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What should we do about attendance?

**PODKIN ONE-EAR** Write epic battles in our KS2 book topic



**N** 

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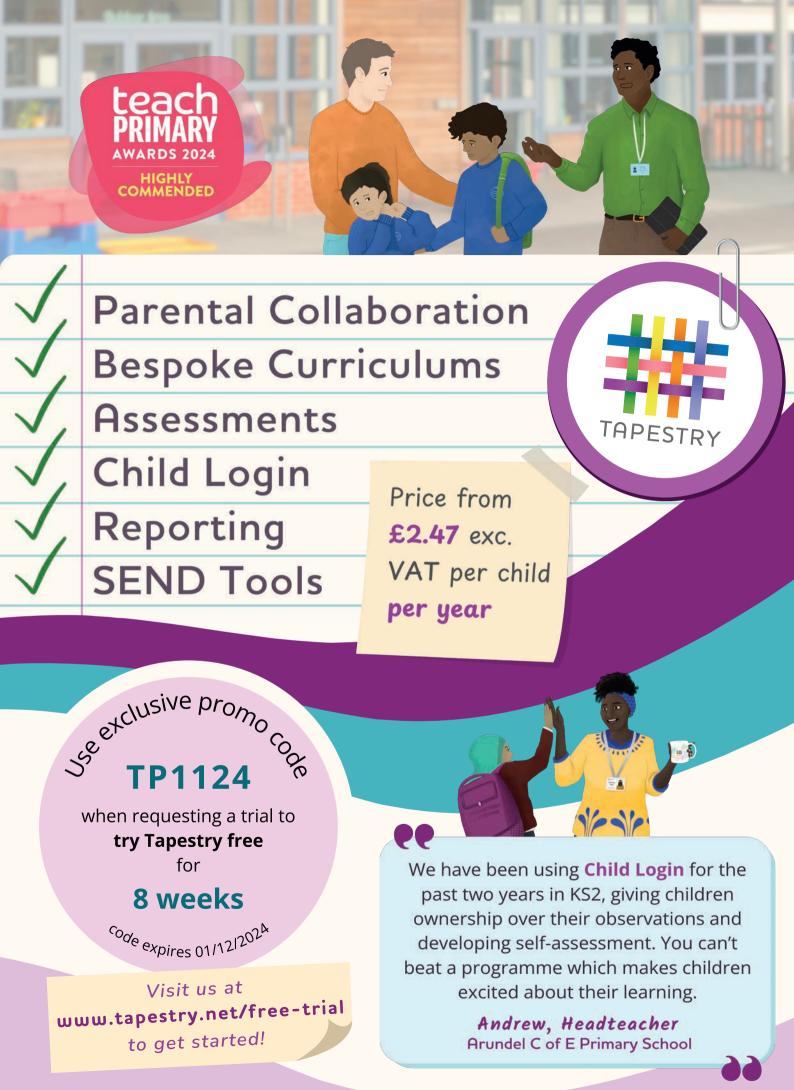
SSUE: 18.8

reative Take your class on a moss safari!

SEND BUILDING STRONG HOME-SCHOOL TIES

HISTORY DIG INTO MESOLITHIC LIFE

ART **EXPLORE LIGHT & DARK WITH FIREWORKS** 



# Hello!



ow time flies. Not only is this the last *Teach Primary* of 2024, it's also my final one as editor. Charley is back from maternity leave, and has already lined up all sorts of interesting and useful articles for the next issue of the magazine. At the risk of sounding like an Oscar winner, I'd like to thank all the contributors I've worked with over the last year, as well as my lovely colleagues – a

special shout must go out to our talented designers.

It doesn't seem long either since our annual Resource Awards, but they're back! Turn to page 71 to discover the winners and runners-up in all nine categories; the standard of entries was really impressive, giving our expert judges some difficult decisions to make.

This issue is a SATs special, and includes an invaluable selection of best-practice teaching ideas for both English and maths. Ruth Astley brings a timely reminder that maths SATs aren't just about numeracy (p65) and Rachel Ede offers a range of activity ideas to help energise your SATs prep (p67). On page 56, literacy expert Shareen Wilkinson reviews the 2024 reading paper and uses her findings to plan for SATs success in 2025.

There's a thought-provoking feature from Nikki Gamble and Jo Castro on page 50. They propose rethinking the concept of talking partners, and instead switching focus to *listening*. Have a read – you may end up reconsidering how you go about pair and group work. Dialogue is something of a focus in November's leadership section too, as our contributors look into attendance issues, and how to get parental buy-in on getting and keeping children in school (p37).

I hope you're still feeling *some* of the benefits of the half-term break, and that the rest of the year goes well for you and your class. Do drop us a line if you'd like to suggest a new feature or resource.

Lydia

Lydia Grove, editor X @TeachPrimaryLG

Don't miss our next issue, available from 6th January

#### POWERED BY...



**KAYTIE HOLDSTOCK** discusses the important role of the art lead

"We need to fight for improvements in the quality and quantity of art within schools" P24



JON BIDDLE dives into The Legend of Podkin One-Ear

"It's a book that is rapidly heading towards classic status" P45



SHAREEN WILKINSON offers detailed advice on preparing for 2025's SATs reading paper

"Being able to fully explain a concept is beneficial for embedding knowledge" P56

## Are your pupils SATs ready?

Discover how DreamBox Reading Plus, the online reading development programme, can identify your pupils' skills gaps and accelerate reading progress on page 63.

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## Contents ISSUE 18.8



### REGULARS

- 8 BREAKTIME
- **11 6 WAYS...** ... to integrate reading for pleasure from Reception through to Year 6
- **19 HOW I DO IT** Get to know your pupils better by creating 'personality islands'
- 28 MEDIUM-TERM PLAN A six-week unit on Ancient Greece

## We're all cars!

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!

## VOICES

- 13 **KEVIN HARCOMBE** Here we go again... there's another curriculum review on the horizon
- **15 HOW DID WE END UP HERE?** A recent report on the last two decades of education policy lays out a raft of major questions and challenges for the government
- **17 A LETTER TO...** Prospective authors, on how to go about writing your first book
- 21 UNDERCOVER TEACHER Why teaching your own children isn't the struggle it's made out to be

#### **SPECIAL SECTION**

#### SATS SPECIAL

- 56 NEED TO KNOW Shareen Wilkinson breaks down this year's reading paper, and pulls out some secrets to 2025 success...
- 60 HAVE YOU EVER MET A TENREC? Alex Quigley asks whether the reading paper needs rethinking altogether
- 65 NOT JUST NUMBERS Ruth Astley explains why there's more to maths SATs than numeracy
- 67 BRING ON THE FUN! Rachael Ede offers some practical ideas to energise your SATs prep
- 69 TAKE IT DOWN, OR BUILD IT UP? Adam Kohlbeck takes a new look at how to use scaffolding when teaching SATs problems



#### We want to hear from you!

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

- teachwire.net
- facebook.com/teachwire
- twitter.com/teachprimary
- lydia.grove@theteachco.com

PUBLISHERS: Joe Carter Sam Reubin Richard Stebbing

EDITOR: Lydia Grove, lydia.grove@artichokehq.com

GROUP ADVERTISING MANAGER: Samantha Law, samantha.law@artichokehq.com 01206 505499

ADVERTISING MANAGER: Demi Maynard, demi.maynard@artichokehq.com 01206 505962

ACCOUNT MANAGER: Kim Richards, kim.richards@artichokehq.com 01206 505420

ART EDITORS: Richard Allen & Sarah Barajas

ACCOUNTS: artichokemedialtd@integral2.com

subscriptions@artichokeHQ.com
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#### FEATURES

#### 23 LOCK IT DOWN

Find out how your school can best combat the rising threat of cyber crime

24 HEAVY IS THE HEAD

It's tough being art lead, but this is a role that really matters, says Kaytie Holdstock

#### 33 PARTNERING UP

A good home-school relationship can make all the difference to a child with special educational needs

#### 37 THIS WAY!

School improvement advice for headteachers and SLT – this issue we're looking at attendance

### AWARDS

## 71 TEACH PRIMARY RESOURCE AWARDS 2024

The results are in! We reveal this year's winners, chosen by our panel of expert judges



#### LESSON PLANS

#### **90 HISTORY** Exploring Star Carr – give children a glimpse of life in the Mesolithic period

92 ENGLISH

This zero-prep poetry lesson includes a video prompt from a CLiPPA prize-winning poet

94 SCIENCE

Take your class on a moss safari

#### 96 ART

Create your own night sky with these seasonal activities for KS1



- 42 WAGOLL Peer inside the mind of the author and help pupils understand how to use dialogue to show character and develop plot
- **45 BOOK TOPIC** Join a found family on a perilous journey in Kieran Larwood's charming adventure story, *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear*
- 50 NO MORE TALKING PARTNERS It's time to start listening, say Nikki Gamble and Jo Castro
- 52 BOOK CLUB We review five new titles that your class will love



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0

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#### NOVEMBER

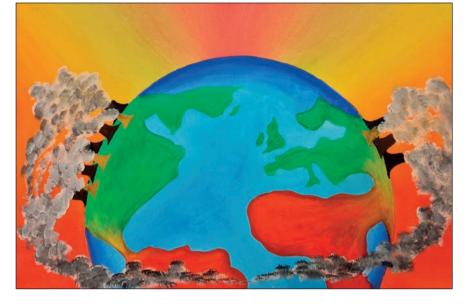
# Breaktime Research

Interviews | Ideas | Resources News 

## Make art for climate justice

Schoolchildren up and down the country are putting their creative talents to use in artwork, poetry and prose as part of a new initiative aimed at helping young people raise their voices on environmental issues. Creative for Climate Justice is a partnership between CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam GB, Send My Friend to School, and the Royal Society of Literature, with support from The Climate Coalition.

Schools sign up for a set of



resources, which teach children about the climate crisis and challenge them to come up with creative ways of sharing their opinions and their hopes for the planet – whether in drawings, sculpture, poetry or prose.

Pieces from each school will be selected for a national online gallery, as well as an exhibition in the Houses of Parliament, to inspire MPs and Ministers to take action.

Visit tinyurl.com/tp-CreativeClimate to get involved.

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



**GET READY** FOR SATS SATs Springboard has helped 22,000 pupils prepare for SATs with greater confidence. 98 per cent of teachers saw progress, 100 per cent reduced their workload, and 92 per cent reported less pupil anxiety. Visit Ibq.org/sats

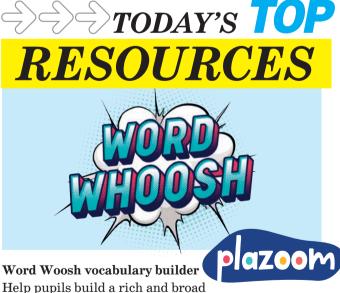


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vocabulary from Reception to Year 6 and beyond, with these powerful resource packs designed to clarify and extend children's understanding of tier 2 words, enabling them to make more ambitious and accurate language choices when speaking and writing. Subscribe now at tinyurl.com/tp-WordWhoosh

#### IN EVERY ISSUE



## **UK** primary schools, ready? Gladiators, ready?

The Gladiators micro:bit competition brings together the BBC micro:bit - the next gen campaign with the hit TV

show Gladiators. It invites 7- to 11-year-olds to design a gadget to improve a Gladiator's performance.

Prizes include a Gladiator visit, a £500 voucher for computing equipment and more!

Teachers can join by watching a special lesson featuring Gladiators Phantom and Dynamite, or schedule in some Gladiator fun using our FREE, curriculum-aligned lesson plans. Go to bbc.co.uk/microbit to find out more, along with full terms and privacy notice.

Entries close at midday on 6th December 2024.

## Grab a free growing kit

A horticulture student from Droitwich is launching a pioneering project to get children growing - and is looking for schools across the UK to take part.

Ross Dyke is asking primary schools to apply for the pilot project. Each successful school will receive a compostable, recyclable, biodegradable and peat-free sunflower grow kit. The schools selected to take part will also be provided with prizes such as bug hotels and bird houses to award to their best growers. All schools that take part in the trial will then be entered into a raffle. which will be drawn in June next year, with the winning school receiving a special day with Lee Connelly, the UK's leading children's gardening educator.

Go to theplantpod.co.uk to sign up.



# 61% of Gen Zs would consider working as a teacher

## Look ahead Book ahead

HADRIAN'S WALL VIRTUAL **FOCUS DAY** Join Hadrian's Wall Learning and Engagement Forum on 27th November



for a day of virtual KS2 activities. Take part in live workshops and discover more about the various sites across the Wall. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-Virtual



packs, story starters and more. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-ChristmasResources





#### **Michael Rosen** Author, poet, broadcaster, activist and academic

1. Rather excitingly, this year will see the first ever Michael Rosen Day. How does it feel to be a living legend?!

A long time ago, there used to be a joke – not mine – about someone being 'a legend in their own lunchtime'. If I could be a legend in several lunchtimes, I would be very proud.

## 2. What will you be getting up to on Michael Rosen Day?

Doing exactly what I'm told to do\*. I'm very biddable when it comes to big occasions. This feels very, very big, so you can be absolutely sure I will be there. One thing will be to do a live interview and performance with the amazing MC Grammar. I think rapping will be involved. I will also eat some raisins, in order to prove that my real name is 'Michael Raisin'.

3. You've recently shared your reading manifesto. Are there any items on it that you think are particularly important for teachers to bear in mind in the classroom

I just hope that teachers can find time in their very busy curriculum to fit in reading for pleasure and talking about books, without worrying too much about comprehension during those times. Reading books teaches children a huge amount anyway.

\*Michael will be holding a live virtual event at 10am on Michael Rosen Day. celebrating the joy of books and reading with MC Grammar, hosted by Read for Good. Sign up for free, and download free resources and activities at michaelrosen.co.uk/michaelrosenday



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**HOW IT WORKS** 



## **FEATURES**

- Ø Planning Classroom visuals 🕢 CPD
- 🖌 App

🗭 Link Consultant

## WHY US?

"The book and the planning had us all captivated. It generated fabulous work, tears and delight. Highly recommend."

Rebecca Dowsett, Year 6 teacher





#### FEATURES LITERACY



# 6 ways to boost reading for pleasure

Get your whole school excited about books with these simple steps



LEIA SANDS is the librarian at Steyning C of E Primary School and Swiss Gardens Primary School.

Steyning Primary recently won the Peter Usborne School Library of the Year Award at the School Library Association Awards.

#### 4 | ENSURE ACCESS TO BOOKS EVERYWHERE

Books don't just have to live in a library or book corner, they can be anywhere – on a table in the corridor, by reception, near the hall or in the playground in a reading shed. Give your children the opportunity to pick up a book wherever they may be. The more your children are interested in the books you provide, the more they will want to read. Make this even more engaging by tapping into children's current interests. For example, every January we offer books related to films they may have watched over Christmas, and in October we celebrate the best poetry books to coincide with National Poetry Day.

#### **5 REVIEW YOUR FUNDING OPTIONS**

We all know that books can be costly, and school budgets are getting smaller. Approach your PTA and see if they can provide funding to purchase new books and look into applying for grants. Our local bookshop started a scheme where community members could purchase books for the school library. Consider running a second-hand book sale, selling off unwanted stock to raise funds for new books.

#### 6 | CELEBRATE READING ALL YEAR ROUND

Think about events that are taking place nationally. Are there books that support that area or topic, whether it's fiction, non-fiction or even news articles? Highlight different reading materials at key moments such as Black History Month and World Book Day. At the same time, promote external and internal reading competitions as they're a great way to build excitement across the school.

#### **1 GET TO KNOW YOUR CHILDREN**

In autumn term, share a short survey, or take time to talk to pupils to find out what their reading journey has been like so far. Do they enjoy reading? If so, what genres? What are their favourite books and authors? Do they read at home (with and without adults)? How often do they read outside of the classroom? By getting to know your children as readers, you can adapt any reading corners you have and find enticing books full of recommendations, tailored to their needs and interests.

#### 2 GET COLLEAGUES EXCITED ABOUT READING

Do the teachers, teaching assistants and members of the SLT show themselves as readers? At Steyning Primary, we start staff meetings with book recommendations and have a WhatsApp group, Book Buzz, to share thoughts and feedback. I encourage all adults to follow authors on social media and participate in initiatives like the Reading Agency's Teaching Reading Challenge. If you get the adults excited about reading, their enthusiasm filters down to the children.

#### 3 | THINK DEDICATED READING ASSEMBLIES

We hold dedicated reading assemblies where we share different books and highlight different authors, often linking to key awareness days, such as Anti-Bullying Week, or covering books that reflect our children's experiences, such as being young carers. Our children take an active role too. We have 'Books that made me a reader' segments, where pupils interview a member of staff to find out which books got them excited about reading when they were a child. And, at the end of the academic year, our Year 6 pupils run the reading assembly, sharing their favourite books from their time at the school. These assemblies are a fantastic way to create excitement around reading.



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#### **Kevin Harcombe**





## Oh look! It's another review...

**Kevin Harcombe** thinks he's seen more than his fair share of these curriculum revisions

race yourselves! The national curriculum is being reviewed. Again. Since its introduction in 1988, there have been many reviews of the national curriculum as governments came and went and sought to put their own stamp on things. Or, as I prefer to put it, meddle.

The original was introduced by Baker (Kenneth not Ted, though Ted might have made a better fist of it). Each primary teacher in England was presented with nearly a dozen ring files, taking up about a metre of shelf space in every classroom, and containing specifications for every subject they had to teach. Requirements for each subject were devised by a committee of specialists in that field. Which was great, but they didn't really talk to all the other subject specialists; and also didn't take account of the absurd restriction of only twenty-four hours in a day in which to teach this stuff.

#### **Sunday league?**

Inevitably, a few years later, another Conservative education secretary, Shepherd (Gillian, not Cybill) fancied getting in on the act and asked Ron Dearing to slim down the original voluminous iteration. He sounds like he should be a manager of a second division football club, but Sir Ron was a shrewd chap who duly had a go at herding the subject specialist cats. The KS2 curriculum in its entirety could now be successfully taught just before the Year 6 children celebrated their 21st birthdays. Nice one, Ron!

Some three years later, Labour minister David Blunkett disapplied the statutory Programmes of Study for foundation subjects to focus more on English, mathematics and science. *National Curriculum 3 – Judgement Day* did poorly at the staff room box office though.

A lengthy seven years after that, Ed Balls was education secretary – a role he

took in preparation for his memorable salsa to *Gangnam Style* on Strictly. Balls tasked Jim Rose, a delightful chap I had the pleasure of welcoming to my school, with another review. Rose recommended replacing single subjects with broader (and more primary friendly) 'areas of learning'.

At the same time, Professor Robin Alexander launched his own independent Cambridge Review. Yes – two reviews at once! This was a sort of 'Yah! Boo! Sucks!' from one academic to another. I took part in some information gathering for the Cambridge Review and felt both Alexander and Rose were aiming to take primary education in a promising direction.

#### **Doorstops**

Alas, a little global banking crisis intervened. Balls and Labour were turfed out and Rose's proposed reforms were ditched by incoming Education Secretary, Michael Gove. He asked Oates (Tim, not Porridge) to have a stab at a review. I was at university with Tim – a clever chap, but his review was a bit meh; at the launch of it he seemed most fixated with children having exercise books that were thick and full. (Gove also liked thick books, which was why he sent every school a massive, fake-leather-bound King James Bible, which weighed more than the average reception child and came in handy for illegally holding open fire doors to aid ventilation during Covid.)

#### **Round** again

This current review, led by Professor Francis, aims to revive music, art, sport and drama, as well as including environmental education, global history, critical thinking and ethical issues, while also retaining the primacy of STEM subjects. So that's the morning teaching taken care of.

Perhaps, and this is just a shot in the dark, primary teachers are regularly given an impossible task? Literacy, numeracy, science, computing, creativity and some sport is plenty. Or maybe even allow schools local autonomy to modify the curriculum according to the actual needs of their children. This review will come and go like all the others, but whatever happens, I'm sure we'll all enjoy Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson's tango to Abba's Voulez Vous on Strictly in the near future. **TP** 

Kevin Harcombe is former headteacher of Redlands Primary, Fareham.



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## How did we get here, and what's next?

Dr Kevin Latham considers where the last two decades of education policy have left us

n the last week of October, the Sutton Trust published a reflective analysis, by education expert Sam Freedman, of the last 20 years of education policy in England (suttontrust.com/our-research/ lessons-learnt). The piece reminds us that whatever challenges are facing the education sector, and however difficult it may seem for those working within the system – sometimes just to keep their heads above water – real progress has nonetheless been made.

#### The good news...

The long view is useful for recognising how all the efforts of teachers, school leaders, governors and others have benefitted students. There are now also far more pupils staying in post-16 education and achieving tertiary level qualifications than there were 20 years ago. And there's evidence that pupils' performance in English, especially reading, has remained relatively steady or shown some improvement over time, particularly for primary pupils, with the country now a strong performer internationally.

#### ...and the bad

However, there are also reasons for concern. Perhaps the most fundamental of these is the failure to properly address the socioeconomic attainment gap over this period. Freedman's report reminds us of the New Labour government's commitment to tackle and, importantly, fund interventions in this area. This was also claimed as a priority by the successor coalition government, and by the subsequent Conservative government when they first took office. Indeed, there was some progress in narrowing the disadvantage gap (though not for persistently disadvantaged pupils) in the 2010s.

That progress was already slowing before the pandemic, and a decade's worth of progress has now been reversed. Hence we see that, whatever the overall improvements in standards in schools, pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds are no nearer to reaping the benefits of that progress.

Despite repeated declared intentions by governments of various colours to prioritise closing the attainment gap, the broad trends in education policy that Freedman identifies have failed to do this. That includes the increasing centralisation of setting and measuring standards, the gradual marginalisation of local authorities that previously ran education, and ever more responsibility and autonomy in the day-to-day running of schools for individual school and trust leaders.

#### What now?

We are at a pivotal moment for education. Schools face fundamental pressures from poorly maintained buildings, teacher retention and recruitment issues, real-term per-pupil funding cuts, rising mental health issues and increasing SEND diagnoses. If education and wider support services for young people are allowed to slide down the government's agenda, we can expect another report in 20 years' time lamenting once again the failure to close the attainment gap.

If the attainment gap is allowed to spread and root itself at this early stage, secondary schools are always going to be playing catch-up. And how can already stretched teachers and resources be expected to better support disadvantaged pupils while experiencing these levels of cuts to fundamental support? While additional funding for capital spending in schools, teachers' pay and free breakfast clubs are all welcome, a far greater amount of money is needed to tackle the substantial issues facing schools today.

As such, the Chancellor's Budget Statement represents a missed chance for the government's opportunity mission – with no new measures to improve opportunities for those from the poorest homes. Funding needs to be rebalanced back towards schools in the most disadvantaged areas, and we need to see a clear plan from the Government to tackle the attainment gap in schools. **TP** 

Kevin Latham is research and policy manager at the Sutton Trust, having previously taught social sciences in a state comprehensive and worked as a university lecturer.



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COLLABORATION

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VOICES

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

## A letter to... Prospective education authors

Always wanted to write a book? You should give it a go, says bestselling author **Sue Cowley**, just bear in mind this advice



t's been twenty-five years since I wrote my first teaching book. That title, *How to Survive your First Year in Teaching*, is currently in its fourth edition,

and I've been lucky enough to publish more than thirty books for teachers since. When I started writing, there was little in the way of practical education books, but in recent years, there has been an explosion in the number.

There is clearly something appealing to teachers about having their ideas in print, but writing can have its pitfalls. Here, then, is my best advice if you are thinking about writing a book yourself.

When pinning down the subject for your book, consider what your readers need to read, rather than what you want to write. It's tempting to use your book to express your views on a topic, but busy teachers want to buy books that work for them.

They need practical advice and realistic content about the real-world issues they face in their classrooms. Understand the market: most teaching books are bought by trainees and new teachers. If you write something niche, it may only sell a handful of copies.

Writing a book is not something that combines easily with teacher workload, so be realistic about how long it will take to complete. There is a gap between submitting a manuscript, and seeing your book on a shelf in a shop or online.

This 'production process' can take six months to a year – your book must be

edited, typeset, given a cover and a blurb, before it goes into production.

Remember that tastes, fashions and the language used in education books will change over time. Write about what you know and about what will be *useful* to your readers, rather than trying to follow fashions and trends.

Prospective education authors often ask me if they need an agent, and the simple answer is 'no'. Writing non-fiction for a specialist audience is different from

"If your book is a success, negotiating your contract could make a significant difference to what you get paid"

writing fiction. You can approach publishers yourself, and you will find proposal forms on their websites.

Do not submit your idea and sample material to more than one publisher at a time (it's basically just rude!). Reputable publishers will probably send your proposal out for review, before deciding whether to contract you to write it. Talking of contracts, make sure that you read the contract you are sent carefully and aim to negotiate terms. Join the Society of Authors and use their contract advice service before asking questions of a prospective publisher.

While that might seem unnecessary, given that most education books are not big sellers, if your book is a success then negotiating your contract could make a significant difference to what you get paid.

Once you have published your book, you will be on tenterhooks waiting for the first reviews to arrive. Although positive reviews are lovely, it is positive word of mouth that is by far the most important.

When readers tell me that they bought my behaviour book years ago and they recommend it to their trainees, or that my book changed the way they manage their class, that's like hitting the jackpot.

Any review is better than no review, but receiving negative ones can feel painful. My best advice is to suck it up and never ever to respond to negative critique. Once you send your book out into the world, some readers will not like it, and they have the absolute right to express that view.

Above all else, there is nothing quite like having that first, crisp new edition of a book that you wrote yourself in your hands. So, if you fancy writing a book, then go for it! You'll never know what might happen until you try...

Yours. Sue

Sue Cowley's latest book is the sixth edition of her international bestseller, Getting your Class to Behave.

suecowley.co.uk

#### PARTNER CONTENT

## ASK THE EXPERT "Teachers should receive confidence"

JCA's Duncan Kemp explains how activity residential providers must prove they offer valuable, child-centred experiences

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#### FEATURES PASTORAL

How I do it Get to know your Year 6s better, with personality islands...

#### KARL MCGRATH



We began by watching a clip from Inside Out and discussing the concept of 'personality islands' as introduced in the film. Each island represents an aspect of a child's personality, such as hobbies, values, or relationships. Starting with my own model, I



encouraged pupils to think about what

makes them 'them.' We discussed things like family, sports, or art. The children were excited by the idea of visualising their personalities in a tangible way, which boosted engagement and offered a fresh way to get to know them.

fter watching Disney's Inside Out 2, I was inspired to use this activity as an alternative to the usual 'get to know your class' activities with my Year 6s. The task was designed to help the children spotlight the core elements that make up who they are, just like in the movie. Through sharing and discussion, pupils explored their unique traits and hobbies, giving them a powerful tool for self-expression as they transitioned into a new school year. It also created a platform for meaningful conversations about identity, making this an activity that can be used time and time again, no matter the subject.

Next, the children were allowed to draw

- their own islands, or use a template I
- provided. They grabbed their pencils and
- started to sketch their ideas, which included
- various aspects like Family Island, Sport
- Island and Art Island. I encouraged the
- children to think hard about what they enjoy
- or love to do, and what is important to them.
- Their drawings didn't have to be perfect,
- but needed to represent their unique selves. We shared
- examples of what these islands could be as we continued.

Once we had discussed possible ideas and interpretations, and the basic structures of their islands were drawn, the children started to add further details, such as symbols or colours that represented their interests or values. For example, pupils who drew Art Island often added paintbrushes or drawings, while Family Island would include pictures or representations of loved ones. The level of personalisation turned each island into a visual expression of a child's personality, helping them reflect on what is most important to them, and worth cherishing.







The final step of the activity involved sharing their islands with the class - if the children felt comfortable, as this task can be quite personal. However, it was an invaluable opportunity

for children to communicate what makes them unique. Whether they shared their love for sports or a special connection with family, this step fostered a strong sense of community in the classroom. It also opened a conversation about how everyone's personality islands are different but equally valuable.



As this exercise was part of our transition days, it was the perfect lead-in to deeper discussions about the changes Year 6 will face. By understanding themselves better, the children were able to think more confidently about the challenges ahead. Moreover, as they learned about their peers' islands, the group dynamic began to solidify, which is key to forming a supportive and



inclusive class environment. We have incorporated the same concept in different ways. Most recently, we used it to highlight our worldviews in religious education, where the islands represented each child's perspective.



Karl McGrath, a Year 6 teacher and curriculum task design lead at Benton Park Primary, develops curriculum driven, engaging task design models.

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#### VOICES

#### UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Negative perceptions around being both parent and teacher to your children are undeserved

What's wrong with teaching your own child?

hat?! You've taught your own kids?!" If I had a pound for every time I've heard this, usually with a look of horror emblazoned across the exclaimer's face, I'd be pretty rich by now...

Yes, I've taught my own children – all three of them in fact – and despite the situation's challenges (and there have been a few) I wouldn't change the experience for the world. I'm always surprised by the negativity people seem to direct at this situation. Don't get me wrong, I know all children are different, and parent/child relationships differ greatly, but for me and my children it worked.

Contrary to common belief (particularly on the parent playground), teaching one's own children doesn't mean they get to choose the story every day, receive the most house points, get chosen for all the special jobs, play the star role in the nativity or win all the class competitions. In my experience, the opposite happens; I was probably a little too hard on my children for fear of being accused of favouritism. I didn't want people to think I was giving specie

people to think I was giving special attention to them. As class teacher, as well as parent of a pupil, there is a careful and trickly balancing act to play. On the one hand you want your child to fit in with their peers and to detach from the family bond, but on the other, they are still your baby. It's hard for both the parent/ teacher and the child in this sense and does take a little bit of getting used to. We found regular chats outside of the classroom and the school day, in the comfort of home, helped us manage the situation and establish routines and expectations. Indeed, sharing Mummy with 29 other pupils is a unique and challenging situation to be in, and it's unrealistic to expect a young child to sail through it without any hiccups.

"Teaching one's own children doesn't mean they get to choose the story every day" I was lucky to have the support of an amazing TA while teaching my children's classes. She always knew when to step in to support, especially when certain

circumstances occurred where emotions could come into play. I was able to stand aside and let her handle situations such as friendship fallouts or upsets – times when it was hard to detach from that mother/child bond. She was also able to recognise when my

child was behaving for me as their mum rather than their teacher, and would magically swoop in to intervene.

As teachers, we're often told to reflect on our teaching and our classroom environments using the question 'Would I be happy if my child was in this class?'. Well, I was in this situation and yes, I was happy. I loved having my children experience my creative approach to teaching, feeding off my enthusiasm for diverse, rich children's books and learning in the beautiful, purposeful space I'd created. As a conscientious teacher (with a bit of a perfectionist nature) I always want this for any child in my care,

but teaching my own children gave me that extra drive and boost to deliver.

I do think other parents recognised this too. They took comfort in the knowledge that I was delivering lessons and experiences that I was happy for my children to be receiving.

I will forever be grateful that I got to spend a whole year teaching each of my own children. I experienced so many situations with them, and shared so many memories that others aren't lucky enough to do. I was present for every school moment, every success and every milestone. I'm glad I was Mrs Mummy (yes, it was their choice to call me this) and my children – now grown – share equally positive memories of this time together too. **TP** 

6

The author is a teacher in England.



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#### FEATURES LEADERSHIP

## Lock it DOWN Gareth Jelley offers cyber security advice for schools

igures released by the Information Commissioner's Office, show 347 cyber incidents were reported in the education and childcare sector in 2023 – an increase of 55 per cent on 2022. Meanwhile, government data suggests most schools have identified a cyber-security breach in the past year (tinyurl.com/ tp-CyberBreaches).

A great place to learn more about best practice is the Department for Education's guidance for schools (tinyurl.com/ tp-CyberStandards), which outlines the standards that your school should meet on cyber security and user accounts.

The guidance highlights that cyber incidents and attacks have significant operational and financial impacts on schools, as well as reputational damage. Data breaches can lead to safeguarding issues, due to sensitive personal data being compromised, and may even affect pupil outcomes.

Significant and lasting disruption, including the risk of repeated future cyber incidents and attacks, and even school or college closure is also possible. But what can schools do to boost security?

#### **Risk assessment**

It's really important to understand the risks associated with your hardware, software and data if you are to keep pupils and staff safe. You should aim to conduct a cyber risk assessment annually and review it every term. Begin by identifying weaknesses. Then put processes in place to help reduce risk, secure systems to make them more resilient to attacks and prepare a cyber response plan to be implemented quickly in the event of a serious incident, to minimise any impact to the school.

#### **Rapid response**

Create a risk management process and cyber response plan that you can roll out in the event of a cyber incident (lgfl.net/services/security/ elevate). Start by creating a risk register – collectively identify, analyse, and solve risks before they become problems and place into a regularly tested business continuity plan.

Keep cloud-based and hard copies of your plan and documentation.

Next, prepare a Cybersecurity Incident Response Plan, including instructions on how to respond to a serious security incident, such as a data breach, data leak, ransomware attack, or loss of sensitive information.

Finally, put in place a risk protection arrangement (RPA) cover, which can be a cost-effective alternative to commercial insurance (tinyurl.com/tp-RiskProtect).

#### **Building barriers**

Safeguard your digital technology and data with anti-malware – a type of software program created to protect information technology (IT) systems and individual computers from malicious software, or malware.

You should also ensure you have a firewall in place; this is a cybersecurity solution that protects your computer or network from



## "Most schools have identified a cyber-security breach in the past year"

unwanted traffic coming in or going out.

You'll also need to implement Role-Based Access Control (RBAC), where the level of access to the network is determined by each person's role within the school, and employees are only allowed to access the information necessary to effectively perform their duties.

#### **Keeping up to date**

Replace software and systems that no longer receive regular security updates from their vendors, as this could impact the level of security afforded. Download security patches (software and operating system (OS) updates that address security vulnerabilities within a program or product) as soon as possible. This will resolve hardware, operating systems and application vulnerabilities that could be exploited by hackers.

Make sure your systems are backed up on a regular schedule, and store your backups in different physical locations (including the cloud) so that you can reinstall current data should a cyber-attack take place. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) advises schools to make three copies of their data, two of which should be on separate devices and one of which is offsite - this could include a cloud backup service.

And if you are unfortunate enough to be targeted, contact Action Fraud (actionfraud.police. uk) as soon as possible. Action Fraud is the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cybercrime, and a central point of contact for information about fraud and financially motivated internet crime.

Visit **lgfl.net/security** for further advice and support. **TP** 



Gareth Jelley is product security manager at edtech charity

LGfL-The National Grid for Learning.



# Heavy is THE HEAD...

It's tough being art lead, but this is a role that really matters, says **Kaytie Holdstock** 

Being the art lead in a primary school can be a tough job. In the hierarchy of subjects, let's face it, art is hardly top of the bill. In the battle for time and resources, English and maths emerge victorious and the threat of an Ofsted deep dive in art is really the only thing preventing the already meagre art budget from being repurposed to buy more Numicon.

It's a hard sell getting the staff to care about your subject. Art is always the first casualty of the over-stuffed timetable – and who can blame teachers, really? If you have ever had the misfortune of witnessing reception children try to wash up paint palettes independently, or been party to children trying to clean clay off tables with a wet paper towel, it's enough to break even the fiercest art advocate.

## An unequal footing

Another challenge is trying to collect evidence for your subject leadership file. You wander round the school collecting artwork for the annual 'book look' to discover that the paints in Year 1 are still in mint condition as the teacher 'can't be doing with the mess,' Year 5 are certain they made Christmas cards once... but they can't show you because they're pretty sure the children took them home. Meanwhile, the Year 6 teacher is indignantly blowing the dust off the sketchbooks muttering at the impertinence of you thinking they would have time for art during SATs year.

If only we had the same status as the core subject leads. All that staff meeting time, a consistent place on the school development plan and a budget for CPD and training. Imagine the impact an art lead could have with that kind of set-up. But, instead of a strategic leadership responsibility, the art coordinator's role is normally viewed as the person whose job it is to tidy the art cupboard. We are under appreciated; especially given the magic we work with little to no resources. It's amazing what an art lead can achieve with a few dry felt pens (all the reds have run out of course) and four glue sticks with no lids. It is pure alchemy.

#### Unto the breach...

Art is worth the fight though. If, like me, you have spent your career advocating for your subject to senior leaders who just do not value art, then here are some headlines that might make your colleagues sit up and listen. Children who engage in the arts actually do better in school, particularly in English and maths. In fact, regular participation in structured arts activities can increase a child's cognitive function by up to 17 per cent (Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017). It's sad

that we have to resort to making the case for arts because it might improve our SATs results, but desperate times call for desperate measures. The Cultural Learning Alliance report also discusses the positive impact on health, well-being and social mobility, as well as employability and community engagement. Suffice to say, our children deserve more art, not less.

So how can we reform art in schools to harness these positive effects for all our children? First,

we need to fight for improvements in the quality and quantity of art within schools. This does not have to be expensive: contact local businesses, parents or members of the school community and think outside of the box for art projects that could be centred around the materials vou are able

to acquire. Take inspiration from artists such as Cecilia Vicuña and El Anatsui, who work with found objects, to create exciting art opportunities with free resources.

We also need to ensure that our classes are immersed in rich, engaging art experiences that are representative of the diverse world our children live

in. We need to source inspiration from a broad base of art and artists, so that every child sees themselves in our art curriculum. Look at vour curriculum as a whole and think critically about the artists you choose, so that children are presented with a more accurate and representative art historical canon. Encourage your teachers to choose diverse artists that resonate with themselves

as inspiration. When teachers feel passionate about what they are teaching and take ownership over their content choices, this enthusiasm will be shared with the children. Also, seek out local artists to inspire the children. Pupils need to see art as something that real people do, so they truly understand that creative careers are not only

creative careers are not only

national initiatives, you show the children that art matters within your school and that you champion artistic skills in the same way and on the same level as reading and writing.

Advocate for your subject and remember, you are not alone; all around the country there are art teacher network groups full of amazing

"We need to fight for improvements in the quality and quantity of art within schools"

achievable, but much needed in our changing world.

Fly the flag for your subject by raising the profile of art within your school. By engaging the whole school (staff as well as children!) in projects such as exhibitions, competitions and local or teachers like you, who really care about and believe in the power of art. Find your nearest group and get involved. If nothing like this exists in your locality, there are many supportive online art lead groups run through social media by Access Art or the NSEAD. Just being part of a group with like-minded educators will be empowering for you as you continue the fight for the arts within schools.

Being art lead can be a lonely job, but one of incredible importance; advocating for creativity has the potential to empower children and transform lives. Tables must be wiped and painting aprons washed, but the impact of quality primary art education lasts forever. **TP** 



Kaytie Holdstock is the author of Teaching a Diverse Primary

Art Curriculum, published by Bloomsbury.

@kaytieholdstockart

kaytieholdstockart.com

#### Five inspirational artists

Shinichi Sawada: Sawada works with clay to create amazing monsters inspired by Japanese folklore. His sculptures are full of personality and his signature use of spikes and swirls would be a perfect starting point for children's own creations.

Glenn Ligon: Have a look at Ligon's colouring book-style art. Glenn gave children colouring book-style images of famous people for the children to embellish how they chose. He then incorporated their ideas into his work. Children could print images of famous people found online and then embellish them in their own ways.

Faith Ringgold: Ringgold's use of embroidery and textiles to tell stories would inspire a beautiful project using felt or fabric offcuts. Children could tell stories from their own lives or about the life of someone they have been learning about in school.

Barabara Kruger: I love Kruger's combination of photography and text art. This would make a great digital art project, where children take their own photos and add a red text box with the signature white writing to turn their photo into a poster.

Nathan Bowen: Bowen is a graffiti artist whose work revolves around the signature motif of a demon. This stylised form appears in many costumes and situations and would be a great starting point for children to create their own demons, thinking about the choices of colour, clothing and setting.

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**MATTHEW LANE** 

he Ancient Greeks have long been a staple of the primary history curriculum. They're celebrated as a bastion of democracy (well, mostly), and we owe many great ideas and inventions to them. The following six lessons aim to give children lots of different ways to connect with the Ancient Greeks, by comparing historical lives with their own. The titles of the lessons can be easily adapted to other parts of the history curriculum, too; I have used the same key question and lesson order when beginning units on the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings to aid with building and connecting knowledge. This unit of work is accompanied by downloadable worksheets, and detailed supporting materials containing all the information pupils will need.

# DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT

ter the fall of the Mycenae (around 1200BC), lots of fferent cities began to grow around 800BC. ese were known as 'city-states' and they were essentially			Task 2		-	-	564	-	
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### WEEK 1 Learning objective

• To know where Ancient Greece was

To start, give a general overview of the Ancient Greeks (see slides 1-12). Talk about their pre-history and give lots of dates, so children can begin to place the Ancient Greeks within the chronological order of world history. Some of the dates should resonate with prior study of the Ancient Egyptians.

This is a great time to ask lots of questions and assess prior learning from within and outside of school. Those Groovy Greeks from Horrible Histories are still popular, so you may be surprised by how much your pupils already know. On the PowerPoint that comes with this article, there are lots of slides of information to read through and discuss with your class. You may wish to trim this down depending on the year group

you are teaching. After all that talking, we switch to watching a video and note-taking. The video linked in the download gives a general overview of the Ancient Greeks. You could use a different video if you prefer – or skip this step if time is short.

Now onto the main activity: some mapping. It may seem an odd starting point in a history unit, but the purpose of this activity is to aid in linking to prior learning. We want children to see that the Ancient Greeks didn't actually live that far away from what is now the United Kingdom.

Ask pupils to locate Greece on their maps, and then plot the various locations where Ancient Greek city-states could be found. This will help build the concept that the terrain informed the culture.

The city-states were a culture, not an empire, so be mindful not to embed this misconception.

#### Assessment

Can you accurately locate Greece on a map, and at least one location that Ancient Greek culture spread to?

.....

#### WEEK 2 Learning objective • To know when the Ancient Greek

period took place

.....

This is a classic history lesson: break out the timelines! Having learned where the Ancient Greeks lived, we will now explore when their civilisation was active, and some of the key moments in its history (**slides 18–23**). First, give the children some core questions to research and answer:

- Ancient Greece began after the \_\_\_\_\_ culture but before the \_\_\_\_\_.
- The Ancient Greeks were at their peak about \_\_\_\_\_ years ago.
- The duration of the Ancient Greek civilisation was about \_\_\_\_\_years.
- The Ancient Greeks had some similarities with the Ancient Egyptians because
- The Ancient Greeks had some similarities with the Romans because

#### FEATURES PLANNING



These questions will help children to put the dates in context and link with prior learning. A video is linked from the download that children can watch to find the answers. Alternatively, they could research the questions online. Answers are included on slide 24 of the PowerPoint.

You can then move on to plot some key events from the history of Ancient Greece, some of which you will explore further in later lessons.

#### Assessment

Can you explain the similarities and differences between Ancient Greece and [Ancient Egypt/Ancient Rome]?

.....

WEEK 3 Learning objective

 To know about the lives of a range of people in Ancient Greece .....

Given the number of different citystates the Ancient Greek culture encompassed, you could fill a whole year working towards this objective! Begin by exploring what a city-state was and dispelling the misconception that the Ancient Greeks were one homogenous culture. There is a great BBC resource available to support this

 a link is in the downloadable PowerPoint (slide 34).

To draw a classic comparison, we then explore the opposites of democratic Athens and the monarchical (and moderately homicidal) Spartans. There is an information text for children to read through that gives an initial summary of the two cities, their cultures and how they were ruled.

Children may be shocked to learn about the routine killing of sickly babies by Spartans, or of the keeping of slaves. They may well also have lots of their own ideas to add to the following class discussion, as Athens and Sparta are often used as examples in history books and TV shows. It's important to highlight how the Spartans, whilst a martial society, were not blood-crazed fighters. Some children may argue that the Spartans had a fairer society than the Athenians, given their views on the roles of women.

There are then two activities that follow on from the reading. The first is to copy and sort eight statements about the city-states, as they either apply to Athens or Sparta. This should be fairly simple, so you may want to make this trickier or add a few of your own ideas.

The second activity is for children to write a paragraph or two explaining whether they would rather live in Athens or Sparta. This is a good opportunity to use the Point Evidence Explain method of writing a short

paragraph answer, drawing ideas and quotes from a text. You can never have too many opportunities to practise and apply those reading skills.



Can you explain if you would like to live in Athens or Sparta and why?

.....

#### WEEK 4 Learning objective

 To understand difference and diversity in Ancient Greece

.....

Breaking the learning objective naming pattern, we are not asking the What or Why of the Ancient Greeks (yet). This lesson expands upon the previous one, adding in learning about more of the city-states. We will be learning more about Athens and Sparta before progressing on to learn about Corinth and its famous columns; the plutocracy of Thebes; and about Delphi and its insightful oracles. Slides have been included in the download - you could read them aloud to the class or have children read a portion of them each. Equally, these slides could be printed off for children to read at their own pace.

With lots to read, the provided activity is light on writing. After reading

# "I can tap into expert advice"

Stuart Boydell discusses the benefits of being a corporate member of the Historical Association



Corporate membership with the HA offers year-round access to history-specific support that anyone on a school's staff can dip into at anytime. Member schools can access a vast collection of resources, teaching ideas, CPD opportunities and a community of people who are there to help.





The Historical Association offers so many opportunities to help improve my history subject knowledge and teaching. I can tap into expert advice and resources, as well as the support of a community of like-minded people – passionate historians and teachers who want the best for children's history education. One of the great things I've learnt about the HA since I first signed my school up as a corporate member is that the Historical Association never stands still.

## What do you value the most about corporate membership of the HA?

If you are a corporate member of the HA, you have a wealth of opportunities. You have the conferences, you have a network of historians that are always there to help, you have access to the web resources. You have a go-to body of support, and I think that is very important, especially to new history teachers and history leads. It can sometimes feel you have been left on your own, and with the HA you are not – you have friends.



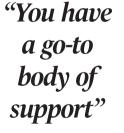
ABOUT STUART: Stuart is a primary history leader



Contact: 0300 100 0223 membership@ history.org.uk history.org.uk

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#### What would you say to others mulling over joining the HA as a corporate membership?

I would honestly say, "Just do it!". I have never regretted signing my school up for corporate membership and the powers that be within my school have never questioned the membership fee. They see the added value from the school's membership in terms of the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. The annual cost is modest compared to many one-day CPD providers, who come and go and are never heard from again.

#### FEATURES PLANNING

about each city-state, children jot down five key facts that they can recall. This will test their short-term memory and ensure that they only summarise the most important or memorable facts. Take time at the end of the lesson to share on tables and then as a class. You could then curate a class set of key facts about the city-states to add to a display.

If resources allow, you could have children research about these five cities, to develop their online searching skills. I recommend structuring the five key facts activity so enough time is allowed for searching and reading.

The aim of this lesson is for children to see that city-states had shared culture but also their own idiosyncrasies. The lesson should also show children that although the city-states were independent, some were also dependent on each other during times of crisis.

#### Assessment

Can you tell me, from memory, one interesting fact about each of the five city-states we studied this lesson?

### WEEK 5 Learning objective

• To understand what daily life was like in Ancient Greece

This lesson is a chance for children to reflect on six aspects of modern life, before comparing these to life in Ancient Greece. The activity for this lesson can be completed using words, pictures or both, so differentiates across a range of abilities. You may wish for children to apply their sketching skills and take a break from writing altogether.

Using the worksheet in the download, ask children to reflect on their house, clothing, food and toys. Then they can think about their role in society (going to school, being a child in a family...) and the roles of their family members or other adults in their lives (their profession, who is in their family...).

For these last two points, children should see that, regardless of gender, they have the same expectations. For other people, there is a whole host of different roles they can have; again, these are not usually linked to gender.

There is then a series of slides you can work through (or print off) about the Ancient Greeks. Children will complete the table again, seeing that some parts of life are similar. They should see that the roles of people in society were quite



different and there was a lack of freedom in life choices, especially for women. My class were shocked that girls could be married off to a man of their father's choosing and that they would celebrate this by sacrificing their toys to Artemis before their marriage.

Allow time at the end of the lesson to compare and share which ideas pupils noted. You could have children write a short summary paragraph, or expand on one of the boxes which they found particularly interesting.

#### Assessment

Can you explain what role you would have had in Ancient Greece as a child and as an adult? Would your role then be the same as now?

.....

WEEK 6 Learning objective

• To understand the importance of the Ancient Greek civilisation in world history

.....

A question children may have been asking since Lesson 1 is 'Why do we need to learn about the Ancient Greeks?'. So why are they important among the many different ancient cultures we could study?

This lesson explores nine ways in which the Ancient Greeks have influenced our modern lives. Children will then plot these ideas out into a Diamond 9 sorting activity (a template is provided in the download) to apply their reasoning and comparison skills.

Open with a discussion of the lesson's question, drawing out the prior learning. If time allows, there are a few videos in the presentation for children to watch and jot notes on, along with a BBC Bitesize page to explore. This is all general background ready for the nine short summaries on the later slides.

If your class has not completed a Diamond 9 before, you may want to model this in lots of detail. As you read through the slides, have children jot one to nine on a whiteboard or piece of scrap paper so they can order the nine topics in importance as you read. Or you could give children a rough copy of the Diamond 9 worksheet.

Allow time for children to complete a neat copy of the Diamond 9 worksheet. This may take far more time than you might expect, especially when children are deliberating between the upper pair and lower pair. This can be a great activity to foster debate between talk partners or tables.

Children can then write a few sentences explaining their most important and least important choices. There is a model for the writing and some exemplars on the slides.



#### Assessment

Can you explain why the Ancient Greeks are important to our society? Can you explain what parts of Ancient Greek society we see in Britain today? **TP** 



Matthew Lane is a teacher from Norfolk. His book Wayfinder, on how to lead curriculum change, is out now.

- @MrMJLane
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#### FEATURES SEND

# Partnering UP

A good home-school relationship can make all the difference to a child with special educational needs, says **Alison Eason** 

ccording to Teacher Tapp, nearly 90 per cent of us need more help to support our SEND learners (tinyurl. com/tp-TTSEND).

Extra teaching assistants, time to plan, expert training and advice are all invaluable to ensure pupils with SEND thrive at school, but while schools can provide some of that, they can't do it all. At Forest Lodge – the additionally resourced provision at Chalgrove Primary School – we have filled the gap by working closely with our families.

By joining forces, we can ensure our pupils have the right tools and resources to succeed, and we've identified three key ways to make this collaboration work.

#### **Communicate well**

To build a good home-school relationship, you need compassion and understanding; if parents and carers feel judged, or not heard, they may quickly disengage. The best starting point is with home visits. These are a great way to meet families and hear about their experiences.

We can also learn a lot from seeing a child in their home environment. During one home visit, I learned that a child had escaped from their previous school, so I was able to put safety measures in place before he started with us. At another, I could see that a family was struggling to accept an autism diagnosis. I connected them with the autism advisory



# *"Times of transition can be anxiety-inducing for parents"*

team for expert support in understanding their son's diagnosis. Through this process, we understand our families better and develop a partnership based on trust.

Our regular parent coffee mornings are particularly useful for us to get to know families better. Parents can meet each other and share experiences, and we invite a SEND expert, such as a speech and language therapist. educational psychologist or autism advisor. Our expert guests can share advice and knowledge about relevant themes like understanding ADHD, developing social communication skills or supporting a child's reading journey. These sessions build a strong connection with families.

We also found that parents were asking for help with at-home routines, so we started sending out a SEND newsletter, which includes free resources and advice. Families can contact us at the provision by email, and book phone or face-to-face appointments. This keeps communication open all year round.

#### **Share information**

When families know what is happening at school, it's easier to support their child. One way we do this is with an online learning journal, where we post photos of what pupils have been up to at school, such as assemblies and schoolwork. Parents and carers do the same at home – whether it's going to the seaside or trying a new food for the first time.

Thanks to the journal, we found out that a child had developed a new special interest over the summer: butterflies. We shared this in class and planned a trip to bring this interest alive.

Another family asked for help in the run-up to their child's first trip abroad. Together, we created a countdown calendar to use at school and at home so the student understood when she would be travelling. We also made a Story to Help that showed what would happen at the airport. The teachers and parents role-played what it would be like to board the plane and go on holiday. The hard work paid off – the whole family had a great trip.

## Prepare for change

Times of transition can be anxiety-inducing for parents – whether it's a change in teacher, classroom or year group.

Our school helps families navigate change by creating personalised Stories to Help, transition books and visual timetables with Widgit symbols (widgit.com). These have names and photos of staff in them as well as pictures of the new classroom, playground, sensory room and pupil's desk area. They explain what will happen on the day in a visual way.

These tools are invaluable in supporting our pupils when they spend time in the mainstream school – to attend maths or PE lessons, for example. Planning in advance reassures families of what is about to come, and builds trust. **TP** 



Alison Eason is head of the Additionally Resourced Provision

(ARP) at Chalgrove Primary School.

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#### Q&A

# "It offers a wealth of opportunities"

Laura Dickinson discusses how the NCCE Teach primary computing certificate supported her teaching

## **30 SECOND** BRIEFING

The National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE) is funded by the Department for Education and delivered by STEM Learning. They aim to transform the way computing is taught in schools across the country by offering CPD, certificates and resources to teachers.

#### What is the Teach primary computing certificate?

The certificate programme offered by the NCCE has been designed to level up primary teachers' knowledge through CPD, student enrichment activities and the use of high-quality resources. It leads to a nationally recognised certificate awarded by BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT.

#### Why did you enroll on the certificate?

I was first interested in the CPD element. The certificate offers a wealth of opportunities to tailor your professional development to your needs and the needs of your school. The courses were timely and well-written, and I felt that the content was something that could really impact on my practice.

#### How has it impacted your pupils?

I have been able to use the resources and knowledge gained from achieving the certificate to meet the needs of our pupils, regardless of their starting point. Because of this, our pupils are now even more invested in computing, they have a desire to learn, and a drive to develop their digital skills.

#### Would you recommend the certificate?

Absolutely! A lot of the tasks needed to complete the certificate are what teachers are doing in their classrooms, week in and week out.



CPD can often feel like an 'extra', but with the primary certificate, it is a celebration of what you have already achieved, and it gives you tons of ideas for the future. You also get to meet other teachers on the same journey as you.



#### ABOUT LAURA: Laura is a primary school teacher and computing lead.



**Contact:** Find out more at ncce.io/primcert 0330 123 5375



#### What would you tell someone considering completing the certificate?

It will not take too much time which is important for teachers. You'll be surprised at how many elements can fit into your classroom practice. Start by identifying some courses to support your progress, and you'll very quickly see how the high-quality CPD and resources will not only make your teaching easier, but also more enjoyable.

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#### LEADERSHIP

**THIS WAY!** School improvement advice for headteachers and SLT MIDDLE LEADERS | CPD | SUBJECT LEADERSHIP

# **IMPROVING ATTENDANCE** *is everyone's business*

ommy, a child classed as disadvantaged, was a persistent absentee, with attendance at 80 per cent. He was missing the equivalent of one school day a week – nearly eight weeks a year. He constantly missed chunks of his learning, so found lessons confusing when he was in school.

However great the teaching was, or the interventions were to catch him up, he wasn't there enough for it to have an impact. In pupil progress meetings, Tommy was talked about a lot – the gaps in his learning and what to target next. However, to really help Tommy, the SLT and Tommy's teacher should have been discussing how to improve his attendance, which was, after all, the root cause for his low attainment.

#### Working together

The Department of Education seems to be aligned to this thinking, with the release of *Working Together to Improve School Attendance* in 2022 and its subsequent updates. Local Authorities are running attendance hubs, and everyone is engaging in the discussion. But what *actually* makes a difference in improving attendance, particularly for our most vulnerable groups?

I haven't found a way to eradicate term-time holidays yet. Even with the increased fine and the constant reminders that 'every day counts', parents are still lured by the significantly cheaper costs and the promise of a quiet beach. However, I have monitored when term-time holidays are most prevalent (after a half term) and put 'unmissable' events, such as sports day, in that week. I share the dates a year in advance, so parents think twice before booking a holiday.

Working Together states that schools should find 'supportive routes to improve attendance', and this is how I always start: a conversation with the parent and/or the child to establish why they are regularly absent or late. I share an 'Attendance Matters' booklet with parents, which includes NHS guidance as to when children should be off school for illness. If a child is regularly absent with illness, I discuss a referral to the School Nursing Service. Often, a conversation is enough, as it brings the issue to the parents' attention. They may not have realised that the odd day off here or there was adding up.

# Why your ELSA is so important

Emotional School Based Avoidance has rocketed in primary schools since COVID. With parents working from home more than ever before, and our excellent awareness of mental health, children who find school difficult are often ending up staying at home.

The Working Together guidance explains that you have to 'make schools a place pupils want to be.' For these children it is two-fold: reasonable adjustments and excellent emotional provision. The ELSA at my school is phenomenal. For many children, knowing she will be there to greet

**T**ÎÎ

them, that they can take some time to acclimatise to school before going into the classroom, and that she will check-in with them, gets them through the door.

Schools also have to find a way to make their offer unmissable. After a holiday and a week or more being on his own schedule, the thought of school did not always fill my son with joy. However, his infant school strategically placed a dress-up day, visitor or trip on the first day back after every break. This was the incentive he needed to get back through the gates, and I am sure it's a big reason why his attendance has always been excellent.

#### **Checking the stats**

The need to keep track of trends in attendance can't be underestimated. As well as regularly monitoring all the pupils of my school, I regularly get teachers at my door starting their sentence with, "I've noticed that..." They take note that a pupil is often out of school on the day they are at their mum's, or that a child is always off on the same day as a sibling. That's why attendance is everyone's business.

How have we tackled the attendance of our most vulnerable groups? Firstly, by building relationships and making the parents realise we want to work with them, and that it is because we have the best interests of their child at heart. I've often had to track down a parent on the playground or by their car, as they might also have anxiety around school.

We regularly invite experts in anxiety or similar conditions into school to share tips and provide support for our parents. We've run a Monday morning breakfast club to help start the week positively for specific children. We create attendance plans alongside the children in KS2 and ask them what would help to improve

#### **Carrots or sticks?**

Schools are held accountable for the attendance of their pupils. It falls directly under the Behaviour and Attitudes judgement in the Ofsted framework.

However, when you look at this in the cold light of day, it is an interesting concept.

Personally speaking, the responsibility of my own children's attendance doesn't lie with the school they attend. It lies with me, their parent. I have a parental responsibility for my children to attend school regularly. Why should my children's school get penalised for the role I have to play?

However, as we know, this is not how things work in the world of education and schools must, and do, follow up on low attendance.

#### **MAKING IT PAY**

The government has just raised the fines for taking children out of school during term time to £80 from £60, but that is not going to deter many from having a cheaper holiday. The savings on bookings make paying the fine worthwhile. Some holiday companies are even actively promoting 'term time breaks'!

So, it could be said, the stick approach on attendance is taken with schools, but the carrot is there for parents.

In November 2023, Amanda Spielman, the Ofsted Chief Inspector at the time, talked about a 'fractured' social contract between families and schools. One of the consequences being lower school attendance. She even added restoring this fractured contract could take years. I have not seen anything to suggest she was wrong in what she said.

#### **ON INEQUALITY**

The wider issue facing schools is the way low attendance disproportionally affects them. Some will have higher attendance due to the community they serve. Others will have the exact opposite. So, how is that a level playing field when looking at the amount of resources needed to tackle the issue? The simple answer is, it isn't.

Every child is entitled to a fulfilled education, leading to the best chances in life. In a perfect world, everyone would think similarly about the importance of education, and attendance in schools across the land would not be an issue, but we do not live in a perfect world. If children are not at school, they cannot learn. The more time children are off school, the less progress they are likely to make. And the less progress they make, the lower their grades will be. Meaning, finally, their life chances will be reduced.

This doesn't make for good reading, but unless there is a shift in the balance of responsibility and accountability to an equilibrium (between schools and parents), the carrot and stick method is unlikely to work.



Ryan Duff is the CEO of Discovery Educational Trust. X @HeliHeadteacher

#### LEADERSHIP



"What actually makes a difference in improving attendance, particularly for our most vulnerable groups?"

their attendance or punctuality. The children's ideas are insightful, and the plan motivates them.

Lateness is as big an issue as absence. For children who regularly arrive late, they miss the sense of belonging that being in class in time for the register brings. They often arrive flustered and anxious. Again, we tackle this through conversations and transparency – telling parents why punctuality matters.

Tackling poor attendance starts with understanding and support, but for anything important, there comes a time when enforcement is needed. Attendance contracts, as detailed in *Working Together*, are a great way to formalise expectations and hold parents to account. I am also regularly in contact with the attendance support team at my local authority in order to navigate the different scenarios that present themselves. They provide me with a wealth of knowledge, which allows me to put the right procedures into place at the most appropriate time. This includes knowing when to take the bold step of unauthorising an attendance without medical evidence. Sometimes, decisions around attendance can be tough and unpopular. But ultimately, I am always making them with the child's best interests at heart.



Laura Dobson is deputy headteacher at a large three-form-entry primary school. She specialises in attendance, assessment

and English.



### Reflections on successful targeted support

The reasons behind persistent absence are many and varied – term-time holidays, family circumstances and children with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). Children with SEND needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds are also more likely to be absent from school.

Consequences such as fines might be regarded as a short-term solution, whereas targeted support is likely to support leaders to address the root causes of absenteeism which can lead to long term behavioural changes. So, how can we make targeted intervention as effective as possible?

Firstly, explore how staff respond to messages about absence from parents. Are they empathetic, while also encouraging attendance? Do colleagues react in a solution-focused manner? Do families receive the same response to absence regardless of who they speak to and when they phone?

Conversations about absence are likely to be more fruitful when there is an established relationship between the school and the child or their family. Choose the best person for the job, whether that's a class teacher or someone else – whoever the family already knows or responds to well. Start with a common point of agreement: we all want the child to succeed in school. How can we work together to achieve that?

Some pupils will have significant gaps in their learning as a result of the time spent out of school. That in itself can create a further barrier to attendance, as the pupil may feel even more adrift from their peers. Leaders and teachers might find it helpful to explore what the child could do at home or on a 1:1 basis in school before going back into class as preparation for their return.

There are no quick fixes. Building trust and relationships with parents – the key stakeholder in raising attendance rates – takes time and continued effort. For more support on tackling absence in your setting visit **hfleducation.org/home** and search for the Attendance Box Set.

## Anne Peck is head of primary curriculum at HFL Education.

hfleducation.org

#### PARTNER CONTENT

# Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration into your classroom

#### 1 Primary Futures

Tune in to the hottest primary education podcast in town, brought to you by Hamilton Brookes!

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"Thousands of listeners in over 50 countries"



#### The New Group Maths Test (NGMT)

The New Group Maths Test (NGMT). developed by GL Assessment, is a termly, adaptive assessment for pupils aged six to 12, designed to accurately measure your pupils' maths attainment. Its adaptive algorithm tailors question difficulty based on pupil responses, delivering a personalised experience that will offer you valuable insights about each learner's strengths, gaps, and areas for development. Auto-marked for efficiency, NGMT will save you time and deliver reliable data. NGMT also links to GL Assessment's dynamic Testwise reporting platform providing you with custom data views, such as by class or SEND status, to support more precise teaching. Visit gl-assessment.co.uk/ngmt

#### New Ed and Bunny book character design competition for schools

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#### **30 SECOND** BRIEFING

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# WAGOLL

## Nush and the Stolen Emerald by Jasbinder Bilan

Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to use dialogue to show character and develop plot



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

tinyurl.com/tp-Nush

nushka is maharani of an Indian kingdom. She is brave, adventurous and clever. So, when she is told she will she not inherit the crown merely because she is a girl, she doesn't take no for an answer. The story is set in the 1850s, at a time when the British East India Company had a huge army and was taking over vast swathes of land. As well as parts of their kingdom, the company has taken the family's most divine jewel – an emerald the size of a small apple. When Nush's father decides to go to England to ask Queen Victoria for help, she sneaks on board the ship.

This is her moment to shine – and bring back the emerald that will heal the kingdom.

Once in England, Nush makes friends with the royal children, especially with Princess Vicky. The two princesses bond over their fight for justice and equality. Vicky, too, knows what it's like to be side-lined in favour of her brother.

Together, the children uncover not one but two dastardly plots. It's up to them to go deep beneath the cellars of Buckingham Palace, where an underground river leads them on a dangerous journey. It takes them to the backstreets of St Paul's and a roof-top chase.

The drama is laced with much excitement and a good part of the

story takes place on horseback. Nush is an excellent rider and gains the admiration of the royal children as well as the young groom, John.

My inspiration for *Nush and the Stolen Emerald* was a portrait of maharani Victoria Gowramma, painted by the royal artist Franz Xaver Winterhalter. The painting hangs at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Aged eleven, Gowramma was the first Indian royal to visit England.

This is a story infused with myth. It raises important questions about the past and shines a light on the rights and wrongs of empire. It also gives children the opportunity to find out about Victorian Britain from a different perspective. And of course, I've filled it with lots of talking! **TP** 

### Using dialogue to show character and develop plot

#### THINK ABOUT SPEECH

Give each of your characters a distinct way of speaking that sets them apart from the other participants in your story. For example, it might be that they use the same quirky word when they get stressed, surprised or scared.

#### LISTEN IN

42 | www.teachwire.net

A really good tip for writing natural dialogue is to become a bit nosy and listen to the way real people talk. You can even note down what they say and give it your own twist when you use it. Always read dialogue you've written out loud as well, to check it sounds natural.

#### **ADD DRAMA**

Dialogue is a fantastic way to up the ante in your story. You can use lots of emphatic language for your characters to bring the action alive. For example, "Stop!", "Wait!", "Listen!".

#### SET THE SCENE

If, like me, you want to write a historical story, dialogue can be a brilliant way to convey the fact that your characters are not in the present day. Although obviously there wasn't any TV in the olden days, you can research the way people spoke by looking at novels written in the time you want to set yours in.

#### **ADD SOME CHAT**

One of my favourite things about writing dialogue is the to-and-fro conversations between your characters. This is such a good way to move your plot forward without adding extra scenes. Imagine something exciting has just happened and your main character is telling their friend all about it.



Nush and the

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#### TEACH READING & WRITING



## **Extract from**

Chapter 3, pages 26–27

I've used just the sort of word you would to complain about being woken up!

I often break up my dialogue with a little bit of action. It helps the reader to get a picture of the of character in their head. We can just imagine the way Arian flops against the pillow, adding extra emphasis to his sleepiness.

What I've done here is to slow the dialogue down a bit and show Nush thinking about how to proceed. There's a gap here and it might be that she is a bit unsure what to say next. It's a good technique to add an extra layer of meaning to the relationship. I burst into his room, leaping on to the snoring bundle of bedclothes.

'Hey!' he complains, waking bleary-eyed and grumpy. He yanks the covers back over his head. 'It can't be morning already.'

'No, of course it's not morning yet, sleepyhead.' I give him a playful punch. 'I've got something important to tell you.'

'It better be good. I was in the middle of a pretty amazing dream just then.' He sits up slowly and flops against the soft pillows.

'I've just been to see Majee. We sat in the lotus chair and she told me the story of the family emerald again.'

'You've woken me up to tell me that?'

'No – not just that. It's to do with the trip to England.' The idea is firing my chest and my words tumble faster than the holy River Ganga. 'You have to let me go instead of you. Tonight, when Majee told me the story of Lakshmi's emerald, I had an idea.'

Arian lets out a sleepy sigh. 'Which is what, exactly?'

'If I can go to England instead of you, I can rescue the emerald, like I said. I have all the skills needed to find it – lock-picking, climbing, riding away with it on horseback! Well, what do you say?'

'I say your schemes are bigger than your boots,' jokes Arian.

26-27

Imagine if someone said they had something important to tell you. You would soon wake up! It's natural, and shows us the close relationship Nush and Arian have.

In this dialogue I use Nush's speech to fill Arian in on what she's been doing. It's a great technique for conveying important information for your reader.

After all the persuading Arian ends the conversation with a joke. Jokes are great ways to defuse a tense or scary scene. Here, Nush is desperate to get Arian to agree to her plan and the way he jokes about it relaxes the situation and gives the reader a moment to take a breath. It also gives us some more information about his character.

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The Legend of Podkin One-Ear

Join a found family on a perilous journey, in Kieran Larwood's charming adventure story

#### JON BIDDLE

remember reading *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear* when it was first published, and being especially impressed with two particular aspects. First, the story itself is outstanding; it is action-packed, filled with fascinating characters, both good and bad, and tells its story within a story extremely cleverly. Secondly, the world created by Kieran Larwood is exceptional. The book is almost Tolkienesque in the way that it is stuffed with mythology, folklore and history, all of which add extra depth to the main narrative.

The world of The Five Realms is expanded upon in the follow-up novels (which are all worth reading) and, by the time that you have enjoyed all seven books that are currently available, it's a world that you will feel totally immersed in. David Wyatt's incredible double-page illustrations bring so much to the book and, whenever you arrive at one, they are worth pausing at and taking some time to explore.

Being a fan of children's fantasy, I

was delighted when *The Legend of Podkin One-Ear* won the 2017 Blue Peter Book Award, and feel that it is a book which is rapidly heading towards classic status. Every year, I have a group of children who fall in love with Podkin, his family and friends. It's a book that I often recommend to teaching colleagues because Podkin's universe is so rich with detail, and a huge amount of fun to journey through. It's filled with opportunities for discussion, writing and artwork, as well as providing wonderful chances to make comparisons with other books.

#### Book topic



#### Recap

Podkin's comfortable life as the eldest son of Lopkin (the chieftain of the Munbury warren) is dramatically and tragically torn apart when a group of evil, iron-clad rabbits, known as the Gorm, invade his warren one Bramblemass Eve. Podkin, his sister Paz, and their baby brother, Pook, are forced to flee their home, leaving everything they know and love behind. As they begin to adjust to their new life, meeting a wide range of characters along the way, they realise that danger lurks almost everywhere. The relentless Gorm, led by the evil Scramashank, have no intention of letting them escape and are a continual threat. With the help and guidance of Brigid, a witch, they eventually arrive at Boneroot, a town of runaways and refugees hidden in an ancient graveyard. But, inevitably, all is not as it first appears.

#### **Found family**

On author Ian Eagleton's Reading Realm website (thereadingrealm. co.uk), there is a fascinating interview with Larwood about how to create memorable characters and build believable worlds. One of his favourite tropes is that of the 'found family', where characters are thrown together because of the situation they are facing. This happens throughout *Podkin One-Ear*. As well as his siblings, Paz and Pook, Podkin joins forces with Mish and Mash, a pair of dwarf rabbits, Crom, a blind mercenary who once fought alongside Podkin's father, and Brigid, a witch with significantly more power than we are originally led to believe.

Creating a character web, showing how the characters first met, their relationships and their similarities and differences can really bring the story to life for pupils. It can be done visually, either in small groups or as a class. This also helps pupils to mentally create 'found families' when reading books independently (*The Outlaw Varjak Paw* and *A Street Dog Named Pup* are both excellent for this).

#### Characters' strengths and weaknesses (Podkin's journey)

The Podkin we meet at the beginning of the book is very different from the Podkin we leave behind at the end. He is lazy, spoiled and self-centred, avoiding as much responsibility as he possibly can, and has no interest in learning the skills needed to become the next chieftain of his warren. This stands in stark contrast to his sister, Paz, who is thoughtful, responsible and hard-working.

However, as Podkin overcomes each challenge he is faced with, he begins to realise that he is beginning to change, putting others before himself and facing up to danger, even though he is terrified of the possible outcome. When I last read this story with a class, they compared his journey to that of



Edward Tulane, which I think is spot on.

Creating a story timeline as you read the book, recording when the pupils notice a change in Podkin's attitude or behaviour and the likely cause of it, shows how authors develop characters during a story and is something children can begin to think about when writing their own narratives.

#### **Rewriting the Battle of Boneroot**

Although the Battle of Boneroot is not the climax of the book (that being the showdown with Scramashank), and takes place about two-thirds of the way through, for me it is the most

## **Take it further**

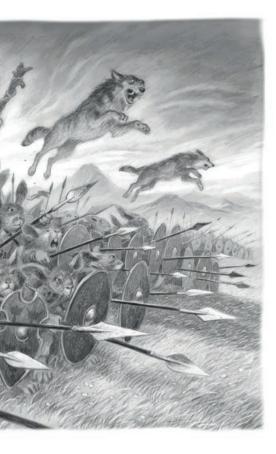
#### **OLIVER TWIST**

When Podkin is captured by the villainous Shape and Quince and forced to go into the markets of Boneroot to steal for them, it is easy to draw comparisons with the behaviour of Fagin from *Oliver Twist*. Although I probably would not suggest reading the entire book, sharing some of the chapter where Oliver starts to work for Fagin is worthwhile, and provides the pupils a relatable – and enjoyable – introduction to the work of Charles Dickens. For me, when I am reading a book with a class, I always try to get them to make connections with other books, poems, films and TV shows. It's important to get children to realise that stories do not stand in isolation and that there are common themes, ideas and topics which run through them all.

#### THEMES

The theme of leadership runs through the

book. Is it a skill that Podkin is born with, or something that he develops during the story? Ask the children to think about other books they have read where one of the characters needs to display leadership. Do they always get their decisions right? What do they do to inspire people to follow them? This will lead to a wider discussion about what leadership means. Who are the leaders in the school community? Can everyone be a leader? Pupils could create comic strips or posters demonstrating what leadership



exciting part. Read pages 188 and 189 to the children and stop at the line 'The Battle of Boneroot had started'. It provides a wonderful opportunity for pupils to make predictions about what will happen during the battle.

Once the chapter is complete, the children can then rewrite the battle from the point of view of one of the characters, focusing on their role in the battle as well as their emotions and feelings. Some of them will probably try and insist on writing from the point of view of the Gorm (well, they did in my class) but that gives them an opportunity to develop their empathy skills and think about the situation from an alternative point of view. Do the Gorm really want to destroy all the

rabbits? Do they have any memory of what their life was like before they were transformed? It also provides a wonderful opportunity for children to explore famous artwork that depicts battles, such as 'The Battle of San Romano' by Uccello, and have a go at creating their own.

#### **Bringing in drama**

Oral storytelling plays a central role in the book, which is framed as a story told by a bard. This provides a natural segue into activities around storytelling and drama. Pupils could try retelling parts of the story in their own words or creating short scenes in which they act out key moments from the novel. By performing and dramatising the events, they will not only improve their understanding of the story, but also develop their public speaking and performance skills.

#### Anthropomorphic characters

There are many amazing children's books that feature anthropomorphic characters. Explain to the pupils what the term anthropomorphic means: non-human characters that have human characteristics, such as emotions, behaviours or intentions. Ask them to think about why we enjoy reading about such characters. Maybe the stories seem less threatening, or can share messages in an entertaining way, or the characters are more relatable... Each time I talk about this with a class, the answers are completely different. Give pupils time to work together and create a top ten of books featuring anthropomorphic characters (whenever I do this, I always pull rank and insist that Watership Down is included somewhere). Varjak Paw, Charlotte's

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

- The Last Wild by Piers Torday
- The Hobbit by J.R.R. Tolkien
- I am Rebel by Ross Montgomery \*
- The Land of Roar by Jenny McLachlan \*\*
- The Last Firefox by Lee Newbery \*
- Ember Spark and the Thunder of \*\* Dragons by Abi Elphinstone

Web, The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane... a good chunk of the list almost writes itself. It is also worth pointing out that sometimes animals in books are biological, rather than anthropomorphic make sure that children understand the difference

#### **Creating characters**

Although The Legend of Podkin One-Ear is already full of rich characters, the class could work in groups to create new tribes of rabbits (or other animals) who live in The Five Realms. They could think about cultures and customs, what the warren looks like, what its members wear and who their leaders are. Whose side are they on? If they met Podkin and his siblings, how would they treat them? Would they try and capture them, or would they help them on their quest? 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.

is. Perhaps a leader in the local community could visit and be interviewed by the pupils for the school website or a local magazine.

#### WORLD BUILDING

As a child who enjoyed fantasy books, I used to spend hours creating my own worlds that I could later use when playing Dungeons & Dragons. Although time is obviously a limiting factor in school, giving pupils an opportunity to think in detail about where a story might be set can produce some truly wonderful writing. Get them to come up with a central idea that they find interesting or exciting, such as an underwater kingdom or a world where only children can do magic, or a planet where apes are in charge... oh, hang on. that sounds familiar!

Once an overall idea or concept exists, it can be expanded. What does the landscape look like? What types of creatures live there? Does magic exist? Who is in charge? What traditions or customs do they have? Providing six or seven questions to start pupils thinking and talking will lead to much

more. Get them to ask themselves 'What if?' as they ponder each idea. What if there were only three colours? What if everyone lived underground? What if the days lasted for eleven hours and it never stopped raining? Creating maps, coming up with names of gods and mythical creatures, designing houses and weapons... the opportunities are almost endless. Not only does it improve writing, world-building with their friends can also have a positive impact on children's creativity, problem-solving and empathy.

# "Quality supervision is essential"

Sara Alston discusses the services and expertise offered by SEA Inclusion & Safeguarding



Every pupil should have their needs met in a safe and supportive environment. That's why good Safeguarding and Special Needs provision are non-negotiable for any outstanding school. SEA Inclusion & Safeguarding works with you to develop and support exceptional practice.

## What is the ethos behind SEA Inclusion?

"The welfare of the child is paramount". Getting this right through outstanding safeguarding practice and SEND, ensures excellent inclusion throughout schools and trusts. My work with schools supports them to achieve outstanding practice though practical, realistic and personalised support and training.

In *The Inclusive Classroom* (co-authored with Daniel Sobel), I showed how inclusion is best supported by small tweaks and adaptions within the classroom.

*Working Effectively with your Teaching Assistant* explains how the efficient use of support staff can support children's learning and inclusion.

Through SEA Inclusion & Safeguarding, I am sharing these ideas with other educators, supporting them to put them into practice too.

#### Can you tell us a bit about how your SEND work in schools is structured?

My aim is to support schools with SEND by spreading understanding and by directly working with individual schools.

Through my books, blog and articles and through regular appearances at conferences, I share my expertise on a range of SEND topics. Similarly, I write



training materials and online courses and deliver bespoke training to schools and other organisations based on their individual needs.

Working directly with schools, I offer SEND reviews to assess their provision across the school, the use of interventions or TA deployment. I am able to support schools either online or face-to-face, including where schools are 'under-SENCoed'.

### What support does SEA Inclusion offer for DSLs?

Having been involved in safeguarding work since 2008,



- + Expert professional support for SEN and Safeguarding in schools
- + Bespoke training and support based on your organisation's needs
- Achievable, practical and realistic guidance, based on over 30 years' experience in schools



**ABOUT SARA:** Over 30 years as a SEND and Safeguarding practitioner



**Contact:** seainclusion@ btinternet.com seainclusion. co.uk

# *"Inclusion is best supported by small tweaks"*

I'm passionate about ensuring schools have the right practice, procedures and ethos in place. As well as writing on safeguarding topics, I deliver training both online and face-to-face. This includes whole-school basic safeguarding training, DSL training and topics such as responding to sexualised behaviours in primary schools – so much of this training is only aimed at secondaries – and the additional safeguarding vulnerabilities of children with SEND.

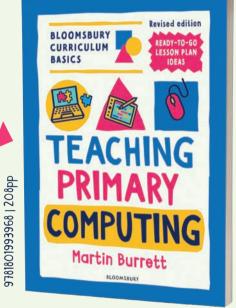
I also support DSLs through supervision. Supportive nonmanagerial supervision is essential for all DSL to support their wellbeing and enable them effectively to safeguard the children in their care.

# BLOOMSBURY CURRICULUM BASICS

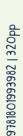
Featuring subject knowledge, key themes and detailed lesson plan ideas, this series equips primary teachers to tackle any curriculum subject with confidence.

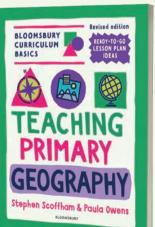
# TOPICS INCLUDE:

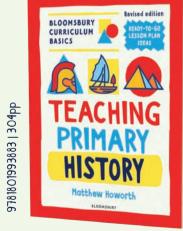
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- Python and developing games
- Artificial Intelligence (AI) and virtual reality
- Hacking and debugging
- And more!

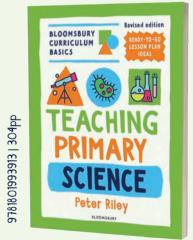


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**BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION** 



# No more talking

#### It's time to start listening, say Nikki Gamble and Jo Castro

ow turn to your talk partner." These words will be heard routinely, countless times, across primary schools in England every day. The intention is to provide an opportunity for the pupils in our classes to have time to think and develop answers to questions in the safety of their partnership. This encourages all children to engage, rather than just those brave enough to speak in front of the class or who think fast enough to get their hands up first.

This approach has become a familiar routine, where everyone plays their well-rehearsed part; but to what effect? There is often little time given for these conversations as the teacher strives to maintain 'pace'. The more confident child often dominates; both children talk at one another rather than listen; and the teacher frequently doesn't know what has been said.

Focusing on talk means focusing on what we need to say, rather than developing a dialogue—a genuine exchange of ideas. Imagine that we reframe this interaction, and instead of 'talk partners', we call them 'listening partners'. Immediately, the focus changes from 'tell your partner what you know' to an opportunity to listen to what someone else knows or thinks, and how that fits our understanding or opinion.

By listening actively, we connect more deeply.

We show that what others say matters to us, and we are happy to wait for them to think; we learn a new perspective, and consider whether we agree or disagree with it. Both partners grow from the experience.

#### Listening partners in action

This process works for any paired talk around a text. Julie's Year 3 class is reading Joesph Coelho and Richard Johnson's *Our Tower*. They are discussing the details of the front cover. Julie has asked the children to work with a listening partner and assign themselves as either partner A or B. The children have been given a set of questions or prompts for Partner A to ask Partner B:

• Where do you think this is?

- What do you notice about the children?
- Where do you think they are going?
- Where do you think they have come from?
- What do you think the yellow things are?

When they have finished, Julie gets Partner B to ask Partner A the same questions, listening carefully to their replies.

It's tempting, as the teacher, to get involved with the children's conversations, but instead, allow them the space while you use the opportunity to make informal assessments. As the children share their ideas, you can observe, listen, and note insightful comments, particularly those that link to existing knowledge or present evidence of new learning.



Typically, after paired talk, teachers ask children to share what they discussed with the class. Julie makes some small adjustments to this process to avoid the children simply repeating what they have already talked about with their partner, which often slows the pace of the lesson and doesn't advance the learning.

She gathers the class and shares a couple of her observations, making connections between the children's ideas and presenting contrasts in their thinking. This signals to the class that she is attentive and interested in what they say when talking in pairs or groups. In short, it models listening.

Sharing her observations also allows her to advance the learning by selecting those points that move the conversation on; it maintains a good pace in the lesson. Pace in this context

doesn't mean speed; it means maintaining the learning pace time to complete the task, rather than letting it drift.

Finally, Julie encourages the children to reflect on what they have learned from each other:

- Did your partner say anything that surprised you?
- Did you have the same ideas as your partner, or
- were yours different?

Another way to avoid show-and-tell is to switch up the paired talk by asking pupils to comment on each other's work, rather than explain their own.

A Year 5 class is reading The Promise by Nicola Davies, illustrated by Laura Carlin. The teacher, Karl, reads the opening sentences, which set the scene for the story. He has withheld the illustrations. After a second reading, the children draw the pictures in their mind's eye, visualising the setting.



When they have had Karl asks the children to turn to their listening partners.

As usual, they assign themselves as partner A or partner B.

Rather than show and explain their own ideas, they are going to explain what they understand about each other's work.

So, partner A explains how they think partner B has interpreted the scene and vice versa. If partner A thinks partner B has misinterpreted their ideas or has omitted something important, they have an opportunity to clarify.

This small adjustment to the more typical 'show and tell' approach keeps both partners active and involved, setting the conditions for active listening.

Nazreen's class are reading the Greenling by Levi Pinfold. They have been studying the book for three weeks and are at the end of the teaching sequence. They are considering the statement 'Greenling is a disruptive influence.'

After clarifying what they understand by the word 'disruptive', Nazreen organises the class into two concentric circles. The inner circle faces outwards so that each child faces a partner from the outer circle. Nazreen presents the statement and asks the children to discuss it with their partners.

For the first 15 seconds, partner A tells partner B their views and then the roles are switched. After 30 seconds, the inner circle moves to the left so the children have new partners. This is repeated several times before Nazreen asks the inner circle to move around to the right – the children are now talking with a partner they have already spoken with. In reflecting on the process with

- Organise the class so all the children can hear each other.
- Have high expectations for clarity and audibility.
- Encourage children to speak directly to each other rather than filtering ideas through you.
- · Avoid repeating what the children say.
- Make listening a focus for feedback.
- Ensure you are a model of attentive listening.
- Change the terminology from 'talk' to 'listen'.

the class, Nazreen makes listening the focus: *Tell me* two new ideas that you learnt from different partners.

The strength of this approach is that the children carry with them ideas that they have heard expressed by different partners. It particularly supports children with English as an additional language, or special learning needs, allowing them to borrow ideas, practise language, and build understanding sequentially.





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# Book CIUB

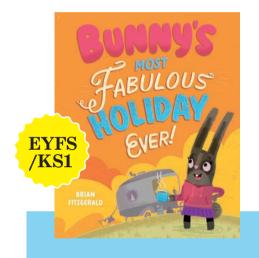
We review five new titles that your class will love

Kim Hvo-e

How We

Share Cake

KS1



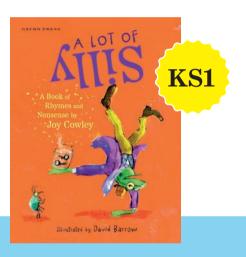
#### Bunny's Most Fabulous Holiday Ever by Brian Fitzgerald

(HB £12.99, Scallywag Press)



eborah Smith

(HB £12.97, Scribble)



A Lot of Silly: A Book of Rhymes and Nonsense by Joy Cowley, illus. David Barrow (HB £16.99. Gecko Press)

Every year, Bunny takes her caravan to the seaside, where she parks in a lonely spot and begins her beloved routine of solitary activities. So, when a monster sets up his messy, disorganised tent right next door, Bunny's holiday is ruined. Or is it?

.....

How Bunny discovers friendship with someone so fundamentally different makes for a satisfying read. The characters share quiet time together, as well as noisier or more active fun, and there's a real emotional journey taking place, with some honest 'crunch moments' alongside the humour.

Readers will recognise their own preferences and choices in this vibrantly illustrated picturebook, which will please FS/Year 1 audiences, generate discussion and encourage empathy. When you've got brothers and sisters, how do you get fair shares? As one of five, the child in this story knows exactly what to do – watch carefully, calculate to the last morsel, make your case and move fast! But all that effort can be exhausting, and sometimes you just want something all your own. An unexpected birthday cake, perhaps?

Transporting us to the heart of a contemporary Korean family, this beautifully observed picturebook takes a light-touch approach to the timeless sibling struggle for fairness and justice.

Translated by Man Booker co-winner Deborah Smith, this charming book has much to say about togetherness, sharing and real-world maths. It will appeal to a wide age range, prompting memories, questions and insights to kickstart discussion and further exploration. Everyone needs top-quality rhymes to grow up on, and this beautifully presented hardback is a great place to start. Most of Joy Cowley's poems rhyme, a few don't. Some restrain themselves to four lines of absurdity, others are longer. Many evoke more than just a giggle on their way to unexpected destinations, and a handful are recognisably tall stories or jokes. But they are all, as advertised, most gloriously silly.

Featuring an expressive cast of animals plus the occasional human, David Barrow's illustrations match the timeless exuberance of the text, with moments of tension and reflection adding to the mix. Share this irresistible collection aloud as soon as children enjoy listening, or pop it on the shelves for independent readers.



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

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



One Wise Sheep by Ulrich Hub, illus. Jorg Muhle (£7.99, Gecko Press)

Man-man and the Tree of Memories by Yaba Badoe, illus. Joelle Avelino (£12.00. Zephyr)

One starry winter's night, a strange event is witnessed by a bobble-hatted sheep. The sky is full of voices and the shepherds have disappeared – presumably kidnapped by a UFO. What's an unruly flock to do when faced with such tidings? Organise their first night hike, of course!

This laugh-out-loud version of the Nativity Story is told with brevity, wit and a keen eye for the absurd. But teamwork, forgiveness and the ability to 'muddle along' are at its heart, and its message is more traditional than it might appear.

Muhle's coloured line drawings feel as though they could burst into life at any moment, like animation stills, and complement the surreal but kindly energy of this rewarding chapter book for Year 2 up. This year's theme is Let Freedom Rain, but Man-man's more interested in pleasing his mum than learning about history. She's too ill to lead the carnival parade, so Man-man's dancing his heart out up front instead.

But the age-old Queen of Revels still listens to those who care, and takes Man-man and his companions to the Tree of Memories, deep in a magical forest, where the sights, sounds and feelings of their shared history have the power to change everything.

Set between London's Notting Hill and a timeless African 'otherworld', this middle-grade novel explores challenging themes (justice, personal agency and purpose, slavery...) in ways appropriate for UKS2. Full-colour illustrations draw on the story's energy and dance with it throughout.

# Meet the **author**

#### YABA BADOE DISCUSSES WHAT INSPIRES HER WRITING



KS2

What was primary school like for you? It was a huge adventure. I started school when I was living with my family

in Ghana. Back then I went to Ghana International School, not far from the centre of Accra where we lived. However, when I was still young, I was sent to prep school as a boarder in rural Devon, England – a tremendous change, which I'm still adjusting to! Imagine moving from the hustle and bustle of a hot, tropical country to the damp and cold of the Devon countryside. The difference in weather, food and culture was enormous, and most probably turned me into the writer I am today.

#### How does your experience as a filmmaker influence your writing?

I suspect that after having worked in a visual medium for most of my life, I tend to think in scenes and images when I write stories. I've also been fortunate enough to travel as a documentary filmmaker to countries as different as Brazil, Mongolia, Vietnam, India, Haiti and Jamaica. This really helps when I'm thinking of the worlds I want my characters to inhabit. It's a bit like having a store of ready-made canvases that I pull out and then paint my characters on.

#### What prompted you to write *Man-man* and the Tree of Memories?

I was asked by the George Padmore Institute in London to think about writing a story for middle-grade students. Three topics were suggested, one of which was carnival. I knew immediately that I wanted to write about carnival because I love dance and movement. I was also thrilled at the prospect of using the Notting Hill Carnival as a springboard to explore the links between family, Africa and its diaspora, which is what *Man-man and the Tree of Memories* is about.

Man-man and the Tree of Memories by Yaba Badoe and Joelle Avelino is out now in fully illustrated paperback (£10.99, Zephyr, an imprint of Head of Zeus).

# **"Adaptive assessment** for every pupil"

Numeracy specialist Andy Small explains how the New Group Maths Test can support maths at your school



The New Group Maths Test (NGMT) is an adaptive maths assessment for Years 2–7 that is objective and rigorous, because it's benchmarked nationally, yet also personalised and inclusive, because it adapts automatically to the level of each child, whether they excel at maths or not.

#### What is the New Group Maths Test?

NGMT is a digital, adaptive assessment for students aged six to 12 that assesses numeracy in exactly the same way as the popular and well-regarded New Group Reading Test and New Group Spelling Test assess literacy. It's a standardised test designed to measure students' mathematical knowledge and skills by benchmarking results against the national average, thereby allowing teachers to identify potential or any barriers to learning precisely and quickly.

#### Why is it different to other assessments?

NGMT is adaptive, which means that the difficulty of the questions adjusts in response to each individual student's answers making it suitable for all students, regardless of ability. Correct answers trigger progressively harder questions, wrong answers easier ones. This makes for a highly personalised test experience.

#### What is the student experience?

A key consideration in the development of NGMT was that it should be as positive an experience as possible for each student, especially as a recent YouGov survey of teachers found that they believed maths anxiety to be the biggest impediment to learning. No

What's the difference?

benchmarked to national averages

regardless of attainment

targeted support

A unique, rigorous, comprehensive, standardised maths assessment

The richness of NGMT's data allows for more nuanced interventions and

It's adaptive and inclusive, and adjusts to the level of each child,



practice or preparation for the test is necessary, and the assessment adapts automatically to the level of each child, meaning that every child will feel challenged yet supported throughout.

#### What does it cover and when should it be taken?

NGMT assesses children on number and algebra, fractions, decimals, percentages, proportion and ratio, measurement, geometry and statistics. It can be taken termly on a PC, laptop or tablet and usually takes children between 45-60 minutes to complete. It can be particularly



ABOUT ANDY: Assessment specialist in numeracy and mathematics at GL Assessment



useful at transition, between schools or year groups, by providing an assessment of student attainment as well as areas of relative strength and challenge.

#### **Does NGMT only** measure attainment?

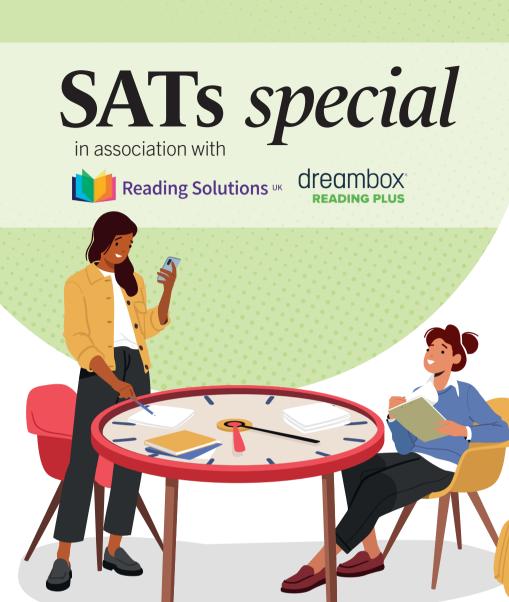
No. it also measures curriculum effectiveness, within and across schools as well as identifying areas of relative strength and those for further development for individuals and groups. It's been designed to deliver the most useful information to all teachers, regardless of experience, to enable them to provide the right support for each student. Moreover, it can be used as an indicator of potential specific challenges that may be maths related. like dvscalculia something that affects six per cent of all children.

#### Contact:

gl-assessment.co.uk/ngmt hello@gl-assessment.co.uk 0330 123 5375

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#### INSIDE THIS SECTION

- **56** Use the 2024 reading paper to prepare for success next year
- **60** Does the reading paper need rethinking altogether?
- **65** Why there's more to maths SATs than numeracy
- **67** Practical ideas to energise your SATs prep
- **69** Why you should be scaffolding your SATs problems differently





Make sure your Year 6 pupils are fully prepared for their assessments with this collection of resources for SATs revision,

practice and evidence gathering. From practice packs for the reading assessment test, to activities designed to produce writing that can be assessed against the Teacher Assessment Framework, to fun 'revision blasters' that make sure grammar knowledge is secure – everything you need is here to help you build children's confidence and get them ready to shine. Get started now at plazoom.com/ collections/ks2-sats-support



# Need to KNOW

**Shareen Wilkinson** breaks down this year's reading paper, and pulls out some secrets to 2025 success...

he 2024 reading paper had mixed reviews; some schools reported that it was easy and accessible, while others found it challenging. One thing it does do though, is provide some great pointers on how to teach for SATs success next year.

## Drip in test-style questions

Repetition is vital. The more pupils encounter test-style questions in a practical and fun context, the less fazed they will be when it comes to the actual test. In practice, this simply means that when completing a reading lesson, adjust your questioning. This is not about testing the pupils, but about cleverly adapting the questions you ask. Here are some examples used in the 2024 KS2 reading paper:

- Find and copy...
- How can you tell...
- This suggests...
- Tick two...
- According to the text...

Let's take the extract, below, from *The Final Year* by Matt Goodfellow (tinyurl.com/ tp-GoodfellowExtract) as an example. When approaching the text with the class, begin by modelling reading comprehension strategies:

Visualisation – What do you see at this point?
Background knowledge – Does this section remind you of anything?

• Questions – Do you have any questions at this point?

#### Keep reading for pleasure and information

The way to develop vocabulary and background knowledge is to read a wide range of fiction, nonfiction and poetry texts on a variety of subjects across the curriculum.

"Draw on strategies like visualisation, and maximise spoken language opportunities to unpick texts"

Alternatively, you could use 'I think, I see, I wonder' to model the same concepts.

Then, adapt your reading comprehension questions. So, instead of 'What is Miss Nolan's character like?', ask children:

'Miss Nolan rubs the boy's back.'

What does this suggest about her?

And rather than 'How is the boy feeling?', ask pupils:

How can you tell the boy is angry? Give **two** examples from the text. In 2024, pupils' knowledge of habitats, extinction and species are all aspects of the science and geography curriculums, but can also be explored through extensive reading across the curriculum. Pupils need to learn new ideas by building on what they already know. In essence, being familiar with

This broadens pupils'

have a rich vocabulary and

knowledge to prepare them

for the demands of the tests.

experiences and ensures they

a topic, not necessarily the exact topic in the reading paper, enables pupils to access the paper swiftly because they are familiar with the content.

# Explicitly teach test techniques

Teaching test techniques is sometimes addressed by giving pupils endless past papers to complete. This is nearly always (in my experience) an unproductive activity. There is a place for pupils to experience what a whole paper looks like, but there is also a benefit to explicitly teaching skills. For example, pupils need to be clear about the question stems used in the reading paper. They also need to have an in-depth understanding of the vocabulary.

The more complex inference questions focused on children being able to decipher a person's personality and compare it to others. Personality is the characteristics of an individual.

Question 39 this year, which was the final question on the paper, read as follows:

Ruskin's personality made him different from the hunters he met in the forest.

Explain two ways in which his personality made him different from them, using evidence to support each answer.

Just under 33 per cent of pupils across the country answered this correctly, and 76.5 per cent attempted the question. To gain the full three marks for this question, children would



#### All I remember is from somewhere really deep down in me I feel a darkness risin' but like a hot darkness like fire and smoke all mixed together and my fists are flames and the next thing I know I'm curled up in The Sunshine Room cryin' and cold and, man, I'm tired so tired and my teacher Miss Nolan's rubbin' my back and the whole room's in bits the whole world is.

Personality	Evidence example
<ul> <li>protective / respectful</li> <li>non-violent (towards animals)</li> <li>ethical / law-abiding / not mercenary</li> </ul>	He is protective, because it says, <b>"They asked me if I had seen a leopard. I said I had not."</b>

Table 1.

need to understand that they must find a point with evidence and then find another point.

I teach pupils Point Evidence Explain as well, just in case they miss a piece of evidence.

Remember – and remind them – that pupils do not need to write long essays. Working around characters' actions, with a focus on 'show not tell', is beneficial here.

Here is an example of a three-mark answer:

He is protective (point), because it says, "They asked me if I had seen a leopard. I said I had not." (evidence) He is brave. (point)

Explicitly modelling how to give answers, and using mark scheme examples for discussions, are sound ways of teaching threemark answers.

#### Use fun and interactive revision strategies

Who says that revision must be dull? I often hear this, but it doesn't reflect my experience at all. Teaching inference skills can easily be covered by exploring the thoughts and feelings of characters in pop songs, rhymes and online videos.

The best way to consolidate learning and enable retrieval practice is to get pupils to teach other pupils in the class.

Give them an area of focus and let them create a poster, worksheet or digital presentation that they will present to the rest of the class. Being able to fully explain a concept is beneficial for embedding knowledge into the longterm memory.

# Explore and discuss language

In 2024, many questions focused on exploring language, rather than looking

at words in isolation. When reading together, explore metaphors, similes and personification and discuss what images they convey to the reader. Draw on strategies like visualisation and maximise spoken language opportunities to unpick texts, e.g. What do you think that means? Do you agree with that? What images can you see?

#### Give pupils experience of the test papers

It's important to continue teaching, and to drip teststyle questions throughout Year 6, but children still need to be aware of the exam timings. This is especially true for the reading paper, where pupils have 60 minutes to read through and answer questions for three or four texts. Rapid retrieval through skimming and scanning is needed for this; just try to keep test experience to a minimum.

#### Work on whole-school strategies

The more *all* teachers see the test papers and have CPD opportunities to increase their subject knowledge, and the more senior leaders promote a whole-school responsibility for SATs, the higher the likelihood of success. **TP** 



Shareen Wilkinson is a successful educational author and adviser with over

20 years of experience in education. Currently, she serves as executive director of education for a highperforming multi-academy trust, where reading at KS2 exceeds national averages.

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# SURVIEC

Alban Edwards, Year 6 Teacher,

**92%** of teachers said pupils completed SATs prep with **less anxiety**.



**98%** believe their class made greater academic progress.



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100% of teachers saw a reduction in workload.



# Have you ever met **A TENREC**?

**Alex Quigley** breaks down the latest KS2 reading assessments and wonders if there's a better way...

he first text for children to read in the 23/24 KS2 SATs reading assessment was an informational one, entitled 'Streaky and Squeaky'. It discussed the wildlife of Madagascar, focusing in particular on the streak tenrec.

Like many informational texts, it presented a unique topic, unlikely to have been directly taught in the primary school curriculum. This approach is common in general reading comprehension assessments.

It seeks to assess a valid, generalised reading ability, separate from expectations of what has been explicitly taught in the national curriculum.

Along with tier 3 vocab (deforestation, population), the streaked tenrec text combined tricky academic language (soft-bodied invertebrates, stridulation) with more age-appropriate 'book language' (confused hodgepodge, marvellous streakiness). Additional text features were also included to guide the reader.

# An unlevel playing field

Stronger readers would likely have encountered more tier 3 words in the curriculum than their less able peers, along with other rich language experiences. As a result, those readers should have been better able to link them together into rich schemas of knowledge – that is to say, inferring more meanings than a reader who was not already familiar with them. In this regard, the SATs reading comprehension test is what E. D. Hirsch describes as a 'knowledge test in disguise'.

Of course, pupils had

three such texts to grapple with, and so the SATs become a demanding test of fluent and knowledgeable reading. Over 2,000 words, across the reading assessment, need to be cohered quickly into meaningful understanding; those schemas matter.

#### Time for a change?

No assessment is perfect – and the KS2 SATs reading test certainly isn't. So, we should replace it with something better, right?

There has been a call to change the SATs assessment into a reading test where the topic of what is being read is already known and pre-taught in the curriculum.

For example, schools could be told that pupils will be tested using texts about the Amazon rainforest.

This could create some equity for those pupils who don't possess the background knowledge of words and the world, accumulated via lots of prior reading and learning.

However, doing this would shift the nature of the assessment to being one more squarely testing teachers' ability to teach a reading curriculum successfully, rather than children's reading ability and knowledge of the English language.

It doesn't take too big a mental leap to see schools narrowing the curriculum to hot house those topics announced for the SATs. A term of Year 6 (then 5, then 4...) could become devoted to learning everything about the Amazon – with pupils mired in endless SATs-style mini-texts. The risk of any shift that privileges a knowledge-rich reading curriculum, is a curriculum narrowed by expediency. A yet more radical



solution, proposed by some experts, is to jettison reading comprehension assessments altogether. Perhaps we could replace them with reading fluency assessments, which are a handy proxy for reading ability.

But what if we then forget to emphasise the meaning of the language? We may unintentionally create a focus on speed reading and oral reading, but miss a vital focus on comprehension (which would hamper the test's validity).

#### Reimagining the tests

There is no easy answer for getting the right reading test format. Reading is a complex skill, comprised of a wealth of



subtly interlinked knowledge and strategies that are developed over years, inside and outside the classroom. Tests usually struggle with such complexity, and they offer us only pale approximations of the authentic reading process.

A key answer for me is to step back from the test format itself and aim to appraise successful readers and skilled reading.

The biggest misconception about the current iteration of the SATs well needs planning and time. It probably needs the space created by not imitating the assessment over and over. In short, if practising the assessment stops you doing lots of 2, 3, 4, and 5, then just stop. It is fool's gold!.

#### Back to Madagascar

Let's return to streaked tenrecs. The pesky little blighters that beset our young readers. These cute little creatures offered a vehicle for a compromised assessment that captures a partial picture

## "You don't become a skilled and knowledgeable reader by undertaking pale imitations of reading comprehension tests"

standardised reading assessment is that practising lots of short texts, and answering questions that retrieve information and summarise ideas, improves your reading ability. But doing this can steal so much curriculum time that pupils aren't doing the wide reading necessary to actually become skilled and knowledgeeble readers

knowledgeable readers.

The fundamental problem is that you don't become a skilled and knowledgeable reader by undertaking pale-imitations of reading comprehension tests. That occurs when you read widely. You summarise, but you talk about texts in a dynamic way that lets you read on and on.

## The elements of success

There is no one solution to complex reading, but I think there are five key interlinked elements, which I have outlined in the panel on the right. To do all five of reading comprehension ability. And yet, you'll struggle to find an assessment that does a much better job.

We probably shouldn't pay streaked tenrecs, or the reading SATs format, too much of our attention. Instead, let's read and read and read... about animals, and rainforests, and biomes, and brilliant characters. If we focus on doing that, we'll be improving reading in ways that are more effective, long lasting, and meaningful than merely aping the assessment format. **TP** 



Alex Quigley is the author of Closing the Writing Gap. A former

teacher, he is now the head of content and engagement at the Education Endowment Foundation, alongside his personal writing and training for teachers.

#### 5 STEPS TO BETTER READING

Get 'learning to read' right It all starts with early reading experiences, good phonics instruction and developing pupils' phonemic awareness. They need to lift the sounds from the page until it appears effortless.

2 Bridge to comprehension with reading fluency Children need lots of practice of reading aloud and fluency. Happily, this builds nicely on phonics approaches, and bridges to plenty of quality book talk that develops comprehension.

Do lots of wide, rich reading The recent focus on curriculum has foregrounded how children learn by building knowledge and connecting those schemas in helpful networks. The key here is reading lots of 'Goldilocks texts', which are neither too hard nor too easy. I think we need to step away from the worksheets and five paragraph texts; children need to read full books. If they overlap in 'reading clusters', so much the better. Only then will pupils make the connections and deal with the complexities that stick long in the memory.

Teach strategies for tricky texts

When you are reading a 'Goldilocks text', you need to be strategic: questioning, clarifying, summarising. These strategies don't need to be over-taught; they should be focused on the text at hand, steering some rich book talk as a helpful scaffold.

### Cover explicit and implicit

It can be very useful to explicitly teach vocabulary like 'deforestation' and 'population'. These are high-value words that initiate lots of connections and schemas of knowledge. In addition, by teaching a small number of words explicitly, we help foster a curiosity for words.



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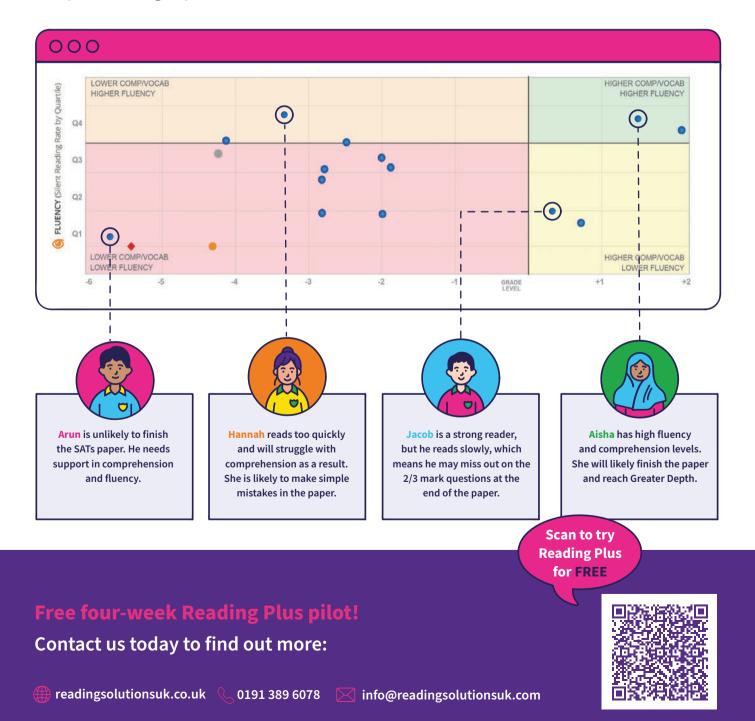
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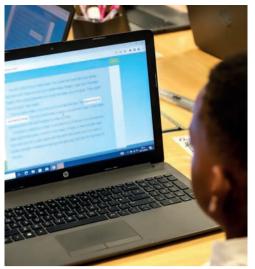
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#### ASK THE EXPERT

# **Unlocking SATs success**

Former teacher and reading development consultant Lewis Crane discusses strategies for enhancing pupils' vocabulary, fluency and comprehension skills

#### How can teachers best prepare pupils for the reading comprehension aspect of SATs?

A balanced approach is key to preparing pupils for SATs reading comprehension. Teachers should focus on daily reading that builds both vocabulary development and comprehension skills. Exposing pupils to a wide range of texts —fiction, non-fiction and poetry— that mirror SATs content is essential. Also, scaffolded questioning, moving from retrieval to higher-order skills such as inference, is crucial.

# What is the most common challenge pupils face in Key Stage 2 SATs, and how can teachers address it?

Time pressure and comprehension challenges are common in Key Stage 2 SATs. Pupils often struggle with interpreting multiple texts under timed conditions, and a lack of cultural capital can make it harder to relate to the content. To address this, teachers should develop deep reading habits early, encouraging pupils to break down complex passages. Building silent reading fluency and exposing pupils to a wide range of texts can also help improve comprehension.

# What roles do vocabulary and language structure play in SATs success?

Vocabulary and language structure are crucial for SATs success. Without a broad vocabulary and a solid grasp of language structure, pupils may struggle to interpret texts accurately. Teachers should incorporate vocabulary lessons into daily activities, focusing on tiered words (basic, highfrequency, and advanced) in varied contexts. This approach helps pupils recognise word meanings in different situations.



#### EXPERT PROFILE

NAME: Lewis Crane JOB TITLE: Reading development consultant AREA OF EXPERTISE: Reading development and pedagogy BEST PART OF MY JOB: Seeing children's confidence in reading flourish

## What strategies can educators use to ensure effective interventions?

Effective reading interventions require robust summative assessments to identify specific needs, such as comprehension, fluency or vocabulary gaps. Tailored small-group or one-to-one sessions can address these challenges. Teachers should engage struggling pupils with high-interest texts at their reading level to maintain motivation. Progress should be reassessed regularly through formative assessments to ensure interventions are working and adjustments are made when necessary.

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> Upper KS2 Phase Leader, Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School

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# Not just NUMBERS

Don't overlook reading comprehension when prepping for maths SATs, says **Ruth Astley** 

he KS2 Mathematics suite of papers covers knowledge and skills taken from the whole KS2 curriculum, with arithmetic and reasoning skills equally tested. But, in order to be successful, is this all a Year 6 child needs to be confident with, or is there more to the maths SAT than just maths itself?

#### So many words!

The role of reading skills within these tests, and their impact on children's maths SAT outcomes, is often underestimated. Picture yourself as an 11-year-old with the reasoning paper in front of you; the arithmetic paper is under your belt. You've got your mirror, pencil and ruler, and you open up the page, only to be confronted by a sheet full of words. "This is the maths SAT paper, not the reading one!" you say to yourself.

It's okay though – you're up to the task, as you have a Year 6 teacher who has prepared you for this moment. You've been taught that knowing your times tables, how to multiply and divide fractions and interpret pie charts isn't enough.

# Going the extra mile

The KS2 maths SATs require a high level of reading ability. A child needs to be able to read problems that are worded in a complicated way, with a significant word count. They must be able to

# *"The KS2 maths SATs require a high level of reading ability"*



read these at a reasonable pace – while maintaining their understanding – to finish the paper in the given time. They need to discard information within the question that isn't essential and locate the information that is, identifying key words and phrases in just the same way they would in the reading SAT paper.

Skills in how to unpick questions and identify essential information are transferrable across the reading and reasoning papers and should be taught in a similar way. There are many acronyms out there which teach children to do this. To some extent it doesn't matter which you use, it's the skill that's important.

## Reading skills for maths success

What about the children who find these skills tricky? Something that many children with less confidence in maths may find extremely useful is the storyboard method. Why not turn your reasoning problem into a story board? Break it down into a set of pictures, each

containing key information. Over the years, I've sent so many SAT papers away, in those dreaded envelopes, with mini story boards drawn throughout them, and they've resulted in great things!

The accepted need to focus on developing vocabulary knowledge for success in the reading paper should also be applied to maths. Knowing synonyms for mathematical vocabulary is a key tool children can use to unlock meaning within maths questions. Can pupils, for example, find and copy a word that means 'multiply'? To do this, they will need to be able to skim and scan the text for key words efficiently.

The children should also be able to identify common question stems, and know what is being asked of them.

#### Thinking logically

One of the main exam techniques I teach children when tackling multiple-choice questions for the reading SAT is learning the process of elimination: referring back to the text throughout to decide whether each available answer is possible, definitely possible or impossible. Pupils soon see that transferring this skill to the mathematic reasoning papers also leads them to success.

Finally, when one of those dreaded explanation maths questions raises its head, I've found nothing more effective than teaching children to answer them just as they would a three-mark question in the reading SAT paper.

Make sure pupils are confident in unpicking a question to make a point, can provide an explanation using the information in the question or text, and explain the answer with a strong grasp of sentence stems. **TP** 



Ruth Astley is a former assistant headteacher, SLE for assessment and English,

and former LA moderation manager.

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# Bring on the **FUN**!

Rachael Ede offers some practical ideas to energise your SATs prep

et's be honest, SATs can feel like a mountain to climb, both for children and teachers. The pressure is real, and it's easy for Year 6 pupils to feel overwhelmed. Of course, there's no getting around the fact that, as teachers, you're responsible for ensuring children are fully prepared for SATs, which may require some serious effort. But it doesn't have to be all hard work. With a bit of creativity, you can mix in some fun to lighten the mood and keep children motivated.

#### Escape room challenges

Turn your classroom into an 'escape room', where children must solve SATs-style questions to unlock each new challenge and progress to the next level of the game. Set up different stations, each focusing on a topic such as decimals, prepositions or coordinates. Pupils work in teams to solve problems within a time limit. Each correct answer gives them a clue or code to unlock the next level. This not only makes learning fun, but also helps children who may struggle with certain questions to feel less anxious. Working in a team gives them the support they need, so they don't feel pressured to figure out answers alone. It boosts their confidence as they help their group move forward to unlock the next question.

#### Leaderboards and power-ups

Set up a classroom leaderboard where children earn points for answering questions correctly, completing tasks, or hitting personal bests. Keep things exciting by adding power-ups:



for example, answering three questions in a row correctly could earn a hint token they can use later when they're stuck on a tough question. You could also offer speed boosts for completing tasks quickly or shield tokens to protect from losing points if they get a tricky question wrong.

#### **Team battle**

Challenge children to compete in small teams. Each team starts with a set number of 'lives' (points), and every time they answer a question incorrectly, they lose a life. The last team standing wins the game. To keep it interesting, mix in different types of questions, such as quick-fire, multi-step, or creative problem-solving. You could even let teams level up with bonuses like extra time or the opportunity to steal a point from another team.

#### **Challenge tournaments**

Create a buzz in your classroom by setting pupils a series of timed challenges – think of it as a mini SATs Olympics. Set up stations with tasks like SATs-style reasoning, problem-solving and reading comprehension questions. Children race to complete each task correctly, working in small teams. You can award medals, certificates, or fun rewards at the end of the tournament. This will bring some fun and healthy competition, all while familiarising children with the main types of SATs question styles.

#### **SATs superheroes**

Create a Superhero Academy, where children train to become 'SATs Superheroes'. Develop SATs Mission Cards, with a mix of individual and group tasks. Missions could involve solving reasoning problems, or helping a peer with a reading comprehension exercise. Each completed mission earns 'superpowers' like badges or points. You can even allow children to customise their superhero identity by earning powers in specific subjects like Maths Master, Grammar Guru, or Spelling Sorcerer. Finish the academy with a SATs Superhero graduation, where children receive certificates and their superhero personas are revealed.

#### Wheel of fortune

Ask children to spin a wheel to determine which type of SATs question they'll face: reasoning, arithmetic, grammar, punctuation, spelling, or reading comprehension. To add a challenge, include bonus sections like double points for a correct answer or a lightning round where pupils must answer as many questions as possible in 60 seconds. The random element adds excitement and keeps children on their toes.

#### **Get moving**

Let's bring life into SATs prep by getting our energetic Year 6s moving. Try revision relays outside on a dry day, where children race between stations to answer questions or solve problems. Short brain breaks, with stretching or mindfulness can also recharge children and boost concentration.

#### **Keep momentum**

Incorporating these ideas into your gamification strategy can keep children motivated in the lead-up to SATs week. While it's important to remember that SATs preparation may also require more focused, serious activities, mixing in fun and creative approaches helps to balance the hard work.

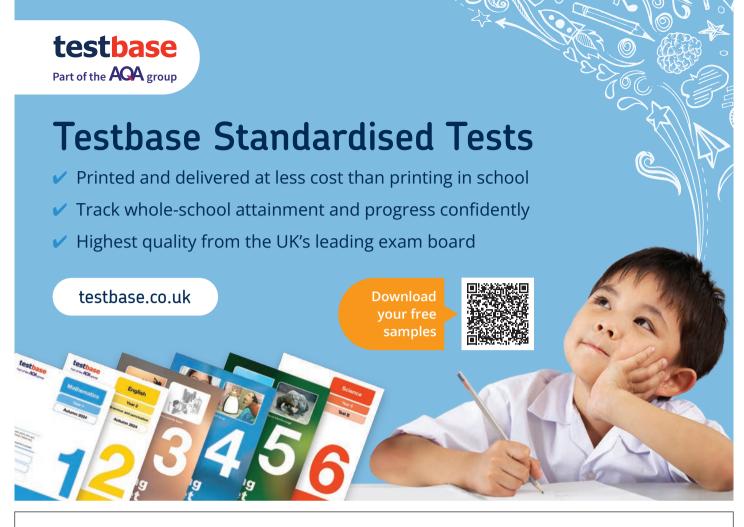
Finally, remember to celebrate the wins along the way. Celebrating milestones helps children feel proud of their progress and keeps them motivated. **TP** 



Rachael Ede, a former Year 6 teacher, founded SATs Boot Camp to

help teachers and students get ready for SATs with less stress.

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# *Take it down,* **OR BUILD IT UP?**

Adam Kohlbeck turns the common perception of scaffolding on its head...

caffolding is a tried-and-tested part of every effective teacher's toolkit. It's more formally known as: the process of making it easier for pupils to reach their learning goals by splitting up big development goals or tasks into several, progressive stepping stones and providing support such as prompting questions or writing frames. To us mere teaching mortals, it's the journey from teacher-led learning to pupil-led learning through gently adding and then removing levels of support – a bit like using stabilisers on a child's bike.

#### Flipping it round?

As with stabilisers, scaffolding is usually presented as something that should be gradually removed. Yet there are scenarios in which building scaffolding up incrementally actually serves learning better.

When problems are presented to pupils with scaffolding, we are allowing every child the opportunity to access the learning by directing them to think about the structure of the problem in a certain way. For example, suppose we present children with Table 1, which shows the cost of fruit at a school cafeteria, and ask them to work through the following problem: *Amir buys two pieces of fruit. He pays with a £2 coin. He gets £1.50 change.* 

He gets ±1.50 change. Tick the **two** pieces of fruit that Amir buys.

Fruit	Cost for one
banana	12p
plum	23p
apple	32p
pear	38p
Table 1.	

With an approach that aims to put scaffolding in place to be later removed for other similar problems, we might present pupils with a visual representation of the problem using a similar bar model as shown in Table 2.

£2		
£1.50	50p	
Table 2.		

Scaffolding in this way allows more pupils access to the question by a kind of working memory outsourcing effect. Instead of the pupils having to build the structure of the problem in their working memory, the construction piece of work is being done by the scaffold. This frees up more cognitive resources to

## "Scaffolding is usually presented as something that should be gradually removed"

work through to the solution. This is a really useful

scaffold for lots of pupils. But equally, and perhaps crucially, it could be seen as counter-productive to some – specifically pupils who could have solved it with less scaffolding.

These pupils would have benefited from having to think harder about their own strategy to the solution as well as the calculation.

#### Testing understanding

The other opportunity that is missed here is that teachers don't know which pupils understood the problem without the scaffold. Of course, you could suggest that teachers first present the problem without the scaffold and then add it in if pupils can't solve it. This is certainly a better approach, but it still leaves the teacher unaware of how much scaffolding each pupil required, since all 'struggling' pupils received the same amount and design of scaffolding.

This is problematic because expertise exists on a continuum, but with the approach described above, the teacher only knows who has the expertise to solve the problem independently and who does not.

So, what can we do about this? Teachers can use a kind of reverse scaffolding whereby the problem is first presented without any scaffolding before it is incrementally increased, with opportunities to solve the problem given to pupils at each point.

Let's consider the following problem:

Terry, Jane and Nimrat are having a jumping competition. Terry jumps 2 metres further than Jane and Jane jumps 2 metres further than Nirmat. Altogether, they jump 9.36 metres. How far does each person jump?

With this question, you could build up successive levels of scaffolding as shown in Figure 1. This would give pupils the opportunity to solve the problem at each round.

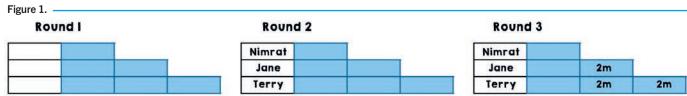
It would also enable you to see who can access the problem at each point, and where issues of understanding begin for each pupil.

By structuring their approach to scaffolding in this way – building it up rather than taking it down – teachers can supercharge their classroom diagnosis understanding. The inferences they can make about understanding become more precise and responsive to current pupil understanding and needs. Game changing. TP



Adam Kohlbeck (FCCT FCMI) is a deputy headteacher, advisor

to National Institute of Teaching and Learning and regular contributor to Testbase educational blogs.



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#### **REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL**

Putting effective assessment at the heart of teaching and learning is always a challenge. When selecting a test, we are looking for a resource that will give us the confidence to assess age-related expectations and reliably support targeted and adaptive teaching. That's not too much to ask, is it? Actually, it is. There are lots of English and Maths tests out there that attempt to replicate the look, feel and importantly the content of the SATs, but many of these can fall short and miss the mark.

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children and get them used to what expect. The tests are available as PDFs for printing

at school, or you can take advantage of Testbase's printing and distribution service, which costs less than in-school printing.

The Testbase contributors are highly experienced in developing questions and judging difficulty and have produced thoughtful and reliable mark schemes to match for fairly and



testbase

reliable evaluating children's current understanding and achievement. Testbase resources are quality assured alongside AQA to ensure you are accessing the highest quality content.

When you take out a subscription with Testbase then you can make use of MERiT, their powerful online reporting tool. This will enable you to dig deeper and gain further insights. The MERiT reporting system is as well-organised and easy to navigate as the rest of the testbase online offering, and includes quick-access guides and calendars to

<sup>\*</sup> "This is a comprehensive suite of termly summative tests"

help you use it effectively. The accompanying app allows you to enter pupils' details and scores to the system as you mark their test papers; or you can bulk-upload using the spreadsheet function. Once your data is in place, MERiT enables you to produce detailed reports to identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses, as well as trends within performance across your class. The reports are easy to share with colleagues or parents. These lookalike practice SATs

papers are probably the best there is out there and are superb for helping to plug gaps and equip children with the required skills to succeed in the national tests.

Testbase can help further too, and provide a whole library of SATs past papers covering KS1 and KS2, and earlier National Curriculum Tests for KS1, KS2, KS3 English, maths and science. With a searchable question bank of over 12,500 SATs and high-quality test questions, Testbase have got every base covered.





#### VERDICT

- Pitch-perfect tests for mirror-image SATs practice, preparation and progress
- A fully-flexible and time-saving resource
- Sleek, professional and engaging
- Perfect for the formative use of summative tests
- Help to measure pupils' learning along with teacher and curriculum effectiveness
- Increase motivation to improve learning outcomes
- Affordable printing options

#### UPGRADE IF...

...you are looking for realistic tests to help children be as SATs-ready as they can.

testbase.co.uk | Complete Primary Package £395 +VAT | See website for further pricing options





## FANTASTIC RESOURCES THAT GIVE VALUE FOR MONEY









## **An Unmissable Opportunity for All Primary Schools!**

1decision is excited to offer a new FREE service to transform pupil development and school evaluations. As winners of the prestigious Teach Primary Wellbeing Award, 1decision helps schools prepare pupils for secondary education.





#### What's included in the starter package?

**Pupil Knowledge Tracker:** Assess Year 5 and 6 pupils, receive reports, identify gaps, and prepare them for transition.

**Provision Audit Tool:** Evaluate your personal development offering with key questions to highlight strengths and areas for growth.

Plus: gain free access to interactive assemblies.

**Don't Miss Out!** FREE Resources For Every Year Group!



## **WINNER 1decision Ltd 1DECISION** -

## PSHE/PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1decision provides interactive PSHE, Relationships and Health Education and Personal Development resources for primary children in 2,000 schools in 47 counties across the UK and international schools in 19 countries. It offers schools original and engaging topic-based resources to enhance and evidence the delivery of statutory RSHE through PSHE and wider personal, social and emotional development for KS1/2 pupils, helping them prepare children for secondary education and life beyond. Visit 1decision.co.uk/ try-our-resources





"This resource is well-presented and easy to use. It covers important lessons that are vital for all primary school settings, including EYFS, and the price point feels appropriate and offers good value for money."

#### HIGHLY COMMENDED Puffin **MOLLY FORBES** EVERY BODY

Every Body is a gender inclusive guide to body image encouraging all children to respect and appreciate their bodies, and to advocate for bodies that may look or function differently from their own. The author, Molly Forbes, is the founder of the non-profit Body Happy Organisation, where she regularly visits schools and runs workshops on

the subject of body image. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-EveryBody

"Teaching children about their bodies using appropriate language is very important. Understanding that we are all different is a vital lesson that needs to be taught young; celebrating difference is key."

#### **Category finalists**

**Action Mats** Mindful Mats. actionmats co.uk/ourmats/mindful-mats-range

imoves imoves. imoves com/ imoves-active30

**Mindfuel** Mindfuel Primary Wellheing mindfuel.school

## **HIGHLY COMMENDED** Fischy Music FISCHY MUSIC ONLINE

Fischy Music is a charity with over 25 years' experience of writing songs with and for children to nurture their mental health and wellbeing. We believe in the transformative power of song to enable children to celebrate their uniqueness and value, as well as supporting them through the tough times. Visit fischy. com/fischy-musiconline/find-out-more



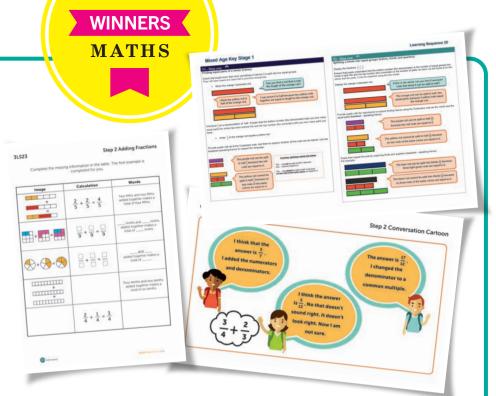
"Songs about and for wellbeing aren't a new concept, but it's often hard to find resources to support wellbeing and mental health lessons. I can see this resource being used in schools to support the messaging from lessons."

#### **RESOURCE AWARDS**

# WINNER HFL Education

Single-age and mixed-age ESSENTIALMATHS learning sequences empower teachers to teach a carefully planned, small-step progression through the maths national curriculum from Reception to Year 6, deepening understanding year on year. Now hosted on an easy-to-navigate, online platform to increase planning efficiency. Visit hfleducation.org/schoolimprovement/primary/maths/ essential-maths





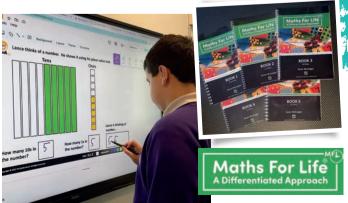
"A comprehensive curriculum for Reception through to Year 6, this vast resource offers teachers everything needed to teach maths in a structured way, but is designed to be flexible to allow teachers to adapt and course what and how to teach. The learning sequence plans explain what teachers need to focus on for each learning moment, and the handouts and activities for learners are superb."

## HIGHLY COMMENDED Maths For Life

#### MATHS FOR LIFE PROGRAMME -A DIFFERENTIATED APPROACH

Maths For Life is a complete programme that comprises educator guides and an online subscription.

The online subscription provides access to: student assessments at all levels including an analysis tool; over 21,000 unique worksheets to support every topic and learning objective in the programme; a dedicated community forum with tutorial videos and access to live Q&A sessions. New content is published every week of term. Visit mathsforlife.com



# HIGHLY COMMENDED

NUMBER BUILDERS

Number Builders is a comprehensive and engaging number support programme for Foundation and Key Stage 1 that brings together flexible lesson resources and an innovative classroom manipulative, n-bars. Developed by former Head Teacher Ian Connors, this multi-sensory, highly accessible programme can be implemented in full or to complement schools' existing maths provision. Visit collins.co.uk/pages/number-builders

## **Category finalists**

#### Out of the Ark Music

Curriculum Crunchers: Maths, outoftheark.co.uk/ curriculumcrunchers-maths.html Teach Active Teach Active, teachactive.org

#### Mrs Mactivity

n-bars

Maths Masters, mrsmactivity.co.uk/ maths

74 | www.teachwire.net

# Collins

# **Number** Builders

## An engaging number support programme for Foundation and KS1

that brings together flexible lesson resources with an innovative classroom manipulative, n-bars





Find out more collins.co.uk/NumberBuilders



Developed by former headteacher lan Connors, this multi-sensory, highly accessible programme can be implemented in full or to complement existing maths provision.





TRIAL PACK

**RISK FREE** Get over 3 weeks' worth of lesson

**TRY LITERACY TREE** 

plans for every year group from Reception to Year 6 for just £25 with code TEACHPRIMARYBF

#### FEATURES

- Ø Planning
- 🕑 CPD
- 🕑 App
- 🕑 Link
- Consultant
- Classroom visuals

RIMARY WARDS 2024

Literacy Tree CPD & App **Highly Commended** in Teach Primary Resource Awards 2024

> \*Limited-time offer applies to trial pack only. Use code TEACHPRIMARYBF at basket Promotion ends 02/12/2024. Cost of trial pack redeemable against membership

@theliteracytree

**(** 020 3196 0140

www.literacytree.com

#### **RESOURCE AWARDS**

# **WINNER**

## Real Group, Whole School SEND

#### UNIVERSAL SEND SERVICES: **ONLINE SEND CPD UNITS**

Delivered in collaboration between Whole School SEND and Real Group, this series of free, online CPD units, designed for education professionals at all levels. provide 20-minute, bite-sized learning on critical SEND themes. The units break new ground, offering a unique blend of accessible and impactful content, and lasting value, empowering educators to champion inclusion for every learner. Visit onlinecpd.wholeschoolsend.org.uk



"The whole-school SEND units from nasen offer a comprehensive library of interactive CPD modules using a range of learning materials. I loved the balance of research theory, succinct presentations, insights from teachers and leaders, and practical classroom tips."

Reach Academy Feltham

**HIGHLY COMMENDED** 

**Education Group** 

## **HIGHLY COMMENDED** Literacy Tree LITERACY TREE **CPD TRAINING**

Literacy Tree's CPD training is designed to enhance the teaching of literacy in primary schools and support integration of Literacy Tree's Teach Through a Text approach in the classroom. The sessions focus on immersing teachers in the themes of

various texts, employing drama techniques and props to bring books to life while meeting national curriculum requirements. Visit literacytree.com/training

"What I loved most about the training from Literacy Tree is that the facilitators are all clearly obsessed with children's books. That passion is infectious, it's impossible not to get very excited about the books under discussion.

#### **Category finalists**

**Dyslexia** Action

Training

Speech & Language Link

The Link CPD.

the-link-cpd

Dyslexia in Multilingual speechandlanguage.link/ Settings, dyslexiaaction. whole-school-approach/ org.uk/dyslexia-inmultilingual-settings-unit Literacy

The Key Support

Services

'New to headship: learn to

lead' practical leadership

course, thekeysupport.

swoogo.com/ learntolead-nonmember

WINNERS

**CPD** 

UNIVERSAL SEND SERVICES

SEND CPD

#### THE NATIONAL COLLEGE National Education Group, operating as The National College, offers the most comprehensive online CPD programme on the market, helping over 46,000 education settings, including primary schools, ensure compliance, enhance practice and improve outcomes. Visit nationalcollege.com

National



## The National College

real group

"I found the instructors and facilitators to be really knowledgeable. The materials are very well produced, with engaging visuals, thoughtfully structured."



#### 76 www.teachwire.net

WINNERS APPS

#### RESOURCE AWARDS

# WINNER Spelling Shed

Spelling Shed is the UK's number-one best-selling spelling app, designed by Martin Saunders, a school governor, teacher and EdShed founder. Drawing on his own experiences and feedback from educators, he created the app to improve pupils' spelling, make spelling fun and engaging and enable educators to target learning while tracking pupil progress. Visit **spellingshed.com** 







THE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION

"Spelling Shed is an outstanding educational tool that makes learning spelling fun and engaging. The app's user-friendly interface, customisable word lists, and interactive games cater to all learning levels. Its data-driven approach allows educators to easily track progress and adjust learning plans."

## HIGHLY COMMENDED Literacy Tree Literacy tree app

The Literacy Tree app is a digital platform designed to enhance the Literacy Tree experience and literary education in primary schools internationally. Developed through extensive consultation with educators, this app supports our mission to integrate a rich diversity of literature with engaging planning sequences. Visit **literacytree.com/app-user-guide** 





"The Literacy Tree app is a fantastic resource for enhancing primary English education. It offers unique features, which allow teachers to personalise lessons and track student progress effectively. The app significantly reduces workload and integrates seamlessly with existing teaching practices."

## <u>HIGHLY COMMENDED</u> Tapestry



#### TAPESTRY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PLATFORM

The original online learning journal, Tapestry is a multipurpose childhood education platform used in over 8,100 primary schools to transform learning outcomes. Visit **tapestry.info/pupil-progress-tracker** 

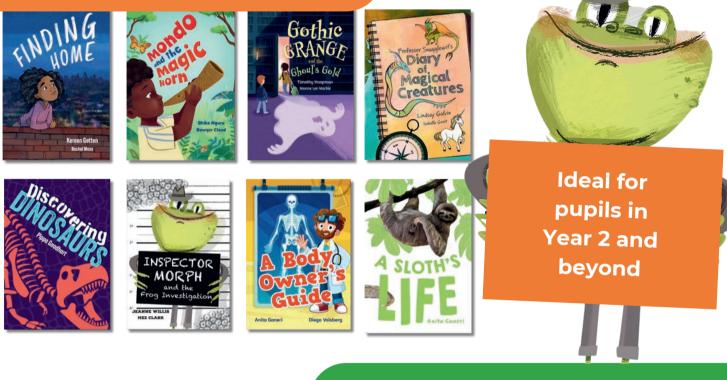
## **Category finalists**

Blippit Blippit Boards, blippitboards.com FlashAcademy®

FlashAcademy<sup>®</sup>, flashacademy.com/ primary-schools Tools for Schools, Inc. Book Creator, app. bookcreator.com

# Develop confidence, stamina and a love of reading with Little Wandle Fluency

60 vibrant, diverse and engaging Big Cat chapter books created by leading authors and illustrators







Comprehensive teaching notes, guidance and downloadable word cards are available for free on littlewandlelettersandsounds.org.uk



Blaise and Flint Instrated by Letizia Rizzo







Scan to find out more



## WINNER Collins and Wandle Learning Trust

#### LITTLE WANDLE FLUENCY PROGRAMME & COLLINS BIG CAT BOOKS

The Little Wandle Fluency programme is designed to create confident readers for life and is for children in Year 2 and upwards who have completed an SSP programme. It teaches all aspects of reading including comprehension, prosody and reading for pleasure as well as fluency. The vibrant, diverse and engaging Collins Big Cat chapter books that support the programme have been written and illustrated by leading contemporary authors and illustrators from a range of backgrounds, including books by Joseph Coelho, Poppy O'Neill and Bali Rai. Visit collins.co.uk/LittleWandleFluency



Collins

RESOURCE AWARDS



"The judges were really impressed with the range of exciting Collins Big Cat books that Little Wandle Fluency offers, with appealing titles that provide an excellent bridge between decodable and chapter books. The judges especially liked the broad range of titles, which offer a superb mix of genres, embracing inclusivity."

# HIGHLY COMMENDED BookTrust

BookTrust's Letterbox Club is a set of six parcels that include expertly curated resources such as books, maths games and stationery items for children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage aged three–13. It is unique in providing schools with everything they need for their vulnerable children in one place. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-Letterbox** 



WINNERS

**ENGLISH** 

"A lovely, valuable and affordable resource for supporting vulnerable and non-vulnerable students. Each parcel is vibrantly wrapped, containing well-curated texts that are excellent, inviting and tempting for children to read."

#### Category finalists

Literacy

**Counts** 

C4K Education Ltd

SATs Boot Camp.

yearsix.co.uk

Ready Steady Phonics, literacycounts.co.uk/ ready-steady-phonics Dreambox Reading Plus, readingsolutionsuk.co.uk/ reading-plus

Reading

**Solutions UK** 

## HIGHLY COMMENDED First News ENGAGE PRO

This revolutionary news-based literacy learning platform provides a personalised learning experience for every pupil, with the correct level pre-selected. The platform is updated every week with new comprehensions, vocabulary puzzles, debates, polls and more to promote Reading for Pleasure and reading non-fiction in the class room. Visit engage.firstnews.co.uk



"Engage Pro's interactive experiences, using current news, give children the opportunity to develop and learn using interesting and timely content. Children are able to discuss articles, comprehend, and develop oracy skills through debates, questions and polls."







Bring the magic of Letterbox Club to your pupil premium and vulnerable learners

"Delightful packages of books, games and stationery for vulnerable children... It's worth every penny!" Teach Primary

- Expertly curated for the needs of vulnerable children
- Proven impact on reading habits
- Strengthens parental engagement
- Aligns with your Pupil Premium strategy

Sign up for Letterbox Club at **booktrust.org.uk/letterbox-club** 



#### **RESOURCE AWARDS**

## **WINNER**

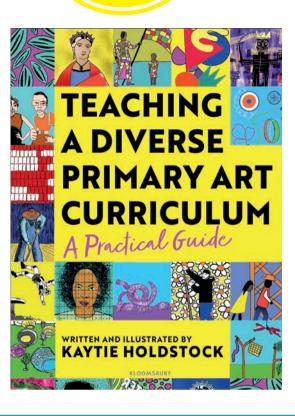
## Bloomsbury **Publishing**

#### TEACHING A DIVERSE PRIMARY ART CURRICULUM BY KAYTIE HOLDSTOCK

This book is tailored perfectly for primary educators seeking to enrich their art curriculum with diversity and inclusivity. It provides accessible, age-appropriate content that aligns with the National Curriculum while celebrating artists from diverse backgrounds. This ensures it meets the educational needs of today's classrooms, fostering cultural awareness and creativity.

Visit tinyurl.com/tp-Holdstock

## WINNERS **FOUNDATION**



"Art within the *classroom – building* the progression and range of coverage - can be tricky, and structuring a series of lessons to be meaningful can seem like hard work. This book offers great examples of how to do all those things. It provides background and ideology for creating a diverse and impactful curriculum, including assessment opportunities, and the author's passion is clear throughout."

## **HIGHLY COMMENDED Dimensions** Curriculum

#### HULLABALOO! PRIMARY MUSIC CURRICULUM

Hullabaloo! is a revolutionary primary music curriculum designed to bring the joy of music to classrooms across the nation. Comprehensive, engaging, and fun, this music scheme is crafted to hit the right notes with both pupils and teachers alike. Visit teachhullabaloomusic.com

## **HIGHLY COMMENDED** HUE **HUE ANIMATION STUDIO**

Welcome to the wonderful world of filmmaking where imagination and excitement meets movie-making technology to inspire the next generation of writers, artists and filmmakers. Visit huehd.com/products/hueanimation-studio





"The software is easy to explore, navigate and use with very little instruction needed. The device itself is simple to manipulate, but strong enough to withstand classroom use, and it is a one stop-motion shop!"

**Category finalists** 

#### **Jam Coding**

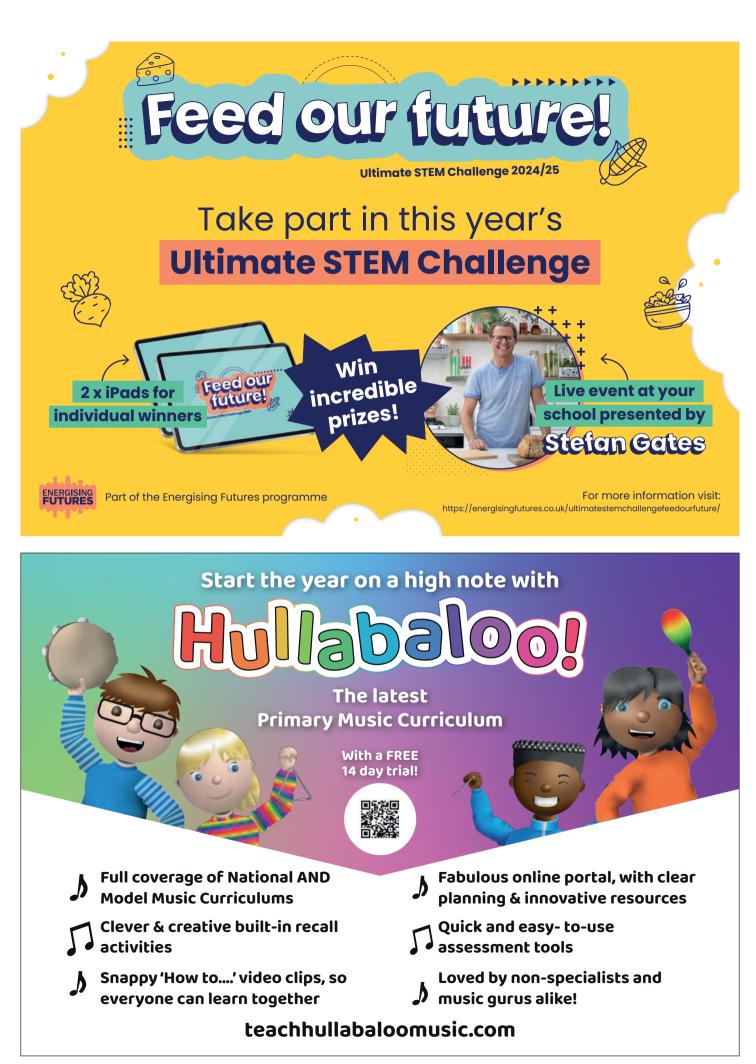
**Jam Coding Bespoke Computing Curriculum** jamcoding.com/ curriculum

## **Jigsaw**

Education Group Jigsaw RE, tinyurl.com/tp-JigsawRE

Welcome to Our Table: A Celebration of What dren Eat Everywhere, Chi tinyurl.com/tp-WelcomeTable

**Nosy Crow** 



WINNERS

FREE

#### **RESOURCE AWARDS**

# **WINNER** Encounter Edu

OCEAN HEROES

The ocean and climate are critical global issues at the forefront of scientific discovery. These can be complex and challenging, and often depressing topics. Encounter Edu has worked with world-leading scientists as part of the Convex Seascape Survey to bring these topics and a message of hope to the KS2 classroom. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-OceanHeroes** 



 Encounter

 Contraction

 Contraction



"This KS2 resource provides a fully detailed package – the study units are complete with multimedia elements and reference to digital access. Live lessons are a great component to bring learning to life. There are also resources and articles to assist teachers."

## HIGHLY COMMENDED PDSA PETWISE AWARD

PDSA's free Petwise Award programme has profoundly influenced primary education by advocating for responsible pet ownership and animal welfare. This programme seamlessly integrates various educational elements while nurturing empathy, compassion, and knowledge in young students. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-Petwise** 



"This resource was selected for its impact and integration of pet care into the curriculum and sound links to PSED/PSHE – whilst being suitable and relevant for all primary ages."

## HIGHLY COMMENDED Energising Futures (We Are Futures) ENERGISING

FUTURES

Energising Futures is a free education programme designed to build affinity with STEM subjects, develop skills, and inspire young people about future careers. This educational hub, funded by bp, brings science to life in the classroom using diverse content such as videos and interactive tools, to show real-world STEM applications. Visit **energisingfutures.co.uk** 



ENERGISING FUTURES

#### **Category finalists**

Challenging Education Ltd

Recorded RADY, challengingeducation. co.uk/rady Royal Ballet and Opera

Royal Ballet & Opera Schools Programme, tiny url.com/tp-RoyalBallet We are Futures

The Edit (a Sky & Adobe initiative), **my.skyup.sky** 





bett | AWARDS



## Have you signed up for your free Explorify account yet?



Explorify is a free primary science website, full of simple, low-prep and fun activities guaranteed to get your class talking about science.

Activities are directly mapped to all four UK curricula, so you're sure to find something to slot into your lesson planning.

Explorify is written by, and trusted by, teachers with 96% of educators saying that they would recommend Explorify.\*

\* 2024 evaluation of Explorify by CFE research.

# www.explorify.uk

Created by welks

POWERED BY **STEM** LEARNING





Find out more and sign up for a free trial: collins.co.uk/SnapScience

## RESOURCE AWARDS

# WINNER STEM Learning

Explorify is an extensive and totally free digital resource of engaging creative science activities for primary and early years teachers designed to stimulate curiosity, discussion, and debate in the classroom. The over-arching ambition of Explorify is to improve the quality of primary science teaching and learning in the UK. It is designed to support educators to teach science confidently and grow children's science capital and scientific skills. Visit explorify.uk



**WINNERS** 

STEM

"An outstanding, easy-to-use resource that is relevant to every year group and all settings. Whether you are teaching in a one-form entry, mixed aged groups, or PRU setting, this resource will resonate with your pupils and staff. It will get your pupils thinking, looking, listening, discussing and creating, at the same time helping teachers assess pupils better. This provides such a rich, positive energy for your lessons."

# HIGHLY COMMENDED

EVERYTHING YOU KNOW ABOUT THE HUMAN BODY IS WRONG!

Curious readers will quickly become experts with this informative, inventive and entertaining take on a human body book. Do you know

everything there is to know about the body? Humans have all of the answers about how it works, right? Well, this book is here to show you that you're WRONG! But don't worry, even the experts can't be right all the time... Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-Everything** 

"I can imagine every child in a class getting something from this book, so it's well worth buying. It contains lovely eye-catching visuals, with lots of detailed explanations."

#### Category finalists

#### Globisens

The Institution of Engineering and Technology

Xploris, globisens.net/ products/xploris Primary, education.theiet. org/primary Can You Get Rainbows in Space?, tinyurl.com/ tp-Space-Rainbows

Puffin

## HIGHLY COMMENDED Collins

#### **SNAP SCIENCE 2ND EDITION**



Snap Science is the leading primary science resource in the UK, with approximately 40.9 per cent market share. The newly released Snap Science 2nd Edition builds on this award-winning digital science programme, designed for EYFS-Year 6. A subscription provides everything you need to teach outstanding primary science and is easy to implement. Visit collins.co.uk/pages/primaryscience-snap-science

"This scheme of work caters for both confident science teachers and those who may feel a little overwhelmed when teaching science. Lesson plans are clearly set out, with key tiered vocabulary."

www.teachwire.net | 85





BBC Teach, the Premier League and ParalympicsGB have come together to create Super Movers for Every Body.

## Super Movers

Super Movers for Every Body offers a comprehensive package of FREE teaching and learning resources for the inclusive Paralympic sports blind football, boccia and Para athletics.

## **BBC Teach**

Everything is available for free on BBC Teach at **bbc.co.uk/supermovers** 

Films are available with British Sign Language and audio description and Welsh language users can find resources on Super Movers i bawb.





## **Our resources**

The resources include exciting and informative films, teacher notes, activity cards and posters guaranteed to engage your pupils age 5-11.

There are also fun follow-along song and dance films for the whole class and families to enjoy.

## B B C TEACH

## bbc.co.uk/supermovers

## WINNER Real Group, Whole School SEND

#### UNIVERSAL SEND SERVICES: ONLINE SEND CPD UNITS

Delivered in collaboration between Whole School SEND and Real Group, this series of free, online CPD units, designed for education professionals at all levels, provide 20-minute, bite-sized learning on critical SEND themes. The units break new ground, offering a unique blend of accessible and impactful content, and lasting value, empowering educators to champion inclusion for every learner. Visit onlinecpd.wholeschoolsend.org.uk



**RESOURCE AWARDS** 





"A wide range of free and easily accessible training courses covering a variety of SEND-related subjects. The courses are well put together and can be accessed by individuals, or used for group training. I liked the range of subjects offered and the flexibility of possible use. These are a really useful resource for training when budgets are stretched."

**HIGHLY COMMENDED** 

**SUPER MOVERS FOR EVERY BODY** Super Movers for Every Body is an accessible sports

campaign partnership between BBC Teach, the Premier

kit for blind football, boccia and para athletics.

Visit bbc.co.uk/teach/topics/cv2z7pw4jzlt

League and Paralympics GB. All UK primary schools are

eligible to apply for a free school para sports pack including

**BBC** Education

**WINNERS** 

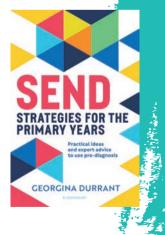
SEND

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

## Bloomsbury Publishing

SEND STRATEGIES FOR THE PRIMARY YEARS BY GEORGINA DURRANT

SEND Strategies for the Primary Years stands out in the realm of educational resources due to its exceptional blend of practicality, accessibility, and comprehensive coverage of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Its suitability for both teachers and parents navigating the complexities of supporting children with diverse needs is unparalleled. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-Strategies** 



"A relatively cheap resource with lots of practical ideas, many of which have accompanying video demonstrations that can be accessed via QR codes on the page. There was a clear explanation of different SEND needs. Overall this is a really practical resource accessible to staff at all levels."

## **Category finalists**

B Squared Connecting Steps, bsquared.co.uk/products/

connecting-steps

Ten Minute Box, fiveminutebox.co.uk/ product/ten-minute-box

**Five Minute Box** 

Hodder Education

SNAP Maths, hoddereducation.com/assessment/ snap-maths

#### PARTNER CONTENT



Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration into your classroom



#### JCA Adventures

JCA is a trusted provider of unforgettable school activity residential trips. For over 30 years, JCA has inspired young people to push boundaries, develop resilience, and learn through exhilarating educational adventures. With a range of options—from multi-activity residentials to single-day adventures and sports weekends—their UK activity centres offer something for every school. Proudly bearing the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge, they blend traditional outdoor activities, including abseiling, archery and kayaking, with innovative workshops like coding and Al. All activities and facilities are located onsite and every JCA trip is crafted for learning, growth, and endless fun! Visit **jca-adventure.co.uk** 



#### Premier League launches free Anti-Bullying Week teaching resources

The Premier League has teamed up with the Anti-Bullying Alliance to launch 'Choose Respect,' a free teaching resource for Anti-Bullying Week 2024, running from November 11 to 15. Aimed at children aged 7–11, these football-themed, curriculum-linked materials focus on self-respect, respect for others, and understanding the impact of actions. Available on the Premier League Primary Stars website, the resources include lesson plans, role-play scenarios, and personal pledges. By using the power of football, 'Choose Respect' encourages positive behaviour and inclusivity, and engages pupils in learning about respect, empathy, and teamwork - both in school and beyond. Download the free resources

now from plprimarystars.com

## Take One Picture

Take One Picture is a national programme for primary schools. Each year, one painting from the National Gallery's collection is selected to create child-led, cross-curricular projects. You decide on the length of the project, when you complete it and how many students take part.

To get started, sign up for a free online CPD day led by National Gallery experts. A member of the team will teach you about the painting and show you techniques for using art as a resource for curriculum-based learning. Spark your pupils' imagination and creativity, and inspire a lifelong love of art and learning. Head to **nationalgallery.org.uk** to sign up for one of our CPD days and get involved.





## STEM Learning

Teaching computing to pupils can be fun and exciting! Read Laura's story of how she has gained confidence to deliver great computing lessons and inspire more pupils into technology by completing the Teach primary computing certificate programme from the National Centre for Computing Education. Visit **ncce.io/primcert** 

.....



#### Testbase

Testbase has launched its new **TESTBASE STANDARDISED TESTS** for both key stage 1 and 2, PLUS an unbeatable print delivery service which could save you £2,000 each year! Track whole-school attainment and progress confidently with termly standardised assessment for maths, reading and English GPS, which closely reflects the style and format of KS2 national curriculum tests (SATs). Sustainably printed and delivered directly to you at less than it costs to print in school. • AQA-quality assured to ensure all our materials have the high-quality content you expect from the UK's leading exam board. Visit testbase.co.uk



Registered Charity No: 1060683



## naace.org.uk

# HELPING YOU USE TECHNOLOGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



The Naace EdTech Review Framework helps schools to:

- $\rightarrow$  Understand where they are in their technology strategy
- $\rightarrow$  Plan the next stages of their technology strategy
- → Record their progress





The tool was clearly set out and highlighted the strengths of our school and has also given us plenty of improvement opportunities for the future. CRANBERRY ACADEMY

If your school is interested in using technology for school improvement, we'd love you to join us

Join us today 뇌

KS2 LESSON PLAN

History





• How we know what life was like in the Mesolithic period

- What Star Carr tells us about Mesolithic settlements
- What tools people used for hunting, fishing and gathering food

• What antler headdresses might have been used for

# Star Carr – a glimpse of Mesolithic life



Guided by **Rachel Bruce**, give children an insight into the Middle Stone Age through studying archaeological finds

#### @Rachelthebruce1

'Stone Age to Iron Age' is often the first history topic studied in KS2 and can be the most challenging. It covers a vast period, and our only clues as to what life was like come from archaeological remains. Our picture of Stone Age people is often based on early Palaeolithic period – hunter-gatherers who lived in caves and hunted mammoths. But recent discoveries at Star Carr, a Mesolithic site in North Yorkshire, show a nomadic society that made sophisticated tools and took part in rituals. Visit **tinyurl.com/ tp-CarrPlaylist** and **tinyurl.com/tp-StarCarr** for more information about the Star Carr site.



## START HERE

The Mesolithic (Middle Stone Age) started in Britain after the last ice age, around 11,000 BC. The finds at Star Carr provide a unique insight into life at this time and show that people were building homes, making tools from stone, bone and antler, and carrying



out rituals. They were hunter-gatherers, moving around to find sources of food. Settlements enabled them to base themselves in places where food was abundant for long periods of time, hunting animals, birds and fish. They were skilful toolmakers, and there's evidence of items being used in rituals and as offerings.

## **MAIN LESSON**

#### 1 | TOOLS

The unique waterlogged conditions at Star Carr, and the preservation of artefacts there, have revealed a window into Mesolithic technology. Tools were made of stone, wood, bone or antler, and it took great skill to create them.

Show children an image of an antler harpoon point (e.g. **tinyurl.com/tp-harpoon)**. Ask them what they think it might have been used for, what it is made of, and what skills would have been required to make it. There would have been a lot of processes involved in designing and creating this tool: from hunting and killing the deer, to removing and shaping the antler and then attaching it to a handle to use for fishing. Other tools include flint blades, arrow tips, and scrapers for preparing animal skins.

#### 2 | HOUSES

Archaeologists found evidence of post holes in the soil at Star Carr – these are the footprints of buildings. Researchers don't know exactly what the buildings would have looked like, but a reconstruction by the Yorkshire Museum and Department of Archaeology at the University of York (tinyurl.com/tp-CarrHouse) has been built using materials that could have been gathered from the local landscape. Show the children the picture

## "Tools were made of stone, wood, bone or antler and it took great skill to create them"

leader may have worn one of

tp-shaman). What does this

picture suggest about Stone

Age people? We often assume

early people expended all their

energy on survival, but these

finds give us clues as to the beliefs that they had and their

close relationship with the

natural environment. Some of

these antler headdresses were

found placed in the water of

platform that had been built.

They may have been offerings

had spiritual meanings. What

sort of rituals and beliefs do

you think Mesolithic people

religions today still celebrate

the gathering of harvests,

giving thanks for food, and

have celebrations linked to

the changes of the seasons.

Conclude the lesson by

might have held? Many

to gods or spirits and have

the lake, near a wooden

the headdresses (tinvurl.com/



of it and ask them what it tells us about how Mesolithic people lived.

To make a house like this, people would have had to work together and communicate. They used different materials for the structure and thatch, and to tie everything together.

Why do the children think Mesolithic people built houses here? (It must have been an area where they could easily obtain building materials, gather and hunt for food.)

The settlement was situated by a lake, so there would have been fish, waterfowl and mammals nearby. Evidence shows that people stayed here for long periods of time – they didn't wander around finding caves to sleep in.

#### **3** | ANTLER HEADDRESSES

Some of the most rare and fascinating finds from Star Carr were 21 antler headdresses. They are made from the skulls and antlers of red deer, and have holes pierced through them. Show a picture of one of the headdresses to the children (tinyurl.com/tp-headdress). Ask pupils what they think the headdresses are made of and what they could be used for. What might the holes be for? What could have been attached to the headdresses? Who might have worn them? Why would people make headdresses like this? Could they have been used in rituals, or when hunting?

Let the children look at Yorkshire Museum's image of how a shaman or spiritual



• How does life in the Mesolithic period compare with the Neolithic or New Stone Age?

Neolithic settlements became more permanent, and people began to grow crops such as wheat and barley and domesticate animals such as cows, sheep and goats.

• What were houses like in the Neolithic period?

Many houses would still have been built out of wood and thatch, but there is also evidence of houses made from stone, such as in Skara Brae on the Orkney Islands, where there were no trees.

• How are rituals and beliefs expressed in the Neolithic period?

This is the era when larger scale and communal sites are first constructed, such as henges and standing stones. The building of these would have involved communication and cooperation between groups of people.

asking children to tell you all the clues these amazing finds have given us about the Mesolithic people living 11,000 years ago. Pupils should be aware that: • There were skilled

- craftspeople who made and used a range of tools from bone, wood and antler, to hunt and prepare food, build shelter and express their beliefs.
- Mesolithic people were still hunter-gatherers, but spent long periods in places where there was an abundance of natural resources.
- They took part in rituals and gave offerings to gods and spirits for the things they had.

Rachel Bruce is an experienced primary school teacher, currently teaching Year 2. She is passionate about local history and has a Historical Association Teacher Fellowship in Local History.



When were the different periods of the Stone Age – Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic periods?
How do we know what life was like in prehistoric times?
What problems might there be with relying on archaeological evidence? KS2 LESSON PLAN

#### English



WHAT

THEY'LL

LEARN

• Develop a narrative structure

for a poem

Play with words to

build imagery

Explore sensory

language

Use figurative

language

# Imagine if your shadow ran away...



Use a prompt from a CLiPPA prize winning poet to spark inspiration, says **Chris Youles** 

#### @chrisyoules 🛄 chrisyoulesblog.wordpress.com

Writing poetry is a fantastic way of getting your students to play with language. Once they've learnt the basic structures of a poem, such as lines and verses, they can write freely and in a way that other writing, with its grammatical and punctuation rules, doesn't always allow for. In class, I normally focus on either a narrative poem – a poem with a story – or I free my writers up to play with words, syntax, figurative language and imagery. Think of poetry more as the freeform jazz of writing than structured storytelling.



## START HERE

As a class, watch our video featuring poets posing different intriguing questions (tinyurl.com/ poetry-prompts).



For this lesson, I will use poet Kate Wakeling's prompt, but you can easily adapt these ideas to suit other prompts. Kate's prompt is this: *What would happen if your shadow unhooked itself from you and went off and spent a whole day alone? What would happen if the whole world's shadows were unhooked from the objects they link to?* 

Ask children to close their eyes and think about what would happen if their shadow could unhook itself and explore the world. Where would it go? What would it see? Share initial thoughts.

## MAIN LESSON

#### 1 | NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

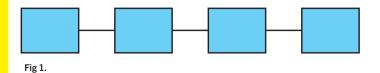
Encourage pupils to think about where their shadow might go, what it might see, and how it might interact with other shadows.

Use an existing poem to show how poems are split into verses. Explain that in a narrative poem, we still use verses, but these verses can tell a story. Model how the poem's verses moving down the page can be transposed onto a story timeline. Where does the shadow start? Where does it go next? Aim for a minimum of four verses and a maximum of six. Gather ideas from the class and plot them onto a timeline (see Fig1.):

Remind children that each box in your timeline of the shadow's story will become a verse in the poem.

Collect ideas from the class on where the shadow might go and write them onto the timeline. For example:

- 1) Leaves the bedroom of a sleeping man.
- 2) Flies over the city.
- 3) Moves over the sea.
- 4) Returns home.





#### 2 | BUILDING IMAGERY

Put one of the shadow's journey ideas at the centre of a piece of flipchart paper or on your whiteboard. You'll add more to this idea by creating a mind map around it. To do this, gather ideas of what might be seen by the shadow (nouns) and then try and build up some powerful imagery around these ideas using the senses and figurative language.

Model this using the second idea (the shadow flying over the city). Start by collecting as many ideas of sights as possible: cars, skyscrapers, buildings, people, parks, etc. Next, add in the other senses, such as sounds: cars honking, people in a stadium cheering, a construction site with diggers etc. You could also add smells, taste and touch here, leading to interesting discussions about what the shadow can and can't experience.

Put your class into groups and get them to add as many ideas as possible. If there is a specific element of figurative language you want to focus on such as similes, metaphors or personification, remind students how to build these in.

Create a large collection of words and imagery (always go for a lot more than you end up using, as it helps build the idea of making writerly choices).

#### 3 | VERSE WRITING

Take the ideas you have created and explain to pupils that they will now turn them into a single verse. Students find this part the hardest, as many will accidentally write a

# Carefully model turning some of the ideas into a verse"

story paragraph. One way of combatting this is to give the class a writing framework for the first verse that has a limit on how many words they can use.

If you don't want to constrict them this way, carefully model turning some of the ideas into a verse. An easy way to keep the narrative flowing is to use the first line of each verse to describe the shadow moving, then use the other lines to build poetic imagery.

The shadow, silent, flies above the bustling city.

A river of cars winds through the streets.

Towering skyscrapers pierce the sky.

Sirens wail, car horns honk, the city's heartbeat pulses through the air.

Once you have modelled an example verse, students can use this process to write the rest of the poem independently.

Chris Youles is an assistant head and author of the bestselling books Sentence Models for Creative Writing and Teaching Story Writing in Primary. He has been an English lead, writing moderator and a specialist leader in education.



## EXTENDING THE LESSON

 Create a shadow puppet theatre and perform shadow plays based on the poems.
 Could pupils turn their poem into a script for the performance?

• Add an extra verse or write a story about a shadow meeting another shadow. Are they the only two shadows in the world? Have the whole world's shadows become free?

• Add a verse from the point of view of the person who has lost their shadow. What would it feel like to not have a shadow? What would they think about their shadow's disappearance? Would they look for their shadow? Where would they look?

• Link the poem to a science topic on light by exploring what causes shadows or tie it into an art lesson on how to draw realistic shadows.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

• How does imagining your shadow's journey change the way you think about shadows?

• How do you want your reader to feel when reading your poem?

• Can you work with a partner to change your word choices? For example, swap two words for one (such as 'big building' for 'skyscraper') or add an adjective ('towering skyscrapers'). KS2 LESSON PLAN

#### Science





• That moss is a microhabitat that changes daily and with seasons. It can be very wet, or dry out completely, and can freeze in the winter

• That a microscope can make very small animals visible

• That there are five microscopic animals with adaptations to survive living in dry or frozen moss

# Let's have a microscopic adventure!



You can go on safari without even leaving the school playground, says **Dr Andy Chandler-Grevatt** 

X @mosssafari 🛛 🛄 mosssafari.com

Have you noticed moss growing around your school grounds? Inside these small moss cushions and moss mats lives a hidden ecosystem of bizarre organisms. These animals are too small to see with the naked eye, but by using a simple microscope we can look into their world. Within this extreme microhabitat are five microscopic animals that are easy to identify by their unique features. Each has special adaptations to survive in moss. Take your class on a Moss Safari – a tiny adventure – in search of the microscopic Big Five animals.

#### START HERE

Start by asking children where they see moss around them. They might say along walls, on roofs, between paving slabs, on trees and within grass. Discuss



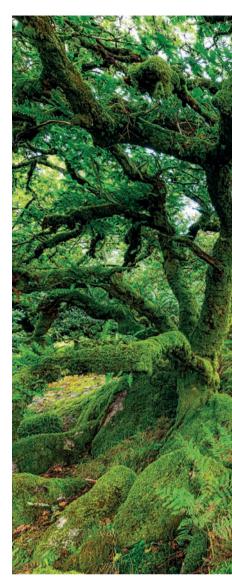
the types of places that moss likes to grow, which are usually damp and shaded. Some can survive periods of bright sunlight on roofs and on walls. Ask for descriptions of what mosses look like: *small, green, furry.* Then ask what moss needs to survive. Establish that moss is a plant and that it needs space to grow, light to make food, water and oxygen. Do they think any animals live in moss?

#### MAIN LESSON

#### **1** | THE MOSS SQUEEZE

Collect a small sample of moss, about the size of a thumbnail, from the school grounds, placing it in a small plastic bag. Put the moss sample in a shallow dish and pour some water on it. If the moss is dry, leave it to soak in water overnight. Take care not to collect moss from out-of-reach places, and always wash your hands afterwards.

For this investigation you'll need a digital microscope, a stereomicroscope or a compound microscope. You'll also require a shallow dish, a plastic pipette and,

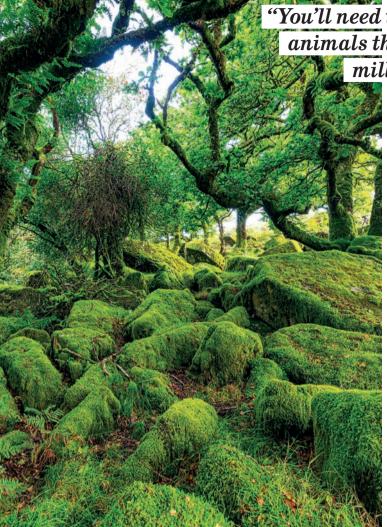


if using a compound microscope, a glass dimple slide and a coverslip.

Take the soaking moss and squeeze it into the dish; all the animals will be in this water. Place the dish under the digital microscope or stereomicroscope. Use a lamp to sidelight the sample. For a compound microscope, use the pipette to transfer a few drops of moss-squeeze onto the glass slide and place on the cover slip. Place the slide on the microscope stage. You are now ready for your Moss Safari.

#### 2 | WHAT TO LOOK FOR

On your Moss Safari, you'll need to look out for five animals that are less than a millimetre in length. The



microscope will magnify the animals. A magnification of  $\times 20$  or  $\times 40$  will allow you to see these creatures.

As you spot each animal, discuss its characteristics and adaptations with the children.

The **moss mite** has a dark round body, a small head and eight hairy legs. Some people say it looks a bit like a beetle. Moss mites have a thick exoskeleton to help them keep water in their bodies. When conditions get too dry or too cold, they move away and hide in soil or crevices.

The **nematode** is a long, thin and often wiggling worm. They are often called thread worms. Nematodes appear pale or transparent and are adapted to living in moss by curling up when the moss is drying. When it is freezing, they grow a thicker skin, like a sleeping bag, to sleep in until conditions improve.

The **rotifer** is known as a wheel animal because when it feeds or swims it uses two large organs on its head that look like spinning wheels. It is adapted to live in moss by being able to shrink into a protective ball and sleeping when it is too dry or too cold. When normal conditions return, the rotifer wakes up.

The **tardigrade**, also known as the water bear, is a sausage shape with eight stubby legs, a wrinkled face with a pig-like snout and long claws at the end of each leg. It is a pale or red colour.

## You'll need to look out for five animals that are less than a millimetre in length"

Tardigrades, too, can curl up into a tight ball when their habitat is dry or freezing, and wake up when conditions improve.

The gastrotrich looks like a hairy worm. In fact, its name means 'hairy belly.' It is the smallest of the Big Five. It glides around using the hairs on its body to swim, and has a forked tail. Gastrotrichs cannot survive drying out or being frozen, so instead they lay eggs that are adapted to withstand these conditions. The eggs hatch when the conditions get better.

#### 3 | THE MICROSCOPIC SAFARI

Once the children have been introduced to what they are looking for, send them on the Moss Safari using a microscope to scan the dish or microscope slide in search for the Big Five.

Alternatively, if you have a camera attached to your microscope, you can project the Moss Safari onto a large screen.

Go on a Moss Safari together, stopping at the Big Five, describing them, identifying them and talking about how they are adapted to deal with drying out or freezing. Encourage children to record what they find, and justify their identification.

Visit **tinyurl.com**/ **tp-Moss** to download identification sheets.

Dr Andy Chandler-Grevatt is a senior lecturer in science education at the University of Brighton, he founded Moss Safari and does outreach to promote microscopes and inspire future scientists.

## EXTENDING The Lesson

• When looking at the moss-squeeze, there are a lot of objects on the slide. What clues could tell us if an object is living, non-living, or dead? How might you record and display the number of objects in each category?

 Using the information provided during the lesson, design a key to help identify the Big Five animals.

• Write a story of how one of the Big Five animals survives in a moss cushion over a year.

• Make a map of the school grounds and mark on it all the places moss is found.

• Lots more resources, including worksheets and a slideshow all about adaptation, are available for free on the Moss Safari website (mosssafari.com).



- What does the animal look like?
- Which of the Big Five
- could it be?
- How is it adapted to
- survive in moss when it dries out or when it freezes?

#### KS1 LESSON PLAN





- To develop social communication, taking turns while working collaboratively
- To build a richer vocabulary
- To use observations to compose ideas orally ready for writing

• To use a range of materials creatively to share their ideas and imagination

# Make your own illuminated night skyscape



Madeleine Fox shows how your class can find out about light and dark while creating imaginative artwork

The clocks have changed. Shorter days and dark evenings are upon us, and winter is coming. Throughout history, people have created festivals and celebrations to help alleviate the winter darkness and build a sense of togetherness. Festivals such as Diwali, Hannukah and Christmas use lights to brighten up the darkness, with candles, lanterns, bright colours, bonfires and fireworks burning brightly. As well as having religious significance, celebrations like these help us cope with the gloom of the cold and darkness of long winter nights. So, let's get your class exploring light and dark in time for the winter festivities.



## START HERE

Discuss the darkness in the evenings now the clocks have changed – what can children see in the night? Talk about the celebrations of Halloween and bonfire night



and how we make pumpkin lanterns with glowing lights, and watch fireworks that brighten up the night sky. Explain that you're going to explore light and dark. You'll be looking at lots of different materials and thinking of vocabulary to describe what you see and feel, then setting up a sensory table. Finally, you'll imagine a night sky with stars and fireworks, while working together collaboratively to make big collages.

## **MAIN LESSON**

You'll need the following materials for this lesson:

- A collection of shiny and sparkly things in a bag – this can include crisp packets, sweet wrappers, shiny foil, old jewellery, beads, shimmering cloth, shiny ribbons, stars, tinsel, small plastic mirrors, etc.
- Different light sources, such as small torches, battery-operated light strings and tea lights
- Black cloth, several sheets of black sugar paper, some large sheets of black card
- Pre-cut colourful cardboard shapes, including swirls, spirals, coils and stars
- Smaller shiny art materials, such as

reflective foil, tinsel and lengths of sparkly string

- Glue and glitter
- Coloured chalks, silver pens and fluorescent paint

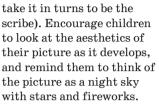
#### **1** | SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

With the class seated in a circle, explore things that shine by passing around the bag of shiny and sparkly things and inviting individuals to take out a piece and describe what they have. Think about using the different senses: What can pupils see? What sounds do the materials make? What do they feel like?

Put the pieces on a black cloth in the centre of the circle for everyone to see.

Start to generate a word bank for any descriptive language – this is going to

## "Throughout history people have created festivals and celebrations to help alleviate the winter darkness and build a sense of togetherness"



Prompt pupils to talk about where the pieces go as they work together. Suggest they take a moment to stand back to look at the effect of the picture they are creating before sticking everything into place. You can dribble glue in swirls around the pictures and shake glitter for an extra effect at the end.

Have a table set up with black paper chalks and silver pens for any children who would like to make some individual pictures of fireworks or the night sky when they have finished their collage.

#### 3 | IN THE DARK

Turn off the class lights and shine small lights on the pictures for added effect, while each group in turn displays their work and describes what they have made to the rest of the class.

Discuss with the children they like about each other's work. What words have they found during the lesson that they can use to describe their creations? You could use the words suggested by the children to create a class poem, and you may wish to set up a class exhibition of all the artworks.

Madeleine Fox is an educational writer and artist. She was a former primary and SEN teacher with a specialism in speech, language and communication difficulties and art.

## EXTENDING The Lesson

• Continue to use the vocabulary bank to spend time writing a class poem. Children can also write descriptive passages to accompany the exhibition. Write up the poems and passages in best writing using silver or white pens on black card. Children can practise their handwriting by painting individual words in fluorescent colours on black card.

 Set up a variety of other sensory tables by grouping materials together where children can continue to explore dark and light.

 Make sensory diorama light boxes or peep boxes.
 Find out about shadow theatres for Diwali and make a shadow theatre.

• Find out more about the night sky and patterns of the stars – look at pictures sent back from the Hubble telescope in space

• Create an area in the book corner with a selection of books about space and the sky on display.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

• What are the names of the different star constellations in the night sky?

• What was the name of the star that the wise men followed at Christmas?

• How do we use lights in festivals to celebrate?

• What are the origins of the festivals we celebrate?

What festivals of light

are there around the world, and how do people celebrate them?

build throughout the lesson.

Set up a sensory table, where children will be able to continue to explore the materials using torches and lights to shine amongst and through them.

Talk about the night sky and show some images of the night sky and fireworks. What shapes can pupils see? (Swirling, coils, spirals.) What sounds do fireworks make? (Whizzing, popping.) How do they move? (Shooting, spinning.)

#### 2 | COLLABORATIVE COLLAGES

Demonstrate how, working in pairs or small groups, we are going to make night sky and firework pictures by arranging shiny pieces of thin tinsel, foil shapes, etc. to make an abstract collaborative collage.

Explain that as pupils are going to be working together it's important to move the shapes around until everyone is happy with the picture, before sticking them down.

The children can now work together to make their own collaborative visual pieces. Play space or sensory music in the classroom to enhance the creative atmosphere. Provide each group or pair with an assortment of different smaller, precut pieces to use with their collages. The first step will be to sort and discuss their materials provide a white board or tablet for the children to scribe any new words as they think of them (they could

# <section-header>

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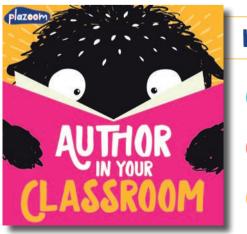


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