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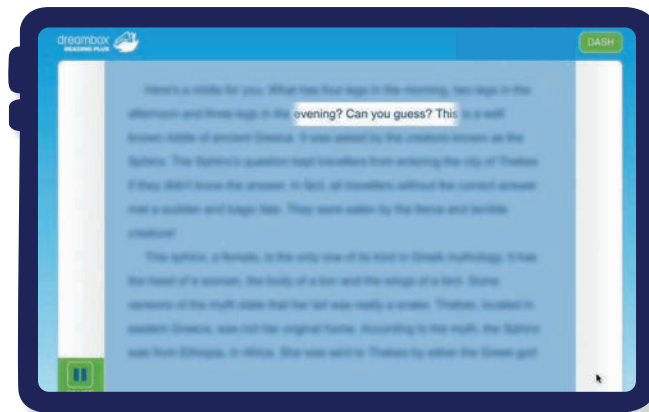
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Hello!



Well, what do you know, Ofsted has done it again. My social feeds and inbox have been flooded with outraged educators over the last week or so, and I can't say I blame them. The goalposts have shifted once again, folks, and nobody's quite sure whether we've jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire or not. Now, that's not for me to say, but your colleagues sure have plenty to talk

about on the topic of the new inspection framework. One such educator is Claire Harley, who has written an open letter to school and MAT leaders across the country, in order to implore them not to give in to Ofsted's apparent encouragement to play the blame game with one another (page 17). In other, somewhat related, news, our leadership section for this issue focuses on how to recruit and, importantly, *keep* your best staff at a time when the rates of teachers leaving the profession are through the roof. Check out what three experts have to say on the matter from page 43.

On a lighter note, we have some fabulous ideas on how to make PE more inclusive (it's not as tricky as it sounds) on page 27, as well as pointers on how to spot a whispering talent – and what that is – on page 35. Our music special this month also gives you a plethora of tips on everything from helping pupils appreciate classical music (page 53) and combining creative subjects with a knowledge-led curriculum (page 58) to managing behaviour in a chaotic practical music lesson (page 63).

If you're focusing more on developing core subjects at the moment, our six-week plan on states of matter for KS2 is a perfect way to tie in celebrations for British Science Week (page 22), and we have a very special interviewee on page nine, who is sure to add a bit of celestial sparkle to your lessons...

Charley

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

Don't miss our next issue, available from 31st March

POWERED BY...



JO AUSTEN explains how focusing on spatial reasoning can improve maths attainment

“There is strong evidence linking children’s spatial reasoning to later attainment”

p36



KATE WILLIAMS shares her favourite activities for helping pupils get over their fear of poetry

“Games can serve as a fantastic building block, unleashing ideas”

p82



ELLIE CHETTLE CULLY presents an inspiring MFL lesson using stop motion to memorise language

“Rhythm and rhyme really seem to make this kind of learning stick”

p92

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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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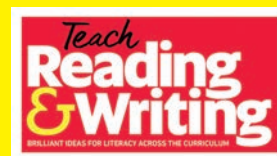


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Breaktime

News | Interviews | Ideas | Resources | Research

Get your steps in with Joe Wicks

The Body Coach Joe Wicks is encouraging schools across the UK to get moving and join the TCS Mini London Marathon in schools.

The 2025 TCS Mini London Marathon takes place between Tuesday 22 April and Friday 2 May, and schools can join in by encouraging their pupils to run, jog, walk or wheel two miles in their school setting. The two miles can be done in one day or split over a number of days, and pupils can celebrate afterwards with a trophy awarded to all settings taking part. Schools will also get assembly packs and WWF-UK educational resources, including information on how to get involved in the charity's Prescription for Nature campaign, which encourages people to get their daily dose of nature and to spend 20 minutes a day outside to boost mood, reduce anxiety and raise confidence. For more info, and to sign up, visit tinyurl.com/tp-MiniMarathon



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



BUILD SELF-ESTEEM

Premier League Primary Stars has released the latest of its free resources, this time supporting pupils in celebrating their strengths and fostering self-confidence. The resources are KS2-suitable, and include team-building activities. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-PLselfesteem



STRONGER SHORES

Check out these curriculum-based KS2 teaching packs consisting of lesson plans based around climate change, coastal erosion, coastal defences and careers, and contain videos, PowerPoint presentations, quizzes and more. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-StrongerShores



BRING STORIES TO LIFE

HUE Animation Studio helps children develop storytelling skills through stop motion animation. HUE's free resource pack includes comic strip templates, a storyboard, and backgrounds, all perfect for engaging classroom projects. Download now at bit.ly/4hH91ZW

→→→ TODAY'S **TOP** **RESOURCES**



Cohesion and cohesive devices

This Real Grammar resource pack provides everything you need to get your Year 5s creating cohesion within paragraphs. Pupils will learn how to use a variety of cohesive devices and explore short explanatory texts linked to the science and geography curriculums. The downloadable materials include teaching slides, worksheets and games. Visit tinyurl.com/PlzCohesion



Say it with me: Kindness

The Oxford Children's Word of the Year for 2024 is 'Kindness', with 61 per cent of children surveyed by Oxford University Press (OUP) choosing the word. OUP's research, which surveyed over 6,000 children aged 6-14 across the UK, showed that mental health was a reason for some children selecting

'kindness', as well as the ongoing global conflicts. Some of the children commented: *It's always important to be kind as a lot of people struggle with their mental health*, while others noted: *At the moment with all the conflict and the issues the world faces, kindness is a good way to go.*

To read the full Oxford Children's Word of the Year report, head to tinyurl.com/tp-WotY24



Tim Peake

Retired test pilot and astronaut

1. What was primary school like?

I remember it as a fun experience. It's obviously about planting the seeds of interest in education, but it's also about growing as a person, and building friendships.

2. When did you first decide you wanted to go into space?

I think of my two Italian colleagues, and Luca, in particular, wanted to be an astronaut since the age of four. Samantha had had her sights set on it since at least her early teens. And I think that's because in Italy they had role models – astronauts who were members of the Human Flight Programme – whereas in the UK we didn't have that. Helen Sharman had flown to the [Soviet space station] Mir in 1991, but that was very much a one-off, commercially sponsored flight. So I didn't think of travelling to space until I saw an advert in my 30s. Luckily, I was already a test pilot, so I wasn't completely unfamiliar with what was going on in space.

3. Tell us more about the BBC's Live Lesson for Science Week

Being able to show pupils a fun lesson that includes professionals sharing their knowledge is a great resource. Teachers have so much to pack in, and it can be hard to link everything to real-world examples, but being able to understand why you're learning this maths, and how to solve problems in a world where the answers aren't in the back of the book, is essential.

Tim Peake is taking part in a KS2 BBC Live Lesson for British Science Week on 10 March 2025. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-TimPeake for more info.

Barking up the right tree

The UK's first-ever School Dog of the Year Award is here! Now open for nominations, the award has been launched by the All-Party Parliamentary Dog Advisory Welfare Group (APDAWG) and the National School Dog Alliance (NSDA), and invites schools across the country to recognise their canine companion's extraordinary achievements. Schools are encouraged to nominate their dog for the award, which will be presented at a special ceremony at the Palace of Westminster in summer 2025. The winning school will receive a trophy, together with a fantastic prize pack for their dog, including treats and a bespoke training package. Runners-up attending the awards ceremony will receive goodie bags for their school and their dog. Nominations are open until 30 April 2025, and can be submitted via the National School Dog Alliance website at tinyurl.com/tp-SDotYA



Only **33%** of seven-year-olds say they enjoy reading*

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WORLD MATHS DAY
Help shift pupils' perceptions of maths to more positive thoughts by getting them all

involved in World Maths Day on 26 March 2025. Visit tinyurl.com/tp-WMD

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6 ways to improve speech and language

Tap into the endless creativity of words, and help pupils to express themselves with confidence

1 | CRACK OPEN THE THESAURUS

Get your class making connections while building their own thesaurus. Key words from that week's teaching can be placed in the centre of a large sheet; two minutes, house points (or just bragging rights) at stake, and go! How many related words can each table come up with? Remember, your focus here is words and their meaning, not spelling. You want pupils to be confident in using new vocabulary and not worrying about the formalities. Another great resource is *The Etymologicon* by Mark Forsyth. Not a children's book but full of word connections, which older learners should find fascinating.

2 | WRITE WITHOUT CORRECTION

Research from The National Literacy Trust has found that only one in three children enjoys writing in their free time.

This is a concern, as writing (alongside reading) is inextricably linked to speech. Free writing, where pupils can record whatever they want, however they want, is an effective way of creating a love of language through a love of writing. Let the children know that this work will not be marked or criticised, but rather, is to be shared and celebrated. Ten minutes regularly is all that is needed.

The aim is for pupils to feel free to go where their thoughts take them, while not being encumbered by expectations of spelling, handwriting or punctuation.

3 | CONSIDER A LAMDA COURSE

LAMDA leads speech and drama courses that can be offered at primary level with one of their qualified tutors. These classes offer nationally recognised qualifications, but usually come with a 'club' rather than 'lesson' feel. The classes teach children to deliver poetry and prose publicly. As well as engaging with texts that they select for themselves, children will develop important public speaking skills and confidence.



HANNAH DAY is a teacher in the West Midlands with a specialism in art and design.

4 | GET VERBAL WITH VERSE

Poetry, through its rhythm and structure, is a pleasure to read out loud, allowing the sounds and shape of each piece to come to life. *The Lost Words* is an illustrated book, using terminology no longer commonly known by children as starting points for poems. This hugely successful collection was then followed by *The Lost Spells*. As they all relate to nature, consider linking poems such as *Bluebell* or *Catkin* to the seasons. Worryingly, The National Literacy Trust this year reported that only 49 per cent of children are engaged with poetry. With many benefits beyond speech development, all children should be assessing this evocative art form.

5 | SHOW AND TELL

Ask children to bring in something they would like to share with the group. Get them to explain what the item is, to talk thorough a demonstration, and explain why they want to share it with the class. Because they are focused on what they know and love, it offers them a natural talking point, which in turn will build confidence as they realise they have lots to say.

6 | GET THEM SIGNING

Songs are a great way to get children talking; this is why we have so many nursery rhymes. What's more, there's evidence to show that literacy outcomes improve if you sing while also looking at the words. So why not crack out the karaoke? Let pupils take turns selecting a song per day (vet them first, of course, for lyrics and suitability). Each half term you'll have covered each pupil's favourite track, while also consolidating vocabulary, practising pronunciation and generally mastering language.



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‘Earning your stripes’? It’s a fallacy

It’s time to stop counting years served to elect school leaders and start really evaluating talent...

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In many schools, the unspoken rule is clear: before stepping into a leadership role, you must ‘earn your stripes’. This typically involves years of classroom experience, taking on smaller responsibilities like leading a key stage or subject, and slowly climbing the ladder. The belief is that experience in teaching equates to excellence in leading. But here’s the uncomfortable truth: it doesn’t.

Education has a leadership problem. The obsession with time served, rather than identifying genuine talent has, in many cases, created a conveyor belt of often uninspired and underqualified leaders. It’s time to rethink how leadership in schools works, and move away from rewarding endurance over impact.

For decades, many schools seem to have operated on the idea that leadership is a reward for survival. Stick around long enough, navigate the pressures of teaching, and eventually you’ll move up the ladder.

Consider the traditional pathway: a classroom teacher starts by picking up extra responsibilities, progressing through roles like head of year or key stage coordinator. Over time, they move into middle leadership and eventually into senior roles. This process, though it sometimes does allow those with talent and aptitude to progress, too often ignores whether individuals actually have the vision or the skills needed to lead; it’s simply about ticking boxes.

Yet time served is, on its own, a terrible predictor of leadership ability. Some teachers spend years honing their craft in the classroom, but

lack the strategic thinking, people management, or decision-making skills that leadership demands. Others spend years moving between roles further down the ladder without truly getting the chance to demonstrate their capacity to lead.

And then there’s the issue of likeability. Schools often mistake personal charisma for leadership potential, promoting those who are well-liked over those with the ability to inspire change. Take that one teacher who’s always organising social events and chatting at lunch. Their visibility can see them climb the ranks, even if other colleagues have a greater ability to drive whole-school improvement. Meanwhile, a quieter teacher only in their second year of teaching might have innovative ideas, but is overlooked because they’re ‘too inexperienced’.



Leadership isn’t about how well you teach; it’s about being able to empower others to teach well. It’s about having a vision for improvement, being willing to make tough decisions, and fostering an ambitious culture. These skills are not a natural by-product of teaching, but rather require a whole different focus.

Some of the most promising leaders are found early in their careers. A teacher in their second or third year might already be inspiring colleagues, driving innovation, and articulating fresh ideas. But schools often tell these individuals to wait their turn. By the time they’ve ‘earned their stripes’, their enthusiasm may have dulled, or worse, they’ve left the profession entirely.

Core subjects also tend to dominate leadership pipelines, because those from larger teams have more opportunities to evidence their impact. In contrast, teachers in smaller subjects, like drama or art, are often overlooked for senior roles, regardless of their potential.

To create better leaders, schools must stop equating leadership with longevity and focus on nurturing talent early. First, we need to separate teaching from leading. Great classroom teachers should be able to stay in the classroom and be rewarded for their expertise without being pushed into leadership roles at which they may not excel (nor enjoy!).

Second, leadership pathways must focus on potential, not just experience. This could include fast-track leadership programmes, mentoring schemes, and targeted development for teachers with demonstrated impact, regardless of years served.

Finally, schools must rethink how they evaluate leadership candidates. Promotions should be based on evidence of influence and effectiveness, not popularity. What has the candidate achieved? How have they inspired others? Do they understand what great leadership looks like?

To build the next generation of leaders, we must create systems that value ability over waiting in line. Our schools and pupils deserve nothing less. **TP**

Hannah Carter writes as The Honest Educator, and is an experienced headteacher and executive coach, specialising in school improvement.



FOR THE THRILL OF LEARNING



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approach, and the skills they develop in their other ventures can directly enhance their teaching. Schools should be looking at these teachers not as a flight risk, but instead as an asset with untapped potential.

One of the biggest challenges facing schools today is the rigidity of the traditional working structure. Teaching is still largely built around a model that assumes full-time, long-term commitment, with little flexibility. But this is increasingly at odds with the aspirations of modern teachers, many of whom are looking for a more dynamic career that allows them to pursue multiple interests. Schools need to consider ways to introduce more adaptable working conditions, such as flexible scheduling or part-time options.

There is also an opportunity here for schools to reframe the narrative around teacher retention. Rather than focusing solely on keeping teachers within the confines of traditional roles, schools could consider how to support them in their broader professional journeys. Offering career development opportunities that acknowledge and incorporate teachers' external skills could be one way to achieve this. Schools could, for example, create partnerships with businesses or encourage teachers to bring their outside expertise into the curriculum.

It is also important to acknowledge that not every teacher will pursue a long-term career in education. Many who develop successful side-careers eventually transition out of the classroom altogether. But rather than viewing this as a loss, the education system should see it as part of a natural evolution. Similarly, if teachers feel supported enough in their dual careers, they may be more likely to stay, contributing their skills and experience for the benefit of the school community for much longer before they move on.

Ultimately, all this presents an opportunity for the education system to evolve. Schools must move away from outdated notions of what a teacher's career should look like and embrace the reality that today's educators are multifaceted professionals with a wealth of skills to offer. By doing so, they can create a more flexible, supportive environment that meets the needs of teachers and, ultimately, benefits pupils in the long run. **TP**

Andy McHugh is a secondary school teacher and the founder of Teacher Writers, a service that supports teachers who want to write.



Teachers are no stranger to the side-hustle

Policy leaders need to understand that many of us are multi-hyphenates, and get on board...

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The modern teacher has evolved. Traditionally, teaching was a single, all-encompassing career. Some would take on some additional work, perhaps marking exam papers in the summer, but their primary focus remained in the classroom. However, the landscape has shifted. Increasingly, teachers are finding themselves juggling multiple roles throughout the year. They are no longer just teachers; they are writers, consultants, business owners, and content creators.

I don't view this shift as negative, necessarily. But it does raise important questions about how the education system responds. The idea of teachers pursuing side-careers may have once been viewed with suspicion, seen as a distraction from their primary duties. Now, it is becoming a reality that schools and policymakers can no longer ignore. Instead of resisting the change, the education system must find ways to adapt, and, what's more, benefit from it.

The reality is that as well as making a few extra quid, teachers are actually seeking something that their day-to-day roles often fail to provide; namely validation, progression, and a sense of autonomy. Our profession, at times, can feel stagnant, with limited opportunities for advancement and increasing pressures that leave little room for creativity. In contrast, writing educational resources, running a tutoring business, or creating content online can allow teachers to find a sense of fulfillment that is too often missing from today's prescriptive teaching practices.

Now, it is easy to assume that a teacher with multiple roles might be less committed to their pupils. In reality, the opposite is more likely to be true. The key to embracing this change lies in shifting attitudes at both a leadership and policy level; teachers who engage in outside work are likely to be more motivated, more inspired, and more well-rounded in their

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

A letter to... *School and MAT leaders*

Although Ofsted's new framework is encouraging us to play the blame game, we should fight back and not get sucked into its twisted world, says **Claire Harley**...



When Ofsted introduced changes to its inspection framework in 2019, we all panicked a bit, and a flurry of reactionary measures resulted in all sorts of new initiatives in schools. To survive the newest switch (don't get me started), we may need to be more structured.

You may well read the rest of this letter and think it's all common sense, but bear with me. Sometimes, in the heat of the moment, it can be tricky to pin down exactly what the best next step is – especially when faced with yet another pivot that appears to just make things harder.

Here's an honest summary of what your SLT may already be thinking, but aren't quite sure how to express...

The new framework is just confusing enough to make it tempting to hand out assignments to individual leaders, who you can then hold to account. But furthering a high-stakes blame culture makes an already difficult job nearly impossible. This is particularly true for smaller schools, where one person will have to carry the burden of leading on multiple aspects of the framework.

Supposedly, the changes are meant to move us away from single-word judgements, but it would be so easy to end up getting dragged into a system where we instead have single-leader judgements.

The conclusions the powers-that-be have drawn from their 'big think' are meant to throw out the single-word gradings that damn or elevate schools in the eyes of colleagues, parents, and the wider community. But I think there's a real danger of the new system just encouraging SLTs to label individual staff within a school with these damning or elevating terms, instead.

Whilst a school will no longer 'require improvement', a vice principal (for example) who is, under the new guidance, the one responsible for attendance, will have their area of leadership labelled as 'needing attention'.

“A high-stakes blame culture makes an already difficult job almost impossible”

So, rather than a whole team being responsible for a reductive judgement, it will fall to a single person. This has the potential to impact how this leader is perceived in school – and in the worst cases, by MAT teams and heads. In reality, no area of school leadership is ever a one-man band; it's far too complex for that.

For the sake of your staff, leave the paperwork alone. Yes, there are new thresholds for success and new key terminology that might be useful to drop into inspections, etc. But consider what actually

needs changing before you delve in, so you can protect yourself and your team. Your SLT need to be walking in corridors, supporting teachers, and being present for pupils; educators need the space and capacity to actually educate.

I implore you to take your time and only do what is absolutely necessary in terms of change. Staff want to be involved in the process, and a collaborative approach is going to be much more helpful in wading through the sticking points (of which there are always many) in the new framework.

At the beginning of the year, you sat down with your senior leaders, shared your vision, and set out a course for the 12 months ahead, and beyond. Don't let Ofsted take all that hard work away from you. Rather than starting again to try and better align with the new framework, we should all consider the extent to which our intentions from that initial planning are still the best bet for colleagues, pupils, and the school community.

The excessive complexity of this new framework runs the risk of creating a longer tick sheet of school priorities. Our hopes for the 'big listen' were that we'd have a new framework to support our wellbeing, and that of our colleagues (and pupils!). Alas, it was not to be. As usual, the responsibility of advocating for the wellbeing of school staff again falls to you, our leaders, and although this is mightily unfair, we can all pitch in to support one another. Don't lose heart – we can do this.

From Claire



Claire Harley is a senior leader and history teacher in the East Midlands.

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UNDERCOVER TEACHER

Our anonymous educator gets something off their chest

Being a supply teacher can be intimidating at the best of times, let alone if we don't even know where the toilets are...

A late call leads to a late arrival. And a late arrival means a cursory orientation and a hasty walk up to the classroom where I'll be covering for the day. I have a positive mental attitude. I'm ready for it. But I'm absolutely clueless.

I've been given some planning for the day ahead, but to be quite honest, curriculum content and pedagogy are the least of my worries – those are the bits I do know.

As the day goes by, the questions pile up. Not questions from the children, but those in my own mind: *what time is break? What do I do when a child misbehaves? What's this assembly the kids keep mentioning? And they keep coming: where's the staffroom? Where's the staff toilet? What time does school finish?*

Like I said: clueless. The security of knowing all the logistical information that you have when you work full time in a school is non-existent when you're a supply teacher, and you're at the absolute mercy of the children to tell you everything (unless you're lucky enough to be teaching a class with a TA – the dream).

What if the children don't know the answers to your questions? I was given three separate times for the end of lunchtime during one supply stint. Or what if they're trying to pull the wool over your eyes? "I'm always allowed to go on the laptop whenever I want...". Or what if their perception doesn't quite match reality? It's hard to tell, and as a supply teacher, you can be left to make things up as you go along, which inevitably leads to the children telling you you're doing it wrong. Not a great look.

But it doesn't have to be like this.

Supply teachers needn't be turning up to a school they've never been to before and then spending the day in the dark with regards to how things work. Schools could, and I'm sure many do, provide all of this information quite easily. And it should be

mandatory, in my opinion.

An information pack – it mustn't contain too much, so as not to be overwhelming – giving an overview of the essential information would mean supply teachers could enter the classroom

well-prepared for the day ahead. It should contain:

- Timings of the day: break time, lunchtime, the end of the day, as well as lesson timings (crucial in secondary, and valuable in primary, where children are creatures of habit)
- Class profiles: SEND information, behaviour information, seating plans – anything that helps a teacher coming in cold to get to know the class as quickly as possible
- Whole-school behaviour management strategies – a quick-reference guide that can be used in the event of behaviour issues rather than a whole policy, which the cover teacher will inevitably not have time to wade through
- School routines – an overview of anything done regularly that will allow a supply teacher to be consistent with everyday approaches.
- A map of the school, including where staff toilets and the staffroom are – anything that makes the supply teacher that little bit more comfortable and able to teach well (nobody wants to be trying their best to get through someone else's lesson plan while desperately running

through a mental map of what little of the school they've already seen, scanning for the toilets).

Armed with this information, I'd have been a lot less clueless and far better prepared to make a success of the day.

Oh, and if whoever books a supply teacher could let the agency know what the parking arrangements are before the cover arrives, that would be most appreciated, too. I ended up parking illegally while I worked out how to get through the gates and into the car park... **TP**



“The security of logistical information is non-existent when you're a supply teacher, and you're at the mercy of the children”

The writer is a supply teacher in England.

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Skills, and THEN SOME

Using tech to help SEND pupils engage creatively with the world around them is paying dividends beyond the classroom, says **Alison Eason**

As a SEND teacher, seeing a non-speaking child's eyes light up the first time they use a text-to-speech app to write and tell a story makes my day. Watching one of my pupils create their own masterpiece in the style of Van Gogh using a digital painting tool is just as magical.

At Forest Lodge, Chalgrove Primary School's additionally resourced provision (ARP), we use technology to make learning exciting and engaging for children with complex needs. With the right tools, I've seen pupils' confidence soar as they gain new skills, develop independence, express their creativity and learn to navigate the world in their own unique way.

Getting creative

Our pupils love to use basic computer programming software to design their own animations. The technology we use, ScratchJr (scratchjr.org), helps children to develop key IT skills while maintaining a focus on the creative aspects of the work.

Children can create their own colourful scenes and characters online and make up stories to go with them. A current favourite is the underwater world, where they can design fish, sharks or any other sea creature and use simple coding commands to make their characters move around the screen. Pupils are able to experiment with different colours or features in their animations, and can even record their own voices and sound effects for each character in the story, which they really enjoy.

We've found that programming software can help children understand mathematical theories such as co-ordinates, while strengthening problem-solving, pattern recognition, and lateral thinking. It's a simple and exciting way to capture the attention of a neurodivergent child, who might otherwise struggle to focus when the classroom is noisy or busy.

Independent communication

There are some fantastic tools around that can make it easier for non-speaking children, or those who have speech and language needs, to communicate with their peers and teachers.

We have one child who has significant challenges with pronunciation. While his close friends and staff know and understand him well, he tended to stay silent when we had visitors or unfamiliar people in school.

He now has a tablet and uses an app packed with symbols and visual prompts from Widgit ([widgit.com](https://www.widgit.com)) to communicate independently. He can quickly find the relevant symbols to type simple sentences and greetings such as "Hello," "My favourite subject is science," or "I love swimming," for example, with the text and images instantly appearing on the screen for others to see. He's much happier to talk to a wider group of people, now, without the need for an adult to explain what he wants to say. It's been a real boost for his confidence, independence and social-emotional development.

Another child with dyspraxia, who found it difficult to write with a pencil, used the symbols online to type his own Greek myth, with the visuals key to the story. When we covered Icarus, vocabulary like 'feathers', 'flight' and 'sun' appeared as symbols above the text on screen. This allowed the child to choose his own words and tell a detailed story. His confidence shone through after sharing his work with teachers and friends.

We support the literacy development of dyslexic pupils with screen reading accessibility tools too, which read text aloud and highlight words to help children track the story.

Rewarding positives

Some pupils with complex needs, such as ADHD and autism, may be impulsive or easily distracted, which can sometimes disrupt the flow of the class. A little friendly competition can go a long way when you want to encourage and reward a child, or reinforce positive behaviour.

Our pupils have their own avatar displayed on the whiteboard, and we reward them throughout the day with Dojo points ([classdojo.com](https://www.classdojo.com)) for all sorts of things, from staying focused to helping others or washing their hands.

The children get so excited when they are recognised for their achievements. They know when it happens as they hear a familiar 'ping' and their avatar does a funny dance.

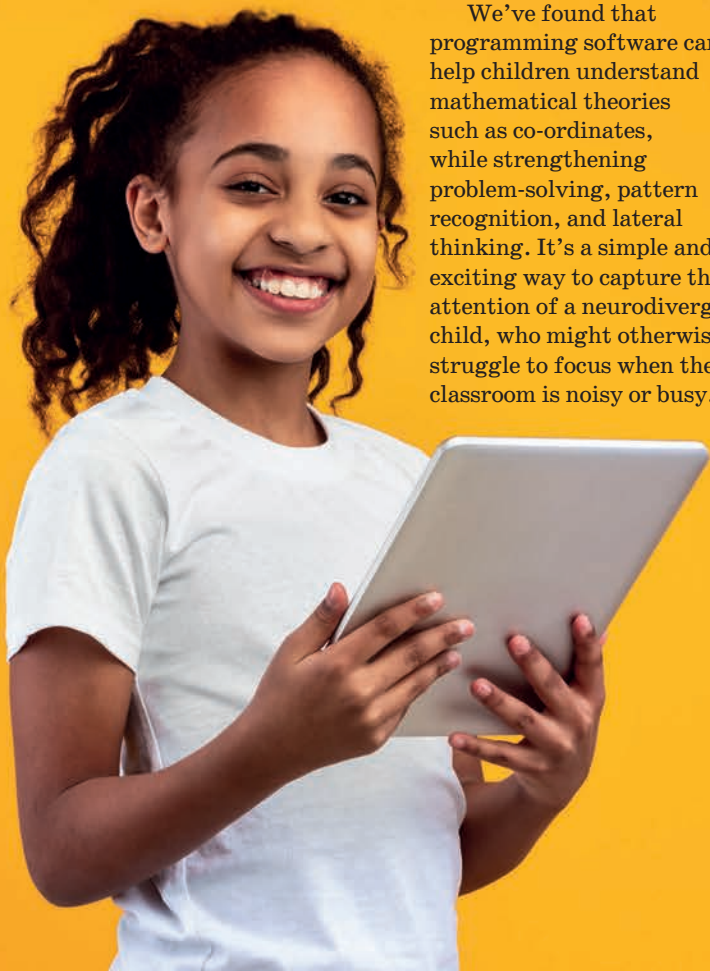
Getting instant feedback in this way helps to engage pupils in what they are doing. They can see how their actions lead to the rewards, too, which boosts self-esteem and positivity, and provides a stimulating incentive to keep the children motivated. **TP**



Alison Eason is head of the Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) at

Chalgrove Primary School, and winner of Nasen's 2024 Changemaker of the Year award.

 @AlisonEason2



MEDIUM TERM PLAN

KS2
SCIENCE

CHANGING STATES

MATTHEW LANE

Solid, liquid and gas. The three states of matter provide a host of different investigations for children to get their hands on. The following lessons start with foundational knowledge, before giving you five different investigations for your class to undertake. The investigations do not need to be completed in order, so you can be flexible depending on what staff and equipment you have available. None of these experiments needs specialist or expensive equipment, either, although they can make a little mess – and cause brain freeze. Whilst I've described six 'lessons', you could fill 12 hours of teaching time, as many of the experiments take a little while to complete and then have a short recording activity at the end. Essentially, you can structure this plan however works best for your class.

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When a solid turns into a liquid it is called melting. The reverse process is called freezing.

The temperature at which a solid material melts is called its **melting point**.

Why is there water on the outside of a cold glass?

- "I think the glass is wet because water leaked out of it."
- "Perhaps the ice has melted onto the outside of the glass."
- "The water vapour in the air has turned into droplets of water that we can see on the glass."

Melting chocolate

Temperature	Time	Observation
Room	1 min	
Room	2 min	
Room	3 min	
Room	4 min	
Room	5 min	
Room	6 min	
Room	7 min	
Room	8 min	
Room	9 min	
Room	10 min	
Room	11 min	
Room	12 min	
Room	13 min	
Room	14 min	
Room	15 min	
Room	16 min	
Room	17 min	
Room	18 min	
Room	19 min	
Room	20 min	

Melting ice

Time	Mass	Volume	Temp	Notes
0 min				
1 min				
2 min				
3 min				
4 min				
5 min				
6 min				
7 min				
8 min				
9 min				
10 min				
11 min				
12 min				
13 min				
14 min				
15 min				
16 min				
17 min				
18 min				
19 min				
20 min				

third state of matter (slide 19). You could then complete the final assessment activity, where children place the substances explored in the lesson on a spectrum of solid to liquid to gas (slide 20).



Assessment

Can pupils define a solid and a liquid? Can they articulate irregular materials such as a sand or foam and their state of matter?



WEEK 2

Learning objective

- What is the structure of a particle?

This lesson is about building on and expanding the children's existing knowledge (background on slides 22-27).

First, explore what a solid is. Summarise how it keeps its shape, and that being rigid or malleable does not necessarily predetermine whether something is a solid or not. Allow time for children to write down their definitions and copy the diagram (slide 29) or stick in the picture version. Then explore liquids, looking at the associated vocabulary such as compressed and what this means (slide 31). Finally, discuss gas (slide 32), being careful to illustrate the difference between gases and liquids, e.g. one can be compressed and one cannot. You may wish to discuss plasma if your class are interested, especially given the recent advancements in fusion power (slide 33).

Children can then apply their summary learning by creating models of solid, liquid and gas states using counters (slide 34). End the lesson with

Download your FREE accompanying PowerPoint and worksheets at

tinyurl.com/tp-StatesMatterMTP



WEEK 1

Learning objective

- How can we sort materials?

This first lesson is about building a foundation of knowledge and dispelling any misconceptions. Depending on the age of your class, they may have covered some of the concepts before. First, watch the BBC Bitesize video (slide 8 in downloadable PowerPoint – link above) on different states of matter.

Pose the question: sand can be poured, so does that make it a liquid? Is it the same as orange juice or honey (slides 9-10)? Discuss misconceptions and introduce vocabulary such as

particulate and viscosity (more common misconceptions are considered in the *What do you think?* questions on slide 11). Allow time for children to craft their own definitions of solid, liquid and gas (slides 12-13).

Next, ask children to plot 14 different materials (slides 14-15) onto a grid to show if they think the material is a solid or a liquid. You could either bring in all the different foods and household items (such as jam and cleaning spray) for children to handle, or have them complete the table from the pictures.

After completing the table, discuss jelly and shaving foam (slides 16-18). Are they solids or liquids (remember they can easily change shape and volume)? End the lesson by introducing gas as the

pupils writing their own definitions of the terms *matter*, *compress*, *volume* and *property* (slide 35). You could add other words of your own to this list if there are terms children muddled during the lesson.



Assessment

Can you draw a model for the particles in a solid, liquid and gas?



WEEKS 3-6

Learning objective

- Why do materials change state?

Lesson three, or rather three lessons. This sequence is a set of five different investigations that explore how materials can change state. The running order below is one example, but the investigations are not sequential, so can be swapped about as staffing and time allow. There are a few introductory slides on the PowerPoint you may wish to share with your class before starting the series (slides 36-43).

Investigation 1 – Melting chocolate

Time needed: 20 mins for the investigation and 40mins for de-rigging and writing.

How better to get children excited and engaged than by putting chocolate in front of them? Read through slide 45, introducing how the process of melting and tempering works, then start the investigation (slides 46-50).

First, get pupils to observe a square of chocolate floating in a bowl of water (make sure each group has water at a different temperature, so results can be compared). As you will be using boiled water, you may want a second adult for safety. I also recommend buying some small foil pie or cake cases for this (or you can fold your own from tin foil). You may want to try this out at home first, especially if using cheap chocolate; some budget own-brand chocolates are surprisingly difficult to melt. Given that each group only needs one square, you could stretch the budget for a better-quality chocolate.

For the investigation, set your little chocolate-filled boat on the water. Record the starting temperature of the water, then ask children to observe the chocolate every two mins, making note



of what happens to it using terms such as *unchanged*, *changed shape*, *making a puddle* and *completely melted*. It is important that all children use the same terms and quantify what these mean before and during the investigation. Allow time at the end for collating data on the class board for each group and get the children to copy it down (or provide a printout – see **11 in the downloadable resources** for a table). Children can then write a few summary sentences.

other ice cubes to melt more quickly. Give the children stopwatches or put one up on your board. Children can observe every five mins using the given descriptive language. They could also try measuring the ice cubes in millimetres to give quantified measurements.

After completing the investigation, children should summarise their observations. See slide 55 for prompts.



Assessment

Can you see any patterns in your collected data?

Investigation 2 – How do different materials melt?

Time needed: 35mins for observing and 25mins for writing and setup.

This activity is akin to watching paint dry for adults, yet somehow children love it. Over 35 minutes, watch how ice cubes made from squash, vinegar, cooking oil and milk melt, and make notes (slides 51-55). I recommend putting food colouring or glitter in the water so you can tell it apart from the vinegar. There is a recording sheet, with suggested descriptive terms, in the download (**12**).

Note: you will need to prepare the ice cubes in school. Vinegar melts rapidly and oil needs a very low temperature to freeze. The first time I did this, I made the ice cubes at home and assumed they would stay frozen in a cool bag during my 15min drive to work. I was wrong and it took ages to get the smell of vinegar out of my car!

For watching the ice cubes melt, I recommend using a paint pallet, so the melting liquids don't mix and cause

Investigation 3 - How do we freeze ice cream?

Time needed: Less than one hour. May need more depending on age of children or adult support available.

Yes, we are making ice cream in the classroom – and it won't be chaos! This is an experiment you may have already tried at home. All you need is: milk and sugar; two zip lock bags (one bigger than the other); ice and salt; and gloves. Put the sugar and milk in the smaller bag and ice in the larger. Then, put the smaller bag in the bigger one and cover the ice with salt. Gently shake the bags so that the salt (and then salty water) covers the ice, causing the ice to rapidly melt. Explain that the rapidly melting ice takes energy from its surroundings to change state, and that it is not the ice making the milk cold and creating ice cream, but rather the melting ice taking



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heat from the milk, which in turn makes it freeze and creates ice cream. You will need gloves to handle the bag for this experiment, as the rapid melting can cause cold burns on exposed skin. Get children to work in pairs so they can share the effort of shaking (depending on various factors, this can take around five minutes). Once made, the children can share the ice cream out and enjoy (see **slide 57** for a video tutorial).

Of all the experiments in this set, this is one you will want an extra adult help with. My class worked in pairs, but trying to monitor and manage 16 concurrent experiments is better with help.

Note: You need just the right amount of shaking to form the ice cream. Too little and the ice doesn't mix with the salt properly. Too much and the milk turns to froth and cannot form ice cream. I used shop bought ice and table salt. You will need a lot of salt to make the reaction work with the ice: keep pouring salt into the ice until it is totally covered in a thick layer. You may want to try this experiment out at home first to ensure success. Or don't, and lean into the scientific discovery. Some of my pupils were pleased with their very cold milk shake.



Assessment

Can you explain why the milk turned into ice cream? (See **slide 60** for prompts.)

Investigation 4 – What is condensation?

Time needed: 20-30mins for observing and writing.

This short experiment has a good connection with prior learning in geography. Start by revising the water cycle and its different stages (**slides 62-63**). Next, complete a diagram of the water cycle to revise the vocabulary involved in process (**slide 64, and worksheet I4**). After the diagram, ask children to write a short summary of the process to further rehearse using the scientific vocabulary (**slide 65**).

Now for the experiment (**slide 66**). All you need is a mug, cling film and hot water. You could do this with a glass or clear plastic bowl if your school has a stock in its DT cupboard. Pour the boiled water into the container and cover with cling film. Shortly, droplets

will form on the inside of the film. Ask children to carefully tap on the film to make it 'rain'. This experiment works better in a cold classroom to encourage the condensation formation. Make sure to remind children not to touch their hot containers of water!

Complete the summary writing activity (**slide 67**) and then discuss misconceptions about the processes (**slide 68**) to complete the session.

Investigation 5 – Where did the bubbles come from?

Time needed: Five mins for observing and 10 mins for writing. You might need more if experimenting with different sponges.

Another short observation experiment. This one is good to slot in if other investigations have taken up lots of extra lesson time and you need to balance out your timings over a week.

This investigation is a simple one: all you need are sponges and bowls of water. Start the lesson by posing the question "Why do bubbles appear when a sponge is squeezed under water?" (**slides 69-71**). Take ideas and address misconceptions. Then, ask children to try it for themselves, squeezing a dry sponge under water and noting their observations. Then ask them to repeat the experiment with a damp/wet sponge and note the differences. You could

extend this experiment by trying different types of sponge and noting the difference in bubble size or amount when compared to the sponges' structures.

Ask pupils to summarise their learning in a short writing activity (**slides 72-73**). Children could do this using the prompt sentences or complete it as a gap fill (**slide 74**).

This is a fun unit of science that has children applying and developing their observational skills and addressing their misconceptions about the world around them. All of these are tried and tested experiments in my own classroom over the last few years, so they will (hopefully) be a big success in yours.



Assessment

Can you explain where the air comes from to make the bubbles? **TP**



*Matthew Lane is a teacher from Norfolk. His book **Wayfinder, on how to lead curriculum change (£17, John Catt), is out now.***

theteachinglane.co.uk

@MrMJLane

the_teaching_lane

Confidence **TRICKS**

Inject the power of positive thinking into your classroom and help improve pupils' self-esteem says **Sam Marsden**

As with so many traits, confidence is one the origins of which are hard to pin down. Some pupils will be lucky enough to have family members who have instilled assertiveness in them from day one, whereas others might not be from such self-assured backgrounds. But confidence can be a useful tool in learning, so if you have more shy or humble pupils, these simple techniques could be just what you need.

Mistakes are OK

Work at normalising mistakes and failures; a process some pupils may fear. Try and dissolve the dread of failure as much as you can with reassuring comments, such as "Failure is part of the learning process and anyone who has had any success in life will tell you they've failed many times" and "It's not the failing that matters, it's how you respond to it".

Promote 'yet'

If a child says they can't do something, or that they don't understand, ask them to try adding the word 'yet' to the end of their sentence. This will help reinforce that learning is a process, and encourage a growth mindset. For

example: "I can't spell this word, yet", "I can't do this sum, yet", "I can't score a goal, yet".

Encourage open communication

You likely communicate with your pupils hundreds of times throughout the day, but there are some more targeted approaches you can take to give them greater agency. Try asking them at the end of an activity how they felt it went, and encourage them to express themselves without fear of judgement. Listening to their thoughts and experiences will help them to feel valued. You can also encourage self-reflection by asking them about what they learned, what they thought they did well, and how they think they could have improved. Reflecting back on longer periods of time also works; you can ask pupils to write, or talk, about how much they have progressed in the last six months, or year.

Break down larger tasks

Feeling overwhelmed can knock our confidence and

make us doubt our abilities, even as adults. Try breaking larger tasks into smaller chunks so that pupils feel confident in tackling the work. Encourage them to be pleased with themselves each time they achieve a small milestone. Be positive about the small wins, and this will add up gradually over time.

Believe in your class

If you believe in the children, trust them, and have confidence in them, this will help them to have belief, trust, and confidence in themselves. Pupils can be sensitive to non-verbal cues. Try and find something positive in every pupil, through which you can make a connection. Focusing your energies on their strengths will help them to do the same.

Be a role model

Be confident in yourself. If you show how to handle difficult situations and how to respond to mistakes positively, this will spill out and benefit your pupils, too.

Give pupils choices

When you can, offer pupils a choice, even if it's only small. For example, let the children take it in turns to choose a book for story time, or to decide

the activity they'll do (from a pre-approved list) if they finish work early. This can help to empower them, which in turn builds confidence.

Encourage individuality

Remind your class often that we are all different, and that this is a good thing! Get to know pupils' strengths, interests, passions, and struggles. You can introduce some books that celebrate diversity and empathy to help spread the message, too. Find a list at tinyurl.com/tp-empathybooks

Try drama games

Adding some theatricality into the classroom can be a great way to help pupils express emotions. Improvisation games can be particularly helpful with building trust, intuition and voice. Drama is also a great tool to help pupils connect with one another, and to feel a part of the group. You can find some easy-to-use drama games at tinyurl.com/tp-DramaGames

Building pupils' confidence doesn't happen overnight, but by sowing the seeds throughout all your lessons, one day they might germinate, and help your pupils in every area of their life. **TP**



© Rosalind Hobley

Sam has been a drama teacher for 20 years, and is the author of 100 Acting Exercises

for 8 – 18-Year-Olds, Acting Games for Improv, Drama Games for Early Years, and Acting Exercises for Creative Writing.

Fair GAME

Don't let the prospect of inclusive PE put you off – some small adaptations can improve outcomes and enjoyment for the whole class

RACHAEL HALL

Does every child access PE in your school? If the answer isn't a resounding 'yes', it's time to ask why. Physical education should be a subject where every child, regardless of ability, thrives, belongs, and enjoys the benefits of movement. Yet, for disabled children, PE can often be a source of exclusion instead of joy. But this doesn't have to be the case.

You already use adaptive techniques every day in your lessons, so why hesitate when it comes to PE? Well, often it's about subject knowledge – as primary teachers we're not specialists in every subject, and as such it can be tricky to know how to adapt every lesson perfectly. But imagine how a child might feel if they are excluded from a class activity,

watching their friends from the sidelines. PE is about more than physical fitness; it's about inclusion, confidence, and connection. And inclusion doesn't need to be complicated; sometimes, it's as simple as thinking outside the box.

Here are some ideas I've found work a treat in my

lessons. I hope they help you, too.

1. A class effort

Adapted PE doesn't have to just be for disabled pupils. There are plenty of unique skills and enjoyment to be found in activities that everyone can participate in.

“Your pupils are the experts when it comes to what works for them”

Try sports like wheelchair basketball (tinyurl.com/tp-ParaBasketball) or adapted rugby (tinyurl.com/tp-ParaRugby). Not only do they give disabled children a chance to shine, but they also allow the entire class to explore new skills. Activities like crab football (tinyurl.com/tp-CrabFootball), blindfold games, or sitting volleyball are fun, inclusive, and adaptable, too. Pair students together to promote teamwork and peer support.

2. Adjusted environments

Small changes can make a big difference. Use larger balls, lighter bats, or catching mitts to adjust activities. Modify the playing area to suit the activity, making it larger or



smaller as needed, and tailor your approach to focus on individual achievements, not just the outcome of the game. You can also make nets smaller or larger for all to achieve.

3. Creative equipment

You don't need expensive gear. Everyday items can work wonders: cones, tennis balls, cardboard ramps for rolling balls (boccia), or even parachutes. If you want to invest, consider sensory-friendly tools like trampettes or slam balls. These add variety and excitement to sessions while being accessible for all.

4. Ask the experts

Your pupils are the experts when it comes to what works for them – disabled children know their abilities better than anyone. Ask them what they feel comfortable doing and let them lead where possible. Their insights will surprise you, and the sense of ownership they gain will be invaluable.

5. Include everyone

Adapt existing activities so everyone can participate.

Doing some gymnastics? Think about alternative ways to travel, such as shuffling on the floor, rolling, or sliding. Playing throwing games? Use targets that accommodate different ability levels (think different heights, sizes, and distances). Engaging in dance? Let the children pick the music and create movements that work for them.

“Small adjustments and an open mind can transform PE”

You'll learn; they'll gain

Through all this, I imagine you'll find that disabled children are often far more resilient than you realise. By giving them a chance to participate fully, you're not only

helping them develop skills but also fostering their self-confidence and sense of belonging. They'll challenge themselves and inspire their peers in ways you may not expect.


For higher-ability children (whether disabled or not), assigning leadership roles can build respect and empathy. Coaching or supporting their classmates gives them a unique insight into the challenges others face, creating bonds and a new appreciation for inclusivity.

Inclusive PE doesn't have to be daunting or time-consuming. Small adjustments and an open mindset can transform lessons into experiences where every child feels valued. Remember, the main objective isn't competition but fun, enjoyment, and participation.


So next time you're planning a PE lesson, think creatively and include every child. You'll quickly realise that it's not just the children who benefit – you will, too. After all, there's no better feeling than seeing a child's confidence soar simply because you gave them a chance to shine.

5 GAME IDEAS

 Try orienteering or simple, partner-led challenges to develop listening, teamwork, and communication skills. There are some ideas on YouTube at tinyurl.com/tp-BlindfoldGames

 Use Velcro balls and tri-golf (a more energetic version of golf, specifically for primary children) to create engaging throwing games.

 Parachute games are always a hit, and inclusive for standing or seated participants. The Scouts has a few ideas on its website, here: tinyurl.com/tp-Parachute

 Adjust net heights and rules (see tinyurl.com/tp-ParaVolley) for seated or wheelchair play.

 Let the kids create their own yoga routines, focusing on simple, accessible movements. Find some ideas from WheelPower.org here: tinyurl.com/tp-AdaptiveYoga

By making small changes like these, you'll create a PE environment where every child feels included and capable.

For more ideas and resources on short and easy inclusive activities and games for all, the Paralympics GB website is a great starting point: [getset.co.uk/equal-play TP](https://getset.co.uk/equal-play-TP)



Rachael Hall is the sports coach and PE lead at Lewis Street School in Manchester.



5 REASONS TO TRY... Rocket Phonics and Reading Planet

Books and resources to support literacy and ensure reading progression for all children



30 SECOND BRIEFING

From wordless and first-words books to titles for fluent readers, Reading Planet ensures you'll have a reading programme at the right level that appeals to all children, including learners with SEND.

1 CREATING FIRM FOUNDATIONS

The pace of the Rocket Phonics teaching and learning programme is more gradual than that of many others. It introduces two sounds rather than four per week, giving pupils with SEND more opportunity to 'keep up rather than catch up'. The whole-class approach of Rocket Phonics means that SEND children are included in the 'input' part of the lesson, and can apply what they have learnt at their own level. We have guidance in our online subscription and documents available for extra support when children are falling behind.

2 ENGAGEMENT AND INTERACTION

Rocket Phonics digital Big Books make learning phonics an immersive, and highly visual experience. New grapheme-phoneme correspondences are presented in context, making them meaningful and memorable. Online games in the Big Books are a particularly fun way to engage SEND pupils, and they can be played again and again to reinforce learning and confidence. In our online libraries, learners can also play audio (which syncs to the text) and undertake simple self-marking comprehension quizzes which they can complete at their own pace and level.

3 A TOTAL LITERACY SOLUTION

We can also provide termly assessments, gap-analysis and



Contact:

Visit: hachettelearning.com/reading

Email: primary@hachette.co.uk

Phone: 01235 400 555

interventions through our assessment platform PiRA (Progress in Reading Assessment) and Shine. PiRA allows teachers to generate diagnostics, addressing areas learners find more challenging. Shine provides both individual and group gap-analysis and links to resources providing interventions to support teachers addressing specific areas in reading and other skills. Used in conjunction with Reading Planet, they provide a total literacy solution.

4 FOR RELUCTANT READERS

With dyslexia-friendly fonts and graphic novels, our Reading Planet Astro series, edited by children's author Tony Bradman, provides exciting dual-banded reading level books to help children get hooked on books. Lower reading levels are combined with age-related interest levels to create fiction and non-fiction that is accessible and appealing. Plus, the first 24 books in the series are highly decodable, ideal for phonics practice and revision. Astro also includes a range of fun mini-series for children to enjoy, with gripping themes from dangerous dragons to spooky schools!

5 CPD TRAINING

Finally, we can provide the perfect starting point for schools in the form of a day of CPD training with phonics expert Abigail Steel to provide a solid foundation for all staff in successful Rocket Phonics teaching, covering subject knowledge, teaching in practice, and leadership and assessment, with additional half-day courses available to ensure continued success, including a course tailored to supporting SEND learners.

To trial Rocket Phonics, Reading Planet or assessment resources, contact our team via email on primary@hachette.co.uk or by calling 01235 400 555.

KEY POINTS

Rocket Phonics and Reading Planet can be used with assessment platform PiRA and Shine to support interventions

CPD training with author Abigail Steel is available to help schools implement the Rocket Phonics approach

We provide a range of additional courses to support different needs, with more planned for 2025

Request additional information on using Reading Planet resources to assist SEND children by contacting primary@hachette.co.uk

A unique space **FOR SEND**

A bit of creativity, plus a little bit of elbow grease, has transformed an out-of-date space into a haven for pupils with additional needs

GAVIN HAMILTON



INCLUSIVITY FIRST

As a nation, we are seeing an increase in the number of children identified as having additional needs. At Shipley CE Primary School, 21 per cent of our pupils are on the SEND register and 5.6 per cent have EHCPs. Both numbers are above the national averages, and both are set to rise further. However, establishing effective SEND provision is a complex process, and like many schools across the country, we have faced a few hurdles including a tight budget, challenges to recruit specialist staff, and the need to grow our own knowledge. But our vision was clear: create a dedicated, nurturing space where children with communication and interaction needs, including autism, for whom the mainstream classroom was not appropriate, could thrive.

Our journey began with a bold decision to repurpose our no-longer-used ICT suite into a bespoke SEND

provision, named The Orchard. The project was made possible thanks to our Trust, the Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT), which helped us secure additional funding.

CPD

Our adaptive teaching programme includes a centrally driven CPD strategy informed by the EEF's five key principles of good-quality SEND ([tinyurl.com/tp-EEFSEND](https://www.tinyurl.com/tp-EEFSEND)). Sixty staff across the Trust have been trained, and we now have a cascade system within our schools, where each colleague learns from the others.



Stage 2, with a more traditional learning setup.

The two spaces are unique in their sensory-aware design, too, including designated spaces for circle time, which help children develop their self-awareness and regulate their emotions, Widgit visuals to develop communication skills, and gentle lighting for a calm and nurturing space. One room has colour, smell and texture themes throughout the week for the children to explore, while also establishing a sense of routine. We saw this as an ongoing journey and worked closely with an educational psychologist and the local authority to continually enhance The Orchard.



GETTING STARTED

The transformation required careful planning to find cost-effective solutions. For example, we repurposed unused furniture and fundraised through our Christmas and summer fairs to earmark additional money for the project. To maximise space and resources, The Orchard has two rooms, which offer two different provisions tailored to the varying needs of our children: one room for early years pupils, which features hands-on, interactive learning, and one for Key

GO OUTDOORS

Over the summer, we renovated and built The Orchard Garden, creating a turf-covered area, which provides a unique environment for sensory-attuned outdoor learning.

BUILDING EXPERTISE

We worked incredibly hard to integrate the new space within our wider school community, which helped us to bring parents along on our journey. To achieve this, we reviewed and enhanced our professional development opportunities to include additional training on intensive interaction, sensory diets and profiling, and the use of visuals, alongside a whole-school focus on inclusion strategies supported by the EEF. This has been crucial in upskilling all our teachers and support staff to feel confident in meeting pupils' needs, but also so that our families and children are confident and supportive of their work. Our team visited and learned from other schools as part of this training, considering how their approaches might work within Shipley as part of a

community-driven approach. We also used the space to practice flexibility within our curriculum. Some of the best ideas for support have come from our children, and we wanted to really listen and understand their interests. We honed this approach by creating a flexible structure for each day, allowing for different learning tasks and activities, remaining supported by a reassuringly predictable structure. This utilises overarching themes or topics that provide a balance of functional skills development and key national curriculum areas.

SPEAK OUT

We focused on using this space for pupils to share their own ideas and engage in independent learning, surrounded by staff who made them feel seen and valued.

“Our vision was to create a space where children with communication needs could thrive”



CELEBRATING PROGRESS

Whilst SEND success can be difficult to measure and requires a different or additional set of standards, we use the Autism Education Trust (AET) framework for assessing pupil wellbeing, engagement, and overall happiness. This helps us to understand our pupil voice and set appropriate challenges through identifying individual learning priorities and developing unique progress scales in key areas such as social skills and independent living. Whilst academic benchmarks are still important, we've prioritised these non-academic milestones that better reflect our pupils' developmental journeys.

We are proud that The Orchard has already had a profound impact on the teaching and learning outcomes for all our pupils. For example, there has been a marked reduction in classroom disruptions, greater attendance, and improvements

in the wellbeing of both pupils and staff.

We have also seen changes in the social and emotional development of our pupils, with many demonstrating newfound confidence and engagement across the curriculum.

LOOKING AHEAD

We'll continue growing, especially to develop our sensory curriculum and integrate our learning as part of a whole-school approach. We're working closely with our local authority to secure additional resources.



NAOMI AND EMMANUEL AIGBOJE - JACHIN'S PARENTS

“[Jachin's] speech is improving, his ability to socialise has improved too, thanks to the specialised and inclusive environment provided by The Orchard.”



QUDRAT SHAH - SHAFI'S GRANDFATHER

“We have been absolutely amazed by the great improvements Shafi has made since joining The Orchard.”



SARAH HYLAND - BEAUX'S MUM

“[The] spacious and quieter environment helps, along with a higher staff-to-child ratio to give Beaux the support he needs. He is definitely enjoying school more.”



Gavin Hamilton is headteacher at Shipley CE Primary School in West

Yorkshire, part of the Bradford Diocesan Academies Trust (BDAT).

shipleyprimary.org.uk

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-Wales High School

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How I do it

Explore the effects of thermal energy by making delicious s'mores in a pizza box oven

LAURA MINTER AND TIA WILLIAMS

Science is like a superpower. Everything we know about the world, and our existence in it, is all thanks to scientists. And exploring outside adds to the fun. That's why we decided to get hands-on with this pizza oven project, upcycling elements from the recycling box to create sumptuous s'mores, and investigating the scientific principle of changes in states of matter at the same time.

You will need:

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Pizza box | Plastic wrap |
| Scissors | Biscuits |
| Foil | Chocolate |
| Glue | Sticks |
| Marshmallows | |



To begin, measure and mark out a one-inch (2.5cm) border on the lid of your pizza box. Score along three sides of the border, leaving the side closest to the hinge of the lid intact. Bend the cardboard back to create a large, door-like flap. Line the inside of the box with foil and glue in place. The reflectiveness of the foil will help

heat up the inside of the oven when the sun is shining on it.



Line the bottom of the pizza box with black paper, placing it over the foil; you don't need to glue it down. This will help the oven retain heat. Cut a piece of plastic wrap, larger than the square cutout of the lid. Stretch it so there are no creases and tape down along all the sides inside the lid. This will also help trap the heat from the sun in the oven.



To make the s'mores, break the chocolate into chunks and cut the marshmallows into small pieces. Make a biscuit sandwich with marshmallows and chocolate layered inside. You could assemble your treats in the classroom, or even outside, camping-style. Can children predict what will happen to the soft marshmallows and chocolate when heat is applied? What do they know about states of matter that they can apply to this situation?



Place the s'mores into the solar oven and close the lid, propping the flap open with two pieces of dowel or sticks. The foil on the underside

of the flap should now be hovering over the plastic-wrapped hole in the lid of the pizza box, with the s'mores underneath. Take your oven into the sunshine. Position the oven so the foil-covered lid is facing the sun; the light needs to reflect off the foil and into the box.



Check your s'mores every 10 minutes until the chocolate and marshmallows begin to melt. The science behind this is all to do with thermal energy (otherwise known as heat energy). This energy is produced when there is a rise in temperature that causes atoms and molecules to move faster. The foil reflects thermal energy the same way it reflects light, which heats up the air inside the box, melting the chocolate and marshmallows in the s'mores.



Laura and Tia are crafters, mothers, and writers. Their book, *Outdoor Science* (£12.99, *Button Books*), is out now.

 @littlebuttondiaries

KEY INFORMATION



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How to spot whispering TALENTS

Identifying untapped potential in your pupils requires leaning into what a little nurturing might reveal, says **Aidan Severs**

What is a whispering talent? I hear you ask.

Well, put simply, it's someone with potential, but who is not yet performing highly; someone who, with the right training and opportunities, will flourish and achieve at a high level.

The term comes from George Anders' book on recruitment: *The Rare Find: How Great Talent Stands Out*, and it's a concept we can apply in the classroom. Are there pupils in your class who have the potential to do really well, but who are currently not achieving what they might be capable of?

Perhaps there are; but how would you know?

If whispering talents exist in our classrooms, and we're serious about helping every child to achieve their potential, we need a way of identifying them. So, how might we do this?

Rasmus Ankersen writes that, "Measuring people's performance is the wrong way to approach the task, and it's especially likely to overlook talent that whispers."

Current performance – test results, work completed in lessons – is not what will point us towards future successes. A child not yet achieving their potential is easy to overlook, precisely because their current output isn't exceptional.

Stephen Francis, the head coach at MVP, the Jamaican running club that has produced many of the world's fastest sprinters, says "I look for [athletes] with the greatest development potential."

It's this developmental potential that we need to spot in the children in our classrooms.

"To spot real potential you must be able to look beyond [current performance] and identify the complex, multi-faceted qualities that help someone learn and keep on learning, to break barriers and to work beyond inevitable

plateaus," writes Ankersen.

So, what are those qualities? What are the values, the attitudes and the ways of working and thinking that we might glimpse in children if we really start to look? What sort of mindset might these whispering talents have, and what might motivate them?

Recently, I got to work with a school that wanted to nurture pupils with great development potential.

The staff decided upon the following qualities as key indicators of children who might be whispering talents:

- Is ambitious
- Possesses a belief that they will succeed
- Displays high levels of effort
- Has a hunger for learning
- Appears to learn at a quicker pace
- Is willing to learn from mistakes
- Shows resilience when things are hard
- Always goes the extra mile
- Demonstrates attention to detail
- Seems to have an inherent ability
- Holds a long-term view of achievement
- Is creative and innovative
- Possesses a problem-solving mindset

When using such criteria, it's important to remember that it's likely a child might only display this potential in a single subject. The above traits may not be visible across all subjects. We should be vigilant in all subjects, making sure

that we don't just prioritise talent-spotting in maths and English, and giving any child who shows promise the chance to shine.

You'll have noticed that I used the phrase 'some of these qualities' in the last paragraph. It would be rare for any single child to display all of the listed qualities.

Realistically, you might identify a number of them as being present in a child, but not all of them. Indeed, the qualities from the list that a child identified as a whispering talent doesn't display might be their areas for development – the things that, if developed, will enable them to go on to achieve their potential.

And it's not just the whispering talents we can identify. The same criteria can also be used to look for every child's relative talent – the thing they are best at. It might not be the case that they will ever be world-class in that particular area, but it might be the thing they eventually get their best GCSE grades for, the thing that brings them the greatest pleasure and wellbeing in life, or the start of their journey into a career.

Talent is everywhere. Where is it in your classroom? Which children could be excelling, but are not yet doing so? Have a go at seeking them out, so that you can really begin to nurture and develop their potential. **TP**



Aidan Severs is an educational consultant with over 15 years of teaching experience.

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Coming THROUGH!

Can't go over it, can't go under it... the primary curriculum may be busy, but we can still work to put spatial reasoning at the centre of maths, says **Jo Austen**

Curriculum time and space is precious and is, quite rightly, contested ground. Indeed, when the new government's ongoing curriculum and assessment review put out its recent call for evidence, it seemed that one area of widespread agreement was that the primary curriculum is overcrowded. Maths is no exception, but one area that should at least retain its current weighting is spatial reasoning.

There is strong evidence linking young children's spatial reasoning capability to later attainment in mathematics (Gifford, 2020). Despite this, the former government went ahead and removed shape, space and measure from the EYFS Early Learning Goals in 2021, risking this crucial area being de-emphasised in early years teaching and learning. It therefore feels particularly important that its already limited position in the maths curriculum is not reduced. Beyond this, we need to work smart and weave opportunities for spatial reasoning into the wider curriculum. Here are five top tips to make this happen at your school.

1 Review and revisit

As teachers and school leaders, we need to be constantly aware of the difference between learning and performance. In the short blocks of time allocated to shape and space in many curriculums, children may be extremely successful, but this does

not mean they have learned anything yet. The new skills and knowledge need to be revisited at spaced intervals throughout the year and the best vehicles for doing this are short retrieval quizzes, starter activities and homework tasks.

“There is strong evidence linking young children's spatial reasoning capability to later attainment in maths”

Throughout longer blocks of work on topics such as place value, fractions or decimals, I'd still hope to see spatial reasoning questions popping up each week outside the 'main' part of daily lessons.

2 Use wet playtimes

Wet playtime often means sitting everyone down and sticking on BBC iPlayer. However, a little bit of preparation can help us take advantage of the rainy playtimes that will inevitably come along. Whatever boxes of construction materials you have (LEGO, mixed wooden blocks, straws and Blu Tack, etc.) can be preloaded with wet play challenges, ready to deploy when needed. Can pupils build a pair of giraffes... a climbing frame... a staircase? Constructing things shouldn't just be for EYFS and KS1 either; any KS2 classroom will be improved by a box of buildable bits!

3 Play games

All primary teachers will have a bunch of whole-class games they like using to fill those odd few minutes here and there. Why not include a few spatial reasoning focused games amongst your options? Two of my favourites are

connections to maths outside specific lessons? Spatial reasoning actually turns up in several other subject areas, providing valuable further time for some

Crocodile Crossing and Shapes Bingo. In any class with a carpet divided into some kind of grid, you can place crocodiles at various points and challenge children to guide each other from one side to the other by giving precise instructions. Play two versions with different rules: one where children can simply step left/right and another that insists upon children making half or quarter turns before further forward movement. Shape Bingo works like normal bingo, but using shapes instead of numbers. You can then call each shape by describing its properties. It's a very simple game and a great way to get children visualising shapes and recalling crucial knowledge.

4 Cross-curricular links

We're usually very good at recognising opportunities for reading and writing across the wider curriculum, but how often do we make

essential concepts and skills.

In art and design, the national curriculum for Key Stage 1 includes the aim to develop techniques using shape, space and pattern. In English, teaching prepositions of place allows us to further practise positional language such as “on top of”, “next to”, “underneath” and so on. Physical theatre activities in drama are a great way to get all children thinking creatively about shape and space, using their bodies to make part of the setting



or a given character. There is a navigational aspect to the geography curriculum in both Key Stage 1 and 2, too, with opportunities to use compass directions and to describe the location of something with relation to something else

(“The palace is to the west of the lake but to the east of the forest”). Finally, part of the computing curriculum requires children to solve navigational challenges, applying logical thinking to create algorithms and

debug codes that aren’t working yet.










5 Improve subject knowledge

Teaching maths well is not easy, and primary teachers are not always subject specialists. If we improve our own knowledge of spatial reasoning, we can take advantage of spontaneous ‘teachable moments’ that occur throughout the year. We’re much more likely to ask children “Do you think we’ll all fit on that bus or should we wait for the next one?” on a school trip, or challenge them to pack a box of resources as efficiently as possible, if we ourselves have a secure understanding of why these things are useful learning opportunities. The best resource I know for improving EYFS and KS1 teachers’ pedagogic subject knowledge in this area is the Early Childhood Maths Group’s Spatial Reasoning Toolkit, which is free to download from their website (tinyurl.com/tp-SpatialToolkit).

The NCETM has a

Essential vocab

Being able to accurately describe different spaces includes using some specific terminology, including:

-  Location
-  Shape
-  Properties
-  Movement
-  Orientation
-  Composition
-  Decomposition
-  Symmetry
-  Scaling
-  Perspective

very useful Early Years progression chart for shape and space, which is also free to download at tinyurl.com/tp-ShapeSpace. Teachers of older primary children should start with these too, before delving into their year group’s section of the NCETM’s Primary Mastery Professional Development materials (tinyurl.com/tp-NCETMcpd), which offer clear, detailed explanations of each ‘small step’ of learning. **TP**



Jo Austen is a lead practitioner in East London, focused on teaching and

*learning. His book on maths teaching, **Small Numbers, Big Ideas** (£16, John Catt Educational), is out now.*

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The who and what OF PUPIL DATA

Knowing your class inside and out is truly a teacher superpower. But how can you utilise that information to improve your practice, asks **Richard Selfridge**

Picture the scene: it's a busy week mid-term, and you've been asked to take some time away from your class for a day. You want to give whoever is going to be taking over the key facts they need to know about your pupils. But what will they be?

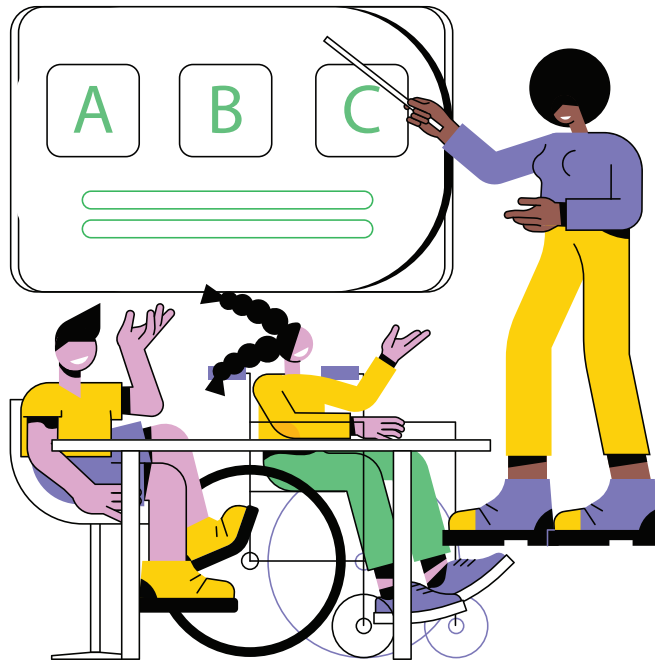
The answer to this should help you to understand what pupil data you really need. By thinking about all the information you'd leave for a cover teacher, you can create a summary of your class's requirements. Ideally, the summary will be on one sheet of A4, so that anyone teaching your class is absolutely clear what the children need to help them get the most out of their time in school.

You should also have a plan for what stage your class is at in any given lesson, so that anyone teaching them has all the key information they need at their fingertips.

Who sits where?

This may seem obvious, but making sure that you've got good information to help you decide where to put everyone in the classroom, and how to make sure that each child is supported and – as much as possible – focused on learning, is a must.

Most of this information will be based on your knowledge and observations of the children. Very little, if any, of your reasoning needs to be written down, although you might make some short notes about certain choices.



Who needs what?

For some children, you need to note key information. Who has glasses (and often forgets or opts not to wear them)? Who is left-handed? Who's younger or older? Who has any sensory needs? Who needs support focusing? Who needs a reading partner or a maths buddy? Online seating plan tools will usually let you colour-code demographics or contextual information. Include anything that you know will help you, and a cover teacher can then more easily keep the class focused on their learning.

What challenges?

Your one-page summary should list the areas you have identified as being potential barriers to learning for your class. Is it persistent chatting causing disruption? Misunderstandings of the

material? Or perhaps some pupils require additional learning aids? Think about which children are getting on well, and which might need more support, and you'll have your starting point.

Which data?

Attendance has clearly become a much bigger focus in recent years for good reason – if pupils aren't in school, they likely aren't learning what we want them to. Your school's attendance analysis should help you to identify any children who have been absent for substantial chunks of time, and your curriculum overviews should give you a good idea of missed learning.

You should also know which of your pupils has spent significant amounts of time out of class, and the reasons why. Analysing this will help you to work out

which areas absent children might need more help with.

If possible, you should also have an indication of pupils' attitudes to learning – who is trying (and not trying) to learn? Finally, use the data you have on whether pupils have learnt what their previous teachers have wanted them to learn. Look at their EYFS profile scores, phonics scores and Key Stage 1 data. If they are in Year 5 or 6, what was their Multiplication Tables Check score? Does your class need to dedicate some time to developing speaking and listening? Would it be beneficial to have more of a focus on core knowledge? Should you revisit topics taught earlier in the school more regularly?

Finally, you need to ask whether it would be useful to go back over your analysis and update your seating plan or class summary. Once you've done that, make sure both are at hand whenever you – or anyone else – works with your class. **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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2



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4

Solve curriculum woes

There's a lot of talk about the importance of sequencing the curriculum, but how do you do it well? *Sequencing the Primary Curriculum* by Seamus Gibbons and Emma Lennard breaks it down into practical advice, paving the way for balanced and cohesive lessons aligned to the national curriculum in England.

Covering everything from the basics of curriculum design to diversity, equality and inclusion and subject-specific guidance, it provides trainee and experienced teachers with answers to our most pressing questions. Find out more and order your copy at tinyurl.com/tp-StPC



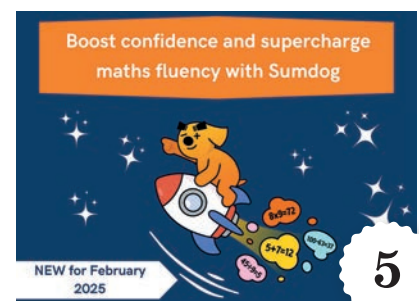
3



Encourage recycling

Leafield Environmental's novelty pencil bins are a popular litter and recycling solution for schools. Their fun and friendly appearance encourages all ages to recycle responsibly, and ideal for indoor or outdoor use. The bins are made with a durable all-weather resistant polyethylene material, with a hood to keep rainwater out. The bins have a generous 70-litre capacity, and an easy access aperture. They can either be used individually, or grouped for multiple-waste stream recycling. Optional extras include WRAP-compliant recycling labels, an antimicrobial additive, and a lock or fixing kit. Purchase a set of four pencil bins to get your exclusive discount! Simply apply the promo code PENCIL4 at the checkout. For more information call 01225 816541, email recycle@leafieldenv.com or visit leafieldrecycle.com

5



Unlock their maths potential

Sumdog's new Maths Fluency Booster is designed to help teachers reinforce pupils' core number skills, going beyond just number bonds and times tables to develop overall fluency. This tool adapts to each pupil's level, identifying areas where they can improve and providing targeted support. As children progress at their own pace, they build confidence in these skills, which enables them to tackle more complex topics. Discover more at tinyurl.com/tp-SumdogBooster

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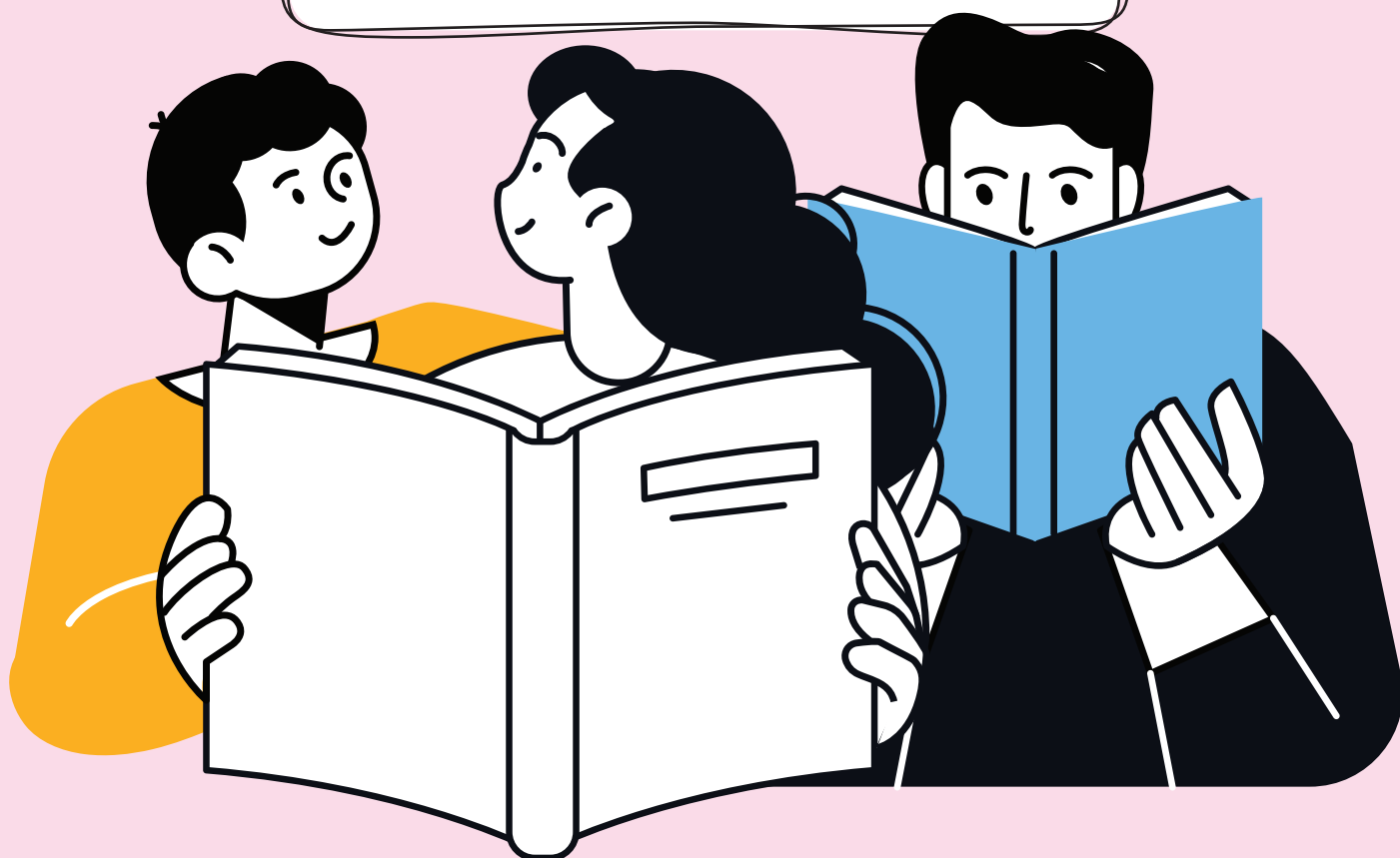
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How great CPD can improve **RETENTION**

We all know that professional development matters. And in their seminal 2014 paper, Kraft and Papay show how effective CPD can lead to a 38 per cent improvement in teacher efficacy.

But what is it all for? This may sound like a redundant question, but over the last few years, the answer has been presented straightforwardly: to provide teachers and leaders with evidence-based knowledge on how to be effective in their classrooms and school practices.

On the face of it, there is little to argue about here. I think most people would accept there is merit in having a coherent system throughout a teacher's career journey, and that different elements of training and support should join up so that school leaders are aware of the same evidence as early career teachers. And that any joined-up approach should be based on the very best understanding of what is effective in helping teachers and school leaders be better at their jobs.

That is the central premise of

the 'golden thread' of professional development supported by the Department for Education – the Early Career Framework and National Professional Qualifications. Together, along with reforms to Initial Teacher Training (ITT), they are designed to create a single, coherent body of knowledge about effective teaching and school leadership practice, all driven by an overt desire to be evidence-led. This is baked into the policy development process directly through the role played by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) as the custodian of what constitutes acceptable evidence within the frameworks.

It is a compelling approach for all those leading policy thinking – especially government – because it offers the promise of a causal link.

After all, if anybody wants to ask His Majesty's Treasury to spend money on anything (especially in our currently tight financial circumstances), it is important to be able to demonstrate impact for investment. So, spending is focused on interventions underpinned by clear evidence of what works, to draw a clear line of sight from the money being spent to the outcomes you are likely to achieve.

Alas, the world is seldom this simple, and there are two key risks in an approach that fails to respond responsively and more sophisticatedly to the investment and structures supporting professional development in schools: agency and relevance.

Agency

In 2020, the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) looked at the factors most likely to impact the job satisfaction of teachers, using that as a way of considering how to improve retention (something that has continued to get worse in recent years). That study showed that teachers in England have less autonomy by some margin than those working in other comparable professions, and compared to their peers internationally. Crucially, it also showed that autonomy is closely related to job satisfaction and retention, and that teacher autonomy

over professional development goals was most associated with higher job satisfaction.

This evidence seems to

run counter to the 'golden thread' approach over recent years, which has decreased the autonomy teachers and school leaders have over their CPD. The drive to create a coherent structure – ITT-ECF-NPQs – has come at the expense of choice and variety in the system. Even within the structure itself, we have seen a decline in the number of providers offering training and qualifications, further restricting choice. School spending on CPD has also plummeted, meaning even less agency for teachers and school leaders.

Relevance

We have all been on a course, seen a lecture, or listened to a podcast and come away disappointed that it did not resonate with our own challenges... then, inevitably, we have all spoken to a colleague who has experienced the same thing and is energised by the training that left us completely cold. This is because teaching and school leadership are complex jobs, deeply dependent on context for success, and 'one-size-fits-all' approaches cannot respond to that.

Any attempt to codify evidence into an acceptable list is necessarily

HELP



The behaviour bullet

It starts with a slammed door. Raised voices. Maybe a chair scraping across the floor. Every teacher has their own trigger. Some moments are so frequent they become background noise. But over time, constant disruptions from pupils and inconsistent rule-keeping among colleagues can grind down even the most dedicated teacher.

At Teacher Tapp, we've been asking teachers about behaviour for years, and the results are clear: poor behaviour doesn't just disrupt lessons—it drives teachers out of schools.

Reports of lesson disruption are now at their highest levels since our surveys began. Nearly every teacher said their last lesson was interrupted in some way. Worse still, 45 per cent said learning stopped altogether at some point due to behaviour, and for 12 per cent, the disruption dragged on for ten minutes or more.

The picture is especially grim in primary schools, where 47 per cent of teachers report regular disruption compared to 38 per cent in secondary. And in schools serving

disadvantaged communities, the situation is even tougher, with up to 80 per cent saying they faced disruption in their last lesson.

Here's where it gets tricky, though. Every school *claims* to have a behaviour policy, but how many enforce it consistently? This year, just 14 per cent of primary teachers and a shocking five per cent of secondary teachers said their colleagues apply the rules fairly. It's no wonder teachers are frustrated.

Does this matter for retention? Teachers say yes. When asked what their school could do to keep them next year, improving behaviour was the top answer. It's easy to see why. Our recent Behaviour Barometer report (tinyurl.com/tp-BehaviourBarometer) showed that poor behaviour has a significant effect on teachers' workload, stress levels, and feelings of value in their jobs.

In fact, after analysing years of data, our conclusion was stark: improving behaviour is about as close as you can get to a silver bullet for teacher retention.

So, how do you fix it? Teachers overwhelmingly agree on three things: clear

rules, consistency in applying them, and a collective effort from all staff. However, opinions differ as to what the rules should be. Some favour tougher sanctions, while others prefer a collaborative approach. The loudest call is for strong leadership and a school-wide commitment to making rules stick.

It's not just a job for leaders, though. Most teachers see managing behaviour as part of their role and admit they could improve in this area. When leaders reinforce this collective responsibility while offering practical support and training, things can improve.

But if leaders ignore the problem or downplay it (perhaps because they experience better behaviour than their staff do), the exodus will continue. And the sound of that slamming door might not just be a disruptive pupil – it could be another teacher walking out for good.



Laura McInerney is an education journalist, public speaker, and co-founder of Teacher Tapp.

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teachertapp.com



Hold on to talent

One teacher can change a child's life. But there could be fewer opportunities for teachers to make a real difference in the next three years.

The MAT Finance Sector Insight Report 2024, published by IMP Software, analysed budget forecasts from 267 MATs and revealed that trusts with mostly primary schools plan to cut 5 per cent of teaching roles and 6 per cent of TAs by the end of 2026/27.

This would mean six fewer teachers and six fewer TAs in a ten-school trust. Smaller teaching teams can put added pressure on existing staff. However, with these three strategies, trusts can better support and retain their top teachers.

1. GET CREATIVE WITH CPD

MATs are in a unique position to offer teachers professional development opportunities across their schools. A Year 1 teacher might relish the chance to spend one day a week teaching Year 3s at a neighbouring school to bring valuable experience working with children of different ages and abilities back to their own classroom. This approach to CPD can boost job satisfaction and encourage teachers to remain in the trust.

2. CONSIDER FLEXIBLE WORKING

Trusts are increasingly looking at new ways to deliver a healthier work-life balance for teachers, without affecting pupils' learning. Teachers might feel more comfortable marking or lesson planning at home, for example, away from the noisy school environment. With more time and space, teachers can tap into their individual creativity to plan and deliver exciting, engaging lessons children will remember.

3. SUPPORT WELLBEING

Trusts with fewer staff must proactively prioritise the wellbeing of their remaining teachers and TAs to help prevent burnout. Teachers should have access to mental health support to help them manage workloads and other challenges effectively. Scheduled wellbeing days can also give people time away from school to focus on their mental health and recharge.

With small changes like these, teachers will feel valued and supported to help their pupils succeed.

David Clayton is chief executive of Endeavour Learning Trust.

endeavourlearning.org



“Teacher autonomy over development goals is most associated with higher job satisfaction”

subjective. There is no way to be certain about what type of professional development might be most effective for every individual in every circumstance, so instead, we have to rely on generalisations and ‘best bets’ as a way of saying whether one intervention is better than another, to decide the frameworks of what constitutes effective practice.

We should show more humility in our understanding of the evidence base, which, after all, can and should be constantly changing as we invest in more research to understand what different types of professional development interventions deliver. This is not to ignore evidence – if there is something that clearly shows an approach fails to work or a theory is debunked, then we should be clear about that. But it is equally dangerous to overclaim for the efficacy of a particular approach. To do so is a form of gaslighting, stretching the credibility of even the strongest evidence. At its worst, it can significantly undermine a teacher's confidence as they keep trying an

approach they have been told is the right answer without seeing the results they need.

If we come back to our original question – what is professional development for? – we can see that a more sophisticated approach would also be useful to improve job satisfaction and retention, by allowing for greater agency in decision-making by teachers and school leaders. We are starting to see the initial shoots of a better approach from this government (including through the recent announcements to review NPQs and the ECF and to introduce an entitlement to CPD), and we should cheer that endeavour. It is an important part of supporting the professionalism of all teachers and school leaders.



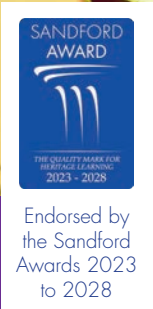
Gareth Conyard is CEO of the Teacher Development Trust.

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 School
profile


Name: Hogarth Primary School
Headteacher: Rob Watson
Location: Brentwood, Essex
Size: Approx. 260
Extra info: Part of Discovery Educational Trust



Lauren King, deputy head and SENDCo

“It really is the
loveliest school”

A passionate leadership team has transformed Brentwood's once failing Hogarth Primary School into a vibrant and inspiring community, finds **Lydia Grove**



“**W**e were at rock bottom,” says Hogarth Primary HLTA Penny Geggus. In 2022, the school was a chaotic place. Classroom behaviour was poor and staff turnover high; results were on a downward spiral. With no central curriculum, new teachers had to plan everything from scratch, and it was years since any of the children had been on a school trip.

Enter Ryan Duff, CEO of Discovery Educational Trust (DET). An experienced head, who had previously led the transformation of another Brentwood school, Larchwood Primary, Duff stepped in as temporary headteacher at Hogarth in late 2022. As work went on behind the scenes to add Hogarth to DET’s roster, Duff became a very visible sign that things were about to change at the school.

“People had been brought in before to improve the school, but each time it just got worse,” continues Penny. “Teachers would leave, and children’s behaviour was out of control due to the inconsistency. So when Ryan came in, we assumed it would be the same again. But this time things felt different. Ryan was interested in us, and believable.”

Although he is no longer head, Ryan still plays a key role at Hogarth and is well-known to the children. “Mr Duff helps schools improve a lot,” head girl Suela informs me, when I catch up with her and head boy Sam for a chat during my visit.

Both pupils have witnessed the change from an unruly school, to which parents were embarrassed to send their children, towards a calm and positive place of learning. Speaking to me at length about all the opportunities available to them at Hogarth now, they’re clearly proud of the school and their own contributions to its success.

Being present

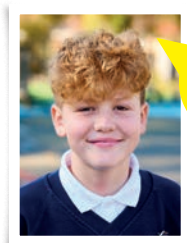
Duff believes strongly that all members of an SLT should be accessible to parents and teachers. He put this into action by doing gate duty at both ends of the day throughout his tenure as temporary head. This practice has been carried on by the new SLT, which was assembled when Hogarth officially joined DET in September 2023.

“We really do know our children well,” deputy head Lauren King says. There’s plenty of evidence of this during my visit, too, with SLT members greeting children warmly by name and catching up on their particular problems and successes.

In addition to the obvious organisational challenges of his new role, first-time head Rob Watson faced a steep learning curve. However, along with Lauren and assistant head Clare Connor, and supported by the Trust, he has embedded real and positive change across all aspects of school life at Hogarth.

“Rob’s amazing,” Penny explains. “If there’s an issue, his door is always open. Staff feel valued again – and the children know that if Mr Watson says something, it carries weight.”

Pupil Voice



Sam

The school has improved so much for pupils and teachers already. I want to help it reach for the stars. We had big gaps in our learning, but they’ve found a fun way to explain things. If we’re struggling, we can go to see Miss King in SEND, and if someone gets stressed, teachers take them to a spare classroom.



Finding the right team was a key focus of Ryan Duff’s time as temporary head, and a huge undertaking. “You need the right people in the right place,” he explains. “We weren’t afraid to re-advertise roles during the recruitment period.” Ultimately, an entirely new office team were recruited, and nine of the school’s 11 classes had a new teacher in place for the autumn term.

Changing the classroom...

During their first half-term in role together, the SLT prioritised choosing a new curriculum. “We continue to make sure our curriculum is broad, balanced and progressive, and built on prior knowledge,” says Clare. “We want subject leaders to embed knowledge, and we need to provide them with the skills to do that.”

Taking evidence-based strategies and deciding which ones would work for them, the SLT focused on embedding good practice. “If you walked into a KS1 class, you’d see the same things happening as in KS2,” continues Clare. “We have the same lesson structure across the school.”

The children have responded well to being given clear



Suela

We have lots of special days now, and Dom teaches us to dance. We do dances for different events, like the Euros, and perform at assembly. There was an assembly about gender stereotypes too. Three people volunteered – they were confident to do it. It was really good, and the teachers were impressed.



“Everyone is proud to work here. Even our caretaker dressed up for World Book Day”

boundaries, which are explained to them clearly and reinforced regularly. “You never hear a raised voice in our school,” observes Lauren.

A partnership with the West Ham foundation enabled the school to introduce cooking and nutrition to the curriculum, and pupils get weekly singing lessons, too. Classrooms have had a bit of a glow-up as well. Suella described to me how the walls were much more colourful these days: “If I don’t understand something, I can look at the wall display to work it out.”

Regular whole-class reading has been introduced, with KS2 classes reading a chapter each day, and there are well-stocked book corners in every classroom.

Pupils are encouraged to read freely at the end of each lesson, and children can bring in books from home as well.

Alongside the creation of a richer curriculum, pupils are now offered a greater variety of extra-curricular activities. Each teacher runs one free club – from crochet to maths – and pupils can take part in a wide variety of sports. Every child has the chance to represent the school at county level, if they wish.

Changes have been made to playtimes too, with prefects from the upper years spending time in the KS1 playground helping everyone learn to play together. “The younger kids really love the prefects,” Suella informs me.

Have all these efforts made a measurable difference to

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Throughout my visit to Hogarth, the teaching staff stressed the importance of their non-teaching colleagues in the transformation of the school. Every staff member is deemed important in supporting pupils and creating an environment in which the children can thrive.

The office staff – all newly appointed in 2023 – play a particularly important role at the centre of the school community. Like the SLT, they quickly formed a close and efficient team, and their role as first point of contact for parents has been key in bringing the wider community on board with the SLT’s vision for Hogarth.

“Everyone is proud to work here,” Rob tells me. “Even our caretaker dressed up for World Book Day this year – that had never happened before.”

performance, though? Well benchmark data showed that Year 1 phonics improved by 19 per cent year on year from 2023 to 2024. During the same period, Year 6 SATs results showed improvements of 25 per cent and 23 per cent for maths and reading at expected standard, as well as a 12 per cent increase in reading at higher standard. Things really do seem to be taking a turn for the better.

... and the staffroom

Centralising the curriculum and tackling challenging behaviour school-wide have both fed into the leadership’s drive to keep workload low and morale high among their colleagues. Other measures introduced include, where possible, laying out key deadlines for the year, so that no-one is asked to get something done ‘by tomorrow’.

Ryan also pushed for two-week half-term holidays, to allow as many staff and pupils as possible to get a real rest. One of the objections raised to this initially was the issue of childcare. To address this, a holiday camp is held at one of the Trust’s secondaries, St Martin’s School, led by Hogarth. In addition, all three DET primaries go on Year 6 trips together, allowing each head to just do part of the week.

Making use of the Trust’s centralised resources and expertise as much as possible has been key to running Hogarth more smoothly. “I don’t want Rob to be bogged down in policy,” says Ryan. “It takes away from the children.”

A lot of policies are centralised across the trust, and Hogarth staff can draw on the financial expertise of both ‘head office’ and other Trust schools. This has included getting some invaluable help in securing two large funding bids.

Peer-to-peer support has also been important for Hogarth’s SLT. As well as taking part in joint-trust CPD with fellow heads and deputies, they’ve reached out to other Brentwood schools to share advice and best practice, and look at establishing mutually beneficial partnerships.

And at a school level, the most transformative thing of all has perhaps been two

simple words. “Rob excels in thanking people for their efforts,” Lauren tells me. “We say thank you all the time. You want to know you’re appreciated.”

These efforts are clearly paying off, as not a single staff member left school during the 23/24 academic year, and the current pupils had their first ever year without a change of teacher.

Looking outward

One thing I definitely didn’t expect to talk about during my visit was the local carvery, but it loomed large over the conversation! The eatery was chosen as the venue for a school



council meeting to give pupils a taste of a ‘working lunch’ and seems to have gone down in school legend.

This grown-up event made a real mark on the children who attended, and is a good example of the way the Hogarth team have approached reinstating school trips and events. Coming from a catchment area that includes the Newham and East Ham estates, money is an issue for many of the parents. So the school look to the local area where possible, making particular use of the nearby woodland and country park. When they do venture further afield, for instance on a visit to the Houses of Parliament, they eschew coach hire in favour of public transport to keep costs as low as possible.

A different perspective

Towards the end of my visit, I discovered that EAL pupils make up a third of the school population. No-one I spoke to mentioned this as a negative, or even a challenge. Suela told me proudly about the world map in the dining room, where children can pin photos of themselves to their home countries. Making new arrivals feel welcome was really important, she and Sam agreed, particularly because they may have been having a hard time.

Lauren and Clare also referred to “celebrating a wealth of diversity that is unique among Brentwood schools”. With that in mind, the school has looked at different ways to explore different cultures, particularly through the wildly popular dance classes with the new but influential Dancing Dom.

Consistently viewing linguistic and cultural diversity as something that enriched Hogarth, rather than a hurdle they had to overcome, really demonstrated the effect that the narratives we tell about our schools can have on their development.

Building community

Whilst the children could see and embrace immediate changes in school life even from late 2022, their families took a little longer to get on board with the new way of doing things.

Hogarth had a poor reputation in Brentwood, and parents felt excluded from school business. Getting word



Meet the staff



LAUREN KING,
DEPUTY HEAD AND SENDCO

I was excited at the prospect of turning a school around: there’s no better reward than seeing pupils’ performance improve. It’s a unique experience to have staff that are mostly new, but the whole team has bought in to a shared vision. We just want to continue to make the children happy.



CLARE CONNOR,
ASSISTANT HEAD AND
MENTAL HEALTH LEAD

We want pupils to leave Hogarth ready for their next steps. It made me quite sad to see what the school had become, but now you can see the change in the children. The main challenge was behaviour, but high-quality teachers and a solid curriculum have helped tackle that.



PENNY GEGGUS,
HLTA

I always hoped the school could get back to what it was before, and as staff we want to come into work now – it feels a bit like a foster child finding their forever home. The kids are so much more ready for learning when they know they’re valued, too.



RYAN DUFF, CEO OF
DISCOVERY TRUST

You need to get collective buy-in. For pupils, barriers need to be overcome, and consequences need to be enforced – we shouldn’t be unintentionally rewarding challenging behaviour. The team ethos is to listen and understand, and every child in this school has a voice.

out that better times were on the way was an important step.

Part of Ryan and the SLT’s focus on transparency and accountability involved getting parents into school more – taking part in school events, joining the resurgent PTA, or simply being free to pop in to the classroom to see how their child was getting on.

Efforts from all staff towards including parents and communicating with them on every aspect of school life seem to have really paid off. The PTA held a successful summer fete in 2024 – the first for many years – and turnout at parents’ evenings is now up to 96 per cent. Pupil attendance also increased by four per cent from 2022 to 2024, and persistent absence went down by 12 per cent.

Arriving rather early for my visit to Hogarth, and waiting in reception, I spent some time reading through comments from parents that have been left in the visitors’ book. It was packed with uplifting messages commenting on the improvements the school has made over the past two years, and I shall leave the last words of this feature to one of those parents.

“My son started Hogarth this year and has settled in remarkably well into his first English school. It is absolutely wonderful to see my son happily talk about the fun that he has in the various activities for the day (football, swimming, trips and lessons). I am grateful to the kind teachers and staff of the school.” TP

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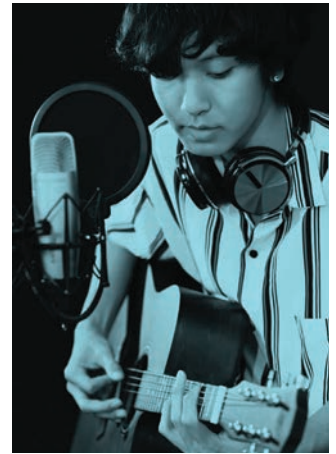
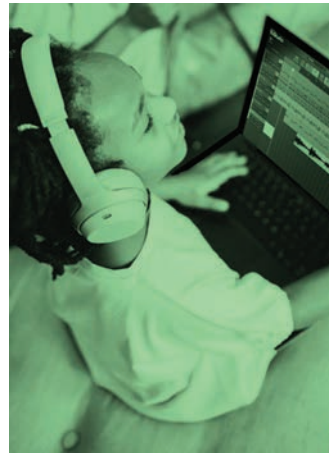
It's easy to get lost in the clamour and the clangour of music lessons, but there are some simple tools to avoid a real racket

66 Stay composed

Focusing on four essential elements allows rewards to outweigh the risks when teaching children how to write music



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Moulding MAESTROS

Playing classical music to your pupils doesn't have to elicit groans, says **Ann Bryant**. In fact, with some practice, they could become aficionados...

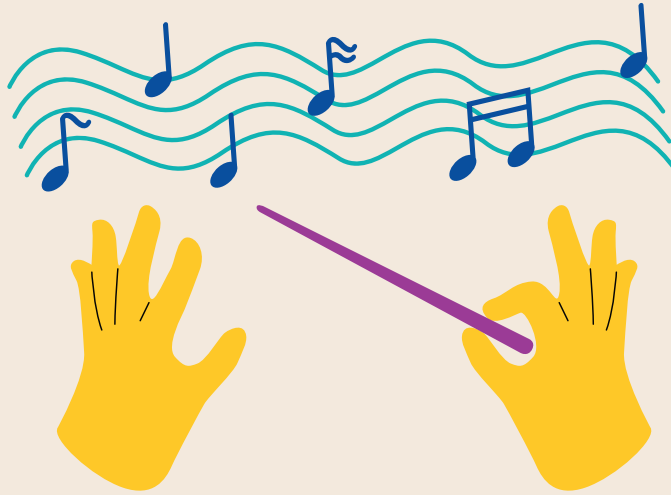
When it comes to classical music, we can be forgiven for thinking that our pupils will just find it boring. After all, it's not often that we're talking to our class about what they're listening to at the moment, only for them to pipe up about how much they love Bach, or Chopin (not in my world, anyway!).

But classical music is such an enduring genre for a reason – not only is it beautiful (to some of us), but it's packed with technical and creative flair that makes it perfect for teaching all ages.

If there's one golden rule for listening to classical music to remember, it should be that familiarity breeds enjoyment. In my experience, the more pupils listen to classic pieces, the more likely they will come to appreciate them. So, when choosing songs for your class:

- Try short pieces of music (just two or three minutes) that you like. (See the list on the right to get started.)
- Always play the piece three times within the same day.
- Listen to one or two pieces per week, and you can repeat them all the following term if you like, or pop in some new pieces. By then you'll all be loving it!

Getting hands on is also a good way to purposefully engage pupils. When you listen to a piece of music during your planning, you'll immediately ascertain whether it has a definite beat. If it does, see if you can clap along to a repeated count of eight. Is there a slower beat you can clap to? What about a faster one? Can you make



“Classical music is an enduring genre for a reason”

a short repetitive pattern mixing two or three different beats? What about if you introduce finger clicks, leg pats, toe taps, crossed-arm pats, head taps, miming beating a drum with alternate hands, miming stirring, tick-tock heads, shoulders raised and lowered, finger shakes? When you do it with the children, either let them echo/repeat your improvised body percussion/actions, or just set up a repeated pattern and see if they can join in as they grasp it. Don't do actions/sounds the whole time, though; sometimes, just listen to the music.

If the beat is less discernible but the music evokes atmosphere or emotion, see what words pop into your head when you listen, and turn them into a very short story. You could either tell your story to the class before you play them the music, then ask them to close their eyes and imagine that

story as the music plays, or tell the story while the music is playing. Don't narrate throughout, but try and leave periods of five to 10 seconds with just the music. You are basically giving the children a visual prop for their listening. You'll become quite the master at this after a few goes.

The second time you play the music, leave longer gaps between actions/sounds for listening.

The third time you play the music, give every child paper and coloured pencils, and invite them to draw anything that the music makes them think of. This might be from your story or could be just a pattern. To combine this with a writing lesson, you could then ask them to write their own music-inspired story. Try following the six-word short story convention if you have confident writers, though a looser structure might be

better to start with.

There are plenty of places you can access official recordings of classical music, including free-to-access sites such as YouTube, and paid subscription services like Spotify Premium and Naxos Music Library. If you're not sure where to start, here are some of my favourites:


- 'After the Cakewalk' by Nathaniel Dett
- Any section of 'Carnival of the Animals' by Saint-Saëns, e.g. 'The Giant Tortoise', 'The Elephant', 'The Aviary', or 'Fossils'
- 'Hungarian Dance no 5 in G minor' by Johannes Brahms
- 'La Musica Notturna delle Strade di Madrid (4: Los Manolos)' by Boccherini
- 'Maple Leaf Rag' by Scott Joplin
- 'Can-Can' from *Orpheus in the Underworld* by Offenbach
- 'In the Hall of the Mountain King' from 'Peer Gynt' by Grieg
- 'Radetzky March' by Johann Strauss 1
- 'Winter' from 'The Four Seasons' by Vivaldi (the Largo section)
- 'Jean de Floret Theme' by Jean-Claude Petit
- 'Montagues and Capulets' from *Romeo and Juliet* by Prokofiev

Good luck! **TP**



Ann Bryant is the author of over 125 books, including a mix of children's fiction and primary

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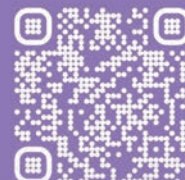
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Video didn't kill THE RADIO STAR

Advancements in technology have helped bring us the music we love, argues **Rachel Walker**, so we shouldn't exclude digital from our lessons

I don't make any secret of the fact that I believe music should be the life breath of a school. I also work a lot with tech, and am the digital transformation lead at my school. And the two go so well together! After all, we can trace the positive impact of technological innovation on music throughout history, and even the primary music curriculum states that children should 'have the opportunity to use technology appropriately'. To that end, I try and deliver music through a balance of musical awareness, creation and performance, both with and without tech.

One, two, three, four!

One of my favourite projects is a simple improvisation to composition task that results in a very professional-sounding piece, using the app GarageBand on iPad. Many of the songs we listen to are based on very simple four-chord patterns, using chords 1, 4, 5 and 6 (more info at tinyurl.com/tp-4chords). First, listen to several pieces of music that are based around different simple four-chord patterns (something like 'Where is the Love?' by Black Eyed Peas, contrasted with Pachelbel's 'Canon in D'). From that, over the course of a few lessons, the children add layer by layer to a piece of their own. Normally I begin with pupils recording the four-chord pattern (video tutorial by the wonderful Eoin Hughes at tinyurl.com/tp-4BarLoop),

then build in a drum beat, record a bass guitar, and if I'm looking to really stretch the class, or particularly high attainers, they can record a melody on top. They can then export it to share on Showbie.

We are fortunate to have 1:1 devices with headphones at my school (music lessons can be some of my quietest!). I teach our children how to play the keyboard using the piano instrument on GarageBand, and the beauty of this as a teacher cannot be overestimated. I can teach pupils a melody (or give them a set of notes for improvisation) which they can then practise, and I can submit screen recordings via Showbie. I am able to monitor every child's screen using Apple Classroom, and after the lesson I can listen to each recording and give

specific feedback, too. Prior to the lesson, I can record my demonstration – which they can watch as many times as they like – or I can share a labelled, colour-coded screenshot of the correct notes to play.

Sing, sister


Another project that always goes down well is one based on the gospel song 'Joyful, joyful'. You can easily link this to a more traditional piece, since it uses the melody of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy'; of course, the children always enjoy watching the *Sister Act* version, too. Within most recordings of 'Joyful, Joyful' there's a rap section, which lends itself perfectly to children learning about rhythm and timing (example backing track at tinyurl.com/tp-Joyful), and last

year I gave my Y5 class the challenge of rewriting the rap. This can be done easily without tech by simply asking children to rehearse and then perform for the class along with the track, however they achieved a more precise result when they were given the opportunity to record themselves on their devices with the correct tempo metronome, and then simply press 'play' at the right moment on performance day. The results were fantastic!

If you're new to GarageBand, I can highly recommend the free Apple Teacher resources, which have a whole module on how to use it. If you have different devices, fear not! Another wonderful option is the Chrome Music Lab, which has a huge number of resources for children from EYFS, and this can be used for all sorts of musical skills: learning pitch, rhythm, experimenting with sound, and much more. With technology, we really can take music teaching to the next level and open up a world in which anything is possible. In my view, we'd be remiss not to include it in our lessons. **TP**



Rachel Walker is a teacher, Apple Distinguished Educator, and maths & digital SLE at Sneinton Primary

 @mrswalkerteach

 blueskyteacher.wordpress.com

Know, recreate, CREATE

Teaching creative subjects in a knowledge-led curriculum can seem all but impossible, but there are ways and means to successfully combine the two...

ASHLEY BETTS

What's the most ludicrous thing you've ever heard from SLT? For me, it was when a certain leader questioned why, as a music teacher, I needed to assess pupils' ability to compose or perform. "Those are skills; we operate a knowledge-led curriculum," I was told. "Just assess what they know". Incidentally, a close second is the same leader telling the entire school that "you can't teach creativity". Sigh.

As music teachers, the phrase 'knowledge-led curriculum' can be daunting. Without proper understanding of what it means, we fear the prospect of losing our beloved practical,

example, when composing a piece of music, we must decide the key, tempo, metre, melody, instrumentation, structure, rhythm, etc. When creating a painting, we have to consider the colour palette, materials, subject, framing, and composition. And when putting together a new recipe, we choose the ingredients, cooking method, plating, etc. All creative endeavours require a multitude of decisions, so when teaching music, we need to help pupils make these choices in an informed context.

Of course, children cannot make a decision about instrumentation, for example, without access to, and knowledge of, a range of instruments. Similarly, they

long-term curriculum into strands of knowledge is an effective way to structure what I need to teach. I have one 'strand' for each of the elements of music, then one for performance-related knowledge, and one for composition-related knowledge. I then refer to the national curriculum (including considering what building blocks are required for KS3 and KS4) and the model music curriculum to populate the strands.

In the medium-term, I start by picking out the associated knowledge I need

to teach from each strand as a starting point. For example, if the long-term music plan calls for children to know that a 4/4 metre and fast tempo combine to make music that is good to dance to, as well as how to play three chords on the ukelele, I might decide that some lessons on rock 'n' roll would be a sensible vehicle for these skills. See the table on the right for more examples.

Repeat after me

Plato famously said that all art is imitation, and recreating existing music can be an immensely valuable learning experience.

"We can meet knowledge-led expectations without losing the heart of music"

skills-based, and beyond all else, *creative*, subject, to rigid knowledge organisers and restrictive multiple-choice quizzes. But after years of teaching at both secondary and primary schools, I've discovered that we can actually meet knowledge-led expectations without losing the heart of music.

Creativity is...

Having read several definitions of creativity that I don't feel really fit, I've decided that the best way to explain the concept to pupils and colleagues alike, is 'making lots of decisions to create something new'. For

can't compose a disco bassline without knowing what disco is, or, for that matter, what a bassline sounds like. Pupils need to know certain things and recreate existing music to further their understanding of particular styles or conventions before they are ready to create something new. Hence, we arrive at our structure for teaching: know, recreate, create.

Need to know

If creativity relies on decision-making, the knowledge we impart should prepare pupils to be able to make those decisions. I have found that organising my



Year group	Topic	Prior knowledge	Know	Recreate	Create
1	Body percussion	Understanding of percussion	What is body percussion?	Perform a song using given body percussion patterns	Compose own body percussion patterns by ordering and reordering cards
2	Intro to melody	Understanding of rhythm	How is a melody different from a rhythm? What are the notes of the musical alphabet?	Perform a given melody using chime bars/ glockenspiel	Compose an ending to the melody using the given pitches
3	Indian classical music	Understanding of melody, rhythm and harmony	What is a raga? What is a tala? What is a drone?	Perform given raga and tala patterns alongside a given drone	Improvise a raga performance within a given three-part structure
4	Major and minor	Understanding of chords. Ability to play C, F and G major	What does major mean? What does minor mean? How to play Am and Em	Perform the song 'Titanium', which contains previously learnt and new chords	Compose a chord sequence for a given melody
5	EDM	Understanding of other popular music styles	What are the stylistic features of EDM? How can we use technology to create music?	Perform 'I Gotta Feeling' by singing and playing the ukulele to gain an understanding of structure and harmony	Compose a remix of the song on an iPad, using a given vocal stem alongside pupil-synthesised harmony and rhythm parts
6	Video game music	Use of music technology. Understanding of textural layers: melody, harmony, bassline and rhythm	How does sound enhance a player's experience? What are SFX? What is a soundtrack?	Recreate SFX from a video game on an iPad	Compose a multi-layered soundtrack for a given video game



Furthermore, reframing performance as a step on the journey to musical creation can allow pupils to value these tasks differently from how they might if they were an endpoint in themselves. I find that moving performance away from the end of a learning cycle can help lower the stakes for the children, who might otherwise see it as a summation of their learning, rather than a part of the process.

Bit by bit

The prospect of a blank page can inhibit the start of the creative process for even the most practised professional, so it's no wonder that it can be intimidating for children. But we need to remind our pupils that we're not expecting them to create something from nothing (although some can do this successfully). Rather, we're asking them to make creative decisions based on the knowledge we have imparted, and that they have experienced already through recreation. We can increase creative freedom over time, loosening the specificity of the framework within which we ask the children to compose.

For example, we might give a KS1 pupil specific pitches and rhythmic patterns to choose from, in order to create an ending to a provided melody. Whereas by UKS2, we might instead instruct pupils to compose the melody using the C major pentatonic scale, and any repeating rhythmic motif, ending on the tonic note of C. It might seem like removing all restrictions would make such a task easier, but while some children might welcome complete creative freedom, often providing a couple of limitations actually makes the process less demanding. Supplying a suggested beginning and ending scale or note can also ensure that the final piece is something the class enjoys listening to; after all, feeling successful is a key part of the learning experience. **TP**



Ashley Betts is a primary music specialist, and former secondary

teacher.

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MUSICAL EGGS-PRESS

Vol. 1 No.1

SPRING 2025

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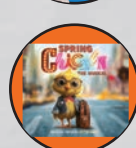
Jan 2024 –

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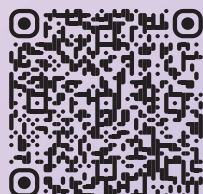
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Managing MELODIC MAYHEM

It's easy to get lost in the clamour and the clangour of music lessons, but there are some straightforward tools to avoid a real racket, says **Dr Liz Stafford**

Music lessons can and should be one of the most joyful experiences of the week. However, the very qualities that make them so much fun can also present significant classroom management challenges. Unlike other subjects, music lessons often involve noise, movement, and the irresistible allure of musical instruments; a combination which almost inevitably leads to some sort of disruption, and can feel chaotic.

However, it would be a mistake for teachers to try and clamp down too hard; there needs to be a certain amount of acceptance that behaviour in music is not going to be the same as in other subjects, and that we therefore also need to adapt our classroom management strategies. The challenge for teachers is finding a balance between maintaining order and embracing creativity and noise. Once you have accepted that music lessons will be noisier and more energetic than other subjects you can start to plan your strategies for keeping control.

Clear expectations

Before the first note is played, establish your ground rules, making it clear that whilst noise and movement are part of the lesson, they must be purposeful. A key expectation to establish is that instruments should only be played when and how instructed. You will need to reiterate this an awful lot before it sticks, but it is

worth the effort. The worst thing you can possibly do is avoid using instruments because the children are 'too silly' with them. This just perpetuates the problem. Instead, use instruments as regularly as possible until the novelty wears off and the sanctions for breaking the rules are clearly established.

Non-verbal signals

Over noise, verbal instructions can get lost. Develop non-verbal cues, such as clapping a certain rhythm (I guarantee everyone reading this is thinking of the exact same one right now!), using a particular instrument that cuts through the noise, or using a hand signal –

although this latter approach relies on pupils actually noticing you standing at the front semaphoring at them. One of the best strategies I ever saw used was at Perryfields Primary School in Sandwell, where when teachers flicked the lights off and on all the children stuck both hands in the air and wiggled their fingers! Admittedly it was a bit freaky the first time I saw it, but I instantly adopted it as my own go-to strategy, because it doesn't involve raising your voice or trying to be heard over the din, and it means their hands are busy so they can't make noise on their instruments while they're responding.

“The challenge is finding a balance between maintaining order and embracing creativity and noise”



Routines

Structure is a teacher's best friend in a music lesson. Begin with a familiar warm-up activity, such as clapping rhythms or vocal exercises. This sets the tone and focuses pupils' energy. Likewise, signal the end of a session with a calming activity, helping pupils transition smoothly back to the classroom environment. This is particularly important if you are handing the children back to a different teacher after a PPA or specialist music session. No-one wants a class full of hyped-up pupils descending on them when they've got to teach something static.

Encouragement, not demand

If you're dealing with a child who is off-task or refusing to join in, take a moment to think about how you would feel in the same situation. If someone asked you to sing in a room full of 29 other people, would you be happy doing it? Some children find it really intimidating to sing or perform in front of others, and it's important to know the difference between genuine defiance and performance anxiety. The important thing is to deal with it calmly and quietly, and have some alternative suggestions up

your sleeve for other ways the pupil can participate, so that you don't end up with a snowball effect where everyone else decides they're not going to do something just because they've seen that one pupil 'getting away with it'. Having said that, in my experience, even at KS1 children are very good at recognising that some classmates are different from others, and take varying levels of expectation in their stride. I once taught a child

with Tourette's syndrome; all the other children in the class just knew instinctively that they weren't allowed to shout out in the same way, and we genuinely never had any copycat instances or 'it's not fair' issues.

Protect your instruments

The use of musical instruments is both a privilege and a responsibility. Set clear rules about when and how they can be played. For example, state that instruments must remain on

the floor or table until you signal to begin. Regularly demonstrate how to handle each instrument, and get the pupils involved in telling you what not to do with them, and why. You might find it useful to incorporate some free play time into your sessions so that your pupils can get their excitement out of their systems. I have many colleagues who start with a 'one-minute free-for-all' before the serious work of the lesson begins.

Musical community

Foster a sense of community in your classroom, where pupils respect one another's contributions and take pride in their collective achievements. Showcase pupils' work through performances or recordings, and teach pupils to give constructive feedback to one another. This builds mutual respect, and helps them take your music lessons more seriously.

Classroom management in music is undoubtedly more

3 STEPS TO PREVENT OVERWHELM

1 Accept that music is going to be louder than pretty much everything else you do; and warn the teachers either side of you!

2 Use the musical concept of dynamics (loud and soft) as a teaching tool. Encourage pupils to think about how they play – sometimes vigorously, sometimes gently. This helps them develop control and ensures that instruments are less likely to become damaged through, shall we say, *overenthusiastic* use.

3 If the entire class playing simultaneously becomes too noisy, divide pupils into smaller groups. While one group plays, the others can engage in quieter activities, such as notating rhythms, practising clapping patterns, or listening to the others and thinking about the answers to some key questions you've given them.

challenging than in many other subjects. However, by embracing the unique energy of music lessons, setting clear expectations, and employing key strategies, you can create a positive learning environment where creativity flourishes. Remember that your passion for music can be contagious! Show enthusiasm yourself and your pupils will be more likely to mirror your own positive attitude. **TP**



Dr Liz Stafford is the author of The Primary Music Leader's Handbook, editor of Primary

Music Magazine, and director of consultancy company Music Education Solutions®.

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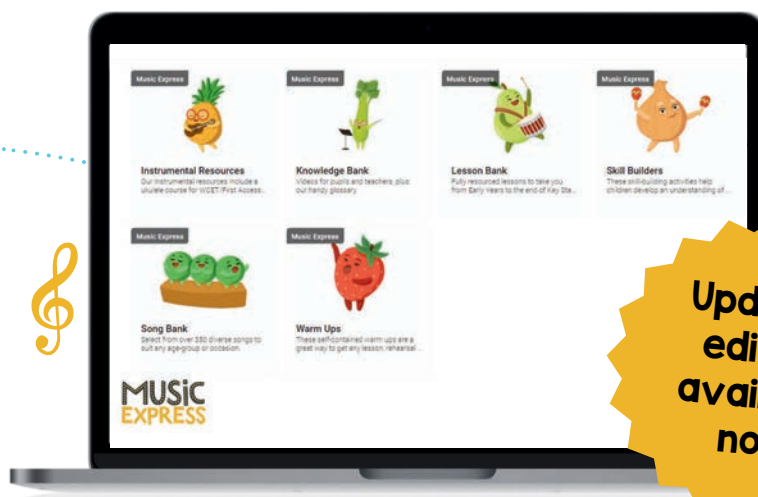
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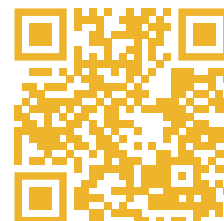
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Stay COMPOSED...

Focusing on four essential elements allows rewards to outweigh the risks when teaching children how to write music, says **Ben Connor**

Music is a subject that many non-specialist teachers find difficult. It requires a different set of skills and routines from any other discipline and, by its nature, involves noise. There is also a great deal of exploration, which is hard for teachers who like to have everything carefully controlled. However, music is vital, as it allows opportunities for pupils to explore creativity, hone cognitive skills, and develop emotional intelligence.

include limited musical knowledge, varying developmental stages, a lack of confidence (from pupils and teachers), and a lack of resources and/or support. After many years, I've developed a toolkit to address these issues, which I hope may be of some help to you:

1. Musical knowledge

It is a misconception that pupils require a deep understanding of musical theory to compose. As with all learning, it is important to start with simple, repetitive

2. Developmental stages

Younger children may not yet have the coordination to play instruments fluently, but they can still experiment with sounds using their voices, body percussion, or classroom instruments like tambourines and maracas. Start with untuned or body percussion and work as a class to experiment. Introduce: rhythm (a mixture of long and short

experience. It's crucial to create a supportive environment where mistakes are seen as part of the learning process. Provide pupils with a clear structure or suggested ideas, for example by linking their composition to the class novel. Can they create a piece of music to describe a particular scene from the book? This will help them to get over the initial difficulties with coming

“Composition stands out as an especially valuable skill”

Among the many aspects of teaching music, composition stands out as an especially valuable skill. It allows pupils not only to appreciate or understand music, but also to actively engage with it, creating their own musical ideas and expressions. Introducing musical composition at the primary school level can be both a fun and enriching experience that nurtures imagination, problem-solving, and collaboration.

Understandably, though, many teachers are intimidated by the prospect of organising a composition lesson. Some of the common challenges I've encountered

tasks that can then be built upon in subsequent lessons. Don't worry about notation to start with; instead ask pupils to create a simple motif based on their name or other significant letters. For example, get children to choose three or four significant note letters, A-G, (so I might choose the letters B, E and C from my name). The corresponding notes then come together to form a simple tune that can be the start of the children's composition. When it becomes important to record their score, use graphic notation (find an explanation of this in the panel on the right) rather than notation.

sounds – see the panel for activity ideas); tempo (fast or slow), for example, play children music clips and have them move on the spot – can they show different movements for different tempos?; dynamics (loud and soft), for example play 'Be the Conductor' where one child is the conductor in charge of the dynamics and can make the pupils play louder or softer by moving their 'baton'.

3. Confidence

Many children are hesitant to create music, especially if they don't have prior

up with ideas. Model giving positive affirmation and constructive criticism to support pupils in working well together collaboratively.

4. Resources and support

With budget cuts, schools might not have whole-class sets of instruments. The first job is to work out exactly what resources are in school





and get them organised into easily stored boxes; it might be that there are instruments hidden away. Sometimes it's a case of just working with what you've got, so if you do have to resort to the dreaded recorders, at least children have a chance to experiment with sound (buy some ear defenders, though...). The alternative is to use a digital approach. There are a number of apps, with Garageband being the most popular, which can be used to create simple

compositions. On Garageband, you have access to a range of virtual instruments that wouldn't be available in class. Pupils can click record and play a simple melody, then listen back and reflect on their composition. An alternative is Chrome Music Lab, which provides a range of online resources. The most effective is 'Song Maker', which allows pupils to create a simple composition by selecting coloured boxes. Remind pupils that lots of our most famous musicians started out recording music in their bedroom – these might be the first steps, but the end point could be super-stardom (or at least a fulfilling career)!

Teaching composition provides children with invaluable opportunities for creativity, emotional expression, and cognitive development. By creating a supportive, engaging environment and using a variety of teaching methods, we can all help our pupils develop their own musical voices, and, hopefully, find teaching these lessons a bit less stressful.

TP



Ben Connor is a deputy headteacher at a primary school in Bury, Greater Manchester.

He is a trained music specialist and has been teaching for 13 years in various schools.

 @bbcteaching

SIMPLE STRATEGIES



START SMALL

To help transition from call-and-response activities, get pupils to adapt a rhythm. Remind them that rhythm is a mixture of long and short 'notes', and share a simple example using a basic subject, like food: "Choc-o-late cake" (short/short/short, long). Ask them to choose a new flavour: "straw-be-rry cake" (long, short/short, long). You could repeat this activity with tuned percussion, asking pupils to copy a simple tune at first, then adapting it themselves.



GRAPHIC NOTATION

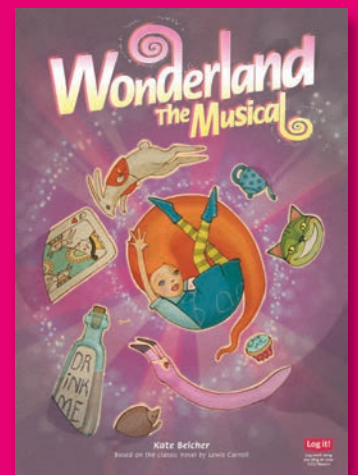
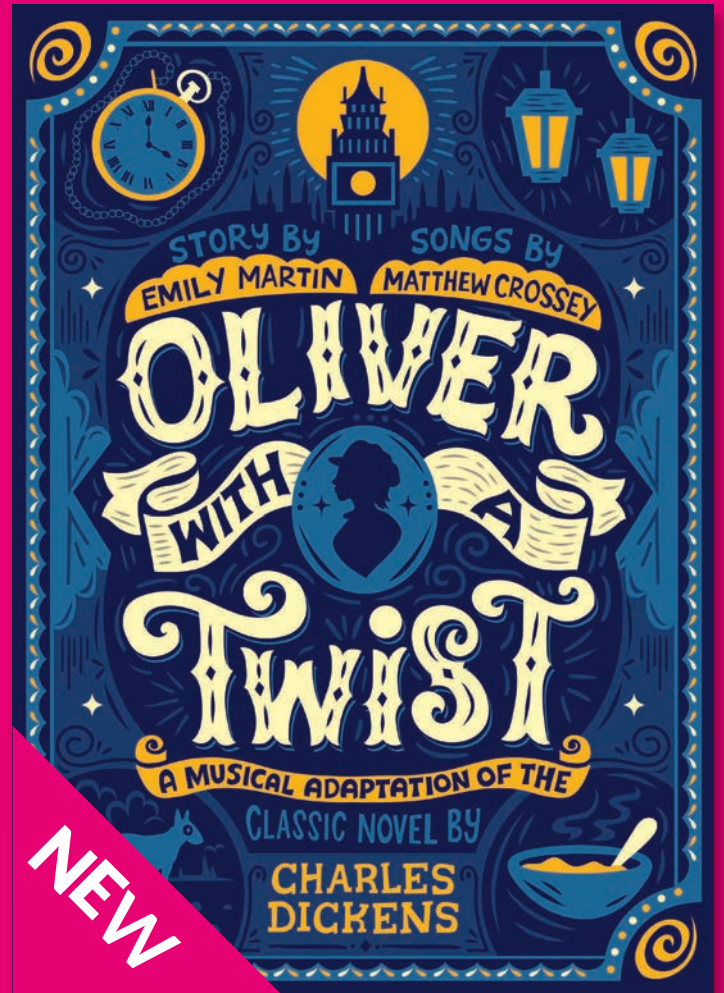
Using note letter names is one simple step towards notation. Another is using images. Have the pupils create a simple logo for each note on a sticky label and attach these to each key on a keyboard. That way, as they are composing, they simply draw out the pattern. For example: A = * B = / C = " etc. That way they can simply record their composition in graphic form. So, * / " " * / "" would be a simple melody.



INSPIRATION

Explore the use of soundtracks in film – how do the composers build tension or mimic positive emotions? Play a short section of video with the sound off (maybe something from David Attenborough's *Planet Earth*). Ask the children to think about what sounds, rhythms, dynamics, etc would be suitable for each segment. Pupils can then perform their piece while the camera rolls.

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Write this **WAY**

Jump aboard Shackleton's ship or sail the Amazon river, and use a laser focus to make children's writing leap off the page, say **Laura Dobson** and **Jess Blake**

Take a moment to consider a learning journey that resulted in an excellent standard of writing from your class. What made it so successful? Was it down to the audience and purpose you gave the children, the stimulus for writing, or something else entirely? There are many ways to focus your lessons, but for real success, we've found there are three essential considerations (see the panel, right, for details):

1. What pupils need to learn and the next step for their writing
2. The focus for the writing task
3. Stimulus, purpose and audience

So, what does this look like in practice? Here's what has worked for us...

Exploring endings – Y4

When using a wonderful but lengthy book like *The Explorer* by Katherine Rundell, it can be overwhelming to

consider how best to use it for writing without studying it all year.

First, know the book well! It sounds obvious but I have often planned with someone who hasn't read the story they're teaching. By knowing the book, you know which chapters can be left out, and which lend themselves to great character work or writing.

Next, make sure you fully immerse the children in the text. We read *The Explorer* when we were studying

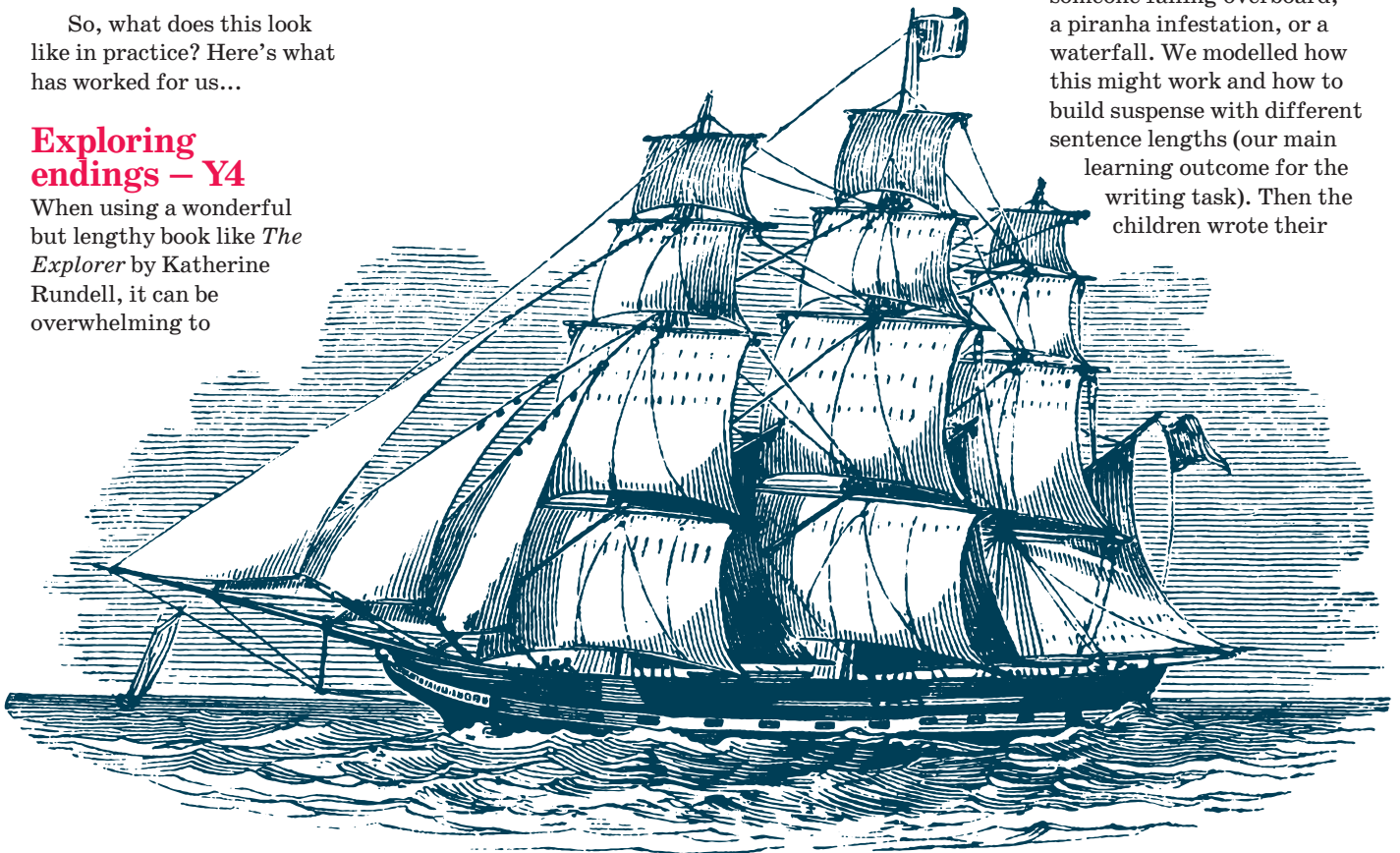
rivers. We looked at the Amazon River in geography, so the children had some contextual information. We used drama and 'role on the wall' to develop our knowledge of the characters (role on the wall is when you draw the outline of a character; on the inside you put their feelings and around the outside you put how they act/present themselves). We added some of these ideas (and photos from our drama) to our working wall to remind ourselves of the characters

when we were writing diary entries.

We also explored the text further using authorfy.com. The children loved hearing about the time Katherine Rundell ate a tarantula!

Finally, make sure you have a specific focus. Too much choice can be a bad thing, and asking children to come up with an entire story, or even story ending, can be cognitive overload. Instead, we focused on an ending for a single chapter. We used a part in the story where the four children are on a raft and there is a fork in the river (serious suspense!). As a class, we brainstormed what problem the children might encounter here. They had fabulous ideas: someone falling overboard, a piranha infestation, or a waterfall. We modelled how this might work and how to build suspense with different sentence lengths (our main learning outcome for the writing task). Then the children wrote their

“Make sure you have a specific focus. Too much choice can be a bad thing for writing”



chapter ending. Providing a simple structure of one problem for which pupils need to find one resolution allowed them to create a suspense-filled scene.

Success with Shackleton – Y6

Children love disaster and drama, so what better way to hook them in than with a staggering real-life story of survival – Ernest Shackleton and his failed expedition to Antarctica? Powerful, real footage, shocking facts and photos and a brilliantly accessible parallel text (*Ice Trap* by Meredith Hooper) really bring this learning journey to life. This three-week unit consists of three short pieces: a blog post, an informal letter and a journalistic report, but the opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences using this hook are vast. In our letter-writing unit, the children needed to use an informal tone to reassure a loved one.

For pupils to achieve true authorial tone, they need to feel as connected to the piece of writing and audience as possible, which is why in our class, all children were recruited as crew members on board Shackleton's ship, *Endurance*. From stowaways and chefs to biologists and artists, pupils were offered the opportunity to 'become' their character, and it was this, relatively

small, decision that captured their attention and fuelled their excitement. If we're being honest, it's rare to be able to say that a learning journey engages all learners – boys, girls, reluctant writers, children with SEN – but this removed barriers easily and effectively. Writing a recount to a loved one in an informal style and tone is accessible; it removes the need to use (though doesn't prevent the use of) overly challenging,

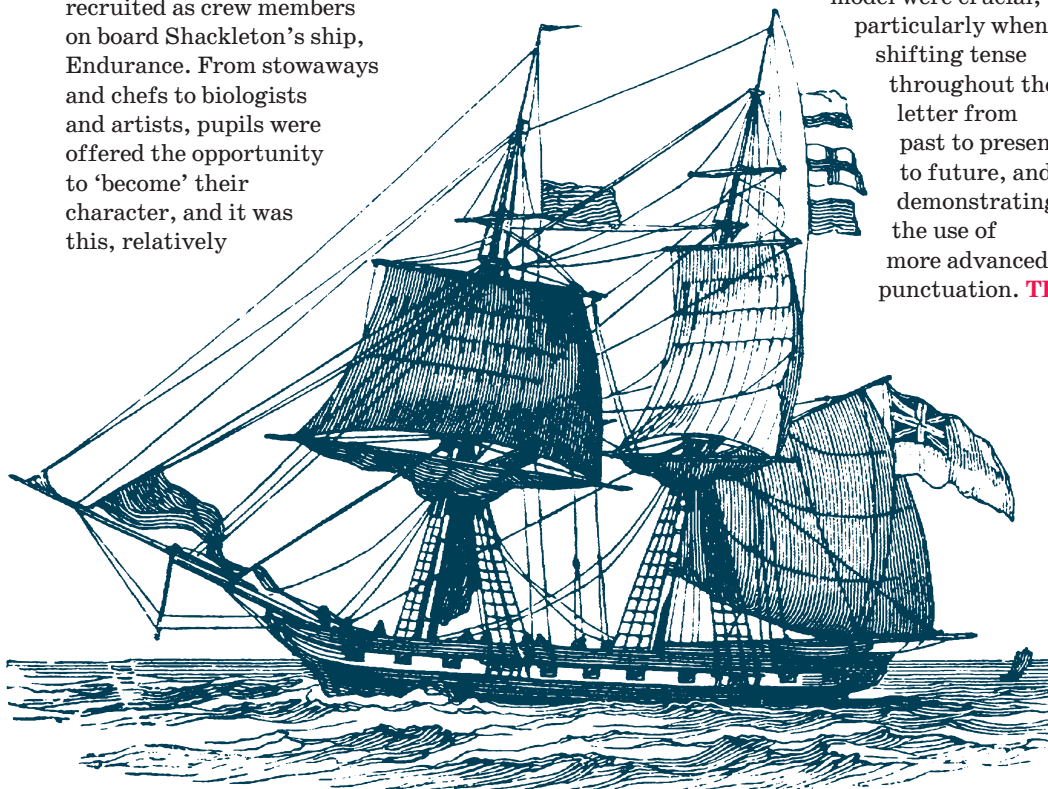
In doing so, 'working towards' and 'expected standard' writers could focus on using the correct tone, while 'greater depth' writers had the opportunity to highlight and research their specific role in relation to the incident (e.g. a meteorologist using the time to collect and collate data about the weather and environment). Once the children had planned their letter, we moved swiftly on to a spot-the-difference

“Pupils were offered the opportunity to ‘become’ their character, and this decision fuelled their excitement”

technical vocabulary and allows children to write in a conversational manner.

For their letter, we tasked pupils to recount the events on board *Endurance* from the point of departure to where the ship became stuck in pack ice – a catastrophic moment in the story – which allowed the children to attach their letter to a specific event.

lesson exploring informal and formal language, before beginning to write. Throughout the writing process, we used a variety of scaffolds to support lower attaining writers, such as prompts, structure grids and word banks created using [The Noun Project \(thenounproject.com\)](http://TheNounProject.com). For all, regular pitstops to model were crucial, particularly when shifting tense throughout the letter from past to present to future, and demonstrating the use of more advanced punctuation. **TP**



3 steps to clear writing

1 What?
The curriculum will guide you with what pupils should learn at each stage, but it may be that a previous year's learning is not quite embedded, so don't just plough on regardless.

2 How?
Less is often more – have a clear focus for a writing task and don't be too ambitious. A whole story is often too unwieldy and will result in rambling rather than quality writing. By asking children to focus on, for example, a story ending, with a focus on sentence lengths, you are setting them up for success.

3 Why?
If children feel there is real purpose to their writing or an audience will see it, they become invested. The stimulus matters, too; find a text which excites them (and you) or a situation they will be engaged in and want to write about.



Laura Dobson is a deputy headteacher at a large primary school, and a former T&L consultant specialising in English and assessment.



Jess Blake is English lead and Y6 teacher at a large primary school, and is part of the moderation team for English in her local authority.

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F4S

How to teach RECOUNTS

Help pupils craft engaging writing using recollections of past adventures and imaginary tales of historical events, with **James Clements**

Recounts are a key part of literacy in Key Stage 2, offering children the chance to reflect on familiar experiences while honing their skills as writers.

Whether they're retelling the excitement of a school trip, describing the highlights of a workshop, or sharing an experience from their life outside of school, recounts help pupils focus on *how* they write, rather than just what they write about.

Not only do they allow children to relive and celebrate personal moments, but recounts can be a vehicle for imagination and creativity, too. Pupils can also be encouraged to write about imaginary events, employing the features of the genre to imagine themselves as witnesses to anything from the toil of a Victorian chimney sweep to life on a distant planet.

By mastering the key features of recounts – like chronological structure, vivid descriptions, and reflective conclusions – children can learn to craft engaging texts that draw readers in and leave a lasting impression.

We went to...

Children can explore a variety of topics when writing recounts. The most common type is a personal experience, such as a recent school trip or workshop, or an enjoyable day out or special celebration. These are especially valuable as they allow children to reflect on an experience as well as honing their writing

skills. As children are writing about something real – something they have actually done – it gives them something tangible on which to base their writing. This can help them to write confidently, as they can focus on expressing their thoughts and emotions clearly, without worrying about getting something wrong.

However, the features of a recount can also be employed for creative writing. That might be an imaginative recount (e.g. a day in the life of a Roman soldier or a Victorian child, or an explorer's recount of investigating a polar desert); or an historical recount (e.g. events leading up to the Great Fire of London from an eyewitness, or details of the Gunpowder Plot told by one of the conspirators).

Writing about their own lives also gives pupils a voice. It allows them to share what's important to them, to tell others about their life outside of the classroom, and explore how they've felt in particular moments. This can also help to show them that their experiences matter and their perspective as a young writer is valued, which can be important in nurturing children's positive attitude to writing.

Most importantly, recounting personal experiences can be fun! Reliving exciting or happy memories can be deeply engaging, helping pupils develop a writing-for-

pleasure culture in the classroom, while also improving their skills. However, as always, teachers need to be sensitive about the different experiences that children might have had. Being asked to write a recount of their half-term holidays will be motivating and exciting for some, but others might be reluctant to write about their experiences for a whole variety of reasons. Being sensitive to this and perhaps giving children the choice to write about something from school, or something imagined as well, can be helpful for some, as well as ensuring they have ownership over their writing.

Remember these

To write an effective recount, children will usually include the following key features:

1. Past tense:

Recounts describe events that have already happened.

Example: *We visited the museum and saw an amazing display of fossils.*

2. Chronological order:

Events are presented in the order they occurred.

Example: *First, we boarded the bus. Then, we arrived at the museum.*



3. First person

The recount is told in the first person.

Examples: *We saw...; I couldn't believe...*

4. Adverbials of time:

Words like *first, next, after that, finally* help guide the reader through the sequence.

Example: *After lunch, we walked to the park.*

5. Details and description:

Including sensory details (what was seen, heard, or even smelled!) helps to make the recounts more vivid for the reader.

Example: *The museum's garden was filled with the scent of lavender, and we could hear the faint hum of bees.*

6. Personal voice (optional):

For diary-style or personal recounts, the writer's thoughts and feelings are often included.

Example: *I couldn't believe how big the dinosaur skeletons were – it was amazing!*

7. Concluding statement:

A sentence or two that wraps up the recount, reflecting on the experience.

Example: *It was one of the best days I've ever had, and I'll never forget it.*

Bit by bit

There are many ways of teaching children to write recounts. One effective approach is to break the process into small, manageable steps. For example, children might:

1. Explore examples

Begin by reading different types of recounts as a class. Highlight key features such as time connectives, past tense verbs, and use of descriptive language.

2. Identify key features

Work on the whiteboard together, or ask pupils to

use highlighters on their individual worksheets to identify recount features in model texts.

3. Decide on a topic

This could mean everyone writing about the same shared experience – a pantomime the class have watched at the local theatre, for example. It could be an imaginative scenario, such as exploring a strange planet or life from inside a Victorian workhouse. Or it could involve asking children to choose an experience to write about from their life outside of school (a football tournament, a sibling's birthday, or a trip to visit family). As noted above, teachers will need to be sensitive and use their knowledge of the class to decide how best to organise this.

4. Plan the recount

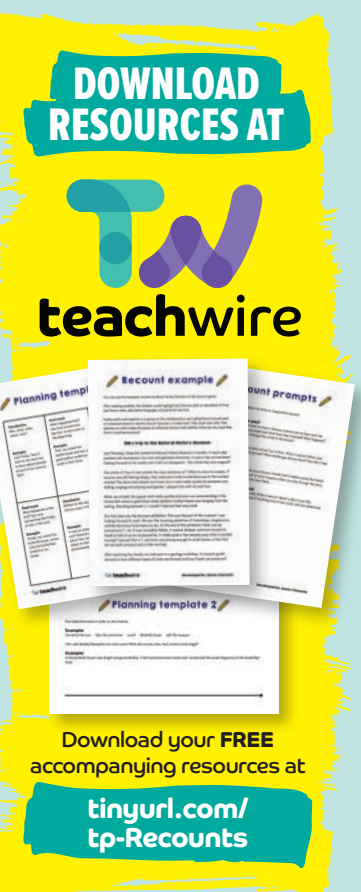
Planning templates, timelines or graphic organisers might help pupils structure their ideas (see linked resources on the right for worksheets).

5. Draft the recount

Focus on writing the recount step-by-step, starting with an engaging introduction, moving through the main events, and ending with a reflective conclusion.

6. Edit and improve

Encourage children to review their recounts, both proofreading for elements such as grammar, punctuation, and use of key features, and checking if there any wider



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opportunities to improve the piece and further engage the reader, perhaps by adding greater detail or including more vivid descriptions to bring the events to life.

7. Share and reflect
Provide opportunities for pupils to share their recounts with peers, celebrate their work, and reflect on how they could improve in the future.

Encourage your class to experiment with recounts today, and see how they bring their writing to life! **TP**



James Clements is an education writer and researcher. His latest project is

FluentZoo, a programme for developing children's reading fluency.

[fluentzoo.com](https://www.fluentzoo.com)



WAGOLL

The Six Queens of Henry VIII by Honor Cargill-Martin

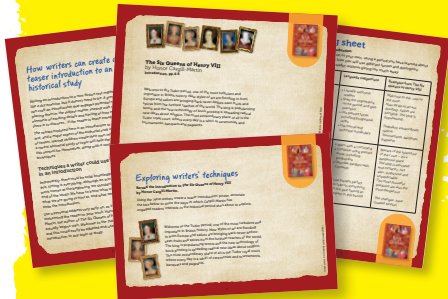
Peer inside the mind of the author, and help pupils understand how to write a tantalising teaser intro for non-fiction



The Six Queens of Henry VIII, by Honor Cargill-Martin, ill. Jaimee Andrews (£14.99 HB, Hachette), is out now

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tinyurl.com/tp-intros

The *Six Queens of Henry VIII* is about the six women who were unlucky enough to be married to the Tudor King Henry VIII, who ruled England between 1509 and 1547. Henry wasn't a great husband, and you might know these queens by way of a rhyme which refers to their fates: divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived. The rhyme isn't wrong, but there's a lot more than that to every one of them. Katherine of Aragon led an army while Henry was off in France. Anne Boleyn started a religious revolution that still stands today.

Jane Seymour protected herself and her family by playing the role of the ideal Tudor wife to perfection. Anne of Cleves built an independent life on her own terms in a strange country. Catherine Howard freed prisoners and tried to have fun. And Katherine Parr became the first woman ever to publish books under her own name in the English language.

When we hear something is about history, some of us begin to worry that that means it'll be B-O-R-I-N-G. Especially when we're talking about something from five hundred years ago. The truth is these women's stories are the opposite of boring and it's my job as a writer to prove that to you, my reader.

This book is packed with drama (think, fighting, playing games and... er... being beheaded). If I can convince you to keep reading from the first page, you'll discover that Catherine, Anne, Jane, Anne, Catherine, and Katherine's stories are exciting and dramatic, full of danger, laughter, tears and history-changing achievements. But, if I can't, then you'll go away assuming they were boring and only knowing a rhyme about their deaths. So, you see, the stakes are high. That's why the first page of a book – and especially a non-fiction book – is so important. This introduction is your chance to grab your readers' attention and convince them to listen to what you have to say. I'm going to teach you how to do just that! **TP**

FIVE TIPS FOR WRITING A GREAT INTRO

1. AUDIENCE IS EVERYTHING

Think about who your dream reader is. Are they your age or younger or older? Do they like funny or serious books? This is the person you're trying to hook with this introduction so keep them in your mind's eye as you write.

2. WHAT'S THE POINT?

When your reader has finished your whole book what do you want them to come away with? Maybe they will have learnt something, or had a good laugh, explored a new world, or met famous characters

they'd never heard about before. Promise them this in your introduction. Just make sure you follow through – you don't want angry readers on your trail!

3. SET THE SCENE

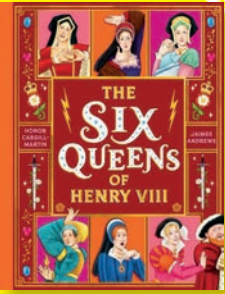
Just because you're writing non-fiction, that doesn't mean it should be unimaginative. Paint a picture! If you're writing about history, tell readers what it might have smelt like. Writing about another part of the world? Tell them what the weather is like. Describing a person? Focus on how they look, talk, or move.

4. TANTALISING DETAILS

The thing that really captures readers is detail. Think of this like the snatches of scenes you see in movie trailers. You want to give your reader a taste of the sort of facts they'll learn and people they'll meet inside your book.

5. LEAVE THEM WANTING MORE

Your goal is to get the reader to turn the page, so don't give away all your secrets in the intro. Reference something briefly, then move on. If they're frustrated? They'll just have to keep reading...



Extract from

Introduction,
pages 4-5

I've started with a direct address to my reader – I want to drag them in to the narrative whether they like it or not!

I mention tennis and printed books in this sentence because they're things that we take for granted today but which were brand new for the Tudors. I want my reader to start considering how else this period might have affected our own, so the history begins to feel less distant and irrelevant.

Here I address my reader directly again, as though they've actually travelled back in time and entered the Tudor period. This is designed to make them more invested in the stories to come, and encourage them to consider what they might have done had they encountered Henry VIII.

Henry doesn't come across well in this book, but I didn't want to be completely unfair to him. That's just bad history.

I use a question and answer here to identify a problem (my reader probably doesn't know much about the real stories of Henry VIII's wives) and to promise that my book will provide a solution, giving them a reason to keep reading.

Welcome to the Tudor period, one of the most turbulent and important in British history. New styles of art are flooding in from Europe and sailors are bringing back never-before-seen fruits and spices from the furthest reaches of the world. The king is popularising tennis and the new technology of book printing is spreading radical new ideas about religion. The most extraordinary place of all is the Tudor royal court, where every day is a whirl of ceremonies and tournaments, banquets and pageants.

Beware of being too dazzled by the splendour of the court – it's a dangerous place. All the changes happening in politics and religion have created tension, and courtiers love nothing more than plotting each other's downfalls. Things are especially risky during the reign of Henry VIII because although the king is educated and romantic, he's also known to be suspicious and unpredictable. At Henry's court, the most powerful positions are also the most dangerous – none more so than that of the queen.

You might already have heard that Henry VIII had six (SIX!) wives. You might even be able to tell me what happened to them (divorced, beheaded, died, divorced, beheaded, survived), but how much do you actually know about their lives?

It turns out that each one of Henry's six wives was an extraordinary woman in her own right. One led an army, one helped to create a whole new church and one was the first female author to publish a book under her own name in English.

Ready to meet them?

In this sentence I use the senses – the look of art, the taste of fruit, and the smell of spices – to help my reader imagine the distant world I'm describing and make its history seem more immediate.

I chose the movement word 'whirl' here to capture the excitement, drama, and potential danger of the Tudor court. I want my reader to know that it was a far cry from the sort of slow, boring, polite royal court they might be picturing.

This image of courtiers making evil plans for fun is silly and exaggerated, but it also alludes to the very real danger to come. Henry VIII's queens couldn't trust anyone at the Tudor court.

I wanted to contrast the ideas of 'power' (which is usually meant to protect its holder!) and 'danger' here, to show that the Tudor court was a place where no one could take anything for granted and no one was safe.

In this sentence I offer my reader little snippets of stories to come without fully explaining them – like in a movie trailer! If they want to find out which queen led an army and why, they'll just *have* to keep reading.

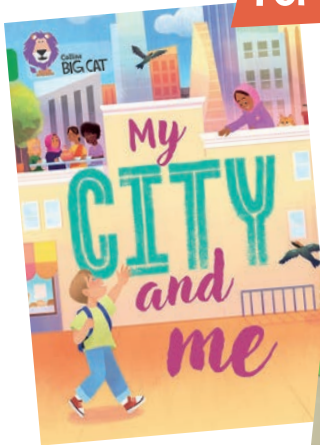


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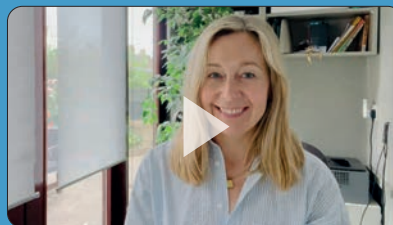
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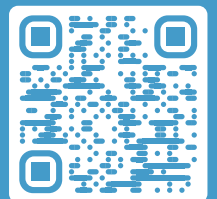
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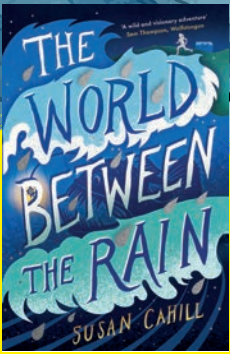


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Published by Everything with Words, October 2023

The World Between the Rain

Step through the droplets and let Marina take you on a journey of emotional discovery, with Susan Cahill's magical portal story

JO CUMMINS

The *World Between the Rain* is Susan Cahill's debut middle-grade novel – a haunting portal adventure about grief, family, gods, and Dreamweavers. It was partly inspired by Cahill's childhood desire to track down the wardrobe that would grant her entry to the magical realm of Narnia, and partly by her childhood home by the sea in West Cork, Ireland.

The story follows the journey of Marina when she accidentally slips between the raindrops after

running away from the house of a newly-discovered grandmother. She finds herself in the watery world of Ishka – full of forgotten gods, strange creatures, and a dream-devouring monster whose emptiness can never be filled. When the monster threatens Marina's family and homeland, she knows that she has no choice but to open herself up to some traumatic events in her past that she's been trying very hard to forget.

This book is full of rich language

and imagery, which would make it a great choice to inspire an upper Key Stage 2 class. There is plenty of scope within this text for narrative writing, poetry work, art and PSHE discussions, amongst other things.

Activities based around the book

Opening explorers

Give each child a four-box grid to complete as they are reading the opening of the story. This will





encourage them to closely focus on the text and process what they are reading. You might like to use the following

headings in each box: *Words I like; New words; Favourite phrases; Questions I have.*

It would be useful for each child to have a paper copy of the first four paragraphs of the text that they can mark up as they go. When they have finished, allow them time to look up and record the meanings of new words. Share favourite words and phrases, and discuss any questions pupils have. Can any answers be inferred or found in the text? Can the children make predictions as to what the answers to peers' questions might be?

What's in a name?

In stories, names are often chosen very carefully to give readers clues about the personalities of the characters they are reading about. Interestingly, in *The World Between the Rain*, the author has drawn upon Latin and Celtic languages to name characters and places within her story.

Challenge children to find the meanings of some of the characters' names and the qualities they might associate with them. Use a simple table to include the name, whether it's Latin or Celtic, the meaning, and the associated characteristics.

I would suggest that the



following names would be good ones to investigate: Marina, Ursula, Seraphina (Seri), Uisce (sounds like Ishka), Fiadh (sounds like Fee-uh), Caibleadh (sounds like Cab-loo), Tuaim (sounds like Two-im). Once the children have found the meanings of the names, discuss them as a class – what clues do the characters' names give about their personalities? You could create a spider diagram for each

“This book is full of rich language and imagery”

name, adding qualities and clues as you progress through the story.

If you are planning on doing some creative writing, challenge the children to find a word from a Celtic language that could be used to reflect an aspect of their character's personality. For example, *brave, fierce* or *curious*.

What does grief look like?

Too often, themes of grief and loss are only discussed when a class member has recently experienced a bereavement. Stories are a fantastic way of allowing children to explore feelings of grief and loss in an emotionally safe way.

This allows the feelings to be normalised, and for children to learn strategies to manage them should they experience them themselves.

In this story, the angler fish is a physical manifestation

of all the emotions Marina has been repressing following the loss of her father. Re-read page 270. What emotions are named? Adults or children may feel able to share a time when they have experienced grief or a loss (a pet, a family member, moving house, going to a new school). What other emotions might be linked to a loss? Gather the children's ideas to build a vocabulary bank of words associated with these feelings to help build the range of vocabulary the children have to express their emotions.



Take it further → → →

ME AND MY SHADOW

Storytellers have long used animals to symbolise certain qualities – snakes being sneaky or evil, for example. Some of the key characters in *The World Between the Rain* (the gods and demi-gods) have shadows which look like animals other than humans (Ursula = bear; Maeve = fox; Seri = small hare; Fiadh = robin; Aloysius = wolfhound; Marina = angler fish; Tala = squirrel). What characteristics do pupils associate with those animals? Do they correspond with what they already know about the characters?

What animals do the children think most

closely match their own personal qualities, or reflect the qualities they aspire to have?

These ideas could be used to inspire a piece of artwork using a silhouette of the child's head, with a silhouette of their chosen animal's head behind it like a shadow. They could embellish this with words explaining the qualities they believe this animal reflects.

MAKING DREAM CATCHERS

The Dreamweavers Marina encounters in the watery world of Ishka play a vital role in helping to satiate the appetite of a dream-devouring monster. Pupils could

create traditional dreamcatchers to help them with their work. There are lots of online tutorials for creating these, but it might be nice to use 'found' materials, which may otherwise end up at a rubbish dump or polluting the ocean. Sticks, straws, strips made from soft plastics or waste fabrics, scraps of wool, and bottle tops would all be inexpensive and easily available options.

BLACKOUT POETRY

The language used in this book is so wonderful that it would lend itself well to the creation of some blackout poetry. It is so easy to do but can have real impact!

Photocopy a selection of yours and



Discussion questions:

1. Why is it important to share how we are feeling with people?
2. How did Marina behave when she was grieving (angry, shouting, bottling things up, crying)?
3. How did Marina 'tame her beast' (remembered stories about her father, screamed into the wind, spoke to her family)? Reference page 284.
4. What other things might help someone in a similar situation? What might help you?
5. What form do you imagine grief/

loss might take if it were a living thing?

Ask pupils to draw a picture of what they imagine grief/ loss might look like. Label it with some key emotion words. Add some of the behaviours they might show. What strategies do the children have that could help 'tame their beast'? Add these as well.

Figurative language grab

The author, Susan Cahill, uses lots of wonderful figurative language to beautifully capture the mood and appearances of characters and settings.

Start by recapping on what figurative language is (similes, metaphors, personification). Can children think of any examples? Have three large sheets of paper or hoops to sort their ideas into. It may be useful to have some powerful examples ready on strips of paper to be sorted and stuck on to the paper.

Give children extracts from the story (maybe a different page per table) and ask them to highlight examples of where Cahill has used figurative language. Write them out on sticky notes or strips of paper and add to the sorting sheets. Pages 84, 195, and 229 are all good starting points.

When the children have finished sorting their finds, ask them to share which are their favourites. Why? Which words do they particularly like? What images do the phrases conjure up in their minds?

The giant angler fish, which was created by Marina's repressed emotions, is a particularly good

Loved this? Try these...

- ❖ *Sword of the Sun* by Sinéad O'Hart
- ❖ *Wild* by Ele Fountain
- ❖ *Bird Boy* by Catherine Bruton
- ❖ *The Way to Impossible Island* by Hilary McKay
- ❖ *Nettle* by Bex Hogan

character to describe using figurative language. Show the children photos or a video of a real angler fish. Which features really stand out? What emotions was the angler fish in the story experiencing (emptiness, sadness, anger, loneliness)? What alternative phrases can children think of to replace the name 'angler fish' to make the figurative sentences they are going to write more interesting? For example: *the beast, the sea monster, the vast creature.*

Give each pupil a picture of an angler fish to label, and add their sentences to. As an extension, they could use personification to describe the sea around the fish. **TP**



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

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

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[@librarygirlandbookboy](https://www.instagram.com/librarygirlandbookboy)

the class's favourite pages. Ask the children to read through carefully and underline lightly in pencil what they think are the most powerful or interesting words. They will then need to go back through and read the words they've selected. Are there any other words (conjunctions, pronouns, etc) that they need to include to make their poem more cohesive?

Once the children are happy with their collection of words, they can use a black marker pen or crayon to back out all the other words on the page, leaving only the chosen words exposed for the reader to see. You can find an illustrated example at tinyurl.com/tp-Blackout

WAX RESIST ART

Pupils could practise their watercolour skills by creating watery wax resist pictures. Ensure a sheet of white paper is orientated in portrait. Using a white crayon or wax candle, the children need to cover the top two thirds of their pages with raindrops or water droplets. In the bottom third, draw a small circle (or group of small circles) with ripples spreading out from them.

When the crayon work has been completed, the children will need to use watercolour paints to fill in the sky. Look at some images of rainy skies. What colours can the children see? Blues, greys, purples, black? Once the paint is applied, they'll see the wax figures appear.

INNOVATE

There are several ways this text could be used to create some extended pieces of narrative or descriptive writing. *The World Between the Rain* is, in part, a portal adventure – Marina is transported to an alternative world when she slides between the raindrops. You could encourage the children to think about what other watery words Marina could have discovered and who may have lived there.

Pupils could also write a different version of the story called *The World Between the Snowflakes* or *The World Within the Rainbow*. How could a character be transported there? What would it look like and who might they meet?



Comet Street Kids from Reading Planet

Meet Rav, Tess, Asha, Stefan and Finn!

Comet Street Kids is an action-packed character series written by children's authors Adam and Charlotte Guillain.

Ahead of this World Book Day and in a celebration of books, we'd like to introduce you to the Comet Street Kids.

Young readers will follow their stories as they embark on a different adventure in every book.

These expertly levelled, highly decodable books will enrich vocabulary and support topic teaching alongside phonics.



Reading Planet offers:

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Adventure TIME

Leap into a veritable volcano of verse and let pupils fearlessly fly away on their own imaginations, leaving their worries about poetry behind

KATE WILLIAMS

Poetry-writing is a tricky thing to teach – if ‘teach’ is indeed the word. Perhaps *nurture* is more apt, but even nurturing can be hard, especially with children who freeze up or freak out at the mention of verse. But there’s one approach that works for me every time: games! Rhymes and other appealing challenges can serve as a fantastic building block, drawing your class in, unleashing ideas and setting pens dashing. Once everyone’s on board, you can sail into deeper poetic waters – if the game hasn’t got you there already. Meanwhile, it will be invaluable in itself, boosting linguistic agility and confidence. Here are six of my favourite games to pick from...

1 Rhyming couplets

Starting with a one-syllable word like *hat*, elicit rhymes from your class (*bat, cat, chat, fat...*), jotting them down on the board. Now tag on a phrase – *I saw a cat, say* – and prompt for a rhyming phrase – *It was wearing a hat*. Some children struggle with word order in rhymes, so draw attention to the importance of putting the two rhyming words at the line ends, one under the other. After concocting and enjoying a few more phrasal rhymes together, keep them on their toes by swapping in a different word from the list... then two-syllable rhymes, like *lazy/crazy* or *tumble/*

grumble. Some children will already be thinking up their own rhyming couplets, and a colourful mix of concepts will be emerging. Finally, take one of their rhymes and prompt for developments. As ideas spin, go easy on rhyme rule – they’re poetry-crafting now.

2 Alliteration

Name a fictional place (Treasure Island, Fairyland, an undiscovered planet..?). Draw its imagined outline on the board and mark in a landmark, and here’s the key: make it a two-word, alliterative name, but with the second word missing: *Forest of F...*, *Lake of L...*, or *Desert of D...* In my experience, some hands will be up in an instant, the challenge understood, while others hesitate and a few children miss the alliteration cue altogether, so be sure to clarify this. It’s the only rule of the game. Suggest a few words yourself to open up the possibilities – *Forest of Flip-flops, Lake of Love, Desert of Danger and Dread*, perhaps. Now watch, as eyes widen and arms wave for attention around the room. Let your class amaze, amuse, scare and charm you with their crazy double-word names, first out loud, then on

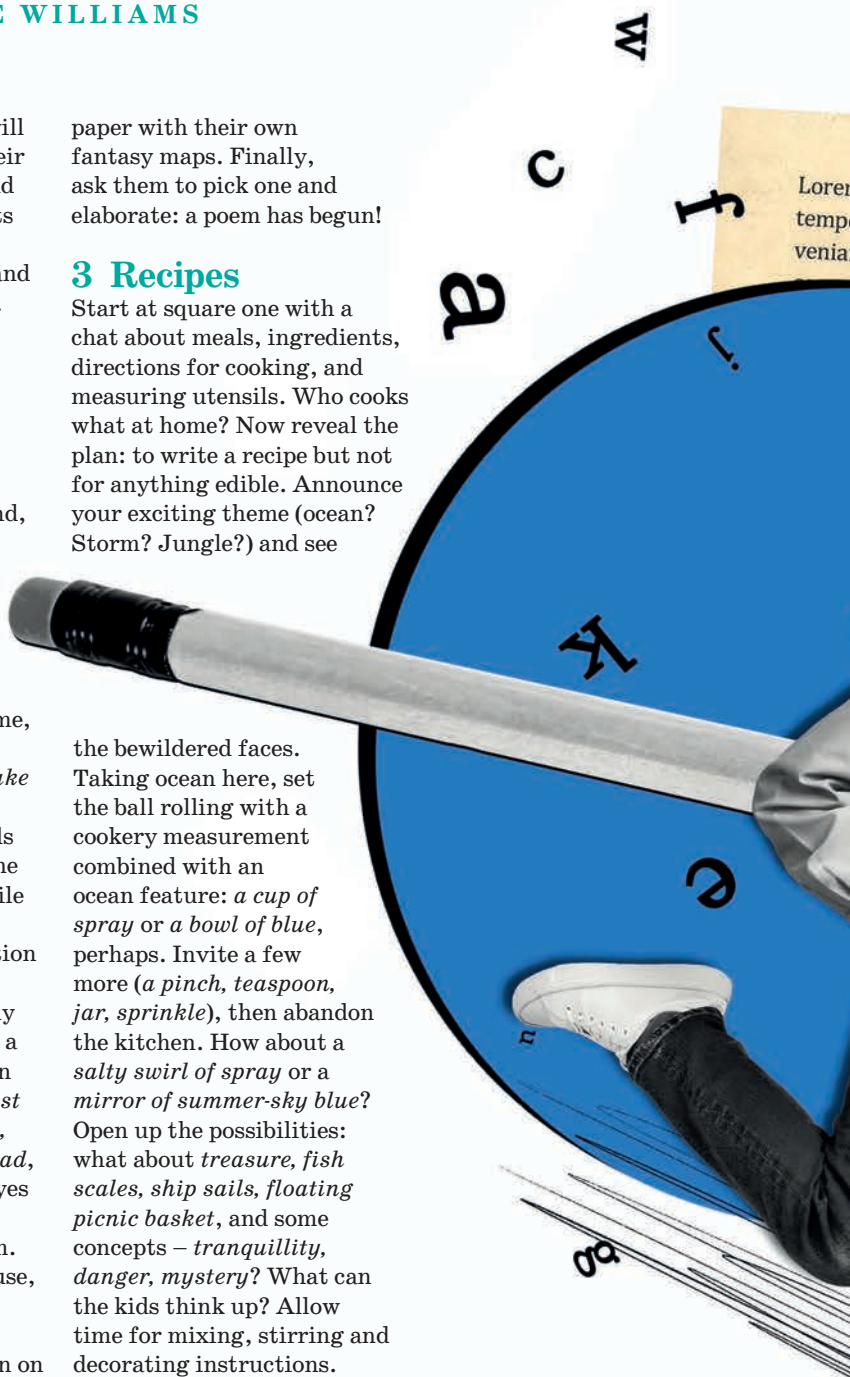
paper with their own fantasy maps. Finally, ask them to pick one and elaborate: a poem has begun!

3 Recipes

Start at square one with a chat about meals, ingredients, directions for cooking, and measuring utensils. Who cooks what at home? Now reveal the plan: to write a recipe but not for anything edible. Announce your exciting theme (ocean? Storm? Jungle?) and see

the bewildered faces. Taking ocean here, set the ball rolling with a cookery measurement combined with an ocean feature: *a cup of spray* or *a bowl of blue*, perhaps. Invite a few more (*a pinch, teaspoon, jar, sprinkle*), then abandon the kitchen. How about a *salty swirl of spray* or a *mirror of summer-sky blue*? Open up the possibilities: what about *treasure, fish scales, ship sails, floating picnic basket*, and some concepts – *tranquillity, danger, mystery*? What can the kids think up? Allow time for mixing, stirring and decorating instructions.

“Rhymes and other appealing challenges can serve as a fantastic building block, drawing your class in and unleashing ideas”



4 Haiku

Haiku are all about syllables, which can be explained as beats or sounds. I always start by helping children count the syllables in their names. Introduce the 'haiku' term and explain its basic format – i.e. three lines with varied syllable counts of 7, 5, 7. Complicated? Start slowly

with a whole-class haiku on a given theme. They'll love counting the syllables and correcting each other, while the need to get words to fit will stretch their linguistic and imaginative powers. Next, offer a partly-written haiku to complete in pairs and share a few outcomes. They're now ready to craft and count independently. If

identify the thing described. There's no required format for a riddle poem, so they're easy-peasy! Personally, I find the cinquain form handy as a loose frame to bounce off from. A cinquain has five lines, each describing a given object in a different way – through nouns, verbs, a simile, a metaphor, and an alternative word to round off (see Plazoom for a cinquain resource: tinyurl.com/tp-CinquainPlzm). Your riddles might include other details (e.g. what the mystery thing likes doing or where it can be found). And here's the best bit – revealing the answer, which might be upside down, backwards, in tiny writing, or any other obscure way the children can devise. As for themes, you can't go wrong with an all-round animal one, or a creature category like *jungle*, *farm* or *winged creatures*.

6 Action words

Action words beg to be enacted, fidgety legs beg to get up and moving, and action-word poems address both needs at once – also, it's oodles of fun. You'll need some floor space and a whiteboard to jot down the children's on-the-move

results don't quite fit the format, no worries: in this session, it's just a game!

5 Riddles

Your junior poets will get a kick out of mystifying each other with their crafty riddle clues, and listeners will equally enjoy trying to

language contributions. Taking *dragons* as an example theme, lead your group in a given movement, say *creeping*. Enact it expressively as possible together, slyly tiptoeing, claws out, teeth gnashing. Now invite other action-words to say and do – *leaping*, *flying* and *fire-breathing*, and nuanced variations: *pouncing*, *gliding*, *blazing* – keeping up the momentum. Never mind that everyone's getting breathless – that's part of the fun. Call

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tinyurl.com/tp-PiePoetry

for adverbs – *ferociously*, *mysteriously*, *crazily*, and similes – pouncing like a... what? Add in sounds, colours, scene-setting concepts, until their responses drown out your prompts. An opening line from you, such as '*The ... dragon went ... like a ... through ...*' and they'll be off.

With all these games, the best advice is to try forgetting that 'poetry' word yourself and go with the flow. You'll find plenty to celebrate, whichever activity you pick, and your class will be geared up to venture further in. Have fun! **TP**



Kate Williams is a children's poet and workshop leader for schools.

Kate's latest book, *Squeak! Squawk! Roar! Amazing Animal Poems* (£8.99, Otter-Barry Books) is out now.

Easy as ONE, TWO, THREE

Chuck old-school comprehension rigmarole out of the window, and focus on a few simple steps to improve reading, say **Christine Chen** and **Lindsay Pickton**

Have you ever had the experience of believing that you'd done a good job of developing children's reading comprehension, only for them to demonstrate that you'd been, um, optimistic, once they complete a comprehension test? It's a common tension: discussion about texts is crucial in the development of understanding, but writing answers to questions is a different challenge. It's one of the reasons Year 6 teachers in particular invest time in 'SATs prep': comprehending what you read is not the same as being able to answer test questions.

And test prep is important: when learning to drive, before the practical exam we often have a mock, so that the real thing doesn't feel completely alien. In the context of a reading comprehension test, it is important that children have had experience of the vocabulary of the longer questions (character, impression, etc), format questions (matching, sequencing, true/false, etc) and yes, writing answers. However, preparation for tests isn't the only reason for teaching children how to express their understanding in writing; in fact, if the entire KS2 testing process were abandoned, it would still be a good idea to have written

responses as part of the reading curriculum – not just in Year 6, but as soon as children can express themselves in written sentences.

Jot it down

Having children write a little as part of a reading lesson – an answer to a question, a single-sentence summary – will give you a record of their understanding, and a good idea of misconceptions to be addressed. It is also there for the children themselves to return to – it's powerful to have them revisit a written response over a sequence of reading lessons and rework their thinking as their understanding improves. And yes, it helps them write better answers in SATs tests. But more important than any of these things is the fact that written responses actually improve comprehension.

We really like the way Lemov, Driggs and Woolway put it in *Reading Rediscovered* (2016). They refer to "taking the analysis and hammering it into clear argument... writing an idea is the most rigorous and demanding way to express it... writing also requires every student to independently complete the analysis that synthesizes the lesson." We know that for some, this

language can sound a little harsh, but the essence – writing helps us to crystallise our thoughts and process our learning – is vital.

Let's be clear here: we are not advocating turning KS2 reading lessons back into traditional comprehension activities, in which children read a text and then write answers to the linked questions (this is practice at best, and often just assessment); we are talking about written responses following very careful teaching – synthesising the analysis, as Lemov, Driggs and Woolway put it. In fact, in *Reading Rediscovered*, they recommend a rigorous process of reading and discussion before introducing this expectation.

Reading Reconsidered is quite secondary phase-focused in its language and examples, but we have observed the processes in primary schools, and have helped a growing number adapt the approach to the specific needs of their pupils. Schools have such a



variety of contexts, and a major variable is how much time is given to these lessons; the length of each session, and the number per week. However, we have found the following principles, applied to whatever time is available, get good results in Year 3 upwards (and some Year 2 teachers have taken this on, part way through the year).

Three simple steps

As with everything, start with the end in mind: better comprehension of a small piece of challenging text is the goal. A written response will enhance clarity of understanding (and let you check this, of course); it will require a close-read, which almost always requires several straight-through reads ('layered reading').

1) Doing multiple reads of the section of the text you're studying allows children to understand more each time, and is probably the world's most-used comprehension strategy.

These reads can take different forms; we tend to start with a model read, so children can hear what the text is meant to sound like and begin to understand it without the demands of word-reading or pronunciation; we usually follow this with a choral read, giving a different way of encountering the text while also helping the development of fluency. Often, we'll have a third

read, which may be pupil-paired reading, a 'jump-in' (model read switching to children-only choral, and back, several times), or similar.

This allows children who would otherwise struggle with decoding or fluency to access the text more fully; by the time we start discussion, they have heard it three times.

We don't analyse during this layered approach, but between each read we prompt paired discussion on pupils' developing understanding with very open questions like "What's it about?" and "What did you notice?" We find this keeps children meaning-focused, without taking up valuable time.

2) Next, we move into a close read: a line-by-line analysis of the text, using a combination of modelled 'thinking aloud' and very quick questions ("Tell your partner what..."). The goal is to ensure that children understand the text at the literal level, with guidance

on the little inferences necessary along the way.

3) This close read is followed by the written response. We have found that recording

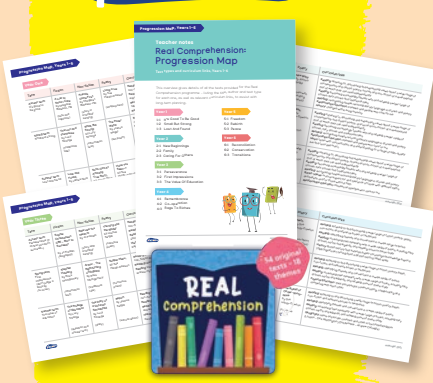
understanding at a retrieval or simple inference level each day is good way to build text comprehension towards what we prosaically call a Big Question: something that requires reference to the entire text, probably applying inference, possibly referring to a change that happens across the text.

Divide and conquer

If they've never answered this kind of question before – or have, but have always struggled with writing an answer – we've found that teaching the skills required via shared writing is extremely effective. You might even use shared writing to answer one Big Question, then pose a second

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tinyurl.com/RealComp


question of similar challenge (on the same section of text) for them to attempt independently. A crucial skill to model in this process is constant reference to the text, often with text-annotation, as many children try to work from memory or even pure imagination.


Composing and transcribing our thoughts focuses our understanding; it's a key reason for the popularity of journals in the pursuit of wellbeing – clarity is key. Making this a staple of reading lessons brings so many benefits, the most exciting of which, we believe, is crystallising comprehension. **TP**



Christine Chen and Lindsay Pickton are primary education advisors,

supporting English development nationally.

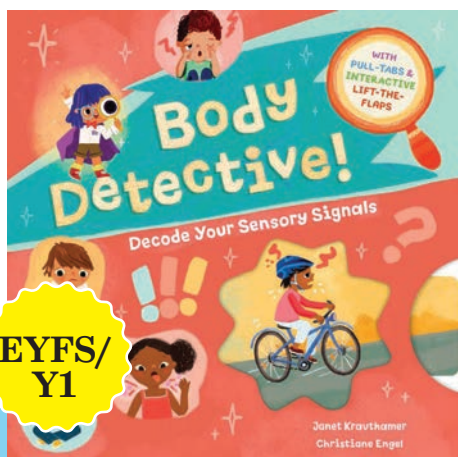
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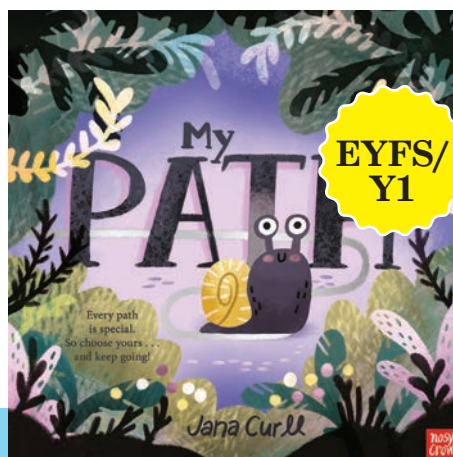
We review five new titles that your class will love



Body Detective! Decode Your Sensory Signals

by Janet Krauthamer, ill. Christiane Engel

(£14.99 HB, Barefoot Books)



My Path

by Jana Curl

(£7.99, Nosy Crow)



Drawn Onward

by Daniel Nayeri, ill. Matt Rockefeller

(£12.99 HB, Harper Alley)

We use our eyes to see and our tongue to taste, but how do we know we're feeling hungry, nervous or relaxed? Join the Body Detective to discover more about the amazing ways our brains and bodies communicate in this non-fiction board book about interoception, the internal signals that tell our brain what's going on. Nine everyday feelings are described, one per spread, with answers hidden behind sliding tabs. The visually inclusive pictures depict common situations – in the kitchen, outdoor play, performing on stage – that young readers will recognise, and two final lift-the-flap spreads provide more information. Well-designed and fun to explore, this chunky book presents intriguing facts in a child-friendly way, promoting individual 'reading for pleasure' as well as group sharing.

"Every path is special. So choose yours... and keep going!"

Every morning, Snail sets off along a path. Sometimes it's easy and they have company, sometimes they have to make their way alone. Unexpected obstacles get in the way, and Snail might need to ask for help. But as long as their path feels right, Snail keeps going, and small-scale triumphs ensue. Expressive characters, exciting visual shifts and a well-judged text make for a rewarding read. The tough beauty of the natural world is skilfully evoked, and small fingers will enjoy following Snail's silver path across each spread. *My Path* presents an important lesson in a light-hearted, easy-to-follow way, and sets the stage for creative retellings and informed discussion.

Loss, an epic journey and a creative approach to palindromes drive this story of a boy whose quest for truth delivers more than he expects. Sumptuously illustrated in graphic-novel style and drawing on video gameplay, this stunning picturebook follows a grieving boy as he struggles to ask his mum an all-important question. Battling through fantasy landscapes to a ruined tower, his mum's gift changes every aspect of his journey home, and as he retraces his steps, the boy weaves a visual whole-book palindrome. Satisfying to read as a simple visual adventure, but conceptually challenging and layered with meanings, *Drawn Onward* rewards close observation and thoughtful questioning, and will be enjoyed by a wide age-range.

→→→ **RECOMMENDED**

RESOURCES

plazoom



GRAMMAR BURST: DETERMINERS

This Year 4 resource pack provides everything you need to teach a series of five lessons on determiners, culminating in an extended writing task where children can use their grammatical understanding in context.

The pack is part of Plazoom's Grammar Burst series, and includes challenge sheets, determiners cards, a model letter and writing plan, worksheets and more. Find it at tinyurl.com/Plz-Y4determiners



Future Vision: Stories of Our Brilliant Tomorrow

by Dr Cathy Rogers and Madeleine Rogers

(£12.99 HB, Button Books)

This book's 12-year-old narrator lives in 2070. But what will our world be like then? Dysfunctional? Destroyed? Or transformed into something wonderful through technology, sustainability and teamwork? It's easy to be pessimistic about the future, but positive change is also possible – IF we can imagine our tomorrows clearly enough to motivate us to work for them. Inspired by current scientific research, a sense of wonder, and good, old-fashioned optimism, this fully-illustrated 'faction' book explores a range of topics from homes and food to education, space travel and rewilding. *Future Vision* is fascinating, timely and energising, and really could start something. Read alongside *Wildlands* (also on this page) for additional impact.



Wildlands

by Brogen Murphy

(£7.99, Puffin Books)

Twenty-five years from now, wolves and bears roam freely across a huge area of the UK. A high-speed train crosses the Wildlands, but people never enter – until the train makes a brief, unscheduled stop and two girls are left behind. With no way to call for help and almost nothing they can use, how will they get home? Convincing and affecting, this classic-in-the-making keeps things nail-bitingly real. A family secret complicates Astrid's relationship with her sister, Indie, and flawed decision-making and sheer bad luck affect every aspect of their struggle to survive. But Astrid can still see beauty in the wilderness, and determination to help Indie keeps her going. Readers will be with her all the way.

Meet the author

BROGEN MURPHY ON OUR CONNECTION WITH NATURE, AND THE WILD POWER OF IMAGINATION



What would you like teachers to know about *Wildlands*?

Wildlands is an action-packed survival story that will

appeal to a wide range of readers. But beyond the adventure, it's an important story of hope – a rare positive vision of a future where nature is thriving, and people are living in harmony with the planet.

It also gently explores themes of family, identity, and belonging, including issues around donor conception and what makes a family. It's perfect for sparking discussions about the environment, rewilding, imagining our own futures, and the diverse ways families are formed.

If you had to imbue young people with one fact about the environment, what would it be?

You are not separate from nature – you're a part of it, and it's a part of you. Humans are animals too! A thriving nature means healthier, happier lives for all of us. The world could be so much more alive, vibrant, and magical than we can even imagine. Nature is astonishingly resilient – if we give it space and opportunity, it will recover in ways that delight and amaze us.

The Wildlands in your story are a vast rewilding project in Britain. If you could visit one part of them, what would it be and why?

The joy of being a writer is that I get to visit all parts of the Wildlands in my imagination. However, if I could go in real life, I would choose... the Buffer Zone! That's the nice safe area around the edge of the project that's actually meant for people, where there are signposted walking routes, and bird hides, and marked camping spots. That way I could still enjoy the wild landscape and amazing animals, without needing to be lost and hungry and scared. At least, that's what a sensible person would do...

Wildlands by Brogen Murphy (£7.99, Puffin Books), is out on 6th March 2025

Spring school trips

Start planning your next educational adventure...



The ultimate school trip

Are you looking for the ultimate school trip destination this spring? Right this way... Gulliver's Theme Park Resorts offers unforgettable experiences across four UK locations! With nearly 10,000 young people enjoying residential stays last year, Gulliver's has become a favourite for schools. From thrilling theme park reward days to engaging workshops tailored to Key Stage 1 and 2 curriculums, there's something for every learner. Gulliver's combines fun and education, providing opportunities to explore, learn, and create lasting memories. Whether your pupils are Nature Detectives, keen to investigate the wonders of the great outdoors as they identify bugs, explore natural habitats and uncover the secrets of the forest; or if they're thrill-seeking go-getters ready to reach new heights on climbing walls, zip lines and high ropes, they will find something to whet their educational whistle. Plan your visit today and see why schools return to Gulliver's year after year. Visit groups.gulliversfun.co.uk

Operation Ouch! Brains, Bogies and You

Journey through the senses at Manchester's Science and Industry Museum. Prepare for an epic adventure of super-sized science and brilliant biology with Operation Ouch! Brains, Bogies and You, a brand-new blockbuster exhibition now open until January 2026. Explore the five familiar senses of touch, sight, hearing, taste and smell, as well as lesser-known senses that help you stay balanced, tell you when you need a wee and when it's time to sleep, through interactive games and challenges, fun facts and fascinating objects. This immersive exhibition brings the hit BBC Children's and Education TV series to life for an unforgettable experience. Get your tickets at tinyurl.com/tp-Ouch



State-of-the-art inspiration

YMCA Lakeside, in the Lake District National Park, offers a unique outdoor classroom for learning and growth. There's access to half a mile of Lake Windermere shoreline and 100 acres of private woodland. Under expert instructors, groups can choose from over 50 land- and water-based activities to develop confidence and skills. Your base is a state-of-the-art Stoller Campus with 280 beds in 54 ensuite bedrooms. Enjoy reduced rates for bookings in November to March. Plus 2025 pricing for all bookings made before May 2025 for the 2026 calendar year. Whatever your goals, YMCA Lakeside provides unforgettable opportunities to inspire and empower students.

Contact lakesidebookings@fyldecoastymca.org or call 015395 39000 to find out more.



4

Mendip Activity Centre

It's time for adventure at Mendip Activity Centre. With over 30 years of experience delivering School Activity Residentials, the Mendip team helps young people make time to disconnect. Experience real adventure whilst surrounded by one of South West England's most special natural playgrounds, the Mendip Hills National Landscape. With real outdoor activities surrounding the site's unique and comfortable accommodation, this truly is the ultimate adventure destination. School residentials and school trips are available for all primary school pupils with group sizes ranging from 30 up to 300.

For more details, visit mendip.co.uk/primary



5

Explore and learn

Give your pupils an unforgettable outdoor experience with Lost Earth Adventures! With over 15 years of experience, we offer thrilling rock climbing, caving, gorge walking, canyoning, canoeing, hiking and abseiling across the Peak District, Yorkshire Dales and Lake District. Our expert instructors provide safe, fun, and educational activities that promote teamwork, confidence, and resilience. Whether it's navigating underground caves or conquering rocky crags, every adventure is designed to inspire and challenge. Perfect for primary and secondary schools, we tailor each trip to your needs. From single-day trips to week-long residentials, take learning beyond the classroom. Book your school's adventure today at lostearthadventures.co.uk



6

Interactive insight

Twist stands for 'The Way I See Things'; through this lens, take your pupils on an exciting educational journey, exploring the fascinating science behind illusions, gaining insight into how they mould our senses and enhance our understanding of the world around us. Interactive exhibits linking to specific learning objectives within the national curriculum provide the perfect backdrop for cross-curricular learning. Developed in collaboration with expert teachers and the Science Magician, the School Resource pack includes a Twist Challenge to complete onsite, then the learning continues in the classroom with subject specific activities and illusions, building on the learning and enthusiasm gained from the trip. For more information, and to book your tickets, visit twistmuseum.com/education



7

Transformative education

Immerse your class in a vibrant world of creativity and expression with the FRAMELESS Schools' Programme. FRAMELESS London is an accessible, multi-sensory immersive art experience that offers pupils unique, transformative learning opportunities. Through four stunning galleries, pupils will engage with some of the world's greatest masterpieces like never before, exploring, learning, and finding inspiration in the power of art. Choose from mainstream tour options, including guided and flexi, or opt for our relaxed tour, depending on your educational needs. FRAMELESS also offers dedicated chilled sessions, specially designed for SEND visitors (including sensory lighting, ear defenders, easy-read/visual guides, Makaton cards and more), available in February, April, May, and August. For more information, please visit frameless.com/schools-programme

Art



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- The meaning of the term 'bird's eye perspective'
- How to create artwork using a photo/video as a point of reference
- How to create an abstract piece of artwork using colour, line, shape and space to represent rows of flowers

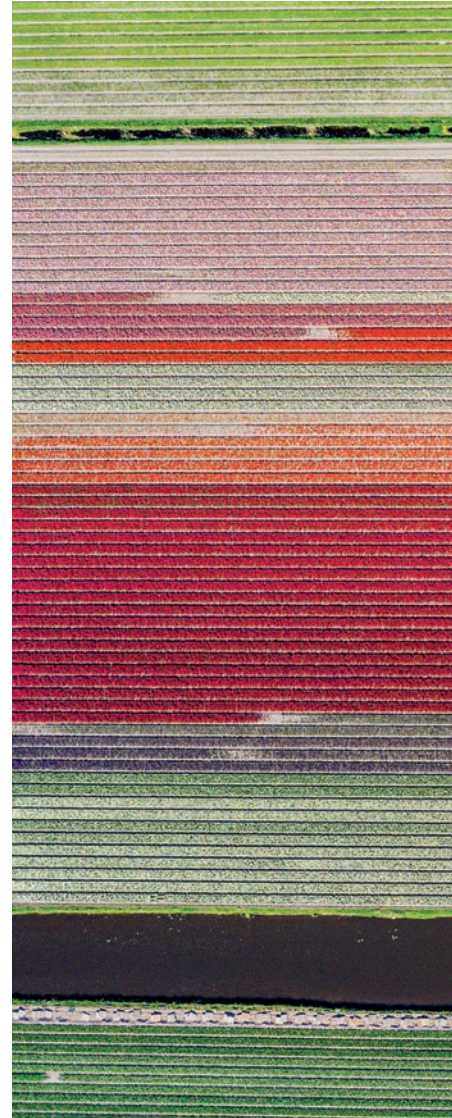
Fly over *Wicked* and wonderful fields of colour!



Defy gravity, and imagine soaring like birds over the dazzling fields of Munchkinland, with **Adele Darlington**

X @mrs_darl Instagram @mrsdarlingtonsworld

You may well have heard the pupils in your class belting out the high notes from the songs 'Popular' or 'Defying Gravity' in recent months. The blockbuster movie *Wicked* has been all over the television, news and social media since its release in December - it's certainly been hard to avoid! If you've seen the film yourself, you'll no doubt recall the stunning tulip fields, which make up the magical landscape of Oz. In this lesson, we'll use these scenes as inspiration for a colourful art activity with a touch of *Wicked* charm. After all, *everyone deserves a chance to fly...*



START HERE

Begin by sharing a selection of photographs of tulip fields with your pupils; a quick internet search should turn up plenty of images. Lay them out on tables or display them on the interactive whiteboard or via a visualiser for the whole class to see. Invite discussion on the images, focusing on colour, line, shape and space. What colours can pupils see? Can they spot patterns, shapes or lines? Draw attention to some bird's eye views of the fields. Explain that these show the view a bird would have if it flew over them, and that a bird's view of the world while it soars is very different from a human's view down on the ground.



MAIN LESSON

1 | I'M LIKE A BIRD

A fun way to begin this study is to focus on the idea of viewing things from above. Invite pupils to imagine they are a bird, swooping around the classroom looking down at its contents. What do things look like? Take a table for example; can you see its legs from above? No! From above, a table is a simple rectangle. What about a bowl, a pencil pot or a drinks bottle? They become circles when viewed from up high. Encourage pupils to draw bird's eye views of the everyday objects all around them. Can they guess what their friends are drawing? Can their friends identify the

subjects of their sketches? You could even extend this to challenging pupils to draw the whole classroom from above.

2 | FIELDS OF GOLD

Next, bring the class focus back to the fields of flowers. Look at the photographs again or watch a clip of the opening sequence of the film, where Glinda is floating above the stunning scenery of Munchkinland in her bubble. Pupils are going to be creating their own artwork inspired by this imagery, but still thinking about a view from above. Ask the children to again imagine they are soaring high in the sky. This time though, they are outside of the classroom environment and above the tulip fields of



“Invite pupils to imagine they are a bird, swooping around the classroom, looking down at its contents. What do things look like?”

This green represents the stems and leaves of the tulips. The strips of paper represent the rows of tulips in the fields. So, for this activity, pupils need a selection of papers in vibrant flower colours – reds, oranges, yellows or purples. They can either cut the strips with scissors (teachers can pre-cut these if necessary) or carefully rip them. The strips need to be glued down parallel to one another with a gap of green showing between each, until the background paper is covered from one side to the next. An alternative method is to use paint, paintbrushes and paper. To start, wash a piece of paper with green paint to create the background – a wash is created by adding water to paint, then covering the whole piece of paper with the mix. Leave to dry, then get ready to paint the stripes of colour. To add some interest, use brushes of different sizes to create rows of different thicknesses. As with the collage method, paint individual stripes of different colours in parallel with one another from one side of the paper to the next, leaving a little gap of green in between. Display the artwork together to create one large-scale field of colourful tulips!

Adele Darlington is an experienced teacher, art lead and primary art consultant. She is also the author of 100 Ideas for Primary Teachers: Art (£15, Bloomsbury).

Oz. What can they see? Get them to describe the view to the person next to them, including the colours – the greens, the pinks, the yellows, the purples and the reds; the patterns and straight lines – the bright, vibrant stripes of colour. Tell pupils to forget about the tiny details – the petals, leaves and individual flowers – instead just focus on the bright, bold stripes they can see. They are going to transfer these floral imaginings of their mind’s eyes onto canvas in one of two ways.

3 | RED AND YELLOW AND PINK...

One way for pupils to create their own tulip fields is by using a collage technique. They can make abstract interpretations of the fields by simply using strips of brightly coloured paper and glue. They will each need a sheet of green paper or card (size can depend on the scale of the desired outcome) to use as the background for their piece.



EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Bring tulips into class for a series of observational art sessions. Cut A4 paper in half lengthways and task pupils with drawing representations of the whole flower from the tip of the bud to the base of the stem. The cut paper size and shape lends itself perfectly to the long shape of the tulip flower. Pupils can create a series of artworks using different media; try drawing in ink, oil pastels, pencil or paint.
- Grab an iPad and get taking some bird’s eye photographs. Find some everyday objects and capture them from above for an interesting view of the ordinary.
- Try drawing from different perspectives. This activity has been all about bird’s eye views – why not try getting down low and drawing from a worm’s eye view?

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What made you choose certain colours for your artwork?
- How does your artwork make you feel?
- Would changing the colours affect this feeling?
- Do you think you could represent a bird’s eye view of anything else in this way?

MFL



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- A short poem, rhyme or song in the target language, by heart
- The accurate pronunciation of words they may not have encountered before
- The meaning of key words or phrases in the target language
- How to use simple apps to sequence still pictures into a short animation
 - How to add narration in the target language

Repeat after me: luces, cámara, acción!



Animate the budding linguists in your class by making your own stop motion movies, with **Ellie Chettle Cully**

@ECCMFL

myprimarylanguagesclassroom.com

From singing times tables to poems reminding us of the number of days in each month, harnessing the power of rhythm and rhyme really seems to make learning stick. I'm sure you can still remember one or more of the ditties that you learned in foreign language lessons at school, even though it may have been years ago. In this lesson, pupils will learn a song, rhyme or poem in the target language and then bring it to life through their very own animated movie. Clapper boards at the ready, it's time to create stop-motion magic!



START HERE

Prior to the lesson, choose a short song, poem or rhyme in the target language for the children to learn. Ideally, this should be linked to the topic you are currently covering in class, to support pupils in memorising new vocabulary and structures. Something of around four to six lines long – including some kind of action on which pupils will be able to base their animation – is perfect. A good source of inspiration is mamalisa.com, where you can view songs, poems and rhymes in many different languages with an English translation, alongside a recording in the target language. Songs and rhymes are categorised by type, country, and even different holidays and occasions, so there should be something for every class.



MAIN LESSON

1 | LANGUAGE DETECTIVES

Begin by presenting the song, poem or rhyme to your pupils orally. Ask the children to use their 'language detective' skills to listen out for any words they may recognise, either from previous lessons or units, or because they are cognates. Cognates are words from different languages that share the same roots and therefore may look or sound similar or the same. An excellent way of assessing what the children can already understand is by getting them to demonstrate any words they recognise physically, for example by putting their

finger on their nose or creating a line of counters or tower of cubes when they hear a word they think they know.

Then, give them the chance to look at a written version of the text, working with a learning partner to generate further meaning from the words. This is an excellent opportunity to teach the important skill of using a bilingual dictionary. Colour-coding the text can be helpful at this point, using three different colours for the following categories: 'words I already know', 'words that are cognates' and 'words I need to look up in the dictionary'. This ensures that pupils understand that it isn't necessary to look up every word in the dictionary and encourages them to draw



“Rhythm and rhyme really seem to make learning stick”

spend some time designing and making the set for their animation; a fantastic way to promote cross-curricular learning with subjects such as design technology.

Once the children are ready, they can begin taking the photos which will eventually form their animation. Remind them of the importance of keeping the camera in the same position, only moving each character slightly each time. A tripod to hold the device steady can be helpful, but pieces of modelling clay on either corner is a good low-cost alternative.

3 | EDITING AND NARRATING

When the children have taken all their photos, it’s time to paste them together. You can do this using iMovie on iPads, or with the Stop Motion Studio app, which is free and available on Android and Apple.

Once pupils are happy with the animation they have created, the next step is to add the narration. Children will need to watch the final animation through multiple times to practise timing their recitation of the poem, song or rhyme, and make sure it matches with what is going on in the animation. Once they are ready, pupils can add the narration to the animation and share the results with the rest of the class for evaluation. Et voila! Your very own movies. You could even hold a premiere for families or other classes.

Ellie is a French teacher and languages and international lead at a Leicester primary. Her passion is creating a buzz around language-learning through creative lessons, international partnerships, trips and clubs.

on prior learning. After this, children should have the gist of the text and be able to explain it in English. Now, it’s time to memorise the text through choral repetition and paired practice.

2 | BRINGING WORDS TO LIFE

Once your pupils are confident in the meaning of the text, and have committed it to memory, it’s time to get creative. Explain that stop-motion animation is a filming method by which objects or models are moved in very small increments, with each movement captured as a photograph. These photographs are then pasted together to give the impression of continuous movement. Children will

probably be familiar with films such as *Wallace and Gromit* or *Chicken Run*, but it may be helpful to show them a short example of a stop-motion animation, such as *Under the Winter Sun*, freely available on YouTube (tinyurl.com/tp-WinterSun).

Give pupils an opportunity to discuss how they would like to animate the poem, song or rhyme they have been learning. Are they going to create their own characters or use puppets or stuffed animals? What will the background look like? Do they need any props? Creating a simple storyboard for the animation helps to scaffold the thinking process. Depending on the amount of time you have, pupils can

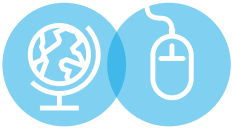
EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Give more confident pupils the chance to choose their own song or rhyme on which to base a stop-motion animation.
- Encourage pupils to create a stop-motion animation using a song in their home or community language to share with their class or the rest of the school. This would work really nicely as part of whole-school Languages Day. You could even invite families in for a viewing, or play the films in assembly for the rest of the school to see.
- Model how pupils can add their video to a class Padlet (padlet.com) and create a virtual gallery showcasing their creativity. Share the link with parents and carers, or display it on your school website. If an in-person premiere isn’t practical for your class, this could serve well as a digital version, instead.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Which words or phrases in the target language do you already recognise?
- Can you spot any cognates?
- What does the word _____ mean in this context?
- Which words might you need to add emphasis to when reciting?



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- To use tablets and AR apps like Halo AR to visualise and interact with learning materials
- To explain the stages of volcanic eruptions and their connection to divergent plate boundaries
- To interpret digital information and apply it to geographic concepts

See volcanic eruptions in action with AR



Engage and excite pupils by using an app to truly bring volcanoes to life, with **Karl McGrath**

[@MRMICT](#) linktr.ee/mrmict

Augmented reality has become a game-changer in the classroom. In this lesson, we're going to use the Halo AR app (haloar.app) to uncover and visualise the processes and mysteries of volcanic eruptions. A few years ago, I discovered the potential of AR within teaching while using an app called Aurasma – now sadly discontinued – and realised how it could be an incredible engagement tool. I was able to make the invisible visible, adding excitement and transforming abstract ideas into something tangible and memorable. Hopefully, today you'll experience the same...



START HERE

I usually start with retrieval linking back to previous learning. Ask the children what they know about volcanoes, and use a simple retrieval task like displaying images of Iceland's map on your interactive whiteboard or using a visualiser, with the tectonic boundaries marked (there's a simple one on Wikipedia at tinyurl.com/tp-IcelandPlates). Ask pupils to describe what they see, and then predict why Iceland is a hotspot for volcanic activity. You can also provide pairs or groups with printouts of the map for annotation. To ensure the AR is an integral part of the lesson (rather than an add-on), encourage them to write down questions they'd like the AR to help them answer. This light introduction sets the stage for curiosity, while allowing all children to engage.



MAIN LESSON

1 | BEHIND-THE-SCENES PREP

You'll need to prepare your Halo AR materials in advance. The app is completely free and takes only a few taps to set up. You will need a video or animated GIF (e.g. from Giphy) to add to the Halo AR app (e.g. mantle movement, magma rising, lava flows). I've found a few examples at tinyurl.com/tp-VolcanoGIFs

Next, ensure you have selected trigger images to pair with your GIFs. The app has excellent tutorial videos at tinyurl.com/tp-HaloHowTo but essentially, whenever a trigger image is scanned by

your device, your chosen GIF or video will play. So, for example, you could print a picture of some lava coming out of a volcano, then whenever you or your pupils scan the picture with the Halo AR app, your chosen video or GIF will play (such as lava flowing).

Print out a series of trigger images, ensuring each one shows a distinct part of the eruption process, and display them around your classroom. There are some good free images on Freepik, you just need to remember to add an attribution: tinyurl.com/tp-VolcanicProcess

2 | INTRODUCE AR AND THE MISSION

Tell the class: "Today, we're geographers, studying

“Using AR, I was able to make the invisible visible, turning abstract ideas into something tangible”



Iceland’s volcanoes. Using AR, you’ll explore the stages of a volcanic eruption!”

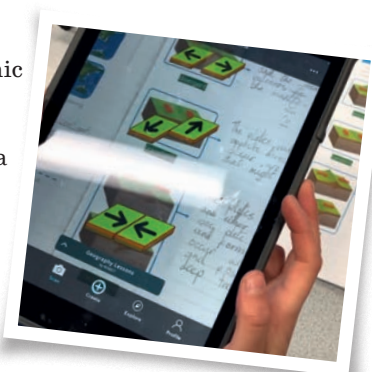
Demonstrate how to scan trigger images using iPads (or whatever devices you use in your classroom) and show them what comes up on the screen when you scan it, to model what they’ll see and how they should take notes.

Next, set the children off in pairs or small groups to scan the images. Each AR visualisation should illustrate a stage of volcanic activity, such as plates moving apart or magma chambers filling. Include a question or challenge for each stage, for example, “What might happen next? Why?”. You could also organise the children into trios to allow for

greater engagement, and assign the following roles:

- *Scanner*: uses the iPad to access AR content
- *Recorder*: takes notes or sketches key observations
- *Clarifier*: repeats notes, asks questions and ensures everyone understands

Rotate roles to ensure everyone gets a chance to try different parts of the process.



3 | DEBRIEF AND CLASS DISCUSSION

Bring the children back together to discuss their experiences of using the app, and how it affected their understanding of volcanic processes. Some questions I used in my lesson included:

- What did the AR show you?
- How does this help us understand Iceland’s volcanic landscape?
- What surprised you the most?
- How has the AR experience improved your understanding?

Project the AR visuals onto the board (if possible) to consolidate understanding and link it back to the map of Iceland’s volcanic plates that you used in the starter activity.

Finally, tell the class that now they’ll take part in a written or digital task (the medium is up to you), in which they should label and annotate a hexagon concept map, linking the AR content to specific stages of a volcanic eruption. You can see an explainer for how I use the maps at tinyurl.com/tp-ConceptMaps and download a template at tinyurl.com/tp-ConceptMapTemplate

Make sure pupils are using key vocabulary such as *magma*, *vent*, *lava*, *mantle*, and *boundary*.

Karl McGrath is a Year 6 teacher, curriculum task design lead, and computing lead. He is an NCCE facilitator, runs a CAS community of practice, and is the founder of the Primary Task Design Facebook Group.

EXTENDING THE LESSON



- **Create with AR**: challenge children to design their own AR scavenger hunt or interactive diagrams for tectonic processes. Can they choose appropriate trigger images and link them to their explainer GIFs? Challenge them to make sure the images are in the correct order for the process, and think about which elements they might want to illustrate.
- **Geothermal energy study**: explore Iceland’s use of geothermal energy and its connection to volcanic activity. Information is available on the Icelandic government website (tinyurl.com/tp-GovIcelandEnergy) and you can also find an explainer article on Wikipedia (tinyurl.com/tp-GeothermallcelandWiki).
- **Cross-curricular link**: integrate AR into a science lesson on the rock cycle or energy resources.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- How does AR help us understand complex geographical processes?
- What makes Iceland unique in terms of geography?
- Could AR replace traditional geography tools? Why or why not?
- What other subjects could benefit from AR technology?

MUSIC 

Spring Chicken the Musical

Out of the Ark Music



Don't chicken out, and try an all-singing, all-dancing show that will really ruffle feathers this Eastertime...

AT A GLANCE

- A fun-filled spring musical
- 11 scenes with speaking and non-speaking parts
- 10 songs with lyrics, music and musical score
- Words on Screen song player
- eSongbook bursting with resources including score PDFs, audio MP3s, lyric sheets, character lists, costume suggestions, and more!

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



How do you like your eggs? Sunny side up? Scrambled? Poached, boiled, coddled, pickled? Or best of all, covered in chocolate? Yes, Easter is just around the corner and that means it is time to start thinking about your spring or leavers production. Eggs-pectations will be high but there is no need to run around like a headless chicken, because we've got award-winning Out of the Ark Music to save the day with a tailor-made Easter special.

'Spring Chicken the Musical' is all-round hertainment bursting with crackin' tunes awash with creative skill, jocularly and musical eggs-cellence for ages 7–11. The action centres on the latest singing sensation Chickalita, her rise to fame and why her plans to start a choir weren't welcomed by some of her farmyard peers. Singing is banned because a report says it has an adverse effect on egg quality! But Chickalita hatches a plan to escape to the city with the help of a cat so she can carry on doing what she loves most. Her road to stardom isn't smooth but after a few scrapes on the streets, she gets spotted by a talent agent who books the acts at Caesar's Palace.

If there is one thing those good eggs at Out of the Ark Music do so well then it is to make singing as accessible as possible for primary school children, and this resource is no exception.

It contains a wonderful collection of a dozen songs with uber-imaginative lyrics including a 24-carrot Bunn E. Bugs' 'Beatbox Rap', 'Chickalita', and 'What Came First?'. One or two even have a bit of a panto vibe to them! There's also the Spring Chicken song, a real Easter earworm, along with a Spring Chicken dance and a BSL signing video that you can have a go at signing along to!

All the songs on this resource are sung by children with crystal clear voices supported by top quality musical production, which is diamond-like in its clarity and precision. Choreography ideas for dances are also suggested.

Out of the Ark's exceptional song player Words on Screen™ software means you are able to display lyrics on any whiteboard, computer screen or interactive touchscreen. This brilliant feature takes the hassle out of learning songs; just press play and the words synchronise with the music. Words on Screen™ comes with every purchase of an online pack and is supplied in an eSongbook format.

If you sign up for their subscription platform called Sparkyard, then you are able to send songs home to your children so they can rehearse and practise at their leisure.

But the songs need a script and Spring Chicken has one that will certainly ruffle audience feathers – in a good way! There are a whopping 42 speaking parts and at least 11 essential non-speaking parts with some VIPs (Very Important Poultry). However, the cast size can be reduced, and suggestions are provided as to how you can best manage this along with an editable script so you can make minor changes accordingly.

Locations for the action take place in Caesar's Palace, a barn, a farmyard, the city, Scallywag Alley and the backstreets. This musical is an all-round blast of fun full of comedy moments, so be sure to let your audience know they might need their hen-kerchiefs to wipe away their tears!

The witty script will certainly be a crowd-pleaser, but it is the songs and the singing that will steal the show and bring the whole school community together in a spirit of music-making.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ Im-peck-able!
- ✓ Peck-tacular!
- ✓ Egg-ceptional!
- ✓ Wing-derful!
- ✓ Hen-credible!
- ✓ Egg-squisite!
- ✓ Cluck-tastic!
- ✓ Poultry in motion!

UPGRADE IF...

...you are looking for a special spring production with high production values that is full of fun and great singing.

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LITERACY 

New Big Cat information books



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

AT A GLANCE

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



REVIEWED BY: MIKE DAVIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

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

UPGRADE IF...

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Find out more at tinyurl.com/tp-BigCatInfo

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?

Perfect happiness in my job is the knowledge that I have had an impact on a child's personal development and that they leave our school prepared to be a citizen of the world; whether that's holding the door open for others, making someone smile or speaking up. We spend a minimum of six hours a day with the children in our schools, and between the curriculum, pastoral care, extracurricular activities and the interactions we have, there are countless opportunities to shape their character. Seeing them grow into confident and responsible individuals is the most rewarding part of my job.

2 What is your greatest fear at work?

Teaching a book I haven't read beforehand! In my first job as a children's librarian, I had to have a good working knowledge of our books and an understanding of each genre and style. This helps me to recommend reads for children. I also enjoy planning the places where I stop the reading to ask a question or create a cliffhanger. My mouth went dry typing those sentences, it is a genuine fear!

3 What is your current state of mind?

Right now, I'm in a space of listening and learning. In my Trust, we have nine nurseries and are thinking comprehensively about early excellence in English to ensure all can succeed in writing. I am in the process of writing the associated long- and medium-term plans, which involves listening and taking stock of current practice,

gathering feedback from educators and researching best practice in English. It is a privilege to work closely with children and educators across our Trust, plus, they keep me on my toes with their energy and jokes!

4 What do you consider the most overrated teacher virtue?

The need for perfectionism and accuracy, particularly when teaching English. It is crucial to the learning process in reading and writing to acknowledge that there is not always one answer. That is the beauty of the subject. Multiple perspectives are important in the classroom, as they encourage children to think deeply about their own opinions. It also helps to reduce the fear of being 'wrong'.

5 On what occasion do you lie to your class?

I usually have to lie when there is a wasp or bee in the classroom. I have, however, mastered the art of removing said insects with a cup without disrupting the lesson. I usually tell the children I am, 'checking something outside' or 'making a quick cup of tea'...

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

I decided to ask the children, and this is what they said:

"Have you included a full stop? A conjunction? A capital letter?"

"Team stop."

"Right, off you go."

"Wow, listen to this..." Usually when I am reading work aloud.

"Ooh, I love that book!"

7 What do you consider your greatest teaching achievement?

I think it has to be being a visible leader who is hard of hearing. I wear bilateral hearing aids and in the last year, my hearing levels dropped from mild-moderate hearing loss, to moderate-severe on both sides. This has presented a huge challenge, as there was a time when my hearing aids needed repairing and I had to rely on others to be my ears. Fortunately, I have always worked with incredibly supportive people and the children are fantastic at championing inclusion. It has reinforced the importance of creating belonging for all in our schools.

8 What is your most treasured teaching possession?

When I was training to teach, my mentor gifted me a special box from Paperchase with instructions to fill it with letters, cards or mementos so that I can revisit them time and time again. Sometimes it's nice to reach for a cup of herbal tea and a pair of slippers, and reminisce on the highlights of the last 10 years.



NAME: Holly Dyson

JOB ROLE: Deputy headteacher and director of English at Inspire Partnership Multi Academy Trust
EXTRA INFO: Member of The English Association, former children's librarian, and avid reader

plazoom

Years
1-6

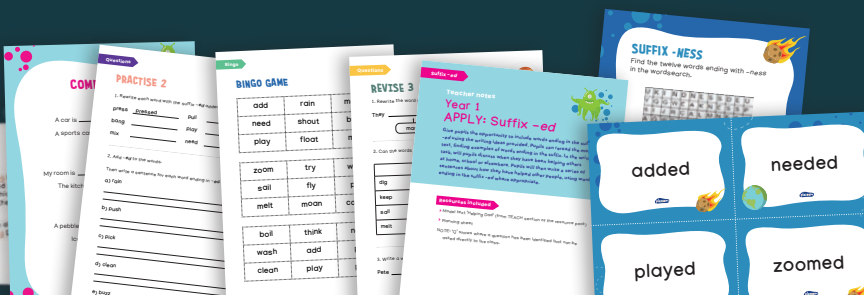
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