

VISIT TEACHWIRE.NET/PRIMARY

teach PRIMARY

Outstanding advice from the UK's top education experts

teach
co

**FREE
6-WEEK
SCIENCE UNIT**

**TO THE MOON
AND BACK**

ONLINE SAFETY

Rules for telling
fakes from facts

**HOW TO
PLAN THE
PERFECT
SCHOOL
TRIP**

PLEA FROM AN HT

Stop failing
SEND kids
of colour

Got a cabbage?

Use it to teach
acids and alkalis...

EXPERT ADVICE

Say goodbye to BURNOUT

DANCE

RE

WAGOLL

TIPS TO GET PUPILS MOVING

WHAT'S OUR DUTY TO MOTHER EARTH?

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE

artichoke



ISSUE: 19.5
PRICE: £4.99

B B C



500 WORDS

Fun creative writing competition
for children of all abilities
Tues 23 Sept – 9pm Fri 7 Nov 2025

Spelling,
punctuation and
grammar are not marked

BOOKS
to be won
for schools

Ages
5 – 11

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

B B C
BITESIZE
FOR TEACHERS

Hello!



Well, it's here – the last term of the year. With another academic season under your belt, how are you feeling? Hopefully, you'll be revelling in a sense of hard work well done, and a soon-to-be break well deserved. However, I'm fully aware that some of you might feel like you're crawling towards the finish line. Luckily for the latter lot, our health and

wellbeing special in this issue not only delves into how you can help your pupils live their best lives, but how you can deal with your own stress, too. Check out a wealth of advice from page 49.

If your end of term looks set to include a school trip, take a look at Hannah Day's article on page 21 for tips on how to make sure the children remember what they learned outside the classroom. And if you're keen to keep the investigations going, but want something fun and hands-on, try Leonie Brigg's science experiment on page 31, utilising some simple household items – including a cabbage – to explore acids and alkalis.

While some of you will be happily winding down, there will be those already plotting their attack for next year. Keen to get your whole team on board with your ideas? Head to our leadership focus, starting on page 37, where we look at how you can explain your approach to make sure everyone's on the same page, the value of a whole-school sustainability drive, and why a tech audit isn't as scary as it might sound.

Thanks for being a supporter of *Teach Primary* this year – we're so grateful for your readership, and hope we've been able to share some inspiration.

Have a wonderful summer break, and see you on the other side!

Charley

Charley Rogers, editor

[@TeachPrimaryEd1](#) [@charleytp.bsky.social](#)

Don't miss our next issue, available from 1st September

POWERED BY...



ADRIAN BETHUNE

On how exploring self-determination theory can help you motivate your pupils more holistically

“Competence, autonomy and relatedness are correlated with life satisfaction”

p50



RACHNA JOSHI

Shares her tried-and-tested ideas for getting the most learning and enjoyment out of a diverse reading list

“It was great to see how one book could lead to so much depth of conversation”

p62



DR JO MONTGOMERY

Outlines her lesson on using sustainability and renewable energy to explain forces

“Pupils will enjoy seeing theories in practice, and taking ownership of testing ideas”

p74



Come face to face



with nature

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

New for 2025

Step into **Heart of Africa**, our newest and most immersive experience, spanning 22-acres. Discover over 50 incredible species, including giraffes, zebras and ostriches all roaming together in a mixed savannah.



**Plan your
school's
adventure
today**



Contents

ISSUE 19.5



SPECIAL SECTION

HEALTH & WELLBEING SPECIAL

8 BREAKTIME

11 6 WAYS...

...to improve your sensory support

22 MEDIUM-TERM PLAN

A six-week science and geography unit exploring the phases of the moon

31 HOW I DO IT

Use regular household items to investigate acids and alkalis through a rainbow of colours

VOICES

13 SARAH WORDLAW

Let's be real: Racism is a safety issue for children

16 MATTHEW ROBERTS

We don't need to tear up the whole primary curriculum; instead let's focus on working with what we've got

17 A LETTER TO...

School leaders on why – and how – we can stop failing SEND pupils of colour

19 UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Is it me, or is unions' fixation on pay really not helping?

50 MR MOTIVATOR

See pupils shine when you drop the reliance on transient rewards and punishments, and focus on internal momentum

52 SAFE, SEEN AND SUPPORTED

Three practical strategies can make sure children awaiting SEND assessment don't fall through the cracks

55 THE ONLY CONSTANT IN LIFE IS CHANGE

Understanding the stages of personal development can help to control stress and improve performance

56 THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BULLYING

Understanding why humans engage in bullying can help us address its prevalence in schools

59 JUST DANCE!

Start your pupils off on a healthy path, and they'll reap the benefits of moving to music far beyond childhood

61 DON'T TOUCH THAT!

Arming yourself – and your pupils – with up-to-date information on allergies will help you avoid classroom drama

We're all ears!

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

**teach
PRIMARY**

We want to hear from you!

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



teachwire.net

facebook.com/teachwire

twitter.com/teachprimary

charley.rogers@theteachco.com

PUBLISHERS:

Joe Carter
Sam Reubin
Richard Stebbing

EDITOR:

Charley Rogers
charley.rogers@artichokehq.com

GROUP ADVERTISING MANAGERS:

Samantha Law
01206 505499
Samantha.law@artichokehq.com

Hayley Rackham

01206 505928

Hayley.rackham@artichokehq.com

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:

subscriptions@artichokeHQ.com

PUBLISHED BY:

Artichoke Media Ltd.



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



FEATURES

21 A DAY TO REMEMBER

Make sure learning outside the classroom doesn't stay there, and extend experiences with six simple steps

27 TRUE GRIT

Use sports day as an opportunity to demonstrate how perseverance and resilience can fuel personal growth and success for pupils

30 FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD

Do your pupils know where meat comes from, or how bread is made? Talk through the basics and furnish them with skills for life

32 WHAT HAPPENED TO THE GOLDEN RULE?

If we want to address the recruitment and retention crisis, we need to start treating our TAs as we'd wish to be treated ourselves

34 STANDARD PRACTICE

What are the new digital and technology requirements, and what do they mean for primary schools and teachers?

LESSON PLANS

74 SCIENCE

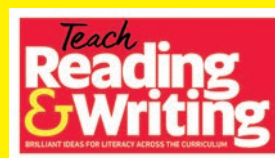
Bring science into the real world, using sustainability and renewable energy to explain forces

76 RE

Why should we care for the environment? Compare different worldviews to find some answers

78 COMPUTING

Explore how children can develop critical thinking skills to identify true and false info online

**62 CREATIVE READING**

It's all well and good saying we need diverse books, but how do you get the most out of them? It doesn't have to be complicated

65 IT'S KIND OF A FUNNY STORY...

Use four simple questions to inject humour into original writing

66 WAGOLL

Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to show characters at a turning point in the story

69 BOOK TOPIC

Face up to big feelings and develop core speech and language skills with *What if, Pig?*

72 BOOK CLUB

We review five new titles that your class will love



HOPE
is all you need

A SUMMER OF HOPE!

20% OFF

every order with code
20SUMMERSAVE

PLUS

£10k

worth of prizes
to be won!

Simply order to enter

This summer, we're celebrating you – our inspiring educators!

We're giving away £10,000 in prizes, with a winner every month for a school or nursery.

Plus, enjoy 20% off every order until 27th July and **FREE** delivery all summer long.

Want in? Just place an order, no forms, no fuss, just well-deserved rewards
for everything you do.

Prizes to be won...

June

**WIN
£4,000**

to spend on
resources of your
choice.

July

**WIN
£3,000**

to spend on
resources of your
choice.

August

**WIN
£2,000**

to spend on
resources of your
choice.

September

**WIN
£1,000**

to spend on
resources of your
choice.

Simply order to enter and save big too...



Find out more

20% OFF

every order with code
20SUMMERSAVE

HOPE
is all you need



FINDEL

Part of the Findel family

For full terms and conditions visit: hope-education.co.uk

Shop online at hope-education.co.uk

Rated "Excellent" on Trustpilot

Breaktime

News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research



Time Odyssey

The British Museum has paired up with charity Art Explora to offer a new, interactive learning experience for KS2 children. The experience, called Time Odyssey, is completely free, and takes pupils on a quest through their local museum both physically and virtually.

Despite 90 per cent of teachers agreeing that every child should visit a museum on a school trip before leaving primary school, 14 per cent have never taken their class – with cost cited as the most significant barrier, particularly for schools outside London, and in those with a higher percentage of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Co-created with over 500 students from schools across the UK, Time Odyssey supports a range of KS2 subjects and skills, enhancing pupils' knowledge and understanding of historical periods and skills, as well as their teamwork, communication, and digital literacy. Learn more and get involved at timeodyssey.org

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



FREE TOOLKIT

The EEF has launched comprehensive updates to its *Teaching and Learning Toolkit*, giving suggestions on how schools could implement approaches including parental engagement and mentoring, in practice. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-EEFtoolkit



SECONDARY SUPPORT

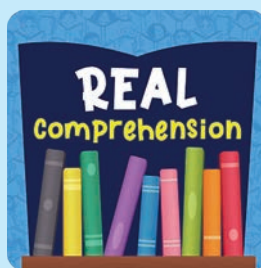
Are your pupils getting ready to transition to secondary school? Are they nervous? Excited? Wary? A new resource from Premier League Primary Stars is designed to support Y6 pupils with this important step. Find activities and more at tinyurl.com/tp-PLPteamtalk



ACCESS ALL ARTS

Sky Arts has released a series of free, 30-minute live lessons, featuring writer George the Poet, dance legend Darcey Bussell, and Marvel artist Will Sliney, to name but a few. The lessons will launch as part of Access All Arts Week (16-20 June) and will be on-demand afterwards, too. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-AAA

→→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



In the summertime...

In their final term of KS2, the theme of 'transition' is one that could hardly be more relevant for pupils – and the texts in this unit have been carefully commissioned to give them an opportunity to share any doubts or worries they may have, as well as understanding others' situations.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/Plz-Summer>



On the road

The autumn programme for The Children's Bookshow is now live. Taking inspiring author stories, fascinating poetry performances and a whole load of new books on tour around the country, this is a great opportunity to discover your new favourite read (and maybe treat your pupils!). The tour

begins in Blackpool on 19th September, and speakers include Children's Laureate Frank Cottrell-Boyce, Katherine Rundell, Matt Goodfellow, and more. Each tour location will also have four free in-school workshops, for which you can express interest when booking tickets.

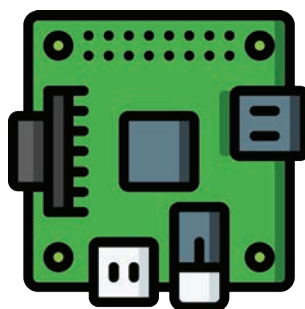
Every child who attends an event is given a book by the artist performing to take home and keep, such as Matt Goodfellow's *The Final Year*; *Tyger* by SF Said; and Frank Cottrell-Boyce's *The Blockbusters*. Sign up at thechildrensbookshow.com

Does not compute

The Raspberry Pi Foundation is calling for urgent action to prepare young people for the age of AI. The paper claims that whilst AI systems are making coding more efficient, we still need expert human programmers to control the AI systems and critically review the code they generate, and that learning to code is still the most effective way to develop expertise in programming.

Industry reports that 30 per cent of code is now being written by AI systems, machine learning, robotics, and automation. The report, however, argues that though we don't know how far-ranging these changes will be, we are living through one of the most significant waves of technological innovation in history.

Philip Colligan, CEO at Raspberry Pi Foundation, says: "Whilst AI systems are now able to generate code, we still need skilled human programmers to control these systems and make sure that what they produce is safe, ethical, and relevant to the problems we are trying to solve." Read the full report at raspberrypi.org



74% of primary school teachers say that cyberbullying is the most common online risk for their pupils*

*Tes

Look ahead | Book ahead



THANK A TEACHER
Mark 18 June in your calendars; it's National Thank a Teacher Day! Despite what the name suggests, this one is for all school staff, and you can get free lesson plans, cards and more at tinyurl.com/tp-Thanks

KID LIT FEST
The UK's largest kid lit festival is back. On 21-22 June, Barnes Children's Literature Festival returns to London with more than 100 inspiring events, workshops and more. See tinyurl.com/tp-Bkidlit



Q & A



Selina Brown

Author, marketing consultant and event producer

1. What was primary school like for you?

Primary school was full of energy, curiosity and creativity for me. I was always that child with my hand up, excited to read aloud or dive into a new story. But looking back, I rarely saw books in the classroom that reflected my culture or identity. Whilst I loved school, I often had to go home to find stories that felt like me.

2. Give us some book recs from Black British authors

I Am Nefertiti by Annemarie Anang is a beautiful, empowering story about identity and finding your voice. *Aziza's Secret Fairy Door* by Lola Morayo is full of magic and imagination – a perfect chapter book series for younger readers. *The Offline Diaries* by Yomi Adegoke and Elizabeth Uviebinené is brilliant for UKS2 – it's funny, real, and gives an honest look at friendship.

3. What is one thing you'd like to tell teachers about diversity?

Diversity in reading isn't a themed day or a tick-box exercise – it's something that should be woven into the everyday classroom experience. Children deserve to see themselves reflected in stories all year round, and they also benefit from seeing worlds and perspectives beyond their own. When representation is consistent, it helps build confidence, empathy, and curiosity, and gives all children the message: *you matter, and there is space for you here.*

Selina Brown's book, *My Rice is Best* (£7.99, Puffin), is out now.





Timotay
PLAYSCAPES

Transform Your Outdoor Space!

Timotay Playscapes, your access to award winning inspirational outdoor play spaces. Using imaginative thinking and natural materials to create an inclusive and nurturing environment specific to your school.

- Playground design and construction
- Outdoor classrooms and canopies
- MUGA
- Forest Schools
- Climbing frames
- Playground surfacing
- Playground equipment
- Mile a day track

Contact us for
your **FREE**
funding guide



Book your
FREE
consultation
today!

Call **01933 665151** or email enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk
to book your **FREE CONSULTATION**
timotayplayscapes.co.uk





6 ways to improve your sensory support

Understanding vestibular, proprioception, and interoception can bring a sense of calm and ease to your teaching

1 | NOTICE THE NEED FOR MOVEMENT

The vestibular system controls our sense of balance and spatial awareness. Children who appear to fidget constantly or love spinning may be seeking vestibular input. This isn't restlessness or defiance; it's their way of grounding themselves. In the classroom, try introducing movement breaks like 'animal walks', jumping jacks, or a quick shake-out between lessons. Swap standard seating with wobble cushions or standing desks to allow 'active sitting', and incorporate balance-based tasks in learning time, e.g. walking on tape lines or beanbag games. Movement isn't always a distraction – it can be a doorway to focus.

2 | BUILD BODY AWARENESS

Proprioception helps us understand where our bodies are, and how much force we're using. Children who crash into things, chew on sleeves, or struggle with handwriting may have underdeveloped proprioception. Create sensory-safe ways for children to meet these needs. Activities like pushing a heavy cart, carrying books, or doing 'chair push-ups' can help. Add resistive materials like therapy putty to fine motor tasks. Encourage play that involves pulling, climbing, or squeezing. These activities not only support sensory processing, but can also bring a calm sense of control.

3 | TUNE INTO INTERNAL FEELINGS

Interoception allows children to sense internal states like hunger, thirst, and emotions. A child who struggles with toilet awareness or doesn't know they're tired may be missing interoceptive cues. Use 'body check-in' visuals that ask questions like, "Is your tummy full or empty?" Practise naming feelings during story time, e.g. "How do you think this character feels in their body?" Mindfulness games like 'tummy breathing' help children notice what's going on inside. Supporting this hidden sense can transform emotional regulation and build self-awareness.



HAYLEY FULLER
is a specialist teacher in EYFS and SEND, and the founder of Creative Teaching Ideas

4 | REFRAME 'BEHAVIOURS' AS COMMUNICATION

Sensory needs often show up as behaviours that are misunderstood. A child who refuses to sit on the carpet may be overwhelmed by movement or noise. One who 'won't' write may be dealing with poor proprioception. Train yourself and your team to ask, "What is this behaviour telling me?" not "How can I stop it?" Simple tweaks – like letting a child choose where to sit, or offering a movement break before handwriting – can have a huge impact. Understanding sensory needs changes discipline from reactive to responsive.

5 | MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM SENSORY-SMART

Small changes in the classroom can make a big difference. Provide sensory stations with tools like fidget bands, weighted lap pads, or squeeze balls. Offer choice – some children thrive in quiet corners; others need space to move. Use calming visuals, keep routines predictable, and reduce visual clutter. Let children take sensory breaks without penalty. Invite them to design their own 'calm kit' with things that help regulate their senses. A sensory-informed environment doesn't just support SEN children – it benefits everyone.

6 | COLLABORATE AND CELEBRATE STRENGTHS

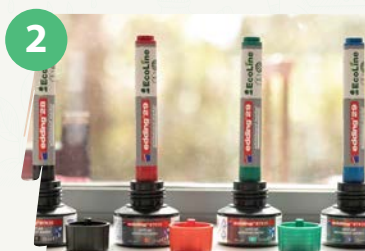
No two children experience sensory input in the same way, so regular communication between teachers, parents, and professionals is key. Occupational therapists can offer specific guidance, but your daily observations are powerful, too. Celebrate the things children can do. Let them lead movement games, become 'calm corner helpers', or demonstrate sensory tools. Include families in conversations about what works at home. When children feel understood and valued, their confidence – and learning – can flourish.

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

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



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



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



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

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

Teacher at Mill Lodge Primary



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

Pupil at Mill Lodge Primary

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



Want to see these solutions in action?

Watch our short video and start your sustainability journey today.

[CLICK HERE](#)



Let's be real: racism is a safety issue for children

As educators, it's our responsibility to speak up for those who are systematically left voiceless...

 @smwordlaw.bsky.social

If safeguarding is the practice of protecting a person's health, wellbeing, and human rights, ensuring they live free from harm, abuse, and neglect, then when it comes to racism as a safeguarding issue – our sector needs to do better.

The Child Safeguarding Practice Review (2025) explains how there's still a worrying lack of focus on ethnicity, culture and race in safeguarding practices. This results in a lack of critical analysis and reflection on how racial bias can negatively impact decision-making and the support and services offered to children. It notes a pervasive silence and refusal to admit and address the manifestations of racism; a silence which then hinders the safeguarding of Black and Brown children, and makes them vulnerable to risk of harm.

It is the responsibility of educators to ensure that all children receive the same care, vigilance, and access to rights, and naming racism as a safeguarding

issue is critical to protecting the lives of Black and Brown children. There is a lot of work being done on developing curriculum, and embedding diversity and inclusion in teaching. This is a good thing, of course, but we need to do more. Some schools are further ahead with this journey than others, but it is deeply heartening to see progress, with the Curriculum and Assessment Review Interim Report (2025) noting that *'the Review will seek to deliver a curriculum that reflects the issues and diversities of our society, ensuring all children and young people are represented, and also exposed to a wide range of perspectives that serve to broaden their horizons'*.

Many teams underwent unconscious bias training following George Floyd, which again, is a good thing, but the real work comes in putting this into everyday practice. Knowing and understanding our own unconscious biases is the first step. Recognising this in practice is a whole other skill, which leaders must prioritise.

Racial illiteracy and the adultification of Black and Brown pupils diminishes their rights as children, and hinders their access to equal safeguarding measures. Adultification is when the *'notions of innocence and vulnerability are not afforded to certain children,'* (Davis and Marsh, 2020); it is the process of treating and viewing children as if they are adults, leading to harsher punishments and less leniency than would typically be given to peers. As an example, Black girls are disproportionately likely to be excluded or suspended from school, despite the fact they do not engage in more disruptive behaviour than other pupils (Perrin, 2023). The consequences of this are far-reaching and damaging for life, deeply impacting children's mental health and self-esteem.

Research has shown harsher punishments for Black children kissing their teeth compared to a white peer tutting or rolling their eyes, too. This is rooted in racial bias against Black pupils, and can lead to targeted harassment of Black pupils from educators who are not racially literate.

This is also seen when working with the wider community. Describing families as 'hard to reach' is wrong; it is not the families who are hard to reach, it is the school. It is educators' job to make school easier to reach for parents and carers. So, what's the solution?

Great safeguarding and behaviour practice is one where educators do not work in isolation – it requires a multifaceted approach centred around collaboration and strong culture of professional curiosity. However, homogenous teams can also become an echo chamber; the quality of the support for pupils will be capped at their collective knowledge. Quite simply, teams must be diversified, so that the practice is the best it can be. Black and Brown leaders, teachers, learners and communities should have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the life of the school.

Anti-racism should be in every school curriculum vision, every school development plan, and be at the forefront of every team's priorities. Without it, we cannot as a sector even begin to make a dent in the systematic structures that allow racism to continue to thrive, both directly and indirectly, in our country. **TP**

Sarah Wordlaw is a primary headteacher and leader of teaching and learning.

WESLEYAN

we are all about you

Re-invent your retirement and join our **free** Retirement Club



RETIREMENT CLUB

FROM WESLEYAN



Wherever you see your future, we are right here right now.

Join the Retirement Club from Wesleyan Financial Services - a **free** club for education professionals designed to help you manage and rethink your retirement.

The benefits of joining

Wherever you are in your retirement journey, membership of Retirement Club gives you full access to our Hub, a dedicated space filled with guides, tools and resources to support their life after work, as well as experts who understand the nuances of the education profession.

Expect monthly updates on the financial topics that matter to you, as well as invitations to live and exclusive events such as webinars, podcasts and drop-in sessions designed to update you on the latest retirement insights.

Joining the club is easy

Join the free Retirement Club by scanning the QR code
or visiting:

wesleyan.co.uk/campaigns/retirement-club-education



By becoming a member of the Retirement Club, you are happy to receive occasional messages from us via email to enable us to share with you the latest updates to the online Hub, and other Retirement Club related updates. We will not share your details with anyone else. You can also opt-out of being a Retirement Club member by emailing retirementclub@wesleyan.co.uk. This will not affect your standard marketing permissions.

Advice is provided by Wesleyan Financial Services Ltd.

Wesleyan Financial Services Ltd (Registered in England and Wales No. 1651212) is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Registered Office: Colmore Circus, Birmingham B4 6AR. Telephone: 0345 351 2352.

Calls may be recorded to help us provide, monitor and improve our services to you.

Q&A

“It never hurts to be informed”

Oonagh Morrison, regional manager at Wesleyan Financial Services, highlights the benefits of professional financial guidance for teachers



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Wesleyan’s team of specialist financial advisers offers holistic financial planning for teachers and senior education leaders across the UK. From the start of your teaching career to planning for retirement, we can support you every step of the way, providing all the info you need.

Do teachers understand the benefits of financial planning?

Having worked in the financial services industry for many years, I have found that some teachers are simply not aware of the advantages that sound financial planning from a qualified expert can offer. Ultimately, what I would always say is that you don’t know what you don’t know. Therefore, even if you think that you don’t need financial guidance – you probably do, as there are often things that you may have done, that could have had a better outcome, or perhaps there are things that you should be doing and that you’re not doing at all.

How can financial guidance help with retirement planning?

Teaching is a demanding profession that, over the years, has become increasingly more stressful. Currently, we have an increasing number of teachers who do not want to stay until the Teachers’ Pension Scheme pension age, which is now in line with state pension age. Early retirement, however, is something that generally needs to be carefully planned for. It may be possible to even go earlier than you thought. This is where a specialist financial adviser can help you to plan to achieve the retirement that you want.

What are some common misconceptions?

There are numerous misconceptions – one being that teachers don’t need financial advice because they have the Teachers’ Pension Scheme



(TPS). Of course, the TPS will provide an income in retirement and it is a fantastic asset, but you have to plan for the retirement that you want, and that needs to be quantified. What will the scheme provide you with, and will that be enough for you to retire when you would like to, and what is the retirement you would like to build? We need to identify what that actually means for you.

What sets Wesleyan apart?

I believe the title that we’ve given our advisers has the key word in it – ‘specialist’. We specialise in your profession as a teacher. Our advisers are highly skilled and fully qualified, often beyond the minimum industry standard. The combination of the knowledge of the profession and the qualification, gives our SFAs the edge



ABOUT OONAGH:
Oonagh Morrison is a regional manager at Wesleyan Financial services

that other advisers may not have – we fully understand you, your profession, your job, how you came to be a teacher, your progression through your qualifications, your layers of employment, and more importantly perhaps, we understand the TPS itself.

If you would like support or guidance on understanding your financial position, speak to a Specialist Financial Adviser at Wesleyan Financial Services for a financial review by visiting: A better financial future for teachers. Charges may apply. You will not be charged until you have agreed the services you require and the associated costs. Learn more about our charges here.

Contact:
wesleyan.co.uk/finances-teach-primary

What’s the difference?

- + A specialist financial adviser is more than a financial expert; we specialise in the teaching profession.
- + We offer a full range of services, including comprehensive financial planning.
- + Our specialist financial advisers are highly skilled and fully qualified – often beyond the minimum industry standard.



Let's encourage deeper, not broader study

We don't need to tear up the whole primary curriculum; instead we need to focus on working with what we've already got...

As September 2025 draws ever closer, school leaders and teachers wait with bated breath for the final report from the Curriculum and Assessment Review, led by Professor Becky Francis. Whilst many educators would agree that something needs to change, there's a looming concern: after seven years of intense work sequencing knowledge, building progression maps, and designing rich experiences, could this review risk throwing the baby out with the bathwater?

You see, the answer to our curriculum troubles isn't to tear the whole thing up. It's to sharpen what's already there. In short, our curriculum isn't broken – it's just bloated. It's time to teach fewer things, better.

Over the past few years, schools have worked hard to develop knowledge-rich curriculums with a clear progression of information and skills. In many cases, teachers now have far greater clarity about what content needs to be taught. The intent and approach are strong – a recognition that schools need well-defined objectives to enable pedagogical approaches such as retrieval practice and schema-building, so learners can deepen their understanding year after year.

But the problem is curriculum creep. This has happened in two key ways. First, through the national curriculum itself. In subjects like maths, for example, content from Key Stage 3 has crept down into Key Stage 2. The curriculum is packed, and in some areas, concepts are introduced at a rapid pace. There are simply too many objectives in each year group to teach each of them well, and provide the necessary depth within one academic year. The curriculum simply isn't designed to allow for the embedding that effective learning requires – especially if teachers are expected to cover these overpacked curriculums in every subject across the year.

Second, many schools – eager to get it right – have added layer upon layer of explicit knowledge to their curriculum documentation; an extra objective here, a broader topic there. We've stretched, expanded and, in some cases, over-engineered our curriculums – often with the best intentions. But the result is a schedule bursting at the seams, and a workforce trying to deliver it all in just 32.5 hours a week.

What's needed from this Curriculum and Assessment Review isn't a reset; it's a reframe.

Refinement, not reinvention.

Encouragingly, the interim report published in March appears to acknowledge this, highlighting concerns around the volume and density of subject content. Schools now have the opportunity to streamline the hard work they've already done – to simplify what's covered and deepen children's understanding.

At our school, we've been doing just that in mathematics. We've started using the NCETM's curriculum prioritisation materials, and the shift has been powerful. The guidance has helped us strip things back to core concepts, identify key learning, and create space for pupils to think more deeply. Crucially, it hasn't meant discarding the curriculum we'd already developed. It's simply helped us teach it with more clarity and focus.



Of course, we still cover all statutory objectives from the national curriculum, but we now give greater weighting and valuable time to the 'ready-to-progress' concepts. It's early days, but feedback from staff has been overwhelmingly positive. Slowing down has empowered children to discuss ideas more confidently, explore concepts in greater depth, and embed learning – rather than racing through content in the name of 'mastery' under a bloated framework.

Whatever direction the Curriculum Review takes, change is on the horizon. Here are three things school leaders can do now to prepare:

- Audit with purpose – review which areas of your curriculum are truly essential.
- Keep the best, let go of the rest – don't be afraid to streamline content that's non-essential.
- Empower subject leads – subject leaders already have a strong vision and intent. Involve them in responding to curriculum changes and draw on their expertise to refine what matters most.

This review doesn't need to be something to fear. It's a chance to make the curriculum more manageable, meaningful, and memorable – for both teachers and children. And that's a goal worth focusing on. **TP**

Matt Roberts is a deputy headteacher at Lowercroft Primary School in Bury, Greater Manchester. He is also the host of the Primary Education Voices podcast.

 primaryeducationvoices.wordpress.com
 @MRoberts90Matt



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

A letter to... school leaders

Education is failing pupils at the intersection of race and SEND, and it's time to make it stop, says **Priya Bhagrath**...



For too long, our education system has neatly boxed issues of race and disability into separate silos, discussed in isolation, addressed with surface-level strategies, and conveniently forgotten when the discomfort gets too loud. But what happens when these identities collide? Inclusion without intersectionality is not inclusion at all.

What happens to the Black child with autism who is misunderstood as 'aggressive'? What happens to the South Asian parent who is told their child has additional needs, but never in their language, never with empathy, and never with clarity? What happens to the Global Majority teacher who has all the skills but none of the sponsorship to move beyond their middle leadership role?

In 2020, when the murder of George Floyd forced mainstream schools to reckon with their complicity in systemic racism, there were statements. Policies. Suddenly, terms like 'decolonising the curriculum' and 'diversity in leadership' became part of the national dialogue. But in all of that, SEND settings were silent. The sector that serves our most vulnerable pupils, many of them also Global Majority, was excluded from the conversation altogether.

My own journey in education, from the classroom to senior leadership, has been shaped by persistent, often invisible barriers. As a woman of colour, I have been

overlooked, underestimated, and often left to fight for spaces that were simply handed to others. I have sat in meetings where behaviour was racialised, where leadership was homogenised, and where SEND was treated as something other, something separate from the rest of school life.

And I have stood beside families – South Asian, Black African, Eastern European – who were navigating complex, jargon-filled SEND systems without maps, guides, or advocates. They were blamed for disengagement, when no one had taken the time to speak in their language,

“This is a call for collective action. Inclusion without intersectionality is not inclusion at all”

or in a way that made sense to them. They were judged for 'not accepting' their child's diagnosis when no one had explained it with cultural understanding. So, what can we do? There are four pillars that I believe are critical for truly anti-racist SEND education:

- **Multicultural education** that goes beyond festivals and food, and instead recognises lived experience, cultural narratives, and history.
- **Increased representation**, particularly in leadership, where those making the

decisions should reflect the communities they serve.

- **Decolonising the curriculum** so SEND pupils are not fed a diluted, colour-blind education, but one that reflects who they are and the world they live in.
- **Anti-racist practice** embedded in every part of school life, from the language we use with parents to the expectations we hold for our staff – and the training we provide for them.

This is a call for collective action. The pupils at the intersection of race and SEND are not just underachieving, they are being failed by a system that was never designed with them in mind. The data on exclusions, outcomes, and engagement paints the picture clearly (tinyurl.com/tp-exclusion). We do not need more evidence, we need resolve.

If you are a headteacher, a policymaker, a teacher, a parent, or someone working in education with a desire to lead with equity, then this plea is for you.

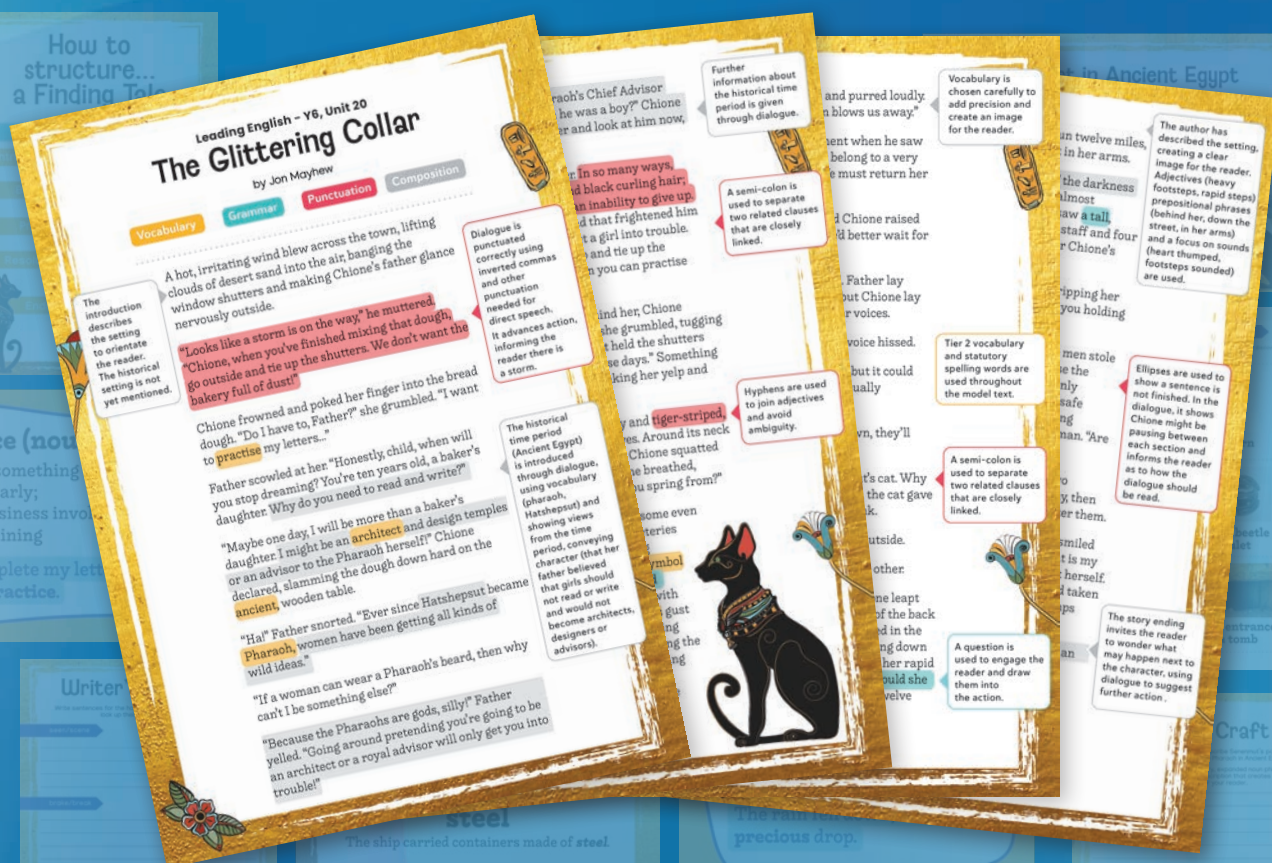
It is not comfortable, but it is necessary. We cannot keep rolling out saris for sensory play and calling it multicultural inclusion. We cannot keep hiring diverse staff without opening up real pathways to leadership. We cannot keep writing off families for being 'hard to reach' when we have not even tried. If you believe inclusion matters, then intersectionality must be at the heart of your work.

From, Priya



*Priya Bhagrath is a headteacher with over 20 years' experience working in special education. Her book, **Creating an Anti-Racist Curriculum for Children with Special Educational Needs (£21.99, Routledge)**, is out now.*

Model it. Master it.



- Great writers learn from great writing.
- Leading English has over 200 high-quality model texts written by award-winning children's authors.
- Each text is annotated with expert teaching points – allowing you to set the bar high, then watch them reach it.

See the full Leading English curriculum and tailored in-school support programme

www.leadingenglish.co.uk

UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

Is it me, or is teaching unions' fixation on pay – over everything else that's wrong with the profession – really not helping our plight?

Strikes might grab headlines – but are they really fixing what's broken in teaching?

Another year, another pay dispute. Another round of strike threats. Another letter home. Another rushed SLT meeting about 'contingency plans'. Another weary chat in the staffroom about who's striking and who isn't, who can afford to and who can't, and who thinks it will really – truly – change anything.

Conference season has been and gone, with both the NEU and NASUWT laying out their stalls. The hot topic? Strikes over pay.

Now, before I'm accused of siding with 'the man', let's be clear: teachers absolutely deserve decent pay. What we're currently paid isn't good enough. The unions should be fighting for salaries that reflect the late nights, the emotional exhaustion, and the endless redesigns based on the latest fad from Ofsted, new SLT, or – dare I say it – Netflix dramas. When I asked a former line manager of mine if he was striking in 2023, he said: *"If I weren't to strike, what am I saying about the value of my profession?"* He was absolutely right, and his mantra is now my own – I am not against striking for better pay. And yet...

Most of us – I hope – didn't become teachers dreaming of mansions, butlers, and private jets. We joined because we loved the idea of teaching. When we see 40,000 teachers leaving the profession in a year, we have to ask: are they quitting over the money, or over everything else that's broken?

I'm not saying we should be striking about parents slagging us off on WhatsApp, or Ofsted's Nando's-style inspection charts, or the reality that real career progression usually means less classroom time. But when the dominant narrative

that reaches the national press is, *"Teachers striking again because their third pay rise in three years isn't enough – sneer sneer,"* you have to wonder if the unions are getting the message across in the right way.

Think of it like this: we want more

teachers to stay and more new recruits to join us. We want teachers to love their profession and be proud of it. So why does it feel like we're embracing tactics that scare people off? Who in their right mind would sign up for a career that constantly seems one bad headline away from being vilified?

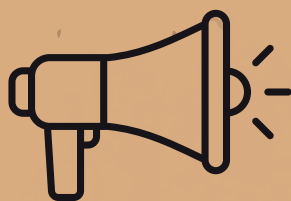
Which brings me back to the unions.

Striking over pay used to be a nuclear option – a last-ditch shout for dignity and respect. Now it's little more than background noise. I've voted in so many strike ballots recently it's starting to rival how often I vote on *Strictly Come Dancing*. And when the headlines are always about teachers walking out, what message is that sending to the 21-year-old future Teacher of the Year, wondering whether they're making the right career choice?

Truthfully, I don't think pay is the main reason teachers are leaving. So why aren't we seeing the same energy spent fighting for smaller class sizes? More funding for teaching

assistants? Holding parents to account for the 'I think you're lying' responses when you ring about behaviour issues?

Fighting for better pay is essential. But every time we focus solely on the money, it feels like we lose a bit of the moral high ground. And a bit more public respect. It's not just our income that needs boosting. It's the whole, sorry, battered soul of the profession. And shouting louder every year about pay might win the odd battle – but it sure as hell won't win the war. **TP**



"Who in their right mind would sign up for a career that constantly seems one bad headline away from being vilified?"

The writer is a teacher and teacher trainer in England.

Ensure KS2 number skills stay in orbit with Sumdog so pupils rocket into next year with stellar confidence!

Sumdog's Fluency Booster adaptivity:

- 🐾 Consolidates key number skills so pupils progress with confidence
- 🐾 Requires no teacher input – questions adapt automatically to each child's level
- 🐾 Provides instant reports to help set interventions
- 🐾 Supports next year's learning ensuring a strong foundation for KS2 progression.



Touchdown with a class of confident mathematicians

See them soar to new heights of maths mastery

Set pupils off at their own level

Request a free trial for your school



A day to REMEMBER

Make sure learning outside the classroom doesn't stay there, and extend experiences with six simple steps

HANNAH DAY

You know the drill: plan the trip, go on the trip, forget the trip. Or at least that's how it so often feels. But how do you make sure learning outside of the classroom can be used once you're back inside the school gates? Try these simple memory-embedding techniques to make sure your time away creates a lasting impression.

Memory games

Research suggests that in order for information to be embedded in the long term it needs to be revisited several times. A break between information learnt and information retrieved can make it harder to remember. This means that pupils need to do more cognitive work to re-access information. This harder work means stronger neuropathways, and an increased likelihood of the information being remembered in the long term.

This has led to ideas such as the 1-3-5-7 rule. Simply put, you revisit information on the day, then on the third, fifth and seventh days after the initial learning. If this feels like too much time to invest, then simplify it. A recap on the day and then a few days later can be a great way to get started.

The following memory-enhancing approaches can help ingrain learning into long-term storage:



Information swap

Ask children to bullet point the key things they remember. Once they have a few elements written down, they can start the information swap.

Moving around the room, pupils will join into pairs, each giving and receiving one piece of knowledge based on what they've learnt on the trip. Once their new fact is written down, they go onto the next person. Within a short time, they should have been able to swap information with five to 10 people, meaning, hopefully, five to 10 new pieces of information.

Clarify the lists

Make a class list of all the facts shared. This will allow you to make sure everyone has the same information, and for you to correct any mistakes in understanding. Have this list displayed on your smart board. Share out the facts to pairs or small groups.

Words to images

Next, using modelling clay or playdoh, ask pupils to show their assigned piece of information visually. Give children five to 10 minutes to create their playdoh infographics, then recap their fact using only what they have made. As they recap, ask them what in their infographics communicates each fact. For example, if one element is that Romans came to Britain in 55BC, ask how their image shows this.

A good variation is a 'facts relay'. Everyone has the same facts. Once the infographics are completed, one group starts to communicate the information back to the group. Each time an element is forgotten or is incorrect, another group can pick up the 'baton'. Whichever group is communicating the last of the facts wins the task.

Music to my ears

The musical world is awash with factual songs; from *Hamilton* to *Six* and *Epic*, the power of music to support information retention is clear.

In this activity, give each pair or group part of the learning from the trip. Ask them to pick a well-known tune, and write lyrics to match, explaining the information that they need to include. We are not looking for whole show tunes, but instead perhaps four to six lines that can be easily remembered.

Get them to teach their song to the group. You can put the lyrics up on the board, and as long as everyone knows the tune, the rest of the class should be able to pick it up easily.

A variation of this is to pick one song, and ask each group to fit their facts to either a verse or chorus, according to the order the facts need to be in. When pieced together, you have a song covering all the key elements you want your group to remember.

However you choose to do it, just make sure you always recap, cementing a valuable off-site experience into long-term educational gain. **TP**



Hannah Day is a teacher in the West Midlands with a specialism in art and design.

MEDIUM TERM PLAN

KS2

SCIENCE & GEOGRAPHY

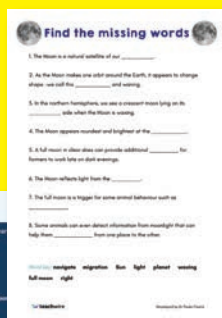
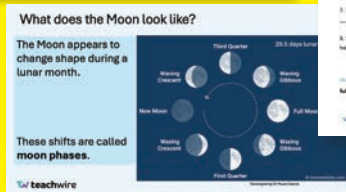
HELLO, MOON

Take pupils on a celestial journey to understand the Earth's satellite and its role both in nature, and in culture

DR PAULA OWENS

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT

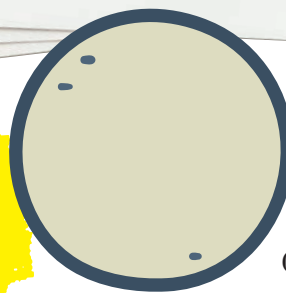
tw teachwire



Download your **FREE** accompanying PowerPoint and worksheets at

tinyurl.com/tp-MoonUnit

How can the Moon, that's so very far away, help us notice what's happening on our doorstep? The Moon is a source of wonder and has many influences on Earth; not least is its cultural significance. For instance, over millennia, indigenous people around the world have used the Moon as a calendar to mark the changing year, naming lunar months to reflect and remind them of the natural world in their home territory. This unit fuses science and geography and is designed to encourage children to look and notice more carefully at the natural world, and how it affects the way we live.



assessment to let pupils practise applying this to images of the Moon (slide 9).

Ask pupils why it might matter to think about whether the Moon is waxing or not? Explain that a long time ago, when people were more attuned to their environment, they planned around the Moon phases, thinking about when they might have more light in the evening for farming, hunting or travelling. Ask pupils how else the Moon might influence life on Earth today. Briefly explain that it affects light, tides, animal reproduction, navigation and migration. It also has an influence on many world religions (slide 12).

Finish by showing the iconic Earthrise images and video (slides 13-15). Ask pupils how the image makes them feel about Earth, before playing them the astronauts' responses.



Assessment

Can pupils use vocabulary correctly? Can they state some ways that the Moon influences life on Earth? Find assessment resources in the **L1** download.



WEEK 2

Learning objective

What can Moon names tell us about biomes?

Recap the previous lesson with a short 'true or false' quiz (L2 slide 2), then introduce or recap what a *biome* is with some examples, e.g. forest, hot desert



WEEK 1

Learning objective

What is the Moon? How does it affect us?

Ask pupils to spend a couple of minutes with a partner to come up with a definition of what the Moon is. Discuss ideas and identify some misconceptions that will need addressing (e.g. it's not a planet!). Pupils may have already covered something about this in Year 5 science, or they may be about to do some work on it, so this can either act as retrieval practice or as a taster.

Explore some definitions and terms such as *satellite* and basic facts, such as

that the Moon produces no light of its own and that it orbits the Earth roughly once a month (all these facts are available in the downloadable resources – link above). Check that pupils can correctly identify the Moon, Earth and sun in a diagram, and which is *planet*, *satellite*, and *sun* (L1 slide 5).

Pose and encourage questions as you go, building a collaboration of enquiry. Has anyone seen the Moon recently? What did it look like? Is it always the same shape? Identify that sometimes it appears full and round, sometimes it appears like a thin crescent, and sometimes it is not visible at all. Explain the phases of the Moon (L1 slide 6) and introduce essential vocabulary such as *waxing* and *waning*. Use a short



Pupils can then write up their own risk assessment using the writing frame provided (see **L3** download). It's useful to remind pupils that they are also responsible for their own safety, as they can choose whether to listen to and follow advice, or not.

Finish by sharing examples of advice from the children, and use this to help create a kit list for the day. For example, you might need comfortable shoes, a raincoat/hat/drinking bottle, etc.



Assessment

Can pupils give an example of a risk in their local environment and explain how to stay safe?

(See **L3** download).

.....



WEEK 4

Learning objective

- What is happening in nature this month (focusing on your school grounds)?

.....

This lesson will utilise the school grounds to practise some fieldwork techniques, and give pupils information on which to base their Moon name ideas. First, check the date of the next Full Moon and identify which Moon cycle is happening - the NAEF website can help you with indications to look out for (tinyurl.com/tp-NAEFmoons). Discuss with pupils the expected weather patterns for the time of year and check current conditions – this will involve some weather data monitoring, or perhaps just checking the daily forecast.

Discuss with pupils what you might expect to find out about natural events from a single trip around the school grounds. What kind of data might you collect? How will you do this? How might what you find influence ideas for Moon names? If available, you could use night-vision cameras to monitor nocturnal visitors (such as hedgehogs and foxes), and the Merlin App is a useful way to identify bird song (merlin.allaboutbirds.org).

The process of identification (whether flora or fauna) is the most important part of this lesson, and you'll need ID techniques and resources to support it. You could either provide weatherproof ID charts (the RSPB has helpful resources for identifying birds at tinyurl.com/tp-RSPBbirdID and The Woodland Trust has some useful plant

(slide 3). Explain that long ago, some cultures gave each Full Moon of the year a name, to remind them what happened at that time in their natural surroundings. For example, some groups of indigenous North American people knew June as 'Strawberry Moon' time. Ask pupils to guess why and confirm it was the time, where these people lived, when wild strawberries could be found. Remind pupils that a long time ago there was no supermarket or freezer, and people hunted and foraged for food. Wild strawberries were a treat!

Next, watch the introductory film from the National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) about their 'Environmental Lunacy' project (slide 6) and discuss how useful a natural calendar of the year is. Ancient British Celts had names for the June month, too. Discuss these and get pupils' thoughts (see slides 9-11). Draw out links between location, climate, vegetation, animals and culture. How appropriate, for example, is the term Strawberry Moon for the UK today? UK strawberries are at their peak in June too, suggesting a similar climate range. Pupils can then work in twos and threes to research the meaning of some popular Moon names (slide 13) and think about how useful they are for describing the natural world where they live (you can also find a writing frame in the lesson downloads).

Finish by sharing some of the completed responses from pupils and identify some class favourites. Finally, look at a map showing estimated snow loss in the UK and Ireland in the next few decades if climate change continues at the current rate (slide 14). Remind pupils that place and time are important when thinking about biomes, as they are

vulnerable to change. How might this influence Moon names we could choose to represent modern times?



Assessment

Can pupils use research to make reasoned judgments about Moon names? Find a resource sheet in the **L2** download.

.....



WEEK 3

Lesson objective

- How can I keep myself safe during fieldwork?

.....

In weeks four and five, you'll be undertaking fieldwork so that pupils can come up with some Moon names of their own. First, it's important to explain how we can all keep ourselves safe when outside the classroom. Whether you're just walking the streets around your school, visiting a park, or taking a trip to a local river, a risk assessment is a must. Carry out your own first, and then you can talk to pupils about some of the potential risks they might face when gathering data. You could even virtually walk the route beforehand with a tool like Google Street View, or Tripego.

Choose a couple of places you plan to visit, and view maps on the interactive whiteboard, naming risks and identifying actions needed to stay safe. The accompanying PowerPoint for this lesson gives some ready-made examples that you can add to (**L3** slides 5-8). Then show three to four locations and ask pupils to take a few minutes to discuss the risks and make notes with a partner.

4 REASONS TO TRY... Morrells handwriting resources

Explore the new partnership between leading suppliers, Morrells, Victor Stationery and RHINO Stationery



1 UNIQUE COLLABORATION
Our partnership is built on a shared belief: when children are equipped with the right tools, support, and encouragement, handwriting becomes a lifelong skill. The partnership enables us to support children learning to write at every stage, bringing you the perfect pairing of expert handwriting resources and exercise books.

2 A MATCH MADE IN HEAVEN
Our collaboration ensures that all pupils have access to the same handwriting-friendly resources across different learning environments. Our combined approach means that when a child is

practising handwriting, they're using exercise books and workbooks that support their development with clearly ruled lines and guidance.

3 WHOLE-SCHOOL SCHEME
Together, we offer a reliable, consistent system for the whole school that builds muscle memory, supports letter sizing and spacing, and encourages pupils to take pride in their writing, using our science-based and research-led approach.

4 QUALITY RESOURCES
Our goal is to take the guesswork out of handwriting practice. With our combined range of specialised high-

quality educational resources by your side, every child can enjoy the journey towards legible, confident, fluent handwriting.

Contact:
morrellshandwriting.co.uk
rhinostationery.com

At a glance

- + Strong writing skills start with strong foundations.
- + Using the right high-quality resource will help children to enjoy the physical act of writing.
- + Sharing our passion for education and dedication to supporting schools delivers results in the classroom.

Let's
share the
challenge

JUDICIUM
JEDUCATION



Data Protection



Employment Law & HR



Governance & Clerking



Health and Safety & Fire



Safeguarding



SEND Support



Facilities Management

www.judiciumeducation.co.uk
enquiries@judicium.com
0345 548 7000

ID sheets at tinyurl.com/tp-treeID). You can also use tech such as Google Lens. Most importantly, look around the site yourself first so you can guide attention and support identification. We use Digimaps for Schools to make maps of our findings, but you could also use free options like Google Maps.



Assessment

How well can pupils identify and locate features on a map of the school grounds?

WEEK 5 Learning objective

- What is happening in nature this month (in the wider locality)?

In this lesson, you'll take a field trip to a spot in your local area to investigate what is happening in the natural world at this time of year. Start by recapping the route and risk assessment from week three. Everyone should have access to a paper or digital map of the area you'll be exploring that they can use to locate themselves and mark their data.

It would be useful to have tablets that can take pictures, use Google Lens or an equivalent for ID purposes, and run the Merlin app for identifying birdsong, if they are available. For a low-tech approach, you can use paper maps with coloured dots and sticky notes to jot down ideas and sightings. You can also use outdoor ID charts to help to name features, but they are more time-consuming.

There are numerous variations on this activity, so you will need to choose one to suit your pupils, location and time of year. Your time doing a recce and risk assessment beforehand will help you identify likely opportunities for data collection.

As with the trial activity in the school grounds, you will be looking closely and paying attention to the natural world. What is important is that the data is correctly named and given a spatial location, so that pupils can add their evidence to a map, either while in the field or back in school. Again, you can write this down using sticky notes and dots on a map, or by adding pins or notes to a digital version. Equally important is talking to the children about how what they see makes

them feel. Remind pupils that they are trying to identify a significant natural event to help them choose an apt Moon name for the time of year – so how they feel about something matters, too.

It is helpful if pupils work in small groups. Remind them that there will be a class presentation from each group in Lesson 6, where they will make their proposal for a Moon name using their evidence, and justify it before a class vote. Ideally this will be a double lesson, with time to work on digital maps back in school.



Assessment

How well can pupils identify and locate features on a map of the locality?



WEEK 6 Learning objective

- What is the best Moon name for this time of year and why?

This lesson is an opportunity to bring together all the previous strands and make a class decision based on evidence. Which Moon name might best reflect natural events where you are and why? Remind pupils of how they evaluated their fieldwork findings as they complete their group work in readiness for their presentation.

Decide an allotted time for each group to present evidence. Six groups of five presenting for about three minutes, for example, will leave enough time for groups to prepare beforehand and for the class vote and evaluation of the work afterwards. Each group's presentation to the class might also be a practice for a repeat performance in front of the whole school as part of an assembly about their local area.

As pupils prepare their evidence,

remind them to include a map, a correct identification of their chosen natural feature or event, visual or sound evidence if they have it, and some statements in support of their proposal. This should include why the event has meaning for them personally, as well as why it might have meaning for others.

In the event that several groups have chosen the same feature, use this as an opportunity to evaluate which evidence was the most compelling and why. Have a class vote for each of the proposed ideas, allowing questions beforehand if there is time, as well as feedback afterwards. Remind pupils that feedback should be kind and helpful.

Finally, ask pupils to evaluate their own achievements over the course of the unit (find a template in the L6 download). What did they enjoy the most? What are they most proud of? What did they find most challenging? What do they need to work harder at?



Assessment

Can pupils present a well-researched and compelling argument for their chosen Moon name?

Can they evaluate their own work and think of possible improvements for future projects? **TP**



Paula Owens is a former primary teacher and deputy head, and is now an education consultant and advisor. Paula is a Trustee of the National Association for Environmental Education (NAEE) and honorary member of the Geographical Association.

 @primageographer

 @geopaula.bsky.social



30 SECOND BRIEFING

Teaching sex education in primary schools can feel daunting. Jigsaw's approach supports teachers and reassures pupils. Rooted in research, best practice, and how children learn, the resources provide teachers with everything they need.

5 REASONS TO TRY... Jigsaw PSHE

Balance sensitivity, accuracy and confidence when teaching sex education

1 RESPONSIVE TO EVERY CHILD'S NEEDS

Every class is different, which is why our lessons include natural pause points where you can check understanding and adapt your teaching. This child-centred approach ensures every pupil receives the guidance they need, when they need it. The Jigsaw Charter and carefully developed distancing techniques create the emotional safety children need to engage with sensitive topics. In today's world, where young people encounter confusing and often misleading information online, these safe spaces are more important than ever — allowing pupils to ask questions, challenge what they've heard, and develop healthy perspectives with your guidance.



2 GROWING WITH CHILDREN

In the primary years, Jigsaw gently introduces children to concepts about their changing bodies in ways that feel natural and reassuring as part of the Changing Me Puzzle. This thoughtful foundation means that when pupils are ready for more explicit sex education in the upper primary years, it feels like a natural next step in their learning journey.

Contact:

Email: schoolsupport@jigsaweducationgroup.com

Visit: jigsaweducationgroup.com

school approach recognises that children's learning about their bodies and relationships doesn't happen in isolation. Instead, it's a carefully crafted journey where each new piece of learning connects naturally with what came before, from Early Years through to Year 6. Detailed mapping documents help you navigate the sometimes blurry boundaries between relationships, health and sex education, giving you confidence in what needs to be taught when.

3 WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

Children's understanding of relationships, their bodies, and emotions doesn't begin, or end, with a single lesson. Jigsaw's whole-

4 INTEGRATED GUIDANCE

Jigsaw understands the complexities of teaching sensitive content, which is why it provides:

- comprehensive teacher guidance materials that anticipate pedagogical challenges
 - accessible training videos for all staff in Jigsaw schools
 - regular supportive webinars addressing implementation questions
 - structured support meetings connecting educators for collaborative learning
 - links to specialist organisations offering complementary expertise
- Materials also clearly signpost when school policies should be referenced, and a school support team is just a call away when questions arise.

5 BUILDING A COMMUNITY

As statutory requirements and societal understanding evolve, Jigsaw updates materials to ensure they remain relevant, appropriate and compliant with statutory guidance. Choosing Jigsaw means joining a community of schools who care deeply about equipping children with the emotional and social tools they need to navigate life. This approach to relationships and sex education isn't about one-off lessons. It's about embedding safe, supportive, age-appropriate learning that helps children grow into confident, respectful, and informed individuals.

KEY POINTS

Adaptable, child centred lessons: Jigsaw creates safe, flexible spaces to support every child's emotional needs and address sensitive topics with confidence

Developmentally appropriate RSE: content evolves naturally with children's development, building secure foundations for puberty and sex education in UKS2

Whole-school continuity: a seamless, spiral curriculum ensures consistent, age-appropriate learning across year groups, with clear mapping and progression

Comprehensive teacher support: includes full guidance, training, webinars, and live support to help schools deliver PSHE and RSE with confidence

True GRIT

Use sports day as an opportunity to demonstrate how perseverance and resilience can fuel personal growth and success for pupils

DR JOHN ALLAN

Sports day is one of the few dates in the educational calendar that focuses exclusively on skills learnt outside of the classroom. Learning new skills is fundamental to healthy, human development, and can come in many forms, including physical, emotional, social and mental.

Although we all recognise the power of acquiring knowledge, we also know that cultivating a child's emotional and mental attributes, such as grit and resilience, is just as important to their life outcomes as their retention of academic information.

Grit focuses on passion and perseverance towards goals, whilst resilience emphasises the ability to adapt and bounce back from setbacks. To help children to adapt to the challenges of today and to face up to the

demands of tomorrow, nurturing these development areas during childhood is essential, as this is where brain growth is most prolific (tinyurl.com/tp-EIF).

We also know that many children respond well to lessons learnt in novel environments, including the morning or afternoon of teamwork and friendly competition on the school playing field. To make the most of the opportunity, we can think about how we use sports day to foster the toolkit of skills that underpins the essential attributes of grit and

resilience, including self-awareness, creativity, trust, and empathy.

Are you ready?

As well as delivering healthy physical activity, sports such as running, jumping or team relays emphasise discipline, collective responsibility and goal setting, all of which are crucial components of grit.

Dealing with disappointment when losing can also be turned into learning experiences, whereby failure is perceived as a stepping stone to improvement. Resilience is not about instant success,

but a continuous journey of personal growth.

Taking part in sport also empowers children to take control of their own learning. This should involve educators and parents being responsible without being over-protective. If youngsters are never allowed to wobble, trip, stumble or fall, they miss out on the experience to know what it's like to get back up again.

Activities that offer some negative emotion, such as feeling nervous or unstable in the moment, counterbalanced by positive emotions such as joy, pride and attentiveness, underpin a 'steeling effect'. This helps to enable young people to handle more significant risks in the future.

So, here are five practical ways to help you

"We know that many children respond well to lessons learnt in novel environments"



build grit and resilience into your own school's sports day activities:

Model effort

Children like to copy people, especially if they are meaningful to them. Demonstrate your own commitment – perhaps by running with them in warm-ups or showing support across all events. Recognise effort over outcome in your comments and feedback.

Pupils will learn to focus, and gain self-belief and drive from their observations of others and from feedback on their efforts. Provide comments during activities, rather than waiting until the end, to give children the momentum to take it on board for their next challenge.

Teach rebound skills

Frame setbacks as lessons to learn and not failures to endure. This shows that achievement comes from stretching oneself by applying continued effort, and allows young people to self-correct and adjust their responses. As a result, pupils will attribute their learning to themselves, avoid the blame game and take pride in their achievements. Use language that

highlights learning from mistakes, for example, “That didn’t go to plan, but what can we try next time?” to promote the idea that improvement comes from effort, not just talent.

Give control

When children realise that they have control over their decisions and actions, they are more likely to respond positively to challenges. Giving your pupils the autonomy to participate at any level and explore their

This can be reinforced through reflection and asking students to consider: “What did you learn from that race?” or “What would you do differently next time?”

Structure teams

Sports day activities provide an opportunity for pupils to learn to work well with others and effectively contribute to a group. This sense of support and acceptance plays an integral role in building healthy

“Sports day offers immediate and realistic consequences”

own abilities also helps them engage more confidently with their environment and develop a clearer sense of self in relation to others.

Let pupils make decisions about the events they enter, how they prepare, and how they respond to outcomes.

relationships with adults and their peers, and effective teamwork requires that group members learn to balance the needs of the group with their own. Resilience literature stresses the importance of developing peer relationships for learning about sharing, taking turns, patience, empathy, and the confidence to ask for help.

Providing opportunities for pupils to share their positive experiences of resilience through sport can also help them understand how their actions can inspire and build resilience in others. Try intentionally grouping pupils across ability levels and encouraging peer support. As well as celebrating winners, praise teammates who showed encouragement, fairness and empathy.

Create natural experiences

The authenticity of the sports day experience offers immediate feedback and realistic consequences for success and failure. For example, dedicated practice can bring rewards which are earned and celebrated with peers; failing to prepare can lead to making mistakes or letting teammates down. To connect these experiences to everyday life, we must teach sport with ‘transfer in mind’. Neuroscience tells us that our brain (and therefore our behaviour) becomes resilient by responding to practical experiences which are personally meaningful and relevant.

By emphasising how these lessons apply beyond sport – such as handling nerves before a test or bouncing back from disappointment in class – pupils can connect these experiences to their everyday life.

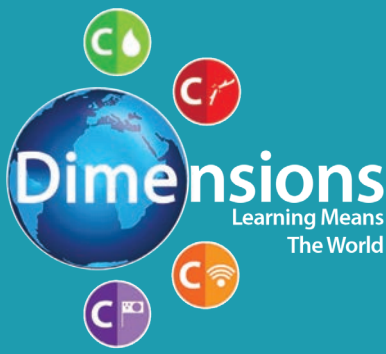
Sports day offers much more than just a dose of physical activity; it provides a natural opportunity to nurture grit outside the classroom. The key lies in using the moments before, during and after each event to draw out learning – encouraging pupils to reflect, recognise their development, and celebrate perseverance and teamwork.

With thoughtful guidance, pupils can begin to see challenges not as setbacks, but as valuable steps toward growth. By helping pupils reframe these moments – whether it’s recovering from a fall or offering encouragement to a teammate – these experiences become powerful lessons in resilience. Over time, such lessons shape essential life skills that pupils carry with them far beyond the sports field. **TP**



Dr John Allan is head of impact & breakthrough learning at PGL.





Learning Means The World

An Inspiring, Ambitious Primary Curriculum



1. Over 10,000 resources linked to the curriculum, **saving teachers time!**
2. Child-centered, **with a global perspective**
3. Creative, connected and relevant **coverage of the National Curriculum**

01254 779142

www.dimensionscurriculum.co.uk
info@dimensionscurriculum.co.uk

Find out more!



bit.ly/45bF7u4

Food, **GLORIOUS** food

Do your pupils know where meat comes from, or how bread is made? Talk through the basics and furnish them with skills for life, says **Mary Hoffman...**

Food is one of those universal things that brings us all together. We all have to eat, which means most of us need to plan meals, shop and cook (though some choose to use ready meals or order takeaways, this still requires decision-making). Some of you may even pride yourselves on cooking every meal from scratch, making your own bread, never buying a packet sauce, and being aware of the nutritional value of every mouthful.

It may seem like an urban myth that children believe that milk comes from cartons, eggs from the fridge, and bacon from plastic packs, but like many myths, this one has a kernel of truth. If pupils aren't aware, for example, that meat comes from animals that are killed, they are unlikely to think about how the animals are looked after, and how they – and everything else we eat – are transported and processed before they reach our plates.

So, it's important that we teach our classes a bit of food awareness. Questions like "What do butter, cheese and yoghurt all come from?", "What is a burger?", and "How is bread made?" are all useful starting points, followed by an introduction to the different countries that popular foods come from. For example, you can point out that tea comes from India and China, orange juice from Spain and Florida, and jam from all over Europe. Other staples such as rice, chapatis, samosas, noodles and pasta may be familiar to many children in the class, whether or not they hail from the countries in which the



food originates.

In the time between now and Harvest Festival (Sunday 5 October 2025), you could cut out images of food from magazines and newspapers (preferably colour), or download and print some. At Harvest in the UK, we are particularly focused on grains – wheat, oats, barley and rye – but we can use the event to learn about all kinds of food. Harvest festivals were originally about thanks and praise, and were an important part of the year for the church, but we can celebrate in a secular way, too.

Try the following activities with your class, and see how much they can learn about their food's journey.

Corn (maize)

Show children a few ears of corn on the cob. Ask them how many things they can think of that come from corn. Cornflakes, sweetcorn, and popcorn are all good answers. Talk about how all of these products derive from the whole corn cob, and how they're made (you can find the information from a quick internet search). You could bring examples to share in class, too.

Yummy!

Give each pupil a paper plate and coloured pens or pencils, and ask them to draw their favourite meal. Then, break into groups and talk about how each of the various elements from the meals are grown, raised, or produced,

and use the collected images from magazine cutouts and show where the food has come from. For example, if a child has drawn a beefburger, chips and peas, you might want to show them a cow, wheat flour for the bun, pea pods or beans, and potatoes, etc. Think, too, about what might be in sauces (e.g. tomatoes, salt, sugar and vinegar for ketchup).

What do we eat?

Using your collection of food images, talk as a class about how you might divide them into different groups. Present children with the categories of grains, vegetables, fruit, animals, fish, and dairy, and ask them to organise their images into the appropriate ones. Children can then make a display of their different foods, and what they're used for.

Lifecycle of a plant

Seeds, shoots, leaves and fruits! Ask pupils what they might already know about plants (can they give any names, such as 'petal', 'stem' or 'root'?). Talk about how farmers prepare the ground, plant seeds, water them, sometimes use pesticides (has anyone heard the term 'organic'?), pick the edible parts, and send them off to factories for processing. This BBC Bitesize video is a good starting point: tinyurl.com/tp-BBCfood **TP**



Mary Hoffman is a writer and critic. Her latest book, *Food for All*,

illustrated by Ros Asquith (£14.99 HB, Otter-Barry Books), is out now.

How I do it

Use regular household items to investigate acids and alkalis through a rainbow of colours

LEONIE BRIGGS

1

Carefully chop two large leaves of red cabbage into small pieces using a knife and a chopping board. Place the chopped cabbage into a pan, cover with water, and bring to a boil. Allow it to simmer for 10 minutes, keeping a close eye on it. Depending on the age of the learners, you might want to do this part in advance.



In this lesson, we'll learn about acids and alkalis using the colours of the rainbow. I put together this activity because I wanted a real emphasis on memorable, hands-on learning. Acids and alkalis are a key concept in secondary science, so building a strong foundation early on in primary is essential. Practical activities like this one allow us to tackle tricky subjects early on in a colourful, fun and creative way.

You will need: a sieve, pan, hob, bowl, jug, knife, chopping board, spoon, three small containers, water, a red cabbage, lemon juice, baking soda, and washing powder.

Drain the cabbage through a sieve, making sure to collect the water in a bowl. The cabbage will have dyed this water purple – this will become your indicator. Red cabbage contains anthocyanins, which change colour when they come into contact with acids or alkalis. Set the indicator aside and wait for it to cool, then pour it into a jug.

2

While the indicator cools, set up your three small containers. Add a small amount of lemon juice to one container. In another container, mix a spoonful of baking soda with a spoonful of fresh water (not your indicator solution). In your final container, combine a spoonful of washing powder with a spoonful of fresh water. Stir each mixture gently to make sure everything dissolves.

3

4

Pour a small amount of indicator into each container. Watch as each of the household substances changes colour! You will notice

that when the indicator is added to the lemon juice, the solution turns red, which indicates an acid. Washing powder is an alkali, so it turns green when the indicator is added. Baking soda turns blue, because it's a stronger alkali. Remember: acidic solutions have a pH of less than 7, and alkaline solutions have a pH above 7.



Now it's time to take this experiment further and investigate the pH scale. What other indicators are available? What are they used for and how do they work? Choose a range of household substances to test. Have fun with some scientific magic, using the indicator to change their colour and deciding if they are acidic or alkaline.

5



Leonie Briggs is a science teacher, STEAM lead, STEM Ambassador, CREST Assessor and director of Amazelab. Her new book, *Make Your Own Rainbow: A colourful approach to all things STEAM* (£19.99, Crown House Publishing) is out now.

amazelab.co.uk  @Amaze_Lab

What happened to the GOLDEN RULE?

To address the recruitment and retention crisis, we need to treat our TAs as we'd wish to be treated ourselves, says **Melanie Moynihan**...

So, here I am, about to start my new part-time teaching assistant role. I am one of those over 60s (in my case well over 60) that the government is so keen to have return to the workplace – or with me, keep going after 35 years of teaching – and I'm sitting in the school hall on the first inset day of September. It's a larger school than I am used to (two form entry) but the thought of providing English support in the mornings, maths and English tutoring in the

morning support. The Year 4s decide to drop me as soon as they can, while the Year 6 staff just can't think what to do with me. In their experience, I'm told, when children are taken out of the classroom for small-group work, they just sit there and do nothing! Nobody asks me what I have done, what I think, or what I am able to offer.

Just a few weeks into my eagerly anticipated new job, then, I find myself floating round the Year 6 classroom, helping children edit their

they get to have a learning voice, not one that is carefully constructed by the school for Ofsted. All good things must have their inevitable downside, however. My tutor groups are data-driven, so new data means new pupils – which might not be so bad if teachers or the senior management team attempted any sort of conversation with me regarding pupil progress. In reality, children move in and out of my groups without consultation.

Lacking personality

'Pink for think', 'green for growth', underline, miss a line are the marking

"There have been teachers who barely acknowledged my existence as a TA"

afternoon, and lunchtime supervision is one to which I'm really looking forward.

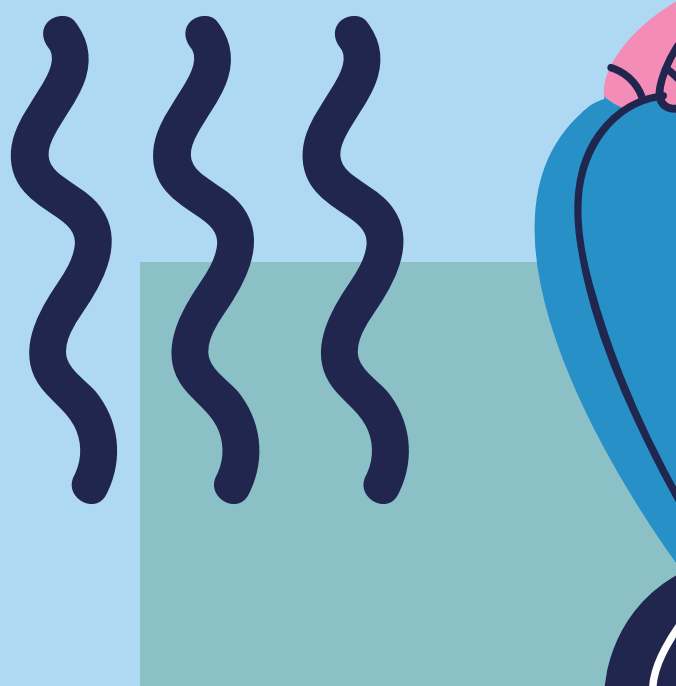
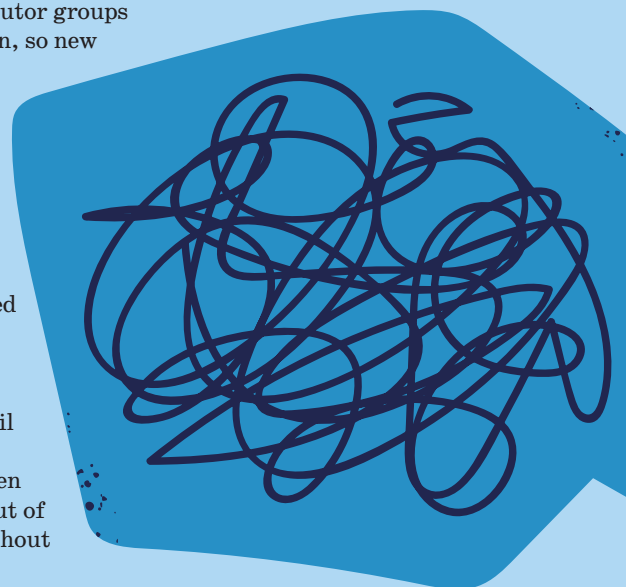
Hello?

At the end of the first session, I decide to set off and locate the Year 4 and Year 6 members of staff who I have been told I will be working alongside in the mornings. Imagine my surprise when neither the Year 4 teachers nor the Year 6 teachers have any idea who I am, nor what my role in the school is meant to be.

Several weeks later, although my afternoon tutoring sessions are confirmed and seem to be going well, nobody appears any wiser in relation to my

heavily highlighted writing. They certainly don't want to be taken out of the classroom to correct a minefield of punctuation and spelling errors, in that all-important chase for the coveted 'working at' evidence. By now, my self-esteem is starting to plummet and I am left wondering if the school rule of treating everyone the way we want to be treated applies to teaching assistants as well as to pupils.

The afternoons seem to be heading in a better direction; children really do appear happy (in the main) to exit classrooms and be taught in a small, focused and interactive environment. It's personal to them and



criteria I now have to follow, according to the school's marking policy. Strangely, a personal comment at the end of the child's work is not required, but merely optional. Sad to think that individual teacher feedback, once so crucial for pupil motivation and improving performance, is now seen as non-essential. Just recently, I met the parent of an old pupil who told me that it was the teacher's personal, written response that had been so encouraging for her daughter at primary school. Not the 'over' highlighting I now witness (almost as bad as the old, red pen crosses all over the page) that generally just seems to require a full stop, capital letter, comma or spelling correction, with pupils having little need to consider their

composition, audience or effect of their writing. It's a robotic formula that leads to a robotic response, which I confess I find difficult; I like the wider discourse, the written communication; and have always felt that book margins are usefully designed for discreetly drawing children's attention to anything noteworthy.

I see teacher modelling, but almost no shared writing, minimising the much-needed opportunity for children to share their vocabulary, practise their sentence and communication skills and 'bounce-off' each other.

The shared writing approach is the one I take, though, and we talk through

both the maths and the English to gain a greater understanding and improve our practice: talk being essential to improving both children's literacy and numeracy. This oral sharing I extend to creating writing toolkits, dispensing with the much-loved success criteria (used throughout the school) that I feel overwhelms children, often growing so long and complex that the writing becomes stifled by its heavy demands. More often than not, it includes unnecessary, technical requirements that stretch beyond the SATs grammar criteria and take priority over writing impact and enjoyment. Toolkits, on the other hand, can be discussed, co-constructed and kept to a minimum.

The other whole-school approach I am discovering is the recent introduction

of the Zones of Regulation, devised by an American occupational therapist. I worry that, after just half a day's training, as a non-practitioner, I am expected to act as a mental health 'expert', helping children regulate their emotions in an amateur effort to guide them to the 'green zone' where they will be ready to learn. They may feel a little blue, yellow or even, red. I am sure that a school focus on mental wellbeing should be welcomed, but its implementation requires careful

thought. It is not as simplistic as a new fashion, and its creators need to understand that children are not guinea pigs and teaching staff are not mental health experts before schools attach

themselves to 'the latest thinking' and mistakes in children's mental health management are made.

It's no from me

So it is that, after eight months, I decide to leave the post I had so looked forward to starting.

Teaching assistants are, in the main, a very friendly bunch – but teachers can be aloof, opinionated and, at times, unfriendly. There have been teachers who barely acknowledged my existence, and looked straight through me, causing me to think that if we want to get the best out of our children, we might start by recognising our support staff, value their contribution (and I don't just mean displays, laminating or book labelling) and show them our appreciation.

I left a note for the headteacher about how I had felt undervalued and about the lack of communication with the teachers I worked alongside, but I never heard back.

We have a wealth of talented teaching support workers, whose teaching capability and expertise is too often ignored, but I'm afraid it's 'No' from me to the government's big idea for retirees to continue in the workforce. Teaching assistants are too poorly paid, too often sidelined, and their many skills too often unnoticed or ignored. For this to change, a school's positive culture should mean the whole school, or staff self-esteem will continue to deteriorate and others, like me, will end up heading for the red zone and the exit. **TP**



Melanie Moynihan is a former teacher and SATs team leader who

taught pupils from EYFS to GCSE in both mainstream schools and PRUs.

Standard PRACTICE

What are the new digital and technology requirements, and what do they mean for primary schools and teachers?

MEL PARKER

If you're a teacher who's ever struggled with slow wifi, shared devices that don't quite work, or tech that's tricky to use with younger pupils, you know how frustrating it can be when things don't run smoothly.

And yet, digital tools are playing an increasingly important role in how we teach and how pupils learn. From programmable robots and online phonics apps to digital maths games, tech has become a vital part of daily life in primary education.

That's why the government recently updated its digital and technology standards (tinyurl.com/tp-GovTechStandards), aiming to ensure every school has the right foundations to deliver a smooth, safe, and effective learning experience for pupils.

If you're wondering what these new standards mean for your role, your pupils, and your day-to-day teaching, here's a clear, practical look.

New standards

These updated standards, released in March 2025, cover the digital essentials that every school should get right. They're about more than just gadgets or wifi speed – they include:

- reliable broadband and wifi in all classrooms and shared areas
- cybersecurity and keeping pupils safe online
- digital accessibility – ensuring all pupils can benefit, including those with additional needs
- cloud-based tools that

support teaching and school management

- strong leadership to oversee the school's digital strategy

These aren't just rules to tick off, either. Think of them as a guide to help you build a digital setup that truly supports teaching, learning, and school life.

So what?

Too many primary schools still face foundational digital

challenges. Only 63 per cent report a fully functional wifi signal across classrooms and shared spaces – a basic requirement that, when missing, disrupts lesson flow and limits access to essential digital learning tools such as phonics apps and interactive storybooks. We know that in primary education, digital tools can make a huge difference, whether it's helping pupils with special educational needs or supporting those learning English as an additional language. But these benefits only materialise if the technology works. The updated standards are designed to help close those early-stage digital gaps, ensuring every pupil starts their learning journey with the tools and support they need to thrive.

What will change?

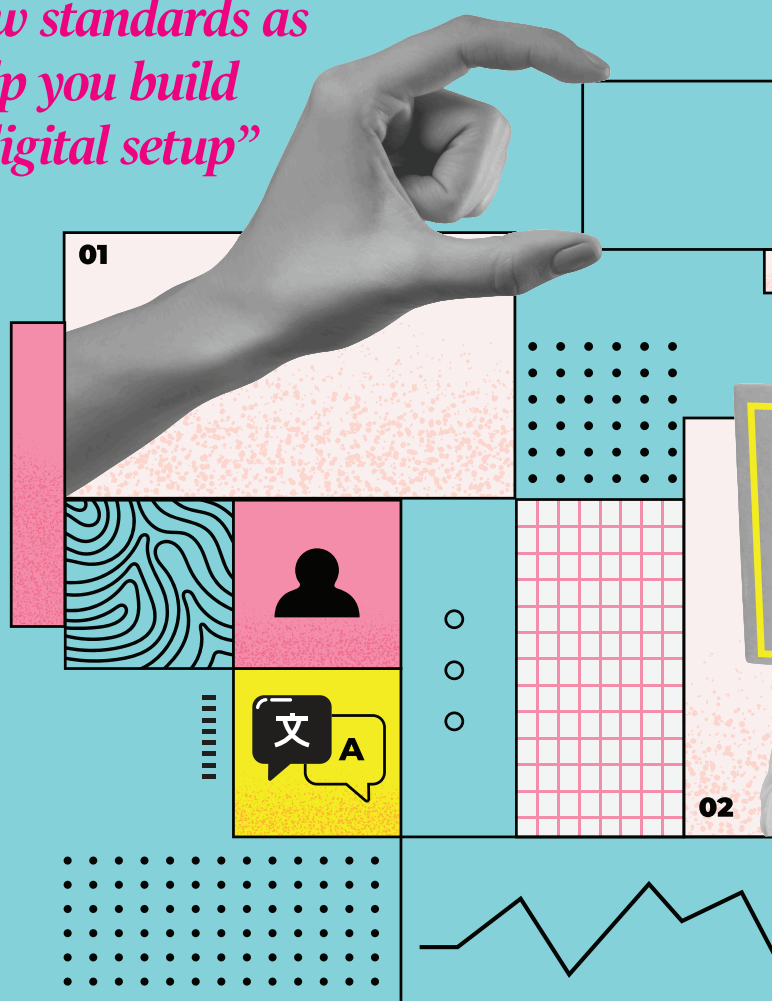
A key change encouraged by the new standards is that schools appoint a senior leader responsible for digital strategy. In primary schools, this doesn't mean adding yet another specialist role, but having a leader who understands the unique tech needs of younger pupils, teaching assistants, and parents.

This kind of leadership

helps bring better coordination for teacher training, device upgrades, and digital safety policies – all tailored to primary classrooms.

That said, I've seen firsthand just how challenging it can be in smaller primaries to find a digital lead. It's not always clear who should take that role, or even where to turn for guidance. As such, for these schools, the standards

“Think of the new standards as a guide to help you build a supportive digital setup”



are just the start; what comes next is reaching out to dedicated IT experts in education, who can offer support with strategic planning, procurement, and leadership training. Without that external input, the standards risk becoming an aspiration rather than an achievable roadmap.

Do I need new iPads?

Many primary schools still rely on 'Bring Your Own Device' (BYOD) policies or limited shared tablets – but these can create real barriers for younger pupils, especially those who don't have access to suitable devices at home.

The updated standards shift the focus towards more sustainable models, like bulk-buying or leasing, ensuring every pupil has consistent access in the classroom. This removes a key barrier to participation and gives teachers the

confidence to plan high-quality digital learning for all. For example, at Sunnyvale Primary, leasing tablets means every Year 3 pupil has their own device for class projects, removing barriers caused by device shortages and enabling more interactive learning.

But it's not just about devices. Digital skills matter too – for pupils, staff, and families. Nearly 40 per cent of families lack basic digital skills (via *The Guardian*, 2024), which can affect how well pupils benefit from technology at home. The standards encourage schools to provide digital skills workshops and resources for parents and caregivers – a critical support in primary education, where home learning and parental involvement are key.

Practical steps

You might be wondering what all this means for your

daily teaching. While some changes will take time, and the involvement of multiple staff members, there are some independent steps you can take to move things along. For example, we've recently been recommending digital tools like Microsoft PowerPoint's 'Present Live' feature, which shows subtitles in different languages on parents' phones during meetings and can improve communication and inclusion, especially in diverse primary school communities. A digital lead could help bring these kinds of helpful tools into your school.

Don't worry about perfect

Remember, the standards are a guide for schools to work towards, not a checklist to panic over. Primary schools are at different stages; many won't meet every part of the standards immediately.

THE FACTS



Less than 60 per cent of UK primary schools have full wifi coverage across the building — many classrooms still have poor connections.



The Connect the Classroom programme provides government funding to help schools upgrade digital infrastructure (tinyurl.com/tp-GovtConnect).



Schools are encouraged to appoint a senior leader responsible for digital strategy to help coordinate training and technology use.



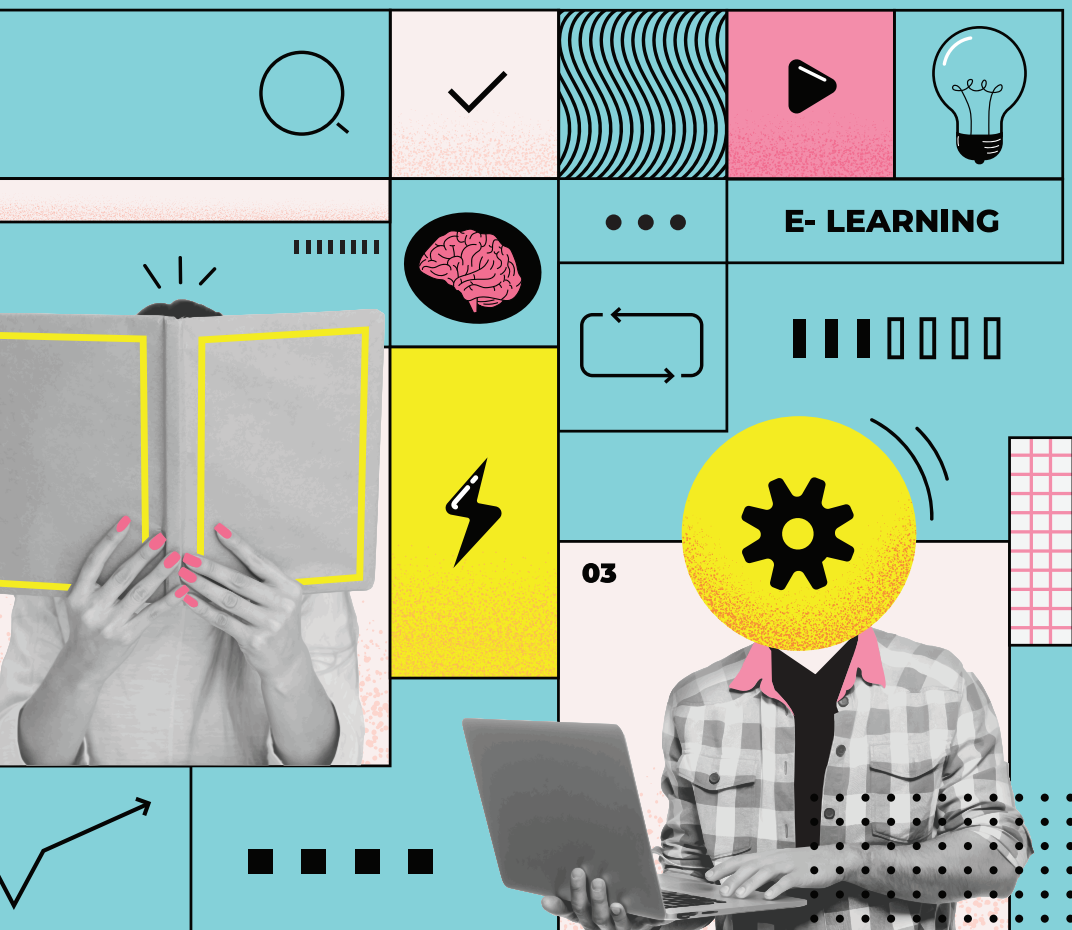
Leasing devices in bulk can reduce costs and ensure all pupils have the same access, closing digital divides.



Almost 40 per cent of families have low digital skills.



For more info and guidance, visit the Department for Education's Digital and Technology Standards page at tinyurl.com/tp-DTstandards



What matters most is having a clear plan, making steady progress, and ensuring technology supports teaching and learning effectively in your classroom. That way, you can focus on inspiring and educating your pupils, while technology quietly supports you behind the scenes. **TP**



Mel Parker is an educational technologist at RM Technology and former deputy headteacher.

rm.com



A hub website hosting FREE learning resources from arts, cultural and heritage organisations



- National curriculum linked
- Key Stages 1–4
- No fees, no marketing



Dive into a world of learning resources at
MyLearning.org

Outdoor Gyms for Primary Schools



Full range of equipment specifically designed for Children, for PE lessons they'll love!



Provides fun & active breaktimes too, increasing physical activity through the day.



Enhance fitness, emotional wellbeing and social interaction.



Develop flexibility, strength, technique, control and balance.



Increase physical literacy across the school with this gender neutral facility.



Additional funding available.


FreshairFitness
The outdoor gym specialists



FREE
Lesson Plans
& Progress
Trackers

T: 01483 608860

E: sales@freshairfitness.co.uk

www.freshairfitness.co.uk



THIS WAY!

School improvement advice
for headteachers and SLT

MIDDLE LEADERS | CPD | SUBJECT LEADERSHIP



The art of getting your **WHOLE TEAM ON BOARD**

asked to develop and what outcomes you are being asked to achieve. Is the focus on raising attainment, or is it all about offering enriching experiences? Will the development impact on all pupils or is it aimed towards targeted groups? I've found that a good quality conversation with your boss at the outset of the project can help to clarify the scope of the work. This initial conversation can also be an excellent opportunity to clarify their expectations in terms of timescales.

If you really want your project to 'land' and have impact, then it's important to involve your colleagues from the outset. As a keen-bean young teacher, I made every mistake in the book. On one hand, I've forged ahead on my own without making any attempt to bring my colleagues with me. On the other hand, I've also sickened colleagues with endless surveys,

I still remember, as a young teacher, being asked to develop a whole-school programme for art and design. My lack of curriculum development experience was the least of my worries; it was my artistic ineptitude that would have brought my secondary school art teacher out in a cold sweat at the mere mention of the idea! Under the circumstances, I did the only sensible thing I could... I co-opted one of my teacher buddies, who was a talented

artist, to be the brains of the outfit. Since this first foray, I've been involved in, and led, lots of curriculum changes. Along the way, I've learned a few things (usually from my own mistakes) about how best to lead a whole-school development and ensure that it has impact across the board.

Outlining the plan

First, I've learned that it's crucial to be crystal clear about what you are being

questionnaires and self-evaluation exercises. The truth, of course, is that a happy medium is best. Our colleagues need to feel engaged and consulted, but it's important not to overburden their already busy days. I've had to learn that not everyone may share my enthusiasm for my latest project. Watching colleagues give up the will to live at a staff meeting can be the educational equivalent of a comedian 'dying' in front of a live audience.

Teachers are genuinely caring people who want their pupils to do well. I've found that, if you can do two things, most colleagues will buy into the new initiative you are trying to lead. First, try and highlight the potential benefits for pupils to your colleagues. Given that teachers

want to see their students do well, they are much more likely to take on board something that they believe will genuinely benefit the children. Secondly, it is so important to bear in mind our colleagues' workload. In the glow of excitement about your latest project, it is easy to forget just how busy everyone already is. Anything you can do to make your colleagues' lives a little more straightforward is likely to help your project land successfully. Teachers always appreciate planners that have been pre-populated, resources that have been collated and lessons that have been planned... in outline, at least. It's always worth thinking about training needs as well.

If I'd had to deliver all those art and design lessons that I planned,

I'd certainly have needed lots of professional development!

Finding time

It almost goes without saying, but one of the most challenging aspects of leading a whole-school development is time management.



Together, for a greener world

As an ex-headteacher, I understand how demanding school life is. Similarly, as a climate action advisor with the Let's Go Zero campaign (supporting schools, colleges and nurseries to be zero carbon by 2030), I also know that schools need to make some changes. These two facts are not mutually exclusive, so I'm keen to help schools see that taking climate action isn't a burden, but an investment in wellbeing, school improvement, and long-term savings.

A climate action plan is a roadmap toward a healthier, happier, more resilient future. It not only reduces a school's environmental impact, but also integrates climate education in the curriculum, supports student engagement, and delivers benefits like cost savings, better wellbeing, and biodiversity improvements.

Of course, every school will be different, but a climate action plan helps you determine how to make the most impact from where you are. Actions can include

installing energy-efficient systems, such as LED lighting, solar panels and heat pumps; improving procurement practices; greening shared spaces; and enhancing air quality. These changes improve the physical environment while also boosting morale and learning outcomes. So, how to write an action plan? These are my top five tips:

1. Appoint a sustainability lead

This makes sure someone is focused on delivery, has leadership support, and drives the plan forward.

2. Engage the whole community

Involve pupils, staff, and families. Climate action is a unifying goal that builds motivation and ownership across the school. And it can be great fun for the children!

3. Set measurable goals

Define clear targets for areas like energy, waste, and biodiversity. Your local climate action advisor can help, too.

4. Use available resources

Support is out there – from councils, NGOs,

businesses, and national schemes. Use our resources to point you to what's relevant (tinyurl.com/tp-LGZtools).

5. Monitor and adapt

Track progress, celebrate successes, and revise the plan as needed.

For instance, Nailsea School in North Somerset developed a climate action plan, and in just six months, they have:

- appointed a sustainability lead
- installed a building management system
- switched to LED lighting in common areas
- secured grants for biodiversity improvements
- partnered with the LA on active travel
- added a second meat-free day in the canteen.

You can do this, too; and if you need a little more assistance, the climate action advisor in your area will understand schools and climate – and will guide you through the process. Learn more about your local advisor at tinyurl.com/tp-CAA



Will Ewens is a former headteacher, and is currently a climate action advisor for Let's Go Zero.

letsgozero.org



In safe hands

An online safety audit can strike fear into those who don't feel 'tech savvy'. However, it's not as intimidating as it sounds, and is a critical element of safeguarding, especially considering the significant amount of time pupils spend online. To streamline and save time, link your online safety audit into your overall Section 175/157 Local Authority (LA) safeguarding audit; and use the filtering and monitoring sections to fulfil the requirement in the DfE standards for an 'annual filtering and monitoring review'.

Although there's still a strong tendency to leave it to the 'tech-experts', key stakeholders must get involved, and collaboration is key. The audit should be led by the DSL – they have *'lead responsibility for safeguarding and child protection, including online safety and understanding... filtering and monitoring...'* (DfE, KCSIE, 2024). The DSL should then be supported by the SLT, curriculum leads and governors, using feedback from all staff and pupils.

An audit needs to be thorough and take a holistic view of all components of online safety within the school including: the curriculum, staff development, policies, parental support, safe systems and tech, recording and reporting.

It should be continuous, too. With the rapid, ever-changing use of digital media and the accompanying associated harms, the audit needs to evolve to keep up and keep pupils safe. So instead of one-off events to celebrate Safer Internet Day, and a tick-box annual report, make use of free, simple, downloadable audits, such as those created by edtech charity LGfL (onlinesafetyaudit.lgfl.net) with comprehensive questions and advice on curriculum; general approach and communication; and safe school systems, which use a simple red-amber-green (RAG) rating system and space for annotated evidence and actions.

This will help to actually keep pupils safe, supporting them to become literate users of digital media.

Alex Dave is the safeguarding education officer at LGfL – the National Grid for Learning.

 lgfl.net



“As a keen-bean young teacher, I made every mistake in the book”

As the old adage goes, ‘You might be able to do anything, but you can’t do everything.’ Almost without exception, the project you are trying to take forward will be far from your only responsibility. I’d suggest that there are two things that may help you. First, decide (very possibly in consultation with your boss) what you are not going to do while progressing this project... and make your peace with that. You should never be afraid to proactively decide not to do something. Second, try and protect some regular time in your diary to work on your project. I try and think when I might be at my best (not late at night for me) and when I *might* get a fairly uninterrupted run at things.

Anyone who has ever taken responsibility for a whole-school development will probably recognise the relief I felt when the final ‘i’ was dotted and ‘t’ crossed on those art and design planners and resources all those years ago; it always feels good to get a project over the line. As we know as teachers, though, our responsibilities do not end when the lesson does... we consider assessment, evaluation,

and next steps. In the same way, I’ve learned over the years that a project doesn’t end when implementation is over. We must think about how we gauge its impact. And the most important people are always our pupils, of course. I’m fairly sure that I didn’t ask the children for their thoughts on the art and design lessons... but I certainly would now.

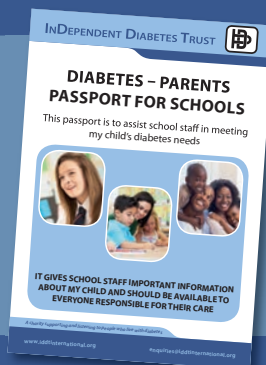
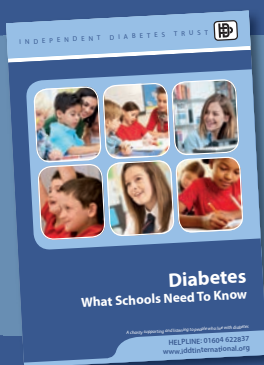
So, best of luck with your project; it’s guaranteed to turn out better than my efforts in art and design!



Alan Shields is a local authority inclusion officer and former primary head with almost 30 years’ experience in the state and independent sectors.



INDEPENDENT DIABETES TRUST



DO YOU HAVE A CHILD IN YOUR CLASS WITH DIABETES?

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

ASK FOR YOUR FREE COPIES TODAY

EMAIL: martin@iddtinternational.org
or TELEPHONE: 01604 622837



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

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

THE UNIQUE POWER OF SHAKESPEARE IN YOUR SCHOOL

Over the next year, thousands of primary school students across the UK will take to a professional theatre stage and perform Shakespeare with us.

Scan the QR code below to learn more about **Shakespeare Schools Festival**.

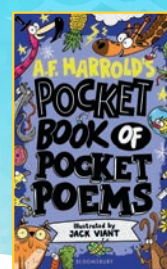
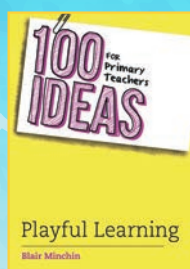
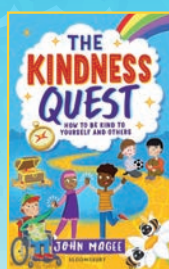
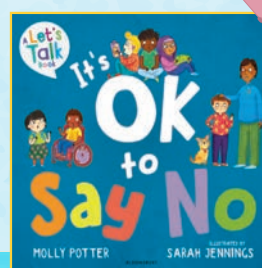
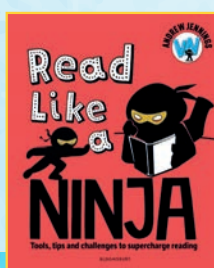
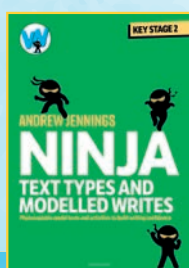
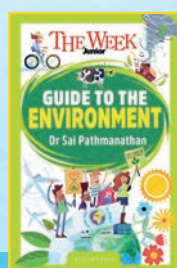


coram
SHAKESPEARE
SCHOOLS FESTIVAL

Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation is a registered charity, No. 1164676 and a limited company (England and Wales), No. 9883201
© Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation 2025.

SUMMER SALE 30% OFF ALL BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION BOOKS

Shop the sale on
[Bloomsbury.com/summerEd](https://www.bloomsbury.com/summerEd)
until 11th July 2025



BOOKS FOR EVERY STEP OF YOUR TEACHING JOURNEY

BLOOMSBURY EDUCATION

BloomsburyChildrens BloomsburyEducation Bloomsbury Ed

Celebrating 20 years of COLLINS BIG CAT

Raising lifelong readers

First published in 2005, Big Cat has become a multi award-winning, market leading reading programme that champions the importance of reading in schools.

It has:

- 2,000+ fiction and non-fiction books in print, featuring work by more than 1,000 authors and illustrators
- been used in more than 12,000 UK schools and hundreds more around the world
- supported 2 million children every year to become fluent readers

INSIDE THIS SECTION

44 The power of books

Original stories and natural language have helped to make Big Cat the enduringly effective reading programme it is today

47 Onwards and upwards

Keep the reading spark alive through the primary-secondary transition with the right books at the right time



Illustration © Irma Ruggiero (*The Dragon in the Sewer*, Collins Big Cat)

How does a book come to life?

Follow the Big Cat process from concept to creation

Shaping the vision

Every book's journey starts with market research and valuable feedback from schools. This helps to define the focus and scope for each Big Cat book.

Finding the right author

The in-house project lead crafts a detailed brief and reaches out to top authors – they may even bring in an external commissioning editor to discover new talent.



Just three of our hundreds of amazing Big Cat authors (L-R: Michael Rosen, Julia Donaldson, Joseph Coelho)

Pairing them with the perfect illustrator

For illustrated books, we scout for the best illustrators to bring the story to life. Sometimes the authors and illustrators like to meet up and discuss the book to ensure they're both on the same page.



Two of our incredible Big Cat illustrators (L-R: Dante Hookey, Sonny Fletcher)



Author Oliver Sykes and illustrator Ian Morris visited Denbigh Castle together to help Ian visualise Oliver's story as accurately as possible.

Crafting the manuscript

Authors collaborate with development editors and in-house editors over two draft stages. The manuscripts undergo copyedits, fact checks, and diversity and inclusion reviews to ensure meaningful representation.



For more behind the scenes content from our creators, follow @BigCatBooksLikeMe on Instagram!

Finalising the artwork

Illustrators deliver rough and final artwork, while photo research is carefully handled. Every detail, from artwork to photo placement, is reviewed and refined across multiple proof stages.



Illustrator Jennifer Latham Robinson's sketches of Jack, the main character of *Going Viral*.

The final touches

Before heading to press, rigorous editorial and technical checks are performed to ensure nothing is overlooked.

Ready for printing

With every detail perfected, books are sent off to our production team to bring authors' visions to reality.



A book begins to take form at one of our UK-based printers.

Books arrive at schools!

Once printed and checked, the books start making their way into classrooms.



Pupils at St George's Catholic Primary School enjoy reading *Big Cat* books.

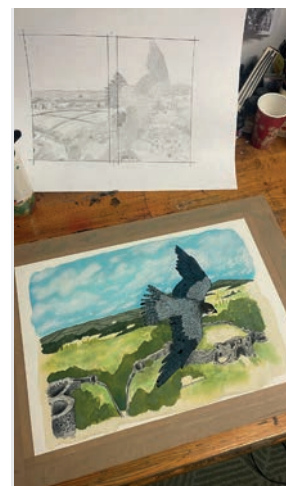
 **20 years**
Collins
BIG CAT of raising readers

Designing the cover

Different options for covers are presented and discussed with the in-house team. Illustrators use a range of tools, from paint to graphic design, to create each cover.



Illustrator Ian Morris sketched and then painted the cover for *Saving Anwen*.



The power OF BOOKS

Original stories and natural language have helped to make Big Cat the enduringly effective reading programme it is today, says **Lee Newman...**

I was the last person in the office on Christmas Eve, 2004, quietly checking off minor file corrections for an urgent reprint of the first phase of Collins Big Cat, scheduled to publish on 5 January 2005. I remember feeling simultaneously exhausted and exhilarated – all 100 titles had gone to press on time, and we'd already sold the first print run.

The beginning of Big Cat

Big Cat was a high-profile project for HarperCollins' Education division, meticulously researched and

featuring a dazzling array of leading authors, illustrators and photographers, and offering excitement, choice and agency to their waiting readers.

We were a small team of just four, supported by a huge external range of freelance commissioning editors, proofreaders, editors, designers, and picture researchers. In constant contact, we were able to draw on that vast well of experience, such as the creative skills of our design managers, Nikki Kenwood and Niki Merrett; elevating the quality and setting a new industry standard for children's reading books.

pre-reading, with wordless, illustrated titles to fluent readers of 80-page books. Drawing on his own teaching experience, Cliff wanted children to develop their skills while reading for pleasure, believing that children need autonomy as readers; that they have more inherent preferences and knowledge than we often give them credit for; and that we should trust them to read what they want. He believed that if we trusted them to choose books written in natural language, with all its nuances and oddities, we would be giving them the best possible start to their journey as readers – and we have stayed true to the principles he enshrined in the programme.

The legacy

Those principles are acutely relevant today, where research reveals children's growing disengagement with the act of reading. Only 32 per cent of five to 10-year-olds frequently choose to read for enjoyment, down from 55 per cent in

“We aim to give children wide exposure to different forms of literature”

developed by publisher Jill Cornish and commissioning editor Eddie Rippeth, who shared a vision for combining the qualities of children's picturebooks with the rigour of a levelled reading programme. Abandoning the traditional model of a small team of authors and illustrators writing schematic books, they brought an unprecedented level of originality to the project, commissioning a different author and illustrator pairing for almost every book. The end result was 100 titles in a range of formats and genres,

One of the most important contributors to the entire project was the series editor, Cliff Moon. A former teacher, lecturer, author and respected literacy expert, Cliff's annual guide to Individualised Reading (National Centre for Language and Literacy) was regarded as an indispensable listing of the readability levels of thousands of children's books. This and other reading taxonomies informed the development of Big Cat's finely graded reading progression, that takes children from



2012; and despite reading aloud to children being a proven way to boost their enjoyment of reading, the number of parents reading aloud to children is at an all-time low. Fewer than half (41 per cent) of babies to four-year-olds are read to frequently; a steep decline from 64 per cent in 2012.

Learning to read and reading to learn are often cited as limiting factors in enjoyment of books, exacerbated by diminishing access due to library closures and financial pressures on families. But we must accept the reality that for many children, reading at school will be their only exposure to books. Even more important, then, to publish high-quality reading books

that capture children's imaginations, and inspire, inform and entertain. This responsibility and privilege has long driven the commissioning strategy for Big Cat. We've published children's contemporary fiction and non-fiction, classics and fairytales, retellings of Shakespeare, poetry, graphic novels, even joke books, aiming to give children wide exposure to different forms of literature, showcasing the huge range of forms that books can take, and helping children to develop their own literary tastes. Recent years have seen us focus heavily on representation and inclusion – from Lisa Rajan's Tara and Dani Binns miniseries that showcases women in STEM

careers, to the Time-Travelling Trio books from Nadine Cowan that shine a light on figures of Black history that have been omitted from traditional historical texts, and collections of books centred around neurodiversity, disabilities and long-term conditions, written and illustrated by contributors with lived experience, shared in an inimitable and authentic way. We want all children to see themselves in our books, so we take care to reflect the widest possible range of people, places, experiences, family structures and different socio-economic contexts; and we do so respectfully and authentically.

We've applied these commissioning principles equally to our decodable phonics books, which have been a mainstay of our publishing programme over the last five years. In 2021 we were delighted to partner with the Wandle Learning Trust and Little Sutton Primary School, publishing resources and supporting books for their systematic synthetic phonics programme, Little Wandle

Letters and Sounds Revised. The programme is now used in more than 5,000 schools, and in April this year won a Teacher Tapp Gold Recommendation Award for having more than 90 per cent of teachers recommend the programme. Once

children have secured the phonic code and embedded their decoding skills, they can build reading fluency and stamina with exciting chapter books by leading authors such as Abie Longstaff, Joseph Coelho and Chris Bradford. Supporting children on their reading journey, from

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Are you in need of a creative and effective reading programme? Consider these criteria:

- 1 A diverse range of genres and topics to allow children agency and choice over what they read.
- 2 Authentic representation and inclusion that gives all pupils a chance to see themselves in the books.
- 3 Rich, high-quality texts that captivate children's imaginations and transport them to new worlds, broadening their point of view.
- 4 A clear and structured progression that helps pupils to secure early reading skills and build reading fluency at a pace that's right for them.
- 5 Comprehensive teaching and assessment support to save teachers planning and preparation time.

mastering phonics to discovering the joy of independent reading, continues to be the driving force behind everyone who works on Big Cat, from the authors and illustrators to the team behind the scenes.

I feel immensely privileged to have been part of Big Cat's journey for the last 20 years. I look forward to seeing what the next 20 years bring. **TP**



Lee Newman is the education and children's publisher at Collins, chair of the Education

Publishers Council at the Publisher's Association, and a trustee of Book Aid Intl.

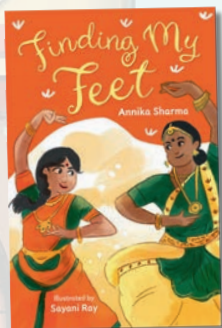
 collins.co.uk/BigCat



Collins BIG CAT Read On

Set children up for a lifelong love of reading
with 20 new chapter books

Bridge the jump from banded readers to longer books
with exciting stories featuring more sophisticated
themes, vocabulary, plots and structures

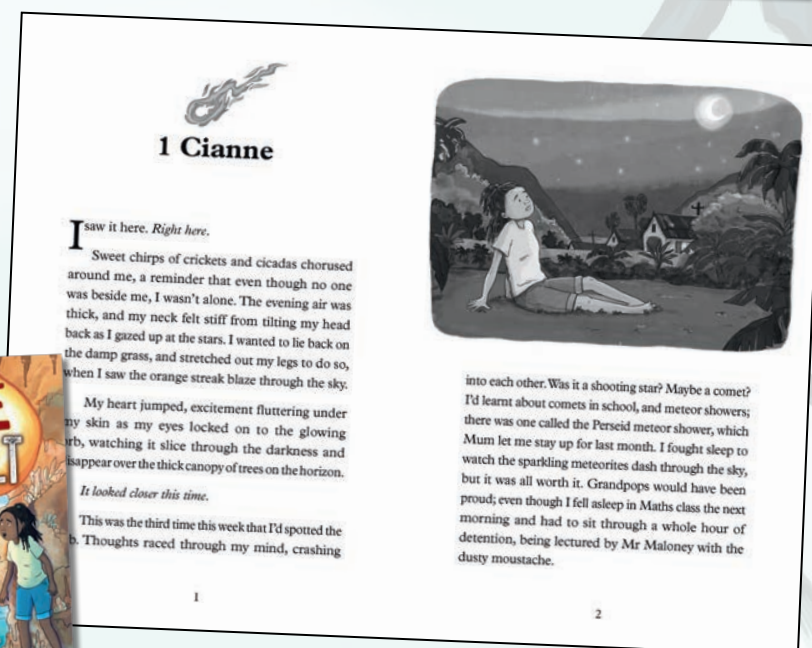
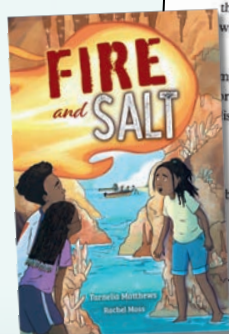


Longer books and higher word
counts to **build reading stamina**

Varied structures, devices
and vocabulary to
boost comprehension

Sophisticated themes
and plots to **encourage
exploring new genres**

Book talk opportunities
to **spark discussion**



Look inside the books and view free
teacher support resources at
collins.co.uk/BigCatReadOn



Onwards and UPWARDS

Keep the reading spark alive through the primary-secondary transition with the right books at the right time, says **Tom Mitchell**...

Given that his dad is an English teacher and children's author, you might imagine my 13-year-old son to be the world's biggest reader, but that's not quite how things have turned out. It wasn't always this way, though; back in primary school, he loved reading. Every so often, my phone throws up a photo memory of him snuggled up with a book. I'd like to say I wonder where that boy went, but I know exactly: he was chased away by SATs, 11+ exams, and secondary school homework. And he's not alone; HarperCollins recently released research showing that almost one in three (29 per cent) of children aged five to 13 now think reading is "more a subject to learn than a fun thing to do". So here's the question: how do we stop reading from becoming a chore?

Spark interest

According to the National Literacy Trust's 2019 Annual Literacy Survey, reading for pleasure levels drop significantly during the transition from primary to secondary school, falling from 72.7 per cent in Year 5 to just 48.8 per cent in Year 8. For any parent or teacher, this won't come as news. The move to secondary school is like reaching a new video game level: you've completed one world, only to find the next is tougher, darker, and full of new challenges. And that's just the parents. OECD data from the 2022 PISA suggests that UK secondary school students spend an average of two hours a day on homework. Given this, it's no wonder reading for pleasure



“Reading for pleasure is a bit like a fire; it doesn't need grand gestures, just regular tending”

falls away – especially if the new school shifts the emphasis from reading for fun to reading for assessment.

Reading for pleasure is like tending a campfire: it doesn't need grand gestures, just regular attention, the occasional spark, and something to keep it burning. Left alone for too long, it fades to embers. Neglected completely, it dies out.

How, then, can we keep the fire burning? Clearly, kids need books that match their interests and their reading level; books that support not just a love of reading, but the habit of it. The danger, however, is the dreaded 'b' word: boredom. I once received a negative Amazon review for one of my children's books, for kids aged nine plus, in which the parent bemoaned the

struggle their 'precocious' six-year-old had in reading it. If you give children books that are too difficult, they'll lose momentum. Similarly, if you stick to books that are far below their abilities, they will quickly outgrow them and stall again.

Tend the flames

This is where transition books come in. They aren't just about keeping the wheels turning – they help young readers build stamina and confidence for the longer rides ahead. They bridge the gap, offering more complex characters and ideas without abandoning the fun. The Big Cat Read On series is pitched at exactly this spot: accessible but never condescending, post-early chapter books, but pre-full-length YA. And in no way boring.

I was lucky enough to be asked to write two books in the first round of Read On. And I wrote what I'd want my son to have read at that age. Both *Gold Rush* and *On the Bench* are stories that are funny, real, and meaningful. Because here's the thing: books in these key years don't need to be overly literary. They just need to keep kids reading.

I realise my 13-year-old is unlikely to ever plead with me to bring a book with him on the supermarket drive with the same passion that he begs to be allowed his phone. But as I encourage him to read little and often, I hope the routine will help him rediscover that sense of ease and balance – where reading becomes just another way to enjoy the ride, rather than a task to prepare him for his GCSEs. It's an ongoing mission, and one I think would have been easier had I understood just how bumpy the transition between Year 6 and Year 7 could be.

We want our children to read not because they have to, but because they want to. As parents, teachers, and writers, it's our job to make sure they leave primary school not just with skills, but with stories. It's not about leaping straight to the classics, but about building the confidence to get there – and keeping the fire gently fed along the way. **TP**



Tom Mitchell is mostly a dad, partly a teacher and, at times, a Collins Big Cat writer.

LITERACY

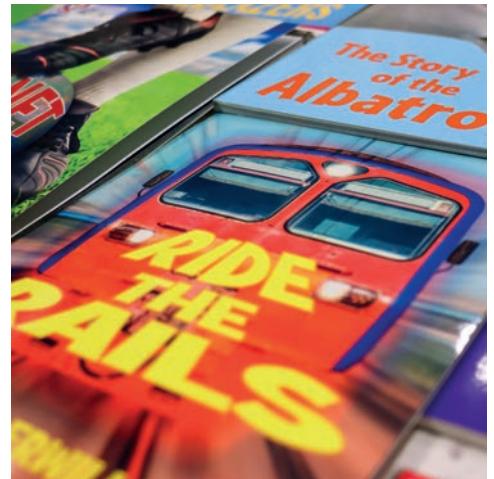
New Big Cat information books



A wide-ranging series of ability-levelled information books, covering a variety of non-fiction genres

AT A GLANCE

- Carefully levelled non-fiction books covering a broad spectrum of primary reading abilities
- Appealingly written and illustrated
- Covers most genres of information text
- Features an unexpectedly wide range of topics
- Part of the popular Big Cat series published by Collins



REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

Sometimes my job isn't fair. I receive a set fee for writing a review, for which I then allocate a certain amount of time to getting to know the given product before putting fingertips to keyboard. It therefore simply doesn't make economic sense for me to spend ages immersing myself in the subject of my review. Yet, on this occasion, I spent far too long on the product-testing phase, because I really struggled to put these books down.

I found this new series of information books from Collins – part of their highly popular Big Cat scheme – a genuine delight. But, before I start enthusing about the content, let's get the technical essentials out of the way first.

These are carefully levelled readers to meet the needs of most reading abilities across upper KS1 and KS2. They join a programme of over 1,800 non-fiction and fiction books in Big Cat, which are designed to suit readers at all levels from novice to independent.

Each book is compellingly written yet precisely pitched. The design is lively and appealing, and the illustrations and photographs are well chosen. In short, teachers can be confident that the content will be spot-on for each child (assuming their reading ability has been accurately established) and there is smooth progression throughout the series, right up to seriously challenging texts for the most advanced Year 6 pupils.

But what really appealed to me was the range of ideas covered. Collins has clearly worked hard to include topics that will pique the interest and

fire the imagination of today's school pupil. No doubt this will enhance the pleasure of reading, not just for the child, but also for the teacher, teaching assistant or parent. And, let's face it, one of the main objectives of creating a successful reading scheme must be to inspire a love of books.

As you might expect, there is a noticeable, though not obtrusive, nod to diversity issues, such as *Twentieth Century Trailblazers* – although even that included examples of women achievers well beyond the usual suspects. There are also playful appeals to perennial childhood fascinations, from football to slime.

But what really caught my eye were the books that provided an age-appropriate introduction to topics that are more typically reserved for adulthood, through their *A guide to...* titles. Psychology is a subject that is particularly close to my heart, so I was thrilled to see it given a book of its own. Similarly, I was pleasantly surprised to encounter a thoughtfully written guide to money. Before long, I was deeply engrossed whilst simultaneously admiring the careful way in which complex and even abstract concepts had been covered. However, as the saying goes, time is money and, despite the enhanced financial literacy granted by this book, I found that the time I was spending getting lost in these titles was becoming seriously economically unsustainable. So, I think I'd better leave it there and let you discover for yourself just how good they are...

teach PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Enjoyable, well-pitched books
- ✓ Wonderfully informative
- ✓ Refreshingly unexpected
- ✓ Attractively presented
- ✓ A positive addition to any school library or reading programme

UPGRADE IF...

You want to foster a love of reading by introducing pupils to a wide range of fascinating topics through wonderfully crafted information books.

Find out more at tinyurl.com/tp-BigCatInfo

Health & Wellbeing SPECIAL

50

Mr motivator

See pupils really shine when you drop the reliance on transient rewards and punishments, and focus instead on internal momentum...



INSIDE THIS SECTION

52 Safe, seen and supported

Three practical strategies can make sure children awaiting SEND assessment don't fall through the cracks

55 The only constant in life is change

Understanding your personal development can help to control stress and improve performance

56 The psychology of bullying

Why do humans engage in bullying? Harnessing this knowledge can aid in addressing its prevalence in schools

59 Just dance!

Start your pupils off on a healthy path, and they'll reap the benefits of moving to music far beyond childhood

61 "Don't touch that!"

Arming yourself – and your pupils – with up-to-date information on allergies will help you avoid classroom drama

MR MOTIVATOR

See pupils really shine when you drop the reliance on transient rewards and punishments, and focus instead on internal momentum...

ADRIAN BETHUNE

If I asked 1,000 teachers if they wanted their pupils to feel more motivated and happy in their classrooms, I would bet that very few would say, 'No, thanks'. But what if I told you that many common practices in schools can actually harm motivation and wellbeing? This is why I believe every teacher and school leader needs to know about self-determination theory (SDT) and how small tweaks to our practice can be the key to better learning, motivation and long-term happiness.

“Competence, autonomy and relatedness are correlated with life satisfaction”

What's the theory?

Self-determination theory is a model of motivation proposed by two eminent psychologists, Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, back in the 1970s. SDT states that humans have three core psychological needs that are the foundations of our motivation and wellbeing. These are competence, autonomy and relatedness (more on these later). When those needs are satisfied, we feel motivated, we are productive, and we are content with our lives. But if those core needs are denied, we can become lost, unproductive and miserable. SDT is another

way of talking about intrinsic motivation – that is, motivation that comes from within. When we're intrinsically motivated, we do things for their own sake and derive satisfaction from doing so. We don't need rewards or the threat of punishment to get us to act and behave in certain ways when we are self-determined.

Since the 70s, hundreds of studies have backed up Deci and Ryan's original findings. One recent study by Frank Martela at the University of Helsinki surveyed over 45,000 adults across 27 European

countries. Martela found that high scores for competence, autonomy and relatedness were strongly correlated with higher levels of life satisfaction and having a sense of meaning in life. This matters, because the latest Good Childhood Report (2024) put UK children as the unhappiest in Europe, and children's 'happiness with school' as the lowest score to date.

What's the harm?

Deci and Ryan's original research was seen as heretical at the time, because it claimed that how many businesses and schools were set up harmed intrinsic

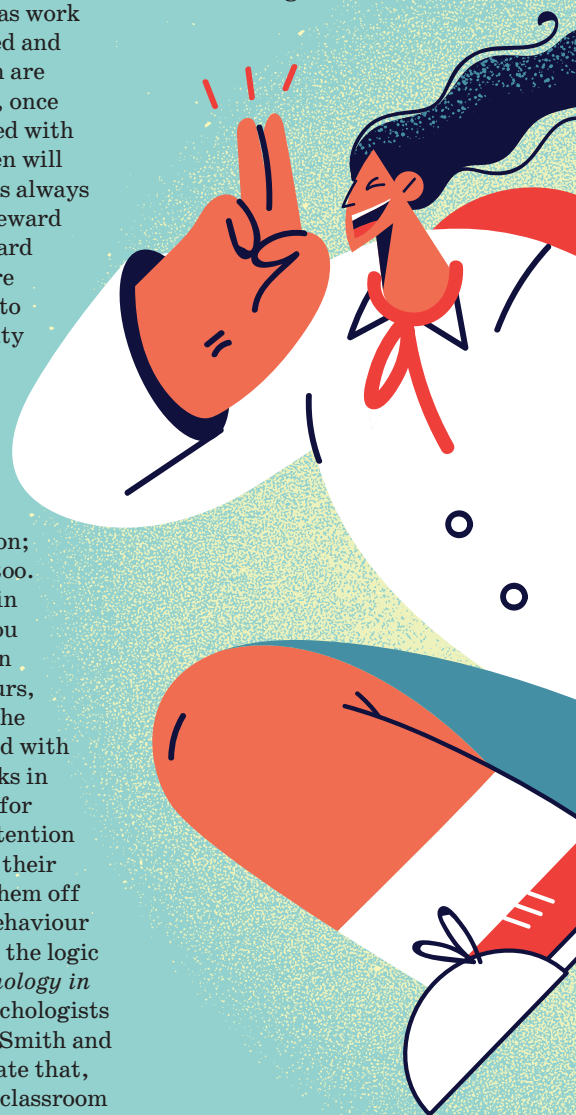
motivation. Let's take the common practice of rewards (think certificates, stickers, house points). Deci and Ryan claimed that when a person expects a reward (e.g. house points) for carrying out an activity (e.g. completing work), they attribute their behaviour to the reward rather than the activity. In the short term, this doesn't seem problematic, as work is getting completed and we assume children are learning. However, once the activity is linked with the reward, children will think the activity is always associated with a reward – and once the reward is removed, they are much less inclined to complete the activity in the future. This is how rewards can backfire.

And it's not just rewards that can harm motivation; punishments can, too. Common thinking in schools is that if you want to stop certain unwanted behaviours, then you increase the sanctions associated with them. If a child talks in a 'silent corridor', for example, then a detention or missing some of their playtime will put them off engaging in that behaviour in the future, or so the logic goes. But, in *Psychology in the Classroom*, psychologists and teachers Marc Smith and Jonathan Firth, state that, 'Highly controlled classroom environments undermine intrinsic motivation.'

They then go on to say that, 'Research strongly indicates that practices that attempts to motivate pupils through sanctions... undermine the quality of student engagement.'

What works?

It's important to point out that I am not advocating for eliminating all rewards



and sanctions in schools. The point is, if we rely too much on them to motivate our pupils, research indicates we are barking up the wrong tree. Instead, we need to provide children with classroom environments that support their need for competence, autonomy and relatedness. Let's take a look at these in a bit more detail:

Competence is about our need to master our environment. We need to feel like we have the knowledge and skills to achieve goals that matter to us. This need is definitely fulfilled in schools through good-quality teaching. When complex tasks are broken down for us, when good learning is

modelled for us, and when we receive feedback that helps us feel like we are making progress, we feel a sense of achievement and wellbeing.

Autonomy is about our need to feel in control of important aspects of our lives. Having a sense of control is strongly related to wellbeing. Having autonomy is also crucial to managing the stress of learning new things. Stress expert Dr Elissa Epel explains in *The Stress Prescription* that 'feeling 'in control' can reduce stress... A high sense of perceived control in life is associated with being happy, healthy and wealthy.' Smith and Firth agree, explaining that 'classroom environments that encourage autonomy result in greater levels of learning and performance outcomes than styles deemed to be more controlling'. See the panel on the right for

some ideas on putting this into practice.

Relatedness is about our need to feel a sense of connection to others and feeling like we belong to something bigger than ourselves. Humans are a hyper-social species after all. Professor Riley at the Institute of Education has found that increasing a sense of belonging in school is associated with increased wellbeing, better attendance, improved academic outcomes and higher staff morale and motivation, too. Ultimately, fostering belonging in school is about letting your class know that they are part of your team, that they are valued, that they have an important role to play, and that you all have each other's back.

Going forward

If we are to become a more evidence-informed profession, we need to ditch outdated practices that research shows are not the most effective ways to motivate children or make them happy. SDT is not a new theory, but every teacher needs to know it exists and how it can enhance their teaching practice. And, of course, SDT is not just about children. Teachers need to feel competent, connected and in control as well. Fulfilling these core human needs could even be the most effective way of solving the retention crisis. **TP**



Adrian Bethune is a part-time teacher in Aylesbury. The second edition of

his book, *Wellbeing in the Primary Classroom* (£19, Bloomsbury), is out now.

 teachhappy.co.uk


 @adrianbethune


In practice


Not sure where to start?


Try these pointers to help your children develop intrinsic motivation:

 Rely less on house points and certificates to reward children making academic progress.


 Use more positive encouragement and verbal praise. These act as better motivators, because once they are taken away, the motivation remains.

 Give children more roles and responsibilities that help them feel in control (e.g. school council or playtime leaders).


 Enable student voice by asking them what they think about school, and what could be improved, and then acting on their suggestions (where appropriate, of course!).

 Where possible, let children have a say on what they learn in class (perhaps by voting on their next class text).

 Create a 'team flag' with your class, filled with representations of your values.

 Set team goals, encouraging your class to work together to achieve them.

 Use humour to build rapport and reduce the stress and tension of learning new things.

 Use 'belonging cues' (smiles, warm body language, fist bumps, high fives, shared rituals) that let children know they are safe, connected, and that they share a future with you.

Safe, seen, and SUPPORTED

Three practical strategies can make sure children awaiting SEND assessment don't fall through the cracks, say **Rachel Berry** and **Cate Marsden**...

In every classroom, there are pupils who thrive on routine, and others who find structured lessons stifling. Some may be reluctant to raise their hands during whole-class discussions, but come alive when working in small groups.

Every child responds differently to learning and social experiences in school. But for a number of pupils, some of the difficulties they face could be the early signs of neurodiversity.

With assessment waiting times for autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions now longer than ever, teachers need practical strategies they can use to support children in the meantime.

Our SEND experts at Woodbridge Academy Trust regularly share strategies that work – and help teachers identify those that don't – to

1 Recognise and respond to masking

Children with communication, sensory or social-emotional needs often develop subtle ways to blend in, like staying quiet in lessons, mimicking others, or avoiding eye contact to help them cope with overwhelming situations. This behaviour, known as masking, can start early and be difficult to spot.

For some pupils, masking can also manifest as disruptive or challenging behaviour, particularly if they experience sensory overload. This can happen in a noisy, busy classroom, for

“Symbols are a great way to personalise techniques such as the zones of regulation”

ensure all neurodiverse pupils can make progress in school.

There are a few techniques we particularly rely on to support the learning and wellbeing of our pupils while they wait to be formally assessed, including recognising masking, restorative justice, and communication aids.

instance, where a child might lash out, shut down, or become suddenly energetic as a way of coping.

Our team regularly helps teachers to identify the signs of masking and introduce healthy strategies to support their pupils. It can be useful to think of disruptive behaviour as a form of communication. For



example, ask yourself what the child might be trying to tell you by bouncing around the classroom instead of starting their story. Did something happen before (e.g. did they fall out with the child sitting next to them), or was the situation more of a distraction

because it was their turn to contribute to a class discussion?

Having one trusted teacher or TA, wherever possible, can make it much easier to spot masking behaviours and create an inclusive classroom where all children feel able to engage in learning.

2 Restorative justice

Children with additional needs often benefit from time and support to process difficult experiences, such as arguments with friends, or to make sense of the consequences of their behaviour.

For example, if a child becomes angry or frustrated because they feel left out of a group task, try to incorporate activities that replicate the principles of restorative justice.

Encourage them to have a conversation about the situation, asking key questions such as “What happened?”, “Who was affected?”, “How do you feel about it?” and “What needs to happen next to put it right?” This will help you get to the bottom of the situation and make it easier for the pupil to process it.

These prompts help children to become more self-aware, and develop empathy and a sense of responsibility for their actions. They also enable the child to reflect on what they might do differently next time. This kind of structured, supportive dialogue helps pupils navigate their way through what can be complex social challenges, while building their emotional literacy in a meaningful way.

3 Make use of visual communication aids

For pupils with communication delays or those who don't yet have the necessary vocabulary to express how they feel or what they need, visual aids can make a huge difference.

We encourage teachers to use visual prompts, such as facial expression cards or coloured emotion charts, to give children with speech and language needs a way to share their thoughts and feelings without having to verbalise them. For a pupil who describes a good day as a ‘birthday party day’ full of excitement and fun, an appropriate symbol might be balloons or a birthday cake. If a tough day feels like a ‘spilled paint day’ that’s messy and frustrating, then an image of a toppled paint pot could work well. The more personally meaningful the visuals, the more effectively children can use them to communicate how they feel.

Symbols are a great way to personalise techniques such as the zones of regulation, too, where emotions are grouped into four coloured zones. Blue represents low energy, tiredness, or sadness; green is calm and focused; yellow signals heightened emotions like anxiety or excitement; and red is for extreme feelings like anger or panic.

The aim is to use colour to help children express themselves, but colour perception can be quite personal. If a child connects with blue as a happy colour, for example, the colours can be adjusted to match their experience, and symbols added to reinforce the connection.

Waiting for a SEND assessment can be challenging for schools, children and their families.

These simple techniques

While you wait

Nearly 1 in 5 primary school pupils in England may have a special educational need, but do not yet have a formal diagnosis (tinyurl.com/tp-SENDstats). With waiting lists currently stretching to many months, or even years, you might find it useful to dip into some of the following resources to help you through.



DfE guidance and resources: tinyurl.com/tp-DfESendassessment



IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice)

documents: tinyurl.com/tp-IPSEA



NHS support options (this is based on services

for NE London, but many of the links are national): tinyurl.com/tp-SENDnhs



EHCP guidance from Scope: tinyurl.com/tp-ScopeSEND



EEF SEND guidance: tinyurl.com/tp-EEFsend

will give you a few tools you can use to help your pupils feel safe, seen and supported whether or not they require an education, health and care plan (EHCP). **TP**



Rachel Berry is a specialist SEND teacher, and Cate Marsden is director of external partnerships, both at Woodbridge Trust.




[woodbridgesend.co.uk](https://www.woodbridgesend.co.uk)



Give parents what they want and give your school the edge

Premium before & after school care
that parents love and your school can trust



- Join **222 happy schools** already delighting parents with the UK's most popular wraparound care
- **Free up** your teachers from extra planning and admin, while creating a new revenue stream
- Children thrive in our **Ofsted-registered** programmes and look forward to our sessions
- Energising breakfast clubs and after-school enrichment – all managed for you



Search Premier Education Wraparound Care

Excellent



★ Trustpilot

Based on 20,000+ reviews

The only constant in life IS CHANGE

Understanding the stages of personal development can help to control stress and improve performance, says **Viv Grant**

Although many years have passed, I still remember the quiet voice that lived in the back of my head when I first became a headteacher. It wasn't the voice of reason or confidence; it was the echo of an old careers teacher who once told me I'd be lucky to get a job on the tills at the local supermarket. He didn't see potential in me. And somewhere, deep down, a part of me held onto his limited perception of who I could be.

So, when I stepped into my first primary leadership role, I exuded an air of confidence, but inwardly, I was harbouring a hidden fear... *What if I'm not good enough?*

That moment, standing at the threshold of something new, is familiar to many. We've all experienced the stress of walking into our first classroom, leading our first assembly, navigating our first difficult conversation with a parent or colleague. And with it, the feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, and self-doubt that often creep in.

The key isn't to avoid these feelings. It's to notice them, understand them, and build a toolkit that helps you respond with clarity and compassion for yourself, and for others.

Stress and change

When we accept that life is a continual process of change and that stepping outside our comfort zone naturally brings a range of stress responses, we become better equipped to face the unfamiliar with more ease, confidence, and intention.

Taking on a leadership role, or simply saying yes to greater responsibility, often means entering what many call the stretch zone. It's a space filled with possibility, but also vulnerability. If we're not conscious of how we respond to stress, this zone can feel overwhelming and destabilising.

But when we're prepared, when we understand our personal stress triggers and have tools in place to support ourselves, the stretch zone can become fertile ground for growth.

Identifying your stress triggers

To grow in the stretch zone, we first need to understand how we respond to stress. Each of us carries our own set of triggers: emotional, mental, and physical signs that tell us we're under pressure. These signs are often subtle. Stress doesn't always look like panic or tears. More often, it's the Sunday night dread. The sharp tone in a staff meeting. The exhaustion that doesn't go away with a good night's sleep. The quiet ache of self-doubt.

To manage stress effectively, we need to pay attention to our early warning signs. A few reflective questions might help:

- When do I feel most depleted or disconnected from myself?
- What situations consistently leave me tense or anxious?
- Are these reactions new, or do they echo deeper beliefs I've carried for some time, such as the fear of not being good enough?

Often, our stress isn't just about workload. It's about the stories we've absorbed about our worth, our ability, or our right to lead. >

“Taking on leadership often means entering the ‘stretch zone’”



A toolkit that works

Once you begin to recognise your stress triggers, the next step is to gather resources that support your wellbeing and resilience. Here are a few that have helped me and many other educators.

1. Self-compassion

Speak to yourself the way you would to a colleague or friend in need. A simple reminder like, *"This is hard, but I'm doing my best,"* can make all the difference on difficult days.

2. Boundaries

Learning to say, *"This can wait,"* is not a weakness, it's a strength. You cannot pour from an empty cup, and your pupils need the healthiest version of you.

3. Reflection

Whether through journaling, voice notes, or trusted conversations, creating space to process your thoughts helps you spot patterns and let go of what no longer serves you.

4. Reframing

Try shifting your inner dialogue. Instead of, *"I've never done this before,"* say, *"I've never done this before – but I have what it takes to learn."*

5. Support networks

Find your people; the ones who listen without judgement, who remind you of your worth, and who've walked similar paths. You were never meant to do this work alone.

It's easy to believe that stress means you're failing. But more often, it's simply a sign that you're *growing*. You're expanding your comfort zone, stepping into new responsibilities, and discovering deeper strengths within yourself.

So, the next time you find yourself questioning whether you're good enough, or whether you have what it takes to cope, remind yourself: *"That's okay. I've grown before. I can grow again."*



Viv Grant is an executive coach, author, public speaker, and director of Integrity Coaching, London's leading provider of coaching services for headteachers and

senior school leaders.

integritycoaching.co.uk

The psychology OF BULLYING

Understanding why humans engage in bullying can help us address its prevalence in schools, argue

Dr Christopher Arnold and Dr Jane Yeomans...

Perhaps the most common display of aggression in schools is bullying, but psychology can make a contribution to tackling it.

First, it's useful to understand that there is a biological dimension, and bullying is not simply a human problem. Similar behaviour has been observed in animals; in these cases (dubbed *mobbing*), large groups of animals, or birds, will attack a perceived threat. For instance, small birds will attack an owl. There are two benefits for the small birds. First, the owl is a predator; as individuals they are unable to defend themselves against this threat, but as a group they can. Secondly, they have an opportunity to learn more about the threat – the small birds are curious.

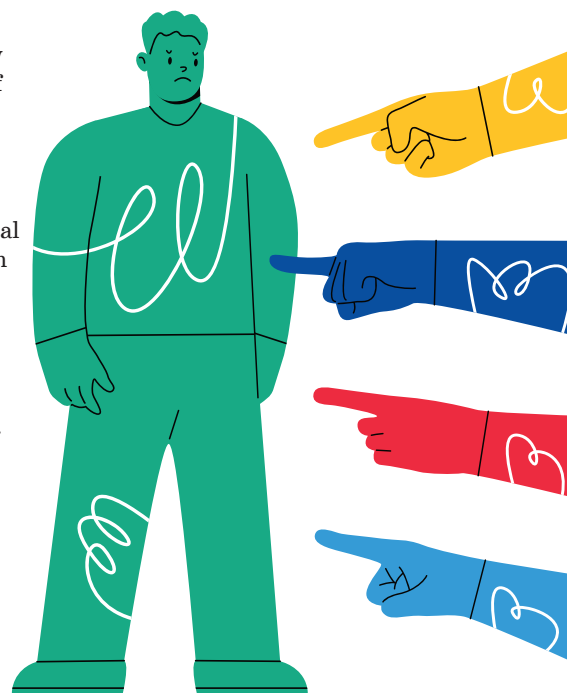
Learning theory gives us more information. In humans, bullying is perhaps rewarded by the admiration, or fear, of others. Status can rise. For the victim, putting up with the acts of the bully may be less humiliating than talking about it to others. Social learning theory suggests that bullies may learn how to bully by watching others. If staff in school use physical or emotional strength to get their way, the message is given that bullying is an acceptable way of getting people to do what you want. Although physical attack is illegal, adults in school can use language to humiliate children and each other (e.g. sarcasm).

These ideas lead us towards ways we can reduce bullying, including creating a culture in which children can talk about being bullied without shame (anonymous reporting, the use of drama and visible school policies); ensuring that the discussion of feelings is an acceptable part of school life (that it is not shameful to say you are unhappy); and making sure that the bully is not rewarded for their

actions (public or private apologies face-to-face or in writing); for the bully who is insecure, some personal counselling or inclusion in a social skills group may help). In addition, there are practical elements to consider in both the design of the school and the ways in which areas are supervised. Bullying is unlikely to happen when the children can see adults; areas of the school which are never supervised are breeding grounds for bullying.

TAs are also particularly well positioned to look for signs of bullying; they may have a closer relationship with individual pupils than a teacher would, and students can feel safer with their LSA. So, next time you suspect bullying in your school, put your psychology knowledge to the test (and recruit your TA's help!). **TP**

Dr Christopher Arnold and Dr Jane Yeomans both worked as teachers before becoming senior practitioner educational psychologists. The third edition of their book, Psychology for Teaching Assistants, (£29.95, Teaching Times), is out now.



You got this

A roundup of tools and resources to help you be your best self

1

Holistic play therapy

Academy of Play and Child Psychotherapy (APAC) is the largest, most experienced and dedicated creative arts and play therapy training organisation in the world. APAC offers the Integrative Holistic Model of Play Therapy, which is uniquely validated through excellent clinical outcomes. This provides a solid foundation preparing students with the knowledge, skills and experience to work therapeutically with children, young people and adults using play and creative arts. APAC offers three routes to train to become a qualified play therapist, including funded, self-funded, and using the employer levy. Visit apac.org.uk to find out more.



3

Bite Back

Bite Back is a youth-led movement challenging a broken food system. Eating healthily should be easy, but for many young people, it's not. Junk food dominates high streets, and too often, the healthy option isn't the easy option in secondary school canteens either. It doesn't have to be this way.

Co-founded in 2019 by Jamie Oliver, Bite Back has successfully campaigned for free school meals during the holidays and the upcoming junk food ad ban across TV and social media. Over 200 schools have joined our fully funded programme, helping students identify and remove the systemic barriers to healthy eating.

From new salad bars and shorter queues, to fairer pricing and attractive hydration stations, change is possible. Applications are open now – build students' skills and create lasting change in your school by visiting biteback2030.com

Have you got wraparound care sorted at your school? If not, let us help! We know that establishing wraparound care can be a heavy burden on school staff, but by leaving it to the experts (that's us!) the process is simple and stress-free.

As the largest provider of before- and after-school care in the UK, our team makes sure kids have enriching, active sessions, parents have an easy booking process, and teachers have zero additional admin.

Talk to us now about getting wraparound care sorted at your school. Alternatively, if you're still considering running the provision yourself, we have a comprehensive guide to help.

Search 'Premier Education wraparound care' to find out more.



4

Get care wrapped up



2

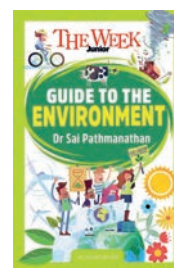


An adventure of discovery

Bring the magic of the Great Barrier Reef into your classroom with *The Great Barrier Reef* book. This beautifully illustrated story follows adventurous twins, Crystal and Leo, as they explore the vibrant underwater world, guided by playful dolphins and the spirit of kindness and love. More than just a story, this book inspires connection – with nature and with each other.

Children will learn fascinating facts about the reef's unique marine life while engaging in gentle yoga poses inspired by ocean animals, and exploring themes of compassion, curiosity, and environmental awareness.

Get your copy at magnificentmemagnificentyou.com



5

Guide to the Environment

This brilliant introduction to the environment and climate change from multi-award-winning children's magazine *The Week Junior* combines cutting-edge science with practical activism. In this book, pupils will:

- discover the science of climate change
 - meet key scientists, leaders and activists in the environmental movement
- learn practical ways to help save the planet from their own home
- understand global environmental issues and their local impacts
- get inspired by positive stories of environmental action

Learn more at tinyurl.com/tp-TWJenvironment



CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge Primary Insight

for ages 5-11

Unlock the potential in your classroom

Empower teachers to build a strong foundation and unlock their students' potential. Identify strengths and weaknesses, reveal hidden talents, and spot where students need extra support.



www.cambridge.org/insight



Unlock the Power of Play for Your Child's Wellbeing



Children don't always have the words to express their emotions—but through Play Therapy, they can communicate, heal, and thrive.

At the Academy of Play and Child Psychotherapy (APAC), we train compassionate professionals to support children's emotional wellbeing through the power of play. Our accredited courses empower educators and therapists to make a real difference.

- ♥ Help your child feel heard and understood
- ♥ Discover how play can heal and transform
- ♥ Train with us and become a Play Therapist

📍 Blended part time training options available across the UK & Ireland.

📞 01825 761143 ✉ contact@apac.org.uk

www.apac.org.uk



Just dance!

Start your pupils off on a healthy path, and they'll reap the benefits of moving to music far beyond childhood, says **Anderley Hampson**

'Hello, I am Charlotte. I am a choreographer and film maker who uses movement as a mechanism to connect people and evoke perspectives on life.'

So says the homepage on the website of one of my past pupils. When I knew Charlotte, she was a seven-year-old whose dance talent attracted the attention of the local press; I still have my signed copy of the centre-page spread about her! Charlotte is now 'a British choreographer, dancer and filmmaker... who broke ground early in her career when she became the Royal Ballet's Inaugural Young Choreographer'. Charlotte reached the dizzying heights that many can only dream of; but it is those dreams that really matter, and they start in primary school.

I currently tutor a GCSE student who is shy at school but becomes a born leader when she helps teach younger children at the local dance school at weekends. She recommends encouraging all pupils to have a go; to experiment with movement, without judgement about what is 'right' or 'wrong'. Furthermore, she has noticed that building 'boys only' classes into the schedule is a great way to boost the participation and confidence of boys at primary age. She feels dance is often still seen as 'for girls' – so separate lessons can help boys to feel that it is also a 'boy thing', while developing some skills before they brave mixed classes.

Similarly, dance in primary school PE is a unique chance to help children to break down their

inhibitions and be valued for their individualism. Of course, some will be more conventionally talented, naturally elegant and athletic than others, but the whole point is to get children up and dancing as soon as possible and just enjoying moving to music. The physical, social, mental and emotional wellbeing gains through dance will have a positive knock-on effect on every aspect of their school lives.

Lifetime gains

What is more, in the primary environment, you don't have to restrict dance to formal lessons. You are surrounded by little people who are designed to move constantly – who *need* to move constantly – as so much of their development and learning comes through movement. So... grab this opportunity to get your primary pupils:

- skipping and Polka-ing round the playground when they arrive at school
- dancing with their arms in registration and taking turns to lead
- learning some synchronised

line-dancing moves as a class in form time to practise in break

- listening to music from 'Swan Lake' (from Russia, Poland, Italy, and Germany), 'Bharatanatyam' (India), and 'Bata' (Nigeria) in assembly
- following up with creative writing about stories the music evokes
- singing, clapping and swaying to learn their times tables
- having dance video lessons from different cultures on in the hall at lunch break as an optional activity
- acting as callers for country and barn dancing at the school summer fete, and participating in demonstrations of traditional dances from around the world
- taking part in street, tap, ballet, Afrobeat, and Bon Odori after school – involve parents with traditional knowledge to help teach
- learning about the stamina, discipline, history and culture of dance in science, history, geography, RE and PSHE

And if you're not sure where to start, I find the following resources super helpful in organising dance classes:

- Arts Council England on the management side of dance teaching: tinyurl.com/tp-ACEdance
- Guidance on teaching dance from Artsmark: tinyurl.com/tp-AMdance
- BBC Teach resources: tinyurl.com/tp-BBCTdance
- BBC Step-by-Step framework: tinyurl.com/tp-BBCstep
- BetterHealth on staying safe: tinyurl.com/tp-BHdance
- Tips for introducing classical ballet from the Royal Ballet: tinyurl.com/tp-RBSchools
- YouTube videos to introduce dance from different cultures
 - Shaku shaku: tinyurl.com/tp-YTshaku
 - Bata (Nigerian traditional dance): tinyurl.com/tp-YTbata
 - Bharatanatyam (Indian classical): tinyurl.com/tp-YTbharatanatyam
 - Bon Odori (Japan): tinyurl.com/tp-YTbonodori

The moral of the story? Dance offers a lifetime of benefits for everyone, and the younger they start, the longer the fun can continue! **TP**



Anderley Hampson is a former teacher with 35 years' experience, and is now a copywriter for Sportsafe.

 @sportsafeuk

 sportsafeuk.com



Smart solutions to classroom and cloakroom clutter



"The Smartsacks are great for the modern curriculum when pupils are moving around much more. They can quickly lift their Smartsack and go to another group, room or outside."

Mrs Karen Gray, DHT, Kirklandneuk PS.



"The Smartsack is a fantastic idea- the children love it, I love it and the cleaner certainly loves it less spilt drink bottles, books lying around, pencils on the floor.....!"

Tara Finney, Teacher, Clacton CEVA Junior School

Make a smart decision for your pupils and order your SmartSacks today, either online or by calling us!

Tel / Fax: 0141 561 8449 • Mob: 07882456392 • Email: info@smartsack.co.uk • www.smartsack.co.uk



SMARTSACK™



SMARTSACK PEG™



SMARTSACK SCRUNCH™



exercise books

BIG SAVINGS
on every page!



SUSTAINABLY
SOURCED



ALWAYS
IN STOCK



DURABLE
QUALITY

DESIGNED FOR LEARNING, BUILT TO LAST.

MADE IN UK

ypo



EXPLORE THE UK'S LARGEST RANGE  ypo.co.uk

DON'T *touch that!*

Arming yourself – and your pupils – with up-to-date information on allergies will help you avoid classroom drama, says **Davina Steel**

Picture the scene: it's someone's birthday in class, there's a tray of cupcakes, and the room is buzzing with excitement. Lovely, right? But for a child with a food allergy, it can feel like stepping into a danger zone. One wrong move, one accidental bite, and things can go downhill fast.

Managing food allergies in a busy primary classroom isn't just about banning peanuts and hoping for the best. It's about being switched on, building a community of understanding, and making sure every child feels safe and included.

So, how can we do that without turning into the Allergy Police? Let's talk it through.

According to recent figures, about 1 in 13 children has a food allergy. That's at least two children in the average-sized primary class. And while some allergies cause mild reactions like a rash or a runny nose, others can lead to full-blown anaphylaxis – a medical emergency that needs immediate action. We can avoid the drama by being prepared.

1. Stay calm

First: know what an allergic reaction looks like. Hives, swelling, coughing, difficulty breathing – they're all red flags. Make sure you and your team are trained to spot the signs and know how to use an adrenaline auto-injector, even if it makes you squeamish. The child would rather be jabbed by you than the alternative option. When it's a real emergency, staying calm and acting fast can literally save a child's life.



“Normalising allergy awareness empowers children”

2. Think beyond lunchtime

Allergies don't clock off at lunchtime. Think about art projects (lentils, anyone?), science experiments (egg cartons?), and even reward treats. Anything that goes in – or near – a child's mouth needs to be checked. And that includes their hands after they've handled the items mentioned. Better still, get into the habit of asking: *Is this safe for everyone in the room?* before you plan activities.

3. Talk about it

Children are great at looking out for each other – if they understand what's going on. Teach your class about allergies early in the year. Keep it simple: explain what an allergy is, why it matters, and how they can help by washing hands, not sharing food, and telling an adult if a

friend feels unwell. When children know better, they do better.

4. Be positive

No child should feel like the awkward one just because of their allergy. Avoid singling them out (“You can't have this because you're allergic...”) and instead frame it positively. Try saying something like “Here's your VIP version – made just for you!”. Celebrate safe choices. Encourage everyone to think inclusively. A simple shift in language makes a world of difference.

5. Have a plan

An Individual Healthcare Plan (IHP) isn't just paperwork. It's a lifeline. Make sure you know the plan for each allergic pupil in your class – and that all staff (including supply teachers)

are briefed, too. Practise emergency drills calmly and kindly, just like you would for fire alarms. That way, everyone knows what to do, and nobody panics when it really counts.

Supporting pupils with food allergies doesn't mean wrapping them in cotton wool or turning school into a clinical zone. You just need to give every child the knowledge, freedom and confidence to be part of the community, safely and fully. When we normalise allergy awareness, we're not just protecting children; we're empowering them. And in the end, isn't that what great teaching is all about? **TP**



Davina steel is a former research scientist and the bestselling author of

Have You Ever Seen a Bee with Hives? (£16.99, Rethink Press).

davinasteel.co.uk

Creative READING

It's all well and good saying we need diverse books, but how do you get the most out of them? It doesn't have to be complicated, says **Rachna Joshi...**

Stories are an important part of the daily routine in primary schools. They're such a valuable tool to embed learning, and invite imagination and excitement for children. Having the right stories for your pupils can give a sense of belonging and offer a new world to step into.

For example, my class were exploring their own identity by drawing self-portraits with skin colour paints, singing along to *Brown Skin Girl* by Beyonce, but when it came to drawing and painting their hair, they struggled to find the right words and language to describe their tight Afro curls. *My Hair* by Hannah Lee became a saving grace; we read it and discussed how the children in my diverse North London class care for their hair. We talked about combs, going to the barbers, the experience of sitting in a chair to get hair braided, and the different beads incorporated into the look. Children swished their hair side to side to make the beads hit each other. Some pupils used a large piece of Lego as clippers and pretended to shave their

friend's hair, describing detailed fades, ticks and lines in the hair. It was great to see how one book could lead to so much depth of conversation, experience and learning from each other.

Where to start

Often, we assume that teachers are just as passionate about reading in their personal lives as they are about promoting it in the classroom, but that's

not always the case. However, even if you don't feel confident about dissecting texts, trust that the children will help bring books alive. Of course, there may still be some stories or texts that you're a bit nervous about, or unsure how to approach. In this case, I would always suggest sitting down with the book and reading it a few times. Make notes of what themes arise. How might you add suspense? What are the key points? Can you find links to the curriculum? Are there illustrations you could explore? Is there text or font that stands out (a possible way to introduce

punctuation). Is there a character that children could embody through hot seating and role playing? A good quality text will enable a multitude of pathways for exploring the story – without just reading it over and over. Try isolating moments in the story, and scaling them into large works of art; changing phrases and words to create a different story or ending; or choosing a particularly



Illustration: *The Café at the Edge of the Woods*, © Mikey Please

“It was great to see how one book could lead to so much depth of conversation”



Illustration: Grandad's Star, ©Rhian Stone

interesting character to unpick. Opportunities for developing children's social, emotional, physical and moral understanding through stories can hugely impact learning and how they see themselves within their wider world.

Book recs

There are some stories that have such simple rhythmic storylines and beautiful illustrations, that children and adults alike just need to be immersed in them! The following books (all shortlisted for the Klaus Flugge Prize) offer up a wealth of possibilities:

The Café at the Edge of the Woods by Mikey Please offers fantastical food where one thing stands for another. Why not try setting up a café for children to 'cook' and design a menu to recreate what Rene and Glumfoot do in the story? Can the children make battered mice, slugs in goo, or

maggot fondue? I know children in my class who would absolutely love that!

Grandad's Star offers a discussion around memories and grandparents. Research has shown that intergenerational learning can widen children's experiences around their own wellbeing, understanding of themselves and the wider world. It's definitely worth getting in touch with a local elderly care home where children can share stories and songs, and live out the real-life *Grandad's Star*. This will be especially beneficial for those who don't have elderly relatives. And if that's too far-fetched, ask grandparents to volunteer on Friday afternoons to join in with songs and stories with the children.

My Hair is as Long as a River opens up imaginative worlds and immerses us in the illustrations that feel like they flow across the pages. With some younger children, the complexity of imagination can be challenging. I have worked with pupils who are still at the literal stage, sometimes

struggling with songs that ask for fingers to 'be' something else – with them very promptly telling me, "That's a finger not a bird". These illustrations enable children to see hair has something else – a garden, thunder clouds, a rope – thereby opening up this new viewpoint for them.

Having some time with the stories you are choosing really helps to ensure that you've

"A good quality text will offer a multitude of pathways"

thought about everything you can relate back to the children's lives. When things link to pupils' own firsthand experiences, the connections they have with the text will be much deeper, and they're more likely to develop a love for reading and be completely engrossed in stories. I remember being fascinated by *Pass the Jam, Jim*, particularly with the character Dot, who had a long plait and brown skin just like my own. I loved the endpapers, which had pictures of food from the party and sticky jam marks all over. I would stare at the book for hours, examining the pictures, completely immersed. That kind of attention is exactly what we dream of for our pupils. **TP**

9 questions to bring a book to life

- 1 Who are the key characters? What's interesting about them?
- 2 Where is the story set? Can children visit this themselves?
- 3 Are there any links to children's own experiences and lives?
- 4 Do the illustrations tell the story, or change the story? How so?
- 5 Is there a diverse cast of characters?
- 6 How might the story link to learning experiences for children?
- 7 Does the story offer 'mirrors, windows or sliding glass doors' for children to step into a new world?
- 8 How might you tell the story for the first time? Will you tell the whole story, or stop at a certain point?
- 9 What questions will you ask at certain points of the story?

To add a dash of drama...



Wrap up the book before you read it, and unwrap it with the children – SUCH excitement.



Use technology to remove text and focus on certain illustrations, eliciting ideas from the children about what the book might be about (before you've even read it).



Use hooks such as simple drama or music, an object or a prop, toy or puppet related to the story to make it come alive.

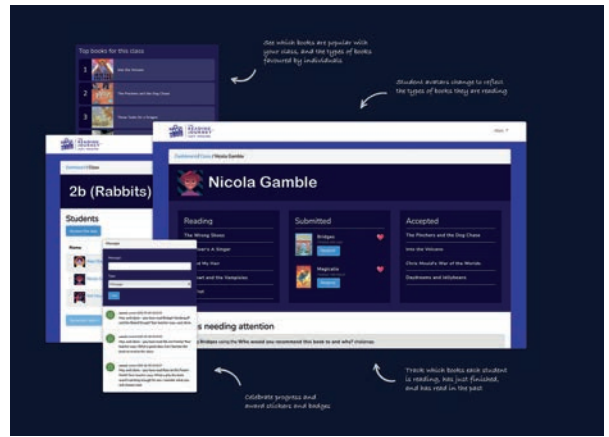


Rachna Joshi is a teacher, writer, keynote speaker and consultant.

 klausfluggeprize.co.uk

4 REASONS TO TRY... The Reading Journey

Revolutionise reading records with an appealing interface for children and easy and informative monitoring for teachers, plus a no-obligation FREE TRIAL



1 PERSONALISED LEARNING

Children build their reading identities with a personalised bookshelf and an avatar that reflects their reading preferences. An inbuilt journal with an audio option enables a personal response to reading material.

2 EASY MONITORING

A teacher dashboard provides an at-a-glance view of children's recent reading activity and highlights those who require attention. Teachers can enable and disable optional features such as parent commenting and end-of-book tasks.

3 SUPPORTS READING FOR PLEASURE

A class presentation view makes it easy for the whole class to see the same text. It facilitates the sharing of the children's favourite books, and can be used as a tool to enhance book talk and support a reading for pleasure pedagogy.

4 TEACHER ASSESSMENT

Individual student records provide a history of children's reading, and have an optional facility for teacher-pupil messaging. The records are useful when preparing teacher reports about children's independent reading progress.

Contact:

Email assistant@justimagine.co.uk
Visit therreadingjourney.co.uk



At a glance

- + The Reading Journey uses digital technology to enhance the reading experience for children and teachers
- + The program is cost-effective, with a low subscription for the entire school

4 REASONS TO TRY... Reading Gladiators

A multi-award-winning book club for children in Y2-6 with week-by-week resources for club facilitators, creative projects, competitions, and more



1 SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

Curated, high-quality text selection, designed to meet children where they are and support a journey to increasingly reflective reading. Selections include fiction, poetry and nonfiction, available at discounted prices.

2 FOR HOME AND SCHOOL

Reading Gladiators makes week-by-week materials available for group facilitators, and supplies optional information for parents, which include ideas for supporting conversations at home.

3 A CHANCE TO WIN

The programme includes creative group projects and challenges, with the option to submit them for competitions and a chance to win prizes – take a look at the website for more information and to enter...

4 INTER-SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS

Reading Gladiators includes a community website for sharing within and across schools. The company also facilitates an end-of-year online inter-school celebration, featuring involvement from some of the books' authors.

Contact:

Visit: readinggladiators.org.uk
Email: assistant@justimagine.co.uk



At a glance

- + Appealing, expertly curated book selection to encourage reading for pleasure
- + Easy-to-use resources to minimise teacher planning

It's kind of a FUNNY STORY...

Use four simple questions to inject humour into original writing, says **AF Harrold**

As a poet who visits a lot of schools, I'm often asked, "Where do you get your ideas?". A girl asked this even more bluntly just the other day, in a young writers' group I was visiting in a local library, as she questioned how I cope with writer's block.

Well, here's a quick exercise, based on a poem of mine called 'The Perils of Breakfast', that I usually use as an icebreaker on school visits. This activity solves that 'blank page' problem, and can lead easily to some funny places. The poem is about a bear hiding in your cornflakes and how dangerous this can be. After performing the poem, I ask four questions.

Break it down

First, "Can you think of another dangerous animal?"

A nice easy starting point. The trick here is to ask pupils to make it specific. A black widow spider is different from a tarantula. A boa constrictor is different from a cobra. A sausage dog is different from a wolf. Second, ask "Where might that animal be hiding?". I'm usually still thinking about the breakfast table/kitchen, but I'm always happy if kids want to hide animals around the school, in the house, at the supermarket... already we're growing beyond the original poem.

Third, get the children to think about the question "What might be the telltale sign that

lets you know you've got X-infested Y?"

These three questions, that are very simple to answer, give us a starting point. Maybe it's slugs in your pancakes (you spot them by the oozing), or it's a hippo in your shredded wheat (maybe you see a smooth, grey thing bobbing in your milk), or it's a wolf

problems with the pupil's idea. Not in a harping, "Oh, that's so silly" way, of course, but in a supportive, encouraging, expansive way. For example, if they've written about a piranha in the orange juice, and their solution is "Chuck it out the window," you can question what would happen if, say, the postie came up the path

"Three or four simple questions can lead to endless silly stories"

under your toast (watch out for the fluffy tail poking out the side).

Then the fourth question is, "What do you do then?"

By which I mean, "How do you make the situation safe, not just for yourself, but for everyone else?" (That last bit is important, because 'Walk away and have something else,' is correct, but not very interesting!)

A good tip here is to point out any

at that exact point and got a hungry, angry piranha in the face! What might they do instead?

Ideas, ideas, ideas

I like the idea of getting a plan for dealing with the problem, and then letting it not work, so that you need to come up with a second scheme, or a third scheme – put some roadblocks in the way, and now you've got a story.

Alternatively, if you don't want to write a whole narrative, you could just take the first two questions and write a list poem of animals in hiding places, maybe repeating them and adding more description, so 'Gorillas in the bran flakes,' becomes, 'Gorillas wiggling in the bran flakes,' becomes, 'Grumpy gorillas wiggling in the bran flakes,' becomes, 'Grumpy gorillas wiggling in the crunchy bran flakes,' becomes, 'Grumpy gorillas wildly wiggling in the crunchy bran flakes'.

So, you see, the right prompts can give you the ingredients for whatever you want to make. A poem, a story, a health and safety warning poster, a little play, all and any of which should be funny in one way or another because of the unexpected juxtapositions. (I sometimes meet a quite literal-minded kid who takes me to task because *bears are actually so much bigger than cornflakes that my poem doesn't make sense*, but even they can hide a deadly spider in some cereal!)

Three or four simple questions can open the door to endless silly stories and imagination – you just need to be willing to step through. **TP**



AF Harrold's Pocket Book of Pocket Poems, illustrated by Jack

Viant (£7.99, Bloomsbury Education), is out now.

 afharroldkids.com/poetry-videos



WAGOLL

The Boy with Big Decisions, by Helen Rutter

Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to show characters at a turning point in the story



The Boy With Big Decisions, by Helen Rutter (£7.99, Scholastic), is out now

DOWNLOAD
RESOURCES AT



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

tinyurl.com/tp-Tpoint

Fred can't make a decision about anything – his parents always tell him what to do, from what to eat every day to which secondary school to choose. That's how Fred has found himself as a pupil at the strict, high-pressured Gains School, when he'd much rather be going to Browtree, with its brilliant art department and kind teachers. As Fred waits for the bus to his new school, the bus for Browtree pulls up – and a wild, thrilling thought strikes him.

Should he jump on this bus and pretend he's a new student at Browtree? Will he be brave enough to follow a different path for once? Well, that's up to you! As the reader, you will stand in Fred's shoes and make decisions alongside him throughout this story. You'll help him stand up for what he believes in, learn what he truly loves to do, make good friends and face choices about whether to swerve drama or walk right into it. **YOU** are in charge of *The Boy with Big Decisions*!

This book uses the literary technique of branching narratives to build a story. A branching narrative structure is one in which the storyline diverges based on the

decisions and actions of the player or reader. Unlike linear narratives that follow a predetermined path, branching narratives offer multiple pathways and outcomes, allowing the reader to shape their own reading experiences. It is empowering and engaging and a really fresh way to read a book!

Branching narratives can also give us, as writers, a really good framework to delve deeper into our characters' wants and desires, and to think about how they might act in different situations. Does your character thrive on drama? Do they get a thrill from danger, or is the safe choice more likely to lead them to happiness? Have a go at writing your own turning point, and see where it takes you...

FIVE WAYS TO CONSTRUCT A TURNING POINT

1. YOUR PLAN

Decide on your core theme for the story – in *The Boy with Big Decisions*, it is Fred moving up to secondary school and all the different choices inherent in that. Next, think about this situation and what decisions your character might have to make.

2. SHORT AND SWEET

Branching narrative stories are written in short sections, so your reader will need to engage with your main character immediately – give us a real insight into their thoughts from the start and present

them with a challenge on the first page. This is true of showing them making their choices, too.

3. YOU'LL NEVER GUESS...

Think about how to make your story really gripping, whatever path you go down. Cliffhanger endings to sections are a great way to do this – then offering a couple of choices that have high stakes as you attempt to dodge real peril! Think about the potential consequences of the decisions your character is making. How do they feel about what might happen?

4. ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

Make sure your main character can make mistakes (or 'the wrong choice'), but is able to course-correct. Mistakes we make in real life (mostly) aren't the end of the world, and it's important to show that it's ok to make mistakes throughout the story, and learn from them.

5. KEEP TRACK

Use a digital platform like Twinery (twinery.org) to help keep track of all your different threads for you. Knowing what will happen after every decision is a must.



Extract from

pages 21-22
The Bus Stop Decision

This is the first indication to the reader that Fred will soon face a choice.

At five past, a bus pulls into the stop with the words The Gains School across the front, and as I'm about to climb aboard I see another bus pulling in behind it. **Different words** are written across the front: Browtree High.

The repeated questions here indicate just how panicked Fred is feeling about the whole prospect of deciding. These kinds of internal thoughts and doubts are a great way to succinctly show how your character is feeling, as well as indicating the possible choices.

I look at both buses and then at the jumper in my arms. An idea lands in my brain and makes my eyes open wider. **I couldn't, could I?** I feel the familiar feeling of flip-flopping, rising panic. Of a decision needing to be made. **Which bus should I get on? Should I listen to my parents? Or is the jumper in my arms a sign? A sign that I need to do something different for a change?** My eyes dart between the buses. As the doors open for the Gains School, **I feel sick at the idea of stepping on to the bus,** of doing the thing that my parents want me to do, that doesn't feel like the thing I want at all. I look to the Browtree bus and see kids sitting at the top in their red jumpers. I could just put the jumper on and **become one of them.** They look so happy, but I couldn't get away with it, could I? I can't just go to the wrong school. **There's no point even trying.** My head is swimming.

This internal question shows us what Fred is feeling, leading up to the choice. He's so used to his parents making decisions for him, so he has a physical reaction to the idea of choosing for himself.

Using the word 'become' here adds a bit of weight to the choice Fred (and you!) are about to make. The path he takes will change aspects of his life, and who he will be as a person.

One of the potential choices is giving Fred a physical reaction here. Remember we can show feeling physically as well as with what the character says.

Another character finally spurs the decision - Fred has no choice but to answer the driver.

"You getting on, son?" the voice of the driver calls out to me, as I stand frozen on the pavement. I just can't decide. **I need help.**

This sentence makes it seem like the choice has disappeared for Fred, but of course we know it hasn't. This is a realistic element of decision-making; we all sometimes decide we can't do something before we've even tried!

That means you! This is a fun wink at the reader, as the next step is for you to decide which bus Fred gets on.

Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration to your classroom



1

A story to tell

500 Words is the UK's largest children's story-writing competition for 5–11-year-olds. The competition will return in the autumn, launching on Tuesday 23 September 2025, and the deadline for stories to be submitted will be Friday 7 November 2025. Children

of all abilities are encouraged to use their creativity and imagination to write a story they would love to read without having to worry about spelling, punctuation and grammar. The 500 Words website has tips, tricks and learning resources to get your pupils writing – why not set them a writing challenge over the summer? Sign up at bbc.co.uk/500words



3

Expert compliance support

Navigating the complexities of legal and compliance requirements can be challenging for schools and trusts. JudiciuM Education brings 25 years of educational expertise to provide accessible, high-quality support across key areas, including employment law & HR, payroll, safeguarding, data protection, health & safety, fire safety, facilities management, governance & clerking, and SEND support. The flexible, wraparound model offers unlimited expert-led assistance with a clear, fixed-fee structure, ensuring value and predictability. By acting as an extension of your team, JudiciuM Education helps you operate confidently and compliantly, so you have the right support precisely when you need it. Discover more at judiciumeducation.co.uk

4

Free digital money game

Young Enterprise has recently launched a brand-new Money Heroes free online game designed to help children aged 5-7 build essential money skills through fun, interactive play. Children can join Ed and Bunny as they save up for a special treat, count coins and complete household tasks, all aligned with the Financial Education Planning Framework for 5–7-year-olds.

It's perfect for both in-school and at-home learning and fits easily into a maths lesson or as a standalone financial education session. There are also two free activity plans linked to the primary framework to support classroom delivery on coin recognition and how to keep money safe. Try the game at tinyurl.com/tp-MoneyGame



2



Free arts resources

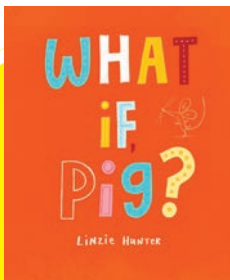
MyLearning is a hub website that hosts FREE learning resources created by arts, cultural and heritage organisations from across England. Established for 16 years, it is a non-profit and funded by Arts Council England. Working with museums, galleries and archives to bring together high-quality resources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

5



Next level coding

Meet Cooper, the new STEM robot that brings coding to life! Designed to ignite curiosity and creativity in young learners through hands-on, screen-free coding, Cooper is aligned with the curriculum and is perfect for Key Stages 1 and 2, helping pupils build essential problem-solving skills with interactive STEM coding challenges. Ideal for group learning, Cooper robots can communicate with each other, encouraging collaboration, teamwork, and interactive play. With its inclusive and engaging approach, Cooper transforms coding into a fun, accessible experience for every learner. Explore more at ypo.co.uk/cooper



Published by HarperCollins
Children's, 2021

What if, Pig?

Face up to big feelings and develop core speech and language skills with the help of Pig, Mouse and friends, in **Linzie Hunter's** joyful picturebook...

JO CUMMINS

What if, *Pig?* is an absolute delight of a book. It follows the adventures of Pig as he struggles to overcome his many wobbles and worries on a quest to throw the perfect party. Luckily, he has a good friend in Mouse, who understands that sometimes people just need a little bit of help overcoming tricky days, and that worries can seem smaller if you share them with a friend.

I have used this book across the

full age range in a primary school and every group has embraced the story and produced some excellent work in response to it. The strong themes of big emotions, friendships, and resilience make it a great choice to help develop children's speech, language and communication skills (SLC); it also provides the perfect starting point for opening up conversations around worries and anxieties.

It is estimated that approximately 10 per cent of KS1 pupils have a

long-term language or communication need, with early years practitioners reporting that children are entering school with much poorer language skills than cohorts of years past. Good SLC skills are key for academic success, social development, emotional regulation, and cognitive development. Research has also indicated that a child who does not receive early support for weak SLC skills can go on to have reduced employment and life opportunities in the long term.





Use the following activities to enhance the teaching in *What if, Pig?* and help develop the speech, language and communication (SLC) skills of the children you work with.

Activities

Discussion (spoken language)

Stories are wonderful vehicles for starting conversations with children about difficult topics and developing the skills they need to express their thoughts and feelings clearly. The inability to do this can often cause a child to become distressed, and display behaviours that you would not usually see from them.

- **Objective:** Develop spoken language skills by discussing feelings and emotions.
- **Activity:** Read the story aloud and pause at key moments. Ask children:
 - *How do you think Pig is feeling?*
 - *Have you ever had a 'What if' worry?*
 - *What could Pig do to feel better?*
 - *What could you do if you had a worry?*
 - *Why do you think Pig's friends threw a surprise party for him?*

- **Extension:** Create an emotion word bank with words like *worried*, *excited*, *nervous*, and *brave* to describe the story characters' different emotions. Challenge children to add other emotion words which were not included in the story. Use these regularly with the children and share examples of when you have felt like that, and what was happening in your body at the time.

Role-play (speaking & listening)

Role-play is an incredibly powerful tool for helping pupils to really explore a text, and to develop their communication and language skills. It can either be adult-led, with clear direction, or be left to happen organically with the help of a few well-chosen objects as prompts.

- **Objective:** Encourage expressive language and social communication.
- **Activity:**
 - **Child-led:** Set up a role-play corner where children can act out scenes from the book. Include a few useful props such as blank party invites, party hats, a pig or mouse mask. The inclusion of puppets may encourage less confident children to join in as the role of a party guest rather than a main character.
 - **Adult-led:** Warm up with a game of 'emotions charades'. Pick an emotions card/ emotions stone for the whole group to enact. Alternatively, you could play traditional charades, with one child picking a card to enact to the group. Think carefully about body language and facial expression (younger children may benefit from exploring facial expressions in a mirror before taking on the full game).



Ask children to create freeze frames of key moments in the text, such as when Pig starts to worry that nobody will come to his party, or at the end when Pig is surprised by his friends.

'What if' scenarios (communication)

I have often found that using scenario cards linked to a story (but which also link to real-life issues the children might face) are a brilliant way of encouraging pupils to problem-solve. Doing these in pairs or small groups, then feeding back at the end also means that children need to develop the skill of listening to others' ideas.

- **Objective:** Develop reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- **Activity:** Give children different 'What if' scenarios to discuss. You may want to stick these in the centre of a large piece of paper so

Take it further → → →

- **Kim's game.** A classic game for helping children build their memory. There are two ways I like to play this game. In both instances, you need to place some interesting objects on a tray. These could link to *What if, Pig?* if you like (e.g. a small mouse toy, a party hat, party bag toys, a balloon, or a woodland leaf). Give the group a certain amount of time to look at the tray of objects, then cover it up. The children need to write down as many of the items as they can remember or tick the correct items

off a list. Alternatively, pupils can play in pairs. After looking at the tray, one partner hides one of the objects and the other child has to guess what it was.

- **Shopping list game.** Another good game for building a child's memory is the shopping list game. This could simply be of items on Pig's party shopping list (hats, cake, balloons) or an alphabetical list where each child adds something new on after recalling all the previous items. You can scaffold the game with visuals for

children who initially find recalling the items difficult.

- **'What if?' question circle.** This game is useful for developing questioning and critical thinking skills. Sit the group in a circle and go round asking silly or serious 'What if?' questions. For example, "What if the moon was made of cheese?" or "What if Pig got lost in the woods?" Encourage children to answer in full sentences. Another variation on this is to play 'Would you rather?': "Would you rather be Pig or Mouse?"; "Would you



that pupils can add their thoughts around it before passing it on to the next group. Children may need to do this orally with an adult scribing.

Example questions: *What if you lost your toy? What if you saw someone steal something? What if you were online and saw someone being called names? What if you want to be first in the line but aren't?*

When every group has seen all the scenarios, get them to discuss solutions in pairs or small groups. Encourage the children to ask questions about someone else's perspective.

Story sort (sequencing & retelling)

Children with SLC difficulties often struggle to understand and recall stories in a logical order. Sequencing activities help them consolidate the

rather walk in the woods or round a pond?" Again, encourage children to answer in full sentences and explain their viewpoints.

- **Pig's worry advice show.** Have an adult or child pretend they are on a TV show where they read a worry aloud and classmates give advice using sentence starters like 'I think you should...' or 'Have you tried...?' This would be even more powerful if the worries are taken from a worry jar of actual worries that the children have anonymously contributed.

idea of a story having a beginning, middle, and end, which forms the basis of effective communication and comprehension. Following the sequence of a story also requires children to employ active listening skills and sustained attention, which children with SLC needs often find challenging.

Retelling stories gives pupils the opportunity to practise new vocabulary and sentences from the book in context, too, as well as accurately using time connectives such as *first*, *next*, and *then*. Furthermore, it is a low-pressure way to speak in front of others, meaning that children can build confidence in speaking clearly, selecting words, and constructing sentences.

- **Objective:** To strengthen narrative and sequencing skills.
- **Activity:** Give pupils images of key events from the story to sort into the correct order – visuals are a key tool in supporting children with SLC needs. If using time connectives to support structure is a key concern, children could just be presented with three images to sort under *first*, *then*, *finally*. Add in cards and conjunctions as the children become more confident.
- **Extension:** A natural extension of this task is to sort simple sentences to match each of the key images. For example, at the end the sentence could be, 'They had a party'. More confident writers could use a sound mat or word bank to write their own sentences.

Mindfulness (self-regulation)

Some of the key skills we can teach to young people are how to identify and communicate their emotions effectively, and how to self-regulate when needed. Very often, children are unaware of the signals their bodies are giving them and how to act upon them safely.

In the role-play task, I suggested some very simple ways to help children recognise how changes in facial expressions and body language can indicate a change in mood. They should also start to match feelings in their bodies with emotions. For example, when they are worried, they might get butterflies in their tummies, or when they feel angry their voice might start to get louder. Once they are able to identify these emotions themselves,

Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *Geoffrey Gets the Jitters* by Nadia Shireen
- ❖ *Worry Boots* by Lisa Thompson
- ❖ *Ruby Finds a Worry* by Tom Percival
- ❖ *Incredible You* by Rhys Brisenden & Nathan Reed
- ❖ *Super Duper You* by Sophy Henn

and have been taught appropriate strategies, they will begin to be able self-regulate rather than depend on an adult for co-regulation.

- **Objective:** Teach self-regulation strategies for managing worries.
- **Activity:** There are lots of different breathing techniques that you can teach children to help regulate their breathing. For example, box breathing, belly breathing, or five finger breathing. A technique which links rather nicely to the party theme of *What if, Pig?* is the blowing out candles technique. Hold your fingers up to represent the candles on a cake and have children take a deep breath in ready to puff out quickly and extinguish the candles.

Grounding techniques can also be very effective in helping alleviate anxious feelings. Like Mouse did with Pig, taking the children on a guided meditative walk through an imaginary wood (or through a real one if you're lucky enough to have a woodland area in your grounds) can have a very calming effect, encouraging the children to focus on what they can see, hear, smell, and feel around them in the moment. If you would like to take an inside walk to another sensory level, you might like to have tuff trays filled with natural materials such as leaves, grasses, or water for them to walk through! **TP**



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

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

 librarygirlandbookboy.com

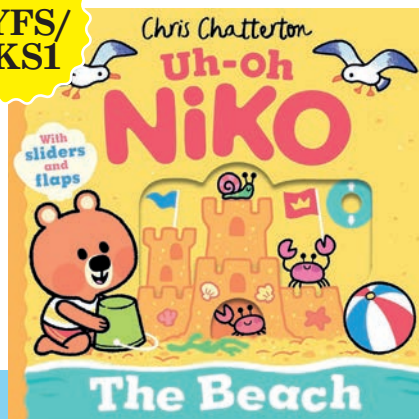
 [@librarygirlandbookboy](https://twitter.com/librarygirlandbookboy)

Book CLUB



We review five new titles that your class will love

EYFS/
LKS1



Uh Oh, Niko: The Beach
by Chris Chatterton

(7.99HB, Ladybird)

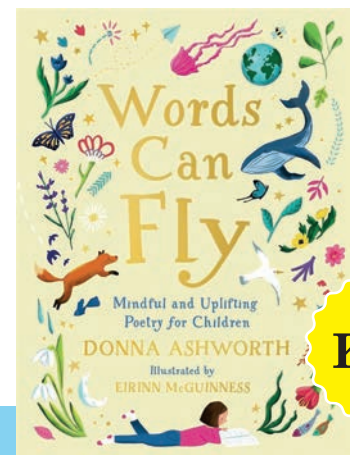
KS1



Tiger, Don't Worry!
By Daishu Ma

(£12.99HB, Post Wave)

KS2



Words Can Fly
by Donna Ashworth,
ill. Eirinn McGuinness

(£16.99HB, Templar Books)

When Niko takes an exciting trip to the beach, he has the best of intentions. But somehow, each of his endeavours ends up in a bit of an accident. From spilling ice cream to accidentally squirting sun cream all over himself and his belongings, nothing quite goes to plan. Definitely one for your littlest learners, this interactive flap-and-slide board book provides plenty of opportunities to discuss pictures and what might happen next for Niko. It also opens up discussions on making mistakes, and what we can learn from them, as well as how we might deal with a situation when it doesn't go exactly as we'd hoped. With only a few words per page, this could also be a great title to introduce to children just learning to read for themselves.

Mei and Tiger are desperate to help Mama, Papa and Granny make tea, but when they attempt to help pick, dry, and churn the leaves, havoc ensues. Worried that they are going to get into trouble, Tiger doesn't want to go home after running away from the mess. Mei reminds Tiger that, even though they made a mess, and broke the churn, if they explain, Mama, Papa and Granny will understand. Spoiler alert, all is well, and they have tea together as a family (including Tiger!). This is a very sweet narrative covering a familiar childhood experience of accidentally making a mess, but it's the illustrations that are the real stars, here. From full-page spreads to smaller, incidental pictures, children could even be encouraged to tell the whole story in their own words. A very versatile title.

I'm not crying, you're crying... Beloved poet Donna Ashworth's first volume for children is all at once funny, beautiful (those illustrations! That cover!), and, yes, tear-inducing. With poems on everything from the delight of summer days and the joy of singing in the car, to descriptions of anxiety and fear, there are both lighthearted and more somber topics to explore. For example, 'Youier', which comes early on in the book, has a poignant and straight-to-the-point theme that works for all ages: that deep, human need for comparing ourselves to others. In the world of social media, this is something that seems to pervade all lives now, and this verse addresses it beautifully. If you're after a poetry collection for your classroom, choose this one. You won't be sorry.

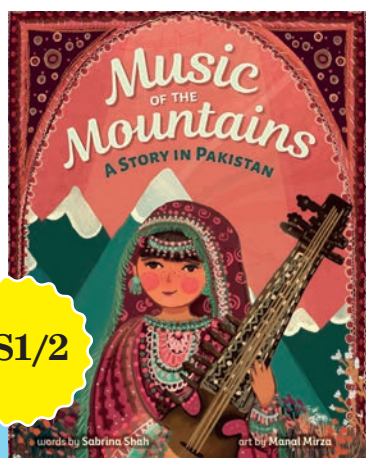
→→→ RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

plazoom



WAGOLL WRITING PACKS

Support pupils' writing with these engaging resources, differentiated for KS1, LKS2 and UKS2. Each of the 86 packs includes model texts, planning guides, templates and more. Each one focuses on a particular kind of text, encouraging children to make appropriate vocabulary, register and layout choices. Visit tinyurl.com/PlzWAGOLL



KS1/2

Music of the Mountains

By Sabrina Shah,
ill. Manal Mirza

(£7.99, Barefoot Books)

With striking, full-page illustrations, and a gentle story about a young Pakistani girl, Roohi, who is worried about performing the rabab (a traditional string instrument) at an upcoming Eid celebration, this is at once an exploration of a specific culture, and a universal tale. Whether you're learning about Pakistan, have an upcoming unit on string instruments, or just want to introduce your pupils to an uplifting, engaging story, Roohi's journey is ripe for both enjoyment and learning opportunities. If you're particularly keen on the latter, see the final pages, where the author and illustrator have provided more information on the rabab, the area of Pakistan where Roohi lives, and Roohi's clothing, as well as some Pashto words.



KS2

Science is Lit: Awesome electricity and mad magnets

by Big Manny, ill. Subi Bosa

(£8.99, Puffin)

If you, or any of your students, are familiar with TikTok, there's a good chance you've already heard of Big Manny. It's certainly not an exaggeration to say he's a sensation (it's even on his book covers). If you haven't heard of him, I urge you to look him up right away. Big Manny reproduces science experiments in short format, and – essentially – uses colloquial language to explain them. This book brings together a selection of these experiments in written form, and is the hotly anticipated follow-up to his first *Science is Lit* book. Whether your pupils are into science or not, they're sure to find these hands-on activities riveting, and the book will provide plenty of ideas for teaching, too. A must-have.

Meet the author

BIG MANNY ON CONNECTING WITH KIDS, AND THE LANGUAGE OF SCIENCE

© Charlotte Kneeb



What has your technician experience taught you about communication?

I was working in schools not long

after lockdown, around the time TikTok started blowing up. I noticed that students were more engaged with short-form content; towards the end of longer lessons, they'd start losing focus. So I found that breaking things into bite-sized chunks really helped. I started doing live experiments in class to keep them engaged. That worked really well.

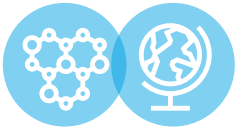
What do you want teachers to know about your book?

I'd say the book is unique and unconventional – mainly because of the language. I use everyday, conversational language to make science concepts easier to understand. It's a light, easy read, which makes it more digestible for young readers. I do still include the key scientific terms needed for exams – that's essential. But I also mix in casual, colloquial language around them to make the reading experience less heavy. It helps students stay interested and makes the content more accessible.

You're also a performer, and have done videos with celebs...

Yeah, I produce music and write lyrics. Some of it is science-themed, but mostly I use music to document my journey – my education, working as a technician, getting into content creation. I want to inspire others and give them a blueprint for following a similar path. And yes! I did videos with Brian Cox and Prince William. They were both incredible. Brian Cox is super knowledgeable – I used to watch all his space documentaries growing up. And Prince William really surprised me; he had a genuine interest in science and asked loads of questions during the experiment. It was great to see.

Big Manny's books, *Science is Lit: Crazy chemistry and epic experiments*, and *Science is Lit: Awesome electricity and mad magnets* (£8.99, Puffin), are out now.



Huff and puff and blow the house down!



Bring science into the real world, using sustainability and renewable energy to explain forces, with **Dr Jo Montgomery...**

[@DrJoScience](#) drjosciencesolutions.co.uk

Whilst renewable energy isn't in the primary science curriculum for England, it can provide an engaging, relevant context for learning about forces in Year 5, and also links to Year 4 and Year 6 electricity topics. We can support children's science capital by linking learning to their experiences. The activities outlined here combine hands-on exploration, observing phenomena, and working scientifically to carry out an enquiry, exploring the effects of changing variables in a comparative test. Pupils will enjoy seeing theories in practice, and taking ownership of testing ideas.

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Identify the effects of air resistance and friction that act between moving surfaces
- Build and test a model wind turbine
 - Research different sustainable energy sources
 - How to work scientifically, using enquiry and critical thinking skills

START HERE

Begin by providing exploratory experiences. Encourage groups of pupils to try and feel the movement of the wind around them. Use large shopping bags and drag them through the air. Alternatively, the children can wear a jacket or coat, unbuttoned, and run holding it open to catch the wind. Ask them to compare the feeling of when coats and bags are closed and when they're open, and to describe what they felt, summarising the experiences in three key words. Did they maybe feel the air *rushing*, or *blowing*, or *whirling* around them? Explain that wind is a form of air resistance, which is a push force that can make things move.



MAIN LESSON

In this lesson, pupils will apply their knowledge and awareness of air resistance to understand how sustainable electricity is produced. They'll engage in practical activities to create a model of a wind turbine, working scientifically to explore the effect of different variables. The children will then apply their experience to real-world contexts, asking questions about how different countries across the world produce electricity, including the use of nuclear, hydroelectric, wind, solar and geothermal sources (find additional resources linked in 'extending the lesson').

1 | ELICIT AND PLAN

Show children images of wind turbines and windmills, and discuss how a wind turbine generates electricity when the rotor is turned by the blades. The more the blades spin, the more electricity is produced. Videos, such as this one from the BBC, can be useful to show the class as part of your explanation: tinyurl.com/tp-BBCWindVid

Encourage children to ask their own scientific questions about wind turbines (e.g. what would happen if the turbine had more blades?) and plan an enquiry that investigates changing a variable to observe the effect on how fast the blades spin. Children could investigate how the number of blades, the shape, or the





“Pupils will enjoy seeing theories in practice and taking ownership of testing ideas”

analyse their data, discussing in groups to see if they found similar results. Draw conclusions linking back to the scientific question the pupils asked, for example: “How does the size of the blades affect the number of volts generated?”

3 | REVIEW AND RELATE

Encourage pupils to think about how their wind turbine is one of the ways that renewable and sustainable electricity can be produced. Explain that they have been looking at their own data and drawing conclusions. Lots of scientists, organisations and countries are trying to use ‘greener’ ways to produce electricity, but there will usually be a balance between renewable and non-renewable sources. As we are all connected across our globe, what happens in one country can have a knock-on effect to another. This is why it is essential to all work together for a greener planet. Can pupils think of other ways to produce renewable energy, and what sources might be involved (e.g. water, or heat)?

Remember that all activities should be risk assessed in the context of your school. Consult CLEAPSS (primary.cleapss.org.uk) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and SSERC (sserc.org.uk) in Scotland.

Dr Jo Montgomery is a primary science specialist, a Primary Science Capital Teaching Approach accredited trainer, PSQM regional lead and hub leader, adviser for The Great Science Share for Schools, and education consultant.

size of the blades affects the wind turbine.

2 | MAKE AND DO

Next, help pupils make a model wind turbine using a cork, cocktail sticks and card (you can find instructions from the Great Science Share at tinyurl.com/tp-GSSSturbine). You can also connect a voltmeter to a small DC motor to measure the volts generated by each design. Test and compare the different turbine designs by blowing a constant ‘wind’ using a hairdryer (remember to keep the angle, speed, direction and distance the same to keep the test fair and limit the number of variables that are changed).

Alternatively, you can test a low-tech version by

marking one of the blades and recording how many times the turbine completes a rotation in a given time frame (e.g. 30 seconds). Top tip: filming this in slow motion and watching it back makes it much easier to count! Pupils can record their data in simple tables, and produce a graph to compare their findings. Support the children to



EXTENDING THE LESSON



Children could apply their experience to real-world contexts, thinking about the way in which electricity is produced in sustainable ways. They could ask questions about how different countries across the world produce electricity, including nuclear, hydroelectric, wind, solar and geothermal.

- Ask children to research different energy types (you could use the fact files from the Great Science Share here: tinyurl.com/tp-GSSfactfiles and complete a PMI (positive, minus, interesting) grid for the different types, or use the Great Science Share reliability checker to support critical thinking: tinyurl.com/tp-GSSreliability).

- Use this Explorify ‘Have you ever...?’ activity to extend thinking to water resistance: tinyurl.com/tp-Expl

- Develop children’s oracy skills around this topic with these talk prompts: tinyurl.com/tp-GSSprompts and ponder resources tinyurl.com/tp-GSSponder. You can also link these with the Thinking, Doing, Talking Science (TDTs) approach (tdtscience.org.uk).
- Develop understanding of STEM careers using some of these resources: tinyurl.com/tp-DrJoSTEMcareers

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What can you feel when you move different objects through the air?
- How can wind turbines help us create electricity?
- Why is it important to consider green energy?

RE



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- What Christians believe about God's creation
- How ethical vegans avoid harming animals or ecosystems through lifestyle choices
- How worldviews encourage action to reduce environmental harm
- How different worldviews can have shared values
- How our own choices affect the world

They've got the whole world in their hands



Why should we care for the environment? Compare different worldviews to find some answers, with **Matthew Lane**

theteachinglane.co.uk

Children face a world shaped by climate change, deforestation and biodiversity loss, so including the topic in our teaching is a must. This lesson introduces how Christianity and the non-religious worldview of ethical veganism teach care for the environment. By examining two distinct ways of looking at the world, pupils can begin to grasp how beliefs – whether religious or philosophical – can shape how people live and act for the good of the planet. You can find some background knowledge for this lesson in the downloadable teaching notes (link on the right).



START HERE

Begin with a short class discussion based on images of pollution, deforestation or plastic waste. Who should take care of the Earth? Let pupils suggest their ideas. Then



introduce the focus for the lesson on how Christianity and ethical veganism respond to environmental issues. Emphasise that one is a religion, and the other is a non-religious worldview or philosophical belief. Note how both offer strong motivations to care for the planet and reduce harm. Encourage children to share what they already know about these views (have they heard of either, either in school or at home?) and dispel any initial misconceptions they may have.

MAIN LESSON

1 | CREATION AND STEWARDSHIP

Begin by explaining that Christians believe the Earth is sacred (God's creation) and that humans are tasked with looking after it. Then introduce the creation story in Genesis 1 and 2. Look at Genesis 1:26–28 (rule over...) Genesis 2.15 (cultivate and care...) where God entrusts humans to care for his creation. Ask pupils what this story suggests about the relationship between people and nature.

Now discuss the concept of stewardship. Encourage pupils to consider what it means to be a caretaker rather

than an owner. What happens if we swap the word 'rule' for 'steward' in Genesis 1:26-28? Use this as a foundation to explore how many Christians view their environmental responsibilities. Next, show images of Christian practices linked to the environment, such as harvest festivals. Then ask pupils what these celebrations tell us about how Christians honour the natural world. Highlight how Jesus' teachings on compassion are often understood to include animals and ecosystems. Then explore how Christians act on these beliefs today. Present examples like Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* and the Church of England's net-zero commitment. How might a church reduce its environmental impact? Frame



“Pupils will begin to grasp how beliefs can shape how people live and act”

‘church’ as meaning the whole global community of Christians, not just one congregation. Conclude this with a reflective question: “What choices could Christians make to care for the planet?”. This final question builds the groundwork for the later comparison with ethical veganism, as both groups make similar choices.

I focused on Christianity for this part of the lesson as it is often a significant part of RE curriculums. However, this section could be adapted to focus on Judaism or Islam. For example, in Judaism, the festival of Tu B'Shvat celebrates the natural world as part of God's creation. In Islam, the Qur'an speaks of

the Earth as a sign of Allah's power and generosity, and Muslims are encouraged to avoid waste and protect nature.

2 | ETHICAL VEGANISM

Start by explaining that ethical veganism is a non-religious worldview that believes in avoiding harm to animals and the planet. Clarify that it's legally protected in the UK as a philosophical belief. Ask pupils what they think ‘avoiding harm’ might look like in everyday life. There is lots of great background information in the About Us part of The Vegan Society website (tinyurl.com/tp-VegSoc).

Next, explore the core principle of ahimsa within

veganism (non-violence), explaining its roots and how it influences ethical choices. Discuss how choosing not to eat or use animal products might help the environment. Present facts on farming, pollution, and emissions (find some stats on the government website at tinyurl.com/tp-AgriEmissions). Encourage pupils to think critically about the links between diet, shopping, and environmental impact.

Follow this with real-world examples. Share campaigns like Veganuary and World Vegan Day. Why might someone want to take part? Encourage pupils to reflect on how personal choices or habits can align with values, even without religion.

3 | COMPARISON

Begin this section by creating a Venn diagram comparing the worldviews and their core values. Guide pupils to identify overlaps like compassion, responsibility and a commitment to reduce harm.

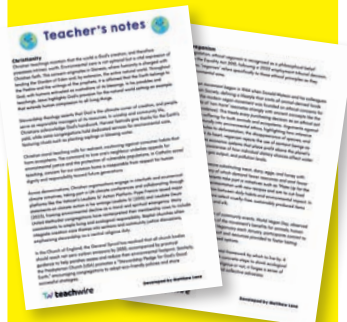
Then discuss how Christians and vegans act on their beliefs. Highlight that both groups make intentional choices based on their values and that belief, whether religious or non-religious, can inspire action. You could look at Sarx (sarx.org.uk) or Operation Noah (operationnoah.org) as points of comparison. Children could research these organisations, or the Vegan Society, and summarise their work as a final written task.

Matthew Lane is an RE Lead and author. You can read more comparisons of RE knowledge in his new book, Religious Education: A Subject Knowledge Handbook, coming soon from Bloomsbury.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Explore the story of St. Francis of Assisi and discuss his teachings on animals and nature. Present this in a piece of summary writing or class presentation.
- Explore the history of veganism and make a short video about it or write the script for one.
- Invite a Christian speaker or ethical vegan to share their perspective and practices. Write questions you could ask them from independent research.

tw teachwire



Download your **FREE** teaching notes at
tinyurl.com/tp-EcoLesson

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Why do Christians call the world ‘God’s creation’?
- How does being vegan help the environment?
- What does ‘stewardship’ mean in Christian thought?
- How do beliefs influence how people treat the planet?

Computing



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To understand misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation
- To identify examples in an online context
- To critically analyse digital content
- To explain the impact of misleading information

One of these things (is not like the others)



Explore how children can develop critical thinking skills to identify true and false info online, with **Karl McGrath**

[@MRMCT](#)

[Linktr.ee/KarlMcGrath](https://linktr.ee/KarlMcGrath)

In a world where we have a wealth of information at our fingertips, children are more exposed than ever to dubious content. This lesson will teach pupils to distinguish between misinformation (something shared by mistake), disinformation (something that is deliberately false), and malinformation (true information used to harm). Using a striking image as a stimulus, it will help children to become critical thinkers, capable of spotting misleading information and explaining why it is problematic, and confident in checking their sources.



START HERE

Explain the difference between the different types of information (misinformation, disinformation, and malinformation - see the explanations in the intro to this lesson). Next, present the children with the following three scenarios:

- A photo of an influencer at a party is shared online with the caption, "Caught breaking the rules!" The photo was taken years earlier, but the person sharing it didn't realise.
- A video appears online showing a rare animal species supposedly discovered in a local park. It goes viral, but the person who posted it used a special app to create the animal, hoping to gain followers.
- A student shares a screenshot of another child's comment taken from a private group chat, making it look like they said something mean. The screenshot is real, but the context is missing.

In pairs, ask children to decide to which category each statement belongs.



MAIN LESSON

1 | DEFINING DIFFERENCES

First, ask pupils to justify their decisions from the starter activity. Share a few examples as a class, prompting children to explain their reasoning. Highlight how some examples can be debated, making the categories less clear-cut.

Note, there is no specific reference to malinformation in the national curriculum, however, this is an increasing trend online, so I believe it is important to make a clear distinction.

Once you've recapped the key info, and discussed any misunderstandings or

confusion, introduce some short, accessible case studies drawn from social media platforms that the children might be familiar with (e.g. a mistakenly shared health tip, a deepfake video, or a harsh meme based on truth). These are fairly easy to find with a quick search, but you can also find some examples in the download link on the right. Let children connect these terms to what they might have seen in the wild online or even overheard in conversations, and encourage a discussion on this. This grounds the terms in their reality and primes them for the analysis to follow.

2 | INVESTIGATING IMAGES

Hand out printed copies of the cropped Jessica E. Boyd image



"This lesson will help children to become confident critical thinkers"

initial impression fair? Why might people share only part of a story? Highlight how visual media can be easily manipulated, not just through editing, but through framing and captioning. Emphasise that often, people will share what they want you to see, not what is truly there. This is when we reinforce that being digitally literate means being digitally curious.

Link back to the original scenarios. Ask: Has anyone changed their mind about any of them after doing the image task? This encourages children to reflect on the learning process, and how being exposed to more context, or even more critical conversations, can shift thinking. To move deeper, you can introduce the idea of credible sources; how do we know something is reliable? (E.g. have you heard of the source before – newspapers like *The Guardian* or *The Times*, or outlets like the BBC, for instance; is there an author listed, and can you find them online, etc?) Remind pupils that checking the source of an article, image or video is an essential part of digital literacy.

Karl McGrath is a Year 6 teacher, curriculum task design lead, and computing lead with a passion for blending digital tools into learning.

(find this in the download link on the right, and read more about it at tinyurl.com/tp-malinfo). Each group becomes a team of visual detectives, asking: What does the image show? How do you know? Is it true? Why/why not? What parts could mislead people? Which sections feel incomplete or out of context? Could any of this be labelled as misinformation, disinformation, or malinformation? Why?

Assign roles within groups such as observer, questioner, and annotator. Then rotate. This builds participation and deepens engagement. Ask children to annotate the image directly or use sticky notes to identify what the

image shows, and what it might be hiding. Invite them to consider what someone could write as a caption, and how that would change the meaning of the moment captured.

Once complete, have each group create a short 'newsflash' explaining their interpretation of what might be happening in the image, and whether it could mislead others. This draws in creative thinking and reinforces conceptual understanding.

3 | DISCUSS AND REFLECT
Bring everyone back together and reveal the full, uncropped Jessica E. Boyd image. How does seeing the whole picture change things? Invite children to share annotations and reflections. Was their

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Turn your classroom into a 'fake news gallery'. Use anonymised and fictionalised screenshots or posts. Can the class correctly identify them as misinformation, disinformation, or malinformation? What clues helped them decide?
- You could challenge children to write two contrasting captions for the same photo: one truthful, one misleading. Display them side by side, asking the children to explain the difference and justify their reasoning.
- Explore child-friendly fact-checking tools like *Newsround* and *Snopes.com*. Discuss how we can double-check a claim before liking, sharing, or commenting.
- Facilitate a whole-class discussion: "If someone didn't know a post was false, should they still be held responsible for sharing it?"
- Invite pupils to create a 'top tips for sharing wisely' infographic to share online or display in class, encouraging critical, kind, and cautious online behaviour.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What makes information trustworthy?
- Why might someone create disinformation?
- How can you check if something is true?

tw teachwire

Download example images and video at

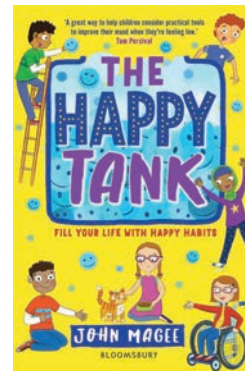
tinyurl.com/tp-MisInfo



KINDNESS ➔

The Kindness Quest

An engaging activity book aimed at fostering kindness amongst primary school children



AT A GLANCE

- A step-by-step guide to establishing kindness habits
- Suitable for use both at school and in the home
- Includes a wealth of practical activities and ideas
- Enhanced with inspirational quotes and bonus tips
- Written by Kindness Coach, John Magee



REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

Do we really need a training manual on how to be kind these days? [*Looks at news, world events, etc.*] Actually, this might be exactly what we need.

It does feel rather dispiriting that the concept of spreading kindness seems to have lost out to the idea of attacking, threatening and insulting others as a way of achieving selfish aims. And that's just our world leaders for you. So, perhaps there is no better time to launch a quest for kindness in the hope that, by the time they have grown up, our current primary school children will have consigned those who live by division to the dustbin of history.

Created by Kindness Coach John Magee, *The Kindness Quest* is primarily an activity book aimed at encouraging school children to develop a kindness habit or become 'rich in kindness' as he puts it. While seasoned teachers might not necessarily find any startlingly new revelations in here, it is accessible, well laid out, and packed full of good ideas for activities – not to be sniffed at in a busy classroom, as I'm sure you'll agree.

After a chunky introductory section, which includes user guidance for teachers and parents, it invites the reader to embark on an epic adventure involving 'six steps to kindness'. You'd have thought that anyone who has ever heard the song *The Greatest Love of All* would already know where this starts but a wise person recently told me that it is remarkable how few adults still don't understand the importance of self-care. So, it seems entirely appropriate that the first step is 'Kindness to yourself'.

From there, the adventure moves on to

spreading kindness at home, at school, to your friends, to your community and, ultimately, to the planet. In this way, the kindness spreads like ripples from the individual, like ripples from a stone dropped in a pond. Indeed, Magee keeps returning to the idea of 'spreading the kindness ripple' – something I'm sure we can all agree with. I wasn't so sure about the friendship section encouraging the concept of BFFs, which has often seemed more like coercion than friendship from what I have seen, but maybe that's just me. It seems plenty of young people do still have their BFFs.

Overall, though, this is a positive and engaging book, and I did enjoy the inspirational quotes, fun facts and bonus tips. There's nothing to stop readers working their way through it systematically but, equally, it feels like something to dip in and out of as necessary. For that reason, it could well be a very useful addition to a school's teaching resources bookshelf. It might also be something for families to have accessible on an as-and-when basis.

Of course, writing style will always be a matter of taste. Many will enjoy the upbeat, almost evangelical tone here. Others might find it a bit much. However, there is no doubt that it is packed with good intentions.

Will this be seen in some quarters as virtue signalling? Who cares? I think we've had enough of lack-of-virtue signallers. They're the ones who got us into this mess in the first place. Let's hope we can nurture a new, kinder generation, not just of ordinary people, but also of future leaders. The quest starts here.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Lively and engaging
- ✓ Well organised
- ✓ Bursting with ideas
- ✓ Practical and positive
- ✓ Topical and relevant
- ✓ Sends a positive message
- ✓ Ideal for home or school
- ✓ Useful for busy teachers
- ✓ Nurtures empathy

UPGRADE IF...

...you want to put young people on a practical path to a kinder, more positive and accepting future.

RRP £6.99 | bloomsbury.com

SUSTAINABILITY

Kapow Primary Sustainability Collection



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

AT A GLANCE

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



REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

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

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

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

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

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

Before the lesson, there is a teacher knowledge

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

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

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

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

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

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

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

UPGRADE IF...

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

Sign up for a free trial at tinyurl.com/tp-KapowSustainability or email enquiries@kapowprimary.com

Q & A

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

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

As cheesy as it sounds, I'm happiest when I feel like I'm being of service. For me, the whole point of working in education is to open doors and model how we want children to behave when they are adults, so I like being positive, motivated and useful – hopefully they'll follow suit!

2 What is your greatest fear at work?

Year 9 on a Thursday! Ok, my serious answer is forgetting something really important. I am responsible for the exams in my school, and the legal requirements, protocol and high-stakes nature of that part of my job have given me plenty of sleepless nights. I'm sure anyone dealing with SATs can relate!

3 What is your current state of mind?

I'm currently on maternity leave and have found being away from school really strange. I'm loving my time at home with our children, though, and I'm using the year to work on a doctorate in education, which I'm studying for part time. My friends laugh at me for being such a nerd, but it helps me feel like I'm still Claire, as well as Mum.

4 What do you consider the most overrated teacher virtue?

Whilst I think that having a neat, tidy, welcoming classroom is important, I just can't bring myself to be the kind of

teacher that makes loads of exuberant displays. Yes, they look great, but they must have taken so much time and money – teachers already have so much to do. It's really not for me, but each to their own.

5 On what occasion do you lie to your class?

I constantly lie about having tattoos. Whenever a pupil spots the small tattoo on my ankle and tries to distract me from the lesson by asking about it, I always lie and say I don't have any tattoos. If they keep going, I will pretend it's a bit of muck and act like I'm rubbing it off while getting us swiftly back to the lesson.

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

I like to make sure pupils are with me each step of the way, so in the classroom I will ask them to do something like write the date or turn to a page in their books, and then say "3, 2, 1... show me". I use it all the time and I'm sure they'd

"I'm responsible for exams, and the high-stakes nature of that has given me plenty of sleepless nights"

say I overuse it, but I've not gotten to the end of a lesson and had a blank book or messy work since I started doing it two years ago, so it's definitely not going anywhere!

7 What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

My first year as head of department, I had a bit of a mountain to climb in terms of rewriting the curriculum and setting high expectations. This didn't exactly make me popular with my classes. However, at the end of the year, one of my classes voted me teacher they'd miss the most. I wasn't expecting it, and it meant the world to me. I realised they saw what the history team were trying to do for them, and appreciated it.

8 Most treasured teaching possession

Oh, it has to be my positive teacher planner. It's pretty, it keeps me organised, and if I've had a pants day I can colour code it or write a to-do list to make myself feel like I'm being productive (even if I'm not). Whether you're in secondary, primary, or EYFS, a solid planner is a must.



NAME: Claire Harley
JOB ROLE: Assistant principal
EXTRA INFO: Claire blogs on all things education at researchtoclassroom.com



A student-centred curriculum, resources and delivery.... why is all learning not like this!

~ Nicky Ashby-Guest, Lead Practitioner: Outreach, Training & Development, The Gallery Trust



Maths For Life delivers...

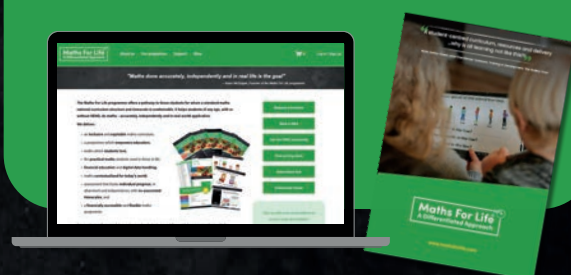
- an **inclusive** and **equitable** maths curriculum;
- a programme which **empowers educators**;
- maths which **students love**;
- the **practical maths** students need to thrive in life;
- financial education** and **digital data handling**;
- maths **contextualised for today's world**;
- the ability to track **individual progress** in attainment and independence with **no associated timescales**; and
- a **financially accessible** and **flexible** maths programme that has been viewed positively by Ofsted on multiple occasions.



NEW

Website & brochure

Both our website and brochure have been updated to reflect our company as it is today. Detailing our complete curriculum and wide range of products and services. Designed to support you in teaching the maths your students need to live and thrive in today's world.



NEW

Reporting and accreditation system

Recently launched, our reporting and accreditation system takes our tried and tested assessments to the next level. Comprehensive reports are automatically produced, detailing a student's attainment, independence and progress against Maths For Life objectives. Celebrating achievements through certification.

- We deliver **transparent prices** and offer a range of subscription plans and packages to ensure our programme is accessible. For full details please visit our website.

Want to know more? You can book a **Q&A** session or an **appointment to talk to a member of our team** via our website.



www.mathsforlife.com



learn@mathsforlife.com

Text, design, layout, charts, photos, and original illustrations Copyright © Maths For Life Limited 2025. All rights reserved.

Leading English



Empower all staff to raise standards in English

- Tailored in-school support to upskill English leads
- Carefully structured medium-term plans for complete curriculum coverage
- Exclusive model texts for every lesson, written by children's authors and annotated for quality teaching
- Over 200 English units covering years 1-6

Find out how we can support your school to deliver excellence in English

www.leadingenglish.co.uk