are more types of activism than just holding the microphone: we need people who are good at organising, people to make food to nourish others, people to handle budgets and create posters, etc. Everyone has a role to play, no matter what your skill or interest, and linking with your own interests is key to staying involved in the long term not just short bursts. I also hope our book opens up conversations about environmental racism and how Indigenous, Black and other People of Colour, the disabled and other already marginalised groups are the most affected by climate catastrophe.

If your books could achieve one change in the world, what would you want that to be?

To show people that everyone has a role, and good things are happening, change is happening, and we can all be part of shaping a better future when we work in community.

Drawn to Change the World is out now.

KS2



Drawn to Change the World

by Emma Reynolds, illus. various

(£8.99, Harper Collins)

Created by Emma Reynolds, founder of the #KidLit4Climate campaign, this book showcases the incredible work of sixteen youth activists. From Autumn Peltier, who campaigns for clean water, to Edgar Tarimo and his work turning plastic into building materials, the contributors featured in this collection will be both awe-inspiring and relatable for children. A real plus point of this book is the diversity of the featured activists, who come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including under-represented communities. The facts and figures in relation to climate change, as well as timelines, a glossary and further reading, all make this a perfect resource for schools.

Stones and Bones

by Rob Wilshaw, illus. Sophie Williams

(£16.99 HB, Cicada)

This large-format book is packed full of interesting facts and figures. The information inside ranges from what a fossil actually is and how it's formed, through to an exploration of the work of Mary Anning. The dinosaur age is covered in detail, including why certain periods suited some species more than others. There are also various case studies featuring stories of how fossilised skeletons were discovered. The text then progresses on through the evolution of mankind, looking at animals that existed during each time period and exploring palaeontology today. Offering much to talk about, this book is a fantastic way for children to discover the story of our planet, told through the stones and bones that hold all the secrets.

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Young V&A's first exhibition, *Japan: Myths to Manga*, is now open and free for schools! Take your class on an exciting and atmospheric trip through Japan – and explore how landscape and folklore have influenced Japanese art, technology and design.

Timeslots available Mondays and Tuesdays at 10.00am and 10.30am, during term time. To book visit the V&A website: tinyurl.com/tp-JapanVA

3



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5



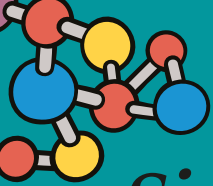
STEM school trips

If you're looking for a day out of the classroom that will spark curiosity in STEM, check out We The Curious, reopening later this year following a fire in 2022.

The science centre on Bristol's harbourside is home to the UK's only 3D Planetarium. Its two floors are brimming with interactive exhibits exploring illusions, sound, space, food, animation and much more.

Combine a visit to the exhibition floors with an awe-inspiring trip around the Solar System in the Planetarium and choice of curriculum-linked shows and workshops on everything from fossils to forensics, chemistry to climate change.

wethecurious.org
education@wethecurious.org



Six steps to levelling up your school's

SCIENCE TEACHING



Get the lowdown on the EEF's latest guidance from its Chief Executive, **Professor Becky Francis CBE**

Ask any primary school teacher or leader, and they'll tell you how crucial strong science teaching is for children's overall development.

Historically though, science has taken a back seat to English and maths within school development plans.

On top of this, some research suggests that primary school teachers lack confidence in specific aspects of science teaching. Some are apprehensive about practical work, as it may be more difficult to manage pupil behaviour during tasks. Others feel they need more technical knowledge to deliver the specifications of the primary science curriculum. Resourcing lessons is also often cited as a common challenge.

Why primary science matters

The gains that can be won from good primary science provision are significant though. This is especially

the case for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, whose progress and outcomes benefit particularly from high quality teaching. Great science teaching also provides 'science capital', which helps disadvantaged pupils to better access opportunity and advancement when they enter employment.

External accountability bodies also now put increased emphasis on the importance of schools delivering a broad and balanced curriculum, of which strong science teaching is a component part. It's therefore crucial that primary school teaching staff and senior leadership are supported to reflect on and refine their science provision.

This is why the EEF has put together a new research-driven guidance report, *Improving Primary Science*, to empower science teachers and leaders in primary schools in their practice. The report is based on findings from a thorough review of the best international evidence on

primary science teaching.

A broad range of research was analysed to identify the particular approaches that have proved effective at raising science attainment in primary classrooms.

With the help of leading academics and expert science teachers, these research findings have been refined into six actionable recommendations, which, taken together, can make a real difference for science learning in primary schools (see panel).

Each of the recommendations zooms in on a specific aspect of science teaching that the research suggests can have a positive impact on pupil outcomes, and includes models, worked examples and suggested strategies.

“Supporting meaningful change in schools is not easy – it takes collective, sustained effort to make lasting improvements”



How to make science shine in your school

Putting anything new into practice takes a thoughtful, considered approach. Schools are complicated ecosystems, each with particular processes, leadership structures, student bodies and local contexts, which is where the role of the science subject lead comes in.

A big part of a science lead's job is to champion any changes or innovations to science provision in their schools. However, the role is also about harnessing their knowledge and experience of the challenges particular to their context, and letting this expertise lead their decision-making around which strategies to prioritise and how to approach implementing them.

Whilst science leads are the key drivers in bringing about lasting

improvements to teaching, they can't do it alone. Without sustained support and buy-in from their senior leadership team, they are less likely to succeed in their work.

It's essential that subject leads have the time and capacity to identify specific areas for improvement across the school. They need to analyse trends in pupil data, observe lessons, consult fellow teaching staff and look for high-quality professional development opportunities that could address the priorities they identify.

The importance of professional development in supporting sustained, meaningful improvement to primary science teaching practice is highlighted in recommendation six of the guidance report. But it's vital that science leads are able to judge the quality and relevance of professional learning opportunities before they are delivered to teaching staff.

It's important that science leads look for training that exemplifies certain qualities, to maximise the likelihood that it will have the desired impact on teaching practice, and in turn, learning outcomes.

There are several commercially available professional development

programmes designed to support primary science, some of which have been rigorously evaluated by the EEF. TAPS (Teacher Assessment in Primary Science) and Thinking, Doing, Talking, Science were shown to have a positive impact on pupil outcomes in these trials. Other CPD programmes have yet to be tested for impact.

Our research on the core elements of effective professional development suggests that high-quality training builds knowledge, motivates staff, develops teaching techniques and focuses on how new approaches will be embedded.

The report also acknowledges that lasting behaviour changes take time, and so ought to be put in place as part of a carefully planned process that takes a long-term view of implementation.

Supporting meaningful change in schools is not easy – it takes collective, sustained effort to make lasting improvements to teaching and learning.

However, it's our hope that these recommendations will bring clarity around what high-quality science teaching can look like in the classroom, as well as empowering science teachers and leaders in their roles.

Improving Primary Science is available to download free from the EEF's website (eef.li/primary-science). TP



Professor Becky Francis CBE is Chief Executive Officer of

the Education Endowment Foundation. Throughout her career, Becky has sought to maximise the impact of academic research by working closely with teachers and policy makers.

IN BRIEF

1 Develop pupils' scientific vocabulary

Identify important scientific vocabulary, explicitly teach it, and create opportunities to engage with these key words repeatedly over time.

2 Encourage pupils to explain their thinking, whether orally or in writing

Whether through high-quality talk or written tasks, supporting pupils to explain their thinking helps them to recall, organise, and express their ideas, refine their understanding, and think scientifically.

3 Guide pupils to work scientifically

Explicitly teaching the knowledge and skills required to work scientifically, guiding pupils to apply this in practice, and providing opportunities for discussion and reflection can all support scientific development.

4 Relate new learning to relevant, real-world contexts

Relating learning to relevant, real-world contexts can help pupils to develop an understanding of science, demonstrate its purpose and highlight its relevance by connecting it to pupils' experiences.

5 Use assessment to support learning and responsive teaching

Assessing learning before a new topic to inform planning (diagnostic assessment), and during teaching (formative assessment) is crucial for high-quality teaching.

6 Strengthen science teaching through effective professional development (PD) as part of an implementation process.

New approaches or pedagogy should be introduced as part of a wider process in which professional development needs are identified and monitored.

Marvellous MINIATURES

The tiny micro:bit has big potential,
says **Laura Di Pasquale**

The primary curriculum is wide and overwhelming. Teachers are expected to be coaches, singers, historians, mathematicians and writers; all while raising attainment and dealing with sore teeth, tying shoelaces and managing endless wet paper towel incidents.

With a lack of subject specialists, ongoing staff shortages and barely enough time to keep up with WhatsApp group chats, we find ourselves editing the curriculum, removing all things not deemed to be essential. So where can we find the space to teach employability skills for the future, such as problem-solving, creativity, digital literacy and analytical thinking? Shouldn't we be building a future generation equipped to tackle serious real-world issues? This is where coding enters the stage.

Getting your nerd on

Embedding coding in the primary classroom really isn't as nerdy, or as niche, as you might think. After all, as Steve Jobs, a man who did fairly well for himself, once said, "Everyone in this country should learn how to program a computer... because it teaches you how to think."

I, however, was born in the 80s, just after the time when it was important to

teach kids how to build houses with their bare hands and before knowing it was going to be important to learn how to work a computer. So how did I become a teacher who could possibly write an article on embedding coding in the primary classroom? The short answer is the micro:bit – a mini-computer that's impressively powerful.

The protagonist

The micro:bit fits perfectly in the palm of your hand. Equipped with 25 LEDs ready to light up the imagination and curiosity of a child, it comes with built-in microphone, radio, thermometer and speakers.

“Aside from transmitting rescue signals, what place does this tiny device have in a bustling primary classroom?”

It can send radio signals up to 70 metres and be used to control several other devices, such as cars, arcade gaming devices and robotic dogs.

The radio transmitter allows you to send a message to over 100 devices at the same time – perfect if you need to send out an S.O.S. when you're slowly drowning under a swell of paperwork. But aside from transmitting rescue signals, what place does this tiny device have in a bustling primary classroom? How can it avoid becoming

just another add-on that nobody has time for? Well, it all begins with tinkering.

The Holy Grail

A computational thinker is someone who can make predictions and judgements, analyse situations, spot patterns, and break things down into parts. One of the key approaches to developing these skills is through tinkering – changing things to see what happens.

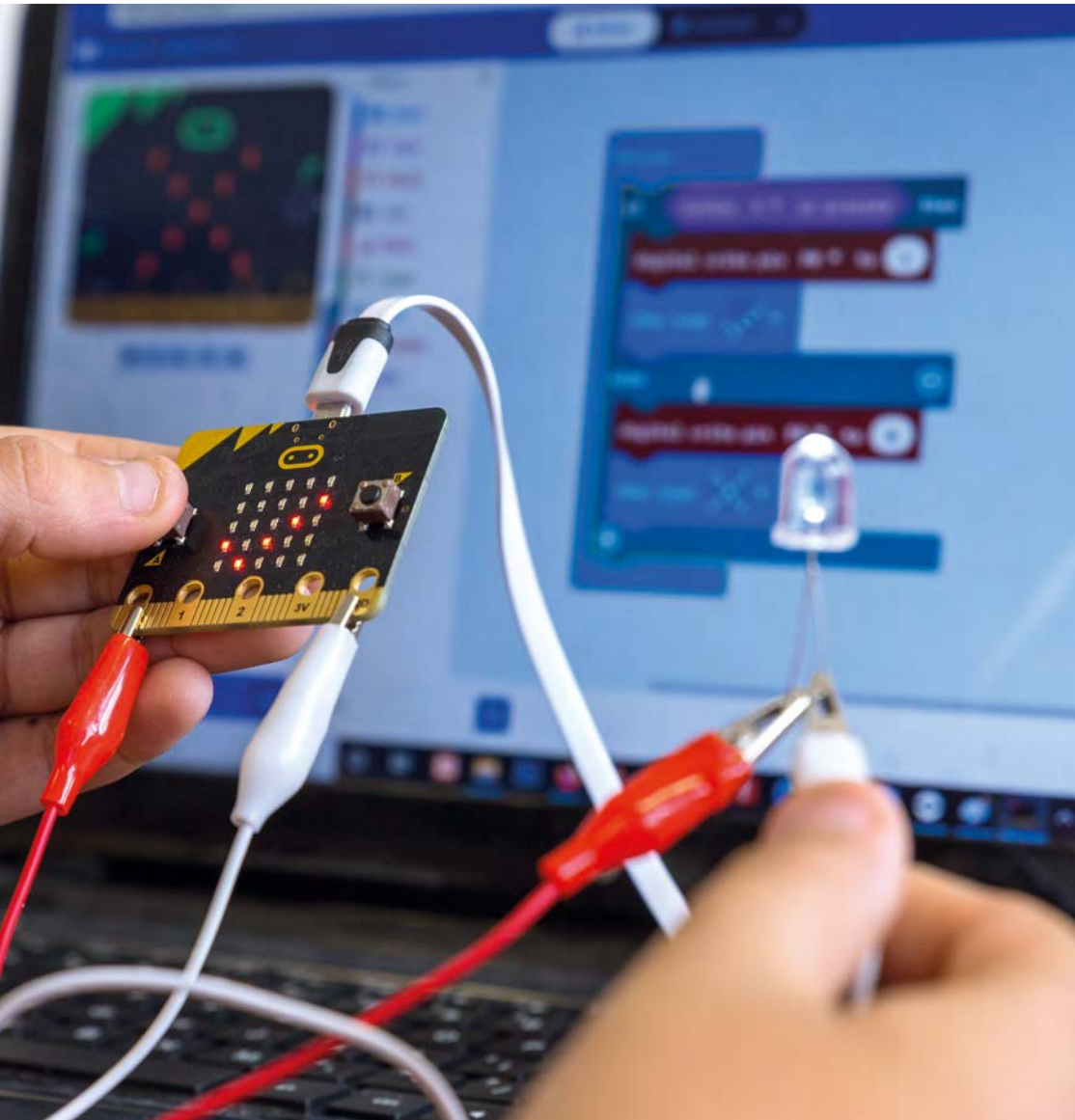
However, when I first received my box of micro:bits I was too afraid to open it. The device looked like something that had been removed from the inside of a computer, suitable only for someone who



across the curriculum. To make this happen, I looked towards the Global Goals: 17 interlinked objectives to protect the planet, for now and the future, with the aim of eradicating poverty and inequality (globalgoals.org).

Coding goals

Consider Global Goal 3, (Good health and wellbeing), of ensuring that children are emotionally literate, getting exercise and confident to talk about their feelings. The micro:bit can change a workout from a dreaded activity into an exciting game. A pedometer can be created in five minutes, and a fun class challenge can be set with a target linked to your topic,



e.g. walk the length of the Titanic or the distance it takes to travel from our school to London Bridge. And why not turn your micro:bits into sets of dice for PE activities, selecting a different exercise for each number? My class created relaxation devices and used these on our daily calm-down after lunch – a handy way to deal with all the issues resulting from playing football.

Pupils can be educated about Goal 13 (Climate action) by creating a device that will sound an alarm to remind people to switch off their lights. Coding your micro:bit to gather data for a litter-pick adventure can help children to focus on what is recyclable

and non-recyclable, and generally help to manage behaviour when out and about in your local area.

You can use the micro:bit in music lessons, too. Enabling pupils to practise on a device rather than a musical instrument allows the children to focus clearly on which notes are required and how long each should be played. It's a lot easier on teachers' ears as well...

Developing innovation (Goal 9) can be furthered by having pupils create gaming devices. Simple games such as a coin toss can be used for class decision-making, and as a tool to assist with teaching probability.

The key to success is to think about what concepts you

are trying to teach and how this little device can be used to support or reinforce pupils' learning experiences.

Once you consider the endless possibilities of the micro:bit and how it can be used in simple ways across the curriculum, your imagination can run wild. It's a small device, but a fantastic way to teach big ideas! **TP**



Laura Di Pasquale is a primary teacher, Apple learning

coach and micro:bit champion based in Glasgow.

X @LauraKeeney01

micro:bits in class



Pair pupils up in mixed ability groupings so they can bounce ideas off each other and generally be there to provide support.



Allow learners to engage in unplugged coding activities to develop their knowledge of the hows and whys of coding. This real-world application of skills is essential for developing understanding.



It's important to teach children to read code before writing it. Use the PRIMM approach to develop pupils' understanding of code before they attempt to create their own (primmportal.com).



Provide a set of coding blocks for pupils. These are put together just like a word bank to assist learners in writing code (makecode.microbit.org/blocks). This level of scaffolding helps pupils develop confidence and provides a supportive learning environment.



Pupils can use the MakeCode website (makecode.microbit.org) at home, as it has a micro:bit simulator and code-along tutorials. It's ideal for the nervous teacher to practise with as well.



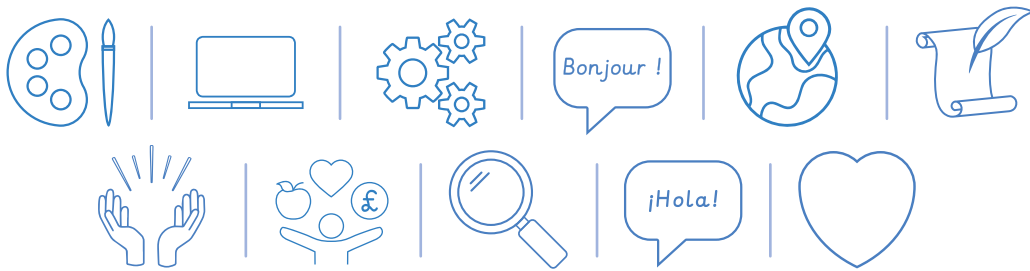
Create plenty of opportunities for pupils to try enhancing existing code. This allows them to take risks, learning how to fail and bring themselves back up again. It develops a growth mindset and encourages pupils to challenge themselves and become more creative with their coding.



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Vicky Doherty, Headteacher, Wetheringsett Primary School

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Let's talk ABOUT IT

Engage primary pupils with science through dialogic teaching, says **Marianne Cutler**

Teaching primary science comes with a specific set of challenges. Compared to those delivering science at secondary level, KS1 and KS2 teachers often lack a background in the subject – and most will have limited access to the practical equipment that could enhance their lessons. As a result, the prospect of explaining complex ideas to children in a way that will engage and enthuse them can be quite intimidating to many practitioners.

If we wish to instil an interest in science from a young age, teachers must be able to receive the necessary training and resources to confidently lead science lessons. It's only then that they'll be able to introduce science in a way which captures pupils' imaginations and encourages them to question and explore the world of science whilst linking it to their own realities.

It's therefore essential that schools support teachers with relevant continuing professional development that offers pedagogical methods and techniques that will help inspire and invigorate pupils' engagement with learning.

CPD solutions

Dialogic teaching is a particularly effective method of engaging younger pupils. The approach focuses on improving the quality of classroom talk, with teachers guiding and facilitating discussion and debate as part of the learning process. It challenges pupils to express and share ideas via structured arguments and reasoning, rather than simply listening

and responding. Pupils therefore develop a stronger, and more in-depth, understanding of topics and concepts. They also become keen to seek answers themselves, come up with solutions and put what they've learnt into practice.

Through facilitated dialogue, teachers can challenge pupils to more actively participate in their learning, developing communication and critical thinking skills, as well as a passion for the subject.

“Promoting an enquiry-based approach through dialogic teaching encourages pupils to ask more questions, collect and analyse evidence, and explain their thinking”



Practical applications

When looking at abstract topics like evolution, it can be helpful to use resources that teach through real-life stories. For example, the Association for Science Education's *Mary Anning: A fossil hunter's story* follows the life of palaeontologist and fossil collector, Mary Anning. It shares insights into her life, exploring the science of fossils and reflecting on the influence of historical, cultural and religious thinking in changing ideas. Examples like this can help pupils connect the dots between moments linked to history and their relevance to today's world.

Taking this one step further, and positioning it through video and immersive experiences, can help children 'step into' the shoes of characters and historical events, and open their eyes to the critical role science plays. This encourages greater curiosity, creativity and analytical thinking.

Promoting an enquiry-based approach through dialogic teaching encourages pupils to ask more questions, collect

and analyse evidence, and explain their thinking among their peers. Using this same example, inspiring pupils using historic role models drives curiosity about the diversity and evolution of life on Earth, as well as recognising the ways in which scientific ideas develop and change over time.

As well as having an evidenced impact on engagement, dialogic teaching has been proven to improve pupils' progress in science. A trial by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and Sheffield Hallam University, led by Professor Tim Jay in 2017, found that, by using conversation and debate to develop children's enquiry processes, skills and understanding of the nature of science, dialogic teaching helped pupils make two additional months' progress in science compared to those who were taught via different methods.

The same trial found that this pedagogical approach has also been proven to be particularly successful at engaging those pupils regarded as low achieving or with typically low levels of interest in science. By providing an opportunity for all children to

be involved in discussions, and to learn from their peers, pupils may feel more inquisitive and comfortable to share their thoughts.

An additional report published by the EEF in November 2023, *Improving primary science*, sets out six practical recommendations for schools. The second recommendation centres around encouraging pupils to explain their thinking, whether orally or in written form. The guidance for teachers to implement this recommendation includes capitalising on the power of dialogue, creating a collaborative learning environment, and cultivating reasoning and justification in the classroom: all key elements of a dialogic teaching approach.

Continuing professional development for teachers doesn't just improve pupils' learning and experience. It's important for teachers' own progress. Equipping them with these types of pedagogical strategies is crucial to helping embolden their self-confidence and ability to effectively impart knowledge. As well as enabling access to regular professional development sessions and courses, schools should ensure appropriate resources are available to complement any new approaches that are introduced during training. In this way, schools can ensure they offer the very best teaching right across the curriculum, and foster a collaborative learning environment that will adequately prepare pupils for the future. **TP**



Marianne Cutler is director of policy and curriculum innovation at the Association of Science Education.

Best practice dialogic teaching



Get the whole class involved by dividing

pupils into groups that are small enough to focus the conversation. This ensures that discussions don't go off topic and that all pupils, including those who may typically avoid joining in, have a comfortable space in which to speak.



Be selective with the resources

you use in class to make sure they support dialogic teaching. For example, a narrative-based resource that draws on lots of angles and talking points, perhaps linking with other curriculum topics, will allow for valuable and in-depth discussions in class.



Facilitate and guide the conversations

to help pupils stay on track and balanced. Use prompts and questions that will help widen thinking.



Keep it positive! All children need to feel

like their contributions are valid and welcome, so it's important to encourage all pupils to respond positively to each other and build upon each other's inputs.



Make sure all discussions are purposeful.

Giving pupils a goal of coming to a conclusion or reporting back to the class on the different ideas or thoughts that were discussed are good ways of structuring the conversations with a goal. It also encourages pupils to reflect on their conversations as a way of reinforcing learning.

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Another brick in **THE WALL**

Build up pupils' maths memory with chunking, says **Maddy Austin**

Imagine a solid wall, where each brick represents a concept or topic in your pupils' learning. This structure symbolises the progression of lessons, where each new concept is built upon a solid foundation of children's previous understanding.

Just as you can't place a brick in mid-air without proper support, students can't grasp new concepts without a strong understanding of prerequisite topics.

Misunderstandings, learning loss and knowledge gaps are the cracks in the mortar, or the missing bricks. Attempting to deepen learning or move towards mastery when foundational learning is incomplete is like trying to pile more bricks on a wall that's broken, subsiding and full of holes. Eventually, it'll all come crashing down.

In cognitive psychology, 'chunking' refers to building meaningful units of information out of smaller individual pieces. It's often used to make retaining new information easier on the working memory. The ideas are applicable to more complex learning, too: grouping smaller learned tasks and relating them together helps students make meaningful connections.

Let's explore how a complex series of maths lessons can be chunked down

and made clearer, and how this can lead to a more stable and successful learning journey for students.

Step 1: Identifying your bricks

Effectively chunking learning content is one of the first steps in creating a strong series of lessons and building that solid wall of understanding. It's not only useful in delivering the next steps, but also as a way of spiralling back and reviewing prior learning to make sure that necessary knowledge is secure for all students.

A useful way to begin is by reviewing the exact learning outcome each lesson is trying to achieve. Often these can be linked directly to statements in the national

curriculum. From there, look at questions or tasks that assess this specific outcome, and consider:

- What steps do students need to follow in order to answer these questions?
- What are the key skills, vocabulary or methods students must understand?
- Where are the most likely points students will go wrong – what are the common misconceptions?

Take a look at the panel on page 67 for a worked example.

Breaking down each outcome to the smaller steps helps identify all the areas where students are likely to make



“As each new learning brick is placed, the goal is to build a robust foundation of understanding that enables students to build towards mastery”

mistakes, which allows teachers to pull these out and plan specific techniques to address each point.

Step 2: Strengthening the foundations

Before adding new bricks to the wall, it's essential to address any broken or weak ones from previous lessons. Formative assessment strategies play a crucial role in this phase. Low-stakes quizzing methods, starter activities, mini-whiteboard responses and so on can all be employed to quickly reveal misunderstandings and address them.

By anticipating potential misconceptions, as covered in Step 1, any vital knowledge gaps can be 'patched-up' as the lesson progresses, creating a smoother transition for pupils to the upcoming topic.

Using technology can accelerate this process. Digital apps that track student progress can show you exactly which students may need more support, based on their previous achievement. As a starter, you can use low-stakes quizzes on tablets or laptops to quickly (and anonymously) monitor the responses of an entire class to a few key questions. Review homework tasks on the same topic; identifying the students who performed best and those who were less confident.

On-the-spot correction can be tricky, but by planning robustly for the misconceptions you expect to encounter, you can have pre-prepared resources and examples ready to laser in on those common mistakes. Useful techniques include:

- Example questions with deliberately wrong answers: can students spot the error and correct it?
- Scripted 'hints' which address mistakes quickly: "Where should the zero be?" "What digit should we look at when rounding to the nearest 10?"
- Predicting possible wrong answers and linking these to the mistake made: if a student adds $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ and gets $\frac{2}{6}$, they have added both the numerator and denominator instead of using equivalent fractions. It can be quick and anonymous to address these common mistakes to a whole class: "If your answer was $\frac{2}{6}$, think about how many quarters are in one half."
- Immediate feedback: Keep your list of misconceptions handy here; it'll help you target and pinpoint with prepared next steps. You can always add to it, too, if you find your students are making mistakes you didn't anticipate.

Again, technology can support you with these steps. Digital learning tools such as virtual manipulatives can provide easy to access scaffolds and diagrams. If students have their own devices, digital quizzes mean they'll receive instant feedback. Adaptive learning programmes can personalise students' tasks even further, targeting their areas to work on and moving them on when they are ready.

Having identified all the separate parts of a task in previous steps, you will more quickly and easily be able to spot parts that prove more challenging, or need more reinforcement. If you can see students are consistently stalling at a particular stage, then focusing revision or intervention sessions on those specific parts can be more effective than more general lessons covering the entire topic or objective.

Linking outcomes that require similar skills helps children build strong links within a topic and gain more practice with specific tasks without getting 'stuck' or having to work on the same skill over and over. As you move on to the next topic or objective, previous learning that uses the same or linked skills makes an ideal starter task and helps students spot connections.

By incrementally introducing new information,

STEP 1: A WORKED EXAMPLE

Learning outcome:

Find 10 more or less than a given number (Year 3 objective)

Steps for students:

1 Read and understand problem, identifying whether a 10 is being added or subtracted.

2 Add or subtract 10 from the tens digit.

3 If there are 9 tens, recognise that adding 10 will make 100 and the hundreds digit will change.

4 If there are 0 tens, recognise that subtracting 10 will mean the hundreds digit will change.

Key skills:

Reading 2- and 3-digit numbers; understanding place value (including partitioning numbers into hundreds, tens and ones); regrouping 10 tens into 1 hundred, or 1 hundred into 10 tens; understanding the vocabulary 'more than' and 'less than'.

and gradually increasing the complexity of problems, students can develop their confidence and competence in each topic. This approach paves the way for mastery, allowing them to tackle more advanced concepts with a solid foundation to build on. **TP**



Maddy Austin is a former primary school teacher with a

passion for maths. She now works as product manager for edtech company Discovery Education.

 @DiscoveryEdUK

 discoveryeducation.co.uk

Event DETAILS

What is Bett?

Bett is the largest edtech exhibition in the world, taking place each year in different locations across the globe, including the UK, Brasil and Asia. From global tech companies to renowned education brands to startups, you can find solutions for all education settings, challenges and budgets

Where is Bett UK?

■ ExCeL London,
Royal Victoria Dock

When is Bett?

■ 24th–26th January 2024

How do I register?

■ Head over to
uk.bettshow.com/visit
and select your ticket



MEET, GREET, LEARN

The organisers of **Bett 2024** tell us what visitors can expect from this year's showcase of the technologies set to transform your classroom

Bett is the world's biggest education technology exhibition. Setting the agenda on what's next in learning, it brings together educators, innovators and changemakers – including more than 600 innovative edtech and resource-solution providers, showcasing cutting edge and impactful products and services. Bett provides tangible support for educators seeking professional development, as well as guidance on best-practice and solutions for assorted challenges.

This year's theme, *Teaching to thrive in fast-changing times*, promises to deliver three days packed with engaging discussions and workshops on the key issues affecting the profession. Across Bett's seven theatres, we'll be looking at the transformative potential of generative artificial intelligence and hearing from Microsoft Chief Scientist, Jaime Teevan, about its impact on productivity. Also presenting will be leading AI experts Kay Firth-Butterfield and Dan Fitzpatrick, who will be discussing the ethics of AI and how to thrive in the AI era.

Former children's TV presenter Baroness Floella Benjamin and acclaimed documentary presenter Louis Theroux also feature among this year's exciting lineup of speakers. Jason Arday – a sociologist, and the youngest Black person ever appointed to a Professorial Chair at the University of Cambridge – will deliver a thought-provoking address on supporting inclusivity and SEND in the classroom. Alex Scott MBE, a former member of England's national football team, will meanwhile be discussing the importance of wellbeing and resilience.

Visitors will be able to debate the future of Higher Education in dedicated 'Ahead by Bett' sessions, and find practical solutions for student attendance and reducing operational costs in the Teaching & Learning theatre. For any startups looking to disrupt the EdTech landscape, the Global Futures theatre will be the place to be.

Bett aims to empower educators to become better users and buyers



of technology. With Connect @ Bett, they can swiftly schedule one-to-one meetings with the right exhibitors. We're also introducing Tech User Labs, where attendees can try out the very latest technologies, plus a brand-new programme of TableTalks, which enable educators to connect with peers in roundtable discussions on shared topics of interest.

To be among the first to hear more about our exciting content programme, register your interest now at bettshow.com and follow us on social media via @bett_show at X/Twitter or Instagram.

AI ON THE AGENDA

With AI technologies on course to make a big splash at Bett this year, we look at how visitors can learn about some of the latest developments in this exciting field

Seemingly out of nowhere, the potential implications of artificial intelligence have suddenly started to loom large over a number of different industries and professions – not least education. With teachers, school leaders and students all coming to terms with how the growth of ChatGPT, Midjourney *et al* may transform the nature of learning, visitors can expect AI to be the topic of multiple presentations and discussions at Bett’s Arena space.

First up will be ‘Thrive with AI: Lead like a scientist’ (24/01, 10am–10.30pm) – a keynote delivered by Jaime Teevan, chief scientist at Microsoft (itself an increasingly big player in the AI space).

Teevan’s presentation will aim to both ‘provide perspective around AI’, and look ahead at the ways in which we might be able to collectively shape a ‘preferred future’ in relation to AI’s potential applications for work and learning.

Determined AI scholars can then remain in their seats, as taking place immediately after (24/01, 10.30am–11am) will be ‘Inclusive AI requires good governance’ – a likely sobering talk by Kay Firth-Butterfield (CEO of Good



Tech Advisory) on the importance of establishing good governance before using AI among vulnerable populations, touching on issues of privacy, data sharing and teacher-child interactions.

The potential impact of AI on children’s safety will then be addressed in ‘The global impact of AI on learning and children’s safety’ (25/01, 2.45pm–3.15pm) – a fireside chat between NSPCC chief executive Peter Wanless and Jim Steyner, founder/CEO of the US-based media information non-profit, Common Sense Media. The two will be looking to discuss both AI’s promising potential, and the potential threats it could pose for adolescent mental health.



EDITOR’S CHOICE

As you make your way around the ExCeL hall hosting Bett 2024, keep your eye out for the following...

Arena

The main presentation theatre, playing host to a series of thought-provoking keynote addresses and talks concerning issues ranging from inclusion and diversity, to wellbeing and sustainability in education

Ahead by Bett

Whether it’s generative AI, or concerns around the upskilling of staff, you’ll find a host of experts and innovators in the Ahead by Bett area convening debates and interactive workshops that explore the future of Higher Education

Connect @Bett

With this innovative digital tool, education decision-makers can swiftly find the right products and solutions for their learners, and schedule one-to-one meetings with providers.

Table Talks

A brand-new feature enabling educators to connect with peers for roundtable discussions and debate solutions to key issues.

Tech User Labs

At these newly added training sessions, participants will get to try out some of the latest educational technologies under the guidance of world-leading edtech experts.

Esports @ Bett

Attendees will discover the power of esports can have in promoting SEND inclusion and future STEM careers through dynamic talks, demonstrations and a mini *Rocket League* tournament open to students.

Kids Judge Bett

This much-loved competition sees students from primary and secondary schools across the UK invited to choose their favourite products among those on show.

teach PRIMARY RECOMMENDS

All bases covered

BBC Bitesize offers educationally approved, curriculum relevant, self-study and home-learning to 4- to 16-year-olds. The website includes thousands of pages of engaging content for primary pupils – look out for our suite of immersive primary games; and new resources for reception. Sitting alongside BBC Bitesize is BBC

Teach, home to all teacher-facing content and the gateway to the best BBC content for the classroom – look out for new Live Lessons programmes during the Spring term; and Newsround has news for primary learners online, on TikTok and via a daily bulletin. bbc.co.uk/bitesize/primary Stand SN22



Literacy Tree

Shortlisted for four Bett awards this year, Literacy Tree is a comprehensive and cohesive award-winning book-based approach to primary English. Written by teachers for teachers and using expertly chosen, high-quality texts, children are immersed in fictional worlds to heighten engagement and provide meaningful contexts for writing using its unique ‘teach through a text’ pedagogy, which

ensures all national curriculum objectives are embedded. School members have access to over 400 book-based resources for writing, reading comprehension and spelling, as well as resources for catch-up and home learning. Visit literacytree.com, email info@literacytree.com



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Be inspired by renowned experts, thought leaders and visionaries across EdTech and beyond. You'll hear from the biggest and best speakers including documentary presenter - Louis Theroux, renowned sociologist - Jason Arday, Minecraft Student Ambassador - Namya Joshi, former Lioness turned sports pundit - Alex Scott MBE and so many more! These, of course, are only a few of the incredible names attending Bett UK 2024, explore our agenda to plan your visit.



New for 2024!

bett | **Connect**

Enhancing the way our community meets and collaborates at the show. Using data and technology we make critical connections between education decision-makers and solution providers, all in a fraction of the time.

bett | *TableTalks*

Brand new for 2024, TableTalks connects individuals from schools, universities and governments for roundtable conversations based on their primary topics of interest.

bett | **TECH USER LABS**

Get the most out of your existing tech with working groups and demos from the top education technology experts in the world.

bett | Education Leadership Programme

In collaboration with ISTE, and SMART, you will join a select group of global education leaders as we take a deep dive into becoming better buyers, users and implementers of technology within education.

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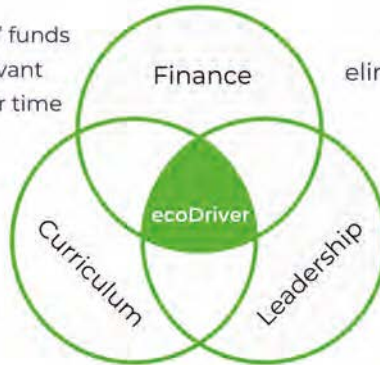


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"During our first year, we reduced our energy consumption by over 50%! [...] ecoDriver has a key role to play in helping children and young people address the challenge of climate change in a proactive, positive way"

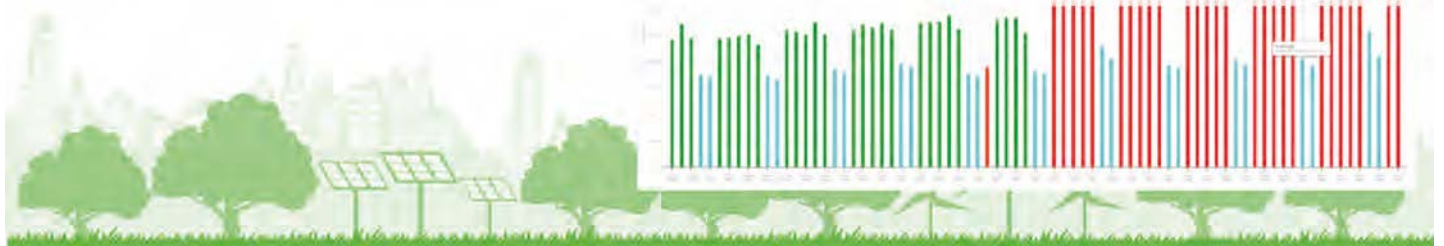


Our Mission

We help schools find energy waste and eliminate it, then we decarbonise what's left.

Empower your school's sustainability journey with ecoDriver's energy management solution and energy-saving expertise. We'll transform your energy consumption into clear insights, enabling you to prioritise efficiency measures, collaborate with staff and students to embed sustainability in the classroom, and achieve significant energy savings.

Primary School Headteacher, Surrey





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BLUESKY EDUCATION

Transforming the way schools carry out staff appraisal, professional development and quality assurance is the focus at BlueSky Education’s stand at Bett

BlueSky – an online platform that allows schools to link appraisal, professional development and quality assurance processes together – is giving visitors a chance to explore the capabilities of the online approach through demonstrations and strategic guidance.

Primary schools are embracing the online approach to managing staff appraisal, CPD and quality assurance, and BlueSky’s team will be on hand to share how schools are using their services to support staff development. A range of informative resources on appraisal, professional development and quality assurance will also be available, including BlueSky’s guide to effective teacher appraisal.



teach PRIMARY RECOMMENDS

Affordable school tech

The award-winning HUE HD Pro is a flexible plug and play document camera/visualiser for classroom, hybrid and remote teaching. Perfect for modelling, magnifying objects, recording videos and more. Special Bett Offer. Buy a HUE HD Pro for £49.95 + VAT and get a FREE case worth £15.95 + VAT. HUE Animation Studio is an award-winning stop motion animation

and time-lapse kit for children aged 7–13. This all-in-one kit includes a camera, book and software for Windows and macOS for only £41.63 + VAT. Meet us at Bett UK 2024. Connect@Bett or email huehd.com/contact to learn more.



Award-winning literacy support

At Literacy Counts, we provide high-quality professional development and award-winning resources to support a school’s every literacy need. Our vision is to empower all schools in helping all their children reach their potential. The Ready Steady Literacy suite of resources includes Ready Steady Write, Comprehension, Spell, Phonics, Curriculum & Intervention. We are extremely proud to announce

that Ready Steady Write has won the Teach Primary 2023 Literacy award and has been nominated for a Bett 2024 award. Join over 400 schools and get started with Literacy Counts, today! literacycounts.co.uk



The guide sets out what schools need to get right when it comes to performance management.

Key steps include:

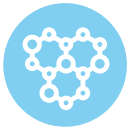
1 Conversations about objectives should always be forward-focused. Rather than look back at achievements to prove objectives have been met, start with an evaluation of an individual’s strengths and areas for development.

2 Set clear and precise objectives differentiated according to role. Well-defined objectives make it easier to agree success criteria. Link them explicitly to team, school and trust strategic plans and make sure they are tailored to roles.

3 Review progress throughout the year. Ongoing dialogue between teachers and their reviewers has a greater impact on success than one-off appraisal events.

BlueSky Education is used by thousands of schools worldwide. It is the only technology solution of its kind endorsed by the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) and the Confederation of School trusts (CST), and a long-established partner of national and international organisations including the Institute of School Business Leadership (ISBL) and The Council of British International Schools (COBIS).
Stand SB64

Science



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- The difference between fossil fuels and renewable energy sources, with different examples for each
- Why renewable energy sources including biomass are so important for the future
- What renewable energies look like
 - That small changes to the way we live can help reduce how much energy we consume

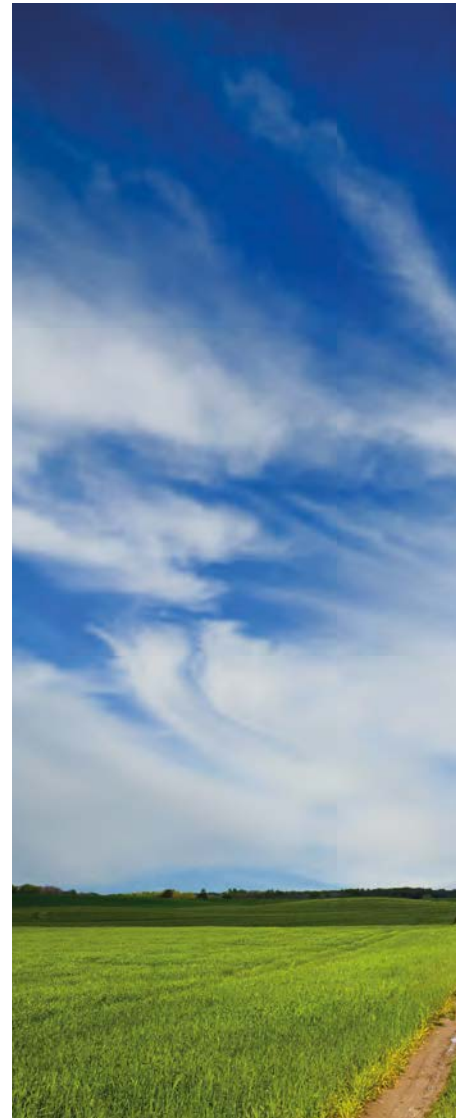
Shine a light on renewable energy generation



In teaching about sustainable ways of life, we could be making the biggest difference of all, suggests **Dr Thomas Bernard**

[@questfriendz](#) questfriendz.com

The things young children are already aware of are eye-opening, and their understanding of climate change problems is no exception. Due to its nature, shielding children from this issue can seem like the best option. However, talking and teaching about it could be a much better choice to make. Our children have a vital role to play in the planet's future, and they can bring learning to life and apply it in innovative ways. With a mixture of discussions, and hands-on fun, we can introduce children in KS1 to the wonderful world of renewable energy, and watch as they come up with their own magical ideas.



START HERE

Begin by introducing the terms *fossil fuels* and *renewable energy*. Discussion is key here to draw out the children's prior knowledge, which will inform how much time they spend on this part of lesson. Ask the children to chat with their talk partner about what they already know, and then encourage the class to share their ideas. Encourage them to give suggestions on what each heading means, and any examples of that fuel type. Make notes on a flip chart or board to make the difference clear. At this point, also address any misconceptions. Then, highlight 'renewable energy' to underline that this is the focus of the lesson; that they will learn about renewable energy sources, and why they're so important to us and our planet.



MAIN LESSON

1 | RENEWABLE ENERGY MATCHING

Begin by providing the children with a set of image cards to sort and match. These cards should include a range of renewable energy sources: the sun, wind, waves and biomass (e.g. sunflowers, algae, animal waste), along with energy collecting devices (solar panels, wind turbines, etc) and items or devices that can be powered by renewable energy. Many children will be new to the idea of plants and animal waste being a source of energy, so it's a perfect way to help them visualise the vocabulary and concepts.

Allow the children time to sort and match their cards, encouraging discussions and asking questions such as

"Where have you seen solar-powered items?", "Where have you seen wind turbines to collect energy?" and "Could this energy source power that device?". Once the children have sorted and matched their cards, ask them to share their learning, and where they may have seen the renewable energy sources in real life.

2 | WHY RENEWABLE ENERGY?

Knowing why renewable energy is a better option than fossil fuels is key, because, let's face it, otherwise what is the point in switching? Where possible, support this with a storybook or a teaching video. Explore the differences between the two types of fuel and make sure the children understand that renewable sources of energy are much cleaner. Then highlight the



question “What does renewable mean?” and explain the benefit of an energy source never running out.

3 | DEMONSTRATE, EXPERIMENT AND PLAY!

Now that the children understand what renewable energies are and why they’re more beneficial, it’s a great idea to go outside and have some fun. Set up hands-on investigation stations for children to delve into and try after you’ve demonstrated. While demonstrating, make it clear that if we can make heat or movement, we can generate electricity, and the more movement or heat, the more electricity we can make.

Windmills

Simple pinwheels can demonstrate wind power. Encourage children to

experiment by holding a pinwheel up in different areas of the playground to see how it affects the movement. They can simulate more wind by blowing. Who can generate the most electricity by making it spin the fastest?

Solar-powered lights

Let children observe how the sun can power an item such as a garden light, or fountain. What happens if they move the light and solar cell to a shadier spot, or cover it altogether?

Water power

With a large tub of water, allow the children to make waves and tides with their hands. Add a small paddle wheel, and set the challenge of making it move or rotate. Does the paddle wheel rotate more with larger waves? And does the paddle wheel move or

rotate more with a bigger tide? What causes the most paddle wheel movement?

Alternatively, you could use a spatula or similar utensil and watch its movement with the simulated waves and tides. Testing utensils of various shapes and sizes can become an investigation into which would be the most effective in producing energy.

Biofuel

The skin of citrus fruit contains the biofuel limonene. Light a candle and prepare a selection of 3cm x 3cm sections of orange, lemon, and lime skin. Hold the skin close to the flame, but not touching it, then squeeze the skin towards the flame and watch how it ignites. Encourage the children to observe and comment. Which skin contains the most limonene? Does the limonene ignite more when squeezed with more force? What might we be able to power with limonene?

Throughout the demonstration, and when children are exploring, ask questions such as, how many times can this form of energy be used? Can this source be renewed? Is it polluting? Why is this form of energy good?

4 | WHAT CAN WE DO?

As a class, make a plan of how you can reduce the amount of energy you use. Ask, “What can we do in our class to make a difference and save energy?” or “How can we introduce renewable energy into our classroom?” This could include turning off electrical items such as computers when you have finished with them, keeping windows and doors closed so the room stays warm, taking advantage of natural sunlight and turning off lights on sunny days, and making sure to reuse or recycle anything they can. Once you have made a list, assign class monitors for each area.

Dr Thomas Bernard is co-founder of STEM publishing company QuestFriendz, and co-author of the SuperQuesters series. SuperQuesters: The Case of the Great Energy Robbery is out now.

EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Encourage the children to keep a diary of the small changes they make at home, and when outside or in their neighbourhood. Ask them to bring it back to school to share with the class.
- Share an age-appropriate newspaper article or video about the effects of climate change. What else can the children tell you about how fossil fuels are harming the environment for us and wildlife?
- Introduce the word ‘sustainability’. What does that mean and what does it look like? What would the world look like if everybody lived sustainably?
- Explore possible emotions related to climate change. How does it make them feel? Reflect and use talk as a means to share worries, but also talk about hope. Share age-appropriate stories relating to climate change success – take a look at [positive.news/category/environment](#) for some examples.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What is the difference between fossil fuels and renewable energy?
- What are the benefits of renewable energy sources?
- Why do we need to switch to renewable energy?
- What will you do to reduce the amount of energy you use (at home and at school)?

Drama



Should we make it up as we go along?



We all improvise every day, so here are some ways to build on this intuitive skill through playful acting exercises, says **Sam Marsden**

[X @SamMarsdenDrama](#) [marsdensam.com](#)

Bring more drama (the good kind) into the classroom! Improvisation is lots of fun, and involves games, acting, thinking on one's feet, and surprises. Some children might find improv difficult to start with, as they are encouraged to perform and share the first thing that pops into their head, so make sure you create a low-pressure space for your lesson. But once everyone gets into the swing of it, there will likely be lots of laughter, and strengthened connections between pupils too.

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To build confidence to perform in front of others
- To trust their intuition and creativity
- To work in teams
- To listen and respond to one another

START HERE

It's good practice to start any drama class by creating a safe space. I normally lay down my two rules for drama, which are 'be kind' and 'practice good listening'. You might like to explain that the drama class is a judgement-free zone; there's no such thing as a wrong idea in this lesson, unless it's violent, or inappropriate. In creating a safe space, you can also explain that you'll never force anyone into improvising. At the start of any improv class, I always explain that it's okay for anyone to say "pass" if they don't want a turn while playing an improvisation game.



MAIN LESSON

1 | SLOW MOTION/DOUBLE SPEED

Once you've established your safe space, introduce a short warm-up activity to break the ice. This is a great way to get the whole class in the mood for improv.

Ask pupils to stand in a circle. Explain that they will act out the actions you call out: in slow motion, at normal speed, or at double speed. Try each action at each of the three different speeds, giving about 20 to 30 seconds for each one. Here are some actions to get you started:

- Make a cake
- Brush your hair
- Hold a snake
- Wash an elephant
- Peel a banana
- Make a magic potion

- Wash the dishes
- Cast a spell

2 | TV INTERVIEW

Set two chairs to face the class and tell the children that this is a TV studio, and a very important interview is about to take place.

Ask for two volunteers: one will be the talk show host, and the other will be the interviewee. The person being interviewed can be noteworthy for any reason—all ideas are welcome. Perhaps they are a singer, politician, football player, actor, Olympic gold medalist, the world's richest person, or maybe something unusual happened to them that has created a media frenzy. Give the pair twenty seconds to decide who the person being interviewed is, and then ask the audience to cheer for the celebrity as they enter.



“It’s good practice to start any drama class by creating a safe space”

Some children will be quite happy to get up and improvise in front of the class with no preparation, but others may be more comfortable if they’re given 10 minutes to prepare something with their partner. Encourage the host to ask interesting interview questions. Examples could include:

- How do you warm up before a concert?
- Do you ever have bad days?
- Who inspired you when you were growing up?
- What projects have you got lined up for the future?

Try and get everyone in the class to take part in an interview, but don’t force them, and encourage the audience to show their support with cheering and applause at suitable moments through the show.

To add a little extra drama, and help everyone get properly into the spirit of things, you could play a piece of music that sounds like a TV show theme tune at the start of each interview.

3 | USING STATUSES TO CREATE STORY

Ask students to get into groups of four. Within each group, one person is going to play a character with a very

low status, another person is going to play a character with a fairly low status, a third person will play a character with a high status, and the final group member will play a character with an extremely high status.

Together, the group should decide on their characters and a group objective. For example, they could be witches trying to make a spell to save a forest; a football team planning how to win the World Cup; flight attendants trying to calm a passenger down; or maybe a technical theatre crew trying to fix a lighting issue half an hour before curtain up.

With the four pupils playing their given statuses as they strive to reach the group objective, they are likely to create some dynamic improv scenes!

Give children five to 15 minutes to prepare, and then ask each group to share with the class.

Sam Marsden is the author of 100 Acting Exercises for 8–18 Year Olds. Her new book Acting Games for Improv comes out this month. She has taught drama for many years in different settings.



EXTENDING THE LESSON

- You can play the slow motion/double speed game with the other two improv exercises also. For example, while doing the TV interview or status improv, you can call out, “Slow motion!” and so on.
- For the TV interview, you can ask the interviewer and interviewee to swap over, so both actors get a chance at trying both roles.
- For the status exercise you can add a prop into the mix to help inspire pupils. One prop per group will be enough. Props that can be fun include a football, a magic wand, a key, a bottle of water, a wallet, and a microphone.

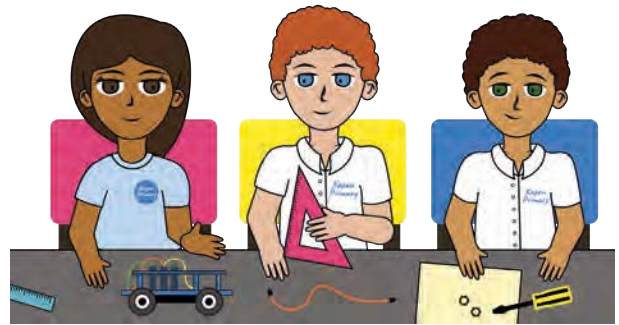
USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What is the character you’re playing wearing?
- What does your character love, and hate?
- What does your character actually want?
- What makes your character happy, sad, excited, and angry?

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY Kapow
Primary™

Kapow Primary Design & Technology

A comprehensive scheme of work created with the design cycle in mind



AT A GLANCE

- A comprehensive scheme of learning for design and technology
- Perfect for non-specialist teachers
- Covers all national curriculum requirements
- Diverse and incredibly rich in range of content
- Underpinned with video content for teachers and students

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



It is no secret that the majority of primary teachers are not D&T specialists by trade. Many enjoy delivering this hugely important, creative part of the curriculum, but having a subject expert in school is a rarity. As such, resources and training can be difficult to find and vet; that's where Kapow Primary comes in. Offering the highest quality digital resources for lessons and teacher development, Kapow Primary have really knocked it out of the park with the latest update to their D&T content.

Kapow Primary's D&T offer focuses on the practical aspects of descriptors in the national curriculum and the resources come fully referenced so that teachers can cross-check the coverage with national requirements.

The Kapow Primary curriculum itself is designed around six key areas that make it easier to show progression and achievement. These are: electrical systems, cooking and nutrition, mechanical systems, textiles, structures, and digital world.

Students are engaged through curiosity, and most importantly through translatable, relatable course content that links to what they see and do every day. The lessons are steeped in the most recent research informed practice pedagogically and are presented in a way in which reduces extraneous load and allows full engagement.

The lessons and resources have also been created with the design cycle in mind so that children get experience in each stage of the processes involved in the creation aspect of

each module, helping them learn the transferable D&T skills that can be applied across projects.

One of the massive strengths of Kapow Primary's resources (as always) is their videos. The pupil videos in Design & Technology help support the children with creating the projects and can be put on a loop for the children to refer to during the lesson. These resources are incredible for teachers in terms of workload and modelling support in that they are able to focus attention on those who need it most, whilst the video addresses many (if not most) misconceptions from learners.

For me the deeper value of Kapow's Design & Technology resource bank are the teacher videos, which provide integrated CPD demonstrating how to model the skills and also imparting subject knowledge at the point of need. The advantage is that these videos can be utilised during planning and prep to ensure that the teacher fully understands how to deliver the content provided. It's like having a D&T mentor on demand, at any time – the perfect support resource for those who enjoy the subject but may not specialise in it.

Learners explore so much variety through the Kapow Primary content, varying from Come Dine with Me, where pupils create a three-course dinner, to Constructing a Windmill, in which learners build and make improvements to windmills they design. These skills are both stimulating and so important for understanding of how the world works.

teach PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Exceptionally intuitive resources
- ✓ Resources are well designed and presented
- ✓ Direct teaching of explicit design and technology skills
- ✓ Easy to deliver, and a valuable training resource

UPGRADE IF...

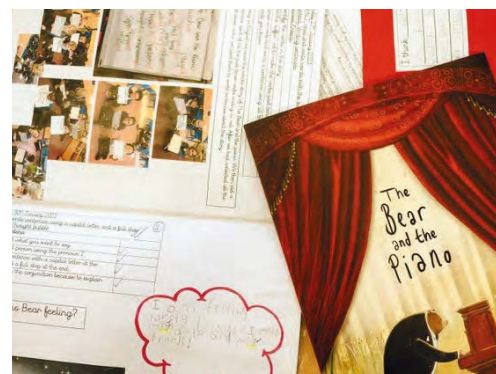
You are looking to develop your design and technology offer, especially if you don't have any subject specialists in the school.

For more information visit [kapowprimary.com/subjects/design-technology](https://www.kapowprimary.com/subjects/design-technology)

LITERACY 

Literacy Tree

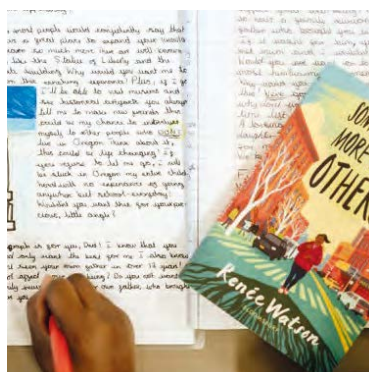
A complete book-based platform for primary schools



AT A GLANCE

- A complete book-based approach to teaching the English curriculum
- High quality and authentic children's literature resources
- A practical approach to teaching a text-based curriculum, full of strategies and ideas for immediate classroom use
- Teach Primary and Bett winners

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



A complete book-based approach to teaching English makes perfect sense as developing a love of reading is one of the most effective ways a school can raise attainment.

If you are looking to oxygenate children's learning through great literature then Literacy Tree have the air supply you need to improve attainment, health and wellbeing, and creativity across the curriculum.

Their 'Teach Through a Text' approach is about creating a thriving reading and writing culture by putting great novels, poetry collections, and high-quality non-fiction books at the very heart of English teaching, transforming children's attitudes to literacy and having a positive impact on learning.

They provide everything you need, with techniques and activities to teach grammar, punctuation, spelling, comprehension and writing. They also offer plenty of support and guidance on planning lessons and units for meaningful layered learning including mixed aged planning. Resources can be used as a complete scheme of work or adopted and adapted to suit accordingly. Access superb classroom toolkits, book lists, literature reviews, curriculum tips and home learning guidance.

Literacy Tree's approach is incredibly well-planned and thought through, with detailed guidance written by experts. They provide book-based planning sequences called Writing Roots that engage children to discover and take on the mantle of the expert helping them to write with clear audience and purpose. Everything sits under a literary theme and children journey through whole books and so upgrade their comprehension

skills progressively as part of their critical readers training.

What I like the most is the way Literacy Tree have embedded a real sense of community through their site with an authentic purpose of communicating information and shared experiences in relation to texts, activities and displays with others.

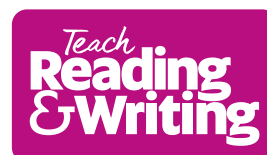
The thinking behind the resources places the learner centre stage and builds their self-efficacy by ensuring success in reading and writing.

Supporting all this, Literacy Tree have carefully selected an impressive range and breadth of authors, illustrators and genres to help teachers ensure progression within and across year groups. Here you will find a richness, diversity, flexibility and choice combined with an unremitting focus upon, and immersion in, reading for pleasure. Their new free Curriculum Maps are impressive and showcase all the books on offer, books that are right, relevant and full of representation.

In addition to their sumptuous suite of books, Literacy Tree have also designed and built a completely free and easy-to-access downloadable app for annotating, capturing and assessing work.

Training and support are readily available with regular online training sessions and planning surgeries for subject leaders, senior leaders and classroom teachers implementing resources.

This is teaching English by the book. It lays the foundations for you to build and embed a reading and writing culture and community in the fabric of your school.



VERDICT

- ✓ The complete thematic book-based approach to improving literacy standards
- ✓ A platform full of responsibility, rigour and relevance
- ✓ Celebrates reading and writing giving both a high profile
- ✓ Superb planning notes and gilt-edged guidance
- ✓ Puts quality children's literature at the very heart of literacy learning
- ✓ Fosters a whole school love of oracy, reading and writing
- ✓ Enables children to become competent, confident and critical readers, writers and viewers of texts
- ✓ Encourages children to become life-long readers and writers

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking to teach the whole English curriculum creatively through quality children's literature and raise engagement and attainment in language, vocabulary, reading and writing.

See literacytree.com for pricing information.

LITERACY/READING →

DreamBox Reading Plus

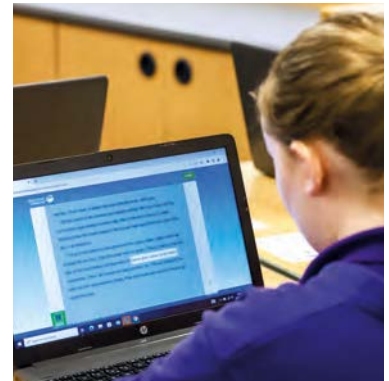


An online reading programme that develops students' reading skills and confidence

AT A GLANCE

- A web-based reading platform
- Designed to help readers become more efficient and effective
- Adaptive intelligence matches learners to texts and continues to do so throughout
- Huge range of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Compatible with most web-based devices

REVIEWED BY: ADAM RICHES



Finding a reading programme suitable to each student's ever-growing needs can be challenging. Many schools are now looking for edtech solutions to supplement their offers. Reading Plus isn't your stereotypical online programme – it teaches reading skills and is adaptive, meaning it can be used as a whole-school solution and something that improves each student's confidence and skills.

Guided by the most prominent reading and pedagogical research from the last 30 years, Reading Plus builds and sustains fluency and reading efficiency whilst exposing pupils to a diverse range of topical content in line with their ability. The platform has a simple aim – to make readers better.

The science behind the functionality is phenomenally impressive. Each reader is given a short baseline test upon first login. This baseline is adaptive, testing and assessing the reader as they move from text to text. At the end of the process, the pupil is matched to a level aligned with their reading ability.

There are 14 levels in total, with each level consisting of 70–80 texts on each level. One of the huge draws is that the content is suitable for KS2–4 – perfect for a number of contexts.

What strikes me about Reading Plus is it actually makes children read better. Not just in terms of exposure to different texts, but literally, read better.

Features such as the guided window are pure genius. This particular feature trains the learner how fast to read by utilising a moving

box. Not only does this reduce the extraneous load for readers as they look at the whole page, reducing the temptation to skip ahead, it also sequentially speeds up, stretching the reader to progressively increase their words per minute over a period of time.

Reading Plus is designed to build vocabulary confidence and expose learners to a plethora of different words. The vocabulary section boasts 2,500 words and the accessibility and functionality of vocabulary exploration is seamless. In addition to this, Reading Plus encourages visual skill building, getting pupils to strengthen their reading muscles and training their eyes to move in an effective and efficient way. This is a particularly helpful feature for weaker readers and EAL learners who may read from right to left in their mother tongue.

One of the most notable factors for me as a teacher is the detailed and precise use of pedagogical approaches to support reading. The scaffolding, consideration of cognitive load and impressive range of text types highlights the pedigree of the creators and staff of Reading Plus. It was designed by people who know about learning.

The online platform is compatible with the majority of web-based devices, meaning that students have access to reading wherever they are and they can read regardless of the device they own. All they need is the internet.

Teachers can track progress with ease through the highly functional and navigable interface.

teach PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Impressive assessing functionality to ensure reading is pitched right for each learner
- ✓ Huge range of texts and text types meaning learners are exposed to different types of reading
- ✓ Online functionality and usability is second to none
- ✓ Content applicable for KS2 through to 4.

UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for an all-inclusive reading package that allows tailored reading experiences for all learners.

For more info, see readingsolutionsuk.co.uk, call 0191 389 6078 or email info@readingsolutionsuk.com

SCIENCE 

Snap Science 2nd Edition

A comprehensive set of lesson plans and resources for teaching science from EYFS to Year 6.



AT A GLANCE

- Written by experienced teachers.
- Designed to meet national curriculum expectations and Ofsted recommendations.
- Includes detailed, editable lesson plans and other teaching resources.
- Develops teacher knowledge and ensures a consistent approach throughout the school.

REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES



From my frontline experience, there are few things in a teaching week that can engage the whole class better than a good science lesson. It seems to spark pupils into life and often allows them to bring their own ideas, observations and interests to an extent other subjects might struggle to match.

The problem is that the lessons can be a bit of a monster to pull together. Any natural enthusiasm you might have for the subject is at risk of extinction from all the planning and preparation. Invariably, if you are going to give each topic the hands-on treatment it deserves, there are numerous resources to gather and arrange. Even producing visually appealing slides or sorting cards can be a labour of love, as anyone who has stayed up into the early hours scouring the internet for appropriate pictures and videos will know.

By the time you've done all that, can you be sure that you have covered everything the national curriculum, not to mention Ofsted, demands of you?

What teachers need, then, is a comprehensive set of teaching resources that tick all the necessary boxes whilst generating lessons that inspire children. Too much to ask? Well, snap your fingers and your wish might come true.

Snap Science from Collins really is the complete package. Written by experienced, expert practitioners, it provides everything a school needs to meet its commitments to the science curriculum from Year 1 to Year 6. This

includes informative slides and videos as well as detailed, editable lesson plans and carefully designed resources to support practical activities. There are even materials for the often-neglected EYFS teachers too.

I particularly liked the way that every lesson is built around a question. Pupils will get a clear introduction to the concepts underpinning the topic. They will then gather data or make observations that enable them to answer that question, just as professional scientists do.

There is a strong emphasis on getting the children to think and work like scientists; this includes the explicit teaching of Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary. *Snap Science* also promotes the use of a wide range of teaching strategies from demonstrations to drama.

There is a sharp focus on assessment, with lessons clearly stating what the expected learning outcomes are and how these can be gauged. There are 'Snapshot' activities to support teacher judgements as well, and even assessment tracker spreadsheets to help monitor progress across the whole year.

However, for me, one of the most important aspects of any teacher support package is how it looks and feels to the user. Some can feel either trite or intimidating, but what impressed me with *Snap Science* is how it blends professionalism with a passion for the subject matter. Going through the materials felt like having an enthusiastic, supportive expert teacher on my shoulder. And who could wish for more than that?

teach PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Detailed and informative
- ✓ Easy to implement
- ✓ Evidence-informed teaching strategies
- ✓ Reduces teacher workload
- ✓ Supports subject leadership

UPGRADE IF...

You want a one-stop shop for everything you need to deliver the entire primary science curriculum in a comprehensive, practical and engaging way.

Find out more at collins.co.uk/snapscience

Q & A

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

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

For me, perfect happiness comes from the relationships I've established with the children I teach. I work hard to develop positive relationships, because I know they're fundamental to a child being successful in every aspect of school life and beyond.

I remember once being shown a Ted Talk that discussed the power of connection for children and the importance of children having a 'champion' who never gives up on them. I love watching children that I have championed grow in confidence, enjoy learning, and take pride in their successes.

2 What is your greatest fear at work?

Forgetting that it's my staff meeting and having no time at all to prepare for it. While I'm perfectly happy in front of a group of children, the prospect of delivering staff meetings always terrifies me. There surely could be nothing worse than standing in front of my fellow teachers with nothing to deliver.

3 What is your current state of mind?

Excited, but overwhelmed. This year I've started at a new school and taken on a new role, which has, at times, felt daunting. I love that I can influence the way the school grows and develops, and I'm trying not to let the 'big picture' distract me from the small, achievable steps. I'm excited to see the impact of the small steps over the next year.

4 What do you consider the most overrated teacher virtue?

Having to be an expert in everything. There are areas of the curriculum that I feel confident in and excited to teach, but there are some areas where my subject knowledge lets me down. Trying to be perfect at everything has, at times, made me feel like I am failing. Instead, I now acknowledge what my weaknesses are and ask for support from a colleague. It's not reasonable or realistic to expect a teacher to be an expert in every area of the curriculum.

5 On what occasion do you lie to your class?

I have absolutely no shame in lying to children if it helps to build or develop their confidence. A child may not be the best footballer on the team, but I am going to tell them they were amazing. A child may not sing or play their musical instrument well, but I am going to assure them that they are producing the most beautiful music. A child may not produce an age-appropriate piece of writing, but if they've worked hard, I am absolutely going to tell them that it's outstanding.

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

I'm ashamed to admit that the most overused phrase in my class is probably, "If it's not finished by the end of the lesson, you will have to complete it in your break time."

7 What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

When I first started teaching, I taught in Year 6, and I loved it. But after a few years, I wanted to try something new, and I was offered the opportunity to teach in Year 1. I had completely underestimated the enormity of the change. I'd never taught phonics and had no idea what a phonics lesson looked like. That year I learnt a lot and really developed my teaching skills.

8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

When I taught KS1, it was definitely my magic wand. One year, an LSA I worked with upgraded my boring wand to one that made a magical sound, and it worked wonders.

Aside from the wand, it would be the translation app. I've taught several children who have arrived in the country with little or no English and appeared completely overwhelmed by their new environment. The translation app enabled me to communicate and build relationships quickly with the children, and also enabled them to have a method of communicating with both me and their peers. TP



NAME: Melanie Higgs
JOB ROLE: Year 6 teacher and English lead.



Teach outstanding science in your school, with Snap Science, created by an expert author team.

Ensure an evidence-informed, best-practice approach to planning, teaching and assessing science in a coherent, connected curriculum so that all children in your school make secure progress in science.

NOW WITH:

- ✓ Easier timetabling with 6 modules per year, ensuring full curriculum coverage in a manageable number of lessons
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The No 1 UK
Primary Science
Programme is
now better
than ever!



Discover more



“Ready Steady Write is an excellent, user-friendly and comprehensive platform that is long-lasting and rich.”

R Simpson-Hargreaves, UKLA



Whole School Consistency

Quality Literature at the core

Fully Sequenced English Curriculum

Reduce Teacher Workload



We improve Outcomes in Reading and Writing



Email hello@literacycounts.co.uk for free sample access of these resources.



High-quality professional development and award-winning resources to support a school's every literacy need from EYFS - Y6.