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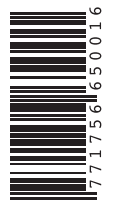
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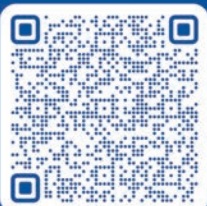


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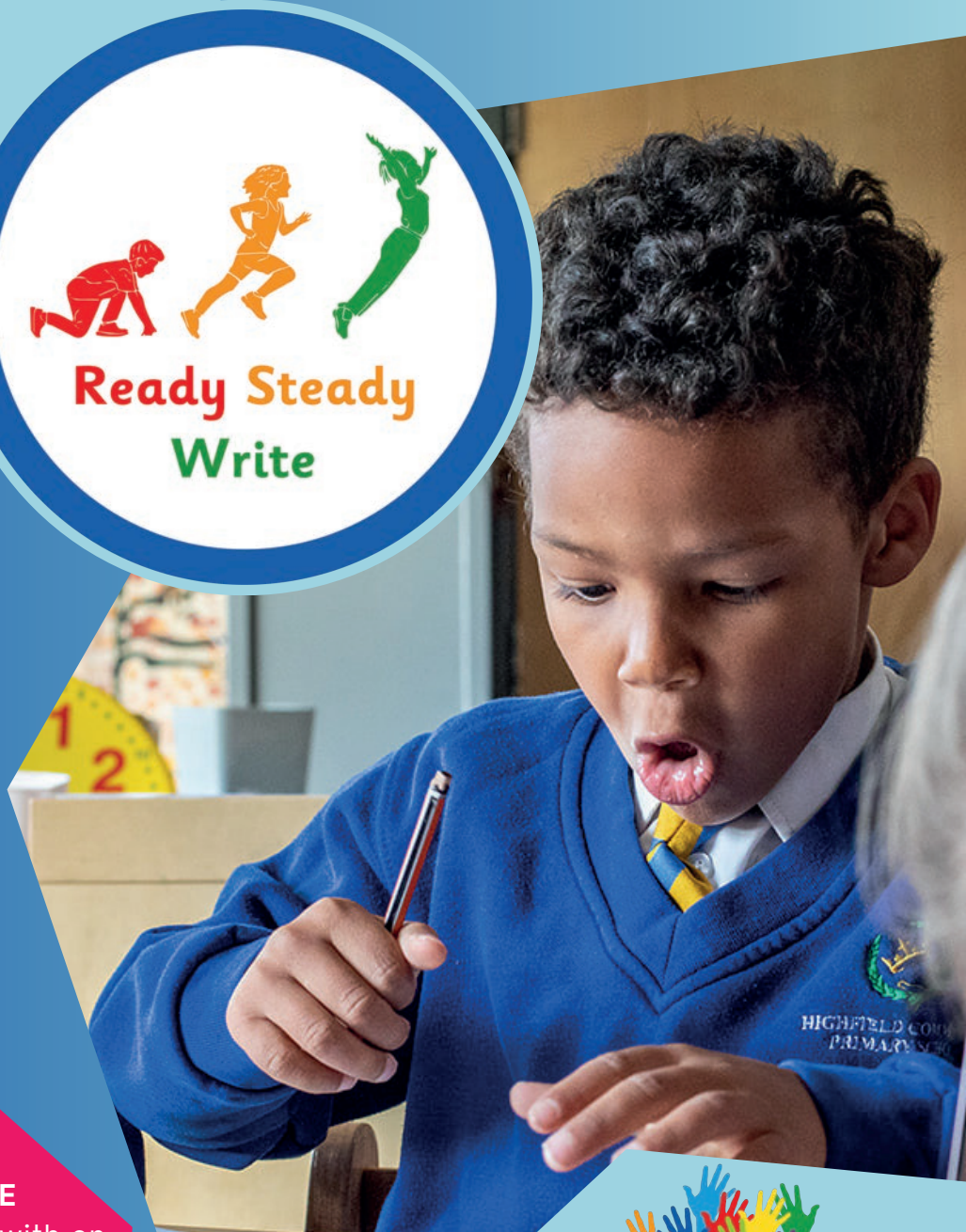


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# Hello!



**W**ell, here it is: the end of 2025. It's been another year packed with changes, updates, and policy moves, including of course, the Curriculum and Assessment Review – fresh off the press.

Rest assured we'll be digging into the report and all it means for the primary sector in due course, but for now, this issue is packed with advice and resources for your classroom; whether you're

buzzing after an exhilarating autumn term, or ready to lie face-down in a box of chocolates for two weeks, we've got you covered.

Our special focus this issue is on one of the biggest elephants in the KS2 classroom... SATs. Literacy consultant Ruth Baker-Leask is here to talk about the best ways to get pupils prepared for the reading paper (page 42); Sarah Farrell's covering the maths concepts that often get overlooked, but can be the secret to success (page 50); and Richard Selfridge examines the data that will help streamline your prep, and what to do with it (page 44).

Last, but certainly not least, it's the time of year again when we here at the Teach Company, along with panels of expert judges, spend a few months trawling through resources and tools to crown the biggest hitters across seven categories. We had a tough time again this year whittling down the brilliant entries, but have come up with a list we think will impress you. Have a peek at this year's Teach Awards winners, starting on page 73. Thank you to all our wonderful judges, and a huge congratulations to the winners and finalists.

I hope you have a wonderful, restful winter break, and I look forward to getting stuck in again in the New Year. Thanks for reading, and see you next time...

*Charley*

Charley Rogers, editor

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*Don't miss our next issue, available from 5th January*

## POWERED BY...



**KARL DUKE**

shares his plans for an art unit on designing your own lighthouse, inspired by books

*"The picturebook Hello, Lighthouse is one of the key texts used in our WW2 focus"*

p26



**ADAM DEAN**

on the importance of understanding the difference between 'disruptive' and 'different'

*"Let's not make pupils use a wrench when they already have a spanner"*

p34



**SARAH TUCKER**

explores the power of lateral thinking through the process of problem-solving in stories

*"I wanted to show children that solving problems is the real adventure"*

p68

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**We're all ears!**

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



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**We want to hear from you!**

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



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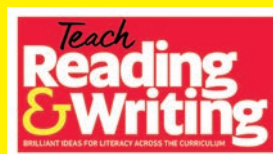
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**Disney**  
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# Breaktime

News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research



## Consider yourself

A new study from The University of Manchester has shed light on why a third of teachers quit within five years. The team at the Manchester Institute of Education, led by Joanne Taberner and Dr Sarah MacQuarrie, surveyed 130 new primary and secondary teachers across England to find out whether personality traits could help explain why some ECTs manage the pressures of the job, while others burn out.

The study examined links between personality and 'mental toughness', (coping with stress, setbacks and pressure). Teachers who scored higher in extraversion and conscientiousness also scored higher in mental toughness. In other words, those who felt more comfortable socially and were naturally more structured in their approach were better able to withstand the demands of the classroom. Joanne Taberner said: "If we can strengthen social self-esteem and mental toughness early on, we may be able to keep more talented teachers in classrooms where they are desperately needed."

Read the full report at [tinyurl.com/tp-BERA25](https://tinyurl.com/tp-BERA25)

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



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### SPACE SHOPPERS

A new game from BBC Bitesize aims to help KS1 children understand money, and develop maths skills along the way. Exploring concepts like place value, symbols, addition, subtraction, giving correct change and more, children will help aliens use human money for the first time. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-BBCmoney](https://tinyurl.com/tp-BBCmoney)



### NO ROOM FOR RACISM

Empower pupils to explore and celebrate diversity through poetry with this free teaching pack for KS2 from Premier League Primary Stars, which includes inspiring quotes from prominent figures in the Premier League and an example poetry. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-PLPpoetry](https://tinyurl.com/tp-PLPpoetry)



### HEALTHY GUTS

Teach children all about a healthy gut microbiome and how what they eat will impact it, with this free KS1 & KS2 programme. Download the pack, including interactive classroom lessons, teacher guides, curriculum links, presentations, assemblies and other resources, at [themicromatrix.com](https://themicromatrix.com)

## →→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



### Focus on fronted adverbials

This Real Grammar resource pack for Year 4 pupils includes teaching slides, worksheets, games and an opportunity to apply new learning in a writing task. To find out more about this unit and explore the full Real Grammar curriculum, visit [tinyurl.com/tp-fronted](https://tinyurl.com/tp-fronted)





## Calling all history teachers!

Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), the charity that looks after Hampton Court Palace, Kensington Palace, Tower of London and many more,

has launched its first ever Inspiring History Teaching Awards. Teachers across primary, secondary, FE and special schools are invited to enter, and do not need to be history specialists to be eligible. The national judging panel will be led by BAFTA award-winning presenter and best-selling author, Lucy Worsley. She was the chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces for 21 years and is now an ambassador for the charity.

Ten regional and national winners, will receive a £500 cash prize for themselves and £500 for their school. One overall winner will receive an additional £500 for themselves and £500 for their school, plus a lifetime HRP membership. Entries close on Sunday 25 January 2026 at 23:59. Find out more, and nominate your chosen teacher (or yourself!), at [hrp.org.uk/teachingawards](http://hrp.org.uk/teachingawards)

## Follow the signs

Signature (the UK's leading awarding body for deaf communication and language qualifications), has released a school programme to help primary pupils learn sign language for free. The programme, called School of Signs, includes 20 online lessons delivered by deaf BSL teachers; comprehensive learning resources, including lesson plans, printouts, homework, and a dictionary of signs; and teacher CPD. The online platform allows schools to track progress and set homework, and combines the online lessons with Codebreakers – a spy-themed video series that brings signing to life in the classroom. Codebreakers follows two spies, Max and Evie, who go undercover in a school to solve mysteries, with BSL seamlessly woven into each storyline. Each episode links directly to topics in the School of Signs study programme, giving pupils a fun and engaging way to practise their skills. To learn more and try out the resources for yourself, visit [theschoolofsigns.org.uk](http://theschoolofsigns.org.uk)



\*TeacherTapp

**80%** of teachers report that they have caught one or more colds this term.\*

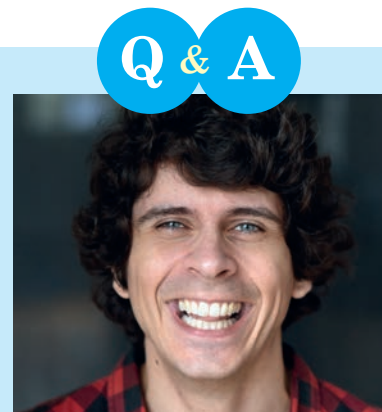
## Look ahead | Book ahead



**READY FOR BETT**  
The world's largest edtech show is back, running from 21-23 Jan 2026 at the Excel, London.

Tickets are free for educators – check out the speaker list and register at [uk.bettshow.com](http://uk.bettshow.com)

**TELL ME A STORY**  
Curl up with your favourite tome and celebrate National Storytelling Week! From 31 Jan-8 Feb, the National Literacy Trust is curating an exciting lineup of resources. Visit [tinyurl.com/tp-NSTW26](http://tinyurl.com/tp-NSTW26)



© Natasha Merchant

## Andy Day

Presenter and author

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

I have very fond memories of primary school. I enjoyed sport and was long jump champion for the school. We had great teachers, too; in fact, I'm still in touch with my old head teacher, Mr. Morris, who is a lovely man and ended up staying on at the school for 35-plus years, which is full merit to his character and teaching skills.

### 2. Where did the idea for Dylan come from?

I love dinosaurs – and Christmas – so Dylan is an absolute anchor for that: a boy who can turn into any dinosaur he likes when he sneezes, then one day gets a horrible cold and becomes the largest dinosaur he has ever been and knocks Father Christmas off his sleigh. He then has to help him deliver the presents and save Christmas...

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

A great question. I'd like them to use it as a fun, interactive tool for learning about different dinosaurs and how to pronounce their names. I've also added a character called Paleo Pip who you can spot in the book (a bit like *Where's Wally*) and count how many times you see him. I want children and teachers to have lots of fun with the story and for the teachers to encourage the kids to sneeze along (with their mouths covered of course) with Dylan and get right into the Christmas spirit.



*Dylan the Dino Boy Saves Christmas*, by Andy Day, illustrated by Alex Patrick (£7.99, Puffin) is out now.



# Create inspiring spaces for every child

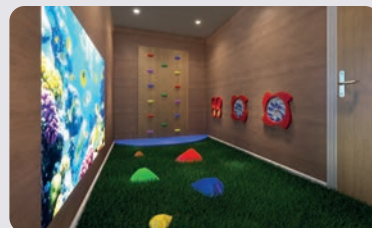
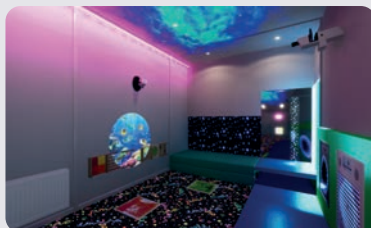
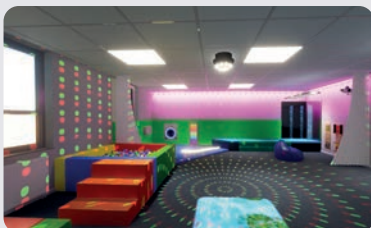
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# 6 ways to use puppets in the classroom

Bring lessons to life across the curriculum with these interactive activity ideas

## 1 | CHARACTER EXPLORATION

Use character puppets to retell traditional tales such as The Three Little Pigs or Goldilocks. Children can listen to the puppets' thoughts at a tricky or pivotal moment in the story, and suggest solutions together, encouraging problem-solving and empathy. Teachers can pause and ask, "Why do you think the puppet acted this way?" to develop inference. To explore links with oracy, children could take turns voicing different characters in the story, building confidence in speaking, listening, and expression. This also helps pupils to cement the storytelling sequence and provides opportunities to practise using ambitious vocabulary.

## 2 | PROBLEM-SOLVING

Introduce a 'Maths Mascot' puppet, who repeatedly makes mathematical mistakes when exploring concepts that the children are studying. Examples could include: "I think  $27 + 14$  is 31... is that right?" or you could add humour by getting the puppet to hold equipment the wrong way round or use it incorrectly. Children should work together to correct the puppet, explaining their reasoning step by step. The puppet's errors are a safe way to expose common misconceptions without embarrassing any child. Pupils can then design their own maths challenges to help teach the puppet a concept they keep getting wrong.

## 3 | EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Puppets can help children to discuss feelings they might struggle to express aloud. As a class, ask pupils to select a worry card to read that has been put forward by the puppet, centred around something that children may struggle with during school. For example, a shy puppet worries about joining a playground game, or a competitive puppet is finding losing in sports tricky to deal with. Pupils then need to work together to develop strategies to help – practising kindness, empathy, and problem-solving, or role-play the situation to explore how to solve it. Children can create advice postcards that sum up tips for the puppet.



**EMILY AZOUELOS**  
is an experienced former primary teacher, and educational content creator.

## 4 | HISTORICAL PEG DOLLS

Present children with a simple peg doll puppet (there are great examples online, such as this one from Salford Museum: [tinyurl.com/tp-PegDoll](https://tinyurl.com/tp-PegDoll)). Explain that this is a time-travelling puppet and they will be travelling back to the moment in history they are studying. Design the correct costumes and props that the time travel puppet will need to navigate the time period, based on research that the class will do. Link to the English curriculum by creating diary entries where the peg doll puppet writes in role, describing the time period and what they are encountering, allowing children to draw in relevant historical facts and knowledge.

## 5 | ANIMAL MOVEMENT

Give each child, or group, an animal puppet (e.g. frog, bird, cat) or ask them to invent a new animal puppet of their own. Ask the children how their puppet would move if it came alive and to show it with their body. Pupils can hop, flap, slither, or gallop around the space, developing coordination, balance, and gross motor control. The class can mirror one another's puppet movements in turn, or create a puppet dance where each animal joins the sequence to form a rhythmic, choreographed routine.

## 6 | CHRISTMAS PARADE!

Explore different types of puppets with the class (made from socks, paper bags, pegs, or sticks) and ask pupils to choose one style to focus on. Together, come up with a list of Christmas characters, both traditional and invented, before using craft supplies such as felt, fabric scraps, coloured paper, googly eyes, glitter, pipe cleaners, and cotton wool to decorate them. Children should design and assemble their puppets, giving them a name, personality, and festive role (e.g. Twinkle the elf, who wraps presents messily). Finish with a Christmas Puppet Parade where children introduce their puppets and describe their Christmas jobs. As an extension, pupils could create a puppet mini fact file to present, too.



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TEA AD 0088 04/25



## Fairer inspections means considering communities...

Ofsted's new framework is still doing schools a disservice by ignoring their social context

**T**he recent proposals to reform Ofsted inspections mark a pivotal moment. For years, inspections have been under intense scrutiny, with legitimate questions raised about the pressure they place on school leaders and the fairness of the judgements they deliver. For those of us working closely with schools in the most deprived communities, it is clear that, while progress is being made, there remains important ground to cover.

The move away from single-word judgements is undoubtedly welcomed – not just by the INEOS Forgotten 40 Project, but across the wider education sector. Schools are complex places, and reducing them to a label such as 'good' or 'requires improvement' has never done justice to the breadth of work headteachers and teachers undertake each day. The proposal to replace these labels with a new five-step report card system will give parents, communities and policymakers a more balanced picture of schools' strengths and areas for improvement. The introduction of

clearer evaluation areas and the use of toolkits to guide inspectors should, in theory, also make inspections more transparent and predictable.

### Building on reforms

But whilst the proposals are encouraging, there is now an opportunity to build on them further and ensure the system fully reflects the realities faced by schools in the most disadvantaged areas.

The new evaluation areas all matter, but judged in isolation, they risk missing the bigger picture. Attendance, for example, is often shaped by housing insecurity or family hardship – factors usually far beyond the control of school staff. Achievement, as currently measured, relies heavily on standardised outcomes that do not reflect the starting points of pupils growing up in poverty.

For schools in the most deprived communities, context is everything. A system that recognises the barriers children face, and values the progress they make in overcoming them, will not only provide fairer judgements but will

also support headteachers' wellbeing and keep experienced leaders in post. This is crucial for ensuring they can continue to deliver their vital work.

### Recognising unseen work

Schools serving deprived communities are often doing far more than delivering lessons. Every day, headteachers and their teams make sure children have eaten breakfast, have clean clothes to wear and a safe place to return home to. They are supporting families through crises, working hand in hand with social services, and stepping in where the system fails.

These roles are often invisible in inspection frameworks, yet they are central to helping children learn. Without acknowledging them, we risk undervaluing schools that are doing extraordinary work to hold communities together. The pressures of inspection, layered on top of these responsibilities, also take a serious toll on the wellbeing of leaders and their willingness to remain in post.

### Reflecting reality

This is why context must be built into the inspection framework. Progress should be valued alongside outcomes, so that schools helping children make extraordinary strides from difficult starting points receive the credit they deserve for that achievement. Equally, personal development, safeguarding and inclusion should be given comparable weight to academic data.

None of this requires abandoning accountability. On the contrary, it means making accountability smarter, fairer and more effective. Inspections should capture the character of schools and how they go above and beyond to support their pupils and families, not simply reduce them to a checklist. Above all, inspections should provide constructive support as well as scrutiny, acting as a genuine critical friend.

By recognising context as well as performance, and through closer partnership with school leaders, Ofsted can rebuild trust and create an inspection system that helps schools to thrive – ensuring every child, no matter their background, gets the fair shot they deserve. **TP**

*Brian Padgett is a former headteacher and Ofsted inspector, and is now a committee member at the INEOS Forgotten 40 Project.*

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# Why getting rid of EHCPs isn't the answer

Funding vital SEND support is a tricky business – but that doesn't mean we should consign education, health and care plans to history...



**A** fresh twist on the growing SEND crisis in our schools looks set to develop this autumn – except this time, it threatens to engulf all of Westminster.

Many policymakers, officials and members of the public broadly agree that the current system – based on the provision of individual educational, health and care plans (EHCPs) – is on its knees. First introduced in 2014, EHCPs are programmes that identify, and then seek to meet the specific health, communication and/or emotional needs of children up to the age of 25.

Since then, EHCP applications, which are agreed and funded through local authorities, have skyrocketed. With LAs buckling under myriad financial pressures, however, these costs are fast becoming unsustainable. As of January this year, nearly 650,000 children are on an EHCP, with thousands more still to be processed.

Many EHCP applicants are refused. In 2024, there were 154,500 requests for an EHCP assessment, 11.8 per cent higher than 2023 ([tinyurl.com/tp-EHCPtribunal](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-EHCPtribunal)).

LAs proceeded to an assessment in only 65.4 per cent of those requests. Better resourced and more articulate parents have increasingly resorted to tribunals ([tinyurl.com/tp-EHCPtribunal](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-EHCPtribunal)) when their EHCP application is rejected by their local authority. According to the most recent figures, 93 per cent of such appeals have been successful.

Even then, those who do receive an EHCP will often encounter a lack of specialist support, and general teacher shortages, among other issues. There are some clear parallels here with the welfare system, in that it's a mechanism intended to support some of the most vulnerable in society, but one beset with spiralling costs and opaque, over-complex application processes.

The Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Phillipson, now finds herself caught between a stern Treasury, a Prime Minister determined not to be bounced into further expenditure by restive backbenchers, and an increasingly well-organised SEND lobby – including some impressively articulate young people

able to sharply critique the current system's limitations.

Additionally, the Education Select Committee has been holding a series of hearings on the SEND system since the start of this year. Whilst the government isn't obliged to implement the Committee's recommendations, the proposals will pile on further pressure once they're published.

In contrast to the welfare issue, however – where Labour's reforms were rushed through – Phillipson and her ministers are treading more carefully. They have talked about the importance of widespread early language intervention, mooted plans that guarantee SEND support to every child who needs it via more extensive in-school provision.

However, the DfE has thus far not confirmed whether it will preserve what it sees as the costly and unwieldy EHCP model. This evasion hasn't gone unnoticed by families and campaigners, who are already mounting a fightback. In July, over a hundred figures – including academics, heads of charities and celebrity SEND parents – signed a letter urging the government to retain the legal protection that EHCPs represent ([tinyurl.com/tp-BBCEHCP](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-BBCEHCP)).

There's a pressing national context to the current debate. After their embarrassing U-turns on winter fuel allowance and disability benefits, the Treasury and Prime Minister's office have made it clear that one consequence of the late spring rebellions will be less money for SEND reform.

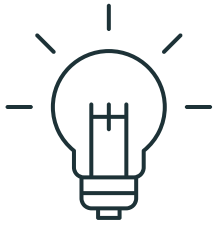
Can the government win this battle? The stubborn beauty of the British Parliamentary system is that MPs aren't just directly accountable to their constituents – an accountability sharpened by the fragile majorities secured by many of the 2024 intake – but that they're also sensitive to the mounting pressures on those they represent.

To be frank, I don't envy Bridget Phillipson and her department. They're having to resolve one of the most complex problems in English education, at a time of acute fragility for the Labour government that seems to afford little room for manoeuvre. Nevertheless, I predict that EHCPs will indeed be scrapped. Whereupon all hell – or at least something close to it – will inevitably break loose. **TP**

*Melissa Benn is the author of **Life Lessons: The Case for a National Education Service (£8.99, Verso)**, and is a visiting professor at York St John university.*



THE NEXT BIG THING



# The School of Signs

Teach your pupils BSL for free to open up opportunities and understanding for both deaf and hearing children...

[ THE TREND ]

## ONLINE ADAPTIVE LEARNING

The School of Signs is a free British Sign Language (BSL) programme of study for UK primary schools. Created with qualified deaf teachers and partners, it offers 20 online lessons, an interactive series and resource support to make BSL both accessible and engaging, helping schools boost pupil's confidence and communication skills.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The School of Signs enables schools to introduce British Sign Language for free and with no prior experience required. Developed over 18 months, with partners the Royal Association for Deaf People, ITV Signpost and 2Simple, the programme includes 20 lessons, an interactive series called *Codebreakers*, and varying classroom resources, including lesson plans and videos. With a hybrid learning model, blending classroom learning with engaging content, lessons are both dynamic and accessible. Schools can seamlessly track pupils' progress, set homework, and access teacher CPD support. By integrating BSL into primary schools, language learning becomes more inclusive, culturally enriching, and supportive of students communication skills and social development.

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT?

We hope to equip primary school pupils with the correct skills to communicate confidently with BSL users. Introducing BSL at primary school level lays the foundations for language learning and encourages children to adopt inclusive attitudes towards the deaf community. With 50,000 deaf children in the UK and over 151,000 BSL users, bridging the communication gap is vital in creating a more inclusive society. We strongly believe that learning BSL boosts confidence and helps foster a more empathetic learning environment. Feedback from schools who have already implemented BSL into the classroom report that there are cognitive improvements such as improved memory and better concentration skills. By creating a programme of study which is interactive, accessible, and engaging, The School of Signs supports both staff and children in developing meaningful communication skills in BSL which they can carry through till later life.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

The School of Signs has now launched and is available nationwide for primary schools. With partnerships like 2Simple's Purple Mash, schools can seamlessly integrate the programme into everyday teaching. By developing this programme, we want to create pathways for continued BSL learning beyond primary education, and by introducing BSL at a young age, we hope to normalise its use in day-to-day life, ensuring deaf awareness becomes a usual part of school culture. The schools who have signed up to the programme will now play a part in shaping more inclusive classrooms, and subsequently, more inclusive communities. We hope that The School of Signs can make BSL a valued part of a child's education, and help develop key skills for life.



**Contact:**  
**Website:**  
[theschoolofsigns.org.uk](https://theschoolofsigns.org.uk)

### Discover More...

Schools can visit [theschoolofsigns.org.uk](https://theschoolofsigns.org.uk) to register their school and start teaching today.

## GET INVOLVED

Access The School of Signs for free at [theschoolofsigns.org.uk](https://theschoolofsigns.org.uk) to find both the lessons and the interactive series, *Codebreakers*, as well as resources and homework. Teachers will receive CPD support and can track students' progress, making the programmes implementation simple.

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

# A letter to...

## Class teachers

Saying that schools should refocus on academics completely misses the point – in a broken system, teachers need support as much as pupils do...



**B**aroness Spielman's recent assertion that schools have become "therapeutic institutions" that should refocus on academic pursuits and

extracurricular activities misses the mark. As the headteacher of a special autism school, I can confirm that, yes, we have become therapeutic institutions. But not because we want to. It is because we have no choice.

Baroness Spielman suggests that children need to experience "the lumps and bumps of adolescence" without support, to become resilient adults. She also says that extracurricular activities are crucial for wellbeing. In a world with adequately funded support services, this might be possible.

Referrals to child and adult mental health services (CAMHS) crisis teams have risen by 53 per cent since 2019. Persistent absences have also significantly increased in the past five years. Yet rather than addressing this surge in demand with expanded resources, we have seen the opposite – a chronically underfunded system that has closed crucial services for children.

The waiting lists for mental health support are often years long. Speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and counselling services have all been reduced or disappeared entirely from local authorities' budgets. So, where do desperate families turn to? Schools.

Not because we have evolved to become "therapeutic institutions", but because we are often the only place in the community that has contact with their child. An underfunded, overstretched system has driven parents to view Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as the only route to access the basic

support their child needs. Parents have had to seek an EHCP for their child due to the need for specialist support, such as therapy or equipment. This should be readily available with proper funding.

The Baroness believes that extracurricular activities are crucial for children's wellbeing; I agree, when a child is mentally well enough to participate. Many SEND pupils may struggle to engage with their core learning, let alone extracurricular activities. Not because they lack the potential or the interest – many of my pupils have deep interests – but because they are overwhelmed and struggling with school-based anxiety or trauma. With insufficient support, these children struggle with sensory overwhelm, they are punished for behaviours that communicate their individual needs, or they simply avoid school.

## ***"Removing this support won't build resilience, it will build trauma"***

Suggesting that these children should cope without support to become "fully functioning adults" is not just misguided; it is harmful, something that any teacher working with SEND children will recognise. Research consistently demonstrates that appropriate support and interventions help autistic people to thrive. So removing this support won't build resilience, it will build trauma. And these children will carry that trauma with them throughout their academic career and into adulthood, which will require far more intervention and support than if this were available to them at a young age.



No teacher that I know of entered our profession to become a therapist. We want to help children achieve their aspirations and prepare them for life beyond the classroom. Yet, every day, we find ourselves supporting pupils and their families in crisis. But what alternative do we have? Watching our children become young adults who are unable to navigate life's "lumps and bumps" because their genuine needs have gone unsupported certainly isn't an option.

As many teachers know, the emotional toll of supporting children struggling with mental health challenges can be immense. Especially while knowing that if we don't provide this support, nobody else will. From spending evenings and weekends researching, to attending training and supporting colleagues, is it any wonder that our profession is facing a recruitment and retention crisis? Every day, schools lose compassionate, committed teachers and support staff who cannot continue bridging the gaps in our current system.

Wellbeing checks and support aren't just needed by pupils, but teachers too.

Helping children to feel safe builds the very foundations that make learning possible for them. Yet, while the gaps we are trying to fill shouldn't exist, they do, and we need to protect ourselves and our colleagues' mental wellbeing as much as we protect our pupils. So, take this as your cue to reach out to your coworker, take a night off from worrying about your pupils, and seek professional support, if you need it.

*Stephanie*

*Stephanie Smith is head of school at The Cavendish School.*

 [thecavendishschool.org.uk](http://thecavendishschool.org.uk)





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## UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

If the government is serious about putting parents centre-stage, it needs to stop rewarding schools that simply tick the right boxes...

I recently heard a headteacher read out the latest pledge from Whitehall, that parents would be put “front and centre” of school life. The Education Secretary’s September pronouncement, trailed with a forthcoming white paper on parent engagement and complaints reform, sounded like the partnership we all say we want. By lunchtime, I was watching a parent hover in the foyer for a pre-arranged meeting about her son’s progress. She signed in, took a visitor badge, and waited while we hurried through other priorities. She was never invited backstage. Many educators see this gap between the pledge and the practice every day. Not for lack of goodwill, but because the system’s incentives make genuine engagement harder than it should be.

Policy churn is part of the problem. In schools, we work through successive policies that do not have time to stick. Last year it was a ‘parent pledge’; this year it is ‘clear expectations’ and co-created ‘universal offers’ for parents. Ironically, the government scrapped mandatory home-school agreements in 2016 as ‘prescriptive’ red tape. Now the wheel has turned, and we’re asked to codify parent-school expectations again. Schools respond because accountability expects visible compliance. One headteacher told me, “We stage consultations and update our policies whenever ministers change course; it ticks the box, but everyone privately knows it is more theatre than transformation.” The incentive is to show we’re following the latest policy script, not rewriting the plot.

Inspection evidence and legal risk push relationships to the background. It is safer to show a paper trail of ‘parental engagement’ than to engage in messy, nuanced human dialogue. The work becomes producing documents that satisfy frameworks rather than shifting power with families. Logos go on websites, banners take pride of place, certificates appear in newsletters, while parents still queue front-of-house. A pastoral lead told me they once “spent more time collating parent survey data for the school improvement plan than talking to parents in need”. Accreditation criteria often reward evidence submission and compliance with standards,



not demonstrable parent influence on decisions. What does ‘parent-friendly’ mean if families cannot see where their voice changed a choice? We end up with what feels like an audience-only mindset. This is engagement on the school’s terms: controlled, formal, and often at arm’s length.

School groups and trusts add distance, too. Decisions that used to be made in the playground or the local governors’ meeting now often sit at group headquarters, far from day-to-day school life. “Our trust holds ‘listening forums’ and talks about co-design, but the big decisions come pre-packaged from above,” said one parent governor I spoke to. “Consultation feels like an optics-led PR exercise.” Parents are invited to the table in theory, but in practice they are given a seat with no real power.

Meanwhile, a complaints culture has taken hold that frames every difficult conversation as potentially adversarial. Many leaders report a spike in vexatious complaints, and in such an atmosphere schools go on the defensive. Instead of seeing concerned parents as partners, they become potential litigants to manage. I know colleagues who refuse to meet a parent alone, not out of hostility, but so that a witness is present. The result is a paradox: policies born of partnership are weighed down by accountability, caution, and sometimes fear, reducing genuine dialogue.

The gap is systemic, not personal. Very few staff in schools intend to shut parents out. Parents, for their part, can sense when they are being placated rather than heard. Many teachers know this feeling too. At this point, I encourage introspection: if you’ve sat in the audience for decisions about your work, consider that parents are the audience to decisions about their child. Like you, they tire when consulted after the fact; when their notes rarely make the script.

Where does that leave the latest white paper promise? The choice is clear. Change the incentives that turn policy into white noise, or watch another script read well and die on stage. What will you and your team change this term so parents see their voice shape a decision? **TP**

*The author is a teacher in England.*





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# 5 REASONS TO TRY... on-site, online AP – supporting schools

Tailored programmes for confidence and progress



## 30 SECOND BRIEFING

On-site online AP offers schools a flexible, controlled way to support pupils who struggle with attendance, behaviour, or reintegration. Personalised lessons provide a safe environment while the rest of the class continues learning uninterrupted.

### 1 SMOOTH REINTEGRATION

On-site online alternative provision helps pupils returning from exclusion, extended absence, or behavioural challenges reintegrate safely and gradually. Pupils follow tailored timetables combining online and classroom learning, allowing them to rebuild confidence and catch up academically at their own pace. While they receive structured support, teachers can focus on the rest of the class, maintaining a calm and productive environment. This approach benefits everyone, reducing classroom disruption, supporting staff wellbeing, and giving each pupil the attention and guidance they need to thrive.

### 2 HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

On-site online AP also allows younger pupils to receive support beyond academics, but still within a familiar environment. For example, at Academy21, we offer enhanced services such as courses for anxiety management, social skills and wellbeing, helping students develop resilience and confidence. Beyond this, the curriculum integrates core subjects with PSHE, wellbeing, and oracy, encouraging teamwork, turn-taking, and thoughtful discussion, nurturing both academic progress and personal development – skills for life.



**Academy 21**  
The Online Alternative Provision Experts

**Contact:**  
Web: [academy21.co.uk](https://academy21.co.uk)

### 3 SAFE AND CONTROLLED

On-site online alternative provision gives pupils with complex behavioural needs or previous exclusions a structured, supervised space to learn safely. Staff can monitor engagement, provide immediate support, and manage risks effectively, reducing incidents that might occur in a mainstream classroom. Students gain stability, reassurance, and

confidence while continuing their education, and schools maintain safeguarding standards.

### 4 PERSONALISED LEARNING

At Academy21, students attend live, interactive lessons delivered by qualified subject-specialist teachers who pay close attention to each student and adapt their teaching approaches to keep them engaged and comfortable. We also leverage tech features to make lessons dynamic, personalised, and interesting for students. This includes videos, polls, whiteboard exercises and, beyond the classroom, a tailored pathway of learning activities via InspiredAI, along with opportunities for mentoring and academic support.

### 5 REAL-TIME DATA

Teachers, mentors, and school leaders have instant access to student progress, attendance and engagement data, so they can identify trends, intervene early, and adjust plans accordingly. Frequent communication between staff, parents, and mentors ensures pupils receive consistent support. Schools can combine this data with their own observations overseeing the students in person to track academic and emotional development effectively, ensuring that pupils reintegrate safely and stay engaged.

## KEY POINTS

Supports gradual reintegration into mainstream schooling, giving pupils space to rebuild skills and confidence while lessons continue smoothly for the rest of the class, thereby reducing risk for teachers.

Provides opportunities for wellbeing and social development alongside academics, helping pupils build resilience, confidence, and teamwork skills that prepare them for long-term success.

Offers the potential to adjust lessons to individual learning needs, abilities, and paces so every child can progress academically alongside their peers in full-time mainstream schooling.

Delivers real-time data on progress and engagement, enabling timely intervention, stronger family communication, and smoother reintegration into mainstream learning for vulnerable pupils.



# Practice makes... PROGRESS

Pinpointing problems is part of the day-to-day workload for school leaders, but how exactly do we break these issues down and tackle them piece by piece?

MARK AND ZOE ENSER

**P**ressures on schools are at an all-time high. Demands on leaders are never-ending, from the impetus to improve outcomes, to the expectation of supporting wellbeing, behaviour, and complex needs. All of these ‘must-haves’ are well documented, but what is often lacking is specific examples of how leaders can actually go about achieving them.

has emerged as an outlier. The class teacher is struggling to manage behaviour, issues are arising in friendships, and some parents have raised concerns. Progress in learning appears to have stalled. So, what do great leaders do next?

## What?

The first move in a situation like this one, is to be curious; we need to understand what the issue is before we jump to action. Has anything

It is also important to be curious about when and where things are going well, so the school can build on these strengths. Great leaders know what they are getting right, not only what they’re getting wrong.

In our example scenario, let’s say that by talking to the class teacher, we find that behaviour becomes most tricky just before and after lunchtimes. Routines begin to break down; social issues take over at lunchtime and pupils struggle to settle back down in the afternoon. We’ve identified a pinch point, but there is more to explore about the causes before reaching conclusions. After a bit more digging, for example, we might learn that the activity before lunchtime is usually English, where pupils are often working independently on a writing task. When we look at pupils’ books, we might find that there is a large proportion of the class who do not complete these activities. This could be due to the breakdown in behaviour and attention at this point, possibly as pupils are hungry. However, when observing in lessons we can see that many of these pupils are finding letter formation challenging; put simply, they struggle

to write. Pupils have good ideas; they are keen to share but cannot get them down on paper accurately or with the speed needed for them to keep up with their peers. This leads to frustration, so the children quickly lose motivation and begin to distract others and bicker. Though the class usually has TAs available, timetabling means they’re

*“School ‘must-haves’, from wellbeing to behaviour, are well documented, but what is often lacking is specific examples of how leaders can go about achieving them”*

Great leaders can of course identify and address specific issues, but it takes time and practice to perfect the process. Let’s take behaviour in a Y4 class as an example.

In our example primary school, behaviour is positive overall. Most pupils, including those in reception, follow routines, increasingly know how to regulate themselves and they are learning well. Expectations are high. However, one class

changed with this group? Are there particular points in the day where poorer behaviour manifests and does this relate to certain activities? Have the demands of the curriculum increased too sharply for this group, with some key learning not secured (due to attendance for example)? Are there pupils with emerging needs which were not as pronounced last year, or were they previously receiving different support?



on break during the English lesson, to allow them to be available for lunch duty.

## How?

One solution in this case might be to simply shift the activity to a different point in the day, replacing it with maths, where pupils are more settled. This might alleviate some of the immediate pressures, but does not address the underlying issue facing those pupils.

A more effective solution would be to spend some time looking at how the writing task is broken down, and how pupils are prepared to write. We might also make the decision, with the agreement of the teaching assistants, to switch the

break times so additional support is available while the issue is addressed.

Additional details about process are also important. For these pupils, perhaps the writing task begins too quickly. They have lots of disconnected ideas, and they can't get them down on paper in the time frame given or in a logical way. We might, then, decide to address this first, introducing more opportunities for oral composition, with pupils working together to discuss their ideas. Pupils can try out ideas, and some will be recorded by the teacher or teaching assistant to capture and organise them. For the time being, we've taken independent

writing out of the equation. This won't happen magically though, so we need to give staff precise training in what this looks like and how to plan and deliver it. Teachers and TAs are also reassured that not everything needs to be recorded in books. The right thing at the right time for these pupils is what matters. It's also worth checking in with other teachers, whose expertise might be useful for helping to plan the new approach.

We also need to provide the children with a clear structure and prompts. It's beneficial for the class teacher to start small, building

to longer periods of writing, and adapting to how pupils respond. Praise is used extensively while this routine is embedded.

## When?

However, there is still the issue with these pupils' transcription which needs addressing. Some of these pupils will require further practice to build the automaticity and stamina they need to write at greater length. This means we need to focus on these pupils during the already established handwriting sessions, and factor in additional practice elsewhere, where they work with a skilled TA to overlearn as well as fill in any knowledge gaps (e.g. correcting pen grip). Some pupils who require support with their fine motor skills might have an additional intervention, using art materials which

they already enjoy. Again, lots of praise is used.

All of this continues to be framed within the consistently high expectations and clear routines already established in the school. The aim is for all pupils to be able to meet these expectations, but leaders see more support is needed here.

Any new approach also needs an evaluation. Start with a two-week review, to observe what's worked well. For instance, in this example, we might see that there have been some improvements, and the teacher has started to introduce more oral composition before, or instead of, writing in humanities lessons. Sessions before lunch may have become calmer, and there have been fewer issues reported at lunchtime, therefore leading to more settled afternoons.

Of course all situations and schools will be different, but this approach is founded on some basic principles: be curious to really understand the problem; consider the best options and sift, plan and prepare; take clear and precise actions which staff are supported to enact; and review, review, and review some more. **TP**



*Mark and Zoe Enser are based in North Yorkshire and are the authors of*



*How Do They Do It? What can we learn from amazing schools, leaders and teachers? (£16.99,*

*Crown House). They write regularly on education and leadership.*

[@EnserMark](#)

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# Science is MATERIAL

Making sure pupils understand that STEM is for everyone not only bolsters their career options, but helps build well-rounded, engaged citizens

JO MONTGOMERY

**W**hat's the point of primary science? Of course, it's important to instil knowledge and techniques in our pupils, ready for their continuing educational journey, but we also have a wider remit. As teachers, we play a pivotal role in developing children's science capital, and making the subject accessible and relevant to everyone.

By science *capital*, I mean the combination of knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and social connection each child has. Research shows that those

Approach – it does what it says on the tin). PSCTA is a framework that empowers teachers to make their science lessons engaging, inclusive, equitable and accessible by making small tweaks to existing practice. It's built on a bedrock of solid pedagogy, and has the aim of broadening who and what counts in science, challenging representations and addressing stereotypes.

It starts with your understanding of your class. Nobody knows them better than you – what knowledge or interests do your pupils already have? How can you

The final pillar can be the hardest – letting the kids lead. Here we can start small, by encouraging pupils to ask questions, explore issues and topics that matter to them, and then take action on real-world problems. Are they interested in climate justice? That can blend perfectly with units on everything from weather to the human body (how can cycling help the environment and our bodies, compared to driving a car?). You can also link in other subjects to support science capital – literacy skills, for instance, are essential in communicating scientific information to the general public. Can you make posters or script a short assembly to tell the rest of the school about the climate work you're doing?

## Right here, right now

The PSCTA also encourages our science teaching to be local. This doesn't mean only teaching about science that is directly related to where you live but rather, finding links in the curriculum that tie to your area. For example, are there any allotments near the school, or does anyone's family grow vegetables or herbs? Tie this in to teaching about plant life cycles. Valuing everyday experiences, as well as the wider examples and stories we focus on in science can help children

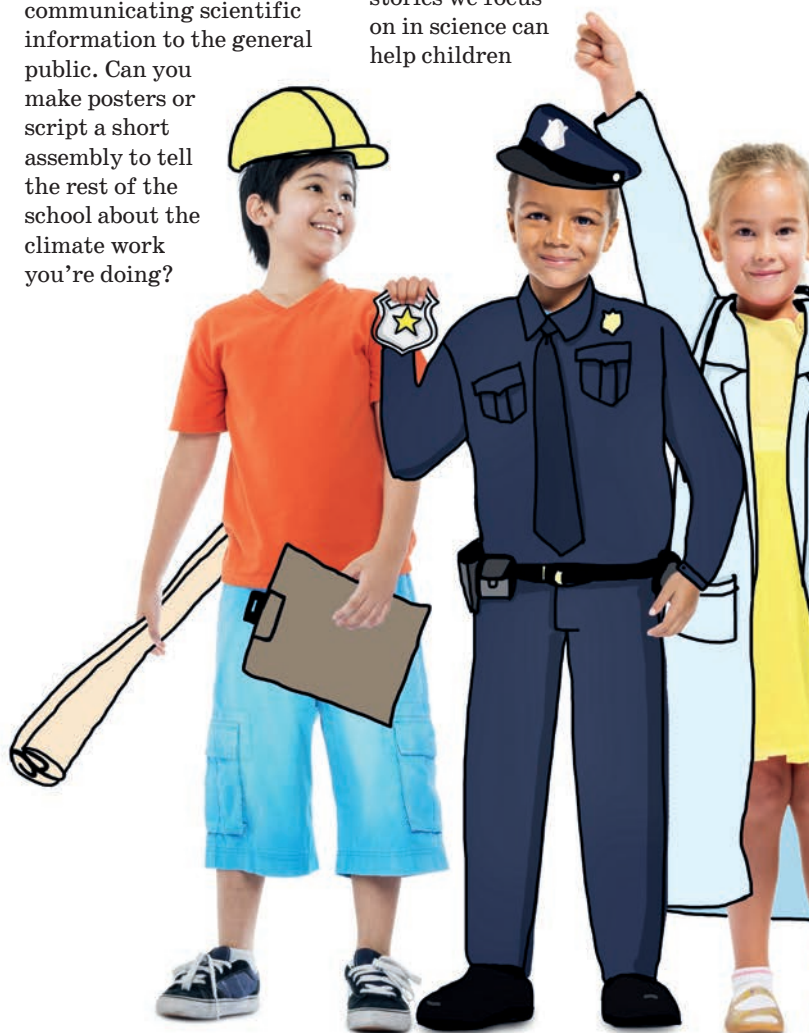
## *"It starts with your understanding of your class"*

with lower science capital are less likely to see science and STEM as being for them, and are less likely to aspire to careers in the field ([tinyurl.com/tp-AspireSTEM](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-AspireSTEM)). Even for those who won't go into STEM-related careers, we still need to develop critical thinking, questioning and problem-solving skills, and scientific literacy is essential for a society that is able to engage in discussions, debate and decisions about topics such as climate change, medical research, and technology.

But how do you go about making sure your lessons are promoting science capital? There are various approaches you can use, but one that I find particularly helpful is the PSCTA (Primary Science Capital Teaching

link that to science? For example, I saw one teacher teach her football-mad class about forces by kicking a ball to begin the discussion. This hooked them right from the start, as well as contextualising the science knowledge, to avoid them seeing it as abstract and irrelevant to their lives.

The second pillar of the framework is to make science feel welcoming to everyone. This means changing classroom habits, and using examples that reflect the range of cultures and communities your children represent. In one instance, I saw a pupil bring in different types of baklava, that the teacher then used to demonstrate how classification and branching work in biology.



understand why they should bother learning about science.

Representation is of course also essential. As the adage goes, *'You can't be what you can't see'*. Why not have pupils draw a picture of what they think a scientist looks like, and then compare those drawings with diverse images of real-world STEM professionals to challenge stereotypes? The Primary Science Teaching Trust (PSTT) has lots of resources to expose children to a wide range of different people who have STEM careers at [tinyurl.com/tp-PSTTlikeme](https://tinyurl.com/tp-PSTTlikeme)

There are also plenty of opportunities to highlight the variety of STEM careers on offer. A few resources I find really useful are:

- **NU STEM** person of the week. This is a STEM engagement activity that's been shown to reduce children's stereotypes

of science and scientists by providing counter-stereotypical character attributes through a set of diverse STEM role models. It includes printable sets of postcards and posters with a variety of science roles, and guidance for teachers. See [tinyurl.com/tp-STEMpotw](https://tinyurl.com/tp-STEMpotw)

- **Science for Everyone.** This resource helps to raise awareness of unconscious bias and its potential to influence children's science capital and attitudes towards science. The classroom resources help pupils explore everyday science and highlight a diverse range of scientists. These come with profiles, video interviews and related activities to get hands-on with the science. See [science4everyone.org](https://science4everyone.org)
- I've also collated some resources to embed real-life science and scientists into your lessons at [tinyurl.com/tp-DrJoCareers](https://tinyurl.com/tp-DrJoCareers)

## Why it matters

You've probably heard it a hundred times, but small changes really can make a big difference. Helping children see themselves as the sort of person that could be a scientist, or engage with science, is invaluable. Embedding science capital isn't optional; we have a responsibility as educators to make sure that any pupil in our care believes that they can pursue a STEM career. Even children who aren't interested in the career aspect should be encouraged to realise how relevant science is in their lives, and that engaging with it, on any level, means they will have more opportunities to participate in society. With inclusive practices and thoughtful teaching, primary classrooms can spark lifelong science identities and aspirations. **TP**

## How to build science capital



Use familiar experiences to spark children's engagement. You can easily weave resources like Explorify's free *Have You Ever...?* activities into your teaching. See [tinyurl.com/tp-HYE](https://tinyurl.com/tp-HYE)



Include all voices: allow more thinking time before asking for answers, helping quieter pupils feel more confident in science discussions, and valuing all inputs.



Link to meaningful, real-life contexts, such as environmental issues in children's own communities, showing that science is happening all around them. This also links with EEF Improving Primary Science report recommendation number 4: Relate new learning to relevant, real-world contexts ([tinyurl.com/tp-EEFscience](https://tinyurl.com/tp-EEFscience)).



Showcase a variety of scientists and STEM careers – you can't be what you can't see.



**Dr Jo Montgomery** is a primary science specialist, Primary Science Capital

Teaching Approach accredited trainer, Primary Science Quality Mark (PSQM) regional lead and hub leader, adviser for The Great Science Share for Schools, and an independent education consultant.

 @drjoscience

 [drjosciencesolutions.co.uk](https://drjosciencesolutions.co.uk)



MEDIUM TERM PLAN

**KS2**

**ART AND DESIGN**

# HELLO, LIGHTHOUSE

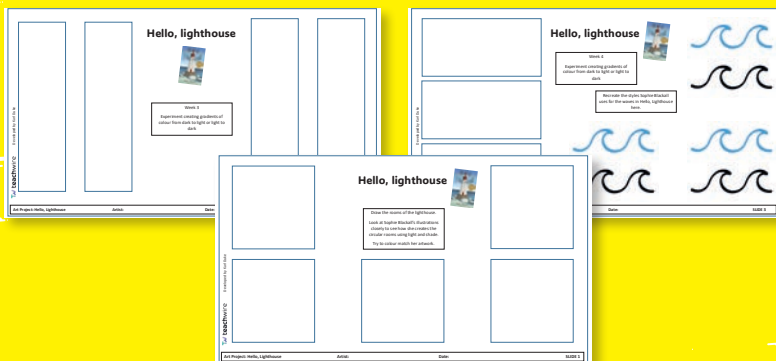
KARL DUKE

Every child is an artist, and inspiring children to truly believe in themselves is so rewarding. Book creator Sophie Blackall is the inspiration for this project; her picturebook *Hello, Lighthouse* is one of the key texts used in our World War 2 focus. After initially researching artwork by modern illustrators, children explore techniques used to paint skies and seascapes, draw lighthouse cross-sections, and experiment with collage. The pupils then create a lighthouse and its surroundings step by step. During the process, they curate their own artist's sketchbook showing their development and experimentation.

I have described six lessons here, but use the time needed to complete the artwork; it's worth it! We often use the majority of a term and at least 12 hours in total.

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**tinyurl.com/tp-Lighthouse**



## WEEK 1

### Learning objective

- To understand how artists create lighthouses

Picturebooks are an essential component of our curriculum, and we use them in art lessons to develop knowledge of the artist (past and present), and to look at the skills used by a specific artist. We value modern day illustrators as much as those revered throughout history, and one of our favourites is Sophie Blackall, the creator of *Hello, Lighthouse*.

Start by reading the book with the children to immerse them in the world of the lighthouse and its responsibilities.

We also make links here to Emily Carroll's *Letters from the Lighthouse*, which runs concurrently as the class text, but this is not a requirement for the project.

Look at the page showing the cross-section of the lighthouse. What technique did the artist use to show the reader the inside of the lighthouse? Why are cross-sections used in books? What is the purpose of each floor? There is an opportunity here to look at other non-fiction books where cross-sections are used (they're popular in botanical texts, for example).

What kinds of materials could we use to create the building and the cross-section of rooms? Could we use different resources and media to create the building?

Explain that the children will start by creating the lighthouse building itself before moving on to the cross-section, the external features of the lighthouse, and then the sky, sea and rocks.

Model drawing the shape of the lighthouse building on an A3 sheet of white card with a wider base than the top. What could we do to ensure the building is drawn symmetrically? (Use a ruler to mark measurements at the top and bottom of the card and using a ruler to join up the marks, for instance). After joining the two vertical lines, create brickwork by making marks 1cm apart down each side of the lighthouse then join them together with horizontal lines using a ruler. Short vertical lines can then be drawn to create brick shapes.

In preparation for week 2, ask the children to look at the colour scheme of the rooms. Which colours will they need to colour-match each floor?



### Assessment

- Can children describe what a cross-section is and its purpose?
- Can children think of the resources that could be used to create a mixed-media lighthouse?
- Can children accurately measure, mark and draw accurate horizontal and vertical lines?



## WEEK 2

### Learning objective

- To learn how to create the cross-sections

Look closely at Blackall's creation of the rooms inside the lighthouse. Consider the colours used and how she creates the

curved effect. Why did the illustrator choose the specific colours and imagery? How did the shading techniques create the circular effect?

Share some of the ideas children had at the end of last lesson for the colour scheme. Ask them to talk to a partner about what they would expect to see when pencil colours are mixed. How will they create light, shade, and the circular form? Make some initial sketches of the rooms on the template provided at the link on the left (**slide 1**), and encourage the children to try out a range of colours.

Children have the choice to decide the order of the rooms they create and the base colour on which they will draw. You need to give them time at this stage to sketch then colour all of the rooms, which will then be glued onto the lighthouse building. Use an HB pencil to sketch each room lightly before adding the colours, working from light to dark. I encourage children to 'over colour' in order to match the vibrancy of the originals. To create the circular effect, darker tones could be used towards the edge of each illustration. Some children have chosen to outline the finished drawings in pen. Constantly refer back to Blackall's work to check for colour-matching.

Referring to Sophie's lighthouse, cut out a rectangular piece of paper roughly two floors in height but narrower than the top of the lighthouse. Draw a line to split the piece into two. The bottom room is an office space, and the top room is the light room. Allow the children's imagination to run free here to consider how a bright light could be created using any media. The completed rooms will be glued on to the background at a later stage.



## Assessment

- Can children use colour mixing to match the colours used by an artist?
- Can children create the effect of a circular room using shading techniques?



## WEEK 3 Learning objective

- To create an atmospheric background

This week we move away from the lighthouse, but don't worry, we'll return next week!



The focus in week 3 is the sky and the waves. Explore the colours used by Sophie Blackall throughout the book to match colours with mood.

Research sky colours created by other artists from a selection of picturebooks. What atmosphere were they trying to create and what colours did they choose? In the sketchbook (or using the template on **slide 2**), experiment with graduating colour to create a small-scale sky from its darkest tone at the top to white at the bottom (the horizon/sea line). This experimentation of mixing colour should recall knowledge from previous learning. Add lighter or darker colours to change the atmosphere. What happens when we add white? A primary colour? A secondary colour? Do certain colours signify a mood or feeling? What atmosphere do children want to create? Day or night? Peaceful or stormy? Early morning or early evening? Choose colours to match the mood, creating a vibrant sketchbook spread. Note: I ask children not to use black, but to instead try a combination of colours to darken the mood.

Once pupils have experimented with colour, they can use a large piece of paper, which needs to be taller and wider than the lighthouse building, for the background. Draw a horizon line approximately a third from the bottom of the paper. This line is where the sea meets the sky. Paint the sky starting with the darkest shade at the top using horizontal brushstrokes. Lighten the shade gradually until reaching the white of the distant horizon line.



## Assessment

- Can children use colour mixing to create a mood?
- Can children graduate colour to create distance in a painting?



## WEEK 4 Learning objective

- To use painting techniques to create waves

There are so many painting techniques to create a seascape and waves. Explore how artists have painted waves through history, including photographic, impressionistic, and stylistic like Sophie Blackall. Look at the range of styles Sophie uses throughout the book to create the sea; her use of patterns and brush strokes is a wonderful playful inspiration that children may aim to replicate. Which medium did she use? Use the sketchbook again (or the template in **slide 3**) to experiment with wave styles and colours.

When creating the sea, the colours could replicate the sky colours to show how the sky is reflected on the water. Explain that the only detailed waves will be the ones in the foreground and that the majority of the sea will be painted using the same horizontal painting style pupils used for the sky, but with a medium sized brush. Model a horizontal painting technique, leaving gaps





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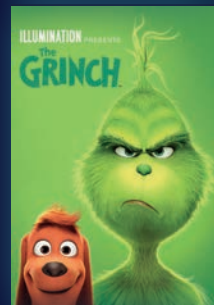
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between the strokes to suggest light on the waves. These brush strokes can be straight or 'wavy' to suggest sea movement; the 'wavier' strokes suggest stormier seas. From the horizon line, graduate from a darker tone to a lighter tone in the foreground.

Finally, referring to the wave styles explored earlier, paint a series of individual waves on a separate piece of paper using a chosen style. Use a thin brush to paint the details. These will be added in week 5.

Glue the lighthouse building onto the background paper, leaving approximately 15cm from the bottom for the rocks, which will be added next time. Add the two rooms created in week 1 to the lighthouse.



## Assessment

- Can children create a sky and sea mirrored in colour?
- Can children use thin brushstrokes to create detailed waves for the foreground?



## WEEK 5 Learning objective

- To use collage techniques to create a base for the lighthouse

Now the lighthouse needs a base. Explain to the class that they'll use collage techniques to create this. The aim is to create a rocky island which is balanced in complimentary colours, or could contrast with the sea and sky; both can be equally effective.

How could the rocks be created? From magazine pages? Or from textured and patterned papers or cut out of coloured paper? Alternatively, marble effects or patches of colour could be painted on paper and cut out into the shape of rocks. Screwed-up paper which is then unfolded can create texture, and tissue paper might be an obvious choice to overlay. Experiment with different textures and materials, and with overlapping the rocks. How could pupils arrange their paper rocks to suggest

that some are in the background and others in the foreground? I tend to share a number of possibilities before giving children the freedom to experiment themselves.

The top of the rock base should be slightly wider than the bottom of

the lighthouse, then should increase in width gradually to the bottom of the paper, making a triangular shape. To create the sense of distance, glue smaller rocks at the base of the building then increase the sizes until reaching the bottom of the paper (the foreground).

To further suggest distance, it is also possible to increase the intensity of colour in the foreground, with softer tones used nearer to the lighthouse.

It is now time to add the individual waves painted in week 4. Glue these along the bottom of the artwork, over the sea and the rocks. We have found overlapping the waves creates a lovely effect, as does using a paint-flicking technique to suggest water spray.

The final task at this stage is to create the boiler room, which is placed on the rocks (this is a room below the lighthouse itself). We made ours using a simple coloured-pencil drawing of the water tanks; one filled with clean water and the other not so. This always triggers one or two giggles!



## Assessment

- Can children use a range of techniques to create a collage suggesting distance?



## WEEK 6 Learning objective

- To add detail to the artwork

The main building and cross-sections are now set on a background of sky and sea. The detailed waves and rocks lead our eye towards the lighthouse. The final session is all about the details, including creating the roof, lifeboat and the aircraft.

First, create a triangular roof, which will sit at the top of the lighthouse. Paint this red but gradually darken the paint to suggest shadow at one side (this gradient may depend on whether the children have chosen a day or night scene). Glue this on top of the light room, then give it a sea-themed weathervane using pen or pencil. Looking carefully at Sophie's lighthouse, consider other details that could be added using a black pen or dark pencil. For example, the railings



and chimney around the light room, the hook at the right-hand side of the image, and the pole that holds the lifeboat. Pupils could also add steps down onto the rocks, as well as the lifeboat itself. One child came up with a brilliant idea to add a message in a bottle (including a line from the book or a message from Carroll's *Letters from the Lighthouse*, rolled up like a scroll and glued to a bottle-shaped piece of paper), placed on the rocks or floating in the sea.

Finally, an optional addition... Influenced by our curriculum focus – World War 2 in Lincolnshire – children used aircraft references to create Lancaster Bombers and spitfires in a chosen medium; these are added to the sky around the lighthouse.



## Assessment

Can children use a range of media to add finer details to the artwork? **TP**



**Karl Duke is the headteacher of a reading-inspired school in Lincolnshire. He is passionate about the power of picturebooks to inspire learning**

**across the curriculum.**

**@karlduke8.bsky.social**





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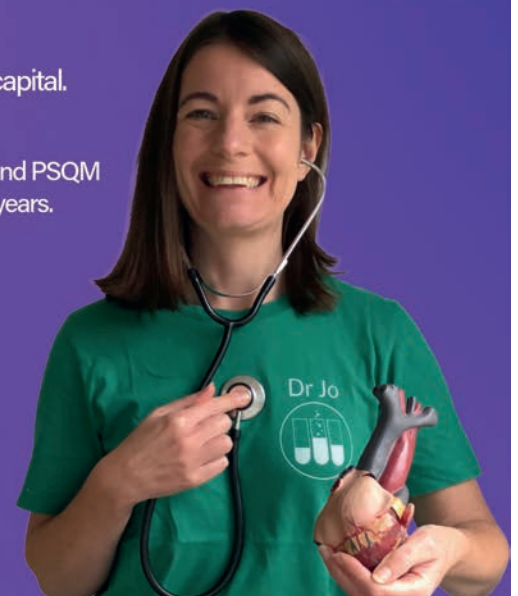


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Find out more about Jo here: <https://drjosciencesolutions.co.uk/>



# How I do it ➡

Update a favourite, and help pupils learn coding skills with this micro:bit rock, paper, scissors project

ADAM KNIGHT

# 1

First, I recapped on a previous coding lesson we'd done, using the micro:bit's light sensors to create a nightlight. If you have previously worked with this device, it would be worth recapping what the children remember, but if you haven't, there are plenty of good intro videos online you can use to introduce the concept (such as this one on

YouTube: [tinyurl.com/tp-microbitIntro](https://tinyurl.com/tp-microbitIntro)).

Explain that in this lesson, you'll be using the micro:bit to play rock, paper, scissors.



Our Trust is very lucky in that we have amazing technology access, so for this lesson, children from across our seven schools were able to take part remotely, and I filmed my teaching from our state-of-the-art TV studio. It does not escape me that many schools don't have this option, but this lesson will work perfectly well in-person in your classroom, as long as the children have access to micro:bits. Pupils will learn to code their micro:bits in order to play a game of rock, paper, scissors, and learn to use Scratch coding blocks to program random number generators and LED displays.

Load up Scratch on laptops ([scratch.mit.edu](https://scratch.mit.edu)), and explain to the children that this is what you'll be using to write your code. The first step is to create a variable. To be able to play an unbiased game of rock, paper, scissors, you'll need your variable to be a random number between one and three (since there are only three possible choices when playing the game). Click on the 'variables' tool in Scratch, and support pupils to code a number generator.

# 2

Children will now need something to trigger the random number generation. We decided to use the 'when gesture' and 'shake' blocks in Scratch to code the micro:bit to generate a number between one and three when it was shaken. Guide pupils to use the Scratch interface to drag the coding blocks into place, and trial shaking their micro:bits to generate a number. If some pupils are finding Scratch tricky, you could ask them to work in small groups, mixing abilities.

# 3

# 4

Next, use the 'if:randomnumber:equals' blocks to program the LED display on the micro:bit to show either a rock, paper, or scissors icon when a corresponding random number is generated. We settled on one=rock; two=paper; and three=scissors, but any combination will do. Another trial-and-error session will allow pupils to test that their coding has worked, and if not, to look through and problem-solve to find any bugs.



Finally, set up a class tournament! Get groups or individuals to test out their codes to play rounds of rock, paper, scissors. You can tie this into maths learning on probability, and discuss real-world applications for the codes you've created. For example, can children think of ways people might use random number generators in the fields of gaming or cryptography? To tie into literacy skills, have children write a step-by-step guide to micro:bit rock, paper, scissors.

# 5



Adam Knight is a Year 6 teacher at Westclyst Community Primary, part of Cornerstone Academy Trust. This lesson was also featured at MATPN South West. For more MATPN events throughout the year, visit [matpn-uk.com](https://matpn-uk.com)

 [tcat.education](https://tcat.education)



# Think AGAIN

It's never too early for children to begin learning how to judge information for themselves, argues **Nicky Cox**...

**W**hen I co-founded the UK's first newspaper written exclusively for children, nearly 20 years ago now, I did so with a very clear mission in mind. Quite simply, I have always believed that the world will only become a better place if the next generation is better informed than the last.

Today's children certainly have *more* access to information than ever before – but that doesn't mean they can always trust what they see. Even at primary age, they are regularly exposed to claims about current events via YouTube, TikTok and other social media sites. Ofcom data show that more than a third of three- to five-year-olds already use social media, often encountering opinion dressed up as fact, or content shared without context. Some of it may be benign; but too often it's deliberately designed to provoke outrage, fear or even hatred.

If children are learning about the world from this mix of fact, fiction and everything in between, then it's fair to say that the role schools play in giving them the tools to make sense of it all has never been more vital, and worthy of support.

## Thinking for themselves

This is where media and information literacy (MIL) comes in. I know that teachers are already under pressure to deliver a packed curriculum, with weighty accountability measures; but the truth is that children



cannot thrive – in any subject – if they aren't able to think for themselves, ask questions, and weigh up different perspectives.

A child who can spot the difference between a news report and a paid advert is also a child who can be more reflective about the sources they use in history, or the information they find online for a science project. A child who can recognise bias is also one who can approach disagreements in the playground more fairly. These are not 'extra' skills. They underpin the kind of confident, curious learning that primary schools work so hard to foster.

And MIL should not be seen simply as a shield against online dangers. Of course, protecting children matters. But it is equally important to show them the positives – that information can inspire, empower and connect. When we teach children to navigate the news, we are not only helping them to

stay safe, we are showing them how to discover the joy of being informed and the satisfaction of forming their own opinions.

## No such thing as too early

"Research shows that the scale of news and media literacy provision in schools is limited and that awareness of resources to help at home is low," says Fran Yeoman, associate professor in journalism & media literacy and head of journalism at Liverpool John Moores University, who is also a trustee of the Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA). "Too often, MIL is reduced to a protectionist online safety issue, which is a narrow and somewhat pessimistic way to approach the subject. Whether mandated by the curriculum or not, children need MIL education that is broad, critical and creative. And though pupils and teachers cannot possibly tackle all the many

facets of MIL in one go, it is never too young to start laying the foundations for creating a new generation of media-savvy, well-informed and confident digital citizens."

At First News, we couldn't agree more. We know that children as young as seven can begin to practise the habits of critical thinking – asking "Who made this? Why? What do I think about it?" – and that those habits can grow as they do. That's why we have worked with MILA to produce a practical framework for teaching MIL in primary schools. Based on MILA's pioneering work and drawing on Bournemouth University's theory of change for media literacy, it's free to download and designed to help teachers plan impactful lessons and track progress over time.

For us, this is just the start. We know that real change will only happen when schools, policymakers and society at large all agree that these skills should be at the heart of our education system; ensuring that generations to come are not only ready to ask questions about the world around them, but also able to trust themselves to find the answers. **TP**



**Nicky Cox**  
MBE is  
editor-in-  
chief and  
co-founder  
of First  
News, the

UK's original news provider for children. The First News MIL primary framework can be downloaded at [first.news/primary-framework](https://first.news/primary-framework)

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**Mrs. Harmer, Year 6 Primary School Teacher**

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framework



Based on frameworks created with the  
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# Disruptive, or just DIFFERENT?

Letting pupils sit under tables might be the best thing you do for SEND progress this year, argues **Adam Dean**...

**W**hat if I told you that letting a pupil sit under the table while you teach could improve their learning, reduce workload, and make your classroom more inclusive?

I've been asked to give you tips on how to support neurodivergent pupils (specifically pupils with autism) to meet their greatest potential in mainstream schools, without relying on increased funding or staffing levels. Well, I've gone a step further. I have some easily applied

potential. Some of these strategies might seem counterintuitive to you, but they work. Sadly, in my experience, there's still a tendency for schools to discourage these things because they're seen as disruptive or because it's 'not fair' for the autistic pupil to behave one way and the neurotypical pupils to behave another way. But, sorry, this isn't equality; it's discrimination and refusal to implement reasonable adjustments. If this were an employee, they'd be taking the employer to tribunal.

It's also making your job more difficult. I'm not talking about anything unreasonable here, just going with the flow. Let's look at a few examples.

Some pupils might find that sitting under the table helps them to focus. Again, it's not typical, but it helps. Group work can be draining for some autistic pupils. But that's okay; some of our brightest minds work better alone or with short, snappy interactions. Some pupils need to flap or draw or chew their shirt sleeves. If that's

the case, please let them, they're hurting nobody. Finally, eye contact is hard. I run a school, and when I'm thinking, I close my eyes and look away. It's never been a problem.

Ask yourself this: is it dangerous? Is it severely disruptive? If the answer is no, then it's probably fine, will help the pupil to learn, and make your job smoother. Our job is to teach, not to force conformity. Let's not make pupils use a wrench when they already have a spanner.

***“Let's not make pupils use a wrench when they already have a spanner...”***

strategies you can use in your mainstream classroom that will make a tremendous difference and actually reduce workload. I'm excited, because I've been delivering autism training for almost 12 years, but I'm also about to go through my own autism and ADHD assessment. So, I'm coming at this from a fresh perspective, even for me.

## **Is it dangerous?**

One of the amazing things about pupils with autism is that they often have special interests and their own coping strategies. They've developed techniques to help themselves reach their



## Teach what matters

Potential looks different for everyone. For pupil A, playing the next Sherlock Holmes could be the goal; another might want to design a gene-sequence machine for cows that produce cool chocolate-milkshake straight from the teat. At Chatten Free School, we phrase it as 'happiness, independence, respect and being part of the world in a way that is meaningful to them'.

What I'm getting at, is that learning is hard; it involves being outside of your comfort zone, therefore, it must have a purpose that means something to the pupil and helps them to reach that potential.

For example, if Jonny doesn't have spoken communication and finds transitions distressing, forcing him to write his name

hand-over-hand probably isn't a good use of your time or his. I'm not saying Jonny doesn't have that potential to learn to write; but it might not be most productive approach right now. Essentially, it comes down to teaching the skills that will help children to meet their full potential, as opposed to the skills the DfE tells you to teach.

But surely this involves a whole separate curriculum, which would require more work on your part, plus access to specialist knowledge? Well, yes, and no. Maybe to start with. Ultimately, though, you have the EHCP to work from; that is your curriculum, and I would encourage you to feed into local services such as school improvement partners. Once you have something up and running, it won't take a huge amount of maintenance.

This is going to save all that time you spend trying

to force relevant learning around an irrelevant topic. Your child will do work that is specific to them and their journey. If you're not sure what this looks like, the Chatten Curriculum would be a great place to start. It's on our website, and it's free ([tinyurl.com/tp-Chatten](https://tinyurl.com/tp-Chatten)).

## Empowerment over conformity

My final takeaway point is that, inevitably, you will spend a lot of your time on situations where dysregulation leads to behaviour that challenges. But the great thing about this approach is that by being flexible and allowing pupils to use their self-management techniques while also teaching relevant skills, the likelihood is strong that pupils with autism will be far less stressed, and you'll see less of those behaviours.

When you consider the skills pupils need and allow them to use their own coping strategies, you don't just help them to reach their potential, you empower them and give them permission to be proud of what makes them amazing. **TP**

## 8 RULES TO LIVE BY

- 1** Don't force conformity. Instead, let pupils use their own coping strategies.
- 2** Ask yourself: "Is it disruptive, or just different?"
- 3** Use special interests to drive engagement. You won't believe the difference this can make to a pupil's time in school and their engagement.
- 4** It can also be useful to focus any reward system you have around these special interests and give pupils time to engage and explore them – they might just lead to employment in later life.
- 5** Prioritise EHCP goals over a generic curriculum – this means teaching what a pupil needs to thrive, not what the curriculum tells you to teach.
- 6** Please don't use isolation booths or isolation rooms.
- 7** When supporting behaviour (with any pupil), consider what the pupil is saying rather than jumping to detentions/breaktimes, etc. That pupil might be struggling and need help.
- 8** If you are working with a pupil who can communicate vocally, ask how you can help them to learn and what they need to meet their potential – honestly, this might be the most important thing I've said here.



*Adam Dean is head of school at Chatten Day school.*

[chattenfreeschool.co.uk](https://chattenfreeschool.co.uk)



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# THIS WAY!

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## *The biggest Pupil Premium* **MISTAKE YOU CAN MAKE...**

**I**t's a familiar scene: the staffroom discussion about how to spend the school's Pupil Premium pot – that extra funding meant to boost disadvantaged pupils. Everyone has ideas, from new laptops to hiring more teaching assistants. Yet year after year, some schools struggle to see a real difference. Why? Often, it boils down to the biggest mistake in using Pupil Premium: spreading it too thinly across ad hoc initiatives instead of zeroing in on what truly drives progress.

### **A very good place to start**

“Maybe we start with the basics – like breakfast?” one teacher suggests, half-joking. In fact, they’re onto something. Free breakfast clubs have been shown to improve punctuality and behaviour, especially for persistently late pupils. Many schools that introduced a universal breakfast club found that children who had always rolled in after the bell began arriving on time. Headteachers reported that classrooms were calmer, and teachers noticed pupils settled down to learn more quickly. Even those who didn’t attend directly benefitted from a smoother start to the school day.

It’s not glamorous, but ensuring that children start the morning fed and calm is one of the simplest ways to use Pupil Premium effectively. It makes them more ready to learn – and that’s half the battle won before the first lesson begins.





## Teaching, not trinkets

Another voice chimes in: “What about a new reading programme? Or more technology?” Tempting, but research is clear that the biggest lever for improving outcomes is the quality of teaching. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) and the Department for Education both emphasise that the best use of Pupil Premium is often to invest in staff development.

When teachers improve their practice, disadvantaged pupils gain the most. Whether it’s training staff in phonics, improving

feedback, or developing strategies for metacognition, professional development has a multiplier effect. The shiny extras can wait – what really counts is giving staff the tools to teach even better.

## Beware the scattergun

Reports from both the National Audit Office and Ofsted have warned that schools sometimes spread their Pupil Premium funding so thinly that no single initiative makes a real difference. In some cases, money is spent indiscriminately

on general staffing or small schemes with no evidence of impact. The outcome? Leaders can’t show what difference the spending makes, and disadvantaged pupils see little benefit.

The lesson is straightforward: focus matters. Choosing fewer priorities, based on evidence of what works, is far more effective than trying to please everyone with a long shopping list of projects.

## Strategy over short-term

The schools that really move the dial on disadvantaged pupils are the ones with a clear strategy. Ofsted found that successful schools planned their spending carefully, with goals agreed by leaders and governors,

*“The lesson is straightforward: focus matters”*



## Do you need a link governor?

It is not a statutory requirement to have a Pupil Premium link governor. However, the board as a whole is accountable for ensuring funding is being used effectively, and most Trusts and boards will designate the role of a Pupil Premium governor to one of its number. The latest Ofsted framework is also clear that they will be scrutinising how governors and trustees hold leaders to account for the school’s support and provision for disadvantaged pupils.

There are cycles within strategy and accountability, and it might depend on where you are within the year, when a new link governor is given the role. They may be coming on board when there is an evaluation and new strategy being formed, or they might appear when the school is simply embedding some work. First of all, it is important for your link governor to have insight into the cycle. The evaluation and re-forming of a strategy is a very interesting time, but it simply might not be the current focus.

If you are bringing a new governor or trustee up to speed, then providing

them with documentation – both legacy documents and the current strategy – will help them understand the journey that the school has been on. It might be that three years ago the school was working in a different way, and by seeing the timeline of changes, they will be able to discern the current rationale. Don’t wait until a meeting to provide these documents; send them in advance. Of course, you can invite questions if going through the current strategy, but these documents can do some of the explaining and context-setting for you.

Consider, too, how your governor can help you and your leaders with the work that you have to do. Monitoring takes time, and therefore it’s worth building in some practical actions that they can undertake to assist you, e.g. pupil voice groups, and discussions with classroom teachers and support staff. When these are planned well, they can provide you with rich data to inform how your strategy is working. Ensure that dates are agreed well in advance, that the governor understands the work that is

being undertaken – what a certain strategy will look like in a classroom – and provide a template. This can include things to look out for, or example questions to ask, such as *If you don’t do very well on a test, how do your teachers help you improve next time?*

Finally, always have teaching and learning as the key focus of any strategy and any discussion. There is ample evidence that shows that this will always be the most effective means of lifting pupils away from under-achieving. When your governor understands this, they will be a force for good. Be united in your commitment to this goal and it will ensure that visits, questions, and monitoring will always focus on this absolute essential.



*Rebecca Leek has been a primary and secondary classroom teacher, head of department, SENCo, headteacher and MAT CEO.*

*She is currently the executive director of the Suffolk Primary Headteachers’ Association and works as a freelance speaker, trainer and writer.*

 @rebeccaleek

 rebeccaleek.com



## Dos and don'ts from the EEF

There is a plethora of information on Pupil Premium out there, and one of the most reliable sources of teaching information – the Education Endowment Foundation – has duly added its own advice, including the below...

- ✓ DO adopt a detailed approach to identifying your pupils' needs. The EEF's Explore framework tool ([tinyurl.com/tp-EEFexplorePP](https://tinyurl.com/tp-EEFexplorePP)) – which accompanies the School's Guide to Implementation guidance report ([tinyurl.com/tp-EEFguidePP](https://tinyurl.com/tp-EEFguidePP)) – can support.
- ✓ DO consider the strengths and needs of your socio-economically disadvantaged children, including those pupils who are exceeding age-related expectations.
- ✓ DO examine the data carefully to work out the root causes – e.g. school attendance.
- ✗ DON'T cherry-pick data that confirms 'hunches' you may already have.
- ✗ DON'T focus solely on pupils who are working below age-related expectations.
- ✗ DON'T confuse the observable effects of a problem with its root causes.

Find more info from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) at [tinyurl.com/tp-EEFPP](https://tinyurl.com/tp-EEFPP)

All information in this column via [educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk](https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)



and monitored the impact of every intervention. They didn't chase quick wins for inspection reports; they took a longer-term view, often working to prevent attainment gaps opening in the first place.

The Department for Education now expects schools to publish a multi-year Pupil Premium strategy. This is not bureaucracy for its own sake – it's an opportunity to take a step back, identify the main barriers for your pupils, and decide on the most effective ways to overcome them. One deputy head described how they dropped half a dozen small initiatives and concentrated instead on literacy tutoring, parental engagement, and teacher training. The shift to a tighter plan made it easier to track impact and brought the whole school community along with it.

### Buy-in = progress

No plan will succeed without staff buy-in. Teachers and support staff are the ones who deliver interventions, adapt lessons, and encourage pupils every day. Schools that succeed with Pupil Premium make sure staff are involved in identifying needs and suggesting solutions. Some even set up bidding pots where teachers propose how a slice of funding could directly support a disadvantaged pupil in their class.

Sharing progress stories is just as important. When colleagues hear that an intervention raised a pupil's

reading age by 18 months, or helped a persistently late child arrive on time every day, it turns abstract funding into real human impact. This keeps energy and commitment high. Successful schools make a habit of celebrating these wins, ensuring the whole team sees the difference their efforts are making.

### In a nutshell

- Feed them first: breakfast clubs don't just fill bellies – they improve punctuality, behaviour, and readiness to learn.
- Invest in teachers: training and professional development for staff have the greatest long-term impact on disadvantaged pupils.
- Less (but better) is more: a handful of focused strategies done well beats a scattergun list of small projects.
- Plan for the long haul: multi-year strategies built into school improvement plans are more effective than one-off annual ideas.
- All staff on board: involving colleagues in planning and sharing success stories sustains momentum and belief in the strategy.



*Lucy Coy is a former acting headteacher and inclusion lead, and is now joint CEO of HeadteacherChat.*

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# SATs SPECIAL

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Are you on the lookout for tried and tested resources to help support you and your pupils in preparing for SATs? Head over to page 73 where we have the lowdown on this year's Teach Awards winners and finalists, and you could end up finding your new must-have teaching tool...



# Big themes, BIG IMPACT

‘Real’ reading will prepare your pupils far more thoroughly for the SATs than drilling past papers, argues **Ruth Baker-Leask**

One reason we focus on reading comprehension in Year 6 is to prepare children for an important national test. Another reason, however, is that we’re nurturing their ability to think, question, empathise and reflect through reading. The first reason offers them a leg-up into secondary school. Meanwhile, we hope that the second will develop their identity as readers, giving them a skill and desire that will serve them well for life.

The challenge? These two goals don’t always fit neatly together. But when we get it right, when our

5 and 6, particularly, when we discover whether children can use what they’ve read to reason, synthesise and hypothesise, not just recall.

The end-of-KS2 assessments give us one picture of that, of course. SATs offer a snapshot of a child’s ability to read fluently, retrieve information, infer meaning, interpret vocabulary and summarise.

## Real reading

No Year 6 teacher needs reminding that there’s a test to prepare for. However, the danger is that we narrow our teaching to what’s testable,

embedding the kinds of thinking and teaching into reading lessons that help children perform well when confronting reading assessments.

Take, for example, a text like *Freeze* by Chris Priestley – a collection of short, eerie stories with moments of ambiguity and tension. These texts are short enough to revisit multiple times, but rich enough to support high-level book discussions that lead to deeper reading comprehension.

Rather than starting with a question stem, we might begin with a close, shared reading of a paragraph that builds mood. A discussion might follow about how they feel now they have read the text, and how they think the author has provoked their emotional response. At this point, children might have differing views – but that is OK. We interpret texts depending on the experiences

we bring with us. By examining our initial responses to a text, we fall deeper into the text’s meaning.

After this initial discussion, children can work in pairs to annotate language choices, discuss possible meanings, and track where clues to understanding are hidden. Then, and only then, we might introduce a SATs-style inference question – perhaps: “How does the author create a sense of unease here?” The skills and strategies that the children used during the

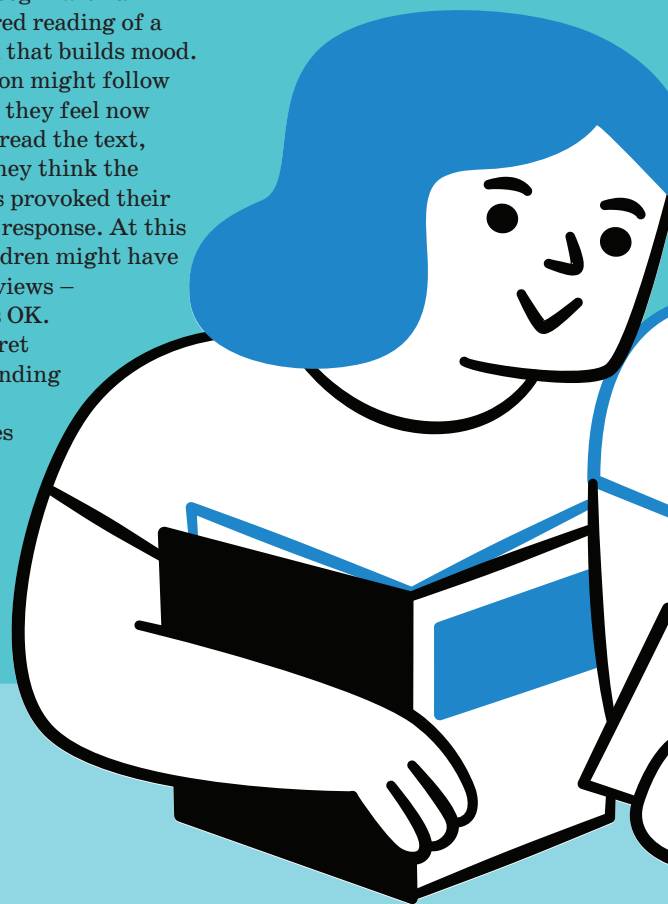
*“We’re nurturing their ability to think, question and reflect”*

children leave Year 6 as confident readers, equipped for secondary school, and curious about the world, we’ve done something that will make a difference far beyond the classroom.

By Year 6, most children can read fluently enough to access a range of texts, but their comprehension may lag. Some of this will depend on their enthusiasm for reading and how much sustained, independent reading they engaged with previously. During Key Stage 2, reading becomes more than a mechanical act; it becomes a means of interpretation and reasoning. And it’s in Years

and in doing so, we reduce reading comprehension to right answers rather than rich experiences. In other words, we have a tendency to focus on the outcome of reading rather than the process.

So, what is the solution when the pressure of SATs remains? The answer is to integrate rich reading experiences into SATs preparation rather than treat ‘real reading’ as something separate. Preparing children for SATs doesn’t mean abandoning book talk or thinking more deeply about texts. It means



discussion transfer to this task, but the teaching goes deeper.

## Acting out

Similarly, in *The Light in Everything*, Katya Balen's dual-narrator novel, children are asked to hold two perspectives in their heads at once – narrators with conflicting emotions and different experiences of the same situation.

Rather than drilling reading comprehension 'skills' in isolation, we need to support Year 6 pupils in making comparisons, spotting contradictions and talking about the reasons characters act the way they do. This sort of discussion deepens understanding and lays the foundation for written comparison, authorial intent questions and empathy. As Harper Lee writes in *To Kill a Mockingbird*: 'You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...

until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.'

*The Light in Everything* also allows children to deepen their understanding of character through drama – an underused but highly effective way to support empathy. A conversation between the two narrators, a note written in role or imagining a chat between minor characters observing the story's main events are just some examples of how short engaging drama techniques can support comprehension. It's about supporting children to enter the emotional world of the story.

Now consider how a non-fiction text like Jeffrey Boakye's *Musical Truth*, which interweaves music, identity and history, presents the opportunity to balance SATs preparation with knowledge-rich reading. Children can retrieve information, make connections and summarise the content of the text while

also exploring concepts such as protest and popular culture. They can also use evidence from within the text to discuss questions like: 'How can music be a form of resistance?' or 'What might the author want us to feel about this artist's experience?' Again, these are meaningful reading experiences that are not limited by the test but that align with test preparation.

## Talk (dialogic lessons)

Reading comprehension is a conversation – even when reading alone, we are talking to ourselves in our heads. We make meaning from text by asking questions, listening to alternative views, clarifying our own understanding and challenging what we think we know. The DfE Reading Framework, the EEF's guidance on reading comprehension and Ofsted's curriculum research highlight that this is best done through structured discussion.

Whole-class discussions are useful during shared reading, but short bursts of paired or group activities can also give children a chance to explore their thinking through talk:



**Paired reading prediction and clarification:** children read in pairs to a suspenseful moment in *Freeze* and stop to ask: 'What's just happened? What do we think might happen next?'

**Role-on-the-wall:** pairs or groups map what they know about a character's thoughts and feelings in *The Light in Everything*. They can compare the two characters more easily using role-on-the-wall and revise their ideas as the narrative unfolds.

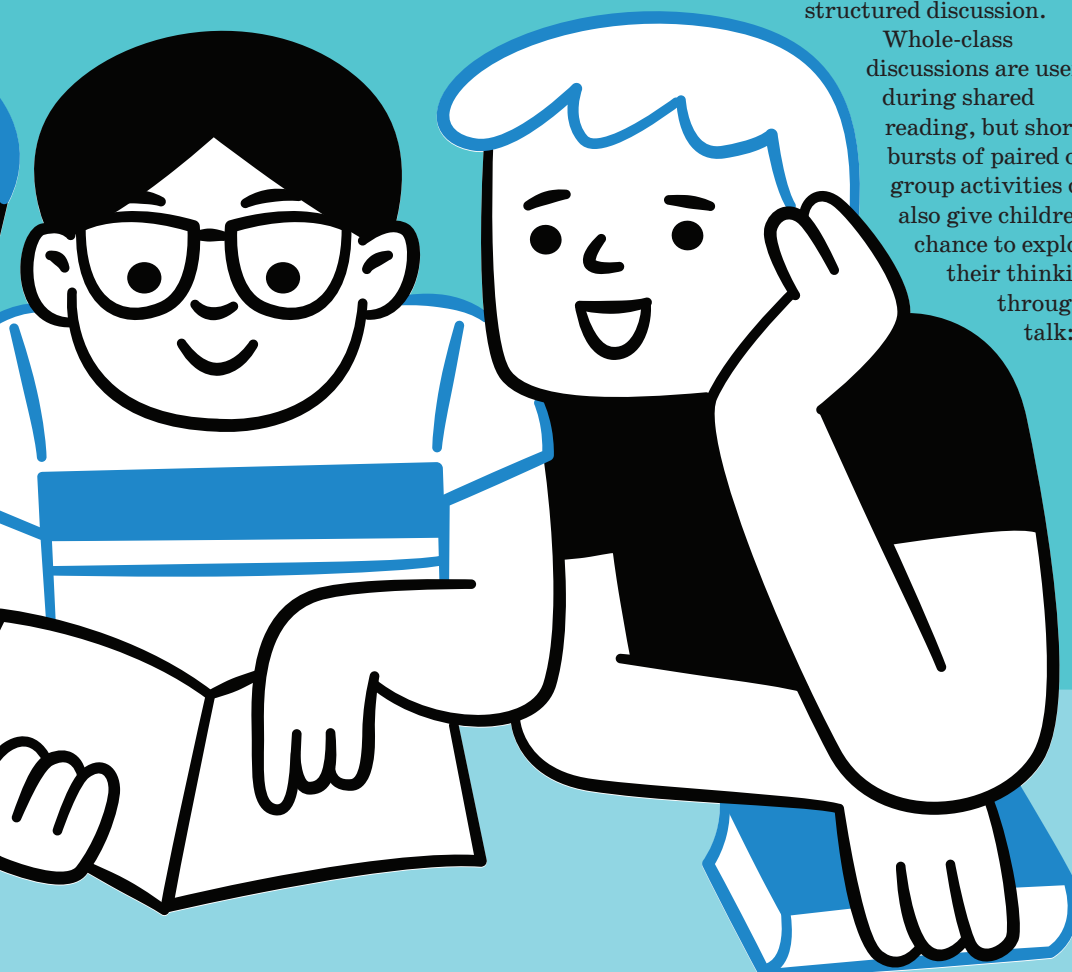
**'One-sentence summary' tasks:** children read a chapter or section of non-fiction such as *Musical Truth* and then, with a partner, reduce it to a single sentence before reading on and reviewing that summary.

If we want children to develop as readers, we need to do more than ask questions after reading. We need to model the process of how meaning is made. **TP**



**Ruth Baker-Leach** is a former primary head, and director of Minerva

Learning and chair of the National Association of Advisers in English (NAAE).





# SATS PREP:

## *a data-informed approach*

To make sure you're as ready as possible for end-of-term assessments, use the information at your disposal to guide your revision strategies, advises **Richard Selfridge**

**F**or Year 6 teachers charged with managing the final run up to SATs, now is a good time to plan out a strategic, data-driven approach to supporting pupils through the process, building on your understanding of both your pupils' journeys through Key Stage 2 so far, and the wider picture.

Nationally, the 2025 SATs results showed encouraging progress, with 62 per cent of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths combined. This is up from 59 per cent in 2022, but remains below the 65 per cent of pupils reaching the standard in 2019. Understanding national trends and analysing your own cohort's data will be essential in targeting your preparation effectively.

### General prep

Begin by taking a good look at your pupils' Key Stage 2 experience so far. Use a rough filter to group pupils into those on track to meeting and exceeding expectations – this is likely to be those who have generally been in school, in class, focused on learning and maintaining pace with year group expectations – and those who are likely to need more of your team's focus in the next few months. Always remember that across the country, most pupils do well in the end of Key Stage 2 assessments. Most of your pupils will too, so keep doing what your school has been

doing to help the children get the most out of their final few months of primary school.

Focus on supporting those pupils who have not found learning as straightforward, and who will need closer support in Year 6. Where possible, aim to do this in class, making changes to your timetable and curriculum focus to plan whole-class sessions, remembering that time spent reviewing learning, filling gaps and managing misunderstandings is likely to benefit every child. For example, where you have identified a weakness in calculation strategies for your focus children, use part of your morning sessions twice a week to dedicate 10 to 15 minutes to reviewing and developing calculation strategies. This may be in a section of the morning when you usually review or recap

general learning, or you may timetable this activity as part of two specific maths lessons.

### Maths prep

The 2025 results showed 75 per cent of pupils meeting expected standard in maths, with 26 per cent achieving higher standard. DfE analysis reveals persistent challenges in reasoning, problem-solving

and applying knowledge to unfamiliar contexts.

Use assessment data to identify specific domains where your cohort struggles. If they are like most children across the country, this is likely to be fractions, ratio and proportion, and multi-step problems. Create a revision timetable using spaced repetition, revisiting

*“Understanding national trends and analysing your own data will be essential in targeting your preparation”*



challenging topics multiple times rather than leaving difficult areas until the final weeks.

Arithmetic fluency remains fundamental, as does effective use of calculation methods. A few minutes of daily practice builds automaticity. For reasoning, teach pupils to dissect word problems methodically, modelling how to identify key information and determine which operations are needed. This metacognitive approach helps embed understanding, rather than relying on learned procedures. You can find a great step-by-step article on this from Gareth Metcalfe at [tinyurl.com/tp-WordQs](https://tinyurl.com/tp-WordQs)

## Reading prep

Reading held up well in 2025, with 74 per cent of pupils meeting the expected standard. However, comprehension remains challenging, particularly with inference, retrieval from dense texts and vocabulary questions.

Create focused mini-lessons using a clear

Objective/Model/Practise/Review structure, for example, addressing specific weaknesses identified through your ongoing formative assessment, rather than simply repeating comprehensions. Build stamina for the test format – pupils face one hour with substantial booklets, requiring concentration and time-management skills.

Continue daily class reading of rich, challenging texts throughout the spring term. Exposure to sophisticated vocabulary and complex sentences supports comprehension far more effectively than isolated test practice. Explicitly teach how to approach different question types: skimming for key words in retrieval questions, combining textual clues with prior knowledge for inference, and using context and word parts for vocabulary questions.

## GPS prep

Grammar, punctuation and spelling results remained steady at 74 per cent of pupils meeting expected standard in 2025. This test

is particularly suited to targeted preparation, as the content domain is clearly defined and pupils can make rapid progress with focused teaching.

Use item-level analysis – where you consider how pupils answer the different types of questions in GPS assessments – to identify precisely which grammar concepts your pupils haven't mastered. Common stumbling blocks include identifying clauses, using the subjunctive mood and applying punctuation in complex sentences.

For spelling, analyse patterns in errors. Are pupils making mistakes with high frequency words, commonly misspelled words or prefixes and suffixes, for example? Target teaching towards these patterns using morphological approaches. Short, daily practice is usually more effective than longer weekly sessions.

## Writing prep

Writing teacher assessment showed 72 per cent of children meeting expected standard in 2025, but just 13 per cent worked at greater depth, unchanged since 2022. This suggests many pupils achieve expected standard but struggle to demonstrate the sophistication required for higher outcomes.

Provide regular extended writing opportunities where pupils draft, refine and edit substantial pieces. Model the writing process explicitly, showing how to plan effectively and make ambitious vocabulary choices.

Focus on addressing pupils' specific weaknesses. For example, some need handwriting fluency; others need spelling and punctuation support; some need help generating ideas. Once again, build this into your working week using the periods at the beginning and end of the school day, for example, or times before and after breaks.

# SATS 2026 KEY DATES

**SATs week:** Monday 11 May – Thursday 14 May 2026

### Test schedule:

- Monday 11 May: English grammar, punctuation & spelling (Papers 1 & 2)
- Tuesday 12 May: English reading
- Wednesday 13 May: Mathematics (Papers 1 & 2)
- Thursday 14 May: Mathematics (Paper 3)

**Results available:** Tuesday 7 July 2026 (provisional)

## SATs week prep

As SATs week approaches, transition to consolidation and confidence-building. In the final fortnight, you are likely to be more nervous than most of your pupils; try not to let this show! Make sure that you are familiar with requirements for the assessment days themselves (find the DfE's guidance at [tinyurl.com/tp-SATsGuidance](https://tinyurl.com/tp-SATsGuidance)), and that your pupils know what is expected of them during SATs week.

Make sure, too, that you have a clear plan for timetable arrangements, breakfast provision, additional staffing for access arrangements, and room prep, and involve all the staff in your briefings. And don't forget to celebrate the end of SATs week! Best of luck. **TP**



*Richard Selfridge is a primary teacher, writer and Insight Education*

*data consultant. His latest book, A Little Guide for Teachers to Using Student Data (£10.99, SAGE), was published in 2024.*

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**SATs**  
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# It's a marathon, NOT A SPRINT

Keeping up is easier than catching up when it comes to SATs, for both teachers and pupils, says **Andy Done...**

**T**he problem with SATs is that they're seen as a Y6 test. As a result, incredible pressure is placed on teachers, children (and headteachers) during that final year to perform. Reading, writing and maths take over, and opportunities to be creative and have fun exploring the wider curriculum are practically non-existent.

Not only is this exhausting for all involved, it's also ineffective. SATs are designed to draw on knowledge across four years, from Y3 onwards. Take maths for example, where Y3 content contributes around 10 per cent of the SATs paper, according to data provided by Learning by Questions. Fractions and calculations – introduced early – remain among the most heavily tested. By Y4, pupils meet more complex fractions and scaling problems, with content from this year making up around a fifth of the SATs paper. Y5, involving measurement and volume questions, then accounts for roughly a quarter of the marks.

And the picture in GPS is similar. Perfect tense and prepositions, that first appear in Y3, resurface again in Ys5 and 6 and are a common weakness. Apostrophes for plural possession, a Y4 expectation, have been tested over a dozen times in recent years, yet remain a stumbling block in Y6. Gaps like these aren't Y6 problems — they are KS2 problems.

Too often, pupils reach Y6 with misconceptions carried forward. The teacher then

spends months firefighting, trying to reteach content while simultaneously introducing algebra, ratio and complex punctuation. It's an impossible task.

However, it is possible to ensure no pupils drifts too far by identifying gaps and putting support in place early. Regular analysis of assessment data is vital, and the insights provided throughout KS2 enable teachers to see which objectives need revisiting – in real time. Low-stake assessments can enable same-day intervention, so that end-of-term assessments are only really needed to provide data for the governors. The result is that both teachers and children perform better. Since applying this approach at our school, we've seen combined scores increase from 58 per cent to 87 per cent, and greater depth scores rise from 0 to 21 per cent.

Plus, the benefits extend beyond the numbers. I remember a particular

pupil who had severe special needs. Gaps in her learning had arisen lower down the school, however, tech tools enabled us to identify these in Y4. Our KS2-wide team worked alongside the parents to address these, and progress made was so great that the pupil succeeded in achieving the expected standard. Working together made the difference. A joined-up strategic approach, focused on clarity and collaboration, is key. Each year group must understand its role. For example, if pupils leave Y5 fluent in the first 20 questions of an arithmetic test, Y6 can then focus on the final 20, rather than reteaching basics.

Phase meetings are crucial, too. Sitting down as a KS2 team allows teachers to share where children are secure and in what areas consolidation is needed. Practical steps can include:

- Mapping backwards by identifying the high-value objectives most likely to appear on SATs and plan



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when they are introduced, revisited and secured.

- Setting clear end points for each year group, in arithmetic fluency benchmarks or grammar knowledge, that pupils must master before moving on.
- Revisiting tricky concepts little and often, such as fractions, measurement and verb tenses.
- Sharing practice across KS2 and encouraging Y3 and 4 teachers to see their work as the foundation for success.

SATs are intense. But when teachers across KS2 take shared ownership, leaders set out clear expectations for each year, and assessment is used to keep up, not catch up, we find a way forward that works for everyone. One that teaches SATs for what they truly are: a KS2 test. **TP**



*Andy Done is headteacher at Masefield Primary School and leadership ambassador at Learning by Questions.*

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# Tech TIPS

Try some of these digital tools to help you prep for SATs with less stress, says **Rachael Ede**

If there's one thing every Year 6 teacher knows, it's that SATs season can feel like a marathon – a relentless cycle of planning, printing, marking and analysing. The pressure to get it right for every pupil can be all-consuming. Yet with so many digital tools now at our fingertips, many teachers are finding that the key to calm isn't doing more; it's doing things smarter.

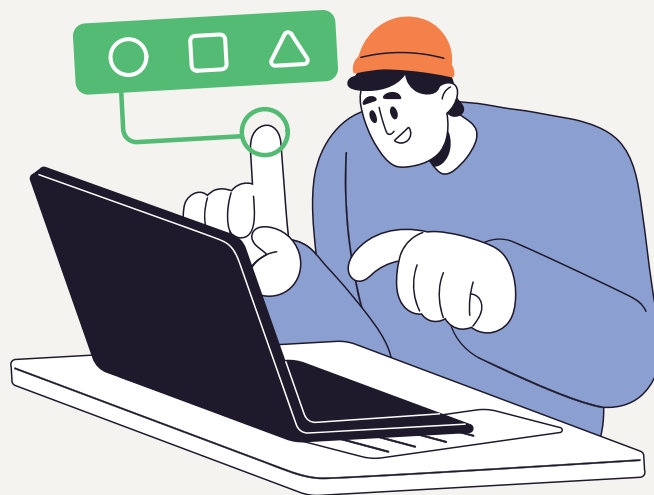
The best news? You don't have to overhaul everything. By weaving just a few well-chosen digital habits into your routine, you can save hours of time, cut down on stress and give pupils faster, more focused feedback. Here are some of the most effective ways to make technology your ally this SATs season.

## Lighten the load with AI

AI tools such as ChatGPT are rapidly becoming the modern teacher's planning partner. They can generate revision resources and practice questions in seconds. The key lies in how you use them.

Start with a clear prompt, for example, 'Write 10 Year 6-level questions focusing on modal verbs, with answers and clear explanations'. You'll instantly have a draft set of ideas that you can then ask AI to tweak, adapt and differentiate for your class.

Another useful prompt is, 'Please write me 10 questions for Year 6, like this question...' followed by an example from a past SATs paper. This helps AI produce realistic, SATs-style questions. Rather than spending hours



*“By weaving in just a few well-chosen digital habits, you can save hours of time”*

creating from scratch, use AI to handle the groundwork so you can focus on tailoring resources for your pupils.

## Embrace instant marking

Marking practice papers is one of the biggest time drains in SATs preparation. Online platforms that instantly mark tests are transforming that experience for both teachers and pupils.

Immediate feedback helps pupils fix errors and feel more confident. For teachers, it reveals class-wide trends and areas to revisit – all without the late-night marking sessions.

As well as offering topic revision and learning videos, platforms like SATs Boot Camp do exactly this: tests are automatically marked, progress is tracked, and every topic is organised in a clear, ready-to-use sequence.

It's the digital equivalent of having an assistant working quietly in the background, freeing you from admin so you can focus on teaching.

## Get digitally organised

Organisation isn't about having more lists; it's about freeing up mental space. Many teachers now use organisational tools to manage tasks in a visual format.

Free tools like Trello make it easy to stay on top of everything at a glance. Its simple, card-based boards can help you plan out topics and objectives across the term, using colour-coded labels so you can see at a glance what's been taught and what's still ahead.

## Go beyond the classroom

Digital homework tools and revision games help pupils

consolidate learning independently without adding to your marking pile. Platforms such as DoodleLearning adapt automatically to each child's level, keeping them challenged but not overwhelmed, and sites like Kahoot! and Wayground (formerly Quizizz) turn revision into interactive quizzes that children enjoy.

The best online tools don't just test knowledge – they teach it. With quick quizzes and short videos built in, pupils can revisit tricky topics independently while teachers gain a clearer picture of what still needs work.

## A calmer way forward

SATs preparation will always demand focus and commitment, but it doesn't have to demand exhaustion. With a few smart digital strategies, teachers can cut hours of admin, deliver sharper feedback and create more space for meaningful teaching moments.

Work smarter, not harder, and let technology take a little of the weight this SATs season. Your pupils will benefit, and so will you. **TP**



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

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

 [yearsix.co.uk](https://yearsix.co.uk)



# Filling in THE GAPS

Getting ready for maths assessments can feel like eating soup with a fork, but starting small with these common errors will make a huge impact

SARAH FARRELL

**T**he KS2 SATs maths test has three papers: **Paper 1:** Arithmetic (30 minutes, 40 marks) focuses on number work such as the four operations, fractions and percentages, testing speed and accuracy.

## **Papers 2 and 3:**

Reasoning (40 minutes each, 35 marks) cover the wider curriculum, from shape to statistics, and place greater emphasis on problem-solving and multi-step questions. While lessons often focus on methods like long multiplication, real success depends on broader skills, such as interpreting problems, spotting patterns and working efficiently, which help children apply their knowledge confidently.

Here are some of the key skills that are often overlooked in the classroom, but are essential for children to be confident and successful when faced with assessments:

## **Efficient mental strategies**

A solid grasp of facts such as number bonds and times tables helps children to solve questions quickly. For example,  $70 \times 60$  can be seen as  $7 \times 6 = 42$ , then  $42 \times 100 = 4,200$ . Without this fluency, pupils may waste time attempting to use long multiplication. Similarly, being able to spot patterns and shortcuts (for example,  $899 + 73$  being the same as  $900 + 72$ ) reduces unnecessary working out and allows children to work faster.

## **What can you do?**

Display a question on the board (for example,  $898 + 43$ ) and ask children to share the different ways that they would mentally calculate the answer. Share strategies and discuss which ones are the most efficient.

## **Checking answers**

When children finish tests, they are often prompted to go back and check their answers. But do they know how to do that? Providing children with strategies for this is essential: re-read the question (if it says 'tick two', have you ticked two?); re-do the calculations (and if a different answer is reached, complete the calculation a further time); use the inverse operation to check the answer (including knowing when this is useful); and checking that they haven't made a transcription error when writing out the calculation or when writing the answer in the answer box.

## **What can you do?**

Provide children with a set of test questions that you have completed with deliberate mistakes. Model different checking strategies, then ask your class to check your work.

## **Interpreting the question**

When presented with a word problem, children often panic and add together the first two numbers that they see. While some children can see the steps needed and know what to do, others will struggle to untangle what is

being asked. By modelling the process of reading and interpreting word problems, we can provide pupils with a structure for tackling complex problems. With techniques such as underlining key numbers, circling operation words, planning out the steps and drawing bar models, children will be able to slow down and think about what it is that they need to do.

## **What can you do?**

Model reading word problems and talk through your thinking out loud to help children see the process that you are using. Try showing questions with numbers hidden while discussing the process, so children focus on

understanding the context before calculating.

## **Estimation**

Being able to check the reasonableness of a potential answer is an important skill in a test. For example, if there is a multi-step word problem that involves calculating someone's change after they have bought several items with a £5 note, we know that the answer must be less than £5. If we are calculating the number of coaches needed to take 355 children on a trip, we know that the answer has to be



substantially less than 355. If children can estimate approximately what an answer should be, they are then more likely to spot where an answer is obviously too big or too small.

#### What can you do?

Provide children with word problems where an estimated answer is given. Ask children to discuss whether the estimation is accurate or not and to justify their thinking.

### Alternative representations

Sometimes, the most confident mathematicians can be thrown by something as simple as questions being presented in different formats. For instance, solving  $450 - 30$  is a reasonably simple question, but if it is presented in a way that children are not as familiar with (for example,

## “Real success in maths depends on broader skills, such as spotting patterns”

\_\_\_\_\_ =  $450 - 30$ ,  $450 -$   
\_\_\_\_\_ = 30 or \_\_\_\_\_ + 30 =  
450), they may struggle to find the answer.

#### What can you do?

Ensure that you use expose your class to a range of different representations and that they are given an opportunity to become familiar with them. You may show them a selection of different calculations and ask them to find the ones that have the same answer, or to discuss which one may be the odd one out.

### Vocabulary in context

Introduce and use key vocabulary that children are likely to encounter (such as *sum*, *difference* and *product*)

and use it in context to show what it may look like. For instance, if a class is told that *sum* means that they need to add, they may struggle with a question like this: *The sum of two numbers is 47. One of the numbers is 20. What is the other number?*

#### What can you do?

Ensure that children know what key vocabulary means and how it might be used in the different contexts by showing different examples.

### Test technique

Encourage children to complete the easier questions first and to come back to any that they may be struggling with. This will both help to keep their confidence up and will avoid them spending too long on a question that they may just not know how to answer.

### 3 TOP TIPS

- ✓ **‘Not to scale’** – Remind pupils that this means they cannot use a ruler or protractor.
- ✓ **Show working** – Use any space around the question, and remember that marks are sometimes awarded for methods.
- ✓ **Convert values to the same format** – Practise this when ordering, comparing, adding or subtracting (particularly with units of measure or fractions, decimals and percentages).

#### What can you do?

Try completing a ‘walking-talking mock’ and modelling your thinking aloud as you complete a section of a test paper. You could also encourage children to flick through the test paper before they start and see which questions they feel confident with.

### Working backwards

There are often questions in the reasoning paper that involve being presented with an answer and having to work backwards to find the starting number. This can catch children out if they are unfamiliar with the process.

#### What can you do?

Model a structure for solving this question type, such as writing out the operations in order and then reversing them underneath. **TP**



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

online.



@SarahFarrellKS2



tinyurl.com/tp-SarahFarrell





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A roundup of tools and resources to help you prepare your pupils for SATs

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## Confident SATs prep

Do you need to know who in your class is secure in content from earlier year groups, and who needs a bit more help? Run a Springboard diagnostic and, by the end of the lesson, the instant Question-Level Analysis provides you with the evidence required. SATs Springboard has helped 22,000 pupils prepare for SATs with greater confidence. 98 per cent of teachers who have used it have seen progress, 100 per cent have reduced their workload, and 92 per cent reported less pupil anxiety. Visit [lbq.org/sats](https://lbq.org/sats)



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# Poetry in YOUR PLACE

Discover how a boot on the beach and a chilly hillside can inspire pupils to create their greatest creative writing

PIE CORBETT

One of my favourite poets is George Mackay Brown. He lived in the Orkney Islands and much of his writing captures and celebrates his local environment. Several of his poems make good models for writing. The poem 'Beachcomber' can easily be found through any search engine. In it, Mackay Brown describes what a beachcomber might find each day of the week, walking the tideline of the local beach:

*Monday I found a boot –  
Rust and salt leather.  
I gave it back to the sea, to dance in.*

When teaching writing, I look for models that have a scaffold that will liberate children's creativity and not constrain their thinking. It is also

important to take the idea and attempt a version yourself to see if it will work and to share with the class. So, I took the idea of using the days of the week as a structure for writing. To prompt detail and ideas, I took several wintry walks:

## Walking the Village

*On Monday, I followed  
a fox's pawprints in snow.*

*On Tuesday, an ice skin  
on the memorial trough.*

*On Wednesday, snow  
drops and primroses by the Holy Well.*

*On Thursday, deer  
on Strawberry Banks.*

*On Friday, a charm of goldfinches  
on the bird feeder.*

*On Saturday, the postman's van  
stuck on the Farm Hill.*

*On Sunday, snow melts  
and church bells' clatter.*

© Pie Corbett





## The walk

One of the reasons that this poetry idea works so well, is that the children have the chance to base their ideas on first-hand experience. Take a short walk from the school, following the usual safety procedures, and on the walk pause every so often for the children to gather ideas – they should bring all their senses to the occasion and be alert to details that they could use in their writing.

## Ideas session

Back in class, it is worth spending 10 minutes or so doing a massive class idea session of things that they noticed or have seen before. Collect anything that possesses a sense of your locality, e.g. local animals, birds and water creatures, other things seen in your locality. Include local place names and landmarks, and favourite things that represent your place. The list should be made fast and furiously; so your handwriting on the flipchart might not be up to much! Children should jot down ideas that they might use in their journals at the same time. This means that no one can say, “I don’t know what to write about”.

## Short-burst practice

Practise writing sentences; model how to make the ordinary sound special! For example:

Fig. 1

| Techniques                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Techniques                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Alliteration</li> <li>● Simile using ‘like’</li> <li>● Simile using ‘as’</li> <li>● Personification</li> <li>● Hyphenated phrase</li> <li>● Kennings</li> <li>● Name it</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ...a silent, silver sunrise</li> <li>● The sun set like dying flames</li> <li>● ...as large as a bus</li> <li>● The road groaned</li> <li>● Snow-fur</li> <li>● Whale-highway (the sea)</li> <li>● Farm Hill not road</li> </ul> |

### Possible openers

I found / saw/ touched/ tasted/ heard/ wondered/ dreamed/ hoped for/ stopped/ walked/ gathered / captured/ caught/ noticed/ watched/ picked up/ collected...

*On Monday, I found a crisp packet.*  
vs -

*On Monday, I found a discarded crisp packet glittering on Farm Hill like an empty promise.*

Children can take ideas from the initial class thinking session, or try new ones that pop into their minds. Remind them to use:

- \* extended ideas
- \* specific, local detail
- \* their senses
- \* alliteration and imagery
- \* accurate punctuation

## Shared writing

As a matter of principle, I always ‘do one together first’, before children write their own poems. I write rapidly and challenge pupils’ suggestions as, ‘the first thought isn’t always the best’. Get the class to generate ideas and choose with care, avoiding clichés, creating surprises and using local detail. See Fig. 1 for examples.



## Independent writing

When KS2 children write, I'd suggest total silence and giving them a time limit of, say, 10 minutes. This creates a sense of urgency as you want their total concentration. Extend the time, if they are writing well.

## Feedback

Rush round the room, providing instant feedback that leads to immediate improvements. In the follow-up session, use the interactive whiteboard to show lines from different children, especially where there are teaching points to make. Pupils can then tweak and polish independently or in pairs. Discuss *what works*, what does not, and why, and show how a line can be improved.

## Examples

### Walking Stroud

On Monday, I found a jackdaw's feather  
like a lost, curious comma, a feathery  
moustache,  
a black quill in the gargling gutter.

On Tuesday, I walked to Chalford Canal  
and watched a heron patiently stood  
statue-still,  
it's grey twin reflected in cold  
canal water.

On Wednesday, I saw Billy Go-Lucky  
stamp his feet and cuddle his body  
to block out the cold's iced fingers.

On Thursday, I touched the  
Vinegar House,  
felt the loneliness of frosted stone,  
and watched as the second hand  
heart-beats  
its way round the clock's  
stubborn face.

On Friday, I tasted stars  
and wondered how to heal  
the sort of scars that families make.

On Saturday, I heard somebody cough  
and felt its echo reverberate  
down Slad Brook alley.

On Sunday, I caught a cold  
and glimpsed hen harriers skydance.

© **Pie Corbett**

Coastlands Primary School in Wales is close to the sea and so their teacher, Wenda Davies, took her pupils to a local beach so that they could use what had been washed up on the shoreline as a basis for their poems. The idea was to create a poem to capture your own place. This sort of location writing has the advantage of sharpening children's focus on their environment as a source for the imagination, keeping writing rooted in experience and concrete description. Here are a couple of examples from Coastlands Primary School to inspire your class:

### Beachcomber

*Monday, I found a plectrum  
embossed with golden letters,  
glossy like a hologram.*

*Tuesday, I found a hagstone,  
red sandstone body  
with an eye that wards off evil.*

*Wednesday, I found a pine cone  
shaped like a skull but covered  
in brown-grey dragon scales.*

*Thursday, I found a rope,  
twisted and tangled  
like seaweed on the rocks.*

*Friday, I found a nail and a washer,  
Neptune-green and rough to the touch  
like sandpaper.*

*Saturday, I found a blenny  
squirring in the rockpools.  
It hid, shy and solitary.*

*Sunday, I found nothing –  
went home with empty pockets  
and a mind full of memories.*

- Sam

### Beachcomber

*Monday, I found a feather,  
fading black to white,  
soon to be found on a hat.*

*Tuesday, I found a piece of sea glass.  
Next summer  
it will be milky and smooth.*

*Wednesday, I saw a rock out to sea,  
tilted my head and saw dolphins  
and sharks playing!*

*Thursday, I found a marbled stone:  
grey to fight off the sharks,  
white to welcome the mermaids.*

*Friday, I got nothing...  
if I was lucky I'd have found a shell,  
but I just caught a horrible cold.*

*Saturday, I found a hagstone.  
I could see the whole world through it –  
my future and my past.*

*Sunday, I sat quietly on the silken  
sand,  
dreaming of magical lands  
and finding hidden treasure.*

- Olivia



*Pie's latest book of poems,  
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Adam Lowing explains how Leading English combines in-school support with over 200 medium-term units to transform your English provision...



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### 1 GETTING STARTED

The process begins with a short video call with your dedicated school improvement partner. Together, you will: walk through the implementation project; explore how to access and use the teaching materials; share key documentation (e.g. SEF/SDP); set visit dates and prepare for launch.

### 2 VISION AND PLANNING

Next comes the first of three in-school consultancy days. It's held anywhere between one and three months ahead of the project launch and focuses on vision and planning. The visit will include: a strategy session with the headteacher; planning and co-design with the subject lead; pupil voice sessions; CPD for the implementation team (slides provided).

The Leading English team help leaders to foster genuine alignment between what's written and what's taught – research shows this is critical to pupil outcomes. We advocate for curriculum-embedded assessment that helps teachers adapt in real time, and support schools in embedding spoken language across the curriculum. Our units ensure oracy is part of English, not an optional extra.



## Leading English

### Contact:

Book a free 30-minute strategy call at [leadingenglish.co.uk](https://leadingenglish.co.uk) or email [adam.lowing@leadingenglish.co.uk](mailto:adam.lowing@leadingenglish.co.uk)

### 3 IMPLEMENTATION

The second consultancy visit takes place one to two months after the project launches, and centres on implementation. Here we will: hold a review session with the subject leader; operate co-planning, team teaching and drop-ins; organise pupil voice sessions and feedback; lead a CPD session (INSET or after school).

Implementation is not intended to result in perfection overnight. At Leading English, we encourage iterative improvement: small tweaks, informed by staff voice, lesson observation and reflection. We believe in the

importance of manageable, meaningful practice including modelling and more sentence-level control. We help you to bring this thinking into the classroom through practical strategies and supportive coaching.

### 4 REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The final visit in the first year takes place three to six months post-launch and supports sustainability. It includes: a final review of the implementation plan; pupil voice and classroom observation; strategic CPD and leadership guidance; evaluation of impact; formulation of next steps.

### 5 ONGOING SUPPORT

Ahead of each project day, you'll receive a 30-minute planning call. CPD slides and visit notes are provided. Schools are encouraged to form an implementation team to embed change and trial approaches – we're here for the journey. From regular planning calls to email support, we act as thought partners to help refine your strategy, troubleshoot challenges and celebrate success. We want to help you achieve real impact – not through shortcuts, but through structure, support and care.

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# WAGOLL

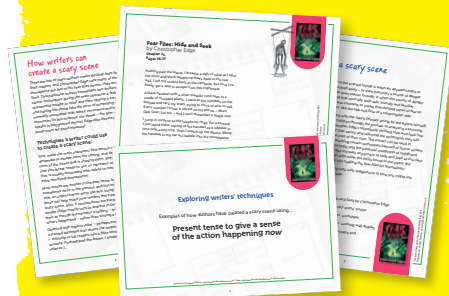
## Fear Files: Hide and Seek

Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to create a terrifying scene



**Fear Files: Hide and Seek** by Christopher Edge (£7.99, Walker Books), is out now

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**I**n my books, from *Escape Room* to *Black Hole Cinema Club*, I'm always trying to write thrilling stories where readers have to keep turning the pages to find out what happens next. Writing a truly terrifying scene in a horror story works in exactly the same way, but with a twist – you want to create the same thrills, but you also have to add a frisson of fear to your writing, making the reader almost too scared to turn the page, but they have to as they still want to find out what happens next, even if they might dread it!

My new series *Fear Files* began with my discovery of the DARKIVE – a top-secret database of young people's first-hand accounts of strange and unexplained experiences. You see, there is only one emotion that is as old as life on Earth – and that emotion is fear; a primal reaction that has evolved to protect every living thing against any perceived threats and dangers. But the dangers we face are constantly evolving and so are our fears – and these are contained within the DARKIVE...

The first book in the *Fear Files* series is *Hide and Seek*, a story inspired by the childhood game of the same name, which is genuinely

the most terrifying game ever invented. Terrifying for the hider – are you going to get caught, or – worse – forgotten? Terrifying for the seeker – who or what is going to jump out at you when you go looking for them? In *Fear Files: Hide and Seek*, Adam and his best friend, Sol, discover an abandoned ghost town and find themselves playing a strange game of hide and seek. But who or what is trying to find them? And can Adam stay one step ahead of the shadowy figure of the Itter?

In this extract, Adam discovers an overgrown phone box and thinks this gives him the chance to phone for help before the Itter can find him. But the Itter has other ideas...

## 5 TIPS FOR CREATING A TERRIFYING SCENE

### 1. FIRST AND PRESENT

To give your reader maximum chills, the choice of a first-person narrative voice told in the present tense can make them feel as though they're stuck inside your horror story. This mode of writing can also help to build suspense, as the reader only shares the narrator's viewpoint and, just like them, can't see what might be waiting around the corner.

### 2. DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS

Think about what scares you and draw on these fears when choosing descriptive

details to evoke a sense of horror. These creepy details should appeal to the full range of readers' senses – sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.

### 3. STRUCTURE

Sentence structure and paragraph lengths can help you to control the pace of your scene. For example, you could use longer sentences and paragraphs to build suspense and then shock the reader with a short, single sentence paragraph when something scary happens, creating an abrupt change of pace.

### 4. PUNCTUATION

Avoid using exclamation marks too often, as this can reduce their impact. Instead, think about how you could use ellipsis to build suspense, e.g. by suggesting something is too terrible to describe, letting the reader's imagination fill in the gap.

### 5. CHARACTERISATION

If we're going to be scared, we need to care! Make characters distinctive in the dialogue you choose for them, the ways they act and react, and, most importantly, their thoughts and motivations.

# Extract from

Chapter 11,  
pages 76-77



First-person present tense narrative keeps the reader as close to the action and in the moment as possible, helping to build a heightened sense of tension. Inclusion of descriptive details such as 'breathe a sigh of relief' and 'escape from this nightmare' hint at a sense of premature triumph on the part of the narrator, Adam, which will soon be undercut.

Verb choices such as 'jump', 'snatch' and 'babble' help to emphasise a sense of Adam's jitteriness and add to the tense atmosphere. Paragraph structure also helps to contribute to this with a sentence of inaction, describing how Adam stares at the phone, placed between two sentences describing Adam's panicked actions.

For the Itter, the antagonist of the story, I created a distinctive rhyming, sing-song style of speaking to create a sense of dread in the reader whenever the Itter speaks. In his dialogue, the Itter references playground games such as 'forty forty' and uses phrases such as 'Each peach pear plum', a rhyme used by children playing games to pick the person who is going to be 'it', which give the sense that he is playing games with Adam.

The contrast drawn between the sun shining outside and the fact that Adam can only see shadows now emphasises the character's despair. Horror stories often use more unpleasant weather conditions such as fog to create mood and atmosphere, but I wanted to show how fear can appear even on a bright sunny day.

This simple sentence and statement of fact ends the extract on an ominous note, and hopefully, makes the reader want to read on to discover if Adam is able to escape from the Itter!

Pushing past the leaves, I breathe a sigh of relief as I spot the silver and black telephone that's fixed to the rear wall. I left my mobile back at the campsite, but now I've finally got a way to escape from this nightmare.

A black handset with a silver metallic cord rests in a cradle of moulded plastic. I stare at the numbers on the keypad and rack my brain, trying to think of who to call. Every number I know is stored on my phone – Mum, Dad, Gran, Sol too – and I can't remember a single one.

I jump in surprise as the telephone rings. For a second, I just stand there, staring at the handset as it vibrates in time with every ring. Then I snatch up the phone, lifting the handset to my ear as I babble into the mouthpiece.

"Please, you've got to help me—"

But the words die on my lips as I hear a familiar sing-song voice crackling in my ear.

"Forty forty, I hear you..."

My blood runs cold as I cling to the phone. "Ring-a-ring-a, telephone line. Is this the best place you could find to hide? Each peach pear plum, I'll see you soon if you don't run!" I drop the receiver in fright as the Itter barks out this final word.

Outside, the sun is still shining, but as I fumble to open the door, all I can see now are shadows.

A disembodied giggle crackles from the handset as it swings from its steel cable.

The Itter knows where I am.

Ironic juxtaposition of old technology (the phone box) and new technology (Adam's inability to remember any of the numbers stored on his mobile phone) gives the first hint to the reader that Adam isn't going to escape from the situation he is in as easily as he initially hoped to.

Adam's dialogue articulates his desperation, with the use of the em dash indicating how Adam is abruptly cut off mid sentence, giving the reader a jolt.

For the Itter, the antagonist of the story, I created a distinctive rhyming, sing-song style of speaking to create a sense of dread in the reader whenever the Itter speaks. In his dialogue, the Itter references playground games such as 'forty forty' and uses phrases such as 'Each peach pear plum', a rhyme used by children playing games to pick the person who is going to be 'it', which give the sense that he is playing games with Adam.

In horror stories, the use of the adjective 'disembodied' is more commonly used to describe ghostly apparitions such as headless horsemen or disembodied hands like Thing from Wednesday. Here though, it is used to describe the Itter's giggle, which creates a dissonant image. Additionally, the image of the swinging steel cable also has macabre connotations.



# AWARD-WINNING SCHOOL SESSIONS

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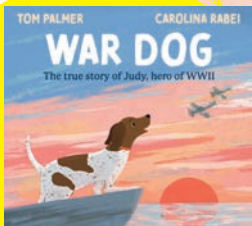
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MUSEUM AND  
STORY CENTRE



Published by Scholastic,  
2025



# War Dog

Hear the real-life story of Judy the dog, and explore the impact of conflict and loyalty with Tom Palmer's moving historical novel...

**KATE HEAP**

**W**ar Dog, written by master of children's historical fiction, Tom Palmer, and illustrated by the incredibly talented Carolina Rabei, is a beautiful account of the true story of Judy the dog. Published just ahead of the 80th anniversary of VJ Day on 15th August 2025, it shares this exceptional canine's bravery during the Second World War.

Serving aboard naval ships, Judy was able to warn crews of incoming enemy aircraft. Eventually captured

alongside the crew, she became the only animal to ever be officially registered as a Japanese prisoner of war. Through her love, devotion and courage, she kept up morale and encouraged resilience for the entirety of her 14 years. Awarded the Dickin Medal (the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross), Judy has become an extraordinary story of war.

This stunning picture book is honest and extremely powerful. Judy is lovely, but she faces a horrific reality of enemy attacks, hunger,

hiding from unfriendly soldiers, long marches and shipwreck. Through it all, she remains devoted to the soldiers with whom she serves.

War Dog celebrates the intelligence and loyalty of all animals who work alongside service men and women in the midst of war. Each gorgeously illustrated double-page spread contains so much to discuss. Teachers will be able to go as deep into the details as they wish – a more surface level story for younger children or greater analysis and





meaning for older learners. As to be expected in a story of war, there are moments of real peril and heartbreak. Judy's life is at risk, but her devotion and resilience in helping her crew saves her life again and again.

## Activities

*War Dog* is a thought-provoking story with so much to explore. Thank you to Tom Palmer and Carolina Rabei for sharing some of their vision for using this book with children.

## The vocabulary of courage

The fact that *War Dog* is based on a true story makes this beautiful picture book even more powerful. Judy was a real dog, who showed exceptional bravery during WWII. The citation on her Dickin Medal reads, "For magnificent courage and endurance in the Japanese prison camps, which helped to maintain morale among her fellow prisoners and also for saving many lives through her intelligence and watchfulness."

This is a lovely citation, but it is also full of quite large words. Take time to explore their definitions and understand what they mean for children. Use 'shades of meaning' to examine the strength of the words and their similes. For example, *magnificent* could be listed with *great*, *notable*, *wonderful*, *impressive* and *tremendous*. Using a thesaurus to find similes and then ordering words by strength, helps pupils understand the nuances of word meaning. Organising words on a paint colour strip reinforces the concept of stronger words. Repeat this with *courage*, *endurance*, *morale*, *intelligence* and *watchfulness*.

## Rich discussion

*"The world is at war, and HMS Grasshopper is part of that war. It's fierce and frightening and Judy tries to remind her crew of their lives, of home. She tries to give them hope."*

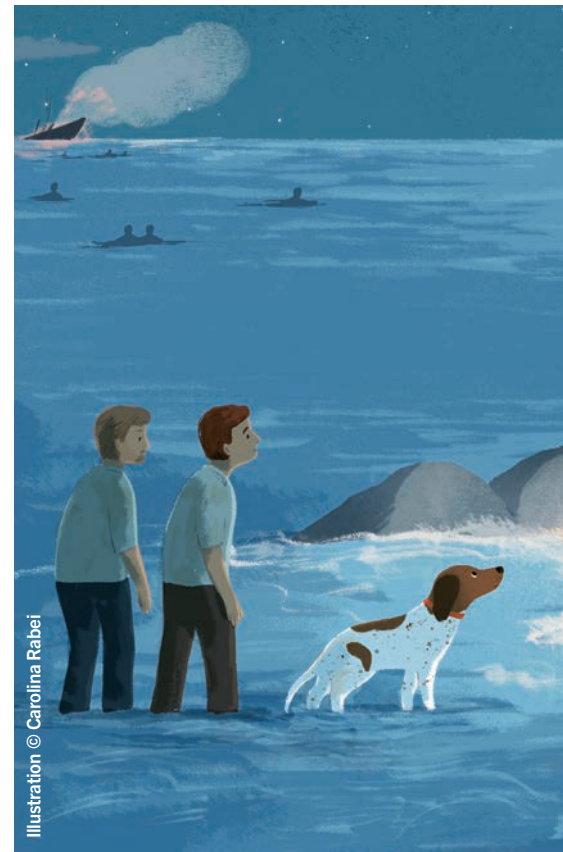
War can be a difficult concept for children to understand. Author Tom Palmer says, "Any picture book about a tough topic is a great opportunity to talk about that topic, to encourage questions and to explore attitudes and understanding of it – in this case, war and what it does to people."

After reading *War Dog* together, discuss the circumstances of WWII and why countries were fighting. Choose specific characters to focus on: the crew of HMS Grasshopper, Frank, the commandant of the war camp and, of course, Judy the dog. Ask questions about their courage, how they survived, and what was most important to them.

Discuss the impact of having an animal as the central character of the story. Illustrator Caroline Rabei says, "Often authors use animals instead of human characters to make sensitive subjects easier for children to process. In this case, though, Judy was a real dog – a true member of the crew on HMS Grasshopper – which makes her story even more powerful." Tom Palmer adds, "Even as adults it is hard to empathise with a man in uniform with a gun. It's difficult to see them as an individual who has people he loves or who love him. But – for younger children especially – an animal is a great way into empathy."

## Texture and colour

Judy is such an appealing character. Despite horrific conditions and terrifying situations, she provides comfort and hope. Carolina Rabei used



softer textures and a pastel colour palette to bring warmth to the story.

Choose one illustration from the book. Look carefully at the textures and colours. Ask open-ended questions about what students notice. What is the impact of particular colours? How has the illustrator used light and shadow? What do the characters' expressions and body language suggest? How does the illustration make you feel? You may wish to provide sentence starters like "I see..." or "I wonder why..." to help children frame their observations.

Encourage pupils to draw their own scenes or characters from the story using similar colours and

## Take it further → → →

### 1. LOCATION OF THE HMS GRASSHOPPER

For many children, *Singapore*, *Sumatra* and even *Japan* are just place names with no real meaning. Use an assortment of maps (physical and electronic) to find the important locations in Judy's story. Google Maps will allow you to zoom in on Singapore, the approximate location of the shipwreck east of Sumatra, and then trace the characters' journey to the Medan prisoner-of-war camp (north Sumatra), back to Singapore, home to

Britain and even to Tanzania where Judy lived out her final days.

Look at images of the landscape of Southeast Asia, find out about the climate and discover more about native animals and plants. Consider what dangers the soldiers and Judy may have faced – both human and natural – and what they had to do to survive the elements.

### 2. WAR IN THE PACIFIC - 1942

Learn more about the Second World War in

the Pacific. Look at the Allied Powers of UK, USA, Soviet Union and China vs the Axis Powers of Germany, Italy and Japan. Consider the impact of the Attack on Pearl Harbour in 1941 and subsequent attacks on British and US territories in the Pacific. You may wish to further expand older pupils' understanding of war in the Pacific by including information about the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and VJ Day in August 1945. Create fact files with information about key countries, events and locations. BBC Bitesize has a helpful webpage entitled World War 2: An Overview ([tinyurl.com/tp-BBCWWII](http://tinyurl.com/tp-BBCWWII)).



shading. Oil pastels or crayons would provide opportunities to layer and blend colours.

### The true story of Judy

Spend time researching the true story of Judy and the HMS Grasshopper. There is a lot of information on the PDSA website, along with some gorgeous photos of Judy wearing her medal ([tinyurl.com/tp-PDSAjudy](http://tinyurl.com/tp-PDSAjudy)). Find additional photographs and information about Judy's life on the Imperial War Museum website ([tinyurl.com/tp-IWMjudy](http://tinyurl.com/tp-IWMjudy)).

Challenge students, too: where was the HMS Grasshopper located when

it was attacked by enemy planes? How did Judy help her shipmates to survive? What was the impact of Judy's relationship with Frank Williams? How did she become an official prisoner of war?

Ask the children to imagine they are living during WWII. They should write an engaging newspaper report about Judy and her heroic acts, including key facts and quotes from people who knew her. Remind them to include an eye-catching headline and photographs (or drawings). You can also simplify this task by asking for a timeline of events instead. Provide pupils with cards describing each key moment in the story. Ask them to organise the cards in chronological order then stick, write or draw each event on a timeline.

### Amazing animals

As per the PDSA, 'the Dickin Medal is the highest award any animal can receive whilst serving in military conflict. It is recognised worldwide as the animals' Victoria Cross'. It was created in 1943 in response to incredible acts of bravery displayed by animals in active service and on the Home Front. It has been awarded for gallantry 75 times, most recently in 2023.

Find out more about the Dickin Medal and the animals who have received it. Tom Palmer has shared information about three courageous animals at the back of *War Dog*: Simon, a ship's cat who kept rats away from the crew's food despite being injured by shrapnel; Upstart, a horse who helped control traffic during a London bombing; and Glen, a parachuting dog who helped prepare the way for the Allied D-Day invasion. There is also information

### Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *Flo of the Somme* by Hilary Robinson & Martin Impey
- ❖ *Bunny the Brave War Horse* by Elizabeth Macleod
- ❖ *While the Storm Rages* by Phil Earle
- ❖ *War Horse* by Michael Morpurgo
- ❖ *Amazing Animals with Astonishing Jobs* by Simon Philip, ill. Adam Ming

about all 75 recipients on the PDSA website ([pdsa.org.uk](http://pdsa.org.uk)). This includes the name and breed of each animal as well as a description of its brave or sacrificial actions.

Ask children to choose one of the dogs, horses, pigeons or cats and create a poster that includes a drawing and facts about the animal's courage. An image search on a web browser will bring up more photographs of the animals and further articles describing their achievements. More information, articles and videos about animals in war can also be found on the Imperial War Museum website ([iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk)). This would be most appropriate for UKS2 pupils. **TP**



**Kate Heap is a primary English consultant, author and children's book reviewer. Her Developing Reading Comprehension**

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### 3. CREATE A GRAPHIC NOVEL

Deepen understanding of the characters and emotions of the story by transforming it into a graphic novel. Use comic strip layouts with various sized panels to illustrate important plot points, zoom in on characters' reactions to their experiences, and focus on significant themes. Use dialogue bubbles and narration boxes containing key words and short phrases to help readers really understand the meaning of each panel and move the plot forwards. Work in pairs or groups to share responsibility for different sections of the story, then put them together.

### 4. DESIGN YOUR OWN MEDAL

As per the PDSA, 'the Dickin Medal is a large, bronze medallion bearing the words 'For Gallantry' and 'We Also Serve' all within a laurel wreath. The ribbon is striped green, dark brown and sky blue representing water, earth and air to symbolise the naval, land and air forces.'

Challenge the children to design their own medal (for animals or humans). It could be awarded for courage, kindness, resilience, generosity or some other important quality. Think carefully about nomination criteria and the actions that will make potential winners truly special. You may wish to provide pupils

with a template that includes a round medal and a ribbon, or have them design their own with a unique shape. Spend time discussing inscriptions and looking at examples of other medals. Use a thesaurus to explore possible wording. Consider the significance of certain ribbon colours and choose a combination which reflects the meaning of the award. Finally, think about who might win the medal. This could be someone you know or a person/animal from the past. Hold an awards ceremony and present the class medals. Take it even further by making physical medals from card or clay.



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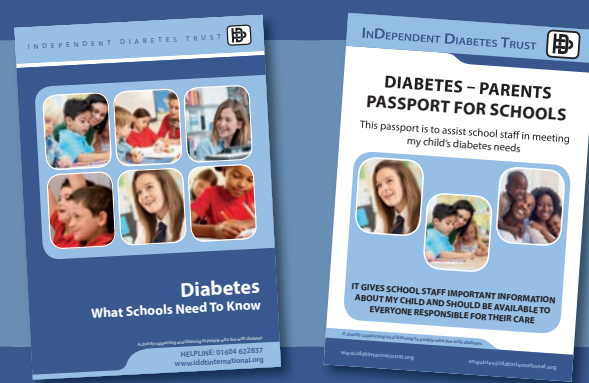
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 **MyThriveScan**



# The art of POSSIBILITY

Teaching pupils that solutions can be as entertaining as their problems will introduce them to important lateral thinking skills ✧

SARAH TUCKER

I once asked a Year 2 class to tell me their favourite part of a story. Without exception, they picked the problem. Goldilocks breaking chairs, the wolf blowing houses down, Horrid Henry wreaking havoc. Not one child chose the solution. “That’s the boring bit,” one girl shrugged, already eyeing up the book box for the next tale of chaos.

And there’s the rub. We’ve trained children, through the stories we give them, to think of the problem as the fun, juicy, dramatic centre of attention. The solution? A hurried afterthought, tacked on so we can close the book and move on to phonics. But in real life, and certainly in classrooms, it’s the solution that matters.

I wanted to flip the script. To make the solution not just necessary but fun; funny, even. To show children that the solving of problems is not the dull bit at the end, but the real adventure.

## A spark from de Bono

The idea didn’t come out of nowhere. For seven years, I researched and wrote about Edward de Bono, the man who gave us *lateral thinking*. De Bono spent his career rattling boardrooms and telling people that the way we think is, frankly, rather limited. We fall into patterns. We assume words

mean the same thing to everyone (they don’t; just say the word “luxury” or “love” in a roomful of adults and watch the fireworks). And we keep doing the same thing, over and over again, expecting different results.

Adults find this hard to break. De Bono created many tests to compare groups of ‘thinkers’ (*The Use of Lateral Thinking*, 1967). One of the most popular was the

*“I wanted to flip the script.  
To show children that the  
solving of problems is not the  
dull bit at the end of the story,  
but the real adventure”*

Wheelbarrow Experiment. He drew a wheelbarrow. A poorly engineered wheelbarrow. He then asked various groups to generate ideas for the wheelbarrow. Groups included CEOs, teachers, five-year-olds, engineers, human resource professionals, advertisers and media. There were no barriers to ideas. The more bonkers the better. Those who were the most limited – provided the least number of and least inventive ideas – were the human resource professionals and the teachers. This was because,

de Bono suggested, these groups not only follow rules, but their role was to teach them as well. The most expansive, original and ultimately genuinely useful ideas came from the five-year-olds. Children, especially at this age, are naturals. They’re already playful with ideas; they just need permission, and tools, to see problems from more than one angle. I realised that if de Bono’s techniques could

unsettle CEOs, they could empower a six-year-old armed with crayons and curiosity.

In my research and workshops, I concoct stories designed to engineer lateral thinking and



solution finding, valuing the power of play and humour. One such story is about a girl called Agnes Triptoes. Agnes is 10 years old, prematurely worldly as editor of her school newspaper, and facing both a nemesis next door and a

mother who keeps repeating mistakes at a worrying rate. Into this mess arrive six peculiar creatures in her back garden. They are clever, funny, and occasionally contrary. Their mission? To show Agnes that problems aren't roadblocks, but invitations.

And the way forward isn't always straight ahead.

### Changing perspective

Teachers see the 'problem bias' daily. The child who loves describing the issue in a story but loses all steam when asked to write an ending. The maths pupil who stares at a single method, repeats it three times, and insists they "can't do it". The class debate that goes in circles because children are more invested in arguing who is right than in finding a workable solution.

It's not ability that trips pupils up; it's perspective. They only know one way to look at the problem, and when that doesn't work, they stop. Lateral

thinking gives them other doors to open. It tells them it's not cheating to turn the question upside down or to imagine how someone else might see it. That isn't failure, it's thinking.

### Before the woodcutter

Try this tomorrow: tell your class the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* but stop just before the woodcutter arrives. Ask: "What else could Red do here?" You'll get chaos at first – poisoned apples, superheroes, calling Childline – but then the magic happens. Someone suggests she could trick the wolf. Another imagines she could turn him vegetarian. Someone will say she could team up with Grandma. Suddenly, the wolf isn't a dead end but a launchpad. The solution space becomes playful, not perfunctory.

You don't need a full curriculum overhaul to weave lateral thinking into your practice. It can be as simple as asking: "What's another way to see this?" or "What would the villain say?" It can be about letting children invent three solutions, even if only one is 'correct'.

When I run workshops in schools, I find that children pick this approach up faster than adults. They're less wedded to being right, less bruised by being wrong. Give them the green light to think differently, and they're off. Which makes you wonder: what would happen if schools taught 'thinking' itself as a subject? Not as an add-on, but as central as maths or literacy.

Until then, stories are our best secret weapon. They let us slip in the idea that problems aren't prizes and solutions aren't punishments – they're the real game. **TP**

## 5 PLAYFUL WAYS... to spark lateral thinking



### Flip the ending.

After finishing a tale, ask pupils

to invent three different endings. Encourage them to be silly; the sillier the better.



### Ban the obvious.

When solving a maths word problem, tell the class the most obvious answer is off-limits. They should be encouraged to find at least two other approaches.



### Play 'perspective chairs'.

Assign each corner of the classroom a character (hero, villain, bystander, teacher). Choose a problem, and encourage pupils to move seats and argue the problem from that perspective.



### Play the 'What's the question?' game.

Give pupils an answer (e.g., "42" or "a shoelace") and challenge them to invent as many possible questions as they can.



### Be your own mistake detectives.

When a child repeats an error, frame it as a puzzle: "What is this mistake trying to teach you?" Treat it as a clue, not a failure.



**Sarah Tucker** is a novelist, broadcaster, and lecturer in lateral thinking

at Cambridge University's *Homerton Changemakers initiative*. Her new book, *Size Six (Cambridge Children's Books, £7.99)*, is out now.

[sarahtucker.info](http://sarahtucker.info)



# Book CLUB



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

**KS1**



***Tiger's Last Roar***  
by Harriet Howe,  
ill. Katie Cottle

(£7.99, Templar Books)

Mae's best friend in the world is her beloved cat, Tiger. Whenever they go outside, Mae imagines that they're traveling the jungle together, having wild adventures. Tiger loves these outings just as much as Mae does. But one day, Tiger doesn't come when Mae calls her, and as soon as Mae realises that Tiger's gone forever, she doesn't think she will ever be able to stop crying. Luckily, Mum is there to hold her close and help her remember all the wonderful things about Tiger. A beautiful ode to the exquisite joy and love of pets, and the heartbreaking loss when they die, this stunningly illustrated book is perfect for a gentle introduction to one of life's cruellest universal truths – that however much we love someone, one day we may have to let them go.

***My Best Friend Tilly***  
by Iris Samartzi

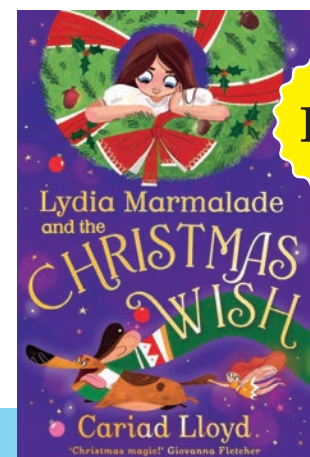
(£12.99HB, post wave)

The narrator of our story has a wonderful imagination. So wonderful, in fact, that when she imagines a dazzling make-believe world for herself and her best friend Tilly, things get a bit out of hand, and the swimming pool, fire-breathing dragons, and intergalactic rollercoasters mean there's no room left for her chum. Beautiful illustrations show the world growing piece by piece, and poor Tilly being pushed further into the periphery, until she disappears from the spread altogether. Finally, our narrator realises that her desire for a playroom, music room, tower, and all sorts of other delights has got in the way of the only really important thing: Tilly herself. A wonderful exploration of friendship, and what it really means to be happy, this is a great title for your little ones.

**KS1**



**KS2**



***Lydia Marmalade and the Christmas Wish***

by Ciriad Lloyd, ill Ma Pe

(£7.99, Hachette Children's)

Lydia Marmalade believes in wishes. Or at least, she used to. It's 1812 and Lydia's mum has just died; her dad died when she was small, so as the book opens, she's in a freezing cold carriage with her little dog, Colin, on her way to the imposing Peppomberley house, set to be her new home. Lydia's moving in with The Partridges, her new family, and Lady Partridge really isn't keen on the idea at all. So begins a wonderful wintery tale about the power of imagination, and a touch of real-life magic. This charming, humorous chapter book from one of the UK's most beloved comedians and podcasters, is a perfect cosy tale to read as the days become darker, and we all start to believe in magic and wishes – if only a very little bit.

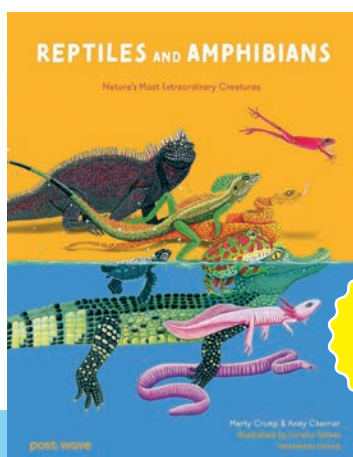
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KS2

### Reptiles and Amphibians

by Marty Crump & Andy Charrier, ill. Loreto Salinas, trans. Iris Enck

(£14.99HB, post wave)

When it comes to animals – furry pets, slimy garden critters, or even exotic creatures they’ve never seen in real life – children’s curiosity knows no bounds. If you have any animal enthusiasts in your class, this is the book for you. Packed with information and brilliant illustrations of everything from salamanders to crocodiles, it’s a seemingly endless source of fascinating facts. Did you know, for instance, that the Western skink has a detachable tail, or that the Texas horned lizard can cry blood? Whether you’re teaching children about evolution and adaptation, or you’re simply looking for a book of curiosities to keep them entertained, I’d recommend this one. Brb, just learning about the blue jeans poison frog...



KS2

### Which Way to the Future

by Cressida Cowell

(£14.99HB, Hachette Children’s)

Everyone’s favourite dragon trainer is back; this time with her much-anticipated conclusion to the *Which Way to Anywhere* series. K2, Mabel, Izzabird, Theo and Annipeck are off on another wild adventure, and Mabel and Izzabird are yet to find out what their magical powers might be... The children have three seemingly impossible tasks, but can they stop quarrelling long enough to pull together and use their magical powers to save the day? A must for existing fans of Cowell’s dazzling fantasy, and perfect for confident independent readers looking for their next world to dive into, *Which Way to the Future* is another time-and-space-bending delight of the standard we’ve come to expect from this master at work.

## Meet the author

**HARRIET HOWE**  
**ON THE POWER OF WORDS AND PICTURES TO HELP US THROUGH LIFE’S TRIALS**



### What was primary school like for you?

I have such fond memories of primary school. A particularly proud moment was seeing one of my stories pinned up by the office. Even back then, I loved writing, but never believed I could become a published author. So, it’s a privilege now to visit schools, hopefully helping teachers inspire a new generation of writers, showing them the world needs their stories too!

### What was it like working with award-winning illustrator Katie Cottle?

It’s been an honour working with Katie; seeing her illustrations evolve was such an exciting part of the process. That alchemy of words and images is so magical. Importantly, it gives even the very youngest readers agency – they can follow the story through the pictures, often being a step ahead of the adult reader. When I was writing, I tried to leave room for the illustrations to tell the story. There’s one spread that contains just two words, and I think it’s one of the most powerful moments in the story. I gasped when I first saw Katie’s illustration!

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

I’d love it to help teachers navigate discussions around loss and grief, with the hopeful message that although our pets can’t live forever, our precious memories will. I’ve had wonderful feedback from teachers already; some have used our story in one-to-one, or small group situations, with children who have lost a pet, or suffered a family bereavement, while others have chosen it for whole-class readings, from EYFS to Y6. I’m a big fan of picturebooks being used across a wide age range, so that’s been great to hear.



*Tiger's Last Roar* (£7.99, Templar Books), by Harriet Howe, ill. Katie Cottle, is out now.



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**bett** | **TECH  
USER  
LABS**

● A Hyve Event

Our most popular programme, Tech User Labs, is back and taking to the show floor! With free sessions at Bett UK 2026, you'll learn how to get the most out of your current tech and explore emerging innovations within education - there's no CPD opportunity quite like it!



All content sessions  
at Bett UK 2026 are  
CPD accredited



# Welcome...

## to the *Teach Primary Awards* 2025!

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



Claire Ingrams, HT, Woodland Academy Trust

#### HEALTH & WELLBEING

Resources promoting happiness & wellbeing for all



Michael Eggleton, HT, Charles Dickens Primary

#### MATHS

Tools & materials that develop maths knowledge & skills



Martin Burrett, speaker & editor of UKEdChat mag

#### STEM

Sparking creativity, problem-solving & STEM curiosity



Dr Jo Montgomery, primary science specialist





# Dandelion Learning

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- Termly live Q&A
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**Successfully supporting schools for over 20 years!**



*"The unlimited access subscription for our Trust is a bargain! We know the content is amazing."*

Adrian Massey, CEO Bridge Schools Trust

*"So many great top tips and easy wins! Most useful CPD I've ever had! Thank you so much!"*

Megan Huntington, Kingsway School

*"Just had Ofsted – your training proved invaluable!"*

D. Thornton, Newton Longville  
C of E Primary School

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The Open University



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COBIS  
SUPPORTING  
ASSOCIATE



@DandelionLearning



@dandelionlearninguk



@TreandPet

## HIGHLY COMMENDED

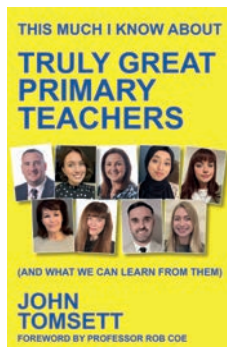


## Level 5 Specialist TA Apprenticeship

ESF Apprenticeships

This specialist teaching assistant apprenticeship will enhance the skills and development of support staff, who can choose from specialisms including SEND, wellbeing, and curriculum provision.

**“A thorough and comprehensive course that is sure to aid every TA in hugely increasing their impact”**



## This Much I Know About Truly Great Primary Teachers

(And What We Can Learn From Them)  
by John Tomsett (Crownhouse)

Covering a range of school types, social contexts, pupil ages and subjects, this book brings to life how nine outstanding primary teachers engage, inspire, nurture and motivate their pupils.

**“A powerful celebration of the excellence that already exists, which too often goes unnoticed”**



### CATEGORY FINALISTS

NAACE ERF  
NAACE

WHOLE-  
SCHOOL  
UNLIMITED  
ACCESS  
ENGLISH CPD  
SUBSCRIPTION  
Dandelion  
Learning

SENCO  
NETWORK  
Gateway Alliance  
(Education  
Services) Ltd

### WINNER

## Literacy Tree Whole-school Membership

Literacy Tree

A complete, book-based professional development programme that is fully integrated with school membership. The model includes structured CPD, planning support, subject leader networking events, and self-paced learning, all designed to improve the teaching of reading and writing across primary. Training is delivered through a mix of live online sessions, on-demand recordings, and optional in-person consultancy. A recent member survey showed that 87 per cent of respondents improved their subject knowledge.

**“Real, high-quality books form the backbone of this product, and the team has built a rich pedagogy around them”**

Jon Hutchinson





THE EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity

No: 1060683

[naace.org.uk](https://naace.org.uk)

CELEBRATING  
40 YEARS!

# HELPING YOU USE TECHNOLOGY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT



The Naace EdTech Review Framework helps schools to:

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

SCAN FOR MORE  
INFORMATION



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

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

Join us today ↘

## HIGHLY COMMENDED



## Honeydew Kingdom Foundational Skills Programme

Dream Tree Creations

A fully integrated literacy system designed for KS1, Honeydew Kingdom teaches all 42 sounds of the English language through a structured, research-based method.

“A comprehensive, thoughtfully designed programme”



## Spelling Shed

Education Shed

Created by former teacher Martin Saunders and packed with engaging digital games, Spelling Shed is the UK's number one spelling app, and helps pupils practise spelling and improve vocabulary acquisition. The app is compatible with various devices, making it a consistent, long-term solution.

“A great resource that combines adaptability, innovation and impact in one accessible platform”



## CATEGORY FINALISTS

**FLASHACADEMY®**  
FlashAcademy®

**SEVEN STEPS  
TEACHER HUB**  
Seven Steps to  
Writing Success

**READY STEADY  
READ TOGETHER**  
Literacy Counts

## WINNER

## ESSENTIALWRITING

HFL Education

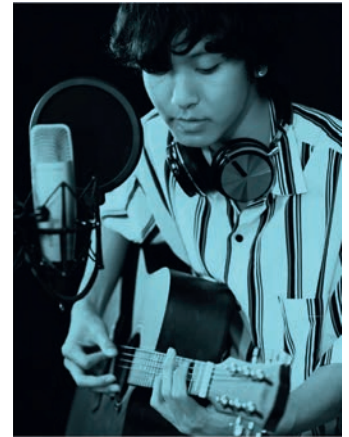
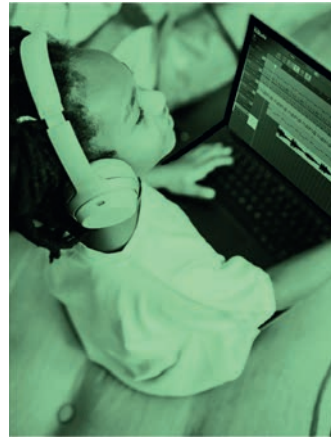
ESSENTIALWRITING is an innovative primary writing curriculum from HFL Education, designed to develop skilled and successful writers. The structured yet flexible framework supports teachers in delivering high-quality writing instruction across Years 1-6. The curriculum is easily adaptable to different school contexts, including mixed-age classes and settings with high levels of EAL or SEND learners. With clear progression pathways and purpose-specific guidance, it empowers teachers to tailor lessons to their pupils' needs while maintaining consistency and ambition. Schools report significant improvements in writing stamina, vocabulary, and engagement, as well as increased confidence and creativity.

“A high-quality, accessible resource that supports effective writing instruction across a range of classroom settings”

Rebecca Simpson-Hargreaves and team



## Your customisable music teaching and learning platform



Charanga is used in schools across the UK to help teachers like you deliver high-quality, progressive music lessons. Enhance your music curriculum.

### **New to music teaching or Charanga?**

Our new Creative Music Scheme (Nursery–Year 6) suits any teaching style or timetable – it's enjoyable to teach with varied weekly activities, straightforward planning support and free training. Plus, we've over 250 new songs with teaching guides, and more besides. Find everything in one place.

### **For music specialists**

Unlock infinite customisation. Create bespoke lessons and units, share creative projects online, and upload your own resources for use alongside ours. Perfect for PPA cover and group work. Score movies with Charanga YuStudio® – a complete DAW. Access creative tools to inspire the young people you work with.

### **Think you know Charanga? Think again.**

Constantly evolving, purpose-built from teachers' feedback and trusted by thousands. See what Charanga can do for you and your students.

Start your FREE 30-day trial. Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/charanga2025](https://bit.ly/charanga2025).



## HIGHLY COMMENDED



### RE Today Primary RE Curriculum

(In partnership with NATRE)

RE Today

A fully resourced scheme of learning designed to empower primary schools to deliver high-quality, inclusive, and thought-provoking religious education.

“Reading this RE curriculum, which is routed firmly in practical learning, was a breath of fresh air”



### Premium Plus membership of PLN

Primary Languages Network Ltd

PLN aims to empower pupils to make significant progress in French, Spanish, or German. Through a structured, four-stage programme, the approach meets government and global requirements, while addressing the key challenges schools and teachers face.

“Resources are extremely high quality and attractive, and sit within an easily accessible site and curriculum”



## CATEGORY FINALISTS

HUE  
ANIMATION  
TOOLBOX  
Ascent IT

KAPOW  
PRIMARY  
SPANISH  
Kapow Primary  
Ltd

PURPLE MASH  
- COMPUTING  
SCHEME OF  
WORK  
2Simple Ltd

## WINNER

### Charanga Musical School

Charanga Ltd

Used by primary schools UK-wide, and beloved by around 68,500 teachers, Charanga Musical School includes schemes of work – from unit planning documents to comprehensive lessons – to support music teaching in any context; a vast library of songs, instrument courses and creative tools; support for home learning; and contains a substantial SEND/ASN section dedicated to supporting

practitioners working with children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Infinitely customisable, the programme is designed to help children aged five to 11 develop a love, knowledge and respect for music in all its forms.

“ This creative resource is a comprehensive guide to the music curriculum, and includes everything a teacher would need”

Ruth Astley





# Get PetWise with PDSA

PDSA's PetWise Award is a completely FREE, fully planned, curriculum-linked programme that teaches children how to look after their precious pets, how to stay safe around dogs, and about careers involving working with all sorts of animals.

A fun, free award programme aimed at primary-aged children.

The engaging lessons, which are available to download in both English and Welsh, will empower your pupils to help improve animal welfare – and they will be rewarded for their hard work, which will boost their confidence.



Help your school  
**#GetPetWise**

Sign up to the PetWise Award to download your **FREE** resources

**[pdsa.org.uk/petwise-award](https://pdsa.org.uk/petwise-award)**

HIGHLY COMMENDED



## Little Princess Trust x CCLG x 1decision

1Decision Ltd

This comprehensive assembly pack informs children about the vital work of charities, focusing on reducing anxiety, fear, and stigma around the word 'cancer' while promoting empathy and understanding.

"This programme helps pupils develop life skills that extend far beyond the curriculum"



## Pet Education Partnership Website

The Pet Education Partnership

Created collaboratively by eight of the UK's leading animal charities (RSPCA, PDSA, Dogs Trust, Blue Cross, SSPCA, USPCA, Woodgreen and Cats Protection) these free resources are rooted in expert knowledge and tailored for classroom use, with wide-ranging applicability across KS1 & 2.

"Curriculum-linked lesson plans are adaptable and relevant across the UK, building empathy, responsibility, and animal welfare awareness"



### CATEGORY FINALISTS

PRIMARY  
MUSIC IN  
CONVERSATION  
PODCAST  
Music Education  
Solutions

BBC BITESIZE  
FOR TEACHERS:  
FANTASTIC  
PHILOSOPHY  
BBC

SUSTAINABILITY  
NETWORK  
Gateway Alliance  
(Education  
Services) Ltd

### WINNER

## Sky Arts' Access All Arts Week

Sky Arts (We Are Futures)

Sky Arts' Access All Arts is a free, national initiative designed to empower primary teachers and pupils across the UK and Ireland with high-quality, creative learning. Developed with input from educators, artists, and arts organisations, the programme offers over 80 hours of flexible, classroom-ready content that is curriculum-aligned and pupil-led, with inspiring videos and live lessons from well-known artists, covering a diverse range of artistic disciplines. Structured teacher guidance reduces workload while supporting creative skill development in visual storytelling, music, movement, and more.

"This is a unique, nationwide cultural experience relevant to all learners, and encourages creativity, expression, and confidence"

Claire Ingrams





# The STORY PROJECT

An award-winning,  
teacher-led social enterprise

100% would  
recommend  
us!

Using the  
magic of stories to  
bring PSHE to life



- 📖 A **fully resourced**, whole school PSHE programme, meeting **all statutory July 2025 RSHE** requirements.
- 📖 **Story-led lessons** using diverse and popular picture books.
- 📖 Grounded in **research and evidence**, with **proven impact** on children's **wellbeing, literacy and oracy**.

“A well-thought out, inspiring programme that has reignited a love for the subject and had remarkable impact. It has been a **game-changer** for our school.”

Hollingwood Primary School



Ready to join a growing community of schools doing PSHE differently?

[story-project.co.uk](http://story-project.co.uk)

## HIGHLY COMMENDED



### Being Safe Around Dogs Animation

The Pet Education Partnership

Friendly animated characters and the memorable ‘three Cs’ approach (Check, Call, Count) in this video teach children how to behave safely around dogs, in simple, practical steps.

“Addresses a very real health and safety concern in a way that children will find fun and relevant”



### Jigsaw PSHE

Jigsaw Education Group

Jigsaw PSHE is an evidence-informed, whole-school programme – including lessons, activities, assessments and whole-school initiatives – designed to support the mental health and wellbeing of children from ages three to 16. Resources are available in both English and Welsh.

“The spiral curriculum, together with mindfulness activities, are well thought out, and can be delivered effectively in any setting”



## CATEGORY FINALISTS

PICTURE NEWS  
PRIMARY  
Picture News

LEARNING FOR  
PEACE  
Peacemakers

MYHAPPYMIND  
myHappyMind

## WINNER

### The Story Project

The Story Project CIC

The Story Project uses the magic of stories to improve children’s wellbeing and literacy in schools. By putting high-quality, popular children’s books at the heart of PSHE, children learn to understand and manage their wellbeing and emotions. They develop empathy, resilience and confidence, as well as

better comprehension and discussion skills. Membership offers staff training (aligned with NPQLTD and DfE Standards), the full curriculum, a curated book set and leadership support, and the research-backed curriculum is fully resourced and created by teachers. Story-led and outcome-focused, it links each lesson to a wellbeing objective, covering all statutory and key non-statutory PSHE requirements.

“The materials are well thought out, evidence-based and easy for teachers to adapt, which makes it straightforward to embed”

Michael Eggleton





# We deliver...

-  An **inclusive and equitable** maths curriculum that meets the needs of both educators and students.
-  Levels and objectives that support incremental step change whilst not compromising the **depth and breadth** of maths needed for adulthood. Including financial education and data handling skills.
-  Maths concepts contextualised for today's world. In response to **social and technological change**, and recognising a student carries a pocket-sized super computer, the priority is on understanding over methodology.
-  An already existing alternative for the **41.7%** of students not achieving GCSE maths on current pathways, that supports the skills needed for **further study and employment**.



## We deliver results...

**"Our Maths For Life children have made awesome progress this year and I'm so pleased."**

*Mo McDonald, Assistant Head teacher, DDSL & SENDCo, Southwold & Gagle Brook Primary School & Nursery*



The Maths For Life programme is designed for those whom a standard maths national curriculum structure and timescale is unattainable. It is a complete curriculum which delivers only the freshest and highest quality ingredients to ensure both educators and students fall in love with maths.

**The best way to order is to talk to us!** You can book a Q&A session or one-to-one chat via our website, or email us!



[www.mathsforlife.com](http://www.mathsforlife.com)



[learn@mathsforlife.com](mailto:learn@mathsforlife.com)

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## Maths For Life<sup>®</sup> A Differentiated Approach

### Menu

Our menu of resources and services allows flexibility to implement the programme in a way which suits the needs of your setting, educators and students. It is designed for easy, efficient, and independent use without the need for expensive training.

**Scan the QR code for our full menu and price list.**



### New look ingredients!



**New look resource library launched with visual menus and even more fabulous content.**

HIGHLY COMMENDED

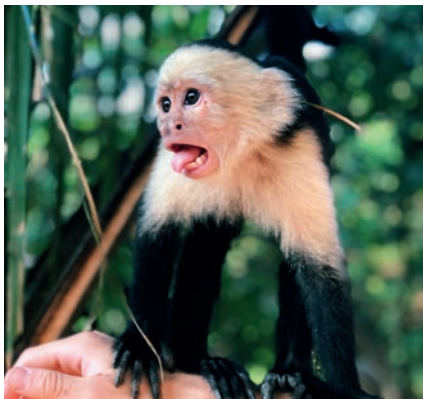


## BBC Bitesize: Primary Maths: KS1

BBC

A completely new programme of study for KS1 and KS2 maths. With over 200 curriculum-aligned guides, each mapped to a specific year group, learners can explore maths topics in a structured and age-appropriate way.

“The platform offers a great blend of video-based materials and practical problem-solving tasks for pupils”



## Natural Curriculum

Natural Curriculum

The Natural Curriculum is a free digital platform for KS2 that uses captivating clips from world-renowned BBC natural history programmes, such as The Blue Planet and Planet Earth, to get children excited about mathematics.

“An excellent website that provides media-rich maths resources, using practical examples to bring the natural world into the classroom”



CATEGORY  
FINALISTS

ARITHMAGICIANS  
Arithmagicians Ltd

MATHS FOR LIFE  
PROGRAMME  
Maths for Life

CROSS-  
CURRICULAR  
ORIENTEERING  
Cross-Curricular  
Orienteering Ltd

WINNER

## URBrainy Multiplication Tables Check

Route One Network Ltd

The URBrainy MTC practice tool can help boost confidence and reduce stress ahead of the MTC. Not only will it give pupils the chance to familiarise themselves with the layout and timing of the MTC, but teachers will also get detailed feedback for each child, as well as guidance on where more practice is needed and links to helpful resources. These include both on-screen practice and printable worksheets to ensure that pupils know all times tables before taking the real check. On top of that, everything is available for free either via the website, or by downloading the app.

“ This is a simple, well-executed tool for practising the essential skill of times table recall”

Martin Burrett





WINNER

## Wonderlab+

Science Museum Group

Wonderlab+ is a free online learning platform designed to engage children aged 7-11 in fun, hands-on science learning – both in the classroom and at home. Building on the success of the Science Museum’s much-loved *Wonderlab* galleries, *Wonderlab+* is a digital extension that brings interactive, inspiring content directly to young learners. It’s packed with experiments, videos, games, and quizzes that help children explore science using everyday ideas and materials, and new content, created by the Science Museum’s digital learning team, in partnership with Explainers, curators and volunteers, is regularly added, so you can come back to it again and again.

### CATEGORY FINALISTS

THE DIGITAL ADVENTURES OF AVA AND CHIP: TECH ACTIVITY BOOK  
AvaChipBooks

CLICKVIEW PRIMARY  
ClickView Ltd

WHITE ROSE SCIENCE  
White Rose Education

HIGHLY COMMENDED



## STEM with Mr N

STEM with Mr N

Created by an experienced educator, the *STEM With Mr N* YouTube channel blends creativity, pedagogy, and practical science in an accessible video format that brings STEM learning to life for children aged 5–11.

“These charming videos offer an approachable entry point into STEM”



## SuperQuesters Mission: River Crest Rescue

QuestFriendz

A STEM-themed adventure chapter book including specially developed experiments and embedded puzzles, and accompanying teaching resource pack, designed for Years 2-4.

“Written with energy and flair, this is an evocative, fast-paced story that will appeal to a wide range of children”

“This resource offers a clear, engaging, and easy-to-navigate website suitable for both home and school use”

Dr Jo Montgomery



# 5 REASONS FOR SCHOOLS TO VISIT GULLIVER'S THEME PARK RESORTS

1

15% OFF SCHOOL TRIPS!

CALL 01925 444 888 TO BOOK AND QUOTE DISCOUNT CODE "TEACH15" TO RECIEVE THE AMAZING SAVING.

2  
RIDES!

It's more than just a day out; it's a chance to celebrate achievements, strengthen bonds, and create memories that will last a lifetime.



3  
EDUCATIONAL WORKSHOPS

Our fun workshops integrate education and recreation, allowing students to gain valuable life skills that extend beyond the classroom.

4



OUR GLOWING REVIEWS

"What a fantastic time we had during our residential visit this week. The children have made lifelong memories, and the trip offers such fantastic value for money."

**Broom Leys Primary School**

5  
RESIDENTIAL STAYS

A residential experience is a key milestone for any child, so whether it is a reward trip or an extended adventure we can work with you to make sure your trip is as bespoke as possible.



**GROUPS.GULLIVERSFUN.CO.UK**

Or call our dedicated team **01925 444 888**



# Winter school trips

Start planning your next educational adventure...



## Meaningful adventures

Acorn Adventure is your gateway to unforgettable school and group residentials across the UK and Europe. Through the Acorn Adventure Gateway, we connect schools with trusted, independently accredited activity centres that deliver safe, high-quality, and inspiring outdoor experiences. With decades of expertise, we make planning easy, offering clear options, simple booking, and full support every step of the way. As a financially protected provider, Acorn ensures complete peace of mind while helping teachers create meaningful, confidence-building adventures for young people in some of the best settings for outdoor learning. With a simple booking process and absolute control, you can manage the trip from start to finish through our gateway with the reassurance that comes with a trusted expert. Book your trip today, and set your pupils up for an experience they won't soon forget.

Explore more at [acornadventure.co.uk](https://acornadventure.co.uk)

## Jump, learn and grow

School trips to AirHop Adventure Parks offer an exciting, educational, and well-managed experience that gets students moving while supporting health, confidence, and teamwork. From clear pre-visit planning to structured on-site sessions, every detail is designed for safety, inclusivity, and fun. Trained staff, accessible facilities, and engaging trampoline-based activities encourage physical development, coordination, and resilience.

Schools can choose tailored sessions suited to age and ability, ensuring every student benefits from active learning. With transparent pricing, clear communication, and a focus on wellbeing, AirHop Adventure Parks turns school visits into energetic, memorable experiences that promote healthy lifestyles and teamwork in a safe, supportive environment.

Visit [airhop.co.uk](https://airhop.co.uk) or email [info@airhop.co.uk](mailto:info@airhop.co.uk)



## Ignite curiosity in science

Fuel imaginations with a KS2 trip to the Science Museum in London. Visit the popular Wonderlab gallery and watch live experiments at the Chemistry Bar, get hands-on with over 50 curriculum-linked exhibits and meet brilliant Explainers who facilitate engagement. Groups can also discover the inner workings of the human digestive system in an It Takes Guts show and see iconic spacecraft up close in the exciting new Space gallery. With free admission to the museum and free entry to Wonderlab for schools, join the Science Museum on their mission to inspire the scientists, engineers, technicians and innovators of the future. Visit [sciencemuseum.org.uk/groups/formal-education-groups](https://sciencemuseum.org.uk/groups/formal-education-groups) or email [Info@ScienceMuseumGroup.ac.uk](mailto:Info@ScienceMuseumGroup.ac.uk)





### Christmas magic

Say hello to the holiday season, and bring your school group for a magical festive day out! Explore a four-mile Winter Safari, then step inside Santa's enchanted lift for a fantastical flight across snowy scenes and sparkling skies. Once you arrive, ring the magical doorbell to meet the big man himself in his beautifully decorated Grotto. Encounter delightful characters along the way and be dazzled by the northern lights. Perfect for creating unforgettable memories, with special festive treats available to make your trip even sweeter, your pupils will experience a magical day full of excitement, discovery, and wonder. Give each child a chance at Christmas joy, and book your tickets now by emailing us on [groups@wmssp.co.uk](mailto:groups@wmssp.co.uk)

### On the farm

Head to White Post Farm for a school trip of a lifetime! Take part in a guided farm tour; a popular option that can be customised to a group's educational topic and is ideal for organised school visits. For groups that prefer to explore at their own pace, you can get involved in a self-led visit, where you can enjoy a free-flow experience around the farm, paired with an educational workshop of your choice. The education team can also work with groups to develop activities tailored to specific topics, ensuring every visit is customised to your group's needs. Help pupils explore the natural world around them, and learn all about our wide variety of animals. Find out more at [whitepostfarm.co.uk/education-2](http://whitepostfarm.co.uk/education-2)



### Visit the stars

How do rockets get to space?  
Why is light so fantastic?

If you're looking to spark curiosity in STEM this winter, check out Bristol's science centre We The Curious, home to the UK's only 3D planetarium and two floors brimming with over 200 things to do, including interactive exhibits exploring space, sound, illusions, food, animations and much more. Combine a visit to the exhibition floors with a mesmerising trip around the winter night sky in the planetarium, and a choice of curriculum-linked live science shows and workshops on everything from fossils to forensics, chemistry to climate change. Visit [wethecurious.org](http://wethecurious.org) or email [education@wethecurious.org](mailto:education@wethecurious.org) to find out more and book your most surprising science experience, yet.



### Unbeatable residentials

Porthpean Outdoor is Cornwall's leading outdoor activity centre. Set overlooking the stunning Cornish south coast, we offer schools an unbeatable residential experience that inspires learning beyond the classroom. Thanks to being just a five-minute walk from our beach, we provide exciting water, beach and land-based activities, such as kayaking, coasteering, stand up paddleboarding, climbing, archery, and bushcraft, with opportunities to build confidence and resilience every step of the way. The cosy onsite accommodation at our secure site, as well as full catering facilities means we take the stress out of your residential. With safety, inclusivity, and education at the core, Porthpean Outdoor gives teachers peace of mind and pupils memories that last a lifetime. You book the coach – we'll do the rest. Visit [porthpean.com](http://porthpean.com) or call **01726 72901** for more info and to book your place. We can't wait to welcome you!



## Art



## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- How to draw observational sketches exploring shape, colour and pattern
- How to make paper clay using simple instructions
- How to make a sculpture using fingers and tools to create textures
- Mixing colours and create tones of colour to paint outcomes

# Sculpt alien plants inspired by Chiaozza



Create vibrant, imaginative Martian flora from design drawing to final sculpture using paper clay, with **Wayne Roberts**

 @dalmain-art.bsky.social

One of the joys of working as an art specialist in primary education is discovering focus artists for projects that excite and inspire young learners, providing a platform for creativity. I came across the work of Chiaozza (the collaborative studio of artists Adam Frezza and Terri Chiao) by accident and loved their vibrant, abstract sculptures. Linking to Year 1's science topic on plants, children thought about what type of flora might exist on other planets. Using paper clay made by the children, the outcomes provided opportunities for pupils to extend learning by mixing their own tones of bright colours.



## START HERE

Inspire pupils with colourful high-resolution images and illustrations when introducing the topic and use resources that explore colour and pattern.



When resourcing, designing and making, shapes that are compact and can support their own weight are easier to make (think cactus). If you can, pre-make your own paper clay and sculpture example to share so that the children can pass it around and study. Show the pre-made example highlighting that the plant is paper clay and the base is air-drying clay. This really enthused my class! Introduce the idea of *alien plants* – plants that are unusual, playful, or strange.

## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | DESIGN

Begin the project with the question: *What is sculpture?* After looking at famous examples and discussing materials, introduce the theme of *alien plants*. Share some example images to inspire ideas (such as these plants created by game artist Elisa Tamagnoli: [tinyurl.com/tp-AlienPlants](https://tinyurl.com/tp-AlienPlants)). The children really enjoyed imagining where the plants came from, their purpose (carnivorous monster eaters were very popular), and inventing funny names for their species.

Next, look at Chiaozza's sculptures (you can see a selection at [tinyurl.com/tp-CHIAOZZA](https://tinyurl.com/tp-CHIAOZZA)), and discuss

the use of colour, shape and pattern, as well as giving the pupils a chance to describe plant-like features such as stems, leaves, or flowers. Demonstrate drawing examples highlighting these features. Next, ask the children to sketch their own ideas, focusing on the shapes and forms that they want to include in their sculpture. Give them time to experiment with de-signs and develop their own concepts.

### 2 | MAKE

Begin the next section of the lesson by showing the children the paper clay ingredients, and demonstrate the sequence of combining pre-made paper mass (made from shredded



***“I came across the work of Chiaozza by accident, and loved their vibrant, abstract sculptures”***

paper and water) with cornflour, oil, salt, vinegar, and PVA glue (you can find a quick how-to at [tinyurl.com/tp-PaperClay](https://tinyurl.com/tp-PaperClay)). As my class were in Year 1, I premeasured the correct amounts for each group (five groups of six) to make the process easier. The children should then be able to follow instructions step by step, stirring and squeezing until the mixture becomes a dough-like texture. Once ready, place it in sealed containers to keep it moist.

The process was messy, sticky, and a little smelly, but the children loved it! Provide non-PVC gloves for those with cuts or skin sensitivities, due to the salt and vinegar in the mixture. Once you’ve made the clay, clear the space

and set up independent workstations, so each child has a board, tools, and access to materials.

Next, demonstrate how to create leaves and petals using wire, pipe cleaners, and masking tape. First, stick a length of masking tape along a piece of craft wire, leaving some exposed for the stem. Add a second piece of tape on the other side, to cover the wire. You can then cut the tape into a leaf shape and set aside for painting. These could also be combined to form flowers. After a couple of attempts, the children will be able to make their own, with support where needed.

After demonstrating how to make simple shapes, move on to how to attach parts by adding a little PVA and

pressing firmly, or by using sticks. Children can use tools such as pencils, clay sticks, or lolly sticks to create indents, openings, and textures in the clay, which can hold petals or leaves later. They can also mould a simple sphere or disc from air-drying clay to act as a plinth. Insert a pre-cut stick to demonstrate how a plant sculpture could be built onto the plinth.

Using their sketches, encourage the children to practice construction, experimenting with rolling, pinching, flattening, and joining the clay. I’d recommend building in short breaks for sharing progress, challenges, and tips. I also had to remind my class to make the holes required for attaching petals or leaves, which they’ll do once the clay is dry. Pupils can use the plans from their sketchbooks as starting points, though they will likely adapt ideas as sculptures develop.

Once they’re confident that they know what they want their plants to look like, the children can begin their final construction. Leave the finished models to dry for at least one week in a dry space.

### 3 | FINAL TOUCHES

Once dry, revisit the resource images and children’s designs to explore colour choices. Discuss which colours worked well together and how to change a bright colour into a pastel tone. You can demonstrate this process by mixing up secondary colours, such as orange, then adding white to create lighter shades. It’s also helpful to model painting techniques, such as adding spots or dashes.

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- We had tremendous fun arranging our models into an alien rainforest once they had been completed, and the children used their voices and simple musical instruments to recreate the sounds their plants might make.
- You could also create a diorama of a jungle or rainforest for the clay plants to sit in for a school display.
- Combine with literacy learning to create a simple fact file for the models – including details such as what kind of habitat the plant has, what it feeds on, and how it grows.

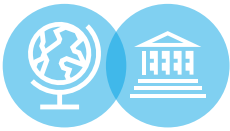
Finally, the children can paint their alien plant sculptures and add patterns such as dots, dashes and swirls using paint pens or the tip of the brush handle. Once the paint is dry, pupils can add final touches by bending and twisting the leaves, bringing their alien plants to life!

**Wayne Roberts is an art specialist teacher at Dalmain Primary School in Lewisham, and has been a teacher for 25 years.**

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What resources are needed (e.g. pictorial instructions) to support specific learners so they can work independently?
- Can these skills be built upon so future projects provide opportunities to secure and consolidate?
- Can this project be used to link to other subjects to create cross-curricular pathways?





# Discover your school's place in history



Explore how your local area has changed over time using maps, digital tools and fieldwork with **Aidan Severs**

 [aidansevers.com](http://aidansevers.com)

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

There's one concept that unites the geography and history curriculums more than any other: *change*. Whilst this is distinctly a geography lesson, it is important to highlight to children that much of what we see in the world is a result of processes of change over time: geography (both physical and human) is a product of history.

This lesson helps children to notice changes that have occurred in their locality, and to understand why those changes have taken place, as well as to develop their fieldwork and mapping skills.

## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

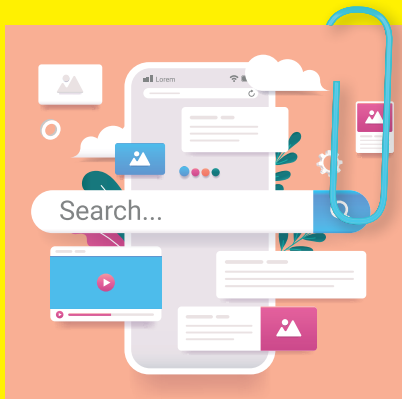
- How aspects of human and physical geography have changed over time
- To use digital/computer mapping to locate and describe changing features of the local area
- To plan fieldwork to observe the changes in human and physical features in the local area



## START HERE

Because we are tackling some of the geography national curriculum's objectives about the local area, you'll have to begin with your own bit of research so that you can really make the most of this lesson plan. Visit each of these websites listed below, input your school's location, and get familiar with the maps:

- National Library of Scotland's online map archive: [maps.nls.uk](http://maps.nls.uk)
- Open Street Map: [openstreetmap.org](http://openstreetmap.org)
- Historic England's Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer: [historiceng-land.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html](http://historiceng-land.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html)
- Historic England's Map Search: [historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search](http://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/map-search)



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | CHANGE OVER TIME

The NLS archive should turn up a number of maps – for my local area there are five maps from 1852, 1895, 1909, 1933 and 1944.

Work out what it is the maps are telling you about how things have changed over time and pick a small number of key changes that you would really like the children to focus on. For example:

- Where there were once just fields, a settlement has grown over time.
- There are now more houses and roads and fewer green spaces.
- There is now a school but the farm next to it

has disappeared.

- A neighbouring village grew too, and joined with our village so there is no longer a clear boundary.

Introducing these maps to the children will be the first part of your lesson. Depending on your resources, you may choose to print out the maps you find or to allow children to use devices to carry out the search just as you did. Ensure children are clear as to which year each map was published, so they can look at them chronologically.

Ask pupils, "What has changed in our local area over time?" They can either write out their answers in their books, or you can have a whole-class discussion.



*“It is important to highlight that much of what we see in the world is a result of processes over time”*

Thankfully, there is archaeological evidence of the things that came before, and there are some great resources that can help us to find them.

The Historic England website is a treasure trove of archaeological evidence, and the two resources listed in the starter activity are brilliant map-related records of this.

Head to the Aerial Archaeology Mapping Explorer – a nicely interactive website – and check if your local area has coverage; not all do. My local area does, and you can see medieval ride and furrow cropmarks and post medieval trackways, enclosures, pits, and spoil heaps, which all hint at the previous uses of the area. The local primary school even has some of these within its grounds.

The Map Search features pins on the map covering listed buildings, scheduled monuments, parks and gardens, battlefields, world heritage sites and even wrecks (there’s one in Filey Bay). This map has full UK coverage, so it’s just a case of finding out what is special about your area. Every historical site on the map has a link to its official list entry which includes a wealth of information – lots of scope for historical research. Website users are also able to add their own photos and comments, so it’s important to check these before children view them.

*Aidan Severs is an experienced educator, consultant and writer who supports schools in improving teaching and learning through creative, research-informed classroom practice.*

## 2 | COMPARING OLD WITH NEW

Next, look at the most up-to-date maps on Open Street Maps (you could also use Google Maps). Ask the children the same question: What has changed in our local area over time? Provide sentence stems to help them articulate the changes they see, for example:

- “Compared to the earlier map, I can see that \_\_\_\_ has increased/decreased over time.”
- “One significant change between the two maps is that \_\_\_\_ has been replaced by \_\_\_\_.”
- “The maps suggest that human activity has led to \_\_\_\_ developing in this area.”
- “Over time, the natural

landscape has changed because \_\_\_\_.”

- “The most noticeable difference between the oldest and newest map is \_\_\_\_.”

As children look at the maps, ask questions that guide them towards the recognising the small number of key changes that you identified when planning the lesson. Make sure you also allow them their own unique findings – they might see something you didn’t, or they may be interested in different aspects of the geography, and this is to be encouraged!

## 3 | BEFORE THE MAPS

The maps we have access to only go back so far in history.

## EXTENDING THE LESSON



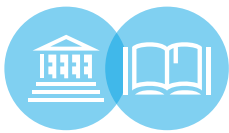
This lesson plan is also a clarion call to plan fieldwork in your local area – geography is out there! Once children have done the mapwork, they will be much more equipped to venture out to look for evidence of the changes they know have taken place.

- Explain to pupils that they are going to use their mapwork as a basis for exploring the local area. The maps they have seen will bring to light things that they previously may have walked past without knowing.
- Allow children to use the maps they have found to plan a walking route in the locality and an itinerary of things they’d like to look out for.
- Before you take the pupils out and about, go yourself – see what you can find so that you’re ready to share it with pupils when you’re following the routes they’ve planned.

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What has changed in our local area over time?
- What has remained the same?
- What have changed more; human or physical features?
- How have humans used physical features to their advantage?





## WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Who did what at the Battle of Hastings
- How to write about them in an engaging way
- How to practise writing skills
- How to bring history to life

# What was it like at The Battle of Hastings?



Investigate one of the most famous conflicts in British history, and have pupils write an account, with **Stuart Douch**

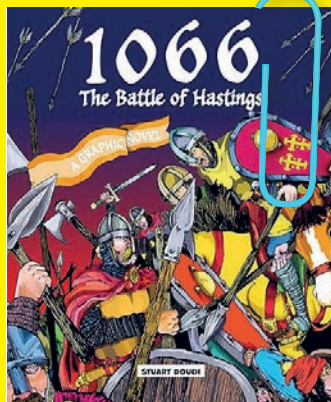
[stuartdouch.co.uk](http://stuartdouch.co.uk) @northlancingbloke

Eyewitness accounts can help us learn a lot about emotions and feelings from any historical event. They can tell us whom people supported, whom people hated and how people felt about anything from getting up every day to fighting a life-or-death battle. This lesson uses my graphic novel *1066 The Battle of Hastings* to illuminate what it might have been like for those on the battlefield. Hopefully, there are some pages and characters which have caught your pupils' interest – they'll help them create a gripping piece of writing.



## START HERE

In order to get the most out of this lesson, it would be great to read the whole graphic novel as a class. Ask pupils to pick out some facts or pages that they found particularly interesting, and then to briefly summarise. You could also divide the class into groups to read different sections and then feed back their findings to the rest of the class. If you don't have access to the whole book, there are some pages available for download at the link on the right, and you can combine this with your existing research into the Battle of Hastings, or task children with using books and online research to find information such as the key players, why the Vikings posed a threat, William's invasion, and some details of the battle itself.



## MAIN LESSON

### 1 | WHAT HAPPENED?

Explain to the children that their task for this lesson is to write an eyewitness account of what happened in 1066. Give them the option of writing a description of fighting in one of the battles against the Vikings, **or** fighting at the Battle of Hastings, **or** being involved in William and the Normans' burning of the land afterwards.

Pupils can choose whether they'd rather be on the 'winning' side or the 'losing' side. Explain that their accounts will need to be in the first person, and what this means. You may

also want to remind them that, since they are writing an account of something that has already happened to their characters, verbs will need to be in the past tense (*I fought... I ran...*).

Begin by asking children to plan some describing words for the setting of their chosen part of the story. They could work individually or in groups. Some important considerations for content include:

- Who are you and what 'side' are you on?
- Look at the graphic novel. What was the weather like?
- What sort of noises or shouting might there have been?
- What could you see?





**“Eyewitness accounts can help us learn a lot about emotions and feelings from any historical event”**

- What were you wearing at the time?
- What were your enemies wearing, what were you going to try to do to them?
- Why were you going to do this?
- What were they going to try to do to you?

Ask them to draft an introduction paragraph that tries to give answers to as many of these details as they can, in full sentences.

## 2 | HOW DID IT HAPPEN?

Next, children will describe the action of their chosen event. Ask the class to consider what kind of language they will need for their descriptions. For example, if they are writing about being involved in the

burning and destruction, which nouns would work well if they were a victim (*home, family, ashes, fire, crime, destruction, cruelty*)? Which would work well if they were a Norman (*house, thatch, torch, tar, ruins*)?

Remind them, too, that nouns are made twice as brilliant by describing them with adjectives (*sharp, shining, trusty, solid, loved, precious, terrible, horrifying*), and that verbs are made twice as fantastic by describing them with adverbs (*quickly, angrily, brutally, mercilessly*).

Recap similes and metaphors, and encourage pupils to try to use both in their descriptions. For pupils who are

confident writers, they can also use onomatopoeia to bring sounds to life (*crash, smash, bang*).

Next, ask children to check the graphic novel (or other research materials) for the progress of the event they are describing. How does the event end? Remind them that they will be working towards this endpoint in their writing.

## 3 | WHAT NEXT?

Once children have described their main events, challenge them to write a paragraph about the aftermath.

For instance, if they wrote from the point of view of a Viking, what would they be doing if they survived at Stamford Bridge?

They might be going home, injured and sore; ashamed at having lost to Harold. If they are writing from the point of view of an Anglo-Saxon, what would they be doing after Hastings?

When pupils have written their pieces, it's time to check some style ideas and re-draft.

Provide prompts for editing, such as: have you used sentences of different lengths? Are your verbs in the same tense throughout? Make sure your work finishes on a clear ending (no cliff-hangers!). Give pupils time to make changes, then you can ask volunteers to read snippets, or even act out some scenes.

**Stuart Douch is a teacher and former headteacher. His first graphic novel, 1066: The Battle of Hastings (£12.99HB, Button Books), is out now.**

## EXTENDING THE LESSON

- Using the glossary from the graphic novel, write and illustrate a handbook to places, people and things in 1066's England.
- Research what William did next to secure his reign of England. Design the first page of a comic book telling this story.
- Write a character dossier of Harold Godwinson and include as much detail from the graphic novel as you can.
- Write a character dossier of William of Normandy and include as much detail from the graphic novel as you can.

**tw teachwire**



Download your **FREE** graphic novel spreads from **1066: The Battle of Hastings** at

**[tinyurl.com/tp-HastingsLP](https://tinyurl.com/tp-HastingsLP)**

## USEFUL QUESTIONS

- **Am I staying on the point of the task?**
- **Is my first sentence interesting, to hook the reader into my piece of writing?**
- **Have I used a good range of punctuation (if not, ask your teacher for help)?**



## MEDIA LITERACY

# Media & Information Literacy TeachKit

**FirstNews**  
TeachKit **MIL**  
Media & Information Literacy

A toolkit to instil essential life skills in your pupils

## AT A GLANCE

- From a leading source of news and news-based learning for children
- Free frameworks created with the Media and Information Literacy Alliance (MILA)
- Schemes of work that slot easily into your timetable
- Teaching packs connected to real, up-to-date news stories
- Editable and adaptable
- Designed to help students become lifelong media interpreters



REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

In a world where anyone can publish anything, our pupils are growing up surrounded by information that is constant, chaotic, and not always credible. They are exposed to news, opinions, and online content from an ever-widening range of sources – including those created or influenced by AI.

Teaching ‘the news’ is a minefield, so teachers need reliable, tried-and-trusted resources that safeguard against misinformation while equipping students with the critical literacy skills to question, evaluate, and navigate the media landscape with confidence.

First News has created a new resource tailored for KS2 and KS3, rooted in the Media and Information Literacy Alliance’s (MILA) five aspirations (be informed, be empowered, be healthy, be socially conscious, be connected) and shaped by Bournemouth University’s theory of change for media literacy.

The First News MIL Frameworks set out the essential knowledge and foundational skills young people need to thrive in today’s information society. Each aspiration is supported by *I know/I can* statements that make media and information literacy explicit. These are systematically addressed through TeachKit schemes of work, with clear learning objectives across the year and fortnightly news-based lessons mapped back to the framework for coherence and continuity.

An impressive collection of related resources on topical news items are there to download including lesson plans, teaching slides and parent guides with additional resources such as vocabulary cards, scenario cards, sorting cards, worksheets, and templates. Taken together, these resources form a powerful package that helps students move far beyond the headline – encouraging them to dig deeper, question

sources, analyse meaning, and develop genuine critical thinking.

Every lesson plan is thoughtfully put together, with guidance to help teachers navigate sensitive or ‘hot topic’ content with care. Clear learning objectives are set out from the start, and all the media and information literacy (MIL) links are made explicit so you can see exactly how each lesson builds your students’ skills. Lessons follow a balanced format, blending starter activities, reading, discussion, creative production, and reflection. Editable PowerPoint slides are included, giving you the flexibility to adapt and tailor the content to your own context and learners. A downloadable parent guide accompanies each lesson, featuring “Ask me what I learnt today” prompts to spark meaningful conversations at home.

The MIL TeachKit is intuitive and user-friendly, giving you instant access to your downloads, saved lessons, and any resources you’ve created. You can personalise your dashboard so it’s tailored to the yeargroups and subjects you teach, while also tracking your school’s network activity. Quick links make it easy to jump straight to the resources you need, and you can seamlessly toggle between expert-written and community-crafted lessons and packs. One of the standout features is the built-in AI tool, which enables you to create high-quality lessons in just two minutes and that’s a real game-changer for busy teachers.

Students need news they can trust – and First News MIL equips them with the essential life skills to become confident, media- and information-savvy citizens. This TeachKit will provide teachers with impactful tools to help support students to question, analyse, and reflect on every form of media they encounter, use, and create.

**teach  
PRIMARY**

## VERDICT

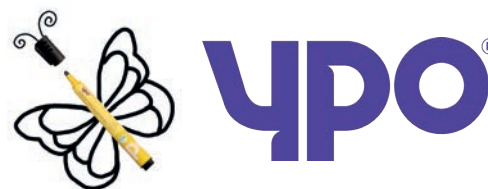
- ✓ Supports students to engage with media and information in healthy, critical, and active ways
- ✓ Encourages students to go from being consumers to interrogators of news and information
- ✓ Empowers young citizens to form informed views and participate fully in society
- ✓ Develops critical thinking so students can make balanced, evidence-based judgements about the information they encounter and use
- ✓ Provides a complete package for building media-savvy classrooms

## UPGRADE IF...

You are looking for practical, ready-to-use tools that bring media literacy to life and help your students look past the headlines, explore issues in depth, and develop the critical skills they need to question, analyse, and make sense of the world around them.

## PHYSICAL RESOURCES

# YPO refillable whiteboard pens



Economical, environmentally responsible dry-wipe markers for busy classrooms

## AT A GLANCE

- Dry-wipe felt-tip pens for everyday whiteboard work
- Easily refillable using specially designed ink bottles
- Made from 90% recycled materials
- Robust and chunky enough to suit hands of all sizes
- Available in a range of colours and nib sizes



REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

I'm old enough to remember what a boon it was for classroom practice when individual dry-wipe boards became available. They were a great way to gauge understanding immediately without having to resort to targeting questions at the usual suspects, or impose the lottery of selecting names on lolly sticks at random. It might seem like a small thing to the uninitiated, but it was so useful to have the whole class simultaneously showing me their proposed answers to questions. Teachers being teachers, they could probably enthusiastically explain a hundred other ways in which they use them in their lessons.

The trouble was, the markers seemed to run out depressingly quickly. It took me back to childhood disappointments of getting a brand-new pack of felt tips only to find them drying to scratchy uselessness after what seemed like just a picture or two.

Similarly, as a teacher, I can remember my heart sinking, not just as my supply of replacement whiteboard pens steadily dwindled, but also as I noticed the frequency with which I was adding to the world's pile of discarded plastic. How soothed my conscience would have been if only we had been using YPO's refillable whiteboard markers!

First things first, they perform as well as any other dry-wipe marker I have encountered. The ink flows smoothly and whatever mark you've made wipes clear easily. The difference, as the name makes clear, is that their ink can be topped up as many as 35 times. That's 34 fewer plastic tubes

heading for landfill for every marker you use. When you think of how many classes they could be used in, that's a huge amount of waste avoided. And don't forget, they're already made of 90 per cent recycled materials to start with. Refilling is easy: open the bottle, pop in the pen, leave for an hour or so. No mess, no fuss, job done.

In a way, that's all you really need to know. Nevertheless, there are a few other features that might catch your eye. For a start, they come in four different colours: black, red, blue and green.

They also offer a variety of nib sizes and styles: chisel, broad, bullet and fine. What's more, these gauges are clearly marked on the outside so that you don't have to scramble through boxes, removing lids, to find the one you want. (Maybe it's just me, but I really appreciate thoughtful little design considerations like this.)

Now don't quote me on this, because I'm sure my quick internet price comparison isn't

foolproof, but from what I've seen, it appears that these YPO pens would be remarkably good value, even if you just used them once, let alone refilling 35 times. To give you some idea, a pack of 50 black fine tip pens is available from just £15.99 + VAT. With refill bottles which can be used up to 25 times, going for around £3 + VAT, it's not hard to see how they make good economic as well as environmental sense. And, at those prices, you can afford to check my figures and work out on a whiteboard how much you might save per pen.

*“They work well, and help you avoid a huge amount of waste”*

teach  
PRIMARY

## VERDICT

- ✓ Effective and comfortable
- ✓ Perfect for classroom use
- ✓ Easy to refill
- ✓ Refill up to 35 times
- ✓ Environmentally sound
- ✓ Great value
- ✓ No mess, no fuss
- ✓ Gauges clearly marked, so no searching through boxes for what you need

## UPGRADE IF...

You want to continue enjoying the benefits of whiteboard work in a way that is environmentally more responsible and economically beneficial.



# 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?

That would definitely be seeing every child smiling, happy and loving learning! In my current role as a primary art consultant, I love to see children get enthused about exploring and experimenting with art tools and materials, talking excitedly about artists and artworks, and developing confidence and understanding as young artists.

## 2 What is your greatest fear at work?

I'm a worrier, so I guess my greatest real fear has always been someone hurting themselves. I also fear hurting myself – I need to come with my own risk assessment! Anyone who knows me will tell you I'm a bit accident-prone, injuring myself in the strangest of ways. I once needed my cheek glueing back together after tripping and trying to protect a tub of snail shells that I'd collected for an observational drawing session – the snail shells survived; my cheek didn't!

## 3 What is your current state of mind?

At the precise moment of writing this I am very happy. I've finished writing my second book, the pressure for that is off and I'm now enjoying lots of new art education-based projects. I've also spent this afternoon in an EYFS classroom, and I find that you can't help but smile when you reflect on the conversations and incidents that happen when you're with a room full of four- and five-year-olds!

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

I think I'm going to go with ultimate wisdom. Whilst it's essential that teachers have their qualifications and a certain level of knowledge, it is unrealistic to expect them to know everything. Primary teachers have to be able to teach across the whole curriculum and it's only natural they have strengths or gaps in knowledge in certain areas.

## 5 On what occasion do you lie to your class?

I'm not sure I would ever advocate lying in the classroom, but I guess I have done when the children I've taught have talked excitedly about Santa or their naughty elves!

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

I know that I say 'right!' a lot at transition times, while raising my voice so everyone can hear and (hopefully) listen to what is coming next. I also know I'm a regular user of the word 'fabulous' in a very enthusiastic manner.

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

Now that's a tricky question; I've been teaching for 24 years! I think possibly writing, creating and videoing a whole-school art curriculum while teaching three days a week is pretty high up on my list of achievements.

It was both a juggle and a struggle at times, but I'm proud of the finished result – a high quality and diverse primary school art curriculum. Through this project, my enthusiasm for art and my teaching skills spilled out of my own classroom and into many, many more. I guess the completion of it, alongside the art resources I created and shared nationwide during lockdown, changed the trajectory of my career.

## 8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

I have to go with my collection of picturebooks. I love them, and the children love them, too! You can't beat a classroom or school brimming with an abundance of high-quality, diverse picturebooks. The possibilities and benefits of a book are endless – to introduce a concept, reinforce one, create a feeling of belonging, or simply just to share and read for pleasure. They are golden.



NAME: Adele Darlington

JOB ROLE: Primary art consultant, author and forever a teacher

EXTRA INFO: Adele is the author of *100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Art*, (Bloomsbury, 2022) and has a new book on the way, called *Primary Art in Action* (Hachette Learning, 2026).



# Noris

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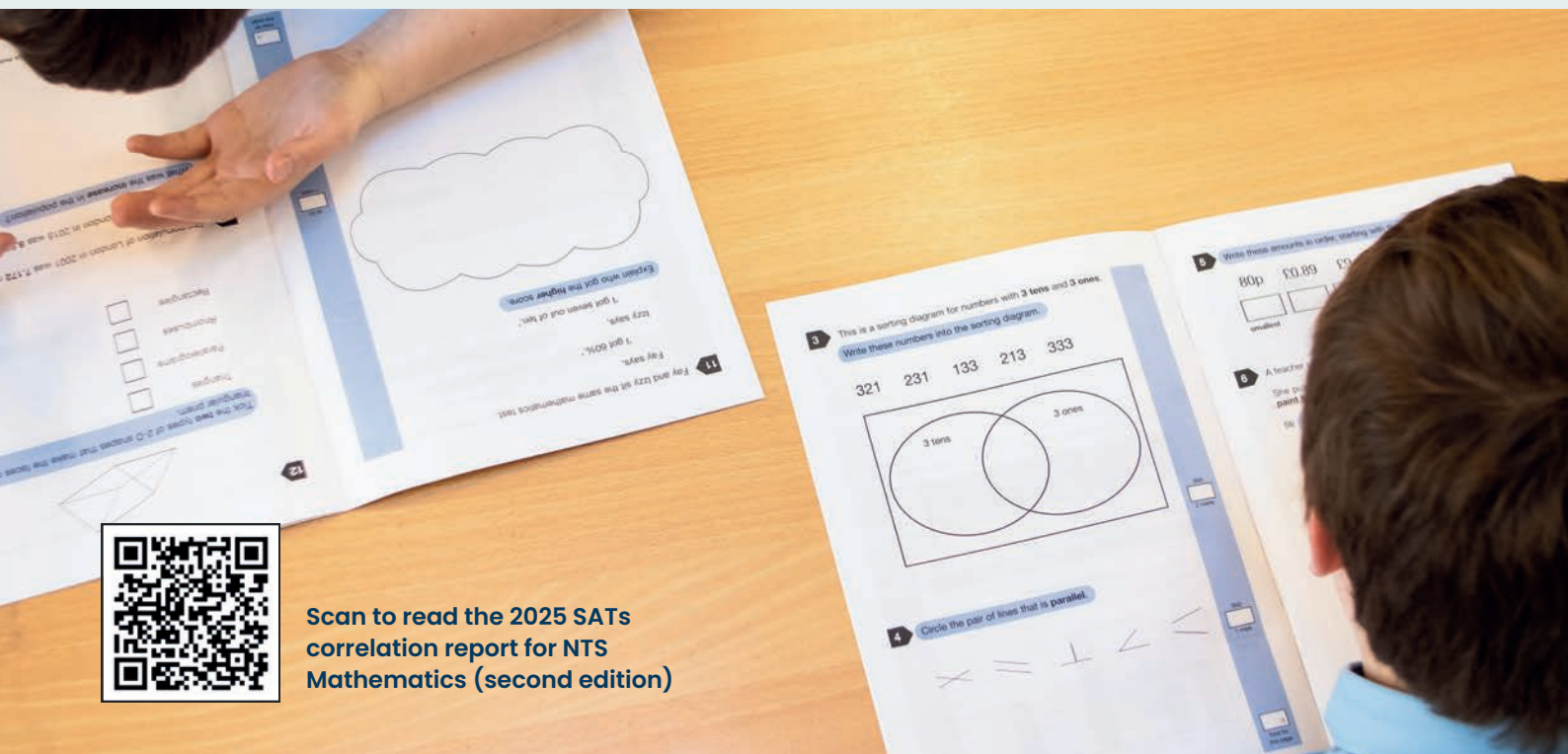


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