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DON'T CAGE THE CAT

How KS1 curiosity pays off in KS2

ATTENDANCE

WHY TARGETS FALL SHORT

4 SIGNS SATS PREP IS WORKING

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Hello!



Welcome to November! The clocks have gone back, the mornings are murky and the glitter is already making an unwelcome appearance in classrooms across the land. Half term might feel like a distant memory, but the Christmas holidays are on the horizon. Bring on the nativities!

Of course, there's one thing that, as I'm writing this, we're still waiting for. The curriculum review has been and gone, but the long-awaited new curriculum has yet to appear. We're keeping our fingers crossed that we hear something soon, but in the meantime, we've filled this issue with ideas that will stand the test of time, whatever the final document says.

Take Stuart Tiffany's history article on page 20, which champions focusing on the *how* rather than the *what* of learning in KS1. By building strong foundations for disciplinary literacy early, we can help even our youngest learners start thinking like historians.

Speaking of looking ahead, it's the time of year when thoughts turn (whether we like it or not) to SATs prep. Before you reach for another stack of practice papers, take a look at Sarah Farrell's brilliant suggestion on page 42: to turn SPaG revision into a playful competition and watch your class master word class with gusto (yes, really).

Elsewhere, the Teach Awards are back for 2026! Once again, our expert judges have put the best of the best resources through their paces to find those that can genuinely make a difference in your classroom. Discover the winners from page 63, and perhaps find your new favourite along the way.

Thank you, as ever, for reading *Teach Primary*. Hang in there, and I hope you have a marvellous Christmas break when it finally comes around.

Charley

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

Don't miss our next issue, available from 4th January.

POWERED BY...



BAHAR CHIRALI shares a colourful cross-curricular art activity focusing on healthy eating

"Painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo looked at ordinary things and saw something different"

p27



JACK LYNCH on what the new statutory RSE guidance means for inclusive LGBT+ education in primary schools

"The new RSE guidance does not mean you must stop teaching about LGBT+ people"

p36



MARC BOWEN explains how to turn pupils into data detectives as they interrogate fictional health datasets

"Rather than asking pupils to log data, this lesson provides it, freeing them to interpret"

p76









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Students still need handwriting that is legible, efficient and sustainable, particularly for extended writing and exams.

This video explores:
- Building writing stamina
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Contents

ISSUE 20.8





REGULARS

8 **BREAKTIME**

11 **6 WAYS...**
...to teach independent thinking

22 **MEDIUM-TERM PLAN**
A six-week music unit on playing famous Christmas movie music with handbells

27 **HOW I DO IT**
Put healthy choices at the centre of this hands-on art lesson with the help of painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo...

31 **THIS WAY!**
School improvement advice for headteachers and SLT – this issue we're looking at Pupil Premium

VOICES

13 **ANDREW TIMBRELL**
Are we missing the real problem with attendance?

15 **A LETTER TO...**
...fellow educators. We expect children to self-regulate, but have we shown them how?

19 **UNDERCOVER TEACHER**
Mindfulness in schools often doesn't work; but it's how we go about it that's the problem

SPECIAL SECTION

SATS SPECIAL

42 **AHEAD OF THE GAME**
Take the pressure off the SATs SPaG paper by turning prep into a playful competition to master word classes

45 **DON'T CAGE THE CURIOUS CAT**
The wonder and excitement of KS1 science can teach us a lot about preparing for SATs in KS2

48 **PUT DOWN THE PAST PAPERS...**
While standard revision techniques can feel like flogging a dead horse, deconstructing the actual skills required is much more beneficial (and less boring!)

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.

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FEATURES

20 WALK LIKE AN... HISTORIAN
For skills that will follow them through their schooling, focus on how – not what – children learn in KS1 history

28 THE FRIDAY THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING
How one school in Stoke-on-Trent made peace a weekly habit, and why its classrooms haven't been the same since

36 CAN I TEACH THAT?
With new RSE guidance in place, what does inclusive LGBT+ education look like in 2026?

38 BEYOND THE GATES
All the info you need to find your next thrilling school trip

63 TEACH AWARDS WINNERS 2026
This year's results are in... will you find your new favourite resource?

LESSON PLANS

76 SCIENCE
Turn pupils into data detectives as they interrogate fictional health datasets and explore everyday wellbeing

78 HISTORY
Use reading and debating skills to imagine what life was like for the ancient Greeks

Teach Reading & Writing
BRILLIANT IDEAS FOR LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

50 AUTHOR IN YOUR CLASSROOM
Play the podcast and bring Michael Rosen and MC Grammar into your classroom to teach pupils about ridiculous raps and rhymes

53 BOOK TOPIC
Delve into the difference between robots and AI, and task children with conjuring up their own creative ideas, using The Brainiac's Book of Robots and AI

56 WHAT IF...?
One small question is all you need to change worlds and supercharge children's writing

58 WAGOLL
Peer inside the mind of the author and help pupils understand how to write an effective ending, with Skye McKenna's *Queen's Witch*

60 BOOK CLUB
We review five new titles that your class will love



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Breaktime

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Maths reasoning boosts scores

Teaching children as young as six to think through mathematical problems and understand the relationships between numbers can improve their maths attainment, according to the findings from a large trial published by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF). Year 2 pupils who took part in the Mathematical Reasoning programme made the equivalent of one additional month's progress in maths, on average, compared with similar pupils who continued with their usual maths teaching. The impact was larger for pupils eligible for free school meals, who made the equivalent of two additional months' progress.

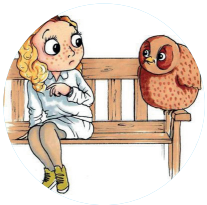
The findings come from a randomised controlled trial involving 238 schools and 6,291 pupils, carried out by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). Read the full report at **tinyurl.com/tp-EEFmaths26**

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



CLIMATE ACTION
Climate Ed has launched a new schools programme to help pupils understand climate science, solutions and practical action.The programme explores climate science and solutions in depth, helps pupils understand how they can take positive action, and supports schools with their DfE Climate Action Plans. Find out more at **climateed.net/for-schools**

NEW STEM PLATFORM
STEM Racing has announced the launch of STEM Racing Learn, a new digital learning platform developed in partnership with Aston Martin Aramco Formula One™ Team and Maaden. The free platform features modules covering careers, engineering, CAD and more, with a further six modules planned for 2027/28. For more info, visit **stemracing.com/learn**



EXPLORING FRIENDSHIP
Our Class , a research-informed classroom resource to help children understand friendships has been refreshed with a range of new features. The latest version includes shorter and more accessible stories, and new animated videos featuring child narration. Resources are also mapped to the latest DfE RSHE statutory guidance. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-OurClass26**

TODAY'S TOP RESOURCES

No losers on sports day



In the latest episode of the *No Running in the Corridors* podcast, PE specialist James Munro and parent of four and educator, Shona Rae, join host Helen Mulley to explore how schools should respond when some children are driven to win while others are simply happy to take part in sports day, and whether we send mixed messages about what success really means. Listen wherever you get your podcasts.



Six steps to SEND reform

The National Association of School-Based Teacher Trainers (NASBTT) has outlined a six-point plan to better prepare new teachers for increasingly complex SEND needs in mainstream classrooms.

Published following a comprehensive year-long review led by Margaret Mulholland – SEND and inclusion specialist at ASCL – *Bridging the SEND practice gap* is based on research including a series of in-depth focus groups with ITT providers, and calls for a fundamental shift from measuring how much SEND content trainee teachers receive, to developing their capability and confidence to make informed professional decisions in diverse classrooms.

The report argues that the response should not be to add more SEND hours to nine-month ITT programmes. Instead, the way teachers are prepared to work with pupils who learn and present in different and sometimes unpredictable ways needs to be redesigned – including developing their confidence to manage uncertainty and adapt their teaching thoughtfully. It outlines six priorities for change, including to co-create a revised, permeated national content map for SEND across the ITTECF, and to support collaborative resource development that underpins teacher decision making. Read all recommendations and research at **tinyurl.com/tp-SENDgapNASBTT**

And the winner is...



HarperCollins has announced the winners of The Reading for Pleasure Awards 2026, in association with The Open University and the UK Literacy Association (UKLA). Launched in 2017, the awards recognise and celebrate teachers, schools, librarians and community organisations who place reading for pleasure at the heart of their practice in creative and impactful ways to inspire children and young people.

Awards were granted across five categories, with each category winner receiving £250 worth of HarperCollins books and 20 copies of Help Your Child Love Reading by Alison David. The winners were Sarah Srichan (experienced teacher); Polly-Anne Gibbs (school reading champion); Miriam Lord Primary School (whole-school); Gary Hamonds (author's choice); and joint winners Chapter One Charity and Doorstep Library (community reading). Learn more at **tinyurl.com/tp-RfPawards26**

48% of boys aged 7-9 think that some sports are only for boys*

*Youth Sport Trust

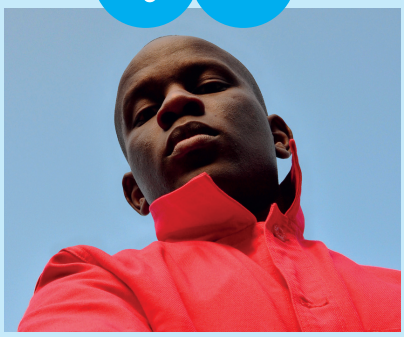
Look ahead | Book ahead

BIG SCHOOLS BIRDWATCH
The RSPB's Big Schools' Birdwatch returns for 2027 from 4 Jan to 22 Feb, giving children the opportunity to watch and count the birds they see before submitting their results to the RSPB. Sign up at **rspb.org.uk/schoolswatch**

CHRISTMAS JUMPER DAY

Taking place on 10 December, the annual Save the Children fundraiser is back, this time with Thomas the Tank Engine as mascot, bringing with him a prize draw for schools. Learn more and enter at **christmasjumperday.org**

Q & A



Love Ssega

Artist, musician, founding member of Clean Bandit, and author

1. What was primary school like for you?
I really enjoyed primary school. We only had 30 students in each year, so the whole school knew each other and our only homework that I could remember was reading. Oxford Reading Tree still brings a smile to my face and fond memories.

2. If you could have any superpower, what would it be?
I think I'd like to fly. That would be my superpower, so that I could see the world from a different viewpoint. I've always imagined what birds were thinking up in trees, or what pigeons are saying when they're hanging out on lampposts.

3. How would you like teachers to use your book in the classroom?
This book should be a conversation starter to highlight the magic of nature, friendship and the environment. Different species and habitats are introduced in the book, which can be interesting jumping-off points. It's hopefully also a gentle reminder that climate change is a challenge, but also an opportunity to find different solutions, which are often right there in nature already. The positive attitudes of The Elementals should be a source of encouragement. Pupils can see which character or element they relate to and see how they would fix a challenge in the book –or in real-life – as if they were all a team of Elementals working together.



The Elementals: Wanzu Sets Sail **by Love Ssega (£7.99, Little Tiger) is out now.**

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6 ways to teach pupils to think for themselves

Help improve children's confidence by teaching them independence and critical thinking skills

1 | WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU'RE STUCK

Pupils often come to rely on instructions and reassurance from teachers during everyday tasks, activities and lessons. When they get stuck, they come to you for solutions instead of developing their independence and initiative. To course-correct this, when a child gets stuck, demonstrate the steps, practise them together, and repeat them often, until they feel natural. Introduce simple problem-solving routines such as 'Stop, think, try, check' and model a trial-and-error process so pupils learn to persevere before asking for help. If a child asks what a word means, avoid giving them the answer straight away. Instead, ask, if they recognise any part of the word, or encourage them to look it up in the dictionary.

2 | BUILD INDEPENDENCE WITH ROUTINES

Independence doesn't happen overnight; young people need time and support to build it. For some pupils, working alone without a teacher's help can be overwhelming, but it doesn't need to be scary. Assign children daily or weekly tasks to foster independence and responsibility. Use visual prompts and checklists to help them make decisions without constant adult direction. For example, ask pupils to organise their own resources, tidy their desks, water plants and be responsible for classroom equipment. This is a discreet but effective way to create independence in the classroom and shows the children that they are capable of making their own decisions and managing their time.

3 | GIVE PUPILS CHOICES ABOUT HOW THEY LEARN

All children learn differently and have unique needs, so one approach won't build confidence and independence for every child. Where possible, allow pupils to choose between resources to help them learn and feel motivated. For example, do you have text, images, and a video that can explain the same concept? Allow children to choose which one suits them best, and how they'd like to present their work. Can they hand-write or type it? Or perhaps include diagrams and posters to get their point across? Once children have more ownership over their learning, the more engaged and invested they become in making decisions and thinking for themselves.



JOLIE MOON
is a specialist education recruiter at Spencer Clarke Group, a former educator, and occasional teaching assistant.

4 | MAKE THINKING MORE ENGAGING

Beyond asking pupils to 'put their thinking caps on', you can make the act of thinking more engaging by using activities that encourage pupils to explore different perspectives. Role play is an excellent example. You likely already use it in your classroom for writing exercises and PSHE, so adding a critical thinking element means you can enhance existing practice, rather than having to create extra activities. For example, when pupils are 'stepping inside' the perspective of a literary character or figure from history, be sure to emphasise thinking about how they may feel in this moment, and what has shaped this person's perspective, what they know or believe, and how their experiences might influence their decisions and actions.

5 | ENCOURAGE PUPILS TO ASK THEIR PEERS

Encourage the 'ask three before me' rule to get children helping each other instead of automatically going to the teacher. This might not seem like it would foster independence, but generating ideas with others helps develop the iterative process required for solo critical and creative thinking. Have a buddy system or a display on the wall that encourages pupils to ask three people for their thoughts or support if they feel stuck. Ask pupils to explain how they reached their answers, then praise their teamwork, offer constructive feedback, and reward their progress with a sticker, house point or verbal recognition.

6 | TEACH CHILDREN TO ASSESS RISKS

Children learn to spot hazards, weigh their options, and trust their own judgement when they make decisions. Encourage children to handle situations independently and take sensible risks – of course you should still step in when needed or if their safety is at risk. For example, in EYFS, if a child is stacking blocks too high, don't stop them straight away. Talk it through with them instead, and ask them to think about what they're doing and decide whether it's safe to continue. Giving children opportunities to assess risks in a safe environment builds independence, encourages sensible decision-making, and helps them understand the consequences of their actions.

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Are we missing the real attendance problem?

Strategies and data are essential, but it's digging into the human element of the issue that will really help children feel like they belong at school

Attendance has become one of the defining challenges facing schools, especially post-Covid. Schools rightly invest significant time and energy into getting children through the gates each morning. But are we spending too much time asking why children are absent, and not enough time asking why they would want to attend in the first place?

The latest DfE figures show that more than 14 per cent of primary pupils were persistently absent last year. Despite enormous efforts from schools, attendance remains stubbornly below pre-pandemic levels. There are, of course, many reasons for absence. Illness, SEND, family circumstances, anxiety, transport and disadvantage can all play a part. No sensible attendance strategy can reduce such a complex issue to one cause. But one factor deserves far more attention: belonging.

A child can attend school every day without ever truly feeling that they belong there. Think about the pupil who regularly spends break time alone, or the reluctant reader who compares themselves with everyone else. For those children, arriving at school can gradually begin to feel like entering a place where everyone else fits. Attendance then becomes tied to negative emotions. This matters because children are much more likely to invest in communities in which they feel noticed, valued and successful. The DfE itself identifies being connected to peers and the wider life of school, alongside developing a sense of belonging, as important benefits of regular attendance. Perhaps we need to reverse that thinking too, because belonging can help facilitate attendance.

The data tells us who is missing school, but it doesn't always tell us *why*. That requires conversation. For a pupil whose attendance begins to decline, schools might ask questions beyond the usual barriers. Does this child have a trusted adult in school? Do they have friends? When did they last experience success? Are there parts of the day they dread? Would anybody notice, from the child's perspective, if they were not there? None of these replaces conversations about illness, safeguarding or family circumstances. but they add another layer. Sometimes the most important attendance intervention might not look like an attendance intervention at all. It could be joining the football team. Being given responsibility for equipment. Attending breakfast club. Or simply being greeted by name at the gate. Small things can communicate a powerful message: *we expected you today, and we're glad you're here.*

Schools should also consider what success feels like for children who find traditional classroom learning difficult. If recognition is dominated by test scores, writing outcomes and academic awards, some pupils quickly learn that school is a place where other children succeed. Primary schools are wonderfully placed to challenge this. Sport, art, music, drama, leadership, creativity, kindness, teamwork and problem-solving can all provide children with an identity within their school community. A child who thinks, *"I'm the goalkeeper", "I'm a playground leader", "I'm brilliant at drawing"*, or *"I'm helping with the Year 1s today"* has another reason to feel connected to school.

The strongest attendance strategy may therefore be one that barely mentions attendance in parts. It might include staff knowing which pupils lack extracurricular involvement, or identifying children without a strong peer group. It might outline how to deliberately create roles for pupils who rarely receive recognition, make clubs accessible to disadvantaged families, and ensure every child can identify an adult they trust. Don't get me wrong; none of this suggests abandoning expectations around attendance. Schools have responsibilities to challenge absence, work with families, and ensure children receive their entitlement to education. But sanctions and letters can only reach so far.

If we want children in school, we should make sure we are building schools they genuinely feel part of – because long before a child appears on an attendance spreadsheet, something else may already have changed: their relationship with school. And sometimes, the best way to improve attendance isn't simply to make it harder to stay away. It's to give children more reasons to want to come back. **TP**

Andrew Timbrell is a primary teacher and writer with over a decade of classroom experience.



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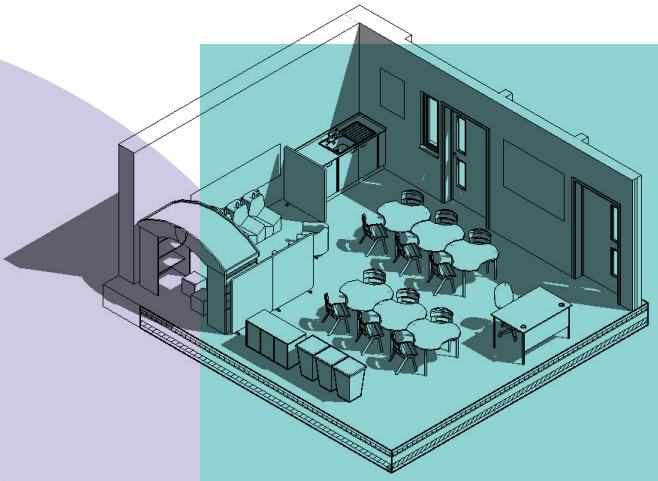
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Each issue we ask a contributor to pen a note they would love to send

A letter to...
Fellow educators



We expect pupils to regulate – but have we shown them how, asks **Victoria Willis**



"Calm down." Most of us have said this, and wanting pupils to feel settled is natural. However, when a child is overwhelmed by big emotions, they are rarely able to act on instructions. Their nervous system is responding that way because they feel unsafe, so expecting them to settle on our say-so is asking them to use a skill they haven't yet mastered. Working out the cause of the distress matters, of course, but in the moment, young children are primarily seeking an adult and need connection. They do not yet have capacity to process their feelings, so they attune to our nervous systems to help them regulate.

This is why I believe emotional wellbeing should be taught in schools from EYFS onwards. We teach phonics and place value, but what about how to breathe when a friend has upset them? We show children how to hold a pencil, but what about techniques for when they are overthinking? We need to teach our pupils what regulation feels like, and, more importantly, give them the tools to get there. So perhaps, rather than focusing on stopping the behaviour, understandable as that is, we need to work out what children need to feel safe, and then become that safe connection for them. We can also learn the early signs of dysregulation, such as stomach aches, tearfulness, or difficulty concentrating.

Regulation is one of the most important life skills, and it is best taught routinely, when children are already settled. Small, consistent practice builds resilience, and the earlier it is taught, the better. I often wonder how different the current mental health landscape might look if we had learned this at school ourselves. Many of us are only now, as adults, learning to recognise our own stress responses and finding simple ways to soothe ourselves. So I see it as our duty to pass on these valuable skills to the next generation.

Step one: reset

Try a simple one-minute reset before registration, or indeed any transition. Get children to notice their bodies, drop their shoulders and breathe slowly.

> *"Regulation is best taught routinely, when children are already feeling settled"*

It helps to settle and ground a class, and when we feel calm and regulated, we are better equipped to take in information. This is not time taken away from learning. These minutes are an investment in the conditions learning depends on. When children start from that environment, they are happier and less likely to be disruptive.

The crucial part? You do it, too. Rather than telling children to breathe slowly while getting resources ready, if we actually pause with them, we'll see much better outcomes, because children struggle to regulate in isolation.

I know how frustrating it can be when a child is disruptive, and no one expects teachers to be endlessly composed. We are all only human, and teaching demands a lot. However, when we brace ourselves and raise our voice to meet theirs, we can, without meaning to, end up matching their dysregulation rather than helping them out of it. Sometimes the most powerful thing we can do is slow our breathing, use fewer words and soften our voice. In doing so, we offer the child a steadier nervous system to co-regulate with.

So really, it begins with us. It is our responsibility to build our own capacity and resilience so we can be that reassuring, supportive presence – and a daily minute of breathwork is one of the best places to start.

Thinking beyond the classroom

I believe we need to think about the whole environment around a child, including the wellbeing of the adults who support them. When teachers, parents and children share an understanding of what happens in the body when we become overwhelmed, regulation becomes part of everyday life, not something we only address when things go wrong. I truly hope that one day, teaching children about their nervous systems will feel as normal as taking the register. Because regulation is not simply another behaviour we can demand from children. It is an essential life skill that can and should be taught. Perhaps, before we ask a child to take a breath, we need to be willing to take one ourselves.

Yours sincerely,

Victoria

Victoria Willis is a teaching assistant, and founder of The Calm Coach, which provides free nervous system regulation programmes.

calm-coach.com

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30 SECOND BRIEFING

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KEY POINTS

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UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

Mindfulness has become a regular practice in schools, so why isn't it working?

Over a decade ago, I went on a meditation retreat in Devon and came back into the classroom with my singing bowl, so excited. My pupils would listen to the sound of the bell and follow their breath, and they'd feel what I'd felt. But within three minutes, I could see it wasn't working.

I still believed mindfulness was good for people, so I gave it a lot of thought. And I found that there's another way: engaged mindfulness. When children are mindfully doing something – moving or playing games, even – rather than just sitting still, they engage and they benefit.

The biggest study of mindfulness in schools so far, Oxford's MYRIAD trial, involved over 8,000 pupils across 84 secondary schools. It found that mindfulness made no real difference to learners' mental health or wellbeing. Many pupils found it boring. Most didn't practise at home. They simply didn't engage.

There's a harder side too. For some children – in particular those who've been through trauma – being asked to shut their eyes and turn inwards isn't calming. It can bring up anxiety, a racing heart, even flashbacks and other post-traumatic symptoms.



Researchers at Brown University, led by Willoughby Britton, have gathered accounts of meditation going wrong, too. Some people began to feel detached from their own body, or as if the world around them wasn't real. Psychologists call this dissociation. Most of that research is with adults, and we know far less about children. But a child who has learned to cope with something frightening by going somewhere else in their head may not need much of a push to go there again. "Close your eyes and turn inwards" can be that push. And in a room of 30, we don't always know what's happening for every pupil.

So, should we bin it? I don't think so. We know mindfulness can be helpful; the problem is just with the way we're delivering it.

There are two ways to practise. One is solo and draws children inward: eyes closed, cut off from the world, going deep inside. For some, that can become a way to dissociate. But the other approach is a more engaged practice. The Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh, who coined the term 'engaged Buddhism', saw mindfulness as a way to wake up to the world, not escape it. In *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, he writes about washing the dishes as being a mediation: being there, feeling the warm water, and the plate in your hands.

I love this concept to introduce mindfulness in a safe way. Call out an activity the students will mime, then they should repeat their mime mindfully. For example, they can pretend to 'unmindfully' wash the dishes, then do so again while focusing on mindful elements, such as paying close attention to the temperature of the water, the feel of the bubbles, and the weight of each plate. Repeat the exercise with all sorts of everyday tasks; walking to school or brushing the dog. You can also add in children's ideas, or fanciful activities. Try washing a unicorn! Children love the chaos of the unmindful round, and that's fine. You can also try passing round a pebble, a feather, or a sprig of rosemary and ask the children to hold it mindfully and then pass it on. Children find the present moment through the world around them, not by disappearing inside themselves. The breath still has a place, and noticing it isn't a bad thing. It's an anchor, always there for us. But more than a few minutes on it can get risky for some children. So keep it short and add movement. For example, take two breaths, then walk around the room and notice your feet on the floor. Shake out the hands, the arms, the legs, then freeze and feel your heart beating. Movement keeps pupils anchored in the room, not drifting somewhere they don't want to be. That's engaged mindfulness. Children learn to notice and regulate by doing, not by sitting still and being told to breathe. Always give them a choice: eyes open or closed, sitting or standing. A child has to feel safe before they can settle.

Mindfulness isn't about sitting still, it's about being in the moment. Let children move, let them play, and they'll arrive. TP

The writer is a teacher in England.

Walk like an... HISTORIAN

For skills that will follow them through their schooling, focus on how – not what – children learn, in KS1 history

STUART TIFFANY

When young children take their first steps into Key Stage 1, they are introduced to the joy of many different subjects. This learning lays critical foundations for the rest of their schooling, and the rich traditions, conventions and methodologies of the individual subjects naturally build on these cornerstones of knowledge as the curriculum unfolds.

> *"The methods historians use are the keys to unlocking 'disciplinary knowledge' at this stage"*

Building disciplinary knowledge might not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of KS1, but it is essential for the development of subjects in KS2 and beyond. In history, particularly, the disciplines of studying and communicating knowledge are very important, and the methods historians use are the keys to unlocking what 'disciplinary knowledge' means in practice at this stage.

Curriculum requirements

The 'processes paragraph' of the KS1 history curriculum sits above the list of topics to be taught, and instead of saying *what* to teach (e.g. the Great Fire of London), it describes *how* children should be learning to think about history. The first half of the paragraph focuses explicitly on chronology, and the second half on the wider nature of historical enquiry (such as how we find out about the past, and share what we find). This is a great framework for considering the developing role of 'the historian' in KS1 and KS2. I find a good starting point here is to introduce who and what an historian is, and what they do. For example: *a person who finds out about the past, like a detective. But instead of solving a mystery about today, they work out what happened a long time ago. They look at clues (also called evidence) like old photos, objects, buildings, maps and stories. Then they tell other people what they have found out.*

When thinking about building disciplinary knowledge across primary, we should be conscious that our children are what Emma Turner calls 'multi-novices', that is, novices in many areas and skills simultaneously. This has implications on how you sequence a unit, and what your instructive teaching approaches may look like.

The most important principles to thread through any approach are:

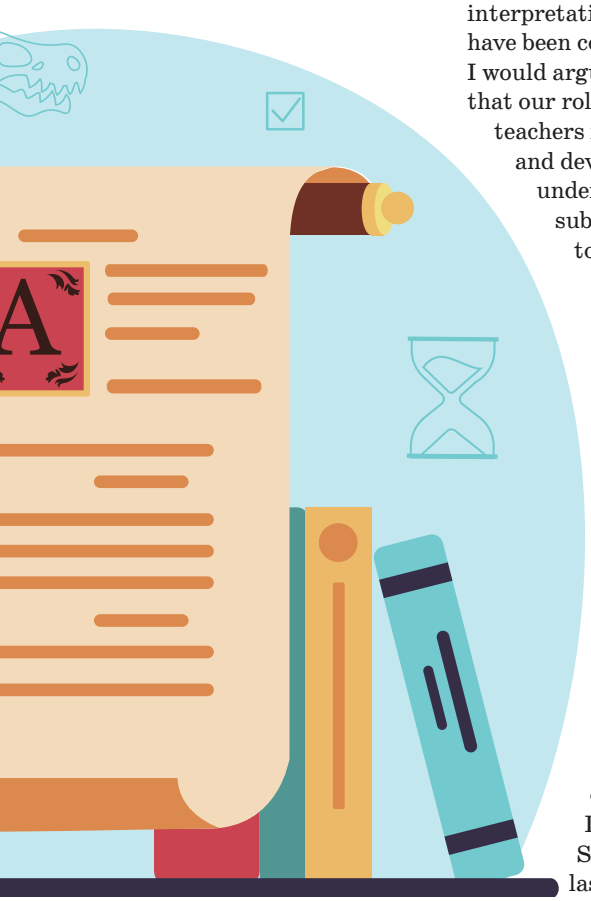
- To keep methods of historical enquiry at the heart of lessons
- Extensive guided practice of how learning in history looks and functions
- Making sure every lesson involves knowledge acquisition and the drawing of conclusions linked to the sub- or overall enquiry question
- '*Memory is the residue of thought*' – D. Willingham. Therefore, if children are not thinking hard, thinking often, and thinking purposefully... what are they learning?
- Children are not being historians at this stage. Rather, they are learning about how historians study and communicate.



KS1	LKS2	UKS2
· Knowledge is constructed from a range of sources to build a detailed 'picture' of what happened · Select evidence from a range of sources to shape answers · Sources can look different and add to our knowledge in different ways · Historians and archaeologists are people who study the past · We rarely know everything needed to give a complete answer to a question	(You can think of this as 'KS1 plus') · Historians specialise in a certain period of branch of history · Archaeology and documentary sources can help us understand different aspects of an event/life. · New discoveries and interpretations shape how historians may view past events. Use specific examples of a historian/archaeologist as part of a study.	(You can think of this as 'KS1 and LKS2 plus') · Historians make extensive use of modal verbs to communicate the strength of a claim · Historians differ in their interpretations based on evidence use and approach Read historians' accounts as part of a study, including how and why they use certain evidence.

Ofsted's subject report from 2023 identified that 'in most schools, pupils had misconceptions about how historians and others study the past and construct their accounts'. Whilst teaching specific interpretations of evidence may not currently be on your Key Stage 2 planning, it can often effectively challenge children's thinking, and develop their understanding of history. Additionally, aim five of the national curriculum specifies that children 'understand the methods of historical enquiry, including how evidence is used rigorously to make historical claims, and discern how and why contrasting arguments and interpretations of the past have been constructed'.

I would argue, therefore, that our role as primary teachers is to introduce and develop solid understanding for subsequent teaching to build on.



Preparing for KS2

As you well know, the jump in complexity and breadth of content increases dramatically from Year 2 to Year 3. Therefore, when considering the development of history for Lower Key Stage 2, or the last year of KS1, we need to secure (and possibly recontextualise) this foundation of what the history discipline is. This is where the importance of 'second order concepts' comes in. For a rundown on second order concepts, see my free YouTube playlist at **tinyurl.com/tp-HistoricalConceptsMrT**

There are also plenty of quality resources out there that demonstrate historians and archaeologists communicating their findings about the past. Some particularly good ones that I like include historian Greg Jenner's recent book series, *Totally Chaotic History*, which is a brilliant introduction to the world of historical interpretations; Sathnam Sanghera's books *Stolen Empire* and *Journeys of Empire*, which are written to be accessible to an UKS2 audience and contextualise aspects of the British Empire's histories, alongside debates within the historical community; and of course BBC Bitesize, which includes a treasure trove of historians like Dr Joann Fletcher taking about life and death in the Valley of the Kings **(tinyurl.com/tp-LifeDeathBBC)**, and archaeologist Raksha Dave exploring Maiden Castle **(tinyurl.com/tp-MaidenCastleBBC)**. Lots of teachers choose to watch or read these kinds of resources with their class to acquire knowledge, and that's a great start. However, in order to really solidify disciplinary knowledge and the role of the historian, you can issue simple prompts alongside the videos or articles, allowing children to dig into what kind of behaviours and approaches make an historian. Ask questions such as, *What is the historian claiming they have evidence for?* Then, *What are they claiming that we don't have evidence for (yet)?* This focuses the children's minds on building a rich and detailed picture of the past, using multiple sources to formulate, strengthen and develop an interpretation under your careful guidance.

This will likely be a process of trial and error – both for you and your pupils. It might take some children a while to understand the processes of historical enquiry, and they might frequently hit 'dead ends' with evidence or questions, but really, that's what being an historian's all about. The important thing is the skills they learn along the way, and how we can help them to navigate the process. **TP**



Stuart Tiffany is a primary teacher, history CPD provider and consultant. He is also the author of* Mr T Does Primary History *(£21.99, SAGE).

@Mr_S_Tiffany

mrtdoeshistory.com

MEDIUM TERM PLAN

KS2
MUSIC

SWEET CHIMING CHRISTMAS BELLS

BEN CONNOR

It's nearly that time again – the countdown to Christmas is on. And what would Christmas be like without music? There's a temptation at this time of year to pull back on more creative subjects, such as music, to focus on making sure all the core subjects are well covered before the festive break. However, there are effective ways to celebrate the happiest season of all, without sacrificing curriculum aims and important musical lessons.

In this plan, we will use a piece of classic Christmas film music to explore rhythm and pitch; two key parts of the interrelated dimensions of music which are vital to pupils' understanding and appreciation of music. They are also a key component in children being able to effectively compose and perform music – in this case, on hand bells.

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT
teachwire



Download your **FREE** accompanying resources for this unit at
tinyurl.com/tp-ChristmasBells

WEEK 1

Learning objective

- To understand and explain pitch

Begin by introducing the set of hand bells to the class. Show them that each coloured bell has a different pitch. Explain that pitch is caused by vibrations: the faster the vibrations, the higher the pitch, the slower the vibrations, the lower the pitch. Usually something bigger makes a lower, slower sound. However, the bells are only different because of the mix of metals that makes them up.

To ensure pupils fully understand the idea of pitch, ask for eight volunteers. Give each pupil a bell, making sure that the bells are in a random order, and ask them to ring them one by one. Show that each bell has a different pitch.

Challenge the class to help these pupils organise themselves so they are stood with the bells from lowest pitch to highest (usually C to C). Ask the children then to ring them one by one. This will show that the pitch is rising in steps.

If possible, have the child with the highest pitch stand or kneel on a chair, and the child with the lowest pitch sit on the floor, with the children in between showing the increasing heights as the pitch of their bells increases. This will fully demonstrate the low to high pitches of the bells.

Assessment

Can individual pupils identify the 'high' bell and the 'low' bell?
Ask the class to clearly identify these, using the correct vocabulary.

WEEK 2

Learning objective

- To understand and explain rhythm

Recap the previous lesson on pitch. Explain that whilst we can use the pitch of the bells to create different notes, we need to play them with rhythm to create a melody.

Tell the children that rhythm is a mixture of long and short sounds, and silence. If time allows, play the game 'Follow the leader' (see an example in video three, here: **tinyurl.com/tp-KS2composition**). This reminds children of the importance of mixing long and short notes to create different rhythms. If you don't have time to watch the video, the idea is that you choose a child (or ask for a volunteer) to clap a simple rhythm, e.g. *long, short, long, long, short, space, long,* then task the other children to repeat it.

Next, repeat the game but have volunteers play the rhythms back with the handbells. This will start to establish the link between pitch and rhythm using instruments. You can also try the game 'Don't clap this one back'. See the downloadable resources for instructions.

Assessment

Can children repeat simple rhythms?

WEEK 3

Learning objective

- To recognise and read simple musical notation

Recap the key themes of rhythm and pitch. Demonstrate the hand bells again, and point out that as well as a colour, each bell has a letter: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. Explain that these are notes, and that each note has its own pitch. Explain that there are two Cs because there is a high C and a low C (the range of notes here is called an octave, because the two Cs are eight notes apart).

Write the letter names on the board. Have eight volunteers ready and have them play their bell when you point to the letters. Start slowly, pointing to each one in turn. Then point to them in a different order, to show that mixing the notes can create a tune.

You can now get the children to play some simple melodies they should already know well. If you think your children will pick these up quickly, you could give them the notation without the words and see if they can recognise the melody as they play it. For a softer introduction, provide the lyrics to the songs on the board or on sheets of paper, as well as the notation.

Some simple nursery rhymes I like to use, that are in the key of C major:

Three Blind Mice
Three Blind mice (E D C)x2
See how they run (GFFE)x2
They all ran after the farmer's wife (GCCBABCGG)
Who cut off their tails with a carving knife (GCCCBABCGG)
Did you ever see such a sight in your life (GGCCBABCGGG)
As three blind mice (FEDC)

London Bridge
London Bridge is falling down (GAGFEFG)
Falling down (DEF)
Falling down (EFG)
London Bridge is falling down (GAGFEFG)
My fair lady (DGEC)

Twinkle Twinkle
Twinkle, twinkle little star (CCGGAAG)
How I wonder what you are (FFEEDDC)
Up above the world so high (GGFFEED)
Like a diamond in the sky (GGFFEED)
Twinkle, twinkle little star (CCGGAAG)
How I wonder what you are (FFEEDDC)

If your school does not have enough hand bells to play through these melodies, you can use glockenspiels or chime bells.



Assessment

Can an individual child recognise a small number of notes? Ask children to play a short series of notes, written down as letters.

WEEK 4

Learning objective

- To perform a short tune, and explain or demonstrate how they would like to improve upon their performance

Now that pupils have a solid understanding of pitch and rhythm, and have begun to understand the link between notation, note names and the individual bells, we can start to practise our piece of Christmas-themed music. John Williams' *Somewhere in my Memory* **(tinyurl.com/tp-JWsomewhere)** is a classic Christmas film soundtrack, made famous by *Home Alone*. It has a simple, effective melody that evokes a warm, seasonal feeling. Using the hand bells, we can replicate this simple melody to create an effective Christmas performance.

Demonstrate with a small group that by following the letter notation, you can perform this melody together. There is also a sung section (*Candles in the Window*), which you can include if you like. However, it is still a lovely performance with just the bells.

You could teach this to the children in small chunks, by playing the melody as a whole class, or in smaller groups, depending on the class and the resources available.

There is also a really helpful play-along YouTube Video, should you want to use that **(tinyurl.com/tp-JWsomewherePlayAlong)**.

The notes are as follows: GEGE CG, DAGCFED, GEGE CG, GA CFE G, CE D

And the sung section is: GEGE CG, DAGCFED, GEGE CG, GAC, FEG, CE E, D, C

Assessment

Can small groups of pupils follow a simple notation to perform a melody? As the children practise, move round the room checking their fluency in following the melody, and correct any misconceptions.

4 REASONS TO TRY...

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Key points

+ Learn to teach these fantastic resources and join 4,000 teachers embedding them into their schools.
+ Get expert guidance from the team behind the Oak Academy Primary Music Curriculum.





WEEK 5

Learning objective

- To perform effectively in front of an audience

Provide an opportunity for pupils to practise the piece, using the YouTube video or just structured written notation.

Once the children are proficient in the performance, discuss how they can go from just practising to performance. Discuss how musicians use posture and expression to create an effective show.

Create opportunities for mini performances, where small groups get to practise in front of their peers. Use these to identify strong performers who can lead certain parts of the final performance, and act as role models for any pupils who might be less confident.

Create a whole-class performance, either with all pupils performing on the hand bells, or with a mixture of tuned instruments. You could include some untuned instruments like bells or drums, or have some children just singing the vocal part.

Depending on your circumstances, this could be performed live to an audience in school, to parents and families, or simply recorded on an iPad or similar.

Assessment

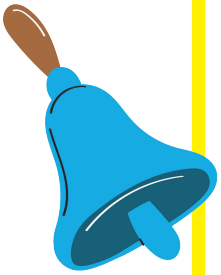
Can children perform fluently and confidently? As pupils prepare for this final performance, listen in to assess their confidence and how well they are following the specific notation.

WEEK 6

Learning objective

- To effectively evaluate a performance

"Use classic Christmas film music to explore rhythm and pitch"



Give pupils a chance to enjoy listening to their performance. Play the video recording back, and ask them to listen carefully to the pitch, the rhythms, and how well they have followed the notation.

Then, ask the children to reflect individually or in pairs and evaluate both the whole-class performance and their own individual work. Explain that professional musicians will always listen back to their performances in order to improve by critiquing their own work, and that they are often also critiqued in exams and recitals, etc.

Provide some prompts to help the class identify how they might improve their performance in future.
For example: how confident were you in following the notation? Were you happy with your timing? If you could try one part again, what would it be?
If appropriate, provide an opportunity for children to perform again with these revisions in place.

Assessment

Can children effectively assess their own work using disciplinary vocabulary and approaches? Ensure that this process is constructive and leads to improvement of their own performance and the performance as a class, and doesn't focus too much on what might have been done 'wrong'. Frame this part of the unit as an exciting chance to make the performance even better than it already was. TP



Ben Connor is a deputy headteacher at a primary school in Bury, Greater Manchester. He is a trained music specialist and has been teaching for 13 years in various schools.

@bbcteaching

5 REASONS TO TRY... National Autistic Society

Build lasting autism expertise in your primary school with National Autistic Society: Learn

30 SECOND BRIEFING

Supporting autistic pupils involves more than the knowledge of one specialist. National Autistic Society: Learn helps schools develop lasting expertise through Licensed User programmes, flexible online learning and specialist consultancy.

1 BUILD CONFIDENCE ACROSS YOUR WHOLE TEAM

Every adult contributes to an autistic pupil's experience of school. Teachers, teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors, office staff and leaders all shape daily interactions. When autism understanding sits with only a few specialists, support can become inconsistent. Shared professional learning helps colleagues recognise individual differences, communicate more effectively and consider appropriate adjustments in their own roles. It also creates opportunities for staff to learn from one another. Building confidence across the whole team makes inclusive practice a shared responsibility, while retaining the individualised support each pupil needs.

2 CREATE CONSISTENCY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

A primary school day includes lessons, assemblies, playtimes, lunch and transitions between activities. Each setting brings different people, routines and sensory demands. For autistic pupils, inconsistent expectations or communication can create unnecessary barriers. Developing shared expertise helps staff agree useful principles while adapting support to individual pupils. This might mean clearer instructions, predictable routines or thoughtful changes to busy spaces. Consistency is not about applying identical strategies to everyone; it is about ensuring pupils encounter informed, joined-up support wherever they are during the school day.

3 STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH PUPILS' FAMILIES

Families know their children in ways that school staff cannot always see. Their insights into communication, interests, sensory preferences and everyday experiences can inform more personalised support. Confident, autism-informed conversations help schools listen and work alongside families rather than relying on assumptions. Some settings may also wish to develop practitioners who can deliver structured family programmes. National Autistic Society: Learn's EarlyBird and EarlyBird Plus Licensed User programmes offer routes to building this specialist delivery capability, where the programme and intended audience appropriately match local needs.



National Autistic Society | Neuroinclusive Education Network

Contact:
Website: **naslearn.org.uk**
Education offer: **tinyurl.com/tp-NASedu**

4 MAKE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABLE

A single training session can be a useful beginning, but new colleagues arrive, responsibilities change and knowledge needs refreshing. Schools therefore benefit from professional development that can continue over time. Flexible online learning allows staff to build understanding around their roles and schedules, while Licensed User programmes develop practitioners able to deliver particular programmes within their organisations. These approaches serve different purposes, but together can support induction, development and expertise. The aim is not simply more training: it is knowledge that remains useful in practice.

5 CONNECT LEARNING WITH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Staff confidence matters, but school systems also influence whether inclusive approaches last. Leaders can consider how policies, routines, learning environments and professional development reinforce one another. Questions might include whether adjustments are applied consistently, whether staff can share learning and whether pupils and families are heard.

Specialist consultancy can help schools review current practice, identify priorities and plan improvements. Connecting workforce learning with school improvement makes autism understanding part of everyday decision-making, rather than an initiative that depends on one colleague or a short-term project.

KEY POINTS

Develop internal capability through Licensed User programmes, enabling trained practitioners to deliver specific autism programmes within their organisation, where these match the school community's needs.

Offer flexible online learning to support staff understanding across different roles,from classroom teaching and pastoral support to induction and continuing professional development activities.

Work with families as partners, drawing on their knowledge of children's strengths, communication and experiences to shape appropriate, individualised support throughout the school day.

Use specialist consultancy to review practice, identify barriers and connect workforce development with practical, longer-term improvements across the school's environments, systems and everyday routines.

How I do it

Put healthy choices at the centre of this hands-on lesson – literally – with the help of Mannerist painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo...

BAHAR CHIRALI

A healthy mind lives in a healthy body, so in this lesson we make healthy heads. It brings two things together: meeting the painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo, who looked at ordinary things and saw something completely different, and talking about healthy eating. Every child creates a head made entirely of fruit and vegetables. There is a clear starting point for this activity, but no set model to copy, so the results are as varied as the children themselves. I have run it with groups of 20 to 30 pupils aged six to 12; it takes about 45 minutes, needs only simple materials and links naturally to science.

1

Start with a conversation about health rather than art. What keeps our bodies strong? Which fruit and vegetables do pupils like, and which colours can they find on their plates this week? Share the old saying that a healthy mind lives in a healthy body, and tell the children that today they will make healthy heads of their own. Keep it light and curious: this is about noticing, not lecturing.



2

Now introduce Arcimboldo in words only. Explain that over 400 years ago he looked at ordinary fruit and vegetables and saw faces in them: an apple could become a cheek, a pear a nose, a bunch of grapes a wild head of hair. Don't show his paintings yet; let the children imagine them. Their mission is to create a healthy head collage made entirely of fruit and veg.

3

Split the class into pairs, and give each pair a printed page of fruit and vegetable pictures, plus scissors, glue and paper or card. Children can cut out the ready-made pictures, draw their own fruit and vegetables, or mix both. Old cookery magazines and supermarket leaflets add even more choice. Ask them to arrange the pieces before gluing anything, and to try turning them around, too: a broccoli or a carrot can look completely different when upside down.

4

As the heads take shape, guide pupils to glue their pieces down, and add details with coloured pencils, crayons or markers. Ask open questions rather than showing an example: what has the broccoli become? Who is this character, and what are they called? Younger children can start with a few big pieces, such as tomato eyes and a carrot nose. Confident artists can draw the whole portrait by hand if they like.



5

Finish with a gallery. Lay the heads on the tables and let the class walk around, guessing what each nose is made of and which head has the most vitamins. Only now reveal one of Arcimboldo's portraits, such as 'Summer', and compare: what items did he choose to represent his face, and what did the pupils choose for their pictures? How are they different? Display the work as your class's healthy heads gallery, with each character's invented name beside it.



Bahar Chirali is an art educator who has run creative workshops with more than 3,000 children over 10 years. She creates open-ended art missions for children aged 6–12.

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The Friday that changed EVERYTHING

How one primary school in Stoke-on-Trent made peace a weekly habit – and why its classrooms haven't been the same since

AMY BEECH & HAYLEY BOULT

Every Friday, something unusual happens at St Paul's school. Chairs scrape, children form circles, and a talking piece begins its journey around the room. For 30 minutes, the class practises something rarely timetabled explicitly: being human together.

Two years ago, we weren't sure this would work. Our school serves around 250 children in one of Stoke-on-Trent's more deprived areas, with high Pupil Premium numbers, many EAL learners, and a community that has experienced tension. We had tried several approaches to behaviour and wellbeing, with mixed results.

What we hadn't tried was giving children weekly structured time to practise being human together. And that's exactly what peace circles do.

This is peace education in its simplest form: supporting belonging, oracy, wellbeing and relationships. A weekly circle delivers existing requirements in a format pupils engage with more readily than a worksheet.

What actually happens?

The structure is deliberately simple. The class forms a circle and passes a talking object (this can be anything – a decorated stick, a teddy bear, or a card). Its holder speaks without interruption, so every voice – including those of quieter pupils – is heard.

Sessions include an emotional check-in, mixer game and activity built around themes such as conflict, empathy, kindness or cooperation. EYFS sessions are shorter, and by Year 6, pupils lead the games.

The moment we knew it was sticking

There are dozens of stories we could tell. But one stands out.

One Year 5 girl, with additional needs and often withdrawn, initially sat at the edge of the circle with folded arms. Around week four, she began arriving early and choosing to speak. Soon she was reminding her teacher it was 'peace circle day'.

You can't manufacture that response. But you can create the conditions for it to flourish.

In Year 1, children ask on Friday mornings "Is it Learning for Peace today?" Afterwards, you'll overhear them using strategies from the sessions: "Let's use our words," "You go first." And not because, as teachers, we've had to intervene and hold their hands while they sort out their disagreements; it simply becomes habit.

What we got wrong at first

We'd be doing you a disservice if we made this sound seamless. It wasn't.

Moving furniture in small classrooms is genuinely annoying, and of course some children were resistant. A few staff felt uncomfortable going off-script – particularly those who like a clear lesson plan to follow. Needless to say, in the early sessions, there were moments that felt awkward or flat.

> *"The shift came when we treated the template as a springboard; sessions came alive"*

The shift came when we treated the template as a springboard rather than a script. Staff could adapt sessions, swap an activity, extend a discussion, or respond to the room. The sessions came alive.

The ripple effects

Circle time ends at 3pm. But it doesn't stay in the circle. We hear older pupils echoing affirmations in unexpected moments: "You're good at different things," or "You made me laugh today." Children who rarely played together now choose each other in the playground, as mixer games break down barriers between friendship groups.

Most significantly, we've seen a genuine rise in self-confidence among our quieter and more vulnerable pupils. When a child who's always on the edge of the group sits in the centre of a circle and hears kind words from their classmates – that's not just nice. It's identity-shaping.

Staff have noticed it, too. Many say Friday afternoon is now the most peaceful part of their week.



One told us she'd started structuring other PSHE teaching around the circle format because the children engage so much better in it.

Should your school try it?

We'd say yes, with a few honest caveats. This isn't a quick fix or a box-ticking exercise. Building a circle culture takes time, and the early sessions can feel uncertain. You need staff who are willing to sit in a circle themselves and mean it, not just supervise one.

Timetables are tight, but 30 minutes a week is findable if it matters. Once the culture shifts, you may wonder how conflict was managed without giving children tools to prevent it. We're still only partway through this journey at St Paul's. But we're laying foundations we believe in; foundations for children who, when something goes wrong – in the playground, in the classroom, and eventually in the wider world – know how to sit down, listen, and find a way through together.

That feels worth 30 minutes on a Friday. **TP**





Amy Beech is behaviour lead and PSHE lead, and Hayley Boult is Christian distinctiveness lead at St Paul's CE Primary School, Stoke-on-Trent. The school works with Peacemakers, a Birmingham-based peace education charity with nearly 40 years' experience.

peacemakers.org.uk

@wmpeacemakers

TRY IT YOURSELF

You don't need special training to start. Here's a simple structure for a first session (30 mins; suitable for any KS1 or KS2 class):

1 Set up the circle (5 mins)
Move chairs or sit on the carpet in a circle. Explain the rule: the holder of the talking object speaks; everyone else listens.

2 Check-in round (5 mins)
Pass the talking object. Each person says one word or one sentence: "Today I feel…" Don't invite any comments, or responses. Everyone else just listens.

3 Mixer game (10 mins)
Try 'The Sun Shines On…': one person stands in the centre and says, "The sun shines on everyone who… *has a pet / likes pizza / has felt nervous about something*." Those it applies to swap seats.This is simple, physical, and quietly brilliant for mixing up social groups.

4 Discussion (8 mins)
Stay in the circle, but pair up children. Ask: "What does it feel like when someone really listens to you?" or "What's one thing that helps you calm down when you're upset?" After a few minutes, pass the talking object and encourage sharing.

5 Close (2 mins)
One-word round to close: "One word for how you feel now…"

Tips:

- Sit in the circle yourself – don't stand outside it
- Participate in the check-in and the game
- Don't force anyone to speak. Always allow a "pass"
- Let silences breathe; they're not awkward, they're thinking time

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Kate Green

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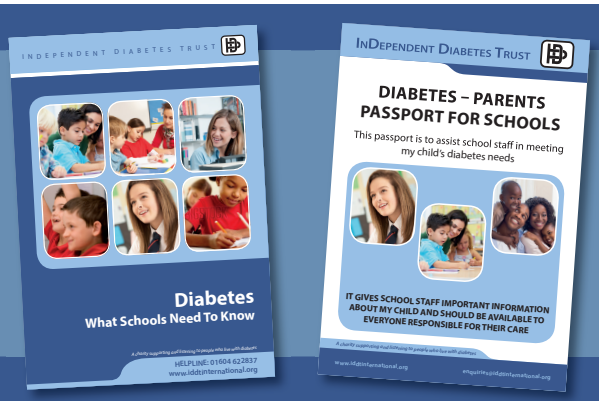
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Maintaining support for PUPIL PREMIUM RECIPIENTS

Changes are underway in Pupil Premium (PP) funding. From September 2026, the system for benefits-based Free School Meals (FSM) in England has two categories: Targeted FSM and Expanded FSM.

Pupils from households receiving Universal Credit with annual earnings of £7,400 or less remain eligible for Targeted FSM and attract PP funding, subject to the existing eligibility rules. Expanded FSM extends free school meals to pupils from households receiving Universal Credit whose annual earnings exceed £7,400, but these pupils do not attract PP funding through this new category. To help schools meet the additional cost of providing meals, mainstream schools will receive funding through the new FSM expansion grant, calculated at an annual rate of £505 per newly eligible pupil, prorated for the initial 2026–27 period.

Importantly, pupils who previously qualified for Targeted FSM will remain part of the Ever 6 cohort if their household income subsequently rises above the threshold. They can therefore continue to attract PP funding for six years after their last period of eligibility for Targeted FSM. Expanded FSM eligibility alone does not qualify pupils for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, which remains linked to Targeted FSM.

These changes make it particularly important for school leaders to understand their funding, identify the barriers disadvantaged pupils face, and ensure that spending has a meaningful impact on teaching and learning.

Allocating funding

Pupil Premium is not simply additional money to spend on resources or interventions. It is an opportunity to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils by addressing the barriers that can affect their progress, attainment and engagement.

According to the Sutton Trust, teachers' content knowledge and the quality of instruction are among the most effective ways to improve pupil attainment **(tinyurl.com/tp-SuttonPP)**. This reinforces the importance of investing in approaches that strengthen everyday classroom teaching, alongside targeted support where pupils need it.

For school leaders, the challenge is to look beyond which interventions are popular or easy to implement and consider what the evidence tells us

about their effectiveness. Good PP planning starts with understanding the needs of disadvantaged pupils in your school, identifying where additional support is needed, and evaluating whether the approaches that you're funding are making a difference.

Understanding why

One of the simplest ways to strengthen teaching and learning is to help pupils understand not only what they are learning, but why they are learning it.

Explaining the purpose behind a lesson or activity can build confidence, improve engagement and help pupils see how new knowledge connects with what they already know. When I started explaining the rationale behind my teaching choices, I noticed a change in pupils' willingness to take on new tasks and concepts.

This matters when considering PP spending. High-quality teaching should be the starting point for all pupils, but leaders need to consider whether disadvantaged pupils are getting the support they need to access it fully. Professional development that helps teachers explain concepts clearly, anticipate misconceptions and make learning accessible can be a valuable investment.

It is also important to listen to pupils. I found that explaining the reasoning behind activities helped me respond more thoughtfully when pupils suggested alternative ways of working. Their ideas sometimes led to improvements that benefited the whole class.

Removing barriers

Effective teaching can only go so far if pupils' wider needs are not being met. Some disadvantaged pupils may face practical barriers that make it harder to participate fully in school life.

Food, hygiene, uniform, equipment and access to learning resources can all affect a pupil's readiness to learn. Schools should identify these barriers sensitively and use appropriate funding and support to address them.

This is not separate from improving attainment. A pupil who is hungry, worried about their uniform or unable to complete homework because they lack the necessary resources may find it harder to concentrate and make progress.

Focused interventions

Some pupils will need additional teaching to address gaps in essential knowledge or skills. One-to-one and



Make it count

Every pound of Pupil Premium (PP) funding matters. But how can primary schools ensure that their spending makes a genuine difference to disadvantaged pupils? The answer is not necessarily more resources or extra initiatives. Often, it comes down to making informed choices about what children need most.

Here are five ways to make your funding work harder:

1. START WITH THE BASICS

It is easy to overlook practical barriers when planning how to improve attainment. However, children who arrive hungry, struggle with attendance or lack essential equipment may find it harder to engage with learning.

Breakfast provision, support with uniform and targeted help with attendance can all play a part in making pupils more ready to learn. The key is to understand the barriers in your school rather than assume every disadvantaged pupil needs the same support.

2. INVEST IN GREAT TEACHING

New technology and exciting resources can be tempting, but high-quality teaching remains one of the strongest ways to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.

Consider how PP funding could support professional development in areas such as phonics, feedback, assessment or metacognition. When teachers strengthen their practice, the benefits can reach pupils across the classroom.

The aim is not simply to buy something new, but to make everyday teaching more effective for the children who need it most.

3. AVOID SPREADING FUNDING TOO THINLY

With so many competing priorities, it can be tempting to fund a little bit of everything. However, a long list of small initiatives can make it difficult to see what is actually working.

Instead, identify a small number of priorities based on pupils' needs and reliable evidence. This might mean focusing on early reading, improving attendance or strengthening parental engagement.

Concentrating your efforts makes it easier to deliver each approach well and evaluate its impact.

4. THINK LONG TERM

Meaningful improvements rarely happen overnight. Rather than chasing quick wins, develop a clear PP strategy that sets out your priorities, intended outcomes and how progress will be measured.

Review the strategy regularly, using assessment information and feedback to understand whether your chosen approaches are making a difference. A multi-year plan can help maintain momentum, while allowing you to adapt when pupils' needs change.

5. BRING STAFF ON BOARD

Teachers and support staff understand pupils' needs through their daily interactions. Involving them in decisions about PP spending can help identify practical solutions and build commitment to the strategy. Share what is working, discuss challenges openly and celebrate improvements, however small. Staff are more likely to support an approach when they can see the difference it makes.

Ultimately, effective Pupil Premium spending is about more than allocating money. It means identifying barriers, choosing evidence-informed approaches and checking that they improve outcomes. By working together and keeping teaching and learning at the heart of decisions, primary schools can give disadvantaged pupils the best possible opportunity to thrive.

Thank you to Lucy Coy, Rebecca Leek, Matt Middlemore, Meena Wood and Simon Barnes for this advice.

tinyurl.com/tp-PP



"We need to ensure that spending has a meaningful impact on teaching and learning"

small-group interventions can be valuable when they are carefully targeted and supported by evidence. When they complement high-quality classroom teaching, not replace it, you're onto a winner.

Where possible, additional support should be time-limited, with pupils returning to their usual learning as soon as they have secured the necessary knowledge and skills.

Curriculum breadth must be protected, too. If a pupil needs extra support in English, for example, this should not routinely come at the expense of subjects such as art, history or music. Disadvantaged pupils deserve access to a broad, balanced curriculum as well as the additional teaching they need to succeed.

Evaluating the impact

Ultimately, successful Pupil Premium spending is not measured by how much a school spends, how many interventions it introduces or how many resources it purchases.

It is measured by whether the provision makes a difference to disadvantaged pupils.

And the good news is, reporting on its effectiveness fits into what you're already doing: establishing clear priorities, using evidence to inform decisions, and regularly reviewing progress. Don't be afraid to tap into your ongoing staff and pupil feedback to help identify what is working and where provision needs to change for Pupil Premium too – a lot of this kind of planning is down to how you use the data you're already gathering.

Some approaches will benefit all pupils, while others will need to be more specifically targeted.

The important thing is to understand the needs of disadvantaged pupils and make deliberate choices about how funding can best support them.

When Pupil Premium is used to strengthen teaching, remove barriers and provide focused support where it is needed, it becomes more than an additional funding stream. It becomes a practical way to ensure that disadvantaged pupils have the knowledge, confidence and opportunities they need to thrive.



Hannah Day is an art specialist based in the West Midlands

Pupil Premium in numbers

£1,550

ANNUAL FUNDING PER ELIGIBLE PRIMARY PUPIL

The 2026–27 Pupil Premium rate for pupils eligible for free school meals now or in the previous six years (Ever 6). Previously looked-after children attract £2,690 per pupil.

Source: (GOV.UK)

£3.2bn

TOTAL PUPIL PREMIUM FUNDING

Around 2.3 million pupils qualify nationally in 2026–27, highlighting the scale of the investment in disadvantaged children.

Source: (House of Commons Library)

32%

THE AMOUNT OF Y6 PUPILS THAT ARE CONSIDERED DISADVANTAGED

In 2025, almost one in three pupils reaching the end of primary school met the Department for Education's definition of disadvantaged.

Source: (GOV.UK)

47% vs 69%

ATTAINMENT GAP AT THE END OF PRIMARY

In 2025, 47% of disadvantaged pupils achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined, compared with 69% of other pupils: a gap of 22 percentage points.

Source: (GOV.UK)

10 months

THE PRIMARY DISADVANTAGE GAP

The Education Policy Institute estimates that the attainment gap at the end of primary school stood at 10 months in 2025, unchanged from 2024. It remains wider than the pre-pandemic low of 9.2 months in 2018.

Source: (Education Policy Institute)

£7,400

A KEY ELIGIBILITY THRESHOLD

From September 2026, expanded free school meals cover children in Universal Credit households above the existing £7,400 annual earnings threshold. However, newly eligible pupils in this expanded category do not attract Pupil Premium.

Source: (GOV.UK)

Find more information on Pupil Premium allocation for 2026/27 at **tinyurl.com/tp-PPgov26**

Start With THE SHARK

Explaining food chains to KS2 pupils can be tricky – but using their natural fascination with apex predators can help everything fall into place, says **Steph Thomson**...



There's a moment that happens in almost every aquarium visit. A child stops, presses their face against the glass and asks:

Is there anything that scares sharks?

It's the kind of question that has real teeth. It comes out before pupils have even had a chance to think about it, driven by awe and genuine curiosity. As teachers, these are the moments worth grabbing and building upon. A pupil question is one of the most powerful hooks a lesson can have.

Most food chain lessons begin with the producer. Sun to plant, plant to consumer, consumer to predator, predator to apex predator. It's logical and well sequenced. But what if we flipped it? What if the most compelling animal in the chain – the animal pupils are already fascinated by – became the starting point, not the destination?

None of this means abandoning structure – it just means deciding what earns the right to come first. It's about recognising how children actually engage with the natural world: through awe, wonder, and the thing that makes them press their face against the glass.

Daniel Willingham, in *Why Don't Students Like School?*, says that memory is the residue of thought – we remember what we think about. Pupils are far more likely to think deeply when a question genuinely interests them. And thought is most likely to happen when pupils are curious and emotionally engaged. A lesson that starts with the answer – here is a food chain, this is how it works – leaves very little room for curiosity. A lesson that opens with a question pupils actually want answered is a different matter entirely.

Wonder first

There's a huge body of evidence that learning sticks more firmly when pupils are given space to think before they are taught. Research from the Play in Education, Development and Learning (PEDAL) centre at Cambridge shows that pupils learn more effectively in environments where curiosity and autonomy are valued alongside structure – where they are active participants in their learning, not just recipients of it.

> *"The question opens the door. The teaching walks through it..."*

The question opens the door. The teaching walks through it.

John Hattie's Visible Learning research, one of the largest studies of its kind, found that classroom discussion and pupil-generated questions are among the most effective ways to deepen learning. Not because they're enjoyable (though they are) but because they make pupils think. As Willingham tells us, what pupils think about is what they remember.

The shark question does all of this before a single slide has been shown.

Pupils who are given the chance to wonder, predict and discuss before being taught show greater retention of what they learn. This is particularly powerful in science, where so much of what we want pupils to understand is genuinely fascinating. The fact that algae produces more than half of the world's oxygen. The fact that removing a single species can affect an entire ecosystem. These are ideas that deserve to arrive with impact. Not as bullet points on a slide, but as answers to questions pupils are already asking.





The curriculum case

The KS2 science curriculum asks pupils to construct and explain food chains, identify producers, predators and prey, and describe how changes in an ecosystem affect living things. It asks them to consider human impact on natural environments. These aren't easy ideas to teach, or to learn, and the shark question unlocks every single one of them.

We tend to assume that teaching a food chain means working upwards from producer to apex predator – and eventually, pupils do need to do exactly that. But here's an argument for starting differently: ask pupils what they think a shark would eat. Then ask what those animals eat. And so on, working downwards through the chain. Pupils arrive at the producers not as a starting point but as a discovery. The smallest, least dramatic organism in the whole ocean turns out to be the one everything else depends on.

Of course, while the enquiry starts at the top, the science still needs to land correctly. As pupils map their discoveries, it's the perfect moment to address a classic misconception: the arrows. By ensuring they point from the 'eaten' to the 'eater', pupils visualise the flow of energy moving up from the producer, even though their curiosity traveled in the opposite direction.

And then return to the question that started it all: is there anything that scares sharks? For many species, the answer leads us to humans. Fishing, pollution and habitat loss all affect shark populations – and that opens up a wider conversation about human impact, conservation, and what happens to an ecosystem when the balance of its food chain is disrupted.

Wonder starts at the top. Understanding builds from the bottom.

Flip the trip

In many classrooms, the class trip comes last. A consolidation of learning already done, a celebration for the unit completed. It's well-intentioned, but it puts the wonder at the wrong end. Here's one more thing worth flipping: the class trip itself. Place it at the beginning, before any formal teaching has happened, and everything changes. Suddenly they're curious before you've taught them anything. Pupils arrive back in the classroom carrying questions they genuinely want answered, observations they want to make sense of, and a reason to care about what comes next.

A child who has stood in front of an ocean habitat display and wondered whether sharks are scared of anything is a child who is ready and eager to learn. The questions they're carrying can become some of the most powerful planning tools we have. Listen carefully, and you'll find your hook for the content you already know you need to teach. TP

FIVE QUESTIONS to launch a food chain lesson

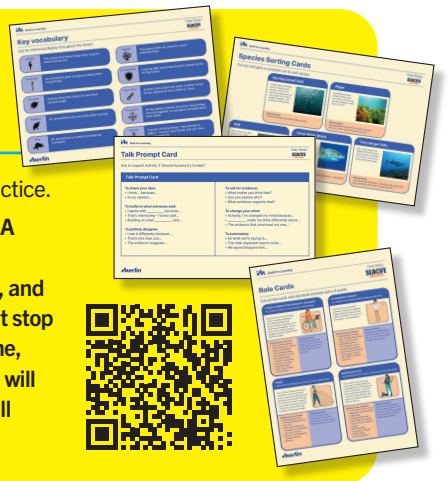
1. Is there anything that scares sharks?
2. What would happen if there were suddenly twice as many sharks?
3. Is any animal more important than another?
4. If the sun disappeared, what would happen to life in the ocean?
5. Should humans ever interfere with food chains?

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Can I TEACH THAT?

With new RSE guidance in place, what does inclusive LGBT+ education look like in primary schools in 2026?

JACK LYNCH

"What can and can't I teach about LGBT+ people under the new RSE guidance?"

Since the Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) Guidance 2026 for England was released, this has become one of the most common questions raised by primary school leaders and educators in our work with schools. The guidance includes a specific section on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender content, and it's this section that has caused concern for many schools we work with.

> *"Inclusivity is broader than teaching about LGBT+ identities alone"*

On one hand, the guidance stresses 'equality and respect' throughout a pupil's education, stating that "*schools should encourage young people to consider how to express their views while remaining respectful of the opinions of others*." At the same time, it says, "*pupils should also be taught the facts and the law about biological sex and gender reassignment*," while noting that "*[...]beyond the facts and the law [...] there is significant debate, and they should be careful not to endorse any particular view or teach it as fact*."

Why this matters for schools

Many schools, educators, parents and families have told us this wording lacks clarity, leaving them with more questions than answers, and in some cases contributing to fear and division within school communities.

This comes against a troubling backdrop. Department for Education data shows that over 13,000 pupils have been suspended or excluded since 2021 for transphobic or homophobic abuse. Meanwhile, LGBT+ young people's mental wellbeing is at some of its lowest levels, with data showing that they're more likely to drop out of school, feel negative about their future and, when not shown positive representation, more likely to self-harm or experience suicidal thoughts.

Making every child and family feel included is a cornerstone of most primary schools' ethos. With that in mind, schools are asking:

- Can we still teach about LGBT+ people, and if so, how?
- How do we keep our curriculum trans and non-binary inclusive within these new boundaries?
- Where exactly is the line between teaching facts, encouraging discussion, and avoiding endorsement, and how do we stay confidently on the right side of it?

After months of scouring the legislation with our legal team at Pop'n'Olly, I can say with confidence that LGBT+ inclusive education is very possible under RSE 2026.

This is broader than teaching about LGBT+ identities alone. It's about teaching children that families can look different but are all characterised by love and care; that we aren't limited by gender in how we speak, behave or dress; and that there are many different ways to be human.

Family and relationship diversity

This guidance calls for schools to recognise that "*families of many forms provide a nurturing environment for children*", including same-sex parents, and that "*teaching should illustrate a wide range of family structures in a positive way*". This provides clarity that teaching about family diversity should be genuinely representative, helping children from all backgrounds see themselves reflected. In practice, this might include reading diverse



storybooks featuring LGBT+ and other diverse families, and using inclusive language such as 'grown-ups' rather than 'mum and dad'.

Tackling stereotyping

This guidance also targets gender stereotyping directly, stating pupils should learn "*how stereotypes can be unfair, negative, destructive or lead to bullying*" and that schools should "*avoid language or activities which repeat or enforce gender stereotypes*".

This matters because gender stereotypes often underpin homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and teaching about diversity reduces rates of bullying. This aligns with schools' duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.

In practice, this may include specific lessons tackling stereotypes (e.g. that anyone can do any job or play with any toys) and using examples of people who challenge stereotypes (e.g. female racing drivers as sporting role models), with an emphasis on respecting that everyone is different. Beyond the classroom this might look like using gender-neutral language ("I need two helpers" rather than "two strong boys") or grouping children in non-gendered ways so non-binary or gender-questioning children don't feel excluded.

Teaching about LGBT+ people

While the guidance is clear on including same-sex parents when teaching about family diversity and tackling stereotypes, there's no direct guidance on teaching about LGBT+ people explicitly, causing uncertainty. How you interpret and approach this will differ based on your specific setting. However, at no point is this guidance saying you cannot or should not teach that LGBT+ people exist.



With 63 per cent of 8–15 year olds knowing someone close to them who is LGBT+, and many schools having LGBT+ children and families themselves, numerous schools are ensuring children know what LGBT+ means, and that it's simply another way to be human, deserving of the same respect as everyone else. This is both because it reflects their ethos of equality and respect, and because it prepares children for life in a diverse society.

This can include books with positive LGBT+ representation, drop-in curriculum references (e.g. a maths question involving 'Michael's two dads'), or lessons explaining what the acronym means. As with all teaching, ensure a clear learning objective aligned with your curriculum and values, demonstrating genuine educational purpose, not personal agenda.

I want to be clear. The new RSE guidance does not mean you must stop teaching about LGBT+ people or supporting LGBT+ pupils. Quality LGBT+ inclusive education is very much possible at primary level. What matters most is that schools are clearer than ever on how and why they're doing this: how it aligns with their ethos and wider inclusion work; whether policies clearly set out their position; their interpretation of the guidance and specifically addressing LGBT+ bullying; and how they're communicating with families about what RSE includes, to build understanding, trust and transparency.

Disclaimer: This information is not a substitute for legal advice and is solely intended to support good practice by offering general information on the legal principles relevant to LGBT+ education in schools. It is the responsibility of schools to know their own legal responsibilities and independent advice should be sought where necessary. TP

The key takeaways

- **Audit your books and curriculum texts**, ensuring representation of diverse families and people.
- **Tackle stereotypes actively and consistently** through specific lessons, curriculum examples, gender-neutral language and non-gendered groupings.
- **Embed, don't bolt on**, weaving LGBT+ references naturally into maths, literacy and topic work.
- **Build diverse representation** into displays and materials, including showing that people aren't limited by gender in how they speak, behave or dress.
- **Avoid grouping children by gender** so non-binary or gender-questioning pupils feel included,and don't have to to choose a group.
- **Revisit policies** regularly as guidance evolves, and seek legal advice where needed.
- **Communicate proactively with families** about what RSE includes, to build understanding, trust and transparency.



Jack Lynch is an educator specialising in diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). They are co-director and CEO at LGBT+ education CIC, Pop 'n' Olly.

popnolly.com

BEYOND THE GATES

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

EXPERT VIEW

Can trips support attendance and behaviour?

With timetables full, school trips aren't always a priority. But our School Trips Grant pilot confirmed that, done well, they support learning, attendance and inclusion.

Teacher Tapp data also showed that 30 per cent of teachers say curriculum pressures stop them running more trips. Yet we now have evidence that trips enhance learning – scored at more than nine out of 10 for meeting learning objectives. In short – trips work best when planned into the curriculum, instead of being tacked on.

They can also get children into school. "When we have a visit all the children attend," said one Cornish primary. At a school in Blackpool, staff saw pupils better manage their behaviour so they could join the next trip. Trips also helped staff connect with pupils who were anxious, isolated or new. As one deputy headteacher said, "you know a lot more about them by the end of [a] trip".



Tips for a transformative trip:

- Make it hands-on, so children are actively involved
- Link trips to your curriculum, bringing the classroom alive
- Offer first-time experiences that spark excitement and curiosity
- Be expert-led with skilled facilitators who pitch learning at the right level
- Build in opportunities for challenge, exploration and personal growth
- Consider free resources that can support your trip's participation



Cara Williams is schools programme manager at the Clore Duffield Foundation.

CURRICULUM LINKS



Science

Curriculum-linked visits for EYFS to KS4 combine hands-on workshops with opportunities to explore Gunpowder Mills' industrial heritage and natural surroundings. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-GMtrip**



Geography

Skern Lodge's outdoor learning experiences include a varied programme of adventurous activities that make the most of the unique location. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-Skern**



History

Mount Cook's residentials focus on three areas of development: resilience and self-confidence; teamwork and cohesion; and independence and self-reflection. Find out more at **tinyurl.com/tp-MCtrip**

OUR BEST SCHOOL TRIP



"The coasts and conservation workshop was fun and engaging and the links to Spurn Point helped the children to relate to our local area. The practical activities encouraged the children to work as a team with all abilities being able to access the learning."
- Lynne Feeney, Year 3 Teacher

Visit **thedeep.co.uk** to book your trip now!

memories

WHAT'S ON...

- ✔ **SPACE EXPLORERS ACADEMY** (Running throughout 2027) Various venues. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-SEA27**
- ✔ **WHO LET THE GODS OUT?** (7 Feb 27 – 22 Mar 27) Polka Theatre, London. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-WLTGO27**
- ✔ **MINISTRY OF SCIENCE LIVE** (16 Feb 27) Regent Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-MoSL27**
- ✔ **TEACH REX** (15 Feb 27) The Tobacco Factory, Bristol. Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-TRBris27**



VENUE SPOTLIGHT

Would you follow the White Rabbit?

Step into a real-life Wonderland on an immersive adventure inspired by one of the most celebrated classics of English literature. Through a combination of immersive storytelling, interactive technology, live performance and spectacular 360° projections, students explore life-size iconic scenes from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as the story unfolds around them, making learning interactive, engaging and entertaining. The experience opens at Dock X, London, on 13 November; school tickets start from just £10 and are on sale from 6 October.

Find out more at **tinyurl.com/tp-AliceImmersive**

RESOURCE CORNER



Built for Learning

These ready-to-teach resources, including exclusive video content, will help you use attractions from rollercoasters and castles to iconic landmarks to explore curriculum concepts in memorable and engaging ways. **tinyurl.com/tp-BfL26**



Settlers and invaders

Are you focusing your school trip on the Vikings? Why not try this engaging art activity, before, after or even during your trip? Pupils will develop their sketching skills while focusing on the artistry and materials of this ancient civilisation. **tinyurl.com/tp-VikingArt**



Egyptian building

If you're heading to a museum to see artefacts from ancient Egypt, you can bring the incredible building prowess of the civilisation to life with this D&T project on constructing a stone lift. Perfect for hands-on history. **tinyurl.com/tp-StoneLift**

SCIENCE MUSEUM

REASONS TO TRY...

4 The Science Museum with KS2

From live science shows to spacesuits and even a real piece of the moon, bring learning to life for KS2...



1 LIVE SCIENCE SHOWS

Investigate forces, maths and energy in our curriculum-linked school show *Are we there yet? The Science and Maths of Motion* or go on an adventure through the human digestive system in *It Takes Guts*. Browse the full programme of live shows on our website.

2 *SPACE*

Discover iconic spacecraft, rocket engines, the spacesuit worn by the first Briton in space and even a real piece of the moon in our free *Space* gallery.

3 *WONDERLAB*

Explore everyday science, watch live experiments at the Chemistry Bar and see lightning demos in *Wonderlab*. KS2 groups go free during term time.

4 DOCUMENTARIES IN OUR IMAX 3D CINEMA

Discover incredible stories with our educational documentaries in IMAX 3D. Learn about animals who have learned to adapt in *Arctic: Our Frozen Planet 3D* (U) or step on board the International Space Station in *A Beautiful Planet 3D* (U).

Contact:
Visit: **sciencemuseum.org.uk/formal-education-groups**
Email: **info@sciencemuseumgroup.ac.uk**
Call: **033 0058 0058**

Key points

+ We host SEN days for schools to enjoy a quieter experience in our *Wonderlab* gallery. Learn more on our website.
+ Download our activity sheets and resources to guide your visit on our website.

WHY I LOVE...

ACADEMY21's flexible and personalised online provision



ABOUT ME:

NAME:
Claire

ROLE:
parent of Ellis, who joined Academy21 in Year 5 after struggling to attend school due to anxiety. He is now happily learning again.

It provided continuity

When Ellis could no longer manage attending school, I worried about how he would continue his education. Academy21 gave him that opportunity from home. He attended his afternoon lessons, interacted with his teachers and took part in learning. Seeing him access education again made a real difference. He felt heard, listened to and calm again.

It fostered independence

I was surprised by how well Ellis took to online learning. He had a set-up at home, and I was in the room next door. I could see him taking responsibility for his learning and becoming independent. He was comfortable in his environment, and could engage with his lessons. Seeing that confidence grow meant so much.

Anxiety and behaviour improved

I saw Ellis come back to himself. His anxiety had come out as aggressive behaviour, a lot of swearing and emotional distress. It became difficult for people to see beyond his behaviour to the actual child himself. But now my son's back – he's himself again. All of that has gone, and he is a happier and calmer individual.

It brought safety

Knowing Ellis was safe while he was learning was reassuring. Importantly, he felt comfortable, and I knew he was safe in his room. The school remained involved, with safeguarding checks and regular communication. The fact that Academy21 is an accredited provision is critical because it reinforces the sense of safety and trust.

Contact:
Visit: academy21.co.uk

SATS SPECIAL

42

Ahead of the game

Take the pressure off the SATs SPaG paper by turning prep into a playful competition to master word class



INSIDE THIS SECTION

45 Don't cage the curious cat
The wonder and excitement of KS1 science can teach us a lot about preparing for SATs in KS2

48 Put down the past papers...
While standard revision techniques can feel like flogging a dead horse, deconstructing the actual skills required is much more beneficial (and less boring!)

Ahead of THE GAME

Take the pressure off the SATs SPaG paper by turning prep into a playful competition to master word class, says **Sarah Farrell**...

Grammar lessons are a great opportunity to have fun in the primary classroom. With a range of quick, easily adaptable games and activities to hand, we can show children how creative they can be with grammar, while deepening their understanding at the same time.

Developing our pupils' understanding of word class enables them to speak more specifically about their writing, and to understand why a sentence does or does not work. Here are a few examples of my favourite word class games to use in the classroom.

Consequences

Give each child a piece of paper and tell them to write the first part of a sentence (e.g. a fronted adverbial) at the top of it, then fold it over backwards. Then, they pass their paper on to the next child, who will write the second part of the sentence (e.g. a determiner), and repeat until the sentence is complete (see *Fig.1*). This is a really fun way for children to be creative, and always results in ridiculous sentences.

SPaG-ticulate

Articulate is one of my favourite board games, so I decided to try doing SPaG-ticulate! This game can be played as a whole class or in small groups, using either the cards provided in the download link on the right, or your own versions. One child selects a category (or is given one) and they must describe the word in that category without using the word itself or using 'rhymes with...'. The description could be verbal or acted out (and often a mixture of the two!). If the class guess the word correctly, the child describing can move on to the next card. The aim is to see how many they can guess correctly in under one minute. This game is great for helping pupils to distinguish the difference between different word classes and to help them understand the difference in meaning, e.g. showing the difference between *may* and *can*.

Word Class Taboo

This is another game that can be played as a whole class or in small groups. A child takes a card and tries to describe the word class at the top of it while not using any of the words underneath. To add an extra level of challenge, you could say that they are also not allowed to give an example.

Mix and Match

This is a great game for giving children an opportunity to be active and creative. Children take a randomly generated adjective, noun,

"We can show children how creative they can be with grammar, while deepening their understanding at the same time"

Example:

Fronted adverbial	This morning,
Determiner	a
Adjective	sparkly
Noun	spider
Verb	drove
Adverb	quietly
Preposition	through
Determiner	the
Adjective	crazy
Noun	books

Fig 1.



adjective	noun	verb	adverb
angry	dog	reading	quickly

Fig 2.

verb and adverb (e.g. *angry dog reading quickly. See Fig 2.*) and act it out for a partner, small group or the class to guess. The words could be generated in several different ways: pupils could write suggestions on small pieces of paper and place them in four bowls labelled with the word class; half the class could come up with an adjective and noun combination while the other half come up with a verb and adverb combination; or each child could write down a set of four words on a strip of paper which they pick randomly out of a bowl.

Card Sort

This game is aimed at helping children to distinguish between verbs and nouns, including words that can be used as both. Give out a selection of cards (e.g., *park*, *book*, *door*, *skip*) and get children to sort them into three piles: those that are only nouns, those that are only verbs and those that can be used as both. Children could also be asked to add their own words to each pile. To extend the game, you could then challenge them to create silly sentences using each word.



Word Class Snap

This is a great game for thinking quickly! Provide pupils with a set of cards that each have a word on them. They play *Snap* as normal, but are looking to match words that are in the same word class, and must say that word class before claiming the cards. For example, if both 'park' and 'close' are put down, a child could say that both are verbs and claim both cards.

Word Class Switch

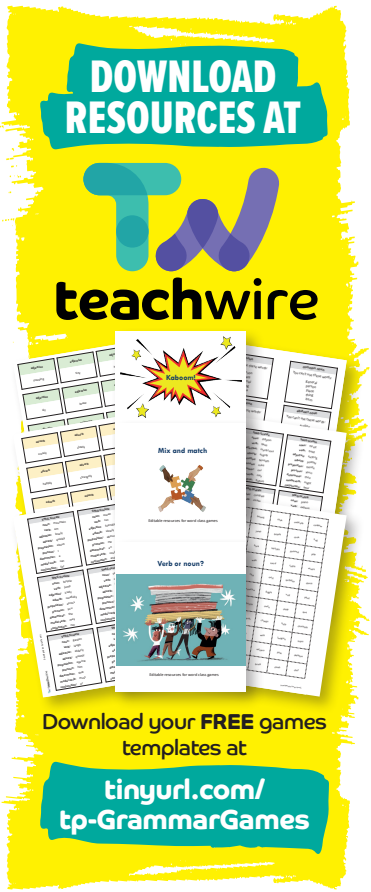
Provide a sentence (either on a card or written on the board) with one word highlighted, e.g. *I would like to read a* ***book***. Children then take it in turns to replace the word while still making a sentence that makes sense and is grammatically correct. This is a great game for helping children to find different examples of word classes, but also to practise making changes to sentences so that they still make sense. Determiners are a great one to highlight, as children will often realise that they know more than they think they do!

Word Popcorn

This is a great game to play in pairs or small groups. When given a word class (either on a card or displayed on the board), children take it in turns to give an example (e.g., for 'adjective', children could say *purple*, *huge*, *tiny*, etc.). You could also add in restrictions or challenges, such as 'must start with a vowel'. This is a quick game with very little preparation needed, which makes it useful for the start of a lesson.

Sentence Change

This is a great game to allow children to be creative while still deepening their understanding of word classes. First, write a sentence on the board, e.g. *I ate some bread because I was hungry*. Then, as a class, go through and identify the different word classes in the sentence and annotate it on the board. Next, pupils can write their own sentences based on the structure of the one provided, being as creative as possible! The actual content of the sentence can be as silly as they like, as the focus is on recognising and using different word classes.



Word Class Kaboom!

This is a really fun game to play in the classroom. It takes a little more preparation initially, but it can then be used over and over again. On strips of card, write a short instruction, such as 'Define an adjective' or 'Give an example of a verb'. Children take it in turns to pick one out of a pot and answer it. If they get it right, they keep the strip in front of them. If they get it wrong, it goes back into the pot. If they pull out a strip that says 'Kaboom!', they have to put all strips that they have collected back into the pot and start again. **TP**



Sarah Farrell is a KS2 teacher in Bristol who makes and shares resources online.

@SarahFarrellKS2

tinyurl.com/tp-SarahFarrell

WHY I LOVE...

Primary school teacher Cheryl Shirley discusses how the new LEGO® Education Computer Science & AI kits and resources have supported her teaching...

ABOUT US:



NAME:
Cheryl Shirley
JOB TITLE:
Director of digital, LEO Academy Trust
FAVOURITE LEGO EDUCATION FEATURE: levelling the playing field for non-specialist staff



Talking About: LEGO® EDUCATION COMPUTER SCIENCE & AI KITS

What do you like most about teaching with LEGO® Education?

What I like most is that it breaks down the traditional classroom hierarchy. Instead of the teacher having all the answers, it creates a collaborative space where pupils and teachers learn, experiment, and solve problems together. Combined with hands-on building and Coding Canvas, it turns complex AI into a shared journey of discovery.

How did the teacher portal support you?

The step-by-step lesson guides and ready-made presentation slides dramatically reduced prep time and boosted non-specialist teacher confidence. Clear curriculum alignment ensured key learning objectives were met systematically, while built-in assessment tools made tracking pupil progress straightforward. Together, these portal resources provided a reliable scaffold that made integrating physical computing and AI concepts simple and structured for every classroom teacher.

How would you describe the coding environment in Coding Canvas?

Coding Canvas is highly intuitive, using pin-based access that lets pupils quickly launch starter code without login barriers. The block-based design scales smoothly from simple icon sequences to text-based blocks, offering a clear learning progression. Immediate physical feedback keeps students deeply engaged, while colourful, visual elements ensure accessibility for learners of all abilities.

Contact:
Download the full report on **LEGOeducation.com** More information online or come and see LEGO Education at Bett 2027!

How do pupils respond emotionally?

Pupils respond with high enthusiasm and visible pride. Building physical models turns abstract code into tangible results, creating wow moments that boost confidence. Even when troubleshooting code or AI inputs, the playful nature of LEGO Education makes mistakes feel like fun challenges rather than frustrating failures.

How does the solution support different types of pupils?

The solution supports all learners with a low-floor, high-ceiling design. Visual, block-based coding and hands-on building make concepts clear and accessible for neurodivergent and lower-attaining pupils. Meanwhile, open-ended AI challenges naturally stretch high attainers without extra planning.

What would you tell your colleagues?

I strongly recommend trust-wide adoption across our MAT. Beyond boosting pupil engagement, it creates a powerful shared understanding that complements our wider AI strategy. By fostering cross-school teacher collaboration, it upskills non-specialists and builds collective staff confidence—ensuring we prepare both our workforce and the children we serve for an AI-driven future together.

WILL IT WORK FOR YOU?

- Demystifies complex tech into accessible, joyful, hands-on discovery
- Upskills non-specialist staff, and reduce anxiety around using AI
- A low-floor, high-ceiling design makes concepts clear and accessible
- Clear curriculum alignment ensures key learning

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Don't cage the CURIOUS CAT

The wonder and excitement of KS1 science can teach us a lot about preparing for SATs in KS2, says **Sandra Beale**

In the Early Years and Key Stage 1, children are constantly exploring, questioning and making sense of their world. Their scientific thinking is present in everything they do: in the way they watch water flow from a tap, the way they compare the size of leaves, or the way they ask why shadows change shape. Yet capturing this thinking – and turning it into meaningful evidence – can feel overwhelming for teachers who are already stretched for time.

However, gathering high quality science evidence doesn't need to be complicated or time consuming, In fact, tapping into children's natural curiosity, and ditching the rigid assessment tick-boxes, can produce some of the most valuable insights. This often means that we can focus on simple, low stress approaches woven naturally into everyday classroom life.

Even though KS1 science is not part of the optional SATs tests, carrying out these kinds of assessments regularly can also strengthen your confidence in judgements across the curriculum.

The power of watching

Observation is one of the most effective tools we have. It requires no special equipment, no formal recording sheets and no interruption to children's learning. Instead, it's about tuning into the small details of how pupils interact with materials, each other and the world around them.

A simple observation might include recording phrases such as: "I think the magnet sticks because the metal is strong"; "If we drop a pebble into water it will sink, if we put a feather in, it will float," and "The shadow is bigger now because the light moved".

These short exchanges demonstrate children's grasp of cause and effect, their ability to make connections and their understanding of scientific vocabulary. Recording a few key sentences during an activity can provide powerful insight into how children think.

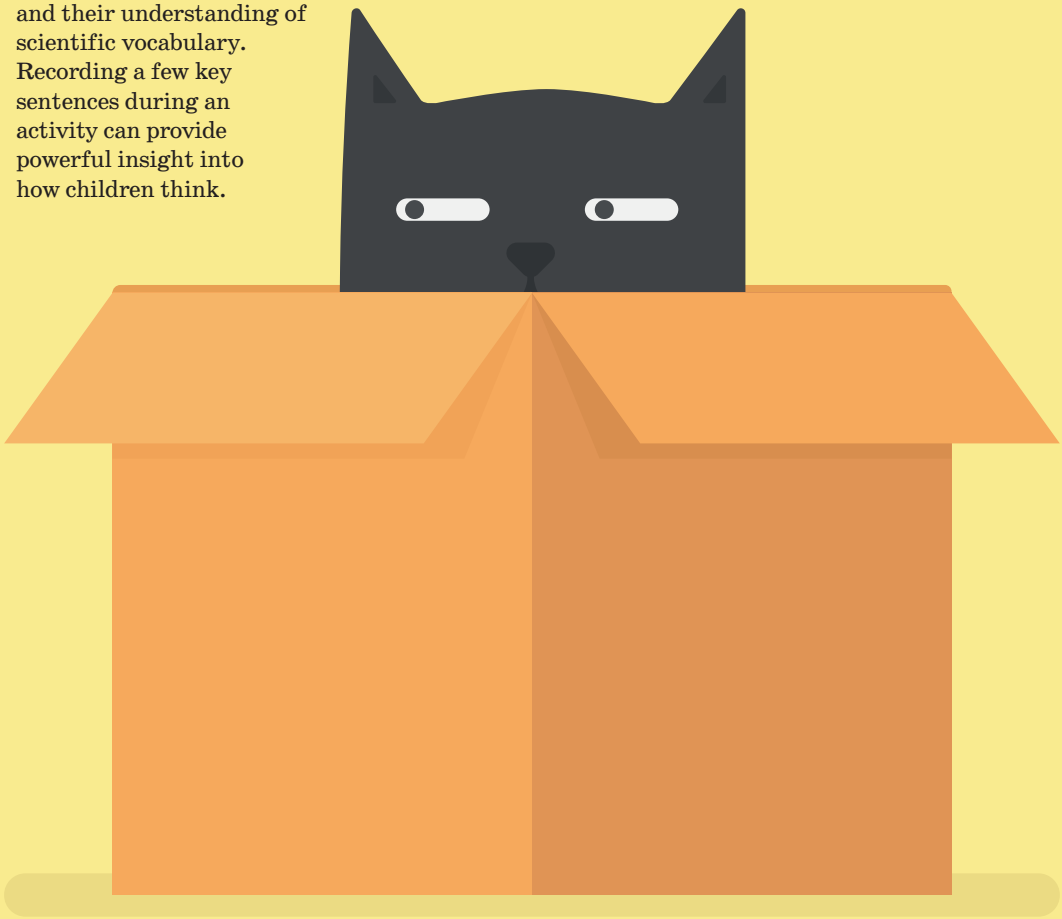
You don't need to write everything down, either. One or two well chosen quotations can be enough to show progression, understanding and curiosity.

No interruptions

Photographs are one of the easiest and most effective ways to document science learning. They allow us to capture moments without stopping children's flow of exploration. Photos can show the process (children testing ideas, building, sorting, and comparing); the outcome (structures, experiments, and creations); and the interaction (collaboration, discussion, and shared problem solving).

A photo paired with a short caption – even just one sentence – can provide clear evidence of scientific thinking. For example, "*Testing different surfaces to see which makes the car travel furthest,*" or "*Sorting natural materials by texture and size*".

This approach is quick, unobtrusive and highly effective for building a visual record of learning.



Small records, big ideas

Teachers often feel pressure to produce detailed written evidence, but in many cases, quick notes are more than enough. A few bullet points, a sticky note or a short digital entry can capture the essence of a child's scientific thinking. Useful quick notes might include:

- a child's prediction
- a question they asked
- a moment of problem solving
- a new word they used
- a change in their approach or understanding

You can add these notes to individual profiles, group records or whole class overviews. They help track progression without adding unnecessary workload.

Low-stress and meaningful

Science is already happening all around you. The goal is simply to notice it, value it and record it in ways that feel manageable and meaningful.

Ultimately, the goal of gathering scientific evidence in KS1 is not to prepare children for a test, but to build a clear, confident understanding of how they think and learn. Science offers a unique window into children's reasoning: it shows how they make predictions, test ideas, adapt their thinking and communicate their understanding. When we capture these moments, we create a rich, authentic record of learning that supports assessment far beyond the science curriculum. This kind of evidence practice then strengthens our judgements in literacy, maths and wider foundation subjects, because it reveals how children apply knowledge, language and problem solving skills in real contexts.

The 'wow!' moment

A perfect example of how easy it is to gather meaningful evidence is the magnetic suspension experiment. It's quick to set up, low effort, and utterly captivating for KS1 children. Best of all, it creates rich opportunities for observation, prediction, questioning and explanation.

All you need is a magnet, a paper clip, a piece of string and sticky tape. Tie the paper clip to one end of the string and secure the other end to the table with tape so the clip hangs freely. Then, using the magnet, lift the paper clip and gently pull upwards until you create a small 'pocket' of magnetic suspension – a moment where the paper clip appears to hover in mid air.

You can take this experiment even further by attaching feathers to the paper clip, so it looks as though the feathers themselves are levitating. This tiny twist transforms the activity from interesting to truly magical. Children are instantly captivated by the sight of feathers 'floating' in mid-air, and their curiosity deepens as they try to work out what's really happening.

"Ditching the rigid assessment tick-boxes can produce some of the most valuable insights"

This simple adaptation opens up even more opportunities for assessment. Pupils begin to compare how different materials behave, question whether heavier objects would 'hover' in the same way, and test how far the magnet can be moved before the feathers drop. Their predictions, explanations and observations provide rich evidence of scientific thinking. It's a perfect reminder that meaningful assessment doesn't need to be formal or time consuming; it can grow naturally from moments of wonder.

A playful, imaginative experiment like this reinforces the idea that science in KS1 is about curiosity, exploration and joyful discovery. And when we capture these moments thoughtfully, they build a clear, authentic picture of how children reason, question and make sense of the world, supporting confident assessment across the curriculum. **TP**



Sandra Beale is the founder of Toddler and Early Years STEM, and a leading toddler STEM expert.

@toddlerandearlyyearsstem

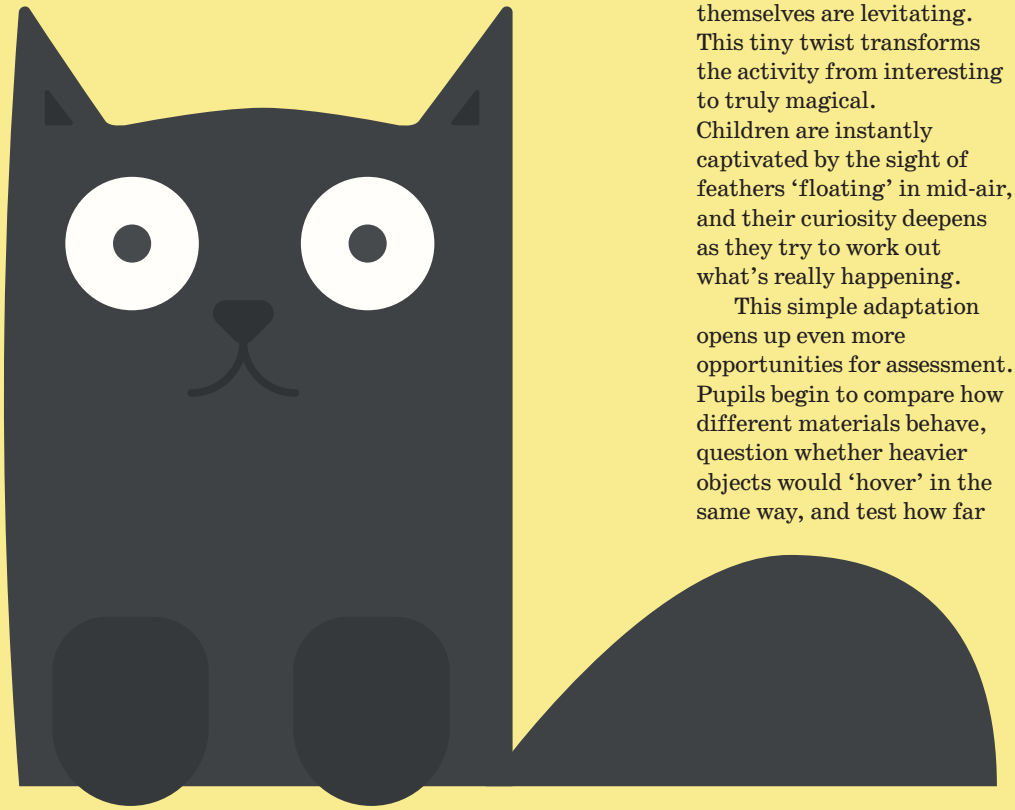
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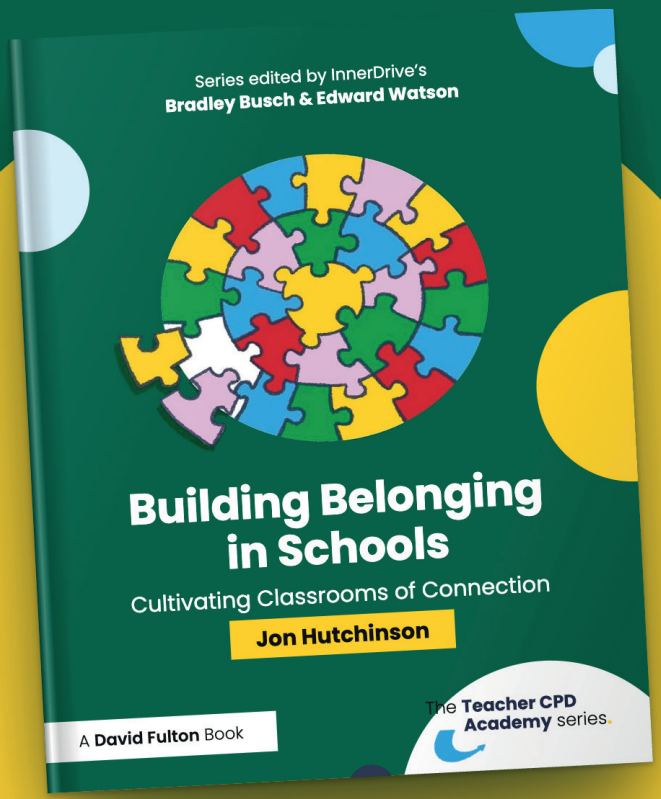


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"Very few books shift a national conversation. *Building Belonging in Schools* is one of them."

Mary Myatt
Education writer and speaker

BY JON HUTCHINSON, OUT 20 NOVEMBER

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Put down the PAST PAPERS...

While standard revision techniques can feel like flogging a dead horse, deconstructing the skills required is more beneficial (and less boring!)

JON CRIPWELL

After more than a decade teaching Year 6, I have filled cupboards with old SATs papers. I have marked them, analysed them, highlighted gaps, and, at times, probably convinced myself that completing another one counted as good teaching ahead of that annual May date looming in the distance.

Practice papers do matter. Children need to know what the tests look like; they need some experience of working to time, deciding when to move on and sustaining concentration for a whole paper, something that can be surprisingly demanding for some pupils. And, of course, teachers also need to know where the gaps are.

But there is a point at which another paper only tells us something we already know.

If a child keeps getting fraction questions wrong, giving them six more fraction questions under test conditions is unlikely to solve the problem. The real value of the paper comes in what we do with it afterwards.

Marking doesn't equal learning

One of the biggest changes I made in Year 6 was to stop seeing the marking of practice papers as an admin task: something to get through in order to produce some data.

Of course, there were times when I genuinely needed that data. But while marking papers at home and handing them back the next day might have given me a little information about where we were on our journey towards May, it only ever taught the children that they got 27 on their arithmetic paper.

"I would rather mark at least part of a paper with the class. Pick the questions worth talking about"

Where possible, I would rather mark at least part of a paper with the class. Not question by question, answer by answer, until everyone (including me) loses the will to live. Instead, pick the questions worth talking about. Find one where several children made the same error. Find one that produced three different methods, or one where the calculation was straightforward, but the question had been misunderstood. Then talk.



What did you notice first? What was the question actually asking? Why did that method work? Where did this solution go wrong? Is there another way? Which approach is most efficient here? How could we check? Those conversations are crucial, in my opinion, because they help children to notice the decisions mathematicians make.

Questions first

There is another habit worth challenging: saving the SATs question until the end of the lesson. I understand why we do it. Teach the skill, practise it, then finish with a test-style application. The problem is that the pupils who most need help making the link are often the pupils who never get to the final question. Why not try putting the question first?

Show the class a SATs-style question linked to the day's learning. Give them a minute to think individually, then discuss what they notice and perhaps make a start. Don't worry if they can't solve it yet. That's the point. Teach the lesson. Build the mathematics. Then return to the same question at the end. Now what can you see that you could not see before? What have you learned that gives you a way in? What would you do first?

For pupils, there can be something quite powerful about returning to a question that looked inaccessible 40 minutes earlier and realising that they now know what to do.

What now?

We sometimes tell pupils to "have a go" as though willingness were the missing ingredient – when in fact, the biggest problem they may face is that they genuinely do not know what to try next. Teaching problem-solving more explicitly doesn't mean teaching a trick for every possible SATs question, but giving pupils a repertoire of approaches they can call on:

- spot a pattern
- work systematically
- draw or use a model
- try something and improve it
- change the way the problem is represented
- connect it to something more familiar

The important part is helping pupils recognise when one of those approaches might be useful. This is where teacher modelling really matters. I am a big fan of thinking aloud, including the bits we often edit out when we model a polished solution. "I'm not sure this is the best method," or "That answer feels too large," or "I've tried this and it hasn't helped, so I'm going to represent it differently." That is metacognition in a form children can actually use. When it's done freehand on a flip chart or whiteboard, pupils get to see the decisions being made, the false starts and the changes of direction, rather than only being shown the finished thinking.

Do less, better

There is still a place for timed practice. The first time a child discovers that 40 minutes can disappear quickly should not be during the real test. But ask yourself: is a full paper every week from Christmas onwards the best use of Year 6 maths time?

Repeated testing without enough teaching in between can simply rehearse the same mistakes. So use papers. Just squeeze as much learning out of them as possible. Mark some together. Discuss the awkward questions. Compare methods. Put individual questions into normal lessons. Use them before teaching as well as after it. Model what to do when the answer is not obvious. Give pupils language for explaining the decisions they make.

The aim is not to make children brilliant at practice papers. It is to make them better mathematicians, who happen to be ready for a test. TP



5 SATS PREP IDEAS TO TRY

1 The examiner's desk
Give pairs three anonymous answers to the same question. Ask them to award the marks and justify each decision using a simplified mark scheme. It makes accuracy, workings and mathematical communication worth discussing.

2 Write the question
Give pupils an answer, such as 2.4 kg or 35%, and ask them to create a plausible SATs-style question that has that answer. Swap with another pair and solve.

3 Which one would you do first?
Display four mixed questions. Pupils choose the order they would attempt them in and explain why. There is no single correct order. The discussion is about confidence, time and decision-making.

4 Change one thing
Take a familiar question and alter one number, condition or piece of information. Ask: what changes in the solution and what stays the same?

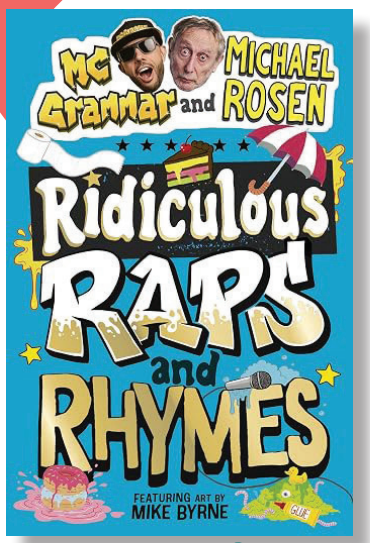
5 The 90-second start
Give pupils 90 seconds with a problem, but tell them they are not expected to finish it. Their job is only to decide how they would begin. Compare starting points before anyone calculates.



Jon Cripwell is a primary maths specialist, writer and speaker with more than 18 years' experience in education. He is now national primary maths lead at Twinkl, and co-host of **The Primary Maths Podcast.**




© Jenny Smith



RIDICULOUS RAPS AND RHYMES

Michael Rosen & MC Grammar

Play the podcast and bring real authors into your classroom, inspiring great writing from every pupil...

Rap is a powerful form of spoken poetry that has its roots in the long tradition of oral storytelling and performance. Through exploring the work of Michael Rosen and MC Grammar in their new book, *Ridiculous Raps and Rhymes*, pupils will discover how rhythm, rhyme and wordplay combine to create engaging and memorable performances. They will learn to listen closely to the sounds and patterns of language, experiment with collaborative writing, and develop confidence as performers. Working with a partner, children will plan, write, refine and perform their own original raps, celebrating creativity, teamwork and the true joy of language.



© Jenny Smith

5 TIPS FROM THE AUTHOR

Rhythm over rhyme
Rhythm matters just as much as rhyme when writing a rap – think about how the words sound and flow when spoken aloud.

Say it before you write it
Play around with words and lines out loud first. You don't need to write anything down until it feels right.

Every word earns its place
Choose words carefully – a strong rap doesn't waste lines. Each one should add rhythm, meaning or humour.

Write with a partner
Take turns adding lines, listen to each other's ideas, and build on them together. Raps often get stronger through collaboration.

Perform with expression
Once you've drafted your rap, rehearse it. Experiment with pace, volume and expression to bring the words to life.





HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

1 Listen to the podcast

Start by listening to the *Author in Your Classroom* podcast – you can find it wherever you get your podcasts, at **teachwire.net/podcasts** or by scanning the QR code on the right.

It's divided into three sections, so you can listen in one go or spread it across your sessions.

It's entertaining, thought-provoking and you'll even hear Michael perform a rap on the fly, with beats from MC Grammar! You heard it here first...

2 Explore the teaching pack

Once you've listened to the podcast, work through the teaching sequence. Use the PowerPoint slides to spark discussion, the first two planning sheets to help children 'bank' their ideas and map out their raps, and the working wall materials to build a growing display of inspiration. Planning sheet three then supports a vital skill: teaching children how to give each other kind, specific and constructive feedback on their finished work.

3 Read the book

If you can, get hold of a copy of *Ridiculous Raps and Rhymes* (out now!) for your class to enjoy – before, during or after the sessions, where you'll join Michael 'The Mic' Rosen and MC Grammar on a riotous rhyming adventure! From school to the zoo, the beach to the museum, this rapping duo takes readers on a one-of-a-kind quest, packed with mischief and hilarity. Expect chocolate cake rhymes, hissing snake raps, and everything ridiculously silly in between. It's a high-energy, laugh-out-loud celebration of poetry, rhythm and rhyme.

MC GRAMMAR SAYS...

"You can't be a good rapper if you're not a good reader. How're you gonna build those worlds of rhymes without the words? You gotta be reading if you wanna be rapping."

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EACH EPISODE COMES WITH:

- **Teaching notes**
- **Planning sheets**
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CHECK THESE OUT



LOUIE STOWELL



KONNIE HUQ

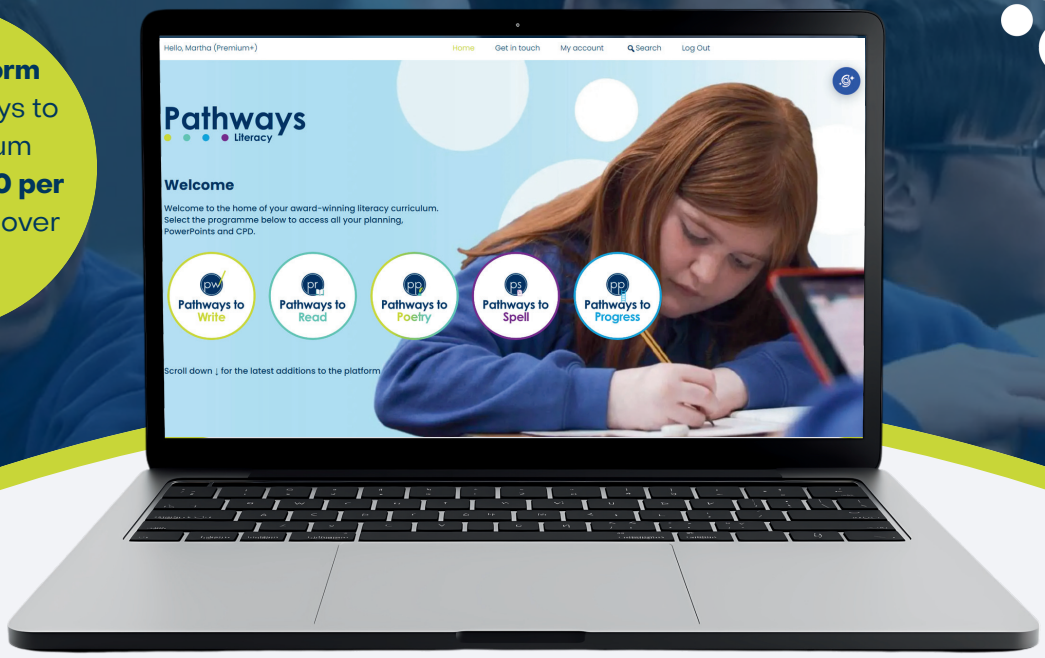


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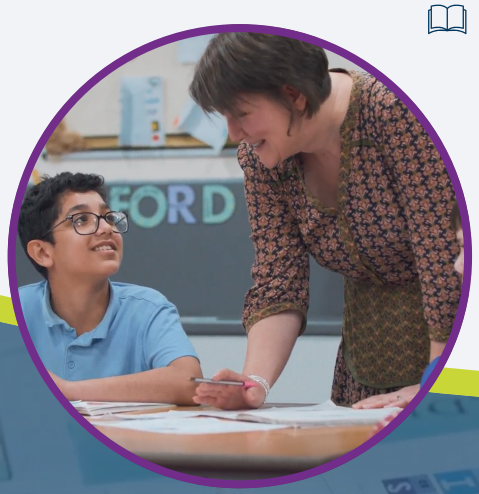
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Published by Thames and Hudson, 2023

The Brainiac's Book of Robots And AI

Delve into the difference between robots and AI, and task children with conjuring up their own creative ideas, with Paul Virr's informational powerhouse...

KAREN HART

This new addition to the Brainiacs series of KS2 information books is packed with facts to amaze readers, inspiring them to investigate the world of robotics and artificial intelligence. It's not all sci-fi glamour though; author Paul Virr introduces his readers to the multitude of robots doing all the dull, dirty and dangerous work in our world, such as cleaning sewers and mapping inside fiery volcanoes. This book offers a wealth of inspiration for creative writing activities as well as informational and instruction reporting. Everything is presented through lively, age-appropriate text, and fun, colourful illustrations, all accompanied by ROB3RTA, our robot guide.

A great book to read and share with your class, I found the best way to use it as a resource was to read through – skipping over the hands-on exercises until we were ready to do them, and recapping individual sections as we focused on them. It's a good idea to keep the book readily available for children too, so they can study areas of interest and look at the pictures in more detail.

Talking about the book

Read pages six to 11 with your class (from 'Robots: Fact or Fantasy?' to 'Spot the Bot!'). Ask pupils if they know what is meant by the terms *robot* and *AI*. Possible explanations include:

Robot – a machine built to carry out tasks by itself using computerised instructions.

How robots work – they use sensors such as cameras or touch pads to find out what is happening around them. They figure things out, using their 'computer brain', and decide what to do with the information, and they take action to complete their job using the mechanisms they were built with.

Uses for robots – small home vacuum cleaners that move around the floor on their own, sensing obstacles in their way; space rovers exploring the rocky ground on planet Mars; and mechanical arms helping to build objects, such as cars,

AI (Artificial Intelligence) – a computerised program that is taught to spot patterns and solve problems in a similar way to humans, although it doesn't have a real brain or any feelings.

How AI works – AI is trained by being 'fed' millions of real-world examples of lots of different things. The information going in is made up of things such as pictures, written text, audio recordings, and computer code. AI can spot patterns in these things – such as mice having long tails, round ears, and whiskers, for example – then go on to make a 'smart guess' about new information it comes across.

Uses for AI – video games that 'learn' your moves so they can play with you; spam filters that look for junk emails on your computer; and Google Maps using AI to track best journey options.

Being as imaginative as possible, what ideas can your class come up with for a robotic or AI device that would make their lives better in some way? E.g. an AI-programmed bedroom tidying machine, or a robot pet dog that can walk itself on cold, wet days.

Activities

Writing an algorithm

Read page 26, 'How Do You Program a Robot?', to your class.
Follow up by recapping the meaning of an algorithm: *a set of instructions that a robot's computer can use to help solve a problem, or use to make a decision about what to do.*

After reading this section of the book, go on to complete the 'Maze Escape' task as a class, before setting pupils the challenge of creating their own robot algorithm for one of the following tasks:

- How to brush your teeth
- How to make a cup of tea
- How to make a jam sandwich

Remind pupils that they have to include every detail of the action, e.g. *Take the toothbrush from the toothbrush mug, then pick up the toothpaste from the sink. Hold the toothbrush in one hand and the toothpaste in the other...* etc.
Remind them that if they miss a step, the algorithm will fail.

Ask for volunteers to share their work with the class.

A day in the life

Read pages 28 to 37, 'Jobs for Robots', to your class. If pupils were



robots, which one of these jobs would they like most? Which one would they like least?

Ask pupils to imagine they are a robot that has somehow gained human feelings. Ask them to pick one of the jobs described in the book, and in their exercise books, write a diary entry describing their working day. If pupils need a bit of help to get started, they can use the following writing framework:

'Today I went to work as a ***(cleaner robot)*** *again. It was very boring. I don't mind working in* ***(a hospital)****, but having to* ***(clean all the floors)*** *is not very nice. Today I* ***(ran into a pair of very pongy trainers!)****'*

Remind pupils to include the job they must do every day, where they work, the things they did and saw, and what happened to them today. If time allows, let the children draw a picture of their robot to accompany their diary entry.

Take it further

STORY JAR ART

Many of us are familiar with using a story jar filled with prompt slips to kick-start creative writing, but they can also be used as a way to fire up an art activity.
Start in the usual way, by having a large jar, basket, or box filled with slips of paper, but in this case, they contain the information needed to draw a prototype design for a robot. Some examples could include:

Babysitting robot – eyes in the back of its head to see what all the children are up to; extendable arms to quickly catch little children if they run too far away; and a built-in TV in case children get bored while out –and about.

Dog walking robot – big, strong hands for holding lots of leads; a built-in doggy treat dispenser; and a hook for carrying dog-poo bags.

Chef – a built-in whisk hand; a chef's hat that doubles up as a mixing bowl; and X-ray goggles to check there are no hairs in the dessert or bugs in the salad.

You can make the instructions as imaginative as you like, and you can make several copies of the same instructions, as it will be interesting to see how individual children come up with different designs using the same brief. You could also use briefs that children have written themselves.



My robot friend

Read page 44, 'Robots That Care'. As a class, talk about the idea of having a humanoid robot friend. What do pupils think about this? Do they think they could feel about them the same way they feel about a real person?

Working as a class, come up with some words or terms that could be used to describe a robot friend, or reasons they like them, writing these on the board. Contributions can be anything at all – the idea is to get imaginations fired up.

Some suggestions could be:

- Always happy
- Curious/inquisitive
- Polite
- Fun
- Helpful
- Supportive
- Helps you tidy your room

Follow this by asking pupils to draw a picture of their robot friend in the middle of a sheet of paper, leaving enough space around the edges to label their characteristics. Ask the children to label their pictures, 'My Robot Friend'.

Story prompts

Working as a class, instruct pupils that they will be working together to write a story about a robot. They will collaborate to collect ideas; break the story structure down into characters, setting and plot; and then construct a beginning, a middle and an end.

Ask for robot character suggestions – just minimal detail about the character at this stage, such as a shy robot, or a robot everyone thought was nice but was secretly evil! Go on to ask for other characters that could make the story interesting – other robots, human characters, or animals. Write these suggestions on the board in one column titled, *Characters*.

Next, do the same thing for a column titled *Settings*. Some suggestions: a scientific laboratory, the planet Mars, a school or a supermarket. Now you can gather more plot ideas from the children, combining the two columns. E.g. 'A robot gets lost in a cave'. Finally, you can discuss all the ideas as a class to come up with a longer outline together, such as:

'In a futuristic supermarket where humanoid AI robots serve customers, a robot called Robert has the job of stacking the shelves. No one knows, but he has always secretly wanted a LEGO set. One evening, when the managers of the supermarket think all the robots have powered-down in the storeroom for the night, Robert sneaks back into the main store and steals a Jurassic Park LEGO set, hiding it under a bench at the back of the storeroom...'

Loved this? Try these...

- *AI For Smart Kids* by Dr Leo Lexicon
- *Think Big: Artificial Intelligence* by Dr Nomisha Kurian
- *Hey kid, what's that AI thing? Understanding Artificial Intelligence for Kids* by August Phoenix Vellor
- *Clever: Robot & AI Questions* by Julia Adams
- *The Wild Robot* by Peter Brown

Go on to write three more columns titled, *Beginning*, *Middle*, and *End*. For example:

Beginning – a fire-fighting robot is about to fight a huge fire in an old disused factory...

Middle – it's the robot's first day on the job and it turns out they're afraid of fire, and they're frozen to the spot!

End – the robot's sensor detects a cat stuck on the factory roof. The robot knows he must save it and suddenly feels very brave. Robot saves the cat and helps put the fire out.

Using all this information, and the framework provided, instruct pupils to write their own story using the characters, settings and themes on the board as inspiration. TP



Karen Hart is an independent drama teacher, literacy workshop organiser, author and freelance writer.

@Karen.Journalist

Ask each pupil to choose a slip of paper from the jar. Giving everyone a sheet of drawing paper to design their robot on, instruct pupils to follow their brief while letting their imaginations run wild – then see what they come up with!

Ask for volunteers to show their designs to the class before putting them together in a 'Robot Inventions' book.

ROBOT CRAFT

Task children with building their very own robot! Since primary school classrooms aren't robotics labs, we used found materials (such as cardboard, googly eyes, and pipe cleaners) rather than complex digital equipment, but the children had a lot of fun designing and constructing.

You'll need:

- Cardboard tubes about the size of the inside of a loo roll. Have a batch of these ready before you start.
- Craft box materials, such as wobbly eyes, pipe cleaners, coloured paper, foil, etc.
- Glue sticks
- Felt tip pens
- Lots of sticky tape – masking tape is much easier to use for younger age groups as they can tear it easily.

We started by looking at images of robots on the internet as inspiration, then children simply used their imaginations and referenced the ideas we'd already discussed, to create their own robot models.

Finally, take photos of everyone's work, encouraging pupils to give their robot a name before taking it home.

WHAT IF...?

One small question is all you need to change worlds... and supercharge children's writing, says **David Solomons**

Children are already writing speculative fiction all the time. They just don't call it that because 'speculative fiction' sounds like the sort of phrase somebody says shortly before launching a podcast.

The moment a child asks, "What if...?", the process has already started.

What if lunchtime lasted forever? What if nobody was allowed to whisper? What if good manners were enforced by the state?

That instinct sits underneath the entire genre. Speculative fiction starts by changing one thing and following the consequences seriously. Dragons and time travel obviously count, but so do smaller shifts that tilt ordinary life slightly off balance. A school where every pupil receives a politeness score. An academy chain where forgetting homework counts as a public offence.

In classroom terms, speculative fiction can feel much more manageable than simply being told to write a story. Instead of inventing an entire plot from nowhere, pupils are changing one thing and following the consequences.

Stories start organising themselves surprisingly quickly, because each new rule creates new problems.

I was never especially good at those blank-page moments at school. I would sit with my pen hovering uselessly above the paper, convinced that proper writers must somehow receive ideas fully formed, like divine transmissions or parking fines. What I didn't realise at the time was that the question itself was the useful part. I just didn't know how to follow it through.

Start at the very beginning

The strongest speculative stories usually begin somewhere ordinary: a classroom before registration, the walk home from school, a kitchen table. Familiarity matters, because readers need something steady to hold onto before the world shifts sideways.

From there, ask pupils to change one rule. This can be trickier than it sounds: young writers rarely stop at one, admittedly; more often, magical powers, robot uprisings and an invasion from another dimension all arrive before the second paragraph. The ambition is admirable, but the resulting story usually collapses almost immediately.

Reinforce that one clear change is often enough; as soon as the rule exists, the interesting questions begin surfacing automatically. Who benefits from it? Who struggles with it? What happens when somebody fails to follow the rule properly?

That's usually the point where the story starts taking shape.



A whole new world

Children often assume world-building means explaining everything. In reality, readers understand invented worlds much faster through small moments of tension: a teacher checking the corridor before answering a question honestly, or a pupil apologising for something that should not require an apology at all.

Language choices matter enormously in speculative fiction, because atmosphere does so much of the storytelling. A character who walks into a room feels very different from one who *hovers outside the doorway* or *edges reluctantly towards a desk*. Sentence length shapes mood as well. Short sentences sharpen tension, while longer ones allow discomfort to build more gradually, giving readers time to notice details gathering quietly at the edges of a scene. Similes and metaphors help, too, because they give readers something familiar to hold onto inside an unfamiliar world.

Most importantly, a well-built world is just a passive background until a character pushes against it. The story really begins when somebody wants something that the rules make difficult, or quietly begins questioning rules everybody else accepts without hesitation…

Bring it to life

One useful exercise is to begin somewhere painfully ordinary and specific. Not *a school*, but *Tuesday afternoon maths during the final week of term*. Specificity helps strange ideas feel believable.

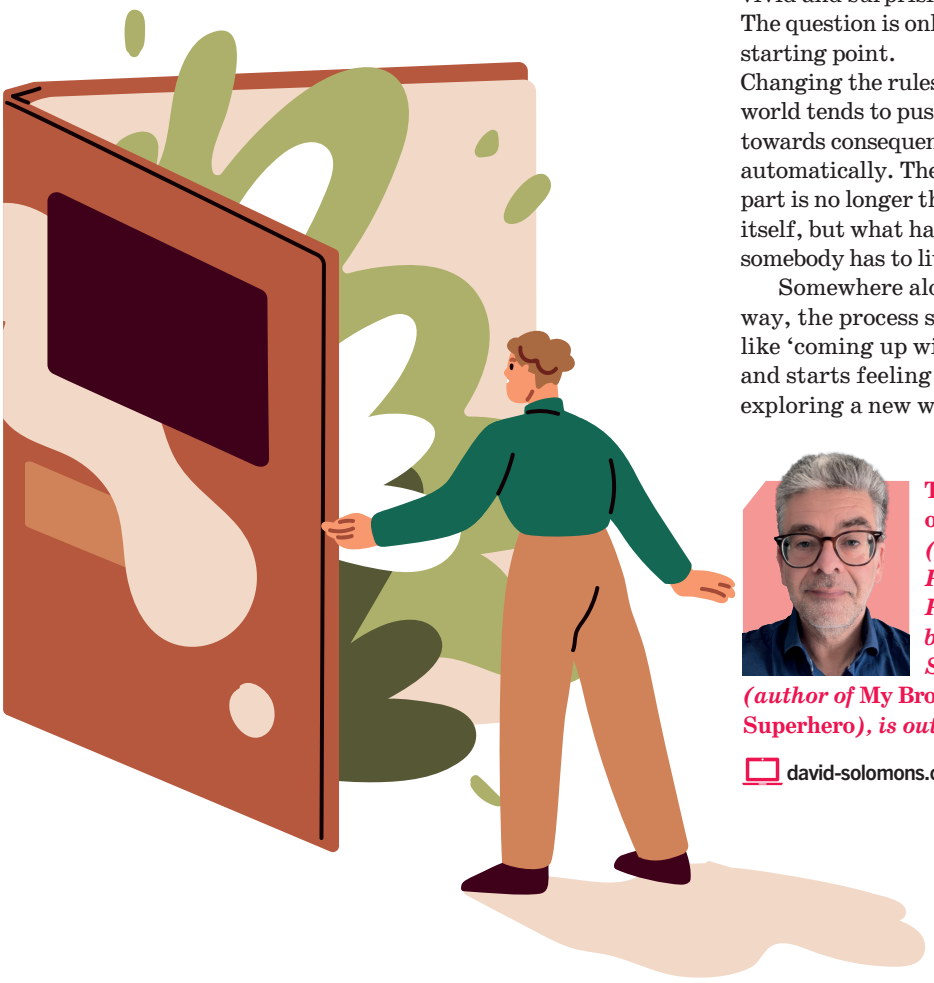
Pupils can introduce a single altered rule and follow its consequences through one scene. Staying with an idea slightly longer than feels comfortable is usually where the interesting material appears. Encourage pupils to think in scenes rather than summaries. A brief interaction often reveals far more about a world than pages of explanation. For example:

> *"Talking during Reflection Period is now a Level Two interruption," said the teacher.*
> *Maya looked down at her desk. Above the door, the classroom behaviour light shifted from green to amber.*

That kind of writing also creates natural opportunities to discuss craft. A stronger verb can alter the atmosphere of a scene completely. Sentence length changes pacing, too, while repetition can quietly build pressure.

If you want to use this exercise for two lessons, you can organise the first session around building the world, followed by the second on introducing a character and writing the opening scene. This is usually enough to produce something vivid and surprising. The question is only the starting point. Changing the rules of the world tends to push writers towards consequence almost automatically. The interesting part is no longer the idea itself, but what happens when somebody has to live inside it.

Somewhere along the way, the process stops feeling like 'coming up with a story' and starts feeling more like exploring a new world. **TP**



The Ministry of Manners (£7.99, Picadilly Press), by David Solomons (author of* My Brother is a Superhero*), is out now.

david-solomons.com

Five writing prompts

1 The new rule
Write a normal classroom scene, but change one rule: Nobody can whisper. Nobody can say the word "I". Every pupil must smile all the time. Don't explain the rule immediately. Let the reader work it out from the way people behave.

2 The missing explanation
Write a scene where everybody in the classroom understands something the reader doesn't. Nobody explains it directly. Let the reader piece the world together from small clues.

3 The suspicious object
Place something slightly unsettling into an ordinary setting: a locked red button beside the whiteboard; a clock that occasionally runs backwards; a corridor nobody is allowed to enter after lunch. Ask pupils to write the moment somebody notices it.

4 Rewrite for atmosphere
Take a simple sentence such as *The classroom was quiet*. Now rewrite it to sound:

- tense
- eerie
- exciting
- funny

It's a quick way of showing how word choice and sentence length can completely change the mood of a scene.

5 The ordinary problem
Take an ordinary school problem (being late, forgetting homework, sitting next to the wrong person) and place it inside a world with a strange rule from prompt one. How does the strange rule change the problem?

WAGOLL

Queen's Witch

Peer inside the mind of the author and help pupils understand how to write a satisfying ending

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tinyurl.com/tp-QueensWitch

***Queen's Witch* is the final book in the Hedgewitch series. The protagonist, Cassie Morgan, is finishing her witchcraft training and growing up. Cassie must decide what sort of witch she wishes to become, whose side she is on, and the future she wants for her world. She learns that 'good' and 'evil' are not always simple categories, and is torn between the different beliefs of her mentors.**



© Ahmani Vidal

Queen's Witch, by Skye McKenna (£16.99GHB, Wellbeck Children's) is out now

In writing an ending to the five-book series, I wanted to deliver plenty of excitement, secrets revealed, and a gratifying conclusion for readers who have followed Cassie on her adventures.

The ending of a story can have several different parts. The climax is where the major conflict is overcome and the antagonist is defeated. Some writers choose to end their stories right after the climax. However, longer stories and series often have a resolution or 'denouement' – a French word that means 'outcome'. I like to think of it as the calm after the storm. The denouement is where we learn what happens to the characters after the conflict has been resolved. It establishes a 'new normal' for the world and explains some of the mysteries.

Emotionally, it is satisfying for readers to check in with the characters, and it provides a sense of closure – especially important since hopefully your readers have made a connection to your characters. If the characters have been on a long journey, this can be the part where they return home, and it may include some farewells, too. Although the denouement is the 'happily ever after' part of the story, it may also be used to set up unresolved problems for a sequel. The denouement sometimes includes an epilogue, which may take place several months or even years after the climax. The epilogue is another way of showing how the characters' lives have been changed by the events of the story and who they have become as a result of their experiences.

FIVE TIPS ON WRITING A SATISFYING ENDING

1. TAKE A MOMENT

First, give your characters a chance to catch their breath and reflect on the climax. How do they feel about the experience they've just been through? Did everything turn out as they'd hoped, or did something go wrong?

2. THE OL' SWITCHEROO

The climax may be unexpected and include surprises, such as unforeseen heroes, or traitors and turncoats. Sometimes, in resolving one conflict another problem is created. The climax can also provide characters with a new perspective, changing their mind about right and wrong or what they want out of life.

3. SHOW DON'T TELL

A denouement (outcome) may provide final exposition, including explanations for any mysteries or significant events. Avoid dumping large sections of exposition on the reader, though. It's better to explain through dialogue or short passages of description.

4. WHAT NEXT?

Now that the conflict has passed, your characters can look to the future. Perhaps they want to pursue new ambitions or simply live peaceful lives. They may also be unsure or nervous about the future.

5. GLANCE BACK

The end of a story is an opportunity to look back at where it all began, reminding the reader of how the story started, for example using reminiscences. This helps show character development.



Extract from

pages 436-437

This extract comes from the epilogue, the final part of the denouement. In the story's timeline, it falls several months after the climax and the resolution and allows the reader one final glimpse of the characters and a satisfying chance to say 'goodbye.'

For the past four years, Cassie had been so fixated on finding her parents and stopping the Erl King that she had not considered what would happen next. If she ever imagined it, she had vaguely thought it would be her, not Robin, helping lead the coven and learning the secrets of the Hedge. However, she was happy to know that at least one member of Oak Patrol would be keeping an eye on things at home.

This past-tense conditional clause shows that Cassie is looking back, considering her reasons for setting out on her adventure.

The word choice here tells us that now that the climax has passed, Cassie realises she had only a vague idea about how her life would turn out once she achieved her goals – her point of view has changed.

Cassie is surprised to discover that an important role she might have filled will instead be taken on by another character: an unexpected hero. This paragraph gives a lot of information about possible character development, without using a lot of words.

Besides, there had been Kendrick Hedgewitches in the past, and who was to say that in future there might not be another?

This short statement is an example of 'free indirect speech'. Cassie's thoughts are given to the reader without the third person narrator using a tag such as 'Cassie pondered'. Free indirect speech merges the character's world view with the narrator's. Does Cassie believe Robin might be the next Hedgewitch, or is the narrator suggesting it?

A bit of certainty and comfort for the reader here!

For her own part, she had a new mission as Queen's Witch – to learn all she could about the lost borders with Faerie. To find and open them again if she could. Cassie had found nothing in the Hartwood library, but perhaps the witches' archives at the Spire still contained some record of these ancient borders.

Here Cassie is looking forward to her future. She has to leave the home she has saved to discover new knowledge. Her desire to know the truth, one of her defining character traits, is reinforced. Cassie's new maturity is shown in her willingness to set out independently.

A whistle blew – her train to Scotland was pulling in. Una had arranged to meet her before she went on to the Spire.

Here, an audio cue is used to jolt us out of Cassie's thoughts. The train's whistle is summoning Cassie and reminding us that the story is moving on.

'Come now,' said Miranda. 'Have you got everything? Good. Where's Montague?'

The grey cat brushed against Cassie's legs and she was comforted by his presence. At least she could take one of her friends with her.

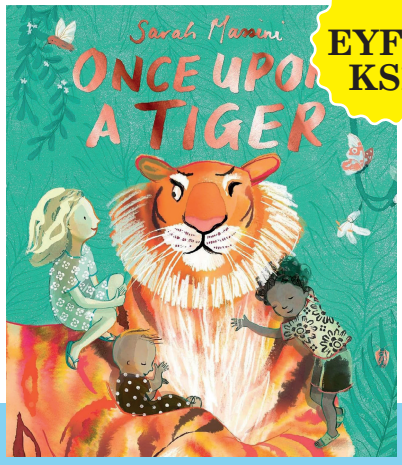
Finally, we are reminded of how the story (and the whole series!) began.
The protagonist's adventure started when she arrived by train in a strange town with her animal companion, to meet her aunt, Miranda. Now Miranda is seeing her off, and Cassie is departing with her companion to begin a new adventure.

436-437

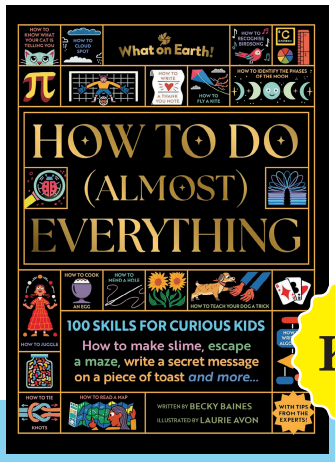
Book CLUB

We review five new titles that your class will love

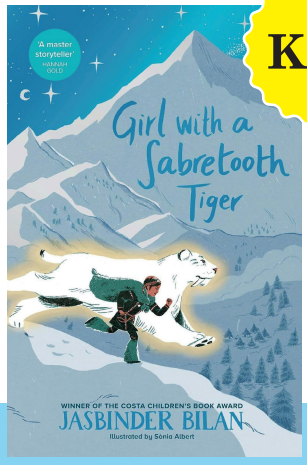
REVIEWS BY KATE HEAP



EYFS/ KS1



KS2



KS2

Once Upon a Tiger

by Sarah Massini

(£8.99, Simon & Schuster)

Once Upon a Tiger is a beautifully crafted picturebook reinforcing the importance of empathy, friendship and discovering who we are meant to be. Words and pictures blend seamlessly to tell the story of three children who help a grumpy tiger learn what it means to be brave, daring and caring.When readers first meet Tiger, he grumbles, grunts and growls at everyone in the forest. He doesn't like to be disturbed. One morning, he awakens to find three children on his back. In his quest to rid himself of these strange creatures, he realises spending time with others isn't so bad and there really is a fearless tiger inside of him. Their friendship gives them all strength and treasured memories of their time together.

How To Do (Almost) Everything

by Becky Baines & Laurie Avon

(£25HB, What on Earth Books)

Prepare to be amazed by this fascinating encyclopaedia of skills for life. *How To Do (Almost) Everything* is packed with brilliantly clear, step-by-step instructions for all kinds of adventures, from space, nature and science to DIY, cooking, sport and more. With activities ranging from wonderfully simple to wonderfully ambitious, there's something to keep every child busy. Aimed at readers aged 8+, children will have lots of fun joining in independently, with a friend or as a family. Engaging illustrations, diagrams, infographics and photos pull readers into the pages as they search for what to try next. The book is perfect for dipping into again and again, with each section just a few pages long. Relatable and fun, this is a treasure trove of potential childhood adventures.

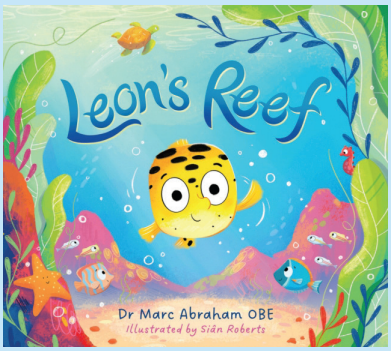
Girl with a Sabretooth Tiger

by Jasbinder Bilan, ill. Sònia Albert

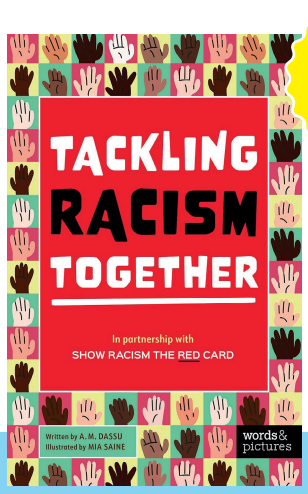
(£7.99, Chicken House)

With storytelling, faith, family and self-belief at its heart, *Girl with a Sabretooth Tiger* takes readers back 6,000 years to prehistoric Britain; a time we can only imagine. Swallow loves her family – especially her baby sister, Bear, who is struggling to thrive. Inspired by the wisdom of her storyteller grandmother, she embarks on a great journey to find a piece of healing jadeite far in the east. This powerful book emphasises our connection to nature, the inspiration of the past and how essential it is that we learn from both. An extra thrill is that the story is based on a real-life mystery, in which, while working with the London Museum, Bilan came across an axe-head that was found in the Thames, but contained a stone only found in the Italian Alps. How did it get here?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES



***Leon's Reef* (Award Publications)**
Leon, a curious little boxfish, explores his colourful undersea home and meets some amazing friends, who – despite all being so different – help one another in incredible, unique ways. An inspiring story of harmony, kindness and community that celebrates the strength that comes from working together.
Order at **tinyurl.com/tp-LR26**





Tackling Racism Together
by A.M. Dassu, ill. Mia Saine

(£10.99, Words & Pictures)

Created in partnership with Show Racism the Red Card (the UK's anti-racism educational charity), *Tackling Racism Together* is an invaluable guide to understanding racism and its impact for students and their teachers.
Beginning with a description of privilege, discrimination and barriers to equality, it provides an honest look at these important issues. Topics such as 'Everyday Racism' and 'Media and Online Hate' go deeper into relatable situations and the reality for communities around Britain.
Question prompts and short exercises give everyone a chance to think about their own situation, how they see the world and how attitudes could change for the better. This is an essential resource for every school.

When I Was a Wolf
by Liz Flanagan, ill. Nikola Aronova

Barrington Stoke

Jasmine loves wolves. Ignoring the stereotype of the 'big bad wolf', she believes they are magical creatures – strong and wise. Jasmine also loves spending time with her mum. Life is happy until, bit by bit, things begin to change. Mum becomes ill and her best friend, Ella, starts spending time with the new girl at school. Jasmine feels very alone – like a wolf – and isn't sure what to do with all her sadness. But then Gran registers Jasmine for a new art club…

When I Was a Wolf is a beautiful story of family, friendship and dealing with complex feelings. Small but mighty, it explores the emotional impact of family illness, difficult friendships and managing change in a powerful yet accessible way.

Meet the author

LIZ FLANAGAN ON SPIRIT ANIMALS AND THE SKILLS SHE WISHES SHE HAD



What was primary school like for you?
On the whole, a positive time, though I also had my share of friendship dramas, like Jasmine in the story. I can remember lots of creative writing in Y4 – this was when I discovered how much I love to write. I also recall the giddy freedom of being allowed unrestricted access to the Y6 bookshelves and working my way through all kinds of brilliant books. I still live within earshot of the school – hearing the playground transports me back in time.

We get a glimpse of a lot of skills in the book. If you could have any skill, what would it be?
I love music but struggle to sing in tune, so I'd absolutely love to have a strong singing voice. I can only imagine how amazing it feels to be able to sing out, like Gran does in the story.

How would you like teachers to use your book in the classroom?
I hope the book is a useful jumping-off point for PSHE discussions, particularly talking about emotions and how our hobbies – like Jasmine's experience at art club – can provide a way of resourcing ourselves through tricky times. Children could talk about their own hobbies, why they enjoy them and what they gain from taking part in them.
Jasmine experiences her mum's illness and friendship difficulties at the same time, and her anger outbursts are an expression of how overwhelming this is for her. She pictures her anger like her favourite animal, the wolf.
Emotions could be labelled and discussed safely through an animal metaphor – *what animal might best represent this feeling for you?*
Jasmine experiences a friendship rupture that is repaired by the end of the story, so this might be a way to talk about changing relationships and strategies for re-establishing communication.



***When I Was a Wolf* by Liz Flanagan (£7.99, Barrington Stoke) is out now.**

Sponsored by Harry Potter and the Cursed Child

NO RUNNING IN THE CORRIDORS PODCAST

WHICH SCHOOL RULES ARE WORTH BREAKING?

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



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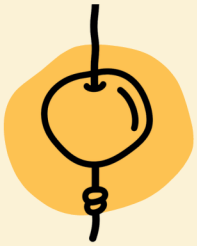
No losers on sports day

How honest should we be with children about what it really takes to succeed?



Don't talk about sex in the classroom

Why can talking about bodies and relationships feel so awkward?



No playing conkers

When we're responsible for other people's children, how much risk should we accept?

Welcome...

to the *Teach Primary Awards* 2026!

We've done the hard work so you don't have to – hand-picking, testing and ranking resources that really **make a difference in schools**.

Expect a mix of the tried-and-true and the brand new.

What do they all have in common?

✔ They work.
✔ They save you time.
✔ They make teaching that little bit easier.

Of course, every school is different – what works brilliantly in one setting might need tweaking in another. But we hope these winners give you a taste of what's possible, and plenty of inspiration to make your teaching even more rewarding.

HOW IT WORKED

1 **ENTRIES OPENED**
Companies submitted their best resources

2 **SHORTLISTS CREATED**
We grouped the standouts by category

3 **EXPERT JUDGING**
Educators put every entry through its paces

4 **WINNERS CHOSEN**
Winner & two highly commended per category

WHAT JUDGES ASSESSED

Judges carefully evaluated each resource against key criteria (below) to recognise outstanding quality, impact and innovation...

- **Suitability & adaptability**
- **Educational impact**
- **Originality & innovation**
- **Value for money**
- **Ease of use & accessibility**
- **Durability**
- **Environmental impact**

CATEGORIES & JUDGES

CPD

Training, guides & tools to develop staff & raise standards



Jon Hutchinson, regional director of Reach Foundation

ENGLISH

Supporting pupils' speaking, reading, writing & vocab skills



Rebecca Simpson-Hargreaves & team, UKLA

FOUNDATION

History, geography, RE, art, PE, MFL, music or computing



Ruth Astley, owner at Nature Makers Coventry-West

FREE

Resources offered to all schools at no cost



Emma Wigmore, CEO, Vine Schools Trust

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Resources promoting happiness & wellbeing for all



Michael Eggleton, HT, Charles Dickens Primary

MATHS

Tools & materials that develop maths knowledge & skills



Jo Austen, asst. HT & author of *Small Numbers Big Ideas*

STEM

Sparking creativity, problem-solving and STEM curiosity



Angharad Pass, chair, Primary Science Committee, ASE

HIGHLY COMMENDED



TabTabTab

Dario Ferrari

TabTabTab is a voice-based flashcard app for times tables. A card appears and the child answers out loud; the app hears both the answer and how long it took, and builds each session from what the previous ones showed. The practice shapes itself around the child.

"The practice felt motivating, without the need for lots of badges, characters, points and prizes"

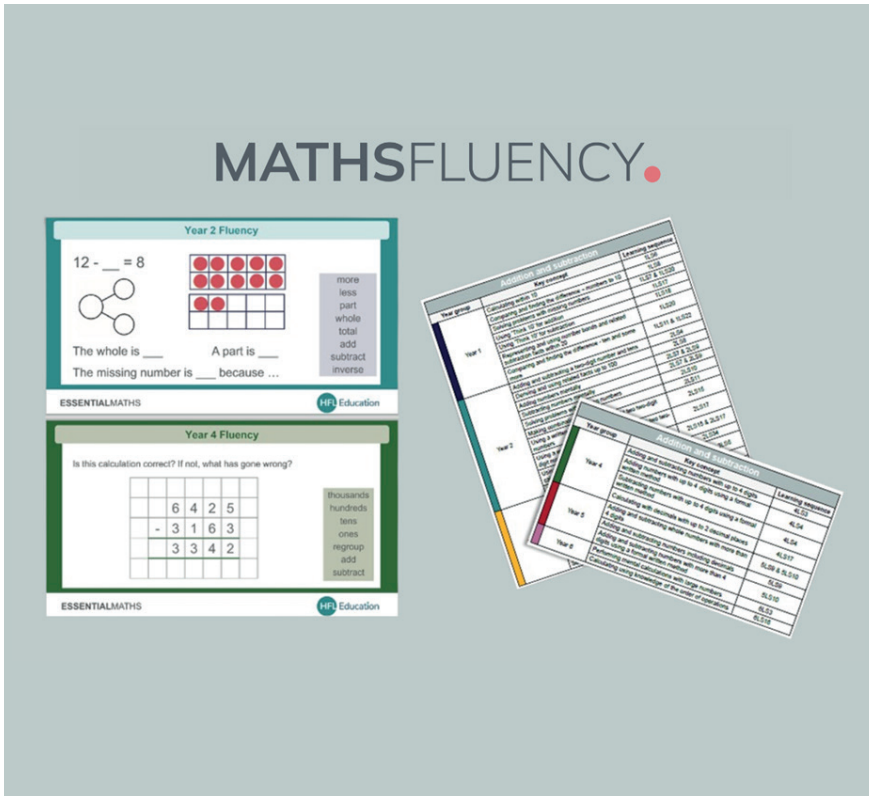


DreamBox Maths

Daisy Education

DreamBox Maths is an adaptive online maths programme improving maths outcomes nationwide with personalised support for every pupil. Unlike static maths schemes, DreamBox Maths continuously adapts to meet each learner's changing strengths and challenges.

"DreamBox Maths actually teaches the child, going far beyond just throwing out practice questions and tasks"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

TEACH ACTIVE – MATHS
Teach Active Ltd

SUMDOG
Sumdog

DOODLE LEARNING
Discovery Education Europe Ltd

WINNER

HFL Education Maths Fluency Resources

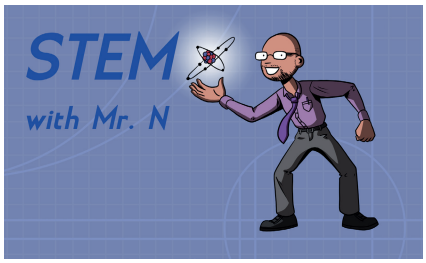
HFL Education

Fully aligned with the national curriculum, HFL Education's Maths Fluency Resources support and secure foundational knowledge and skills, helping pupils build the confidence and understanding required for long-term success. The package includes: 200+ editable fluency slides; ready-to-use PowerPoints; adaptable models and images; carefully selected mathematical vocabulary; dedicated times tables progression materials; and a comprehensive suite of support.
Short, focused sessions strengthen recall, increase confidence and develop understanding.

"This is a seriously impressive package of resources. The 'less is more' approach is a real winner"

Jo Austen

HIGHLY COMMENDED



STEM with Mr N

STEM with Mr N

STEM with Mr N is a classroom-informed collection of free STEM videos, practical activities, downloadable resource packs and careers materials created by practising primary teacher Stuart Naismith.

"A valuable resource that often explores high-level concepts in an engaging and accessible way"



STEM Charades

Pling Ltd

STEM Charades is a screen-free, research-informed game that helps primary-aged children develop and communicate STEM understanding through movement, gesture and collaborative discussion.

"A well-made, adaptable and durable resource that is simple to use and offers a wide range of uses"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

DINOSAURS REPTILES AND BIRDS ACTIVITY BOOK
Dodo and Dinosaur

CONNETIX 47 PIECE BALL RUN LAUNCHER PACK
Connetix

EXPLORE: SMALL CREATURES
L&M Education Ltd T/A Millgate Publishing

WINNER

My Science Club

My Science Club

My Science Club is a digital resource to support educators running their own science clubs. It's fully prepped and trialled; the only thing left to do is add the kit and the kids! Themed packs are written by award-winning STEM teachers who know what educators are looking for, saving hours of time and money and freeing everyone to grow children's love of science and inspire curiosity. As a digital resource, members can download and use their chosen packs as many times as they wish, and packs are regularly edited and updated to ensure they stay fresh and relevant. All physical resources needed for clubs are also readily and cheaply available.

> "A fantastic resource that places both teachers and learners at its heart"
>
> **Angharad Pass**

british-sign.co.uk

FREE FOR EVERY SCHOOL

Teach your class to sign

teach PRIMARY AWARDS 2026 WINNER

Free daily challenges, games and classroom resources to help your pupils learn British Sign Language.



ALL FREE · NEW CHALLENGES EVERY DAY

- Sign of the Day
- SignSpell daily puzzle
- Fingerspell Five daily game
- Picture BSL dictionary
- Fingerspelling games
- Word search maker
- Printable charts
- BSL sign quizzes

british-sign.co.uk/teach →

Plus CPD-certified staff training from £5 per learner

My Science Club

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

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

Every session is carefully crafted by award winning science educators





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

Flexible sessions for a science club or to enhance science lessons



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

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

So what do I get for my 12 month membership?

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

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

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

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

@my_scienceclub

HIGHLY COMMENDED



HUE Animation Toolbox

HUE

Packaged in a one-of-a-kind box that folds out into a multi-sided animation stage, HUE Animation Toolbox is bursting with everything young storytellers need to spark their imagination and start animating right away.

"This toolkit is accessible for a vast age range to create animated stop-motion videos"

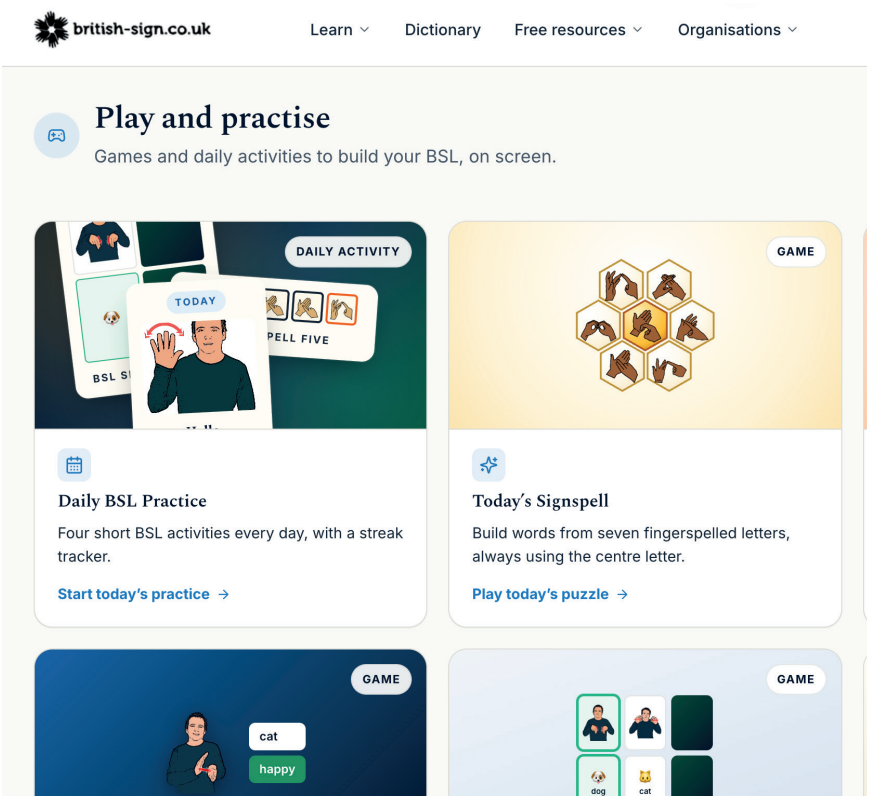


micro:bit Create AI

Micro:bit Educational Foundation

A free, web-based tool that makes it easy for students to explore AI through movement and machine learning – and take it into the real world in a safe environment.

"A great product for introducing machine learning in a practical and memorable way"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

Understanding Muslims, Understanding Islam
RE Today

MusiBop Open-and-Go Improvisation & Composition Cards
Onion Ear Music Academy

In the Know: Climate Change
The Geographical Association

WINNER

Free British Sign Language resources

Lisia Digital Ltd

A collection of classroom and self-study resources designed to help make British Sign Language more accessible in schools and beyond. The collection includes a searchable BSL dictionary, lesson plans, printable classroom activities, fingerspelling tools, interactive games and daily practice activities. Resources can be used individually or combined to support lessons, enrichment activities, Deaf awareness events and independent learning; it is a flexible and sustainable resource that is available whenever it is needed.

"The resource provides an inclusive approach that's easy to understand and access for both teachers and children"

Ruth Astley

Turn imagination into animation

Everything kids need to make amazing stop motion movies!



Includes a camera, software, book, stage, puppets, clay & more



Discover HUE Animation Toolbox

huehd.com

HUE™

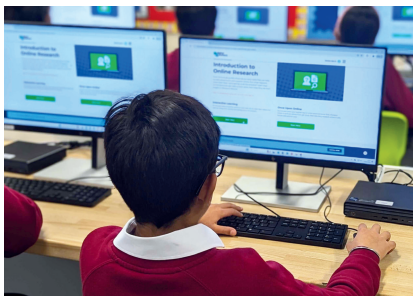
HIGHLY COMMENDED

Complimentary Professional Development Service

Learning Village

This CPD service gives schools free access to EAL expertise, evidence-informed guidance, and classroom resources to support language, literacy, and curriculum access for multilingual learners.

"A sustainable model, regular updates and accessibility for schools regardless of budget distinguish it from many professional development offers"



Digital Matters

Internet Matters

Covering key topics like misinformation, AI tools, privacy and passwords, online relationships and more, the platform supports teachers to deliver engaging media literacy education.

"Particularly impressive is the inclusion of resources that strengthen home-school partnerships"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

KINDNESS CONNECTS SINCE 9/11

PET EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP RESOURCE HUB
The Pet Education Partnership

NATIONAL STORYTELLING WEEK
National Literacy Trust

WINNER

LifeSavers – Financial Education

Just Finance Foundation

LifeSavers helps schools introduce meaningful financial education early, equipping teachers with high-quality training and engaging, ready-to-use resources. Aligned to the curriculums of all four UK nations, LifeSavers supports numeracy, critical thinking and emotional wellbeing alongside essential money concepts. Resources span maths, PSHE, English, drama, social studies and health and wellbeing; all underpinned by the values of wisdom, generosity, justice and thankfulness for ages four to 11.

> "A comprehensive and thoughtfully designed financial education programme that equips pupils with essential life skills from an early age"
>
> **Emma Wigmore**



Everything your school needs to build children's social and emotional wellbeing

Hamish & Milo brings together evidence-based SEMH programmes, accredited staff training, family partnership and impact reporting into one integrated approach - helping schools improve outcomes for children.

Our integrated ecosystem includes:

Evidence-based programmes

Structured, ready-to-use resources that explicitly teach social and emotional literacy through small-group, one-to-one and whole-class SEMH provision.

Training and development

Free implementation training and a range of specialist and accredited professional development to strengthen staff confidence, knowledge and SEMH practice.

Parent and carer partnership

A programme to strengthen partnerships between school, home and child through shared language, practical activities and conversations that create understanding and connection.

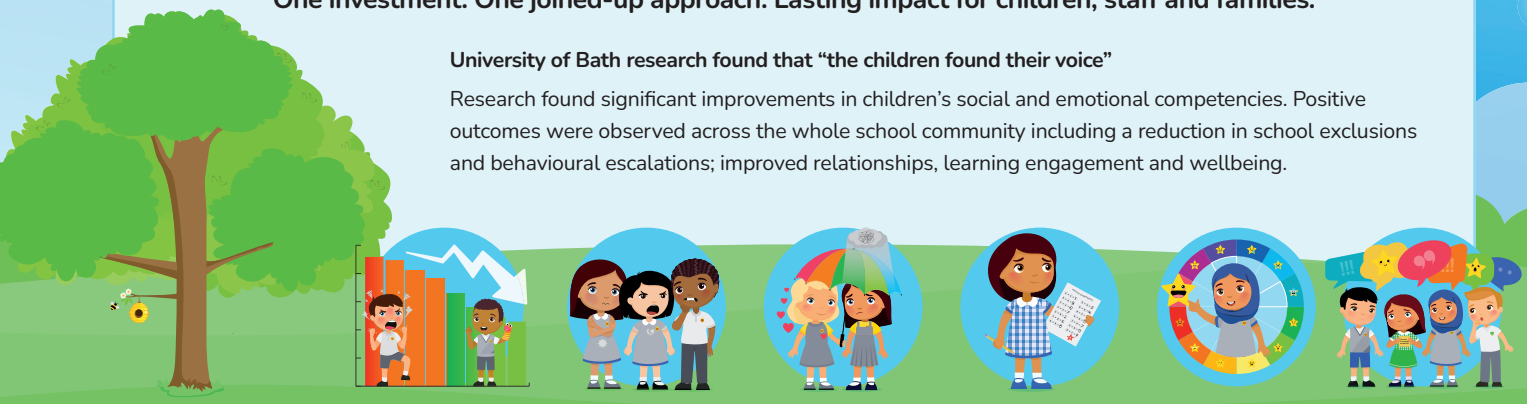
Impact measurement and reporting

Reporting at child, cohort, whole-school and trust level that evidences impact, monitors progress, identifies trends and supports strategic planning for inclusive SEMH provision.

One investment. One joined-up approach. Lasting impact for children, staff and families.

University of Bath research found that "the children found their voice"

Research found significant improvements in children's social and emotional competencies. Positive outcomes were observed across the whole school community including a reduction in school exclusions and behavioural escalations; improved relationships, learning engagement and wellbeing.



"Hamish & Milo has been transformative for many of the children who have taken part. We have seen noticeably calmer, more regulated, more confident children who are able to express their feelings to others..."

Ruth Clifford-Turner, SENCO, Exning Primary School, Suffolk

Scan for research evidence

Explore our complete approach to SEMH provision at hamishandmilo.org

Trusted by more than 900 schools, supporting thousands of children every year.

© Hamish & Milo Ltd 10/2026. All rights reserved. Hamish & Milo® and associated logos are registered trademarks of Hamish & Milo Ltd.
School count accurate at publication but we're growing fast!

HIGHLY COMMENDED



Lidl Foodies

We Are Futures Ltd

Lidl Foodies is a free healthy eating programme, launched to combat declining fruit and veg consumption, and transforming the way children aged 4–7 relate to nutrition.

"The programme's extensive reach, strong impact data and free access make it an impressive resource for schools"



Learning for Peace: A Toolkit

Peacemakers

What if a more peaceful future begins in the classroom? Using a playful, inclusive approach based on circle work, Learning for Peace fosters essential skills such as empathy, communication, conflict resolution and cooperation.

"Thoughtfully designed, practical and highly adaptable for primary classrooms"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

TALKING TILES EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT PACK
Talking Products Ltd

SHAPE YOUR SKILLS AWARD
Leadership Skills Foundation

THE BIG 5 TOOLKIT FOR RSHE
Human Values Foundation

WINNER

Hamish & Milo Wellbeing Programme

Hamish & Milo Wellbeing Resources

Hamish & Milo is a complete, evidence-based SEMH learning programme for primary schools, designed for universal provision and targeted intervention within a whole-school graduated response to inclusion and wellbeing. Ten emotion-themed units cover friendship, resilience, anxiety, diversity, anger, change and transition, conflict, loss, sadness and self-esteem. Each unit includes progressive session plans, assessment, impact and planning tools, and a wealth of additional resources, including parent and carer resources, creative enrichment activities and therapeutic sock puppets.

> "I really enjoyed this programme and would happily use it in my own school"
>
> **Michael Eggleton**

HIGHLY COMMENDED

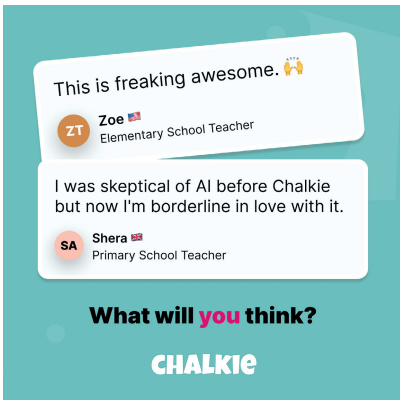


Primary Education Programme

Down Syndrome UK

Developed in response to the widespread lack of specialist provision across the UK, PEP bridges a critical gap by equipping school staff with the knowledge, confidence and practical tools required to deliver high quality, inclusive education.

"Teachers will feel empowered to make adaptations that allow pupils with Down Syndrome to flourish"



Chalkie AI

Chalkie AI

Chalkie is an AI-powered platform that helps teachers create curriculum-aligned lessons, worksheets, quizzes and classroom resources in minutes instead of hours.

"This is genuinely one of the best AI products that I've tested"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING PATHWAY
SkillFlash

SEFI
Schoot

META COGNITIVE TEACHING
Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd

WINNER

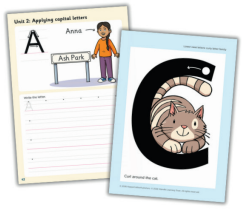
Stress Less, Teach Better

Teachappy

Teaching is one of the most meaningful professions in society, but it is also one of the most demanding. Stress Less, Teach Better was created to meet this challenge with understanding, practicality and evidence-informed support. Developed and delivered by Adrian Bethune, teacher, lecturer and founder of Teachappy, the course gives teachers, school leaders and support staff the knowledge and tools to understand stress, manage it skilfully and protect their long-term wellbeing.

> "I think it would be impossible to engage in this course and not feel significantly better equipped to manage your own stress and wellbeing"
>
> **Jon Hutchinson**

HIGHLY COMMENDED





Little Wandle Handwriting

Wandle Learning Trust and Collins

Designed to equip teachers with the confidence, knowledge and resources to develop well formed, fluent handwriting from the start, so transcription becomes automatic and children can focus on vocabulary, composition and expressing ideas.

"A comprehensive, well-organised handwriting programme"



Pathways Literacy

The Literacy Company

Pathways Literacy brings together five research-informed programmes: Pathways to Write, Read, Spell, Poetry and the newly launched intervention programme, Pathways to Progress. It combines curriculum planning, assessment, intervention, CPD and subject leadership support within one platform.

"A valuable, regularly updated, curriculum-aligned package for schools"



CATEGORY FINALISTS

SPELLING WITH GRAMMAR SAURUS
Grammarsaurus Ltd

ALL THE BETTER TO READ YOU WITH: STORIES & LESSONS TO INSPIRE READING FOR PLEASURE (2ND ED)
Epic Tales

WRITER'S TOOLBOX
Writer's Toolbox

WINNER

BooksForTopics website

BooksForTopics

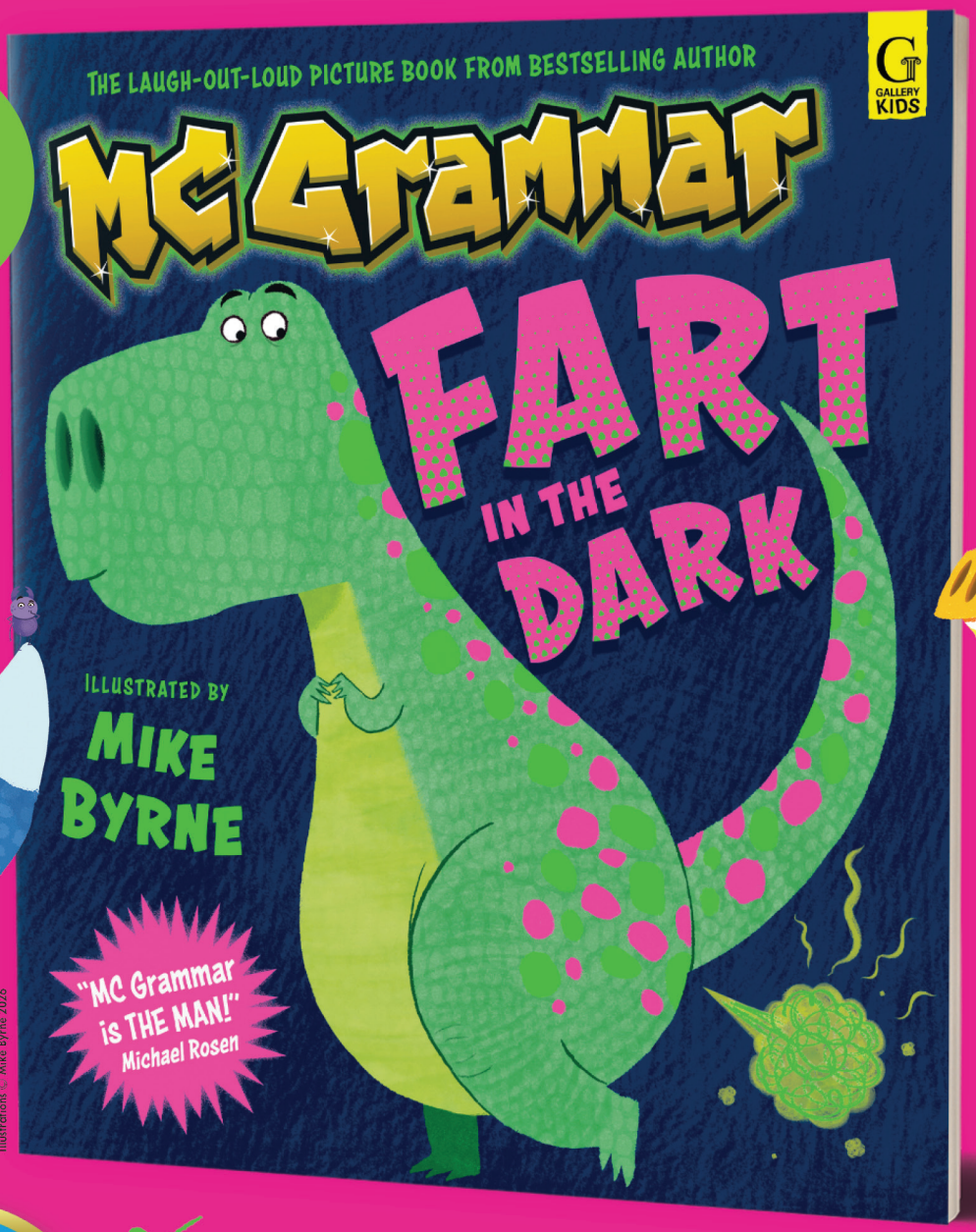
BooksForTopics is a free platform that takes the guesswork out of literacy planning, reading-for-pleasure implementation and book procurement. It takes curriculum topics (like the Stone Age, rivers or electricity) and other aspects of classroom teaching (such as reading for pleasure or emotional literacy) and curates highly specific lists of the best children's books to match them, allowing teachers to instantly find expert-vetted, high-quality, modern literature that fits their lesson plans. Founded by primary teacher Alison Leach in 2016, the platform has grown from a grassroots research project into an industry-leading platform.

> "An outstanding free resource that makes it easy to find the right book"
>
> **Rebecca Hargreaves and team**

TURN STORY TIME INTO A LAUGH-OUT-LOUD DINO MYSTERY!

GUARANTEED GIGGLES AS YOU DISCOVER WHO IS THE STINKIEST FARTER IN DINO HISTORY!

PERFECT FOR KS1



Illustrations © Mike Byrne 2026

FREE ACTIVITY SHEETS



FROM AWARD-WINNING TEACHER

MC Grammar

ORDER YOUR CLASSROOM COPY TODAY!

GALLERY KIDS

Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration to your classroom

1

Evidence-based handwriting strategies



Handwriting plays a vital role in helping children communicate, learn and express their ideas. To support educators at every stage of the writing journey, edding has partnered with the National Handwriting Association to create three practical, evidence-based videos for Early Years, KS2 and secondary settings. Combining edding's expertise in writing tools with the NHA's leadership in handwriting education, the series offers simple classroom strategies to build confidence, fluency and writing stamina. Discover practical approaches that help pupils become capable, independent writers throughout their school years.

Visit **tinyurl.com/tp-eddingYT**

2



Preparing primary schools for the future of geography

The Geographical Association has supported geography education for more than 130 years and is proud to be helping shape the future of the subject through supporting the development of the new geography curriculum with the Department for Education. Our new Primary School Membership has been created to give geography leads the confidence, knowledge and expert support they need to lead curriculum change successfully in their schools. With expert-led CPD, curriculum guidance, practical resources and regular opportunities to ask questions of our specialists, membership provides year-round support that helps schools achieve better outcomes for every pupil. Find out more at **geography.org.uk** or email **membership@geography.org.uk**



5

Reliable, affordable CPD

Ready to refresh your RE teaching, without stretching your budget? Whether you teach primary or secondary, are new to RE, an experienced subject leader or a member of SLT, we have dozens of CPD courses designed for you! Our affordable programme includes dozens of practical CPD courses from leadership updates to deepening your subject knowledge… and much more! Boost your confidence, develop your expertise and bring exciting new ideas into the classroom, all at a price designed to make high-quality CPD accessible. Discover our full programme today and take another step towards Chartered Teacher Status. Any questions? Contact us today! Call 0121 458 3313, email **admin@retoday.org.uk** or visit **tinyurl.com/tp-REtoday26**



3

Helping primary teachers teach music with confidence

Bristol Beacon is helping primary teachers get more from the free Oak National Academy Primary Music Curriculum, with a programme of online practical teacher training. Created by Bristol Beacon and Amplify Education, the curriculum provides 228 lessons and resources for Years 1 - 6, supporting pupils to discover the joy of music, and develop their musicianship through singing, listening, composing and performing. The accompanying CPD helps teachers understand the curriculum, put it into practice and adapt it to their own school – whether they are music specialists, non-specialists, subject leads or curriculum leaders. Online sessions are available throughout the academic year at £35 each. Sign up at **bristolbeacon.org/oak-teacher-training**

4

Building confident, inclusive primary schools

National Autistic Society: Learn helps primary schools develop the knowledge, confidence and expertise to create more inclusive learning environments. Drawing on specialist expertise and lived experience, we offer evidence-informed professional development that supports staff, school leaders and wider education teams. From flexible online learning and specialist training to Licensed User programmes and consultancy, our services help schools strengthen everyday practice, build internal capability and support lasting improvement. Whether developing individual staff confidence or embedding inclusive approaches across your school, we're here to support your journey. Discover more at **naslearn.org.uk**



Science

How messy data makes better scientists...



Turn pupils into data detectives as they interrogate fictional health datasets and explore wellbeing, with **Marc Bowen**

raglanciwvcprimary.co.uk



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to identify patterns, comparisons and anomalies within scientific data, using specific evidence to support conclusions
- How to distinguish between what a dataset suggests and what it can actually prove
- How everyday choices around sleep, exercise, hydration, diet and screen use can affect physical and mental wellbeing

Science lessons can sometimes become so dominated by the 'doing' that the really important thinking gets squeezed into the final 10 minutes. By the time equipment has been gathered, variables controlled and results collected, meaningful analysis can easily become the poor relation. This lesson deliberately reverses that process. Rather than asking the children to generate data, it provides them with carefully constructed, artificial datasets so that the whole session can focus on interpreting, questioning and challenging evidence, while the wellbeing angle provides a genuine purpose.

START HERE



The real success of this lesson relies on the children understanding that they are not looking for a single 'right answer'; they are hunting for what the evidence allows them to say. Begin with two contrasting fictional lifestyles: one built around regular exercise, water, a balanced diet, purposeful screen use and consistent sleep; the other around inactivity, fizzy drinks, doom-scrolling, frequent fast food and irregular bedtimes. This immediately generates opinions, which helps to raise the following question: How can we test whether our assumptions are supported by evidence? From this point, you can introduce the children to six 'Data Explorer' stations.

MAIN LESSON

1 | DATA EXPLORERS

The six stations are focused on: sleep and reaction time; exercise and resting heart rate; sugar and tooth decay; hydration and concentration; screen time and eye strain; and mental wellbeing and exercise. The data itself can be deliberately artificial, using AI to help construct plausible datasets, with the parameters anchored to broad patterns and guidance from reliable sources such as the NHS. The goal should not be to present the tables as definitive medical evidence. Instead, they are designed as teaching tools: clear enough for children to analyse but with sufficient variation and anomalies to stop them simply spotting a pattern and declaring the job done. You can download the data set I manufactured for my class at the link on the right

Organise the class into small teams and give each group a starting station. Before anyone writes anything, they need to spend time simply reading. What does the data table show? What units are being used? Which values are highest or lowest? Can you see an overall trend? Only when the group has discussed the data should they be allowed to pick up a sticky note and record a conclusion (which will be left at the station for the next group).

The prompt questions should become increasingly important. At the sleep station, for example, the data suggests that children with longer, more regular sleep tend to have faster physical



"Rather than asking children to generate data, this lesson provides it so they can focus on interpretation"

and mental reaction times. Rather than asking, *Who did best?*, the children are prompted to consider: *What pattern can you see? What evidence supports your answer?* and *What happens to the reaction time as sleep becomes shorter?* At the exercise station, they'll explore the broad relationship between more weekly activity and a lower resting heart rate, but they are also challenged to find the result that did not fit perfectly. Suddenly the discussion moves beyond spotting a trend into asking why real-life data might be 'messy'.

This should become an important principle across all the stations. The sugar and tooth decay table includes two children with the same number of sugary food or drink occasions but different levels of decay. The hydration data contains a small dip within the broader upward trend in concentration scores. These 'wrinkles' in the datasets are essential. Without them, the activity could become little more than pattern spotting. With them, the children have to consider other variables and recognise that one factor rarely explains everything.

2 | INTERROGATING EVIDENCE

After around five minutes, ask each group to rotate to the next station. However, they are not starting afresh; the sticky notes left behind by the previous team now become another source of evidence. Before adding anything new, the children have to read what their peers have written and decide whether they agree. If they do, they are encouraged to extend the comment with additional evidence. If they disagree, they have to challenge it constructively: *I'm not sure this proves that because...*, *I agree with the pattern, but...*, or *Could there be another reason for...?* This simple layer transforms the task. Pupils are no longer just analysing the table; they are analysing the analysis. Meta-analysis!

You should largely be there to circulate, listen and gently interfere. Rather than confirm conclusions, keep returning to a small number of questions: *Where is your evidence?, Does every result fit? Are you describing the data or explaining it?* and, perhaps most importantly, *Does the table show that this caused that, or only that the two things appear to be connected?*

3 | TIME FOR REVIEW

To finish, gather everyone around the stations and select examples of particularly strong reasoning, along with a few assertions that need rewriting. A statement such as *Screens cause eye strain* could become *In this dataset, higher screen time is linked with higher reported eye-strain scores*. The station itself deliberately asks children whether the table proves that screen time is the only cause, providing a useful route into this more cautious scientific thinking. That small change in language represents a significant shift in thinking.

Finally, return to the wellbeing focus. Discuss the sensible messages that could be drawn from the collection as a whole: regular sleep, physical activity, hydration, dental care and balanced screen habits all matter, but our bodies, minds and lives are complex and no single table tells the whole story.

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

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Ask groups to convert one dataset into a graph, then discuss whether the visual representation makes the pattern easier, or harder, to interpret.
- Give children several 'over-confident' conclusions and challenge them to rewrite each one using more scientifically cautious language such as 'suggests', 'may be linked to' or 'appears to'.
- Invite pupils to design a seventh data station, including a sensible variable, an anomaly and three analytical questions for another group to investigate.

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT

teachwire

Download a **FREE** data set for this lesson at

tinyurl.com/tp-DataDetectives

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What does the data actually show, and what are we assuming beyond the evidence in front of us?
- Which result does not fit the overall pattern and why is that anomaly important when we form a conclusion?
- What other factors might influence the outcome and how could we investigate these before claiming that one variable caused another?

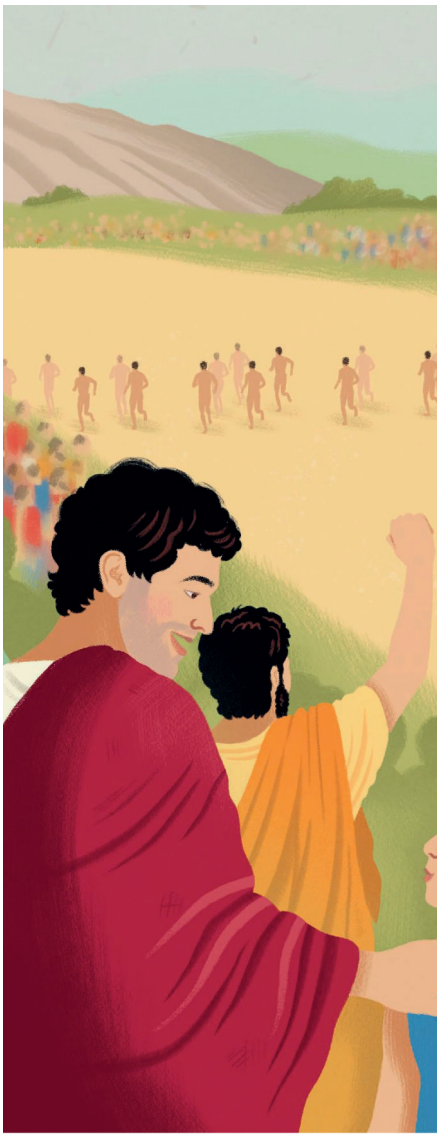
KS2 LESSON PLAN

History, English

What was it like to live in ancient Greece?



Use reading and debating skills to imagine what life was like for the ancient Greeks, with **Claire Saunders**

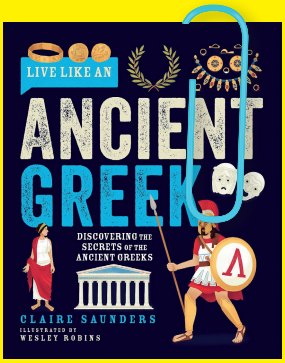


Ancient Greece was one of the world's first great civilisations. In fact, it's often called 'the birthplace of Western civilisation', because so many of its ideas and inventions have influenced the Western world, from art and architecture to politics, writing and theatre. Learning about what life was like in the past can help us make sense of the broader history of ancient cultures and how they have gone on to influence ours, and also allows us to recognise the ways in which our society has developed. This lesson uses the book *Live Like an Ancient Greek* to illustrate the everyday lives of people living in ancient Athens and Sparta, to illuminate this fascinating time.

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- What life was like for ordinary people in ancient Greek society
- How to bring history to life
- How to practise writing skills
- How to debate

START HERE



Start by splitting the class into groups of three or four, and give each group a spread to look at in *Live Like an Ancient Greek* (if you don't have access to the whole book, there are some pages available for download at the link on the right). Give the groups 5-10 minutes to study the spreads and discuss the most interesting facts – each spread covers a different aspect of ancient Greek life, from the army to a day at school – and then feed back three to five points to the rest of the class. While the feedback is happening, be sure to prompt pupils to draw connections and comparisons with different parts of society. E.g. if one group has looked at the life of a Greek boy, you could question the role of women in ancient Greece. Make a class list of facts and questions on the board – you can aim to answer the questions throughout the rest of the lesson.

MAIN LESSON

1 | WHAT WAS SCHOOL LIFE LIKE?

Read about what school was like in Athens and Sparta, including the account of a typical school day for Pentathlos, the fictional Greek boy who features in the book.

Ask the children to consider the subjects boys in Athens studied, such as poetry, writing, music and sports. Have them write down what they think the merits are of studying each of these subjects for the boys' lives as Athenian citizens. They could work individually or in groups. Some important considerations for content include:

- What do they think of the use of corporal punishment for dropping a tablet?
- Sports classes involved wrestling. Would children today enjoy this or is it too dangerous?
- Sport and music were as important as reading and writing, and ancient Greek students spent roughly the same amount of time on each. Would modern pupils enjoy a school day like this? How is it different from school today?
- Education was different in Sparta, where the focus was on harsh military training to toughen boys up. Ask the children to imagine how they would have coped with life in a Spartan military school. Why do you think military



"So many ancient Greek ideas and inventions have influenced the Western world, from art and architecture to politics, writing and theatre"

training was so important to the Spartans?

2 | WHAT WERE THE ORIGINAL OLYMPICS LIKE?

Ask pupils to read the eyewitness account in the book (pages 40-41; available in the download link), then write their own eyewitness account of an event at the Olympics. They can choose whether they are writing from the perspective of a competitor or someone watching as a spectator (note that only men were allowed to compete at the Olympics, but women had their own competition, called the Heraia). Pupils can choose which event they want to write about – such as chariot racing, wrestling, or running in full armour – and then find out what the rules were. Explain that their accounts will need to be in the first person, and what this means. This is a creative writing assignment and should be fun and exciting. What happens? Who wins? Remind the pupils to include lots of details to bring their account to life. For example, what they are wearing (remember, male athletes competed naked!), what the weather is like, what they might have been able to hear and smell. While they're writing, remind the class to consider the language they use; it should be engaging and descriptive.

3 | DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Athens was the world's first well-documented democracy. In Athens, all male citizens – rich or poor – were allowed to vote on new laws, and took turns to be on the council that ran the city. However, slaves (who made up as much as a third of the population), women and 'foreigners' were not allowed to vote. Ask the children what they think of this system. Do they think it would work well? Is it fair? How does it compare to the way the country is governed today? What do they make of the fact that slavery was so common and widespread in ancient Greece?

Finally, split the class into groups of at least three. They can return to the spreads they reviewed in the starter activity, or if they already have a good grip on the facts, they can swap spreads around. Have them read the spreads again, and see if they can answer any of the questions you put on the board at the beginning of the lesson. For example, perhaps after reading about boys at school they may have questioned where (or if) girls were educated. They may also have asked about the food people ate or what the role of the council was. At the end of the lesson, come back together as a class and discuss any answers that the children have found.

Claire Saunders has been a writer and editor for over 20 years and specialises in children's non-fiction. She loves travelling the world, learning about the history of other cultures.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Research the cities of Athens and Sparta: Would you prefer to grow up in democratic Athens or in warlike Sparta? Why? Would your answer be the same if you were the opposite sex?
- Creative writing – time travel! Have the children write a first-person paragraph (or story for more confident writers) imagining they have time travelled to ancient Greece. What would they miss the most about modern life? Their phone? Flushing toilets?
- If you could make one new law for ancient Athens, what would it be? What would be the consequences of the new law?

DOWNLOAD RESOURCES AT

teachwire



Download **FREE** spreads from *Live Like an Ancient Greek* at

tinyurl.com/tp-AncientGreekLP

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- How was life different for boys and girls in ancient Athens?
- How did ancient Greek democracy influence the way our country is run today?
- Would you like to have grown up in ancient Greece? Why or why not?

LITERACY

Pathways Literacy by The Literacy Company

A fully resourced, expertly curated and inclusive book-based English curriculum, designed to save you time and improve progress

AT A GLANCE

- **A complete primary curriculum for English**
- **Ready-to-go resources that will engage all primary age pupils**
- **Book based units that promote diversity and inclusion**
- **Helpful CPD videos and guidance to support school staff in delivering the curriculum**





REVIEWED BY: BEN WHITE

The planning and delivery of a high-quality English curriculum is no mean feat, and with lots of options on the market, it takes something special to stand out from the crowd. Having tried and tested many myself over the years, it is rare to find a complete English curriculum quite like The Literacy Company's Pathways Literacy.

From the minute you log on, resources are well organised and within seconds you can find the year group, term and planning you require. Based on a vast array of different books, the text choices will appeal to your class and include a range of genres, from narrative to non-fiction, historical to scientific, and many books and stories that are inclusive and representative of the children you teach.

But that's not all; there's even more to discover. Explicit spelling and reading schemes are also available, and will run alongside your English lessons. Just like the writing curriculum, these come with full progression documents and are meticulously planned. Resources are teacher and student friendly, easy to understand and, in my opinion, very well pitched. The pupil resources are engaging with photos, modelled writing and the use of a cursive font.

And how about those pupils falling behind in class? Well, that's covered too with the Pathways to Progress – an intervention tool for every year group that supports children who may need a boost or additional support.

Alongside curricular resources, The Literacy Company also provides a vast library of CPD and support materials, from videos to use in staff training, to specific and up-to-date guidance on implementing the curriculum. English leads, whether experienced or new to the role, will find everything they need to implement, monitor and evaluate their English curriculum. Proformas for book looks, learning walks and spelling audits, just to name a few, are all provided, as well as the key documentation for the school website, creating policies and for when the inevitable Ofsted visits come along.

Another feature of this expertly curated curriculum that I found useful were the sample work documents that come with each unit. This shows teachers exactly what the outcome for each lesson may look like in books using real pupils' work – something I haven't seen in other schemes. This would be great for newly qualified teachers, cover or supply staff, or for the class teacher to refer to when preparing their lessons.

The Literacy Company's Pathways Literacy really does provide you with everything you need to successfully implement a high-quality English curriculum. It will save teachers time, enabling them to concentrate on delivering high-quality lessons and with the spelling, reading and intervention add-ons, will allow you to provide a seamless, connected English curriculum.

VERDICT

- ✔ **Planning and resources from EYFS to Year 6**
- ✔ **Easy to use, with exemplary work to refer to in all units**
- ✔ **Extensive CPD and implementation resources for the English lead**
- ✔ **Both pupils and teachers will love the scheme**

TRY IT IF...

You are looking for a complete primary English book-based curriculum that has been expertly planned with both pupils and teachers in mind.

www.theliteracycompany.co.uk/pathways-literacy/

LITERACY

Bookbuzz Primary from BookTrust

BookTrust Bookbuzz

A brilliant evidence-based programme to inspire reading for pleasure across Key Stage 2 and help every child discover books they'll love

AT A GLANCE

- **After delivering Bookbuzz to 2 million Secondary School children, the programme's been adapted for Key Stage 2.**
- **Curated selection of brilliant diverse and inclusive books.**
- **A brand new book for every child.**
- **Expert-developed teaching reources to help deliver engaging sessions.**





REVIEWED BY: BEN WHITE

Have you noticed that your Key Stage Two pupils are less enthusiastic about reading? You're not alone in spotting this. BookTrust's research shows that reading enjoyment drops between the ages of 7-11*.

This is where Bookbuzz Primary comes in!

The programme, designed by BookTrust, supports you to inspire your pupils' love of reading by giving children the chance to **choose and keep a book they'll love** from a curated selection.

When you sign up, you receive a large box of books, containing two copies of the 16 hand-picked titles, and high quality resources. The books range from comic-style graphic books to longer adventure novels; there really is something for everyone in the programme. The aim of the launch pack is to allow children to explore the different genres and styles to find something they like. Having two copies of each book will encourage discussion and sharing and inspire purposeful conversations. Handy teacher tips and activity plans also provide staff with strategies to facilitate these sessions, talk about the stories and instill a love of reading.

"Each title will engage and captivate children"

The books themselves have been carefully selected by a panel of teachers and librarians – the people who know exactly what young people love reading. They cover a range of different genres; both narrative and non-fiction. The selection of books highlights diverse backgrounds and foster inclusivity throughout. Each title will engage children through illustrations, captivating narratives or interesting facts that bring each page to life.

Once the initial exploration period has taken place, including watching an engaging author video with pupils, children are able to select a book to keep. These are ordered online and delivered to schools shortly after. The only thing left to do is to get reading!

Once children have finished reading their book, the fun doesn't stop there. The Teacher Area on the BookTrust website provides teachers with fun activities linked to each book that will engage the children further, and encourage them to talk about and share their new book with their friends.

At just £3.65 per pupil, the value for money is really impressive. This low cost per pupil means the impact is certainly worthwhile, especially when you consider the 32 brand-new books that the school will have to bolster their school library.

teach PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✔ An engaging and well-curated scheme that will promote a love of reading
- ✔ Support and guidance throughout the scheme
- ✔ Adds a selection of brand-new books to boost your school library
- ✔ Exceptional value at just £3.65 per pupil

SIGN UP IF...

You are looking for an exciting way to instill a love of reading in your pupils and join them in discovering new books.

booktrust.org.uk/bookbuzzprimary

* N=1,655 KS2 teachers. BookTrust (2024) 'Primary school children's reading and the vital role teachers play in nurturing reading enjoyment'.

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?

Walking into a school and seeing children and adults who genuinely look pleased to be there. Too many children (and, if we're honest, adults) simply don't want to be in school. The persistent absence figures don't lie. Perfect happiness, for me, is a school where people feel that they belong and, perhaps even more importantly, that they matter. Where children know that someone notices when they arrive, notices when they're missing and is genuinely pleased to see them. They used to say, "Don't sweat the small stuff". I'm increasingly convinced that the 'small stuff' is actually the big stuff.

2 What is your greatest fear at work?

That we become so busy running schools that we forget to notice the children (and adults) in them. Education has an extraordinary capacity to turn human beings into numbers, percentages and coloured boxes on spreadsheets. And that the "sit down, shut up, seen and not heard" brigade will return. That we mistake compliance for learning, silence for engagement and control for good education. Underneath every bit of data is a human being having an experience of school. My greatest fear is that we lose sight of that.

3 What is your current state of mind?

Buzzing. Curious. Mindful. Learning to be empathetic.I'm spinning lots of plates while balancing on a skateboard – and loving every minute of it.

4 What do you consider the most overrated teacher virtue?

Treating everyone the same. Or, more specifically, the idea that inclusion simply means treating every child the same. Children aren't the same. Context matters. Relationships matter. Fairness isn't always about doing the same thing for everybody. Sometimes the most skilled thing a teacher can do is respond differently while still holding the same boundaries and expectations. Inclusion isn't about everybody getting the same. It's about everybody getting what they need to belong, participate and matter.

5 On what occasion do you lie to your class?

"It will be OK."
In the UK, we can find ourselves stuck in a loop of toxic positivity. We want to reassure, make things better, fix things – and teachers are particularly prone to this. But sometimes we don't know that it will be OK. Perhaps the more important thing is to create a space where it's OK not to be OK. To resist the urge to fix, sit alongside someone and hold whatever they're feeling for a while. I'm still learning that one.

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

Probably "I wonder...", "Imagine..." or "Notice..." . I'm a great believer in trying to understand what's going on before deciding what to do about it. Although my own children might suggest I've taken this too far. They once said: "Can we go back to being told off? It's quicker than having to talk about our feelings again."

7 What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

The children I taught who still remember something about how being in my classroom felt. I'm proud of schools I've helped improve and all the usual things we collect over a career. But when somebody you taught 20 years ago remembers a conversation, a book, a joke or a moment when you believed in them, that feels different. We rarely know which moments children will carry with them.

8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

The books I've accumulated over the years. My shelves are essentially a record of repeatedly discovering that something I was absolutely certain about 10 years ago is considerably more complicated than I thought. They're scribbled in, folded over and full of highlights. Education should leave you with fewer certainties and better questions. Oh, and my clicker presenter thingy. It took me years to find one that doesn't suddenly do something weird at a crucial point in a presentation. I'd be devastated if I lost it.



NAME: Anthony Benedict
JOB ROLE: CEO, Ambition Community Trust
EXTRA INFO: Co-author of *Seeing Children Differently* and *Educating Everyone: An Introduction to Relational Inclusion in Schools*.



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