

# Teach Early Years

OUTSTANDING ADVICE FOR  
FOUNDATION STAGE PROFESSIONALS

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## CALM & COSY

How to be more 'hygge'

## BACK TO BASICS

What kids learn from  
pegs and shoes

## FINE MOTOR WORKOUTS

From porridge to  
pom-poms

## David Wright:

Why your team  
needs more men

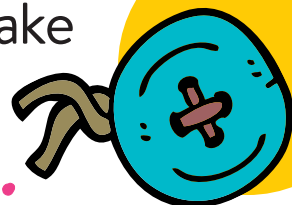
# Be the boss

10 essential skills you need to lead

## TO THE TINKER TABLE!

Create a space to mess,  
mix and make

Plus...



TOP TECH FOR THE  
CLASSROOM

Talk tips  
to boost  
progress,  
p26





CARLEY SEFTON IS THE CEO OF LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPES.

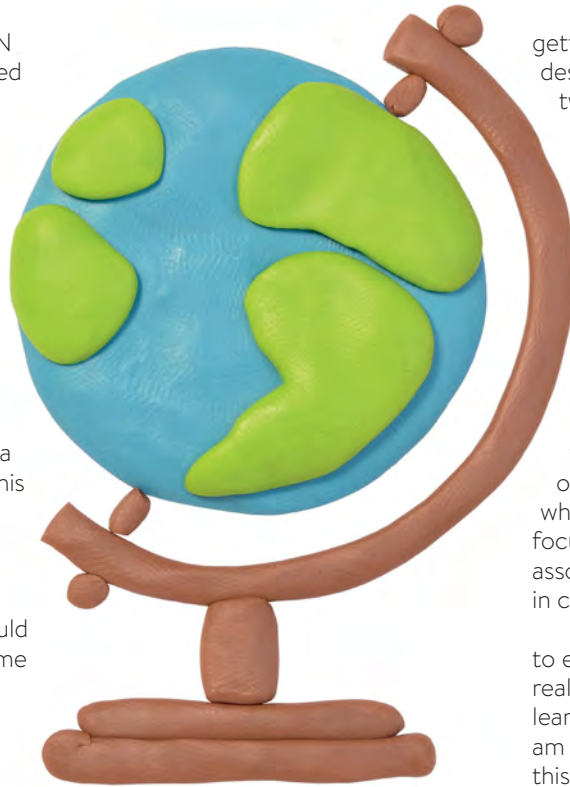
# HOW DOES EARLY YEARS *differ in Europe?*

*Passion and commitment are omnipresent, but the focus and priorities of educators can vary considerably, says **Carley Sefton**...*

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN the varied ways teaching is approached around the world. For a long time I believed that 'children are children' and that there is no need to teach them differently just because of their nationality, but the more time I spend in settings overseas, the more I appreciate the importance of understanding the cultural differences that inform the way children learn.

While working in a high school in Hong Kong I asked a class, "What is your favourite scene?" – referring to a play we had just watched. In the UK this type of question would normally result in a lot of hands up and shouting out, but I was met with respectful silence. A teacher later explained to me that the children would not give an answer until they'd had time to consider their opinion and would only contribute if they felt they had something valid to say – a very different style to the UK and US schools I had experienced.

Over the last two years, Learning through Landscapes has been lucky enough to be involved in an early years research project called 'Take Me Out', which looks at how our approach to outdoor learning in early years settings differs across Slovakia, Estonia, Denmark, England and Scotland. As you can imagine, when approaching a project like this there are some basic differences that have to be addressed. One of the surprising things we discovered quickly is that early years staff are all called different things! Staff in Estonia and Slovakia are always referred to as teachers, with settings in Estonia being structured much more like the UK's primary schools (a degree level-qualified teacher and classroom assistant in each class), while in Slovakia we saw ratios of one teacher to 20 children. Denmark refers to staff as



pedagogues while in the UK we favour the term 'practitioners'.

The resourcing of outdoor spaces also differs hugely: as in the UK, the Danish are placing increasing importance on loose-parts play, open-ended resources and enabling creativity in their provision; this has had an impact on how settings are resourced and how they set out their outdoor space. The Slovaks are very well resourced but focus a lot more on toys and access to information technology.

The approach to sleep became a really interesting area of discussion. Here, the UK is very flexible, working to the needs of the child, whereas the Danes expect that if a child needs sleep they will find time on the bus on the way home! Slovakia, on the other hand, puts much more emphasis on the importance of sleep, with all children

getting into their PJs and beds in a designated 'sleeping room' for at least two hours after lunch.

Risk taking proved a passionate area of debate. Unsurprisingly, safeguarding was a priority within the UK and we were much more cautious about the use of fire in settings than in some other countries (especially Slovakia, where campfire culture is embedded into family life from a young age). However, the Slovaks were amazed at the way the Danes grew and harvested their own food with the children. Estonia, where outdoor learning is in its infancy, focused a lot more on the risks associated with taking children outdoors in cold and icy weather.

This project has seen the team travel to each of the countries involved to really begin to understand what outdoor learning looks like across Europe, and I am delighted that the outcome of all this work has been made into a free online book and website full of resources and lesson ideas to help get you outside as much as possible (visit [takemeoutproject.eu](http://takemeoutproject.eu)).

I have really enjoyed beginning to understand how and why things are done so differently across Europe, but I can honestly say the most important thing I have learned is that the passion and commitment of early years staff across the countries we worked with is amazing, and that surely means that the education of the youngest members of our society is in safe hands.

**LtL is a UK charity  
dedicated to enhancing outdoor  
learning and play for children. For  
services and resources for early years  
settings, visit [ltl.org.uk](http://ltl.org.uk)**



ADELE DEVINE IS A TEACHER AT PORTESBERY SCHOOL & DIRECTOR OF SEN ASSIST.

## SEND SUPPORT

# Why it helps to compromise

When faced with challenging behaviours, giving a little ground can make all the difference, says **Adele Devine**...



*Situations that seem simple to the majority can cause the child with special needs overwhelming anxiety.*

IMAGINE YOU ARE SIGHTSEEING IN SNOWY AUSTRIA. You reach the top of a very steep slope and your guide hands you a snowboard, saying, "Meet you at the bottom!" And then they snowboard off. You had not expected this and had not planned to learn to snowboard. You watch as others skillfully descend, making it look so easy, but the idea absolutely terrifies you. How might you feel?

Situations that seem simple to the majority can cause the child with special needs or autism overwhelming anxiety, fear and frustration. Maybe they don't have the language to express how they are feeling, but they need to find a way to let people know. If a child is refusing to join the group or struggling to follow rules and routines then have a brainstorm with your team. See if there is a way of finding some middle ground – as Hedy Lamarr once observed, "Compromise and tolerance are magic words."

### KEY QUESTIONS

When faced with challenging behaviours, ask yourself the following questions:

If the child is...

- **Climbing on furniture** – is there something they can climb?
- **Refusing to follow transitions** – where do they want to be?
- **Trying to get to something** – when can they get it?
- **Not joining the group** – could they join later?
- **Leaving the group** – what motivates them to stay?
- **Not sitting when others do** – is sitting essential to joining in?
- **Throwing the toys** – what toys motivate them to play?
- **Staying in one area** – what makes that area special?
- **Not following adult agenda** – is the plan clear and achievable?
- **Hurting other children** – what reaction are they seeking?



Simple compromises or small changes to the way you do things, such as those suggested above, can make all the difference as the case studies opposite illustrate...