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**SPECIAL
ISSUE**

ISSUE: 2.1

The A to Z of inclusion

How to make your
classroom SEND-friendly

Let kids
**learn from
risky play**

JAN DUBIEL

*“Beware tests in
early years!”*

**Talking
tragedy**

Should you discuss
bad news?

**ADMIN
OVERLOAD**

Time-saving tips
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Hello!



Welcome to *Teach Primary 3 to 7* issue 2. We have lots to share with you this time round, but a fair slice of it concerns ‘play’.

For some, when applied to young children, this is a word that conjures up visions of chaos – children running around, making a mess and generally doing little of educational

consequence. Clearly, no good teacher wants their classroom to play host to a howling mob (unless they’re howling in role), but proper play-based learning is meat and drink to those in early years settings – and as Richard Gerver argues on page 10, the best of these have much to teach the whole education sector about developing dynamic learners...

Perhaps the debate around play relates to a misunderstanding of the term. On page 28 Anna Ephgrave sets out a clear definition linked to Ferre Laevers’ levels of involvement, and several examples of purposeful play led entirely by pupils. This, she argues, is how children learn best, whether they are in nursery, Reception or Year 1. A little earlier, Ben White shares his experience of deconstructed role play (page 24). Providing children with the freedom to experiment, and the time and space to take full advantage, can yield impressive results, he explains, with boys, in particular, in line to benefit.

In both cases, as well as with Alistair Bryce-Clegg’s guide to continuous provision in Year 1 on page 26, teachers are required to take a step back and facilitate as children lead – this takes careful planning, but, our contributors would argue, it’s well worth it. We’d love to hear if you agree.

Jacob

Jacob Stow, Editor

@editorTeachEY

POWERED BY...



RICHARD GERVER

is an author, speaker and broadcaster, and believes early years classrooms hold the key to nurturing dynamic learners.

“The more we fail and learn, the more our resilience grows”

p10



JAN DUBIEL

is national director at Early Excellence, and argues there’s no shortcut to accurate early years assessment.

“There’s a tradition of ignoring reality for the sake of convenience”

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LOUISE JOHNS-SHEPHERD

is chief executive of the CLPE, whose research shows that sharing great

books makes great writers.

“Let them lift the words off the printed page to enrich their own written work”

p62

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PUBLISHED BY:

Maze Media (2000) Ltd, 25 Phoenix
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Essex, CO2 8JY. Tel: 01206 05900



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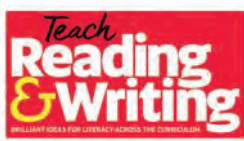
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Breaktime

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Baseline's back, alright

Stop the presses – it has just been announced that the government will introduce a new “teacher-mediated assessment” in the Reception year from 2020, in order to provide a baseline measure to “better track pupils’ progress during primary school”. The DfE has said that the assessment will be developed “in conjunction with the teaching profession” – what that means in practice remains to be seen. The EYFS Profile will also be “improve[d]”, with new support guidance provided to “reduce the burden for teachers”.

In the same announcement it was also confirmed that KS1 tests and assessments will be made non-statutory from 2023.



MAKE A MASK!



Celebrate WWF's Wear It Wild Day while highlighting the plight of the African lion, with this KS1 activity...

What you need

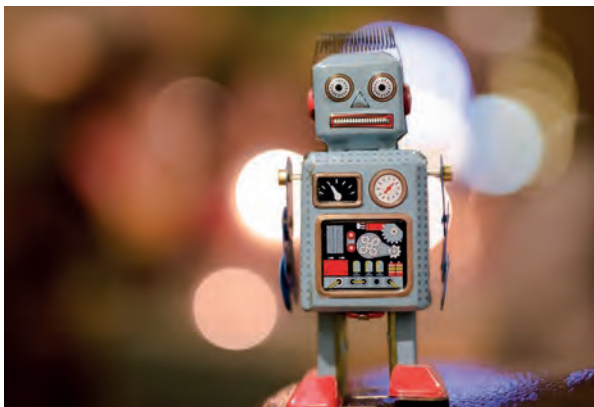
- A collection of recycled cardboard packaging
- Colourful tissue paper
- Sugar paper
- PVA glue
- Strong glue or tape

- 1 Collect some recycled materials and packaging. Egg boxes, milk bottles and cereal boxes work well.
- 2 Arrange your materials until you have made a lion face. Take time over this to make sure you are happy with your results.
- 3 Stick down the lion features with strong glue and leave to dry.
- 4 Have fun decorating with pieces of colourful tissue and other craft materials. Make your lion mask as colourful as you like!
- 5 Cut strips of sugar paper and wrap them around a pencil. Hold them there for a minute and unfurl. Repeat this and then glue the curly strips to your mask along with some wool to create a mane. Roarsome!

Wear It Wild 2017 takes place on 20 October. For activities, curriculum-linked resources and fundraising ideas, visit wwf.org.uk/wearitwild

Programmed to teach

Warning: 'inspirational' robots are set to begin replacing puny flesh educators within the next decade – at least according to Sir Anthony Seldon, vice chancellor of the University of Buckingham. Technological advances promise more personalised teaching and an end to setting, and will render “traditional academic teaching all but redundant” Seldon has suggested. Reports that the Reception classes of the future will be presided over by friendly (and probably de-lasered) Johnny 5 types are yet to be confirmed.



43%

TEACHERS WHO FEAR THEIR SCHOOL'S BREAKFAST CLUB MAY SOON BE FORCED TO CLOSE BECAUSE OF A LACK OF FUNDING.

Look ahead | Book ahead

NAHT PRIMARY CONFERENCE

24 November 2017

Aimed at all leaders in the primary sector, NAHT's conference will this year have the theme of 'Leading for Excellence in changing times (doing more with less)'. Seven workshops will cover the likes of comparative judgement, teacher workload and emotional wellbeing, while poet Michael Rosen is amongst the keynote speakers. For more information, visit naht.org.uk

OSIRIS EARLY YEARS CONFERENCE

1 December 2017

Best practice, practical strategies, policy and research will all be on the table at Osiris Educational's Early Years Conference, which will take place in London. Speakers will include Professor Iram Siraj OBE, Dr Janet Rose and Richard Gerver, who writes in this issue on page 10. For 20% off your ticket, quote OsirisEY17 when booking via 0808 160 5 160 or visit osiriseducational.co.uk



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8 WAYS to succeed in early years

Just embarked on a career teaching in the Foundation Stage? Allow **Claire Farman** to share some helpful pointers

1 | GET ORGANISED

Any Foundation Stage teacher will tell you their cupboards are full of scribbled observations and sticky notes with details of the wonderful things they've seen or heard from their class. Think ahead about how to store your paper evidence; clearly divide and label files by pupil names or curriculum areas to help you pull together all of these more informal documents at the end of the year, even if the setting also makes use of digital observation tools.

2 | PACE YOURSELF

Hopefully, you're brimming with creative ideas and raring to get started. Remember, though, starting school is a daunting (if exciting) time for children and parents, and we can have a tendency to be a little overambitious in our plans for those first few weeks.

Rather than filling your plans with an unrealistic amount of activities, concentrate on quality learning opportunities and allow time to interact meaningfully with every child. Crucially, try to keep a firm cap on the amount of work you do out of school hours in order to avoid burning out.

3 | ASK THE CHILDREN

How should your outdoor area look? What construction resources should you provide? In Foundation the questions seem never-ending, but you don't have to come up with all the answers alone.

Don't be afraid to speak to the children and take on board their ideas about everything, from what they'd like the environment to look like, to what they'd like to learn about or how to organise snack-time.

4 | WRAP UP!

Anybody working in early years will tell you that lots of children simply love to work and play in the outside area, whatever the weather. Activities such as catching snowflakes on coloured paper, filling buckets with rain or whizzing scooters around an obstacle course all have one thing in common – you're going to need a decent coat. Keep waterproofs, hats and gloves in school, layer up alongside the children and join in the fun.



CLAIRE FARMAN
is EYFS
Coordinator at
Nottingham
High School.

5 | READ A STORY

With fast-paced days and a whole curriculum to think about, it's easy to bypass the traditional daily story time. Ensure you dedicate a timeslot to sharing picture books, and preserve it as far as possible. After all, it's guaranteed there will be few other times when your class are as calmly engaged as when they're listening to a favourite story. It's the perfect way to end the day.

6 | ACCEPT HELP

You've chosen a role that's physically demanding, mentally tiring and, at times, emotionally draining. Let people lighten the load where possible. Lots of settings foster great relationships with parents or carers who are keen to volunteer or to support trips. Experienced colleagues may offer tried-and-tested advice, and you may even be lucky enough to work directly alongside a teaching assistant. Take these opportunities where they arise rather than feeling that you are expected to do it all alone. Divide tasks appropriately and accept that successful classrooms are never a one-man show.

7 | EMBRACE UNPREDICTABILITY

When working in Foundation, even the best laid plans can go awry. There's no accounting for children having accidents, lesson plans falling flat or technology failing. Sometimes, you simply have to think on your feet. Have a bank of trusted games, songs and activities ready to use on such occasions. Don't worry if the role play area you've spent hours creating isn't used exactly as you intended – some of the most meaningful learning stems from allowing the children to explore their interests, even if the activity turns out to be nothing like you originally intended.

8 | HAVE FUN!

The very best way of getting to know your children is undoubtedly through embracing their carefree world and having a little fun! Ultimately, it's what makes the year so memorable for you and the children. Whether it's through dressing as a wizard, crawling under a parachute or singing like a frog, you can't survive in early years without a healthy dose of silliness!

Here's why young children make such dynamic learners, and how we can develop ways to sustain their progress

Dr Richard Gerver



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

“**W**e are trying to be a more innovative and inclusive organisation,” I was told recently by a major technology company CEO. “We have smart people, working for us, really smart people, but whenever we talk about simplifying our systems so that we can be flexible, more responsive or more creative, people just ask endless questions. What do we do?”

My answer may appear glib, almost flippant, but it wasn't: “Don't employ anyone over five years old!”

I spent my entire teaching career working in primary schools with nurseries and was always staggered by our youngest children and their ability to learn, adapt and change. It's funny really, recently the OECD, the organisation that publishes the PISA data, cited in its research that the links between future employment, skills and education are the same three traits that are the most important in current and future adult working life.

Since leaving teaching 10 years ago, I have been lucky enough to work across a number of sectors, and the more I see and hear about the 'skills gaps' we keep hearing about, the more I think about our youngest children – and the more I look back with real affection and respect for the job our staff do in our early years settings.

I must confess that I don't remember a huge amount from my teacher training, but I do remember a statement made by one of our lecturers, who provocatively informed us that children learn somewhere between 70 and 75% of everything they learn in their lifetime before they are five. The more you think about it, the more you realise the truth in the sentiment behind that statement; most of us learn to walk and talk, to understand body language, facial expression and vocal intonation. We learn to make sense of the complex sensory world around us, all before we hit Key Stage 1!

Our children are amazing, and they'll need to be: the ones we are working with now could well live into the 22nd century. That is some responsibility. They will be the ones who must lead the world on to find



new ways of running global economies and the planet's ecology.

What has consumed so much of my thinking in recent years has been how do we harness the abilities and talents of our youngest children so that they grow to become the people we need, the people we can be truly proud of? How do we ensure they are, to be blunt, better than us?

The answer, of course, lies with education, and primarily early years education. We don't need early years departments to do too much that is different, but we do need them to be fiercely protective of what they do, and more vocal about sharing that practice 'upwards', so that the whole education system can learn from it.

Of all the things we must be conscious of, perhaps most important is just how powerful failing and making mistakes is in the learning journey. Fear of failure is the single biggest issue in underperformance in education and in life. I've seen incredibly talented athletes crippled by it, top students suffer from severe stress because of it and workplaces paralysed by it. As parents and teachers our primal instinct is to protect children from it and to promote 'getting stuff right'. But if I've learnt nothing else

in my time as a teacher, I've learnt this: you only learn from making mistakes, or realising you don't know something or can't do something. Great early years settings are skilfully constructed to provide the emotional security and encouragement to try and to make mistakes. We underestimate sometimes how important the 'soft skills and environments' are in not only stimulating learning but also in shaping attitudes for life.

The more we fail and learn, the more our resilience grows; the greater our resilience, the more we galvanise our confidence and ability to overcome challenges. The more that happens, the more equipped we become to thrive in education and in life. The more skilled we early years educators are at developing that climate and process, the more chance our children have of changing our world and winning in theirs. **TP**

*Richard Gerver is a bestselling author, speaker and broadcaster. He will be appearing at the **OSIRIS EYFS Conference** in London on 1 December 2017 – for 20% off your ticket, quote **OsirisEY17** when booking via 0808 160 5 160 or see osiriseducational.co.uk to find out more.*

Tales of beleaguered beasts won't nurture the skill of empathy, say researchers, but practising mindfulness just might

Debra Kidd

 @debrakidd  debrakidd.wordpress.com



Learning to share and to care are some of the hardest lessons young children encounter, yet we don't have national tests to check that they happen.

Nevertheless, teachers persist in helping children to help others and to work towards more harmonious and sociable relationships in school. So what works best in helping children in these areas?

The Max Planck Institute in the US has been exploring the issue of empathy for years. Their research shows that while most of us are born with the capacity to empathise, that ability tends to be limited to those most like us. We are all, to an extent, tribal, and have to learn to bring others into our tribe in order to extend our empathy to them. They've found, however, that empathy can be practised, learned and extended, and that certain activities help – for example, mindfulness and meditation (Singer 2013). When we are stressed and experiencing negative emotions ourselves, we are less likely to extend empathy to others. For children and adults, taking part in mindfulness and meditation activities increased empathy – lowering our own stress levels and feeling positive allows us to find the capacity to care more for others. This could partly be to do with the fact that, as neuroscientists have discovered, we mirror the emotions of those we are empathising with. We literally feel their pain at both an emotional and physical level. If we are already overloaded with our own pain, this is made more difficult. It's one of the reasons why we need to be careful not to label damaged or unhappy children as uncaring, and why creating safe and emotionally positive learning environments is vital.

What about stories? For years, many of us have used them to teach children how to see another's point of view. Often these stories use anthropomorphism – animals and even objects imbued with human feelings and attributes – in order to build empathy. But a recent study (Larson et al, 2017) found these stories have little impact on children's pro-social behaviours unless the characters are human. (The study did not examine whether the children reading the anthropomorphised stories became



kinder to animals!) It would seem that seeing situations from human points of view in stories and discussing their dilemmas and experiences can help children to become more empathetic.

In a study intended to explore the impact of music on IQ, Schellenberg (2004) stumbled across an interesting finding in a group of children taking drama instead (intended as a control). He found that the drama group improved their social skills by 72%. Why might this be? Drama places children in the shoes of others in a much more verbal and physical way than simply reading a story. The words and actions of a character are enacted in such a way that the brain responds in an emotional way (in a similar way to the research that shows when you practise a smile, your brain responds and you feel happier). Enacting emotions that others are feeling seems to have a positive impact on our ability to understand them. So make sure your children have lots of opportunities to take on the roles of people and characters with different views and experiences to their own – it's the pivoting of perspective that allows the change to take place.

Keep in mind that empathy is only a step on the road to compassion. In itself,

it is not compassion, just understanding. As Paul Bloom points out in his book *Against Empathy*, it is perfectly possible to understand how someone else feels and to sit back and do nothing – or worse, turn their pain to your own advantage. Empathy alone does not make for a better world; compassionate action does. So how do we take children on to that level of engagement with compassion? Discussing and enacting solutions is an important element of this process. Taking action to put something right is much more vital than a simple apology or recognition of wrongdoing. In our classrooms we can do so much to take empathy into compassionate action: acts of charity; making decisions that will help characters in stories – even changing the direction of the plot; taking on roles of people who can effect change and enacting those changes; discussing alternatives, mediating and negotiating; putting things right... All these actions can build on empathy to create compassionate engagement. **TP**

Debra Kidd has worked in education for over 20 years and has delivered CPD nationally and internationally.

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Schools



to keep themselves clean. In a different school, the hospital accident department was in full swing. The nurses carefully put a sling on the teacher, while the receptionist telephoned his home. “Your little boy has hurt his arm,” said the receptionist, “but he is okay. We’re just putting a bandage on it and you can come and pick him up.” (I couldn’t help smiling as the ‘little boy’ was at least six feet tall!)

I love seeing adults and children having fun together in role play. It’s a great opportunity for staff to ask questions, make suggestions and feed imagination. It can also offer insights into early leadership skills: one little girl said to me, very assertively, “I’m in charge of the team painting the train. Here is your paintbrush; you can start at the back seats.” I did as I was told and was praised for my efforts.

Back to the home corner. Not everyone is a fan: one of my colleagues said, “They’ve already got homes. We should use the space to give them the chance to do something more exciting.” Certainly, if you’ve got a mud kitchen outside then there’s little point hanging on to the plastic pans in the home corner (and who wouldn’t rather play in mud!). My personal view is that if you’re going to have a home corner, you should consider how you make it more interesting. In one school, strips of coloured plastic were attached to a hula-hoop, which was then hung from the ceiling. This was the ‘shower’, complete with shower cap, bath brush and sponges, and was surprisingly popular! (The same hoop arrangement would later be modified as a ‘beam up’ station near the spaceship). In another variation of the home corner, a lovely Victorian fireplace and period details such as frames and a lace tablecloth-covered ‘desk’ for writing sparked some amazing conversations between the lady of the house and her maid.

The possibilities are endless. When considering ideas, think about maximising opportunities for speaking, reading, writing, number work, artistic skills, social development and so on. If there’s the chance to dress up, even better – although this can lead to problems, as shown when one little boy, surrounded by various policeman, fireman and train driver uniforms, sobbed, “I just can’t choose what to be!”

I once heard someone say that “an early years setting is as good as the imagination of the staff”. This is certainly true when it comes to setting up role play. Be creative, get involved, promote learning – but most of all, have fun. **TP**

Julie Price Grimshaw is a teacher, trainer and education adviser. She has been involved in school inspections since 2001.



GREAT ROLE PLAY TAKES IMAGINATION

Don’t default to the same tired home corner – get creative and watch the early learning opportunities multiply

[@julespg](https://twitter.com/julespg) selfpropelledlearning.co.uk

I hadn’t visited the school before and was looking forward – as I always do – to visiting the nursery and Reception classrooms. The rooms were bright and colourful; some children were painting pictures, some were playing in the water tray, everyone seemed busy. I asked about the role play area. “Oh, you mean the home corner? It’s over here.” There I saw a tired-looking jumble of plastic pans and cooking utensils amongst old wooden cupboards. There were a couple of chairs and a rug. No children.

I visited so many schools last year where role play was confined to a rather dull ‘home corner’. Often, there were really good things happening elsewhere in the room – but I couldn’t help feeling that the lack of role play led to many missed opportunities for excellent learning.

I’m a great fan of role play because, where it’s done well, there simply isn’t a more fun way to develop a huge range of skills. There are, of course, ‘shops’, each with its own potential for language development. I saw a delightful exchange between a Reception-age garden centre worker and a customer who was purchasing a small plant: “That will be one pound. Put your plant in a sunny place and don’t let the compost dry out!” A teaching assistant joined in: “How about making a care sheet for the plant? Can we do that together?”

In another school, a wonderful pet-grooming parlour, called the ‘Bath and Biscuit’, included cushions for the soft toy pets, together with old hairdryers, a price list, a telephone, an appointment sheet... The children told me they were ‘beauticians’ and had to wear special aprons

Beware tests in EARLY YEARS

There is no shortcut to establishing children's starting points, even if policy-makers pretend otherwise

JAN DUBIEL

The current tensions around the nature, purpose and efficacy of assessment in the EYFS are nothing new. Given that *what* is assessed is an indicator of what we consider important and relevant, coupled with *how* we assess as an expression of our belief in how children demonstrate what they know and understand, this is hardly surprising. What *is* perplexing is that policy-makers stubbornly refuse to acknowledge the reality of young children, and how this relates to the process and content of assessment.

Part of this reality is, inconveniently, that there are generally significant cognitive, social, emotional and developmental differences between young children (up to the age of six) and children aged 11, 14 and 18. Scientific evidence indicates that birth to six or seven is a specific and unique stage of development. It is also clear that this early childhood stage requires specialist knowledge and approaches to support and – in terms of summative assessment – represent this. Unfortunately, it is more convenient to ignore and subsume this reality into approaches and methodologies suitable for much older children.

This quest for convenience is precisely where the conflict resides.

Even the most cursory glance over recent history in this area provides ample supporting evidence of this. The transition from the original Baseline to the then Foundation Stage Profile in 2002

indicated the need for a single, teacher-led observational approach that accounted for all aspects of development and knowledge. The reason for this was primarily the need for accurate and reliable data rather than statistical convenience. The previous range of available Baselines had included test-based models whose accuracy, regardless of its pedagogical usefulness or otherwise, was questionable.

The more recent Baseline debacle effectively re-ran the conflict, with the DfE accrediting six different choices for schools. Five of them consisted of narrow test- / task-based assessments and one – our own EExBA – provided a non-test / task-based, moderated teacher-derived assessment. Over 80% of schools that chose to use any of the accredited Baselines selected EExBA, prompting the DfE to revoke and ‘reconsider’ the policy...

The DfE’s enthusiastic (and unilateral) adoption of ‘Baby PISA’ – a tablet-based test of specific skills – and its apparent intentions for the ‘reconsidered’ Baseline to consist of a similar online test of narrow aspects of learning – reinforces the disturbing tradition of ignoring reality for the sake of convenience.

A lack of understanding

There are deeper issues here about strategic understanding of early childhood education (ECE) and a denial that it is different, how this impacts on policy and expectations of practice. Much of this surfaced in our ‘Teaching Four & Five Year-olds: The Hundred Review of the Reception Year in England’ report (bit.ly/2fNAPwK), with one of its conclusions stating that

“1.2. The understanding of pedagogy and practice in YR and its uniqueness within a school environment is not always fully acknowledged at either national or local strategic levels. There is strong feeling amongst YR Teachers and Practitioners that pressures and tensions emanating from

this lack of understanding can compromise effective YR practice and have a negative impact on outcomes for children.”

Inevitably this then has had the habit of affecting the understanding and approach to early years assessment, with the intention of ignoring what is known about young children, and in particular their understanding of the process, and the content of what is considered to be relevant.

In essence this returns to two of the basic principles of all assessment:

- *What* are we going to assess / what information is relevant and pertinent?
- *How* are we going to assess this to ensure that it is accurate?

Considering the evidence provided by research into the impact of ECE on later outcomes leads to inconvenient but fairly clear conclusions. Studies cited in the research study to the Hundred Review indicated that Heckman, Wikart, Sylva et al (EPPSE) and Callanan et al (SEED) all strongly suggest that the critical factors in ECE relating to long-term development and success – and therefore what should constitute the content of assessment – are identifiable, although appear awkwardly within a wider view of assessment.

The awkward inconvenience of this reality is that what clearly *matters* to young children’s successful development, and is most likely to support and impact in their long-term development, is not purely the acquisition of specific knowledge but the all-round development of learning behaviours, dispositions and understandings – summarised in the EYFS’s ‘Characteristics of Effective Learning’ (CoEL). Additionally, the areas of language and communication, physical development and personal, social and emotional development are also critical to long-term trajectories of success.

The reason this is awkward is that



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these key aspects can be difficult to fully assess, are possibly impossible to measure and don't fit in a simple linear way with later measurable outcomes. Taking the central accountability of primary school outcomes in literacy and mathematics, it would be much more convenient if this were traceable to literacy and mathematical knowledge in the EYFS – especially with a Baseline policy. Unfortunately this isn't the case, and later outcomes in these two vitally important curriculum areas are, in ECE, equally dependant on the demonstration of securely embedded CoEL, language, physical development and personal/social/emotional skills in EYFS classes. Therefore any attempted assessment that avoids these areas, or focuses *solely* on literacy and mathematical knowledge, will be an unhelpfully partial view.

Measuring progress

The idea of a 'simple task-based assessment' from which progress can be measured is a seductive solution. However, it belies our knowledge of the reality of children at this age, their perception and understanding of the world and how this manifests itself. Testing – and by that I mean an assessment that relies on a response to a preset

question to which there is a right answer – may or may not be an effective methodology for older children. It is quite clearly not for children in the early childhood age bracket. When older children are subjected to a test scenario they are aware of how the process works. Most importantly they know there is a 'right answer' and the purpose of the test is to get as many right answers as possible. We learn the rituals of testing: what the 'tester' or 'examiner' *wants* us to do in order to get that right answer, how to 'second guess' what they are looking for and provide it for them. Young children do not have the knowledge of the rituals of the test process, generally aren't aware that there is a 'right' answer, and often respond to the questions with their own unconventional or creatively uninformed perspective, thus creating data that doesn't necessarily demonstrate what they really know.

As long as policy-makers deflect reality because the nature of young children is untidy, unpredictable and takes time, skill, patience and reflection to ascertain, then these tensions and conflicts will continue. As long as they place statistical convenience above accurate, albeit challenging processes of assessment then there will always be a nagging

antagonism between the necessary creation of accountability data and EYFS specialists and practitioners.

Although not convenient, effective assessment for accountability must include all the aspects that contribute to developmental trajectories and likely outcomes. Although by no means a perfect process, teacher-led observational assessment, properly supported and moderated, does provide accurate and reliable information that can be used to effectively establish starting points from which accountability can be judged. **TP**

“Teacher-led observational assessment, properly supported and moderated, provides accurate and reliable information”

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The 'why' of BEHAVIOUR

Making the effort to explain the reasons behind your rules and requests will yield the best results in the end

SUE COWLEY



We need our children to behave so that they can learn in a calm, safe environment, and so that we can teach them effectively. If children are talking when you are speaking, how can they hear what is being said? If children are out of their seats running around the room, how can they focus on learning? But helping children learn to behave properly is also a vital life skill. We want our children to behave well in their wider lives, as well as in our settings. And for this to happen, we need more than systems to control behaviour – we must help children understand the why behind what we ask them to do. We must help them develop the empathy that's at the heart of 'good behaviour'.

Many settings have a system of rewards and sanctions as part of their behaviour policy – this can be useful for controlling the majority of issues, but it can run into problems when it comes to exploring motivation. Think about the messages we send children when we ask that they work and behave well, in return for an extrinsic reward. Similarly, think about the messages we send when we insist they don't misbehave, for fear of receiving a consequence. Are we suggesting, even if subconsciously, that the only reason for good behaviour is to receive a treat? Are we

saying the main reason for not misbehaving is to avoid a sanction, or is there more to it than this?

As soon as we step away from a straightforward 'training' approach to behaviour, the questions become far more complex. It's fairly straightforward to apply rewards and consequences, in the hope of creating a climate for good behaviour. It's much more difficult to think about the reasons behind poor behaviour, and what we might do to resolve them. We know from the statistics that many children excluded for difficult behaviour have SEND. Clearly there's a link between the difficulty these children have in accessing learning, and the behaviour that we experience. Those children from chaotic home backgrounds often lack the role models they need. If a child hears his parents swearing, or sees them becoming confrontational in the face of difficulty, this is the model he may bring into the setting. The practitioner becomes an important example of what 'good behaviour' looks like. The more explicit we make the model we offer, the better placed our children will be to replicate it.

Tip 1

Talk about the *why* behind what you are asking the children to do. When you need them to

listen or work silently, give a reason. If you insist a child returns to her seat, outline why 'staying in your seat' is necessary for learning in this situation.

Tip 2

Talk about the *emotions* other children feel when a peer behaves badly towards them. How does their behaviour make other children feel? Why might it upset or anger someone? Stories are helpful for developing empathy, particularly ones that explore how a character's behaviour impacts on others.

Tip 3

Talk about the *moral code* you are trying to create as a community of learners. Why is it important for children and adults to behave in this way? What does it mean for the learning that happens and the way we feel when in the setting?

Tip 4

Talk about your own emotions around behaviour. Show the children how you are able to control your instinctive responses to stressful situations, and help them learn

to do this too. If you make a mistake, be explicit about what it was, and talk about how you solved it. Don't be afraid to apologise if your behaviour doesn't live up to the model you wanted to present.

Tip 5

Finally, talk about how the *learning* that happens in your setting is closely linked to behaviour, stressing the importance of focus, concentration and effort. Show how learning links to the wider world, and the kind of long-term benefits it offers. Support children in accessing the curriculum, and find ways to engage them with the learning they do. Show them that the main 'why' behind good behaviour is a positive not a negative – it is the pleasure and joy that learning brings. **TP**



Sue Cowley is an author, teacher and trainer. She has helped to run her local preschool for the last eight years.

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SHOULD WE TALK ABOUT TRAGEDY?

When a terrible event hits the headlines, listen carefully to what your children are telling you before addressing it in the classroom

Watching the horror of London's Grenfell Tower fire on television, I was brought back to September 11, 2001. I was living in New York City when 9/11 happened. I had just dropped off my seven-year-old daughter, Molly, at school, and was walking back home, crossing Fifth Avenue. I witnessed a totally bizarre phenomenon. I saw approximately 50 people on the street who were all doing the same thing: they were standing stock-still, their bodies all facing south, their heads craned upward, looking into the sky. The first plane had struck.

As a psychoanalyst, and a concerned mother, I thought deeply about how to communicate with my daughter on her own perceptions, thoughts and feelings about what was unfolding around her. I learned some good lessons that next week (and beyond) about what to say and what to not say about unexpected tragedy. Molly understood something had happened. But of course, she did not understand *what* had happened, nor the meaning of what

had happened.

The first important decision I made was to not have TV or radio on within her hearing or viewing ability at all for the first week. That decision was difficult for me. I wanted to know everything that was going on, every detail, to try to make some sense of how the world had suddenly changed. I waited until Molly went to bed before I indulged my need for information. I made this decision because I understood that children do not have the filters in place that adults have for selecting information. As adults, we have the mature privilege of choosing what we pay attention to. This gift of evolution allows us to both focus and to be distracted; to pay attention and to *not* pay attention. But for children, information streams into the senses as though it were an avalanche: there's often no escape for them, even though the information is overwhelming to their developing sensory/mental systems.

Of course, children talk to each other. They talk in fragmented ways, without

fully understanding the full consequences of meaning of events. So, the likelihood is: they *will* learn something about the event unfolding, even if our initial impulse is to keep them blissfully unaware for a time. Their awareness is not always under your complete control.

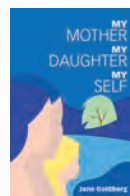
After hearing about the collapse of the buildings from another child at the playground, my daughter said about the World Trade Center: "I'm not too upset because it wasn't my favourite building. My favourite building is the Empire State Building." Such is what a seven-year-old mind is capable of understanding. And this very shallow understanding needs to be respected. Deep understanding evolves slowly in the human mind. It involves many brain/mind structures that aren't yet in full bloom, and cannot be rushed into development without a problematic kick-back.

It is important in these difficult instances to not lead (as you are used to doing as a teacher or parent), but to follow your children. You need to stay in an up-to-the-minute awareness of what they are processing. This means you sometimes need to ask more questions than you answer. You need to know what your children know, to help them talk about what has filtered through to awareness. But you also need to know what they don't know, and even more importantly, what they don't *want* to know. Children have the right to not know. And, this desire to ward off disturbing information is absolutely essential to their wellbeing. We cannot force-feed them facts or feelings about tragedy. I like to use the phrase 'knowing no'. Know where no needs to be placed. Honour the value of *no*.

And equally the value of *yes*. Respond with care and attention to children's interest in knowing. Leaving children in the dark when there is real interest in knowing is a mistake that will lead them to not trust your honesty.

Ultimately, children's innate intelligence has to carry the day. To deal smartly in these difficult times of tragedy, we only need to listen and observe when our children want to engage with events unfolding around them and when they don't.

Dr Jane Goldberg is a psychoanalyst and media commentator in specialising in family and relationships. Her latest book, My Mother, My Daughter, My Self, is published by Free Association Books.





Elevator PITCH

Take two minutes to find out how Boogie Mites can help you harness the power of active music-making



1 On a mission

The Boogie Mites team write songs and compile music programmes. Their mission is to offer all early years practitioners and families the knowledge, resources and confidence they need to take advantage of the brain-boosting fun of music-making to support learning in the EYFS, each and every day.

2 Inspiring resources

Boogie Mites offers a selection of resources, including six educational programmes aimed at specific age groups or areas of development. The programmes can be downloaded or purchased as physical products, and have been developed over many years with input from teachers and children. All feature original music, linked activities, teacher notes and training videos.

3 Get training

To help educators get the most out of its programmes, Boogie Mites provides workshops suitable for those working in nursery or Year R. Comprising six sessions, they can be delivered over six consecutive weeks, or once per half term, to give staff time to practise what has been covered between visits.

4 Why music?

There is a wealth of evidence published by neuroscientists that proves that music-making in early years hones, grows and improves neural networks like no other activity. There isn't space to share it here but for a useful summary, read this article by Boogie Mites' Sue Newman – bit.ly/2wehdx3

To find out more about how Boogie Mites can support you, call 023 92 817274, email enquiry@boogiemites.co.uk or visit boogiemites.co.uk

Boogie Mites Programmes Supporting Early Year Development Through Music



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WHY BOOGIE MITES

- Original Funky music
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- Programmes for use in early years settings
- Links to EYFS
- Informed by neuroscience
- Evidence based

'Neuroscience studies prove that music practise supports brain development - and the earlier you start the better.

You don't need to be a musician to lead brain boosting music in early years - YOU NEED BOOGIE MITES!

School profile

Name: Thames View Infants
Headteacher: Paul Jordan
Location: Barking
Ofsted rating: Outstanding
Size: 400+ pupils
Extra info: Proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above the national average



Paul Jordan, Headteacher

“We’re vibrant, passionate and hands-on”

Twice ‘outstanding’ Thames View Infants is a colourful and creative Academy where barriers to both learning and social cohesion are being overcome

Passion is an overused word these days, but when Paul Jordan, headteacher at Thames View Infants (TVI), deploys it, it doesn’t ring hollow. “This is my calling,” he says of his position. “It’s a vocation. The school is my family, my life.”

It is partly about commitment – Paul’s passion for East London, for infant education, and for the school he has led for 10 years, through two ‘outstanding’ inspections, has kept him in post when more financially lucrative opportunities have come calling and, more importantly, helped to propel TVI into the top 5% of infant schools nationally for attainment – in circumstances that are never less than challenging. But it is also about enthusiasm and excitement. It is fair to say that it takes passion for one’s

cause to get up and dance in assembly on one of the hottest afternoons of the year (which 3 to 7 witnessed), or to put on a Helen Shapiro-based cabaret act at Christmas and make it work across countless cultural divides (which, sadly, we didn’t). At TVI, Paul tells us, academic outcomes and a vibrant – a *passionate* – approach to headship and teaching in general are inextricably linked.

What comes across loud and clear over the course of our conversation, and as the interview pauses briefly once, twice, three times for some of the challenges of leading a school to be confronted, is that Paul genuinely cares for his charges and the work he and his team are doing to effect positive change in the wider community...



1 A change of culture

“Don’t do your first headship on the View,” someone said. The director of education came down to see me within the first couple of weeks, and asked, ‘Are they any different, the families on this estate?’ I said, ‘No.’”

In many ways taking over at TVI was a natural move for Paul Jordan. Having completed his degree in the North East, he had returned to his roots and risen steadily through the ranks at different schools – from class teacher to history coordinator, to science lead, then Key Stage 1 lead in a school in special measures. “After that I became a deputy in an infant school just down the road within the borough,” he says. “That’s where I found out about the depth of provision you need to be ‘outstanding’”. When the position came up here in 2007, I knew it was the right school for me.”

Nevertheless, TVI represented something of a jump into the deep end. As ever, the statistics only tell part of the story, but they are important context: at the time of the school’s 2014 Ofsted report, which followed its conversion to Academy status in 2012, close to three-quarters of children spoke English as an additional language (today, 43 different languages are spoken by children at home), and numbers accessing pupil premium funding, and those with a special educational need or disability, were well above national averages. Paul himself notes that the school is situated “in the most deprived ward in the tenth most deprived authority nationally”, but plays down the impact of EAL: “English as an additional language isn’t really a thing for me – we’ve got multicultural staff, a lovely ethnic blend, and you overcome it. It doesn’t present as an issue with most children at all.”

Alongside the challenges arising from its location, back in 2007, the school’s teaching required improvement too, and that meant a change of culture. “It was ‘satisfactory’ when we took it over,” Paul explains. “The culture I wanted to instil was much more vibrant, much more learning focused, with a signature pedagogy and an emphasis on developing empowered children, using talk for learning and giving them a voice. Because the curriculum wasn’t, in my view, deep or far-reaching enough, I rewrote all the lesson plans in Key Stage 1. My deputy [deputy headteacher, Claire Smith] did the same for early years, too. The night before planning, I was up till about three or four, in that first year, coming to school on Red Bull, then teaching to model the expectation...”

The change of culture Paul ushered in was built upon ‘responsive leadership’, which in practice sees him guiding the



“This school represents equality, and that’s rubbed off on the neighbouring environment”

school from the front. He admits to being in and out of classrooms on a regular basis; he mentors his NQTs, and teaches when time allows. “It’s the only way,” he says. “As a head, you have to inspire your teachers to teach; you have to make sure the planning’s completely fine – and it’s the best way to check the standards.”

It was only 18 months after Paul’s arrival that TVI received its first ‘outstanding’ judgement. “I was fortunate because a whole lot of people came with me on that journey,” he reflects. “It was a very empowering process.”

2 Raising attainment

While children often arrive at TVI at below expected levels of attainment, they don’t lag behind for long – in fact, their progress is inspiring, with many leaving for KS2 at well above the national average for attainment (or as Paul puts it, “more able than children in Richmond upon Thames, the most affluent, highest-attaining local authority average in the country”). So what is the secret?

“I’m trying not to say ‘high expectations’,” Paul says, “because



“I’m proud we’re ‘outstanding’”

For Paul making a success of TVI, and maintaining and building upon its achievements to date, means a huge amount. “I pride myself on being head at an ‘outstanding’ school – and should that not be the case one day, I don’t know what I would do, really,” he says. He speaks positively about his experience of inspection, and is forthright in his view that when it comes to educational settings, being Ofsted ‘good’ isn’t really good enough.

Just as TVI is looking outwards to its community, so too is it offering its expertise to other schools, often without charge. Paul is a National Leader of Education, and the plan is for TVI to become a Teaching School, working in partnership with the University of East London. Paul is also keen to set up a Multi Academy Trust, and is actively seeking an infant school requiring improvement in TVI’s vicinity that would be keen to embrace his approach to education.



but this year is special needs-led. You need to have sufficient staff to work in this way, and we spend a high percentage of our budget each year on employing them – the ratio is at least one to 10 in every class, and some classes have one to seven. Of course, all this means we have to have great financial management, too.”

3 Reaching out

Alongside the academic support at TVI there is a significant pastoral component to its teachers’ role. “Increasingly this job is also becoming about parenting, and you need people who are absolutely tuned into that,” Paul says. To help open channels with home, he operates an any-time, open-door policy for mums and dads, with the promise that they will be listened to by somebody who knows their child well and wants to help.

This all feeds into an ambition Paul returns to on several occasions – to challenge “traditional dispositions to learning”. These, he explains, vary from individual to individual, but can also be rooted in cultural background, and relate to a host of issues – from approaches to parenting and discipline, to attachment, attendance and a family’s past relationships with educational settings. “Some families have had bad experiences, whether it’s the parents themselves as children, or their children in another school. Unpicking that, and getting trust going in how we do things, takes thought. It’s something we do very carefully,” he says.

In an effort to begin this process as early as possible, Paul and

his team are keen to reach out into the community in a novel way: “We want to do up a double-decker bus, make it look really funky and try to get the zeroes to twos for drop-ins, coffee mornings, play sessions, so we can say ‘this is what we’re about’ and catch parents with those good parenting messages,” he tells us. “We just need to find the forty grand to do it.”

Putting TVI at the heart of a community that in some respects feels like a village, isolated as it is by surrounding industry and infrastructure, and bringing its diverse elements together is another focus: “Community cohesion is something we’ve always felt very strongly about, and what we’re really good at is getting British values right,” Paul says. The school works hard to cultivate that sometimes elusive sense of British identity by going to town with St George’s Day – “we dress up, do maypole dancing” – combining Harvest with Eid, holding an Easter parade through local streets and marking festivals such as Diwali, amongst others. “I think this school represents equality, and that’s rubbed off on the neighbouring environment,” Paul sums their efforts up. **TP**

I don’t think people necessarily get what ‘high expectation’ is – but really believing that these children can do it, that they can achieve a greater depth, that they can get their early learning goals is really important. There’s a can-do atmosphere here.”

There is also a proactive mindset. Paul points to practice in the nursery and Reception classrooms, where child-initiated provision is supplemented by short, sharp, highly focused whole-class teaching sessions that provide the leg up many pupils need. “They take 15 minutes,” he explains. “They’re planned, they have talk for learning, lots of songs and rhymes. They’re often story-led. There’s a huge emphasis on everyone being involved.”

As you would expect, speech and language is a focus at TVI. Support groups and a dedicated speech and language therapist help address areas of concern, and Paul again points to the influence of talk as a foundation for learning: “How can you get children to read sentences let alone write sentences, if you’re not encouraging them to speak in sentences first? That starts down in nursery.”

Identifying strategies to hurdle the barriers posed by special educational needs has become important, too. “Increasingly we’re taking children who should be taught in some form of additional resource provision – at least one child per class in early years,” Paul says. “We’ve had to be flexible to deal with this. So we have our own nurture group, which previously was a behavioural-based resource provision

JUST ADD EXCITEMENT

What does a vibrant infant school look like? At TVI, children’s uniforms come in a kaleidoscope of colours; a small dog, Pear, shares the headteacher’s office (a three-legged cat, Humphrey, also calls the school home); everybody is on first name terms. Paul and his team are determined to create an atmosphere in which children can relax, and enjoy and succeed in their learning.

And dancing in assembly? That’s all part of the plan too. “Dancing unites cultures, it makes children happy, it reminds teachers that it’s about being fun,” Paul tells us. “And what better than the headteacher leading dancing in assembly, or during Christmas concerts, to bring everyone together? Again, it challenges those traditional dispositions to learning.”

A vibrant approach is a useful tool for involving families in school life, too. Open days, sports and cooking classes are regular fixtures, while a lively annual school election project runs for two weeks, culminating in poll winners taking office for a day. The latter is also about increasing engagement with the real-world democratic process, another of TVI’s efforts to empower its pupils and their families. Children form parties, create manifestos, canvass for support and produce a Newsnight-style podcast, before casting their votes – hopefully encouraging their mums and dads to do the same when they get their chance. “There’s a culture of parents being disengaged, of not voting and not understanding the process,” Paul says, “but with this, we can get them excited.”

Deconstruct your role play

Provide the resources, take a step back and watch children's learning flourish

BEN WHITE

Hospital, vet's surgery, post office, travel agent – themed role play areas are often seen as a must for an early years setting. They are often meticulously prepared to be aesthetically pleasing, covered in laminated words and pictures with the aim of enticing children in. But this is where I encountered a problem: in these areas, children are expected to come together to play out adult scenarios that are consistent with these themes. Yet how many children have visited a travel agent to book a holiday recently, or operated on a pet dog in a vet's surgery?

For the majority of children, themed areas such as those described above are simply too alien

for high-quality cooperative play to develop – which is why I found the children in my class would revert back to playing 'mums and dads' by mid-morning, rather than booking a holiday to Costa Rica, as the poster on the wall in the travel agent suggested!

I decided action had to be taken; it was time to improve my role play corner. And so I deconstructed it!

What do you need?

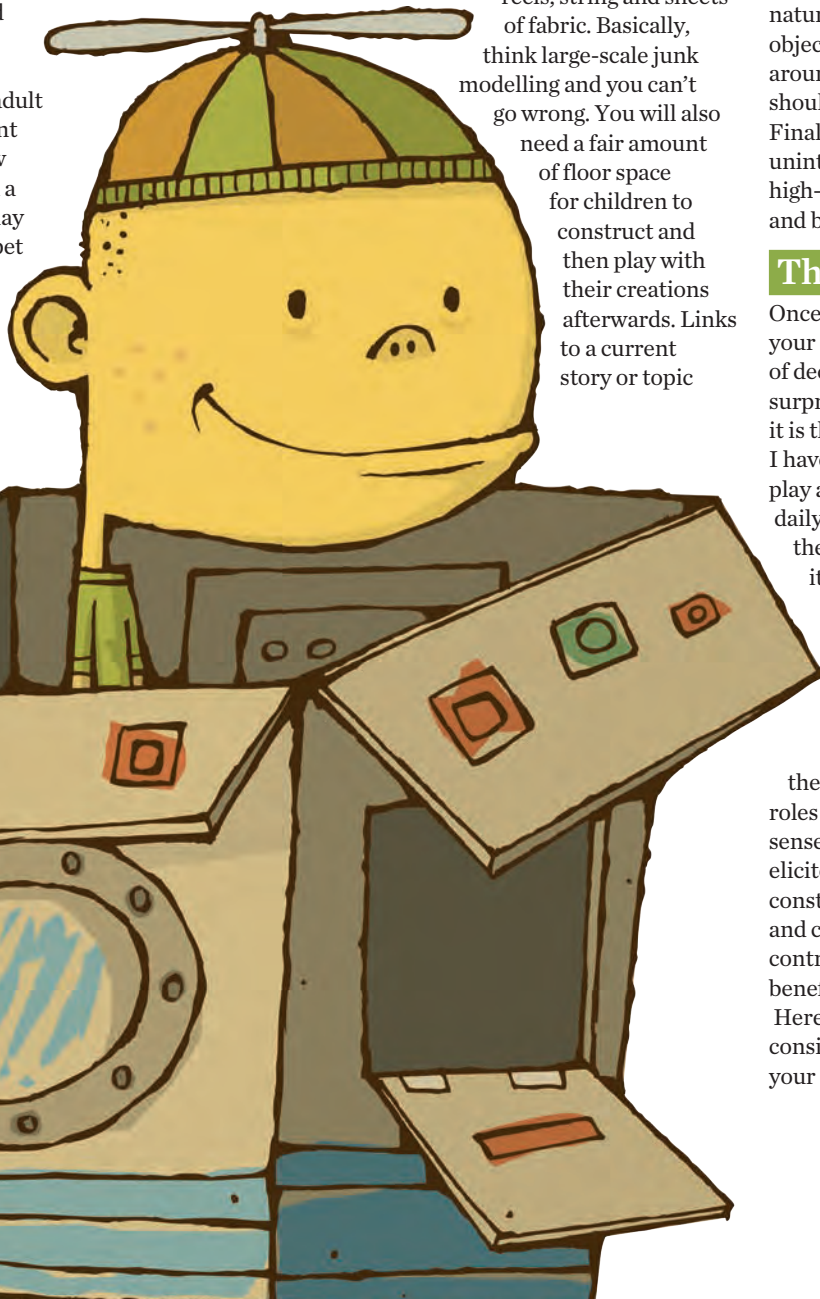
Simply leave out a selection of cardboard boxes (the bigger, the better), crates, empty cable reels, string and sheets of fabric. Basically, think large-scale junk modelling and you can't go wrong. You will also need a fair amount of floor space for children to construct and then play with their creations afterwards. Links to a current story or topic

make good enhancements and don't be afraid to add in some resources from the traditional role play area, too: plates, cups, dolls and food can always be made good use of. Masking tape is a must when constructing and don't forget markers and large sheets of paper for signs, labels and plans. Children will naturally source their own objects and materials from around the classroom, and this should be openly encouraged. Finally, children will need uninterrupted time so that high-quality play can develop and be sustained over time.

The benefits

Once it is embedded within your classroom, the benefits of deconstructed role play will surprise you every day. For me, it is the only indoor area where I have seen true cooperative play at its highest level on a daily basis, and this is due to the limitless possibilities it offers. Regardless of personal experience or lack of, everyone can contribute something.

It develops leadership skills in children, encouraging them to take on real-life roles in real-life situations. The sense of pride and achievement elicited by completing a construction raises self-esteem and confidence in all who contributed as they reap the benefits of working together. Here are six more reasons to consider introducing it to your classroom:



- **It's truly child-initiated.**
The play that takes place in deconstructed role play is initiated and developed entirely by the children and as a result is more purposeful and more likely to be sustained over time.
- **There are no limits.**
From Lamborghinis, to ice palaces to helicopters – anything you can imagine can be constructed.
- **It promotes talk.**
Children will use language while constructing, while playing with the creation afterwards will encourage the use of narrative and storytelling skills.
- **Boys love it.**
In my classroom, deconstructed role play has been particularly beneficial for the boys. They thrive with this style of play, and happily spend hours planning, constructing, reviewing and improving. They will then return to their construction the next day to continue the play, often

to solve problems, reviewing their work and finding ways to improve their constructions.

Identifying cooperative play

As teachers observing high-quality play, we can spot that look of intense concentration on a child's face as they meticulously complete the trickiest of tasks. Cooperative play is more difficult to identify. Firstly, you need a group of children to be playing alongside one another in that deep level of concentration. Within the group, they will have their own roles, defined by their personality or hierarchy in the group, perhaps. The theme or intended outcome would have been set early on in the play and will be sustained throughout. Children may leave the group freely, and be reaccepted when they return. Resources will be shared with one another and children will help each other out to complete difficult tasks, such as threading string

when everyone has their own job to do.

The adult's role in cooperative play is important. In actual fact, an adult in true cooperative play is not needed and seldom sought. I once suggested to a group of children that the helicopter they were creating might need a couple of blades on top. But no, its two "turbo-powered fire blasters" at the back were more than enough to make it fly! In my experience the adult's role is to facilitate the play. Often they become the dogsbody, fetching resources from around the classroom when ordered by the 'boss' of the group, or used to talk through ideas and listen to the complexities of the design.

In cooperative play, the theme will continue for long periods of time and often into the next day, if allowed. With deconstructed role play, after completing a construction, children will return and interact with it in a more imaginative style of play. They will be proud of their creation and will want to spend time driving their Lamborghini down the motorway or flying their helicopter through thunderstorms and tornadoes.

The best of both worlds

Although in my classroom I have chosen to replace the 'traditional' role play corner for the time being, it is still important for children to have the opportunity to play in more familiar role play situations, such as the home. In my setting, children have free-flow access to other classrooms and therefore can still access a home corner, should they choose – try to work with colleagues to develop role play opportunities that work for all children in your setting. **TP**

“The joy of this type of role play is that anything can be anything. There are no rules, no limits and no expectations”

extending it without any adult intervention required.

- **Children naturally take on roles.**
Deconstructed role play generally involves 'real-life' roles – the boss, the builder, the planner, the resource supplier.
- **Thinking critically.**
Children will work together

through a cardboard tube or tying a knot to hang a piece of fabric.

Children will talk to each other when they need to, sometimes discussing new ideas or often just to chat about last night's TV as they work collaboratively alongside one another. Other times, children will construct in complete silence, as conversation is not needed

6 steps to success

1 Add new resources regularly – different-sized boxes, costumes, planks... Anything that will capture the imagination.

1 Keep finished masterpieces for children to return to. This may mean leaving constructions up overnight so that children can extend their role play the next day.

2 Sneak in mark making opportunities. Backing a wall with paper allows children to create scenes and backdrops, too.

3 Allow and encourage children to be resourceful and take things from around the classroom.

4 Observe the play taking place and only interact when invited. Even then, continue to allow the children to lead the play and avoid the temptation to suggest new ideas yourself.

5 Look out for and praise children who take on roles that are relevant in the real world. Use this as an opportunity to promote life skills and discuss aspirations.



Ben White is early years leader at Denbigh Primary School in Luton.

@benwhitej



Adult-Free LEARNING

Take a leaf out of the early years book and implement continuous provision in Year 1 – it's not as scary as it sounds

ALISTAIR BRYCE-CLEGG

 @ABCDoes

 abcdoes.com

You may have heard your early years team talk about 'continuous provision'. This is the bit of the day where the children are not having a direct adult input and are 'free' in the provision that has been created. As a Year 1 teacher who is used to working a system of 'carpet to table and then back to carpet', this will be a little bit scary – but stick with it, because when done well it is an amazing way to teach and learn.

Finding room

When I was in Year 1, my play-based provision amounted to the number of free corners that I had available (usually four). In these four corners I would put some play opportunities based on what was available. Not sand – too messy! Not water – are you

kidding? Not dough – think of the carpet... I also needed to be sure that I was linking all play to visible academic outcomes – ideally literacy and numeracy. So, I would have a shop (counting, money and writing), a construction area (counting and measuring), a writing table (for even more writing) and often a 'nature' area because it gave me somewhere to put all of the conkers that the children brought in!

The problem with this approach is that it is not providing quality play experiences, it is not building on children's learning and it is probably encouraging the children to stagnate in their play and focus on a level of skill they have already surpassed. If you can give up your whole classroom space to continuous provision, then you will have a

lot more room to play with. But if you have limited space due to storage/furniture and you are having to work with four corners, as is the case with most Year 1 classrooms, then your 'gap and strength analysis' (GSA) will indicate which areas of learning should take priority. That doesn't mean that you only have to offer continuous provision in your four corners; you can use your carpet and tabletops. Realistically, working in four corners means that you can't offer the range of choice and experience that you might ideally want to, but it is better than offering no choice at all.

What will they learn?

One thing that will really help you and your team, especially with your planning for continuous provision, is

to think about the early years settings that your children will be coming from, and think about why they have the particular areas of provision. What skills can children learn when they are playing and learning in them? It is worth considering that continuous provision is not something you go on to when you have finished your work. It isn't a holding activity or a 'reward'. It is a space for children to learn in the absence of an adult. Therefore it must be planned and considered carefully.

Remember: any area of provision can have any focus when there is an adult in it to direct the learning, so always think continuous provision when there is no adult there in a teaching role.

This might also help you to generate a list of resources that you can beg, steal, borrow or buy



to help you to meet the needs of your children. The great thing about that is that when you then hand in a list of resources to be signed off, everything you have identified has been linked directly to assessment and doesn't look like you just picked it out of the catalogue because you fancied the look of it. When you and your team start thinking about assessment in this 'broad sweep' way it can really focus your judgements and help to create a greater team coherence. If you are using tools such as GSA to help you to plan your space, then you are already able to demonstrate to anyone who wants to know that your environment is linked to assessment and has been structured to support the needs of all children (even the most able!).

Plan effectively

Don't think of continuous provision as the provision that is continuously available for the children. Think of it as resources that you have put out that will continue the provision for learning in the absence of an adult. Ask yourself the question: how does the construction area that you have set up have the potential to continue the provision for your children's learning when there is no adult there? That doesn't mean telling all of the children they have to build a tower

taller than 15 bricks – that is an adult-directed challenge. The best way to ensure true continuous provision is to look at skill development and follow this with effective planning. Also, pop into your EYFS department once they have all gone home and see if they have got copies of *Continuous Provision in the Early Years* and *Continuous Provision: The Skills*. If they do, nick them! Also have a look in their stock cupboard – I bet they have got some sparkly pipe cleaners hidden at the back for a rainy day! So, that's where the art budget went!

Keep 'topic' as an enhancement

Your continuous provision is the backbone of your space; it is linked to children's skill and experiential development. Your continuous provision should not be completely themed around topic or activity as then it ceases to become continuous provision and becomes an adult-initiated activity.

Don't... If you are talking about shape and then you put shapes in your water tray – and nothing else – this isn't continuous provision for water play, it is a shape activity in the water.

Do... Provision to develop the skills of water play would be to have continuous provision

“Children can help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers”

for water play in place and then you might add some objects with interesting shapes as an enhancement. The shapes would not be the only thing the children could play with or the thing the children had to play with, but something they could choose to play with and interpret in their own way. This sort of enhancement gives adults the opportunity to use the language of shape in water play rather than force an activity on children who don't want to do it.

Don't... If you ask all of the children to make a hedgehog out of dough in your malleable materials area, this is not continuous provision. It might be autumn, and you might be talking about hedgehogs and you might have been onto Pinterest and seen some really cute dough ones, but we should be planning for skill development and process not just outcome.

Do... You may be planning to develop your children's fine motor dexterity in your malleable materials area, so you would provide them with lots of opportunities to pinch, pull and roll as part of your continuous provision. This could be making

an alien, spider man, a tank – whatever takes their fancy. As you have been talking about hedgehogs, you might enhance your malleable materials with some images of hedgehogs and some resources that would support children if they wanted to make a hedgehog. But there should be no sign saying 'Can you make a hedgehog?'. More often than not the answer would be: 'Yes, but I don't want to, thanks. Can I make a sea monster?'. **TP**



*Alistair Bryce-Clegg was head of a infant school and Early Years Unit for 10 years. Today he works as a consultant, speaker and author. This article is an edited extract from his book *Effective Transition Into Year One* (Bloomsbury, £18.99). To purchase your copy, visit bloomsbury.com*



Let your CHILDREN LEAD

By allowing pupils to become deeply involved in activities they choose, you can cover the Year 1 curriculum in full

ANNA EPHGRAVE

Introducing child-initiated 'play' into Year 1 delivers happy, engaged children; it improves behaviour dramatically, and attainment afterwards will be similar (if not better) than it was before. The curriculum can be covered in full. However, the play I am referring to is not a chaotic 'free for all' but rather the highest quality of free-flow play...

What do we mean by play?

'Play' means different things to different people, so before

I go on, allow me to explain what I mean by the term. Children are hardwired to learn, but they want to learn in their own unique way about the things that interest them. Unavoidably, therefore, whole-class, topic-based teaching or objective-led teaching will not be right for each child.

Given the autonomy to learn about what interests them, in a superb environment, children will select what to do and become deeply involved. I am referring to

involvement as measured by Ferre Laevers, where the deepest involvement includes "concentration, energy, creativity and persistence". Whenever a child is at this level of involvement, deep learning occurs. Incidentally, this is also the state children want to be in – no child wants to be bored – and it is the state you see when they are given autonomy, i.e. when they are 'playing'.

So, 'play' is whatever a child does in order to become deeply involved – what follow are examples of this in practice

at Carterhatch Infant School.

Making bracelets

The girls in picture 1 had chosen to sew friendship bracelets and became deeply involved in the activity – displaying "concentration, energy, creativity and persistence". They were 'playing' and through the autonomy they had been given, they had selected the very best play to engage them at this moment – the activity through which they would learn. The curriculum coverage was broad and deep:

- literacy/reading – they were using non-fiction texts, following instructions;
- writing – they completed a design sheet, including a list of materials and instructions, and evaluated the outcome;
- maths – they had money to spend each day and ‘bought’ the resources they needed for this project; they measured the ribbon and thread, and created patterns;
- physical – they were developing their dexterity;
- D&T – they were ‘making, doing and reviewing’;
- science – they explored materials and their properties.

Pervading everything was the development of personal and social skills, self-regulation and the Characteristics of Effective Learning.

Talking fruit

When Amira was looking at the globe and atlas, she started to look at the flags and also knew that some fruits come from far away. She talked about her mum making amazing things with fruit and went on to design a ‘fruit person’ on a design sheet, buy the fruit and make her ‘fruit person’.

Again, curriculum coverage is broad. As with the previous example, literacy, maths and PSE pervade the play, as well as D&T and physical development. In this example, there was also coverage of geography (locating countries around the world, but also in exploring the local area for the shops), history (talking about family traditions), and a different aspect of science with regard to plants.

Wooden wonder

Woodwork should be part of the continuous outdoor provision in Year 1. The aeroplane in picture 2 was made as a result of a child seeing an ‘old aeroplane’ on a video. Again, the coverage is broad: literacy, maths, D&T, physical development, PSE, history (change in aeroplane design), science (materials and flight), etc.

Police play

Kai’s choice of ‘play’ reflected his ongoing interest in police and firefighters, and had persisted for three years. On one particular occasion, he wanted to write a story about a policeman. He was supported with various secretarial aspects of the writing as well as the compositional aspects. In order for the ‘acting’ of the story to be realistic, Kai wanted a hat and was then introduced to sewing (picture 3). He used reference books to help with the design and combined paper and fabric to finish the hat to his satisfaction. He went on to make a gun at the woodwork bench as well as handcuffs and a belt with other materials. Kai also adapted the Bee-Bot to look like a police car and then used it on a map he had made previously, programming the ‘police car’ to travel along the selected route to the police station he had drawn. Kai had a wonderful week, totally absorbed in his learning, challenging himself to try new things, confident that the adults (and other children) would support him as necessary. Again, he covered many different ‘subjects’ all through the vehicle of his interest in the police – literacy, D&T, art & design, geography and computing.

In with the chickens

One day a group of boys decided to clean out the chicken coop (picture 4). We observed deep involvement in their ‘play’. Of particular benefit too, was that this play was both outdoors and authentic. The children’s knowledge of chickens and how to care for them will be ingrained and true, as a result. Compare this to a child who has done a literacy lesson reading a non-fiction text about chickens.



1



3



2



4

The right environment

In each of these examples, although a child initiated the play, adults were there to exploit the involvement and enthusiasm of the child, to challenge and teach them in ways that were uniquely appropriate to that child at that time. This is what makes this way of working so successful – the adults are totally focused on the individual child in that moment, assessing exactly where they are at (academically and emotionally) so that the ‘teaching’ will be exactly

them want to be outdoors and on the move – that is how they learn best; they cannot concentrate sitting still indoors and therefore they should not be expected to do so. Therefore, the environment needs to meet the needs of all the children, not just those who can sit still indoors.

When considering the environment, a few principles can help – aim for resources that are accessible, versatile and authentic. Look at the curriculum and think how the environment can offer opportunities for coverage without resorting to worksheets and whole-class teaching. For example, being outdoors in all weathers while taking care of a vegetable patch and some pets can cover vast amounts of the science curriculum. Allowing the children to design and then cook real food can cover huge aspects of both the literacy and maths curriculum, etc. However, the environment has to be developed to ensure this is possible.

“Aim for resources that are accessible, versatile and authentic”

appropriate and, therefore, in every case lead to progress. The adults are not busy doing something else – there is nothing more important or powerful than the play a child has chosen.

The other critical component of successful free-flow play in Year 1 is the environment. These children are just five and six years old, and many are still going through various stages of development that others will have completed in the Reception year. Many of



Anna Ephgrave was assistant headteacher for early years at Carterhatch Infant School.

Her latest book, Year One in Action (Routledge), is available now. To find out more, search “Year One Happy” on Youtube.

It pays to get **PARENTS INVOLVED**

Take every opportunity to work in partnership with mums and dads throughout the Reception year

DANIEL SATURLEY

How can practitioners work alongside busy and hard-to-reach families to better support their children's development whilst understanding their changing needs? Here are some successful strategies that have helped my school move out of special measures...

1. Get to know your families – fast!

Have you debated carrying out home visits, preschool visits or inviting children in to work alongside their key person before they start Reception? I know I did, but it is definitely worth the effort. Doing all these things will help you better understand the children and families you serve. Persevere through the difficulties around staff cover and timetabling because you will find this a simple way to build trust between school and home. If you are quick to interact with parents, you stand a greater

chance of being welcomed by them when you later attempt to offer guidance on supporting children's learning. The senior leadership team should support getting families on-side early, too, because it could set a precedent for their future involvement, strengthening their willingness to contribute in later years.

2. Uncover their interests

Interacting with families will help you uncover whether their interests might prove useful to your school. Are any of them specialists in a future topic focus? Could any of them facilitate an after-school club with support from a staff member? By taking an interest, you are more likely to be rewarded with their time and expertise. This is something I experienced first-hand when casually discussing plans to enhance our outdoor reading area during an after-school

club. The conversation inspired a parent to form a working party that built a gorgeous structure which fills our Reception children with excitement and an enthusiasm for reading. It is important not to underestimate, too, how much can be achieved through activities often overlooked due to time constraints – for example, stay-and-play sessions.

3. Find out how you can help

It is important to ask families where they feel they need support, because they can help to deepen learning in the home. If you don't do this, there is a risk that they may, for example, unwittingly embed the incorrect articulation of phonic sounds, or create misconceptions in early mathematics.

Using an online survey provider is helpful because they are usually free, and seamlessly send surveys and analyse data. Carefully written questions will give you insightful answers about the specific things parents would like help with. I find the response rate to surveys is around 40%, which is well above average, and demonstrates how online systems are an effective means of reaching out to busy families during modern fast-paced life. (This approach appears to be more effective than using paper-based systems, which are going out of fashion. They also allow schools and teachers

to demonstrate new ways of parent participation whilst streamlining their work.)

Without taking these steps to find out what parents wanted help with, I would never have been able to offer workshops around supporting behaviour in the home and facilitating child learning through open-ended discussions.

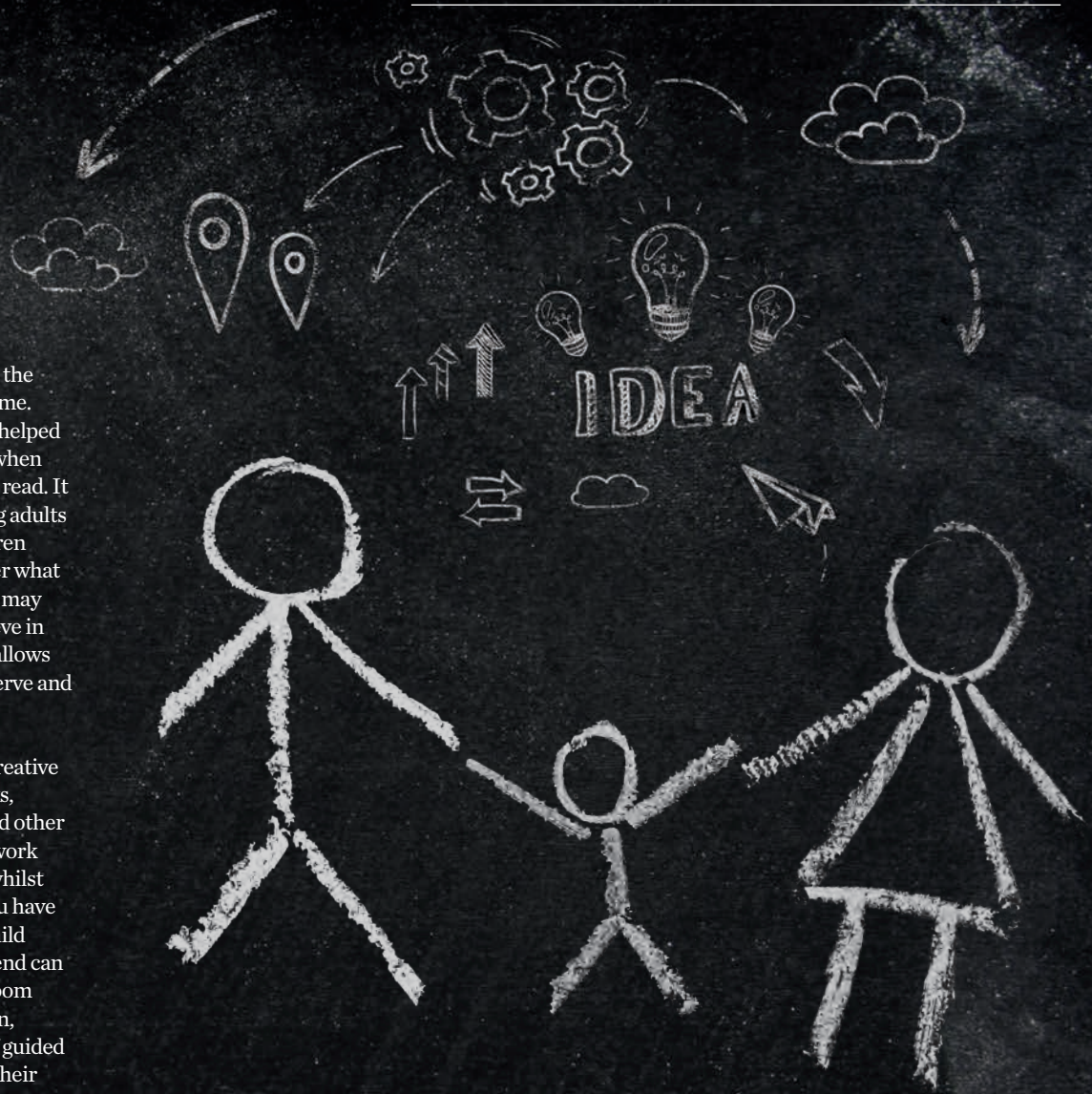
4. Invite them in

Once you know what your families would like support with, you are in a position to cater to their needs. So, for example, if your survey responses suggest they would like advice and guidance on how best to support early phonics and mathematical enquiry, you could integrate this into a workshop.

There are several benefits to inviting parents into school:

- It keeps parents informed about what they can do to support their children. It is easy to give a formal talk about how they can support early reading, literacy and mathematics. It is important to have a well-prepared presentation – show a video if it helps (e.g. correct phonic pronunciation) and allow time for questions within the group at a time convenient to them.
- Inviting parents in to work alongside their children gives you a chance to show them how to do something by modelling it to them. I have found this approach

“If you are quick to interact with parents, you stand a greater chance of being welcomed by them when you offer guidance on supporting children's learning”



is most effective just after the register or before home time. Using this method I have helped families use questioning when listening to their children read. It is also effective at showing adults how to read to their children using book talk to consider what the author and illustrator may have been aiming to achieve in their work. This usefully allows parents and carers to observe and learn from school staff.

- Inviting parents in for creative crafting events, local walks, stay-and-play sessions and other activities allows them to work alongside their children whilst learning new things. If you have enough staff to oversee child safety, the adults who attend can be moved into a nearby room and given a demonstration, presentation, talk or brief guided session that will support their needs and build upon teacher/parent relations.

5. Enable them to do more at home

Understanding the things children do at home helps teachers develop opportunities for them to continue their learning in school, which in turn strengthens your bond with parents. To support this process, you should go out of your way to encourage families to send in 'wow' moments and carry out home learning observations. You could create a recording template and teach parents how to complete it during a workshop. Remind and encourage them to create 'parent shares' using digital solutions (2simple and tapestry, for example) if you have them. It is also helpful to ask adults to sign to confirm that they have viewed their child's learning journey whilst commenting on some of the next steps that have been

identified. If you incentivise this by awarding children a certificate, pencil or reward for a predetermined amount of contributions made by their family, you may be surprised by how many you receive...

It is important to also check that parents and families feel the things you have planned and facilitated have improved their understanding of how they can support their child's progress and next steps. Last year I found that families wanted more ways to communicate with teachers about their child's progress. So, I plan to respond this year by setting up termly telephone and email clinics for them to contact teachers during the school day. It is important to be adaptive and learn from parents and families.

Have a go

It is crucial that we create opportunities to interact with families and respond to their needs. By doing so we will help them support their child's learning, and with strong communication and support that starts when families first join school we can enhance the impact they have. So, take an interest in the families you work with and ask them what they want from school; this will allow you to effectively reach out to, and support, busy and hard-to-reach homes. You may find it slow progress at first, but with perseverance you can develop the understanding and consistency that will challenge and extend the learning of your children. **TP**



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HOW ARE WE DOING?

Self-evaluation is the backbone to a great school, but it can feel incredibly time-consuming – here's how to simplify the process

TIM NELSON

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Good schools have long carried out self-evaluation in every aspect of their work, but it has not always been performed objectively and systematically to the extent that is now expected. The New Relationship with Schools, announced by David Miliband way back in January 2004, is still breaking ground in getting schools to work with a sharper focus, less bureaucracy and greater autonomy. Self-evaluation is one of the main components of the new relationship; its links to Ofsted inspection and the 'single conversation' with a school improvement partner are at the core of the new system.

Leadership & self-evaluation

The implications of this system have ensured that the school leadership team has a greater connection with self-evaluation as a tool for improvement. At the root of this connection are two important questions:

- How can we simplify school leadership?
- What is the essence of leading a great school?

It goes without saying that at the heart of great leadership

is the relentless drive to get the best for your children. Leadership focused on children and great outcomes, time and again, trumps all other motives. This is most clearly seen when there are challenges and vulnerabilities in school, and within the community. Driven and decisive leadership makes a difference – the evidence tells us. Roy Blatchford (2014) notes, "Leaders set out to see the best in people and dwell on the positive, while at the same time being single minded in rooting out mediocrity."

So whilst leadership is leadership, regardless of sector or context, there are some distinguishing features of educational leadership – namely the focus on pedagogy and getting the best outcomes for all children (i.e. equity).

Ofsted & self-evaluation

When Ofsted visits any school, the inspectors' evaluation criteria are clear. They are looking for evidence that demonstrates how

well schools are performing, closing gaps and ensuring that all children achieve their very best. The starting point for the inspection process is the school's own self-evaluation. The self-evaluation is the first glimpse that inspectors get of how the school views itself.

Self-evaluation isn't new, but it has previously been cited as one of the most time consuming and challenging tasks by many school leaders. But at its heart, self-evaluation is simply asking

- How well are we doing?
- How do we know?
- How does that compare with any benchmarking or national comparison?
- What do we need to do next to secure further improvement?

Where to start

There is no right or wrong starting point with self-evaluation – leadership teams need to find what works best for them. However, one strategy many teams find useful is



starting with the criteria they will be judged against, using it to identify their best fit, identifying their evidence base to support their judgements and defining their next steps in terms of improvement. Here is an example of how you might approach this, centred on feedback:

FEEDBACK

Evaluation

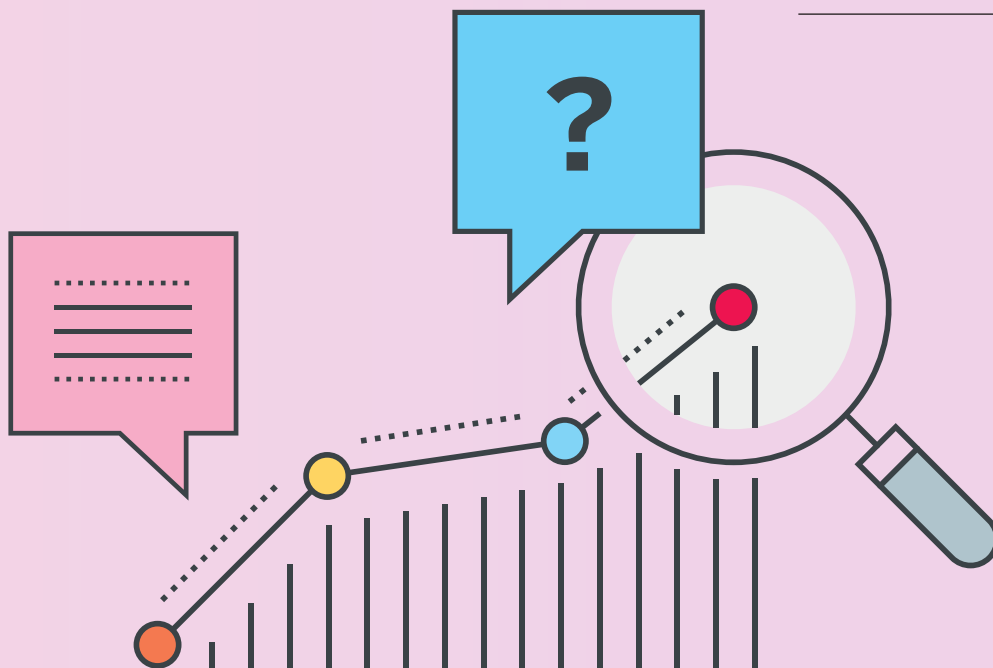
'Good' – Teachers give pupils feedback in line with the school assessment policy. Pupils use this feedback well and they know what they need to do to improve.

Evidence

- Book scrutiny
- Feedback policy
- Pupil voice (academic)

Next steps

- Ensure feedback in non-core subjects matches quality in core subjects.
- Improve quality of feedback in Year 3.



Having undertaken this task as a leadership team, you can be sure that all leaders will share the bigger picture and should also understand how the sections of the inspection criteria dovetail together – for example, what you assert about teaching should correlate with outcomes, etc. For many, this process is the most useful part of self-evaluation.

Where many schools seem to get stuck is by trying to write their self-evaluation as a group, because the written product is merely a record of the discussions and debates you will have had as a team. Sharing the criteria and deciding the best fit is the critical process; who actually writes the self-evaluation summary is slightly irrelevant.

Keep it simple

When it comes to writing your self-evaluation, keep it simple. It can be helpful to frame each statement in a similar way. As illustrated by the example below, state your judgement, state how you know and define what is next:

Written feedback is consistently good. Evidence from book scrutiny and discussions with children support this because children can talk about their successes and next steps with the majority of pieces of work evidencing pupil response to feedback. To further improve we

need to ensure that this good practice is seen in all areas of the curriculum, not just in English and mathematics.

The length of your self-evaluation will vary depending on the complexities within your school. Many leaders find it useful to summarise their self-evaluation on a one-page document. This should provide space to note down key strengths and next steps for the following areas:

- Effectiveness of leadership and management
- Quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- Personal development, behaviour and welfare
- Outcomes for pupils
- Effectiveness of early years provision.

Additionally, it should summarise the quality of your SMSC, and record your judgement of the school’s overall effectiveness.

It is important to remember that you don’t need to include every detail in your self-evaluation. The simplest way to keep your summary short is to signpost the reader to other sources of evidence – for example, the detailed evaluations of teaching, evaluation of pupil outcomes, CPD records, analysis of pupil groups, etc.

Once complete, it might be useful to ask a colleague outside of your school to

read your self-evaluation and ask whether they can see clearly the strengths and next steps, aligned to the inspection criteria. When looking at a self-evaluation summary, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is it concise and succinct, clearly signposting evidence?
- Is it evaluative rather than descriptive or repetitive?
- Is it a working document, updated regularly?
- Is it shared?
- Is it linked to the inspection criteria?
- Is it linked to the improvement plan?
- Is it honest?

Use evaluative language

Writing about your own school is challenging, probably much more challenging than writing about another school. In your school, there are emotions, heart aches, dilemmas and human beings! The combination of these makes writing in a dispassionate way a real challenge.

However, try, where possible, to use evaluative language. The following phrases may help as a starting point:

*Because of... this meant that...
Data indicates that... because...
The progress of... compared*

*with national shows...
The impact was... as a result of...
Evidence from... showed us that...
Feedback from... resulted in...*

Conversely, try to avoid the following language:

*It seems like...
We are not sure why...
We think that...
Obviously...
Clearly...*

A vital tool

In essence, writing your self-evaluation is an important leadership task. Your self-evaluation summary along with your school website are the first glimpses that inspectors have into the reality that is your school.

Self-evaluation contributes to school improvement by providing an accurate assessment of how well the school is performing and what it needs to do next. It leads to the identification of improvement priorities and to evidence-based school improvement planning, which results in clear benefits for pupils. **TP**



Tim Nelson is a former headteacher with over 25 years’ experience in primary education working as an LLE, a School Improvement Partner, Professional Partner as well as an Ofsted Inspector and mentor for trainee inspectors. He is now a full-time consultant for Focus Education, working with teams in school on all core areas of school improvement.

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'Can-do' maths FOR KEY STAGE 1

Effective use of the mastery approach can help develop every child's mathematical fluency without resorting to rote learning. Here's how to get it right

SUZANNE TERRASSE

In a traditional primary school maths lesson, children are 'set' for maths and taught content based on their anticipated ability. This means that from an early age children are classed as those who can and can't 'do maths'. But when teaching maths for mastery, the whole class moves through topics together. Each topic is studied in depth, with more secure pupils working at a deeper level with the concepts, thereby building mastery; the teacher does not move to the next topic until all children

demonstrate that they have a secure understanding of mathematical concepts.

Creating mixed groups is one way of facilitating effective whole-class teaching. Some teachers successfully pair a struggling learner with an advanced learner, others make tables with two advanced, two middle attainment and two struggling learners, but there is no 'right way' when it comes to creating your mixed groups and it is important to think about who the child is and how they learn.

Teach less, learn more

Give time to think deeply about the maths and ensure that learners really understand concepts at a relational level rather than as a set of rules or procedures. This slower pace leads to greater progress because it ensures that pupils are secure in their understanding and teachers don't need to revisit content once it has been covered in depth. Some school leaders, teachers and parents are concerned that advanced

learners are 'held back', but this is not the case as there is still plenty of scope for effective differentiation in teaching for mastery.

What differentiation looks like

Although the whole class works together, there is still differentiation. Unlike the old model, where advanced learners are accelerated through new content, those pupils who grasp concepts quickly are



challenged with rich and sophisticated problems within the topic, using the skills they have mastered independently. Those children who are not sufficiently fluent are provided additional support to consolidate their understanding before moving on.

The differentiation thus lies in the depth of understanding. An advanced learner would be expected to show a minimum of three different methods to solve the problem. The methods may demonstrate a deeper-level thinking and may be more abstract. A top tip for extending advanced learners is to ask them, “How do you know?” or “Can you explain it to the class?” or “Can you find another way?”

Similarly, a struggling learner who might not be able to explain their thinking can perhaps be encouraged to draw what they mean or show you using concrete materials. For struggling learners, challenges can be met using techniques such as ‘afternoon interventions’, where learners are given further explanation or clarification. There may also be time for some focused work with concrete materials, to further aid deep understanding.

In addition to afternoon interventions, a ‘focus table’ may be used during workbook sessions. Struggling learners, or those who self-identify as needing extra support from the teacher on a particular topic, choose to sit at the focus table. Manipulatives are used to aid understanding and the learning is more facilitated by the teacher.

Don't leap to the abstract

Children and adults can find maths difficult because it is abstract. Teaching for mastery uses the concrete pictorial abstract (CPA) approach to help learners with new ideas, building on their existing knowledge by introducing abstract concepts in a more tangible way. It brings concepts to life by allowing children to



experience and handle physical objects themselves:

- *Concrete* is the ‘doing’ stage, using physical objects or manipulatives such as counters, interlocking cubes, paper shapes, etc. to model problems.
- *Pictorial* is the ‘seeing’ stage, using representations of the objects to model problems. This stage encourages children to make a mental connection between the physical object and abstract levels of understanding by drawing or looking at pictures, circles, diagrams or models that represent the objects in the problem. Building or drawing a model makes it easier for children to grasp concepts they traditionally find more

“Children teach each other or debate in rich mathematical conversations”

difficult, such as fractions, as it helps them visualise the problem and make it more accessible.

- *Abstract* is the ‘symbolic’ stage, where children are able to use abstract symbols to solve problems. In the abstract phase children are able to represent the maths using just the numbers. For example, a child who was ready for an abstract representation of an addition problem would be able to solve this by writing the number sentence

$5 + 6 = 11$. Children need to have a secure understanding of the concrete and pictorial phase before moving on to abstract. If they move too quickly then it can create gaps in their learning.

Children move at different paces. Some will easily move from concrete to abstract and may not need to draw, whereas others will need to constantly use concrete manipulatives like cubes to solve problems. So, although presented CPA has three distinct stages, a skilled teacher will go back and forth

TEACHER-LED VS PUPIL-LED

A maths mastery classroom doesn't look like a traditional maths classroom, where children sit silently listening to the teacher talk. Instead the children are teaching one another and discussing or debating in rich mathematical conversations. One of the reasons children love maths for mastery is because they are able to discuss and drive the learning. The structure of the lessons allows for many opportunities for the children to lead the learning. Even Year 1 pupils enjoy sharing their methods and reasoning with the whole class. The role of the teacher is to question and build upon the pupils' thinking and methods. If a pupil is demonstrating a misconception, it is important not to shut this idea down, but rather to question and facilitate it so they can recognise why their answer may not make sense.

task or something similar, and they use their journal to show which methods they can use to solve it; they may draw a picture, make a bar model or write a number sentence.

In Year 1, when pupils have limited writing skills, journals might contain more pictures or diagrams than sentences. If learners are doing a practical activity or you are working with a struggling learner who is using manipulatives to work out a problem, it can be useful to take a photo and stick it in their journal to demonstrate their level of understanding; more advanced learners might be expected to critique various methods discussed in class.

Textbooks written by experts

A good textbook written by subject experts with specific learning outcomes in mind is key to the mastery method. A textbook series does even more: it ensures continuity of learning, building slowly on foundations laid previously in order that students can attain mastery of the relevant subject. Additionally, workbooks and other associated materials will enable students to progress effectively, and will free staff to do what they do best – teach.

Maths mastery schemes work on a spiral curriculum, which means that each topic taught in the order proscribed by the textbook,

is explored at length and in depth in a researched order. A spiral curriculum revisits the same topics with increasing complexity, building on and reinforcing previous learning. Each concept learnt in Year 1 will be revisited and built upon, it will get a bit harder and the numbers will get a bit bigger. If the children have gaps in their understanding they will struggle as they progress through their journey of school.

How to use the textbooks with children without strong reading skills:

Read out the Anchor Task

We limit the number of words we use in the Year 1 books, but there are words that children will see and are likely to not understand, e.g. 'equally', 'half', 'halves', etc. The key when delivering the Anchor Task is to read out the problem while children follow the words in the book. To aid understanding, either

- use language that's already familiar to children, such as

- 'share', 'cut', 'pieces'; or
- when new words appear, write them on a 'word wall'.

Teachers might also bring together certain children before the lesson to help explain and demonstrate words from the lesson that might present a challenge.

Use visuals to explain new concepts

When children come to the Let's Learn section of the lesson and have to read by themselves, they may still not understand the language. What's important is that they are able to see clear visuals of the concept that is being presented. Children will need your help explaining certain terms, but the most important thing is for the child to read and access the visual illustrations.

Create a maths journal poster

Early on in Year 1, children may not have the skills to be able to write their own journals. We recommend they create one in groups to help them with tricky concepts until they are able to complete their journals individually. To help develop children's journal writing, the teacher can show the groups what their journal should look like on a poster, such as the day's lesson title, keywords and pasting examples and visual aids. **TP**

The Maths – No Problem! Primary series is the only textbook to be approved by the Department for Education for its maths mastery programme. The scheme of work for the primary series is available to download for free at mathsnoproblem.co.uk

Suzanne Terrasse is commissioning editor at Maths – No Problem!, a provider of textbooks, teaching resources and professional development for primary and secondary schools.

mathsnoproblem.com

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between each representation to reinforce concepts.

The importance of writing

An unusual feature of the Singaporean approach is that each child has their own maths journal where they write down what they've learned in maths their own words. This is not to be confused with an exercise book that children use to complete their sums; the maths journal allows children to explain and demonstrate their thought processes and understanding.

The journals are an important part of teaching maths for mastery. They are a place where learners can show what they know with no limitations. Pupils are given a problem, often the 'in focus'



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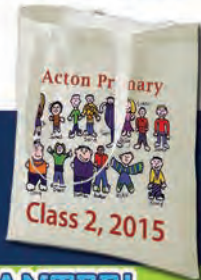
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Teach maths with counters

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ALISON BORTHWICK

Counters are a fantastic resource – easy to use, cheap to buy and ideal for developing mathematical thinking and learning. Because they are easy to handle, children love playing with them, so make sure you have lots around the room, in baskets, bags or boxes. It also helps to have them in different areas, not just the mathematics corner (if you have one).

Counters come in different sizes and different colours. There are even double-sided counters sporting two different hues. It is useful to have a mixture if possible and then watch what the children do with them. For example, do they sort them into piles of different colours or sizes? Often children will treat different sizes of counters with the same value (usually a value of one) but sometimes they will give larger counters a bigger value.

One of the easiest activities to use counters for is to make patterns. Give children a handful of counters and ask them to make a pattern. Have a look at the NRICH activity on Pattern Making for more ideas (ow.ly/t07W30f2Puw).

Number facts

You can use counters to represent numbers in different ways. Like beads or other objects, (such as pasta shapes, conkers, stones), they can be used as counting objects. They can also be arranged in different ways to highlight number facts.

$6 = 3 + 3$		$3 + 3 = 6$
$7 = 5 + 2$		$2 + 5 = 7$
Double 4 = 8		$4 + 4 = 8$
Half of 12 = 6		$12 - 6 = 6$

Counters also provide a useful model for addition and subtraction facts to 10 or 20. Using counters in this way shows that addition strategies have corresponding subtraction strategies. It is important to teach addition and subtraction together so that children understand the relationships between them.

You could start by exploring addition and subtraction facts to 10 first and then move on to 20. Use two different coloured counters to highlight the importance of five. Once children are secure with the cardinal value that a group of counters represent five, they will begin to count on from five each time (instead of needing to go back to one each time).

$7 + ? + 10$		$10 - ? = 7$
$10 = 6 + 4$		$4 + 6 = 10$
$20 = 10 + 10$		$20 - 10 = 10$

Subitising

Counters are also a useful model to give children opportunities to subitise. Subitising is the immediate recognition of a small number of objects without having to count them. Children can subitise up to about four or five objects. This is a key skill in developing children's ability to count as it begins to move children away from 'counting all' and can provide some progression to the next development stage in mental calculation strategies for addition. If children are presented with having to combine two or more quantities, if they have subitised one group of objects first, they can use the next stage of counting (counting on from the first number or the larger number) to reach an answer more efficiently than if they count all the objects in both groups.

The counters below show the quantity four. Subitising helps children to instantly see four counters without having to count them individually.



You can have lots of fun with subitising. Ask children to take a small handful of counters and place them on the table. Notice if they attempt to arrange them into a line or a number they recognise (such as the five on a die or domino). Ask how many counters are there. Do they give an answer that is close or not? Often at this stage children will guess and say any number! Show them how to count the counters using one-to-one correspondence, touching and moving each counter as you count and that the last number in the count is also the number that represents the total in the set. These are some of the essential counting skills children need, but using counters to support this is a fun way of children practising them. The more you ask children to count, the better they will become.



Alison Borthwick is primary coordinator at NRICH. You can find many more early maths activities at nrich.maths.org/early-years. Sign up for the free NRICH half-termly newsletter by emailing enquiries.nrich@maths.org

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Let's end the cotton wool culture

There are signs that we are finally opening our eyes to the huge benefits of risky play and learning

CARLEY SEFTON

In the week I started as the new CEO of Learning through Landscapes, the *Telegraph* published HM Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman's article 'It's time to end the cotton wool culture in our schools – and let children live again' (bit.ly/2xR9Auy). The cheer in my new office must have been audible far and wide as (we hope) we're finally seeing the tide of opinion changing on what many have believed for so long – risk in childhood is good. No, actually it's crucial!

The article looks at child safety and risk. Now, no one would deny that it is important to protect children; so many of the policies introduced into schools have been of great benefit and made us a world leader in child safety. But the flip side to this is that we

have allowed a culture to develop that shies away from all risks in play and learning because of fear of repercussion and litigation.

So how can this culture change? Well, apparently in September Ofsted inspectors will take part in training titled 'When is safe, safe: what really matters' – this alongside recent 'outstandings' for settings and schools who are pushing the boundaries in risky play and learning feels like a huge step forward in long overdue reform.

Understanding risk

In my previous organisation I was given the nickname 'Health and Sefton'; I never saw this as a negative, though I'm sure it was regularly used behind my back! People soon realised that my referral to risk assessments and risk benefit wasn't ever designed to stop an activity happening; in fact a good risk assessment did quite the opposite – it made sure that we could do everything we wanted to create an exciting and memorable learning experience.

Even though attitudes may be changing, we live in a world where the risk assessment culture is based on being as safe as possible, not as safe as necessary. The biggest risk of this is that risk assessing becomes a tick-box, liability-avoiding exercise, rather than a useful safeguarding tool that allows us to take on educationally beneficial challenges and risks.

There are lots of projects and activities I have run where I have felt confident because I've explored the potential risk involved first. These have allowed me to push the boundary because I understood the worst that could happen and do all in my power to prevent it. A risk assessment should be a living document shared by staff and students that can allow exciting learning experiences to take place. Understanding this has allowed me to introduce children to a world of learning that has often been avoided, including allowing young arson convicts to take part in a fire workshop, and exploring animal husbandry.

Look at the research

Understanding the benefits of learning risk is nothing new – over 50 international studies have looked at risk benefit in childhood, and all of them document the positive outcomes understanding risk brings. In Berlin this September, the ISGA (International School Grounds Alliance) will be publishing its risk statement as part of its annual conference: it states

Risk taking allows children and young people to learn vital lessons about themselves and their world. These are lessons that cannot be taught and can only be learned through experience. Caution, resilience, courage, knowledge about one's own abilities and limitations, and the self-confidence to reach beyond them are learned through self-chosen action.

I have to admit that every time I read this paragraph, I smile – resilience, courage and self-confidence are skills I want to see in every child. I would never disagree with the importance of learning formal subjects, but I hope we are finally beginning to realise that a child's education should not just be based on a set of measurable outcomes, and those vital attributes such as soft skills and character development have to become a core part of our education system.

What now?

None of this means we can rip up the risk assessment and let the kids run outside with a pack of matches. But what I hope it means is that finally educators can use common sense to help provide engaging learning opportunities for all children on a daily basis, and those tiny hi-vis jackets can be left in the dressing-up box for good old-fashioned creative role play where they belong.



Carley Sefton is the CEO of Learning through Landscapes. A charity dedicated to enhancing outdoor learning and play.

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

ltl.org.uk



10 WAYS TO *get out and learn*

Embracing the educational riches of the great outdoors needn't be restricted to early years – here's how to take a break from the classroom in Key Stage 1

EMILY CARLILL

 @CLOtC  lotc.org.uk

As the term suggests, learning outside the classroom (LOtC) is not just about what young people learn but also, importantly, *how* and *where* they learn. LOtC provides a framework for education that takes advantage of your surroundings and communities beyond the school gates. Such an approach helps young people to construct their own learning and live successfully in the world they encounter around them. There is strong evidence, too, that great LOtC adds value to the learning going on inside the classroom – it provides a context for learning in many areas: general and subject-based knowledge, thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as vital life skills such as cooperation and interpersonal communication. Apart from anything else, of course, young people are intensely curious and should be given the opportunity to explore as widely as possible.

So, if you're raring to get started, here are 10 simple ways to start harnessing the educational potential of the wider world...

1 Use your grounds
Accessible, cost-effective and convenient! Using your school's grounds, led by your own staff, is the simplest way of incorporating more learning outside the classroom into your children's learning. Your approach can be simple or ambitious, depending on your time and resources, but I defy you not to be inspired by the work of Reception teacher, and LOtC Innovator Award winner, Simon Poote – read more at bit.ly/2w1PDo6

2 Use your space
Regardless of the size of your school grounds – be they a small yard or acres of green fields – there are endless opportunities for learning across all subject areas. Why not try using chalk and measuring distances to create a historical timeline, exploring

habitats in hedgerows, creating a school garden, storytelling in the fresh air, using play areas for team-building activities, drawing shapes and creating angles, or use your playing fields for overnight camping experiences (visit learningaway.org.uk for case studies of KS1 residential)... The possibilities are only limited by your creativity!





3 Connect with others

If you are a school based in a rural setting with lots of greens spaces, why not join up with another school, perhaps from a more urban setting and arrange to visit each other's premises? This not only provides teachers with more opportunities to deliver different learning activities, but also allows children to experience different locations, culture and lifestyles, as well as social interaction with new people – children and adults alike.

4 Walk to the park

Physical activity and learning! Taking children to the local park will thrill them and give you a great way of teaching them outside in natural environments. Trees, plants, hedgerows, ponds, rivers – all manner of habitats and plenty of wildlife means lots of opportunities for science and learning about nature, as well as risk-taking and exploration, teamwork, arts and crafts (nature art – try collecting leaves to take back to the classroom for painting), messy play (mud pies!), building (dens, Stickman) and so much more. Plus, they will also learn personal safety and wellbeing from wearing appropriate clothing, safety when crossing roads, and looking after each other.



5 Go to town

As with visiting the local park, children will learn a lot about looking after themselves and others, building better relationships with staff through communication and trust, and also an awareness for local residents, by heading into town. On the way, ask them to take note of what's around them: the houses

and buildings, businesses, roads – insights into town planning and urban design, but also a great opportunity to learn about where they live in. Discovering the town can open up opportunities for learning about its history, geography, the jobs people do and transport. Allow children to visit and use the shops, post office, etc. to build on their social skills and confidence when talking to adults and use their practical maths skills working with money.

6 Visit the library

And not just for the many books, displays and resources available to young people – local libraries (and museums) often have free weekly story time, craft, theme or rhyme time sessions. Don't miss out on these invaluable learning opportunities – get involved!



7 Let children decide

Perhaps one of your students is interested in cricket... Arrange a trip to the local cricket ground. Do you have a keen baker? Take the children to the local shop to buy the ingredients for your baking activities. If your children or school are involved in any charity fundraising activities, visit the local charity to give the money donations directly and the children can see first-hand what the charity does and the impact their contribution will make.

8 Involve parents

One thing that often limits the scope and impact of educational visits is a lack of available staff – so ask your children's parents or grandparents to volunteer. Most family members would love to be involved, as long as they are available – who wouldn't want a day out at the local farm! Make a good plan of who is doing what, which children they are responsible for and meeting points, etc. – this way you can ensure both children, staff and parents will get the most out of the day while staying safe, learning and having fun!

9 Bring the outside in

When it's really not possible to take children outside the classroom, bring outdoor experiences in. Invite representatives of local services (fire, police, medical, etc.), businesses, museums, charities or even parents to pay

you a visit, to talk to the children about what they do, giving demonstrations, providing examples or visuals for the children to see, hear and touch.

10 Extend learning

All LOTC activities – whether they have taken place in your grounds, or involved a walk to the local town or bus trip to the seaside – can be built on upon your return to the classroom. Exhaust the experience from every angle: use it for storytelling, art and craft, history, drama, science experiments, literacy, numeracy, music, show and tell, and more. This will simplify lesson planning for you, and mean the children are more likely to be engaged, feel connected to the topic and develop greater understanding – all of which will greatly improve their learning. **TP**



DO MORE OUTSIDE

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC) is a national charity that believes young people should have access to frequent, continuous and progressive experiences in school grounds, educational visits further afield and residential – and that these experiences should be utilised as a tool for teaching, learning and delivering the curriculum. For more information on learning outside the classroom including training, events, information and resource packs with lesson plans for teaching the curriculum outside of the classroom, visit lotc.org.uk



Emily Carlill is marketing and events coordinator at the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom.



Spaces that boost **LEARNING**

Truly enabling environments, be they indoors or out, allow children to experiment free from the fear of failure

TANIA SWIFT

Enabling environments should be age-specific, appealing to children's interests, making them feel happy, challenged, safe and secure. They should be places where they can confidently play and learn. However, some of the best spaces will provide enriching and exciting spaces for children (and adults) of any age, either due to their nature or how they have been organised by professionals or a combination of both.

As children learn so much through exploring the environment and child-led activity, it is important that we create an environment that is interesting, exciting and poses challenges. With a

well-thought-out or chosen environment, children will be able to experiment, problem-solve, push themselves, use mathematical concepts, use their communication skills and be active with a minimum of input from adults.

Some questions to ask yourself when thinking about the environment include the following:

- Is it accessible for all?
- Do children feel cared for, safe and secure?
- Is the environment inviting to children?
- Will children experience many things without prompting from adults?

- Will children be stimulated by the environment?
 - Will the environment challenge children to experiment, problem-solve and push themselves?
 - Is the environment safe whilst still being challenging?
 - Does the environment allow children to be flexible, and is the environment itself flexible?
 - Is the environment interesting for children?
- Margaret McMillan, pioneer of the British nursery school, said, 'We are trying to create an environment where education will be almost inevitable.' (Hay, 2014) This is a simple explanation of an

enabling environment. If it is interesting, exciting, enticing, and encourages exploration, creativity and experimentation, it will enable learning.

When considering creating an enabling environment, you will need to take into account the emotional environment, the indoor environment and the outdoor environment.

The emotional environment

The environment is not only the physical areas that children are exposed to but also the people who are in it: other children, parents/carers and staff. The emotional environment is affected by how parents/carers

and staff interact, whether children feel safe, secure and cared for, and if there is an underlying feeling of positivity or negativity in the space. In effect, relationships are what constitute the emotional environment, which includes the relationship between the parent/carer and staff, the relationship between staff and children, how people behave and speak to each other, how they are treated and how inclusive it is.

When children feel, safe, secure and happy in an environment that responds to their individual needs they are more likely to feel comfortable trying new things, push themselves and generally relax into enjoying their day. This will open them up to learning so many new things and allow them to be challenged physically, emotionally and cognitively.

One of the best ways for children to learn is for them to feel able to make mistakes and persevere until they get it right. Children will only be willing to do this if they are in a setting that has an emotional environment that encourages and supports all to explore and try new things.

“When children feel safe, secure and happy in an environment, they are more likely to push themselves”

It is therefore important for settings to have an ethos that supports positivity about failure, that nothing is wrong unless it will lead to someone getting hurt, and trying something new is more important than sticking to your comfort zone. Much of this ethos will be discovered through adult role-modelling; we should allow ourselves to make mistakes, learn from them and try again, always be positive, allow children many opportunities for self-directed play and learning, respect each other and be inclusive.

The indoor environment

Indoor spaces need to be interesting, accessible and flexible to accommodate children’s changing interests and needs. Ensure there are spaces where children can be active and allow children to have an input into how the space is organised. If space is limited, consider activities such as dancing, active stories and yoga as they do not require a lot of space yet significantly raise the heart rate and allow children to learn at the same time.

The outdoor environment

Children should be outdoors as much as they are indoors, if not more, and have a balance of self-directed and adult-led activity time. When children are outdoors they can play and explore without many of the restrictions that are so often placed on them. What they will encounter in nature is generally open-ended and will spark their imagination, encouraging them to discover and learn through their senses, leading to natural physical and cognitive

development. Children can experience many things they are exposed to indoors, but often on a larger scale. This can be great for little hands that have not developed dexterity and fine-tuned their fine motor skills and for children who struggle to sit still and concentrate. Creating an effective outdoor environment does not mean creating a pretty, tidy environment. Children love to explore wild spaces, enjoy messy play and be inspired by an array of what might appear to be junk. It is important not to place our aesthetic value on

OUTDOOR INSPIRATION

INEXPENSIVE RESOURCES TO ENHANCE PLAY...

- Blackboard paint to use as permanent fixture
- Chalk to create games on cemented surfaces
- Strong cardboard packaging to create shelters
- Pieces of fabric/old sheets to make tents and dens
- Guttering to create a water play area
- Tyres – these can be free from local garages
- Planks, logs and pieces of wood
- Signs of all kinds
- Boxes and crates to build with
- Old CDs hanging at different levels
- Old pots and pans strung on a strong line between trees with spoons to play them
- Trellis for weaving thread or vines through
- Shallow trays for water
- Old Wellingtons to plant in
- Spare hosepipe wound along the fence with a funnel at each end to use as a telephone
- Plastic drinks bottle filled with different substances and objects to hang or to create skittles
- The wonderful array of natural resources such as sand, water, mud, all types of earth, pebbles, stones and rocks
- Bird feathers
- Sea shells
- Containers of various shapes and sizes
- Painting equipment
- Woodwork, gardening and DIY tools

a space that has been created for children’s exploration and enjoyment. We also do not need to create different learning areas for subjects such as mathematics and literacy as children will constantly be learning if they are exposed to an enriching outdoor environment. When children play outside they learn about the effect they have on the world around them and how to be good to the environment. They will learn all kinds of mathematical concepts from outdoor activities, from playing with sticks, to water play, to building dens. They will develop their language and communication when role-playing or problem-solving with their peers. And when they have finally built that bridge out of tyres and planks, they will feel so very good about themselves! The provision of open-ended, non-prescriptive and adaptable resources will open up children’s

learning experience and encourage them to use their imagination, problem-solve and experiment, and you will find some ideas of what to use in the panel on this page. **TP**



*This article is an edited extract from **Learning Through Movement and Active Play in the Early Years** by Tania Swift (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, £14.99), which explains the importance of physical activity for promoting young children’s learning and wellbeing. To purchase your copy, visit jpk.com*

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A change of method

Introducing Montessori pedagogy in the early years has the capacity to benefit children throughout your school

BARBARA ISAACS

 @MontessoriUK  montessori.org.uk

Over the last decade the Montessori St Nicholas charity has helped several primary schools to introduce the Montessori pedagogy into their nursery and Reception classes. The first to take the plunge was Gorton Mount Primary School (now Rushbrook Primary School) in Manchester. The project was the brainchild of then-head Carol Powel and her idea inspired others such as Stebbing Primary School in Essex and Aldersbrook Primary school in East London, as well as The Fawbert and Barnard Infants' School in Hertfordshire.

Is it something your school could make a success of? Such a project relies on the vision and commitment of the headteacher and her or his early years staff. You must understand the EYFS principles relating to the unique child, enabling environment and positive relationships, and how they underpin children's learning and development. You must, of course, also have a knowledge of, and a belief in, the Montessori approach, and its benefits. Montessori St Nicholas can offer training for teachers, but your school must take the lead in ensuring that the learning environment is properly prepared.

Independent learners

In all the schools using the Montessori pedagogy to deliver the EYFS, we witness children's growing capacity to independently meet their personal needs and develop the fine motor skills essential for every task they undertake



in class (especially writing). We see independence of thinking when selecting activities, engaging with them and problem-solving. The emphasis on a systematic approach to learning enhances children's concentration and critical thinking. Short, dynamic group lessons in phonics and math concepts are supported by opportunities to engage with activities that support what was introduced in the group lesson. The activities are differentiated to meet the individual needs of the children, who continue to work with the teacher, on their own or in small friendship or ability groups.

The resources supporting the 'understanding the world' area of learning are of particular interest to the children and provide many opportunities to learn about the Earth and the unique physical and cultural qualities of the seven continents. Study of nature is enhanced by the children's sensory experiences on outings and in the school garden and activities available on interest tables.

Learning materials

The teachers (and teaching assistants) who attend the training find strong connections between the

EYFS and Montessori principles, and see the potential of the Montessori learning materials very quickly. They appreciate the systematic, well-structured approach to helping children learn to count and use addition and subtraction activities, while the scaffolded Montessori phonics activities underpin the Letters and Sounds approach effectively. All these tasks offer children opportunities to revisit, practise and gain a deeper understanding of the daily group lessons.

The calm and purposeful atmosphere created in Montessori-focused nursery and Reception classes has proved an inspiration to many visitors and teachers from Year 1 and 2, and beyond. Montessori numeracy materials are particularly appreciated; their design scaffolds children's understanding of the relationship between quantity and numeral in small manageable steps, and for this reason many schools have purchased an extra set to use with older children in need of extra support.

As children who have experienced the Montessori approach in early years enter Year 1, they bring with them

a joy of learning, a capacity to concentrate and a logical approach to negotiation of tasks, and a 'can do' attitude – qualities that help them engage fully with learning at a higher level. The respect and trust with which they were nurtured when they first enter nursery and Reception is translated into polite respectful behaviour as they progress through the school.

Beyond early years

The schools with whom Montessori St Nicholas has worked during the past 10 years have continued their Montessori practice in the early years, and have carried the basic principles of respect for every child's unique learning journey across their complete education programme. In the majority of these schools, an element of free choice and extension to learning using Montessori-based activities continues in Year 1 and 2. This approach makes the transition easier for the children and provides a gradual introduction of more structured learning. Junior-age children requiring more individualised support also benefit. The key element of the Montessori approach, which transcends all the age groups, is respect for the child and his/her efforts to learn and do their best at school, academically and socially. **TP**



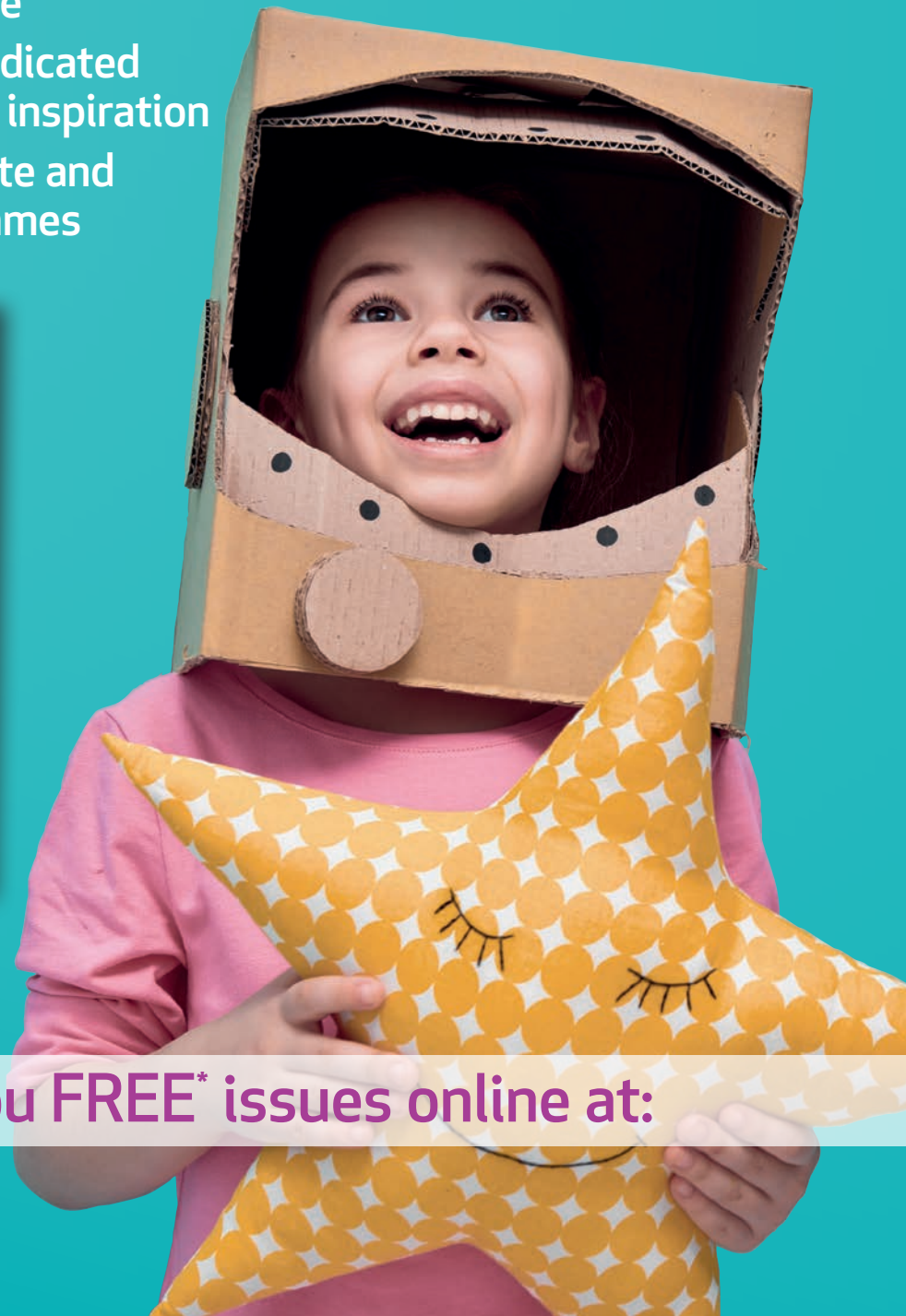
Barbara Isaacs is the academic director of Montessori Centre International.

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MIKE ASKEW



MICK WATERS



SUE COWLEY



KEVIN HARCOTMBE



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DEBRA KIDD

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An A to Z of inclusion

There's always something you can do to make your classroom more welcoming

ADELE DEVINE

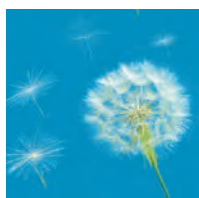
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Can Your Hearing Impaired Pupils Read?

Talit Khan considers how we should identify dyslexia in pupils for whom established screening techniques might not be suitable. Read it at tinyurl.com/tphearing



6 Things I Wish I'd Known About SEND

Cheryl Drabble looks back on the lessons that a career spent working with SEND pupils has taught her. Read it at tinyurl.com/tpwish



Learning To Cycle Can Help Everyone

We find out how SEND pupils' physical development and confidence levels can be given a boost. Read it at tinyurl.com/tpcycling



Our sister title *SENCo* provides useful ideas, practical guidance and thoughtful insight into SEND provision in primary schools. Read past issues at teachwire.net/special-issues

Imagine that you are at home snuggled on your sofa. What are the things that make you comfortable? Think about your favourite scents, textures, colours and people... We are all so unique in our likes and dislikes, and homes reflect this. There is no universally accepted ideal living environment. So is it possible to create a learning environment where every child feels comfortable (a truly inclusive space to play and learn)?

areas and think of ways to establish a sense of calm. A place for everything and everything in its place...

FUN

Enjoy yourself! Blow up a balloon and let it go, or throw a ball up higher and higher. You will gain and sustain children's attention when they see that you are engaged and having fun.

GESTURE

To help communicate meaning, learn some Makaton together. Using simple signs helps draw the child's attention and helps them to decode what we are saying. Try watching CBBC's 'Something Special' or Singing Hands on YouTube.

HOME VISITS

Home visits help build a trusting relationship with both the child and their carers. You see them in their comfort zone and get to know their likes and dislikes, anxieties and comforters.

INTENSIVE INTERACTION

Think about how a mother interacts with her newborn baby, responding to facial expressions, movement and sounds. Allow the child to remain in their comfort zone and become part of their play.

JUSTICE

Ensure that all children are treated equally and no one child dominates an activity or always gets the most attention. Ensure your reactions are predictable and fair.

KNOWLEDGE

After the home visit, create a simple checklist to share information with

ATMOSPHERE

Create a calm, loving, nurturing and supportive atmosphere. Genuinely happy staff, who crouch to a child's level and smile brightly, help children feel welcome, warm and safe.

BUBBLES

When a child finds settling tricky, sit nearby and blow bubbles. Do this in a quiet, non-demanding way. Bubbles can gain the child's attention and help establish trust.

CLIMBING FRAME

Redirect the child who climbs on radiators or tables to a climbing frame in the classroom. This allows them to get positive feedback rather than a negative "Stop!" or "Get down!".

DARK DEN

Sometimes children need a sensory bolthole. Providing a dark den allows them to escape while they build up tolerance and trust.

ENVIRONMENT

Think about ways to tone down visual stimulus, reduce glare from sunlight and noise. Create quiet



your team – toys that will settle each child, favourite foods and any dislikes.

LISTENING

Listen to parents, listen to staff and listen to the child. A child does not need to speak to communicate when they are happy or anxious. Listen and learn about what they love.

MIRRORS

Mirrors provide a familiar, friendly face for a child (their own). Establish a communication table with a stock of mirrors, toy telephones, microphones and communication books.

NOISE

Perhaps the hum of strobe lights, squeaky doors or the hustle and bustle of transition times is like nails down the blackboard to a child. Provide noise-reducing headphones and find ways to reduce these trigger sounds.

OUTSIDE

Outside provides a peaceful space where children can breathe fresh air, recharge, explore nature and release energy. Provide a photo, symbol or switch with 'outside' recorded to enable children to communicate when they want to go out.

PECS

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is a powerful way to help children learn to communicate what they want, and even comment. Have pictures of your snacks, of the toys in the cupboard. Teach the pre-verbal child that they can get swap a picture for something they want.

QUILT

A quilt can be a real comfort to some children. They might use it to cosy

up in the book corner or to hide from bright lights. Some children also respond well to weighted blankets, waistcoats or squeeze vests.

REDIRECT

Don't tell them "No" – offer a more appealing alternative instead. Shift children's focus and divert their attention. Respect their needs and provide happy alternatives.

SENSORY NEEDS

Some children love to rip displays, squeeze into tight spaces or chew toys. Respect sensory needs and find ways to meet them. Provide a box of paper to rip up for a display, and chewys.

TIMERS

Use sand timers so that the child has a visual way to count down. Build trust by ensuring that the activity does end when the sand has run through.

UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

When a child knows they are with someone who loves them unconditionally, they start to feel safe. Children are instinctive and love being loved unconditionally for who they are.

VISUALS

Establish routine, but also provide a visual timetable so that you can talk through any changes. Some children may need an individual timetable or 'Now and Next' schedule.

WELLBEING

Include a yoga session, and practise breathing and meditation. Some children will respond well to these things and continue to use them as strategies to reduce anxiety.

BOX

Forgive the phonetic cheat! Each day we do an amazing session we call 'Box'. For information on this session structure, look up 'Attention Autism' (devised by autism expert speech therapist Gina Davies).

YOU

Take care of you and reflect on what you all do well, and share this with staff. Be ridiculously positive and optimistic. Your joy and enthusiasm will be catching!

ZONES

Zoning activities creates a sense of order. This allows a child to anticipate demands and builds independence. Have a set place for coats and bags, a snack area, music area, book corner, communication table and a quiet sensory area.

Video observation

Before you change anything set up a camera and video the children arriving at the start of the day. Is there any way to improve their first impressions?

Final thoughts

My hope is that establishing and building on the supports in this A-Z checklist will help children and staff to feel calm, comfortable and, most importantly of all, happy.

So is it possible to create a truly inclusive learning space? As Audrey Hepburn famously observed, "Nothing is impossible, the word itself says, 'I'm possible!'"



Adele Devine is an author, teacher at Portesvry School and director of SEN Assist.

senassist.com

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



SLCN? DON'T DELAY

Early universal screening can help address issues with speech and language before the damage is done

DIANA MCQUEEN & JO WILLIAMS

It is shocking but no longer a surprise that in areas of poverty, over half of all children start school with delayed speech and language. This has consequences: between 50% and 90% of children with persistent speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) go on to have reading difficulties, and two-thirds of 7–14 year-olds with serious behaviour problems have language impairment. Additionally, most children with SEN have SLCN.

The good news is that robust tier 1 (universal) speech and language strategies aimed at both prevention and early identification make a difference!

Put it into practice

Much has been written about the importance of language development and the key role played by early years settings. What might be news, though, is that as much as two years ago universal screening was specifically highlighted by Ofsted (bit.ly/2uabpDO), describing an example of good practice: “[...] It includes in-depth screening of children’s language development, which can lead to early targeted support [...]” (p22)

That’s all very well you, might say, but how on earth do we go about it? Here are some pointers.

STEP 1 Getting started

It’s vital to choose the right resource. Before investing, check your preferred option gives you

- a screening tool;
- a score and rating system, so you know how many children are either very behind or not too much of a worry (and who those children are); and
- activities to pick up and use immediately.

Many of the schools and settings we work with use the Wellcomm Speech & Language Toolkit (available from GL Assessment), which ticks the boxes above. Though it is designed to be a stand-alone resource, just taking the plunge can be daunting. Read on for additional hints and tips to maximize your impact!

STEP 2 Choose a ‘lead’ person

This is by no means mandatory, but things work well when one person has overall responsibility. This doesn’t mean that the lead does everything to the exclusion of anyone else! In fact the opposite – having several staff to screen and deliver interventions avoids putting ‘all your eggs in one basket’.

Dawn, an experienced TA at one of the settings we work with, had the ‘lead person’ role handed to her but is clear about the benefits: “Having

one person to oversee the programme instilled confidence in staff to run it reliably and the progress spoke for itself.”

STEP 3 Decide the responsibilities of the lead

Whoever is chosen to spearhead your efforts should become familiar with the screening tool chosen. They should put together a timetable – how and when the screening will happen – gather and ‘hold’ the data, support getting the necessary intervention groups going, identify when to re-screen and then compare the results.

STEP 4 Get everyone on board

Check what people need before you start and put on some basic training if that’s required. Staff need to know

- How speech and language develops – knowing ‘what happens when’ helps staff to implement strategies in the right way.

• When to start screening – ideally, allow your new cohort to settle into Reception and then screen (so, towards the end of September). Aim to get interventions underway after the October half-term. Re-screening towards the end of March will give you plenty of time to make the most of your intervention groups.

• What will help children who arrive with little or no English – the Wellcomm Toolkit gives some advice on home language screening. Also draw on your own experience: children with additional needs will acquire language more slowly, regardless of whether they are monolingual or bilingual speakers. For some you may decide to offer targeted vocabulary interventions and defer screening for a term or so.

• How to screen – the lead has a role in understanding what to do and supporting everyone else to work in a similar way.

• Why they need to screen – to identify those who are at risk of/already falling behind so that action is taken at the earliest opportunity.

“Between 50% and 90% of children with persistent speech, language and communication needs go on to have reading difficulties”

- How to group children – not everyone with the same level of difficulty will be behind for the same reason. Beware grouping only very low children together; it will be tough to deliver without one or two more able children to act as good role models.
- That some children may need individual help and/or specialist assessment – look out for children with obvious SEN who may disrupt the dynamics of your group/s. Remember, what you are delivering is at a universal level; for some this will not be sufficient to address significant needs.
- When to be sure children have ‘got it’ – you will see progress within the sessions but skills learned here need to become ‘generalised’. Look out for structures taught cropping up in other curriculum areas and during play.
- When to move on – as with any other area of the curriculum, when most children have successfully mastered most of your intervention plan, move on.
- When to re-screen – GL Assessment’s Toolkit advises after three months, but we advise flexibility; you need time to deliver the interventions.

There is no point in rescreening too early – the longer you leave it, the more gains will be made.

- Understand what is meant by ‘measuring impact’ – put simply, it’s proving what you do is effective. See the panel below for our suggestions.

Key to success

Some of the settings we work with are a year down the line with their universal screening, others are further along. Staff have come to see the screening - intervention - re-screening cycle as an integral part of what they do; they feel they can ‘unpick’ why some children make less progress and know when to ask for specialist help; and they have more confidence to appropriately cater for children for whom EAL is the primary reason for slow language development.

MAXIMISE THE IMPACT

- Delivered properly your interventions can make a real impact, reducing the numbers of children with significant difficulties and increasing those at ‘Age-appropriate or just below’. The data comparisons can be dramatic: in one nursery setting the proportion of children causing concern fell from 40% to just 10% from spring 2016 to May 2017, while those considered ‘Age-appropriate or just below’ rose from 60% to 90% in the same period.
- Work to move those working at just below age-expected levels up to ‘Age-appropriate’ – this will give children time to consolidate their skills before they are assessed on whether they have reached a good level of development.
- Identify the added value in your efforts; children who are broadly age-appropriate can also make valuable gains.
- Show how children from your nursery are further ahead than those joining Reception from other settings.



Diana and Jo are directors of Soundswell Speech and Language Therapy Solutions. The advice in this article is based on a model developed in partnership with experienced EYFS staff, designed to support settings to take ownership of speech and language development.

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A colourful checklist for children in EYFS and KS1 classes to record what they find as they explore outdoors in the autumn months. bit.ly/2x0gNck



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Opinion



Don't let fear of terrorism put you off school trips.
bit.ly/2h1HzND

Discussion



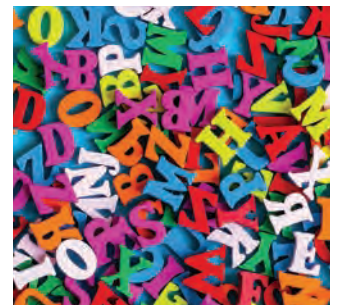
Why are some schools more joyful than others?
bit.ly/2jhdyKh

Advice



Pie Corbett's 10 secrets of reading schools.
bit.ly/2vU5C3v

Resources



5 interactive spelling games for Key Stage 1 & 2.
bit.ly/2h396um

What's trending

1

How to learn to speak child
bit.ly/2xZohvz

2

Practical maths learning
bit.ly/2xZlZfV

3

Why handwriting matters
bit.ly/2xZP9eO

4

Teach maths with dice
bit.ly/2xyqSk0

5

Time-saving display ideas
bit.ly/2xzec6Jy

Top of the class

Resources and activities to bring fresh inspiration to your classroom...



1

Time for tea towels

Fundraising this Christmas? Why not offer parents something personal and practical, like these children's self-portrait tea towels from Stuart Morris? To take advantage of this tried-and-tested way of raising money, order your free artwork pack now by calling **01473 824212**,

emailing info@stuartmorris.co.uk or visiting stuartmorris.co.uk. If you sell 300 tea towels at £4.00 each, you'll make over £670 in profit for your school. Order before 3 November for a 5% discount – if you can find school fundraising tea towels at a better price, Stuart Morris promises to beat it!

2



Serving suggestion

Leafield Environmental has designed the 'Caterer', a new table moulded serving top for schools without space to store large bespoke serving tables. Made from UV-stabilised polyethylene with optional anti-microbial additive, it's easily placed on top of a standard folding table, features rubber feet to prevent unwanted movement and is stackable. It also features four banner fixing holes to allow for the promotion of menu choices, and comes in a choice of colours. Call **01225 816 541** or visit leafieldrecycle.com

3



Très bon

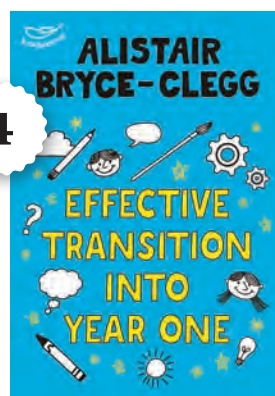
La Jolie Ronde has been at the forefront of primary language learning since 1983. Over 60% of UK primary schools have chosen to use La Jolie Ronde's French and Spanish language programmes, schemes and resources.

Growing numbers of schools, throughout the UK and abroad, are finding that the La Jolie Ronde programmes are meeting their needs, with positive results for both children and teachers alike. Find out more at language-resources.co.uk

Smooth operation

Helping children make the transition between Reception and Y1 is a challenge. When done well it can have a significant impact on children's emotional and academic development, but when done badly it can set development back by up to a year. Alistair Bryce-Clegg's new title is packed with practical ideas to help practitioners to plan for and create an effective learning environment that promotes high levels of attainment in Y1, based on the effective principles of EYFS practice. bloomsbury.com

4



5



Outdoor advice

Time outside is crucial to early development – it gives young, growing children access to one of the most enriching environments in which to access key areas of learning, from language, literacy and mathematics, to PSED, physical development and understanding the world. Timotay Playscapes has a free inspiration guide to outdoor play spaces and play equipment, packed with innovative and engaging educational ideas to help you bring your outdoor space to life.

For your copy, email enquiries@timotayplayscapes.co.uk or call **01933 665 151**.

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The power of play

Whether they are serving tea in a café or deciding if they can safely billet the crocodiles with the wildebeest in a small world zoo, children can learn lots from their imagination

SIMON DAVENPORT

When it comes to personal development, there's no time quite as critical as the early years. From a young age, children learn through play, and it is through this creative exploration that they lay the foundations for the skills and knowledge they need for the future. This phenomenon is also not uncommon when it comes to the primary classroom, and recent research provides scientific evidence that illustrates how play can continue to aid children's development and boost their understanding of the world.

Play in the classroom

In the classroom, play gives children the freedom to explore the topics that interest them and develop their understanding of ideas, while still having a safe space in which to seek guidance from their teachers when they need it. It supports the learning of many important skills that will be useful for their future – for example, play can encourage the development of everything from creativity to sorting and counting skills and social etiquette.

Creative play

Creative skills vary in form, but play provides ample opportunity for children to express themselves and tap into their imaginations. With a play-based approach, for example, a set task relating to a specific topic or theme can nevertheless offer children the freedom to come up with a unique story or scenario. Providing children with an

open-ended task that has no one right answer, means that children are encouraged to explore a variety of options, consider different solutions and come up with their own conclusion, all while learning about certain things along the way.

Let's pretend

Role play offers another way to encourage children's creativity. Pretending that you occupy another person's shoes, putting yourself into real-life situations, is an effective way for children to embrace their imagination and make sense of the world around them. Set up different scenarios in the classroom and let them explore. Whether it is creating a 'café' environment made up of customers, waiters and kitchen staff, or something more exotic, encourage the children to pick their roles and then call out different situations. For instance, in the case of the café, an unhappy customer, giving the right change from the till, taking a large order, etc. These practical activities will help pupils learn to interact effectively with one another, develop mathematical skills, such as the aforementioned counting and sorting, and recognise and respond appropriately to other people's emotions.



Turn toys into tools

While playing with 'toys' might not seem educational, there are certain things that can be learned for such activity, including important organisational skills. Take a box of animals – setting a task that allows children to design their own zoos will get them thinking about habitats and categorising different animal families. Children could distinguish the different environments animals live in, or the types of animals that could cohabitate. Although a fun and playful activity, this will help children build their awareness of the world and, most importantly, they will more than likely be so engaged that they will forget they are learning.

Taking this one step further, play can also facilitate time for social opportunities. Group activities and discussions can encourage the development of social etiquette. For example, children could discuss their zoos, and the reasoning behind their decision to group particular animals and/or

communities. Group conversations encourage listening skills, and teach children not to interrupt and the importance of taking turns. With the growing pressure we face to prepare children for a changing future, play perhaps provides the perfect balance of allowing children to be children and enjoying their time in the classroom, while also laying the foundations for their academic future and later lives. With research suggesting that play is the most natural form of learning, it makes sense for schools to teach children in a way that affords them the freedom to explore while connecting with the world. **TP**



Simon works at LEGO® Education UK. To learn about its education resources, including

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How to WRITE A RECOUNT

Help your class to commit real-life experiences to the page in an engaging way with these useful tips

PIE CORBETT & JULIA STRONG

 @Talk4Writing  talk4writing.co.uk

Recount is one of the easier non-fiction text types because, since it focuses on telling what's happened, it has the same key ingredients as narrative and is thus comfortably familiar. The difference is that, whereas narrative is fictional and thus made up, recount text should be a retelling of events that have actually happened: in the first person if it is a personal recount, and in the third person if recounting events that have happened to others.

Like most non-fiction, recount writing begins with an introduction that explains what the subject matter is about, often using the 'Who? What? Where? Why? And When?' approach to orientate the reader, crafted into some sort of 'hook' to encourage the reader to read on.

Ordering recount text is relatively straightforward because it is logical to retell events in chronological order. However, since the skill of recount writing lies in the ability to make the event sound interesting, this sometimes means breaking away from strict chronological order and always means thinking about just the right phrases to engage the reader. If we are not careful, the over-drilling of children in time signposts to link their recounts, results in tedious writing that has never broken out of the initial 'first', 'next', 'after that' guidelines for very young children.

To write an effective recount, the author needs to have real knowledge about whatever happened and be interested in it, otherwise there will be little to say

and what is said is likely to be deadly dull. This is why linking recount writing to real experiences, like class outings, is so important because then children actually know something in detail and want to communicate what they have experienced.

Choosing a topic

When it comes to recount writing, teachers are spoilt for choice because there are so many things that the children have experienced that can be the springboard for excellent writing. Personal feelings are an obvious source of inspiration: embarrassing moments, first day at school, being treated unfairly, most scary memory, favourite toy – the list is endless – can all lead to excellent writing as long as these memories and experiences are 'warmed up' so that the children are bursting with ideas and are encouraged to select just the right words and phrases to make their memory come alive.

Apart from individual experiences, there are all the collective experiences like school events and outings that are the perfect focus for recount writing because the children have directly experienced what they are being asked to write about.

Role play is an invaluable tool for helping children understand the predicament of others across the curriculum in history, geography or RE. Topics like the evacuation of British cities in 1939 come alive when children are encouraged to put themselves in the shoes of an evacuee packing his or her little bag.

They are then in a position to write moving recounts in role as an evacuee. Whatever focus you choose, remember the golden rule: the topic must engage the children so they have something that they really want to express.

Audience and purpose

Always provide some sort of audience and purpose for whatever focus is chosen. It can be useful to get the children to draw a picture of someone who is typical of their audience to help them remember who they are writing for so they can pitch their writing accordingly.

Warming up the tune of the text

It is worth thinking carefully about the tune of recount text and the topic selected: about the sentence signposts and structures that are typically used, as well as the information and vocabulary that the children will need when they come to write. Then devise daily games that help the children internalise these patterns and the related information at the right level of difficulty for the class. Recount writing lends itself to:

Tuning into the vocabulary games

Brain dumps: For personal memory recounts, get the children to jot down all the words they associate with a particular memory. Try it cold and then get them silently to think through the event and then try again.

Tuning into sentence signpost games

Understanding the power of sentence signposts to link paragraphs, sentences and information within sentences is key to achieving cohesive text that flows logically and engagingly.

Spot the truth: In pairs, one child has to come up with two true statements about themselves, plus one untrue statement, beginning with a temporal sentence signpost, for example:

- ‘Last year’ / ‘yesterday’ / ‘last week’ ...
- ‘A long time ago’, ...
- ‘When I was a toddler’, ...

The partner has to see if they can decide which is not true. The partner should be encouraged to use discursive sentence starters, often tentative, for example, ‘I think that’ ... , ‘I’m not sure’ ... , ‘It seems unlikely’ ... , ‘also’ ... , etc.

Using engaging sentence signposts:

Help the children recognise that endless standard time signposts or lists of precise dates to introduce facts can be confusing and dull. Provide them with interesting alternatives. Their task in groups is to decide which standard sentence starters or list of dates they could possibly replace with the alternative sentence starters to make the writing clearer and more engaging. Encourage the children to magpie useful words and phrases from this activity.

Tuning into the text games

Role play: Get the children to enact aspects of the topic using a range of techniques like hot seating, visiting professor/ minister, mobile phone conversations, mime, television interviews, news reporter interviews, etc.

What = ‘good’ for this sort of writing:

Write four different introductions to whatever recount you want the children to write, one of which is better than the rest. Include one example that is worthy but extremely dull, and one that has lost the plot (i.e. it is not a piece of recount writing but is persuasion or instruction). There

KEY POINTS

THE TYPICAL INGREDIENTS OF RECOUNT TEXT...

Audience

Someone who wants to know what happened.

Purpose

To retell a real event in an interesting and engaging way.

Structure

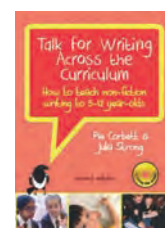
- A beginning, middle and end in chronological order.
- Opening paragraph to hook and orientate the reader (often includes Who? What? Where? Why? When?).
- Paragraphs often begin with a topic sentence.

Language features

- Past tense.
- Time sentence signposts for coherence.
- Specific and descriptive – often in style of information or explanation.
- Direct speech.

should be no surface errors in any of the text – you want the children to focus on content and expression. Children select which is best, given the purpose, and suggest the ingredients that make it the best. This can be snowballed from pairs to fours to eights and then the whole class can establish their key ingredients for an effective introduction when writing a recount. Display these ingredients on the writing wall.

Sequencing the text: Find a good short exemplar of whatever sort of recount text you are focusing on and rearrange the paragraphs so that when it is cut into paragraphs the children cannot put it together again using the cut marks. In groups, the children have to sequence the text, read the sequenced text aloud to check it is coherent and, finally, be prepared to explain the order in which they have placed the text. **TP**



This article is an edited extract from *Talk for Writing Across the Curriculum (2nd edn)* by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong (Open University Press) – a fully updated version of the popular resource that comes complete with DVDs. To order your copy, visit goo.gl/NmJHCq



Talk for Writing Across the Curriculum, second edition

How to teach non-fiction writing to 5-12 year-olds

Pie Corbett & Julia Strong

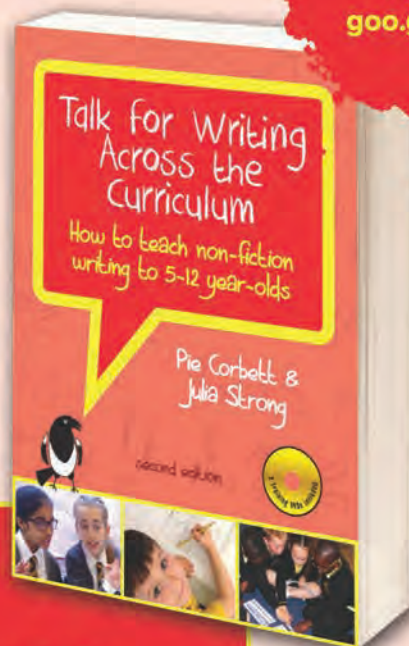
ISBN: 978-0-335-22688-7 | £36.99

This bestselling resource has been fully updated, putting formative assessment at the heart of the Talk for Writing process and introducing children to a love of non-fiction writing. It offers fully worked, tried and tested examples of how to apply Talk for Writing to each non-fiction text type and a wide range of fun activities, including story mapping, helping children internalise how to express and link text effectively.

Talk for Writing Across the Curriculum is also accompanied by two hours of DVD footage and handouts to train all staff. New clips of Pie demonstrating Talk for Writing and of classes engaged in the approach show teachers how to use Talk for Writing successfully in their classrooms.

Designed for busy teachers, *Talk for Writing Across the Curriculum, second edition*, will help transform children's writing and attainment across the curriculum.

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We love writing!

Help children in Key Stage 1 wield their pens with enthusiasm and watch their attainment soar

CLARE MCGREAD

 @Literacy_Trust  literacytrust.org.uk

Writing is an important skill that children have to learn, and it develops gradually. To help them become confident, competent and creative writers, we first need to help them discover a love of writing. When children enjoy writing, they write more often outside the classroom and perform much better in it. In fact, our latest research shows that children who enjoy writing outside school are seven times more likely to write above the expected level for their age compared with children who don't enjoy writing. Seven times!

Early years and Key Stage 1 teachers have a really important role to play in helping young children get started on their writing journeys, as well as giving them a running start for when they reach KS2 and beyond. Here are five things you can do to help...

1 Add variety

Have a wide range of tools that children can use to write and draw, including scrap paper, crayons, felt tip pens and paint. This will enable children to explore writing in all its various shapes and forms and develop manipulation skills. Paper isn't the only canvas children can use – get creative and take children outside to make marks with chalk on the patio, path and pavements, and with sticks in mud and sand.

2 Join in!

Be ready to get involved with drawing and painting, and take every opportunity to show children how and why you write. It is important for children to have positive writing role models from day one, to get them excited about writing and so that they can understand the relevance of writing to daily life.

3 Be a cheerleader

Children who are corrected too often or asked to write things out 'properly' can lose interest in doing it altogether. Children who enjoy the process of writing, and who know that what they produce will be praised, will write more often and so get better at it. Be encouraging, even if you can't understand

what they have written or if the letters are in the wrong place – this is all part of learning to write. A child's ability to progress along their writing journey depends as much on confidence, motivation and practice as their physical skills or ability.

4 Provide a purpose

Writing for a purpose is important for children, particularly boys. So encourage parents to ask children to help them write shopping lists, thank you notes, cake recipes, name badges and more.

5 Use free resources

The National Literacy Trust has a wealth of wonderful, colourful and creative writing resources for early years and Key Stage 1, which are free to download from literacytrust.org.uk/resources.

For starters, our Jolly Postman resource for early years, KS1 and KS2 (literacytrust.org.uk/resources/jolly-postman) children brings Janet and Allan Ahlberg's popular *The Jolly Postman* story to life with activities created to develop a love of writing. Each activity includes background notes for teachers, printable activity templates and editable PowerPoints.

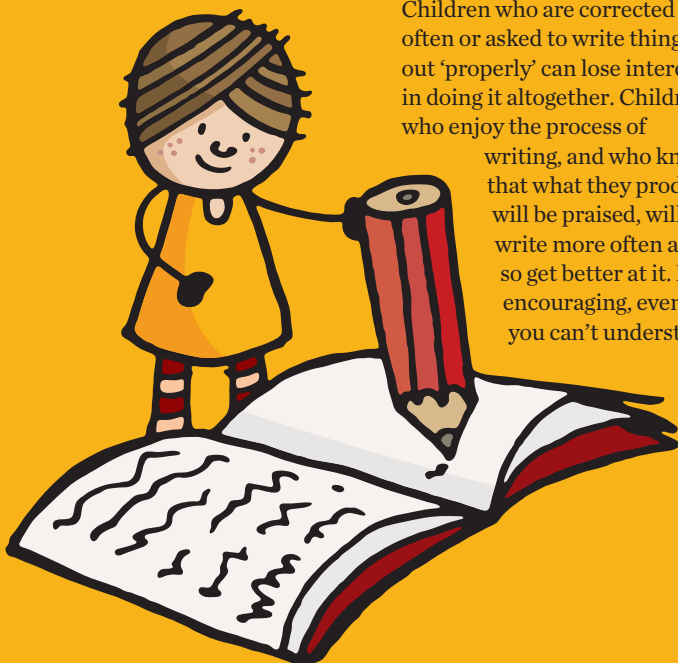
One activity in the resource involves writing and sending a letter. *The Jolly Postman* story includes lots of different types of mail: a letter of apology, a postcard, an official letter and a birthday card. This activity introduces the idea that a

purpose of a letter, and who it is being sent to, make a difference to the way children write it...

- Ask children to bring in examples of different letters from home and look at addresses, postmarks, adverts and stamps. Encourage children to compare them with letters and other items in *The Jolly Postman*.

- Compare the language of two letters in *The Jolly Postman*. For example, in the letter to Mr Wolf, talk about words that make the letter sound 'official' and phrases that imply he might get into trouble if he doesn't change his behaviour! Then look at Goldilocks' letter to Mr and Mrs Bear, and ask children to count the ways Goldilocks says 'sorry' for her behaviour and point out how her letter is not as formal.

- Ask children to choose a character from *The Jolly Postman*, or a parent, friend or teacher, and write them a letter. The letter can be for any purpose, e.g. an invitation to a birthday party, a thank you letter for a present, or an apology. Make sure children think about the appropriate words to use.



Claire McGread is early years programme manager at the National Literacy Trust.

The reader in THE WRITER

The most important thing a teacher can do to develop children's literacy is expose them to high-quality literature

LOUISE JOHNS-SHEPHERD

Almost 20 years ago, Myra Barrs and Valerie Cork embarked upon a research project to look at the links between the study of literature and writing development at Key Stage 2. The outcomes of their study were published in 'The Reader in the Writer', an influential text that still underpins the work and research we carry out at CLPE.

Links between children's reading and their writing have long been acknowledged. What 'The Reader in the Writer' did was to look at exactly how children's reading experiences are linked to their progress in writing, and how, through picking the right literature and helping children understand the skill of an effective and powerful professional author, teachers can support and enhance children's developing writing skills.

Two decades on, in an education landscape dominated by fronted adverbials and auxiliary verbs, this research is still relevant and its conclusions important for our teaching. At CLPE we work with more than 600 teachers a year on our Power of Reading and Raising Achievement in Writing projects, and many more through all our other work. We are still collecting evidence that shows us that the most important thing a teacher can do to support developing literacy

is ensure children are exposed to a range of high-quality literature. Our evidence shows the conclusions of 'The Reader in the Writer' are as relevant to teaching today as they were back in 1998.

1 Read aloud, every day

Reading aloud slows written language down, enabling children to hear and take in tunes and patterns. It allows children to experience and enjoy stories they might not otherwise meet. By reading well-chosen

beyond their own reading fluency level. Create a rich reading environment that demonstrates the written word in all its forms and shares how writing can be used for thinking, for communication and as a means of expression. This will enable children to see how writing is used for different purposes and to communicate to different audiences. With a rich diet of quality texts, children will be able to find their own reasons to write and develop a style that fits the purpose, audience and form intended.

Hearing the written word is extremely important, but you should also ensure that children can understand how meaning is conveyed in other forms, such as film, illustration, digital texts and performance.

When exposed to a range of texts that demonstrate expressive, informational and imaginative writing, children begin to understand how to control and manipulate the conventions of writing for a range of purposes throughout a variety of forms across narrative, non-fiction and poetry. Children are more likely to set an appropriate mood and tone for their written pieces if they have seen it done successfully in a range of ways.

"Children can help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers"

books aloud, teachers help classes to become communities of readers – ensuring they can share in experiences of a wide repertoire of books they enjoy and get to know well.

2 Explore language models and structures

If you want confident young writers, read aloud and share high-quality texts across a range of genres, reflecting a range of writing styles. Choose texts that are rich in vocabulary, and enable children to comprehend

3 Share a variety of texts

When children have explored a range of texts across genres, they form an understanding and appreciation of how language functions, and how best to use this when writing themselves. Plan to share rich examples of writing, both on and off the page. Include texts that allow children to absorb the rhythms and patterns of language, reflecting the cultural, social and linguistic diversity of the children, as well as introducing a world beyond the familiar.

4 Use creative teaching approaches

Supporting children to 'tune in' to the creativity needed for writing is key to developing imagination and ideas for writing in all forms. When drawing on a text to stimulate writing, pause at pivotal moments as the story unfolds to allow children to express and discuss their initial responses. This type of book talk enables children to deepen their understanding of characters and events, and supports them to articulate ideas effectively in their own writing. Before writing poetry, allow children to hear it read aloud, hear and see it performed, and

perform it themselves; the poem off the page adds layers of understanding and experience of the rhythms and patterns of language.

Provide time and space for drama, explore real and fictional situations through talk or role-play, supporting children to see events from a different viewpoint and write in an authentic voice. In role, children can often access feelings and language that are not available to them when they write as themselves.

Time to develop ideas through art and illustration is also important. Visualising and producing art inspired by

a sound or film clip, or writing read aloud allows children to expand on ideas and add detail and description to their writing, using rich and relevant language.

5 Respond as readers

From the earliest stages, it is important that children understand that writing is a means of expression and a communication tool. We know a culture of book talk deepens reader response, and allows children to explore the effect the author of a text has created on the reader. We need to give children opportunities to

reflect on their own texts in the same way.

The teaching of writing is effective when children see the use in it; when there is real, authentic purpose; when there is an audience that authenticates their voice, whether themselves or another reader. It is important for teachers to validate children's writing with appropriate response, focusing first on the effect the writing has on the reader. Children take pleasure in a reader's feedback and begin to link writing with authentic communication.

Children can also help each other by reading their writing aloud and responding as readers, supporting each other as they compose and structure their ideas. In this way they will learn how to communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. They are

then more likely to reflect on their writing and revise it for the reader, choosing language for effect or to clarify meanings.

Give children a voice

Supporting children to become literate, to plan the most effective provision so they can become confident, happy and enthusiastic readers and writers with all of the benefits we know this brings, is so much more than asking them to decode, remember grammatical constructions or tricky spellings. It is a complicated and intricate process – and if you enable a child to become literate you have given them a voice, supported them to communicate and provided them with a skill that is vital for all of their schooling and to their life beyond.

In every writer, there is a reader. Give them reading. Let them lift the words off the printed page to enrich their own written work. **TP**



More ideas...

- ❖ Download a free guide to Writing from the CLPE website – clpe.org.uk/library-and-resources
- ❖ Download free booklists for ideas for texts to inspire children from EYFS to KS2 – clpe.org.uk/clpe/library/booklists
- ❖ Read this article on nurturing writing in the early years from CLPE's Anjali Patel (first published in Teach Early Years magazine) – bit.ly/2wmBWQb



Louise Johns-Shepherd is chief executive of the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education.



@clpe1



clpe.org.uk



John Hegley and Neal Layton
Published by Hodder Children's Books
ISBN: 978-0-340-98819-0

Stanley's STICK

A broken bit of branch might be dismissed as nature's detritus by some, but it is far more to the hero of John Hegley's tale

HILARY WHITE

There is no better toy than a stick! Stanley certainly thinks so, and wherever he goes the stick of the title goes with him. Although his stick can never again be part of a tall, grand tree, Stanley gives it new purpose by turning it into a fishing rod, a whistle or a matchstick to 'catch the world aflame'. Deceptively simple at first glance, *Stanley's Stick* reveals on closer inspection a multi-layered exploration of imagination, generosity, friendship and loss. Author John Hegley is a comedian and performance poet as well as a writer of picture books, and his skill with poetry and humour shine through to create a unique story about one small boy's adventures with a stick.

How to share the book

Although *Stanley's Stick* introduces some complex language and ideas, it is a

traditional picture book in length and format. This makes it easy to revisit as often as you wish, and enables children to develop their understanding across a number of readings.

Pause and talk

Make sure all the children can see the pictures, and pause for long enough to allow them to study, question and comment. Allow free-flow conversation to develop, and follow the children's lead. Ask open-ended questions about the words and pictures; for example, how might Stanley feel after he has thrown his stick into the sea?

Recall, recount and role play

Encourage the children to recall how Stanley plays with his stick. Can they think of their own ways of using a stick? Ask them to recount the story from

beginning to end, and role play some of Stanley's stick games.

Filling the gaps

All stories have gaps in them – intervals between events, happenings before the start or after the end of the narrative, and aspects of a scene that the picture doesn't show. Look out for gaps to fill, such as discussing where Stanley and his family might be going as they stand at Stockport Station, or thinking about Stanley's adventures with his new 'fantastick' once the story has ended.

Practical activities

As Stanley discovers, there are few resources as versatile as a stick. Using *Stanley's Stick* as a starting point, introduce some of the following ideas to your children and encourage them to develop the activities in their own way. Once the

activities have been completed, ask the children to review each one and decide which they enjoyed the most.

Gathering sticks

Look out for sticks and twigs on nature walks, in the school grounds and during forest school sessions. Challenge the children to find a variety of shapes, colours, lengths and widths. Investigate how leaves attach to twigs, and how some sticks are forked. Peel the bark from a twig to reveal the fresh new wood beneath, and provide magnifying glasses and a telescope for closer examination.

Stick scrolls

As the children explore the sticks, encourage them to use all their senses and come up with a list of adjectives – rough, scratchy, brown, mossy, smelly, knobbly, forked and so on. Working on strips of paper, write ‘A stick is...’ at the top followed by lists of adjectives. Glue sticks to each end of the strips and roll them up to make scrolls.

Writing in the sand

Look at the illustration of Stanley writing with his stick in the sand and use a mirror to read his message. Provide trays of damp sand and plaques of damp clay, and let the children do their own ‘stick writing’. Encourage them to plan the purpose and content of their writing before beginning the activity.

Puns and word plays

As you read *Stanley’s Stick*, talk about some of the puns and wordplays (*fantastick*, *twiggyback*, *sticky game*, *Stickosaurus*). Using these wordplays

as a starting point, introduce simple puns to the children by playing with homonyms (same word, different meanings). Make up sentences containing familiar word pairs such as ‘jam’ (traffic and strawberry), ‘bark’ (dog and tree) and ‘nail’ (finger and hammer). Encourage the children to be creative and humorous, and develop their sentences as far as their imaginations will take them.

Tongue twisters

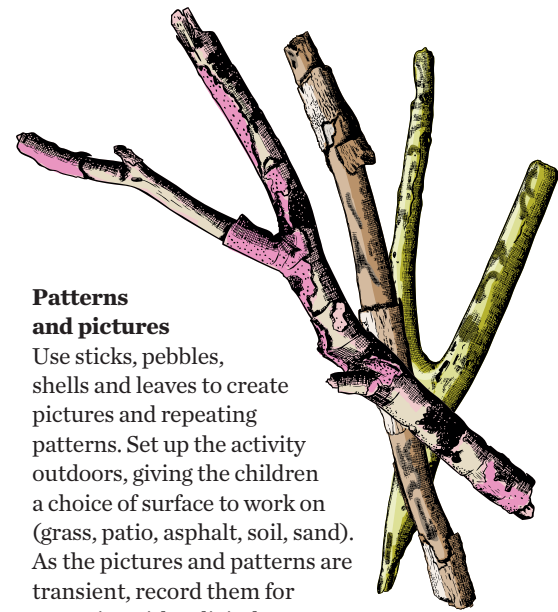
Stanley’s Stick begins with an alliterative tongue twister: “Stanley stands on Stockport Station with his stick.” Using the children’s names, come up with your own tongue-twisters – “Rhianna runs round the red road”, “Chan chooses chocolate, cheese and chips”, “Marek makes millions of muffins”, “Cara keeps cats in her cardigan”.

Stick shapes

Challenge the children to create geometric stick shapes such as triangles, rectangles, trapeziums and kites. Encourage them to explore their shapes – for example, can they turn a rectangle into triangles? Can they form a circle? How can they mark the angles within each shape? Can they make two squares into a rectangle?

Measuring sticks

Using rulers and tape measures, measure the length and width of different sticks and put them in order from longest to shortest. Look at the ‘wonky fantastick’ that Stanley finds towards the end of the story and explore ways of measuring the length of a curved stick.



Patterns and pictures

Use sticks, pebbles, shells and leaves to create pictures and repeating patterns. Set up the activity outdoors, giving the children a choice of surface to work on (grass, patio, asphalt, soil, sand). As the pictures and patterns are transient, record them for posterity with a digital camera.

Stick sculptures

Push sticks into lumps of clay and thread with grass, leaves, feathers, ribbons and fabrics to create abstract stick sculptures. Make the sculptures more interesting by using sticks in a variety of colours, shapes and lengths. Peel the bark off some of the sticks and use twigs with leaves still attached – just like Stanley’s stick. **TP**



Hilary White is a former nursery and primary teacher. She is a regular contributor to Teach Early Years Magazine and the author of a number of books.

Take it further → → →

ALL SORTS OF STICK

❖ Make a collection of sticks to display in the classroom. Include as many different types as possible – chopstick, broomstick, walking stick, matchstick, lolly stick, hockey stick, drumstick, breadstick, lipstick, stick person drawing, stick of seaside rock, ‘Pick-Up-Sticks’ game and so on. Add photos of items that cannot easily be displayed, such as a stick of butter, a gear stick and a yardstick. Encourage the

children to explore the sticks and talk about their uses, similarities and differences.

STICK PLAY

❖ Using Stanley’s exploits as a starting point, let the children create their own imaginative games with sticks. Take photos of each child playing with their stick, talk about the photos and record or make notes of their words to write out as captions, labels and speech bubbles. Turn the words and pictures into a class

book, involving the children in writing, designing and constructing the book.

WHO’S STANLEY?

❖ Stanley is central to the story and makes a great resource for helping children explore the narrative concept of the ‘main character’. Note how he features in every picture, and talk about his appearance, personality and behaviour. Look out for evidence of his thoughts and feelings as well as exploring his actions. Make a large

poster with a collage picture of Stanley at the centre, surrounded by descriptive words and phrases.

‘CHARLIE’S CHOPSTICKS’

❖ Help each child to choose an item that alliterates with their name, such as Charlie’s chopsticks, Polly’s pet, Malik’s mug and so on. Record a story for each child featuring them as the main character and telling the story of their adventures with their special item.

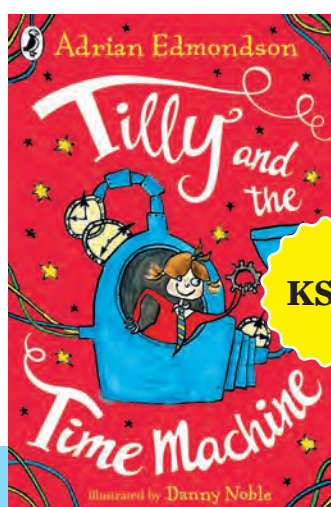
Book CLUB



Helen Mulley, editor of *Teach Reading & Writing*, reviews five brand new titles



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KS1/2

Tilly and the Time Machine
by **Adrian Edmondson**
(£6.99, Puffin Books)

Adrian Edmondson's first novel for children starts with a massive explosion – precisely the kind of opening you might expect from the star of chaotic comedies *The Young Ones* and *Bottom*. The dust quickly settles, however, as we are introduced to Tilly, an inquisitive seven-year-old, whose scientist dad has just invented a time machine. And for Tilly, this means just one thing – she can travel back to her sixth birthday, when she ate too many cupcakes and her mummy was still alive. Unfortunately, before she can make the journey her dad manages to get himself stuck in the past; and it takes a good deal of journeying through history, including tea with Queen Victoria and a timely encounter with a football in 1966, before Tilly manages to find him again. Edmondson's writing is as sensitive and thoughtful as it is witty – he's produced a great debut, with the promise of more to come.



EYFS/
KSI

The Dressing-Up Dad
by **Maudie Smith**
(£6.99, OUP)

Picture books in which male parental figures feature at all are uncommon enough; but one that focuses, as this does, entirely on the positive relationship between a father and his child is as rare as it is welcome. What's more, it's such a cracking story and so engagingly told and illustrated, that the absence of mum isn't even remotely an issue, which is hugely refreshing in itself. Danny and his dad both love dressing up and do it at every opportunity – however, Danny sometimes wonders what it might be like to have an 'ordinary' dad, like his friends do; so for his birthday party, that's what he asks him to dress up as. It's a tricky challenge, but Danny's dad rises to it and puts in a great performance – until Danny realises that, in fact, he misses 'dressing up dad' and as a result, starts to understand that being yourself is more important than being the same as everyone else.



EYFS

Everybody's Welcome
by **Patricia Hegarty**
(£11.99, Caterpillar Books)

The topic of Brexit may not seem like a natural or easy one to bring into an early years setting – however, the divisions that have arisen in the UK around the issue of whether or not we should stay in the EU, and particularly with regard to immigration, will doubtless already be having an impact on even very young children. This gentle and empowering story about a little mouse who dreams of building a 'great big happy house' in the forest, and achieves his goal with the help of a succession of animals who are themselves in need of assistance, was commissioned by Thomas Truong, publisher of Caterpillar Books and himself the son of a refugee and a European migrant, following the results of the referendum. Its message is simple: if we are all kind and welcoming then together, we can create a home where everyone can be safe and joyful.

Find more online...



Telling children which stories are 'for them' risks turning them off literature completely, suggests Robin Stevens. teachwire.net/school-books

Meet the author

**TOM PERCIVAL
CELEBRATES BEING
DIFFERENT – AND
THINKS BACK ON HIS
OWN CHILDHOOD**



Did you write Perfectly Norman with a particular child in mind?

Initially, yes, but as the story developed

I thought more about the fact that everyone struggles with feelings of difference at some point in their lives. That was why I chose wings for Norman's point of difference, rather than anything 'real' that might restrict his story for young readers. Of course there is also the benefit of being able to do anything you like in a story, and I thought giving him wings and the ability to fly would be very cool!

Is it easier to explore 'difficult' topics in a picture book, rather than through text alone?

I don't feel that it's any easier; it's simply a different medium. I like to work across a variety of different mediums. I write songs, create animations and take photographs alongside my work as an author/illustrator and have also dabbled with interactive projects too. So I feel that it's just a case of choosing the most suitable medium for any particular idea.

How important was reading to you as a child?

Massively. I grew up in a caravan in the middle of nowhere with no television. My closest friends were a five-mile cycle away. So reading, drawing and making up stories was pretty much all I did. Apart from walking; I did a lot of walking.

Which books did you find comforting when growing up?

One picture book that I went back to time and time again was a story called *Mr Blogg's Bridge*. It's about a man who lives alone on a small island with a seagull called Parkinson. He gets lonely and builds a bridge from his island to the mainland so that he can see more people. But then too many people come and his small island gets overrun and over-developed. The book ends with Mr Blogg and Parkinson sailing off together in a boat to a new island. I'm not sure what my fascination with that book says about me, but it certainly resonated.



**EYES/
KSI**

Today I Feel...

by Madalena Moniz

(£8.99, Abrams & Chronicle)

This thoughtful ABC book takes readers through a whole range of emotions, from 'adored' to, well, 'zzzz'. Madalena Moniz's beautiful and tender watercolour illustrations are a great starting point for gentle conversations about feelings – including challenging ones, such as 'grumpy', 'nervous' and 'yucky', alongside more positive, but complex, examples, like 'victorious' and 'patient'. Identifying difficult emotions is, of course, the first step in learning to manage and live with them – and this book could really help teachers support that tricky but important process. For example, what do your pupils reckon it might mean to feel 'quiet', or 'original'? Why do they think 'warm' is represented with a hug? And can they remember any situations in which they might have described themselves as feeling 'light', 'mini', or 'invisible'? The last page asks readers how they are feeling today – could this be a useful prompt for some original artwork?



KSI

Perfectly Norman

by Tom Percival

(£6.99, Bloomsbury)

When Norman – who has always been perfectly normal – suddenly sprouts a pair of large and rather beautifully coloured wings, he is at first delighted, swooping around with the birds and having tremendous fun. But then doubts start to creep in: what will his parents say? Might his friends change the way they treat him now he's no longer ordinary? Afraid of other people's reactions, Norman decides to cover his new appendages with a big coat – but this brings its own problems and only ends up making him even more miserable, until he finally plucks up the courage to reveal his feathers, and fly. Tom Percival's exquisite artwork perfectly captures the poignancy of his young protagonist's emotional journey towards acceptance of himself; the book is an uplifting celebration of difference and a sensitive acknowledgement of just how tricky it can be for children to feel they stand out from their peers.

Are you a

RECEPTION TEACHER?

Teach Early Years is the magazine for you.



What's inside?

Our remit includes all aspects of the business of caring for and educating the 0-5's - so readers will find everything they need inside, from pedagogical guidance on all areas of learning and development, to tips for leaders on developing staff, engaging with parents and achieving a successful Ofsted judgement.



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Lesson PLANS



Even more ideas...

We're taking the hard work out of planning with innovative ideas from some of the UK's most creative teachers

Activities



SPARK YOUR CLASS' CURIOSITY
Kirstine Beeley suggests creating an investigation station.

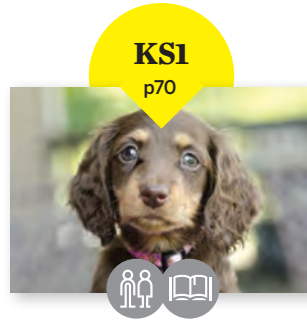


WE'RE GOING ON A SHAPE HUNT
Use iPad apps to explore the environment, says Marc Faulder.



AFTER ME, 'UN, DEUX, TROIS'
Learn numbers one to 10 in French with Amanda Barton.

Lessons



STANDING OUT FROM THE CROWD
James Clements explains how Odd Dog Out can support PSHE.



ART IN MOTION
Make an Alexander Calder-inspired mobile, says Judith Harries.



DANCE LIKE AN ELEPHANT'S TRUNK
Join Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals, with Sam Dixon.

Read all about it

You'll find countless ideas for harnessing the learning potential of picture books in the early years on teachwire.net – search 'Hilary White' to uncover a host of activities based on a varied selection of popular titles.



Go wild

WWF's Wear it Wild day takes place on 20 October 2017 – while you're taking a break from fundraising, why not take advantage of the free activities and resources on offer. Visit wearitwild.wwf.org.uk or turn to page 7 for a taster!

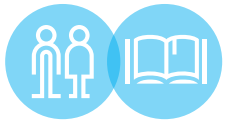


How do you like them apples?

The Orchard Project is a national charity dedicated to the creation, restoration and celebration of community orchards, and a better food system. To help spread the word, it has a range of lesson plans for Years 2 to 5 – find out more at theorchardproject.org.uk



Find more online! Visit tinyurl.com/TP99lessons



Standing out from the crowd

WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

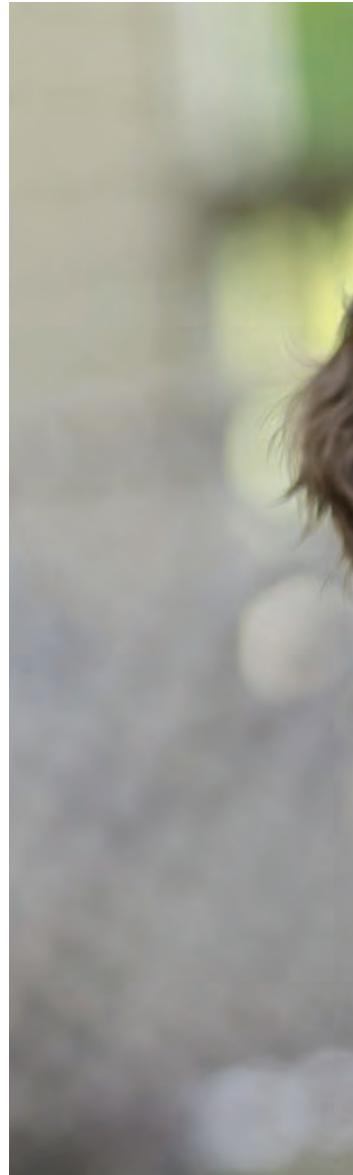
- Think about similarities and differences between people and the things they like
- Consider the notions of uniqueness, peer pressure and the desire to fit in with others
- Write letters, drawing on their knowledge of the texts they read



Rob Biddulph's wonderful *Odd Dog Out* gives children the perfect way to think about how they differ from their peers, says **James Clements**

[@MrJClements](#) shakespeareandmore.com

For many young children standing out from the crowd comes naturally, but as they grow older and become more aware of their peer group, this can be replaced by a desire to fit in with everyone else. In this lesson, children will have the opportunity to enjoy the story of a small dog who feels she doesn't fit in and who travels a long way before realising that being different isn't so bad after all. In addition to the PHSE aspect of the lesson, children will have the chance to develop their understanding of characters, their ability to infer information from a text, and they'll practise writing letters too.



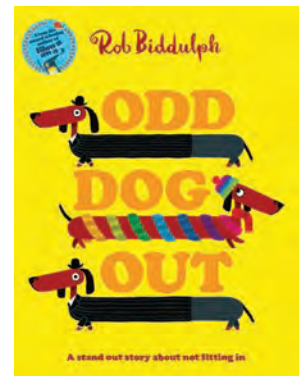
START HERE

Read the book *Odd Dog Out* aloud to the class, taking time to explore and discuss the pictures as well as the text. Once they have listened to the story, read it through again, this time stopping to ask the children to think about how the small dog feels at different points in the story: when she's 'dancing to a different beat' at the start; when she realises that she doesn't fit in with her electric guitar; when she arrives in Doggywood; when she meets another odd dog out; when she finally arrives home. Ask the children to think of some words to describe the small dog and her feelings at each point in the story.



MAIN LESSON

1 ASK FOR ADVICE
Ask the children to think about the moments in the story where the small dog is feeling like an odd dog out. The children might suggest the scenes at the concert where the other dogs are playing violins and she has an electric guitar, or where the other dogs are dressed identically apart from the small dog.
Ask the children, what could the other dogs do to make her feel better? What could the small dog do herself? Ask the children to think about the advice they would offer to her.



2 IN THE HOT SEAT
Tell the children that you are going to pretend to be the small dog from the story and they are going to be the other dogs. Sitting on a chair at the front of the class, explain to them that you are feeling a bit sad because you don't fit in.



“A well-told story provides the perfect vehicle for exploring ideas and children’s feelings”

Image: Rob Biddulph / HarperCollins Children’s Books

You like different things from the other dogs and you wonder if you should start pretending to like the same things as them. Ask the children if they have any advice. Listen to the children’s ideas, responding and slowly cheering up as they convince you that it is good to be different (don’t worry, they will!). Then ask them if there is anything *they* could do differently to help you feel happy being yourself.

Next, ask for volunteers to play the role of the small dog. This could be in front of the class again, or with the children in small groups so more children get the chance to talk. Don’t worry if the conversations and advice is

almost identical to the first go – this consolidation of ideas will be really useful when they come to write.

3 | WRITE A LETTER

“Tell the children that they are going to write a letter to the small dog when she is feeling like the odd dog out to try to convince her not to leave town and go to Doggywood. Remind them of some of the ideas that the class came up with during the initial discussion and the hot-seating.

Once they have finished, give the children time to read over their letters and make any changes. They could also share their letters with a partner and try to suggest

one thing that would improve each other’s work.

4 | TALK IT OVER

Finally, there is a chance to apply the children’s ideas to real life. Ask the children: can they think of an example of a time in real life where someone might feel like the odd one out – being the only person to support a particular football team, perhaps? Or if a group of friends all liked a particular toy or game, but one person didn’t?

Ask the children if it matters that they all like different things. What could they do if someone liked something completely different from their friends – different clothes, different games or a different type of music? If they were feeling like the odd one out, what could they do? Would any of the advice they offered the small dog be useful in real life?

James Clements is an education writer and researcher.

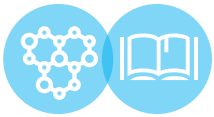
EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Extended writing: the children can write replies to their letters in role as the small dog. Has she listened to their advice? Did she find their letters useful?
- ICT: the children could draw their own dog on a painting package (e.g. 2Paint a Picture or Tux Paint). Then they could copy and ‘stamp’ their drawing to create a page of identical dogs before adding their own odd dog out somewhere on the page.
- Drama: the children could choose one dog from the last page of the story to interview in role. What does that dog like doing? What do they like about the way they are dressed?
- Further reading: the children could listen to and enjoy Rob Biddulph’s other wonderful books, including *Blown Away* and *Grrrrr!*

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- **Have you ever felt the need to pretend to like/ not like something to fit in? How did it make you feel?**
- **When is the small dog happiest in the story? What makes her happy?**
- **Who is your favourite dog in the story? Why?**



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Develop confidence in independent learning choices
- Build on open-ended questioning and natural curiosity
- Practise inquiry and exploration skills

Spark your class' curiosity

In Year 1 it is really important that our environments offer transition opportunities for young children used to a play-based approach with the EYFS. Developing an 'Investigation Station' can help ease the move to KS1 for children who may only be a few days past five years old...



A homemade 'investigation station' will deliver open-ended exploration and questioning opportunities all year round, says **Kirstine Beeley**

START HERE

Developing an area of your classroom with the specific aim of encouraging children's ability to be curious, to ask questions and to initiate their own lines of thinking will support lifelong learning skills. It is easy to implement in Y1 classrooms – build an area that looks visually appealing, features lots of multisensory options and is accessible as part of continuous provision play. Using old crates is a lovely way of keeping the space appealing, uncluttered and accessible. Include a wide range of objects that scream 'come and explore me!' rather than the traditional 'you can look but don't touch'...

MAIN ACTIVITY

1 | KEEP IT NATURAL

Natural objects are very effective at enticing children to your investigation station. You can reflect the changing seasons and weather, and provide ongoing opportunities for questioning and language development. Leave objects to be discovered and explored. Do not 'over-label' the area; the focus should be on developing spoken language skills, *not* reading. Include pine cones, conkers, acorns, shells, sea glass, leaves, silicone set bugs, flowers, animal skulls (available bleached online) and pebbles. Mirrored surfaces will extend the exploration, and if possible, provide a light table or panel for added

excitement and intrigue.

2 | TOOLS FOR EXPLORATION

Encourage children to access and use a variety of scientific equipment in their explorations of the objects in the area. Include magnifiers, bug pots, tape measures, torches, magnets and timers. If offered freely, all can be used to develop questioning and curiosity while introducing key scientific language.

3 | LASTING APPEAL



It is really important to keep refreshing the area with new objects (anything that will make the children think 'wow!' and want to begin asking questions) throughout the year to build on children's understanding. Use open-ended questions to encourage children to explore their thoughts

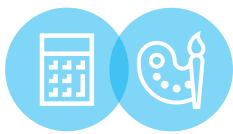
further. Comments such as, "What do you think...?" or "I wonder what...?" are far more powerful than questions with a defined single answer. Remember, don't ask questions that you as the teacher already know the answer to! Make sure you provide access to the internet as well as lots of non-fiction books so you can work together with the children to develop their lines of inquiry and find answers to their own questions as they arise.



Kirstine Beeley is a former primary teacher, author and early years

educational consultant.

 @Playingtolearn2
 playingtolearnuk.com



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Talk about the properties and functions of 2D shapes
- Recognise 2D shapes in the environment
- Use knowledge of 2D shapes in a design task

We're going on a shape hunt

@MarcWithersey

enabling-environments.co.uk

It is easy to personalise your children's learning in shape activities using these simple free apps. Children will use photography, audio and digital tools to show what they know – watch how the use of technology gives depth to children's work in this multi-modal maths lesson.

Grab your iPads and help children explore their environment, with these ideas from **Marc Faulder**



START HERE

To begin, introduce the class to the Book Creator app (available from apple.co/2xdtljq). They are going to make a shape journal that will contain all of their shape work today. You can model how to create a 'new book', then how to select the 'square' template and add a selfie to the front cover by tapping '+'. Children should also write their name using the pen tool.

Ask the children to make three pages in their shape journal. They will also use the 'add sound' functionality to explain their shape work using the voice recorder.

MAIN ACTIVITY

1 | SPOTTING SHAPES

In Pic Collage (apple.co/2wbdAEF), children use a 'freestyle' template, tap '+' then 'photos' to take photos of shapes they spot. This collage is personal, showing exactly what shapes children notice. When they have photographed all kinds of shapes, they save their work by tapping 'Done' and 'Save to Library'. Children return to their shape journal in Book Creator. On a new page, tap '+' and 'photos' to add their Pic Collage to the page. They now select 'add sound' to record themselves talking about their photos.

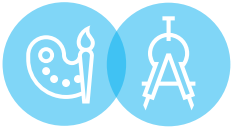
2 | SHAPE SHIFTERS

Use 'Geoboard' (apple.co/Pa33UV) to make shapes with bands. Children must think about the properties of the shapes they are making, as they will talk about them later! To save work, children press the 'home' button and 'sleep/wake' button of the iPad together. In their shape journal, they make a new page, tap '+' and select 'photos' to insert their screenshot. They now need to record themselves explaining the shape properties using the 'add sound' tool.

3 | SHAPE SORTING

Pattern Shape (apple.co/1Ft7xKF) has unlimited shape pieces for children's design work. Use 2D shapes to create a picture. They can use a blank page or a template as support. There is a pen tool to draw other shapes too. To save work, children press the 'home' button and 'sleep/wake' button of the iPad. Open Book Creator and make a new page in the shape journal. Add the picture by selecting 'Add Photos' in the '+' menu. Children now record themselves explaining why they have used these shapes for the picture.

Marc Faulder is a Foundation Stage teacher and Apple Distinguished Educator. Download more app ideas and shape activities for free at apple.co/2eOj4Tk



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Explore the work of an artist from the 20th century
- Recognise geometric shapes
- Use design and technology to plan and construct a mobile using wire and shapes
- Create their own mobile using autumn leaves

Art in motion



Who made the first mobile? Hands down, Motorola. **Judith Harries** invites children to explore the moving sculptures of Alexander Calder

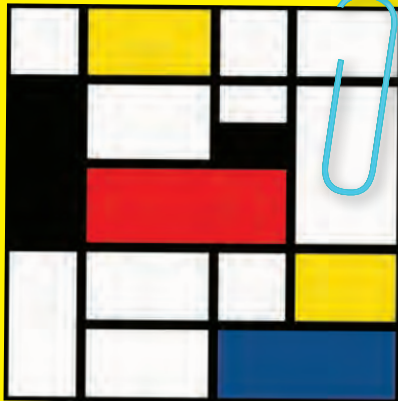
The American sculptor Alexander Calder is credited with inventing the ‘mobile’ as a sculpture or art form. He liked the paintings of Piet Mondrian such as *Composition A*, and it’s said that on a visit to the artist’s studio he suggested Mondrian take the coloured shapes from his artworks and make them move. Calder subsequently tried it himself, and came up with ‘kinetic sculptures’. In this lesson, children will use a range of skills to explore his work, discuss the design and purpose of mobiles, and create their own. You will need shape templates, coloured cardboard, plastic foam, garden wire, pipe cleaners, metal coat hangers, string/twine, autumn leaves, beads and buttons.

Manuel Ascanio / Shutterstock.com



START HERE

Talk to the children about mobiles. Ask them if they have a mobile, or if there is one (or more) in their house. Let them think that you mean ‘mobile phones’ before then reminding them of the other meaning of the word – ‘hanging mobiles’. Divide the children into small groups. Provide a selection of mobiles for them to observe, handle and evaluate. Print out pictures or look at images you find online. Talk about how they are made (using shapes and wire), what they are used for (decoration and entertainment), and who they are for (homes, babies, cots), etc.



MAIN LESSON

1 | INTRODUCING CALDER

Show the children images of the artworks of Alexander Calder, such as *Mobile*, *Red Sumac*, *Antennae with Red and Blue Dots*, *Four Big Dots* and *Long Yellow*. A useful website to explore is sfmoma.org. Choose two mobiles to look at in more detail and compare and contrast. Talk with the children about the shapes Calder used and how they are suspended on wire. Why do they think he gave them these titles? Explain to the children that they are going to make their own art mobiles in the style of Calder.



2 | SHAPE MOBILES

Working with a talk partner, ask the children to look at some shape templates and name the different shapes they can see – circle, square, triangle, rectangle, diamond, etc. Encourage the use of mathematical language such as ‘sides’, ‘corners’, ‘curved’

“Calder suggested the artist Mondrian take the coloured shapes from his artworks and make them move”



EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Go to calder.org and look at some other works by Calder that focus on fish such as *Goldfish Bowl* (1929), *Aquarium* (1929), *Fish* (1944), *Funny Fish* (1948), *Flying Fish* (1957). Some of these are wire sculptures rather than mobiles.

- Ask children to experiment with shapes they can make out of coated garden wire or large pipe cleaners. Start with geometric shapes. Work with a talk partner and test each other on the different names and properties of shapes.

- Can they create some bigger wire fish shapes? Provide beads and buttons to thread onto the wire. Challenge children to design their own wire sculpture inspired by fish.



3 | AUTUMN LEAF MOBILES

Go outside for a walk and collect some autumn leaves. Invite children to find small, different-coloured leaves. Look for ones that are still flat and preferably not torn or dirty. Back at the setting, try laminating some of the leaves. Let children make rubbings of other leaves using autumn-coloured wax crayons and then help them to cut out the leaf shapes and mount on coloured card. These leaves will be the shapes for individual hanging mobiles.

Look at images online of Calder's work: *23 feuilles à l'écart* (*23 spreading leaves*). Use hole-punches to make holes in the leaves and let children choose three or four different leaves for their mobile. Follow the procedure from before to attach leaves to string or twine and wire frames. How could they make the mobiles look more like trees or plants? Display the autumn leaf mobiles inside and outside so they can be seen by parents and visitors to your setting.

Judith Harries is an author and teacher of music and drama, with experience of working with children aged nine months to 11 years.

and 'straight'. Introduce some new artistic shapes and their templates: the plectrum, a triangle with rounded corners; or the teardrop, a circle extended into a point at one end. These shapes are frequently used by Calder in his mobiles. Ask the children to choose two different types of shape to use on their mobile such as squares and teardrops, or circles and plectrums.

Show the children how to draw around the templates on paper and cut out the different shapes they need. Let them practise doing this on sugar paper before using cardboard, shiny paper or thin foam for the finished shapes. They will need about seven or eight shapes to build an effective mobile. They can

use different-sized versions of their chosen shapes to increase variety.

Ask children to use hole-punches to make a hole in each of their shapes. Allow time for them to practise threading string or fisherman's twine through the holes in shapes and fastening them. This is quite fiddly and it will probably require adult help. Next make cross shapes from pipe cleaners or garden wire. Tie the strings and hanging shapes onto the ends of the wire crosses. Experiment with different lengths of string so that the shapes hang at a variety of levels. Attach the wire crosses to a central stick or use a metal coat hanger. When finished, display the mobiles around the setting.

USEFUL QUESTIONS

- Where else have you heard the word 'plectrum' or seen the shape before?
- Why is a triangle called a 'triangle'? Can you think of other words that start with 'tri'?
- Why do hanging mobiles work better outside?
- What do you think a 'stabile' would look like?



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WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

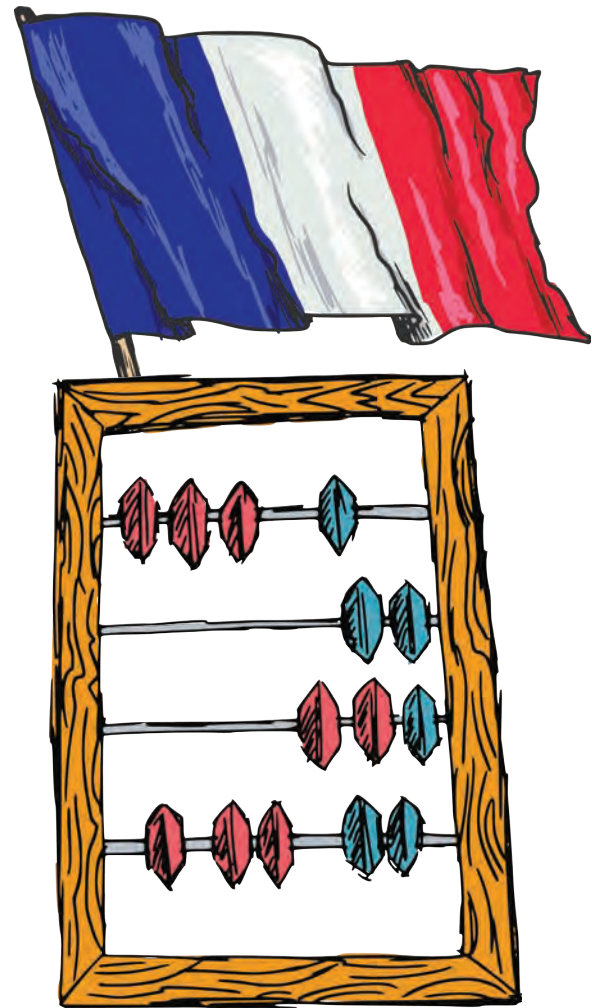
- Listen to and show understanding of basic numbers in French
- Develop accurate pronunciation
- Use physical actions to memorise new vocabulary
- Extend their numeracy skills

After me, 'Un, deux, trois'

Teach your class to count from one to 10 in French with these ideas from

Dr Amanda Barton

There are many fun ways to teach numbers in a foreign language that also consolidate children's numeracy skills. If you are unsure of the pronunciation or spelling of numbers in French, visit frenchnumbers.org.uk, or for Spanish, bbc.co.uk/schools/primarylanguages/spanish/numbers



START HERE

Do a numeracy warm-up activity in English. Think of a number between one and 10. Pupils take turns to guess the number and you respond with 'more' / 'less' until the correct number is guessed. The pupil who guesses correctly takes on the role of the teacher. Ask pupils if anyone knows how to say the numbers 1-10 in another language, and ask the class to listen to them counting. Does anyone know how to say any numbers in French? (If you have previously taught them how to describe their brothers and sisters as part of the 'family' topic, low numbers will have featured).

MAIN LESSON

1 | USE ACTIONS

Introduce the numbers 1-10 with choral repetition and actions. You could ask the class to help you decide on a suitable accompanying action, but here are some suggestions:

- Un** – one hand raised
- Deux** – two hands raised
- Trois** – goldfish mouth to emphasise the 'ois' sound
- Quatre** – catch a ball with two hands in mid-air
- Cinq** – hold your nose and mime 'sank'
- Six** – two hands sweep over each other to mime 'cease'
- Sept** – freeze, like a set jelly
- Huit** – hand sweeps from one side to the other, like a racing car at speed

Neuf – shake both hands either side of your head in an exasperated fashion to express 'getting on my nerves'

Dix – two hands raised and wiggle fingers.

2 | TAKING TURNS

When you have repeated the numbers and actions several times together, say the first number and ask the class to say the next, then repeat backwards, from 10 to one. Say only the number and ask the class to do the action. Then reverse: you mime the action and the class says the number. Repeat the warm-up 'Guess the number' game in French, responding with 'moins' or 'plus'.

3 | SING WITH ME

Sing the numbers to the tune of 'Frère Jacques'. You start

by singing the first line, with the class repeating. Once they are confident, one half of the class sings each line, with the other half echoing them:

*Un, deux, trois,
(Un, deux, trois)
Quatre, cinq, six,
(Quatre, cinq, six)
Sept, huit, neuf,
(Sept, huit, neuf)
Dix, dix, dix.
(Dix, dix, dix)*



Dr Amanda Barton is a freelance writer, educational consultant and teacher

trainer. Amanda is co-author of Teaching Primary French and Teaching Primary Spanish (Visit bloomsbury.com.)



WHAT THEY'LL LEARN

- Explore the composer Saint-Saëns and his musical suite
- Develop listening skills and recognise instruments of the orchestra
- Identify different musical elements
- Use puppets and dance to interpret the music

Dance like an elephant's trunk



Create a colourful, musical menagerie with the help of Saint-Saëns and these ideas from **Sam Dixon**

songchest.co.uk

French composer Camille Saint-Saëns wrote *The Carnival of the Animals* in 1886 as a piece of lighthearted fun. The suite is made up of 14 separate pieces of music, each one representing a different animal, such as the lion, the tortoise, an aviary of tiny birds, an aquarium of glittering fish, the elephant, the swan, and even a bunch of dancing fossils. The pieces are an excellent introduction to the instruments of the orchestra and musical elements such as tempo, dynamics and pitch. But the best fun is found in music and movement, with animal characterisation!



START HERE

The following activities can be used as individual lessons in their own right, or, if you prefer, they could



build towards a performance that features other animal-related songs. Why not produce your own 'Carnival of the Animals' presentation, with songs, movement and puppets?

For this lesson you will need to find a recording of *The Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns (there are several orchestral versions on YouTube) and a few simple resources – a hoop; several small chairs; some streamers, pieces of card and sticks, and a large, long piece of cloth.

MAIN LESSON

1 | WHICH ANIMAL?

Introduce the children to Camille Saint-Saëns and tell them the music they will listen to describes an animal. Can they guess which it might be? Listen for clues: if it is a small animal, will the music have high or low sounds? If the animal moves quickly, will the music be fast or slow? If the creature jumps around, will the music be spikey or smooth?

After listening to each piece, ask the children which creature they thought of, until someone guesses correctly. There might be several different creatures that fit the music, but we are trying to



guess the one that Saint-Saëns thought of. Play the piece again, moving around as the animal.

2 | LION TAMING

The first piece in *The Carnival of the Animals* is called 'The March of the Lion'. The music implies not only the physical characteristics of the lion but also some of his stately manner, being the King of the



“The Carnival of the Animals is an excellent introduction to the orchestra”



hanging over the cloth. A long grey sock on their arm creates a ‘trunk’ and a headband can be used add ears. As the music plays, they perform a series of moves:

- Each child’s ‘trunk’ appears one at a time, sniffing the air, in different directions.
- All arms dangle over the wall facing down. Start to sway in unison from left to right. At the end of the first musical phrase, ‘loop the loop’ by drawing one big circle in the air.
- Divide the children into ‘A’s and ‘B’s. Alternate raising trunks slowly up and down.
- Children all turn to face right, with arms by their side. Lift trunk over their head one at a time, making an elephant trumpet noise.
- Raise right arm straight up above head. Sway in unison slowly, left to right.
- Squirt the audience for a big finish!

Sam Dixon is a teacher, composer and musical educator who has taught across the primary age group for 18 years.

Jungle! Choose six to eight children to be ‘the lions’; you will be ‘the lion-tamer’. Position six chairs at the front of the class, with the back of each chair facing the rest of the children. As the music plays, the lions parade slowly around the room, using their hands as giant paws. The lion tamer holds out a hoop, which could be decorated with cut-out flames for added drama. When the lion tamer taps his/her stick, one lion at a time should jump through the hoop. The other children should cheer as each lion jumps through. After they have all jumped through, ask the lions to kneel up on the chairs, holding on to the back for support.

Can the children identify the part of the tune where the

lion roars? This is played by the piano with a scale of notes running up and down. The lions should throw their heads back and roar in time. When the lion tamer makes a circle gesture with the stick, the lions must pace around their chairs, until the end of the piece, when they all climb back on their chairs for a final ‘Roarrrr!’.

3 LET’S DANCE

‘The Elephant’ is a funny solo for the double bass – show the children the instrument in action on YouTube (bit.ly/1OQv3uL). Using a cloth ‘wall’, choreograph your own trunk dance to the music. The children stand in a line behind the cloth with only their head visible and their right arm

EXTENDING THE LESSON



- Simple puppets can bring *The Carnival of Animals* to life. ‘The Aviary’ is full of movement and energy – tie coloured streamers to the end of a stick and manipulate them, to represent flitting birds with long colourful tail feathers.
- After listening to ‘The Aquarium’, make a variety of paper plate aquatic creatures (crabs, jelly fish, silver fish) and suspend them from a piece of string tied to a stick. The children sit behind a long piece of blue cloth (which can be decorated and wiggled to represent the water). The puppets appear one at a time and are dangled in front of the cloth whilst the music is playing. Add bubbles from a bubble machine for an extra watery feel.
- Compose your own animal piece using a selection of percussion instruments. Which instruments suit your animal best?

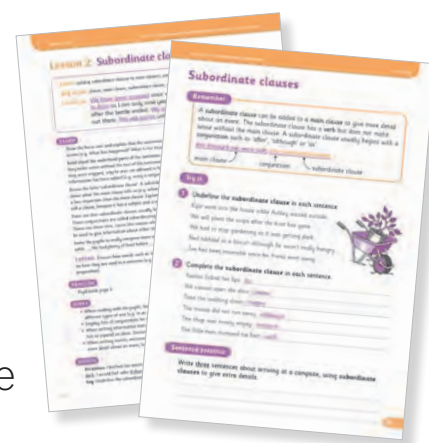
USEFUL QUESTIONS

- What is your favourite piece in Saint-Saens *The Carnival of the Animals*? Why do you like it?
- What other animal songs do you know?

LITERACY

Grammar and Punctuation

An engaging and accessible programme that will take the strain of teaching grammar and punctuation



AT A GLANCE

- A structured 'mastery' programme comprising pupil books and teacher guides
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- Wide-ranging topics, from capital letters and verb endings to fronted adverbials, and the subjunctive form



REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL

Grammar and punctuation often tie children, and adults, in knots. To make matters even more confusing, the marketplace is packed with resources promising to help, so what do you choose?

Let me introduce you to Schofield & Sims' Grammar and Punctuation, a structured 'mastery' programme featuring pupil books and teacher guides (six of each for Year 1 to Year 6). Together they provide an all-inclusive solution to teaching grammar and punctuation, keeping a close eye on developing vocabulary, reading and writing skills too.

The pupil books differ in their content but share similar features. Year 1 contains 15 double-page lessons, while Years 2 to 6 contain 30 single-page lessons covering everything from capital letters and verb endings to fronted adverbials, double negatives and the subjunctive form, with plenty sandwiched in between.

Practice pages feature a punchy summary of key learning points, alongside a couple of snappy 'try it' exercises and a 'sentence practice' activity. There are also regular revision pages to reinforce learning with imaginative writing tasks, allowing children to showcase their skills. At the back of each book children will find a glossary, and there is a self-evaluation checklist to help them assess their own learning.

The teacher guides provide lesson plans, assessment and record-keeping resources, plus the answers to the questions found in the pupil books. The supporting material follows a 'teach, practise, apply, assess' model. Each lesson plan provides a step-by-step guide for setting up and executing a successful grammar and punctuation session, including the learning objectives, key terms used, teaching notes and reinforcement activities. What I like about these notes is that they contain short but interesting 'focus texts', so you can teach each learning point in a meaningful context. There are also short dictation exercises for assessing whether children have understood each topic, and an end-of-year test along with a detailed mark scheme and analysis sheet.

As in the pupil books, you will find a glossary, this one more comprehensive to support your subject knowledge and understanding. The guides all have a clear focus and are easy to pick up and teach from with confidence.

The books focus on grammar and punctuation while promoting and developing wider literacy skills in the process, so they add plenty of value, and a selection of free supporting downloads is also available from Schofield & Sims' website.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ High-quality and affordable resources
- ✓ Pupil books feature vibrant text, clear instructions and stimulating activities
- ✓ Clearly focused guides allow you to teach with confidence
- ✓ Handy glossaries support children and teachers' understanding
- ✓ Revision pages and engaging writing tasks help to reinforce learning

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Pupil books £2.50 each, teacher guides £7 each, schofieldandsims.co.uk/grammar

LITERACY

Reading Planet Online

An exciting expressive reading programme for Reception and KS1 from Rising Stars



AT A GLANCE

- A powerful combination of phonics and speech rhythm strategies
- Levelled according to book-banding criteria and Lexile-measured
- Displays engaging texts on the whiteboard or any internet-enabled device
- Emphasises the relationship between musical rhythm, prosody and reading
- Meets the demands of the new curriculum and KS1 assessments

REVIEWED BY: JOHN DABELL



Reading is stressful, but not in the way you're probably thinking. English is a stress-timed language, and sentence stress is an important factor in fluency. It is also a very rhythmical language, and children who can maintain the right rhythm are more likely to sound natural and fluent.

To achieve a natural rhythm in speech, children must understand the stress-timed nature of English and the interrelated components of stress, connected speech and intonation. The music of English is something that pro-phonics publishers have neglected, focusing on segmental phonological awareness, which doesn't work for all children. Rising Stars stands out from the crowd, though, with its new reading programme, Reading Planet, which also tunes into the importance of speech rhythm sensitivity, combining this learning approach with phonics to create a powerful tool to develop word reading skills.

Reading Planet Online is an exceptional reading curriculum, featuring activities designed to enhance pupils' rhythmic awareness. It spans young children's development, covering everything from pre-reading skills (lilac banded) through fully decodable texts to a range of exciting fiction, non-fiction poetry and plays for confident readers. Its four strands are packed with activities and include action-packed stories

from a library of over 200 resources.

Engaging, flexible and accessible, Reading Planet Online offers the full range of Reading Planet print books in a convenient digital format for use at school or assigned learning at home. The books feature audio recordings that complement the text, highlighting each word as it is spoken, plus checkpoint quizzes (multiple choice, complete the grid, fill in the gaps, sequencing, matching and highlighting) and end-of-book questions to assess comprehension skills. The books can easily be allocated to individuals or groups, and progress can be scrutinised via a powerful and easy-to-use teacher dashboard. As questions are marked automatically, you can get a transparent picture of where children are at through performance reports of content domains. No-nonsense Teacher Guides offer easy-to-follow advice on getting started, loading pupil data, and searching and using the online materials.

One size doesn't fit all, which is why speech-rhythm activities have their place in the classroom, and should be explored by all practitioners looking to help every child achieve reading success. Reading Planet Online makes us sit up and listen, helping us understand that prosody is critical because of the ways in which it informs developing literacy.

teach
PRIMARY

VERDICT

- ✓ An original, pioneering and imaginative programme supported by innovative research
- ✓ Effective use of phonics and speech rhythm strategies
- ✓ Audio recordings perfect for EAL learners
- ✓ Expertly rhythmic activities proven to boost children's early word reading

UPGRADE IF...

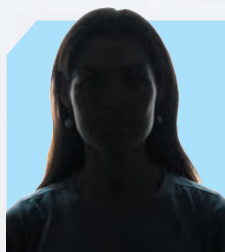
You are looking for a dynamic, novel and research-based reading programme using speech rhythm intervention training to enhance literacy skills and ensure children are reading-ready.

Reading Planet Online is available from £450 for unlimited access until August 2020, risingstars-uk.com/reading-planet-online

We offer a contributor the chance to get something off their chest

A letter from... a frustrated Reception teacher

It feels like we're caught between a rock and a hard place – something needs to change



As many teachers know, the end of the academic year isn't just for end-of-year assemblies, parties, film days and fun. No matter that the summer

holiday is in sight and almost within our grasp, this is also a time when there are 250 loose ends to tie up simultaneously, without getting yourself muddled and stuck in a knot.

And the loose end I dread more than any other? External moderation (I can already hear the distant screams of many teachers). I have been in the Reception classroom now for more than four years, performing a variety of roles, and two of the recurring themes have been the lack of consistency and the lack of understanding of how Reception should be run. Now while to some degree each and every setting within the early years sector does things differently, I would argue that it is Reception classrooms that vary the most in terms of where their practice falls on the EYFS spectrum. So, you might think, why does this matter? How does this affect people in moderation? Well I'm glad you asked! More often than not, comments and discussions quickly become about

what is considered best practice – which is always problematic because there isn't a specific answer.

I see being an early years teacher, and specifically a Reception teacher, as a bit like being a parent: we all want to do our best, but we're not really sure about which route to take because we are constantly bombarded by judgement, theory and many, many differing opinions. When I speak with most Reception classroom practitioners, what emerges is that we feel as though our hands are tied behind our backs. Teaching in Reception can feel a little bit like being stuck between a rock and a hard place: more often than not you are passionate about early years and have a clear vision of what you think good practice looks like in the classroom – but then you realise very quickly that you have limited say over what goes on, as it is mainly controlled by others higher up, who, of course, also have views on how a Reception classroom should be run. This is not to say that these people are wrong, necessarily – but it can make the experience of moderation difficult, since you may have to carry out certain practices that are not of your own choosing.

As I've pointed out, there are many different ways people like to run their Reception classroom. On the one hand

there are those who feel it should be run very formally – not much to do with play-based learning, with lots of table and book work; then on the other hand, you have those who believe that *everything* should be play-based – completely child-led, with no planning and no formal teaching. And of course there are those who sit somewhere in the middle of the debate. As you can imagine, this can cause quite a bit of friction at moderation.

For me, the Reception classroom has been neglected – almost forgotten. Not only are we not able to make our own decisions but also, at times, many of us feel as if we are not respected. Some Reception teachers – myself included – have experienced being unintentionally mocked, left feeling less important than our colleagues, disconnected from our schools and early years community, with an overwhelming sense of being lost. It's no wonder so many Reception teachers are frustrated. This cannot go on; let's give the Reception classroom life again; let's educate those who lack understanding of this rewarding, different and at times challenging department and make it glow, while allowing its practitioners to feel respected and supported.

From a Year R teacher

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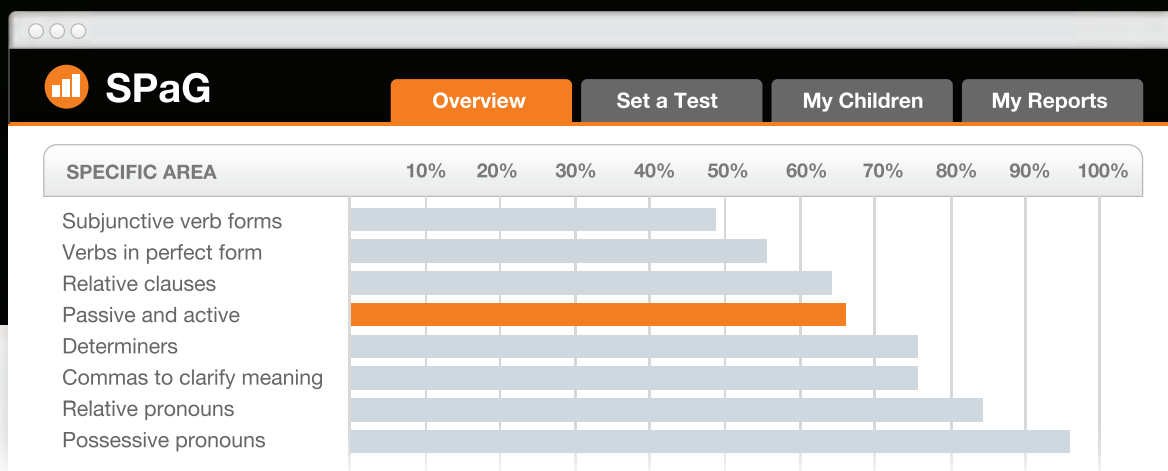
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