

THE PRIMARY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TOOLKIT

FOR SENIOR LEADERS



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

INTRODUCTION

Get ahead this year with the Primary School Improvement Toolkit! We have curated a selection of resources to support both you and your staff.

From helpful checklists to support you with your own professional development to lesson plans you can share with all your staff, we hope there is something for everyone in this toolkit.

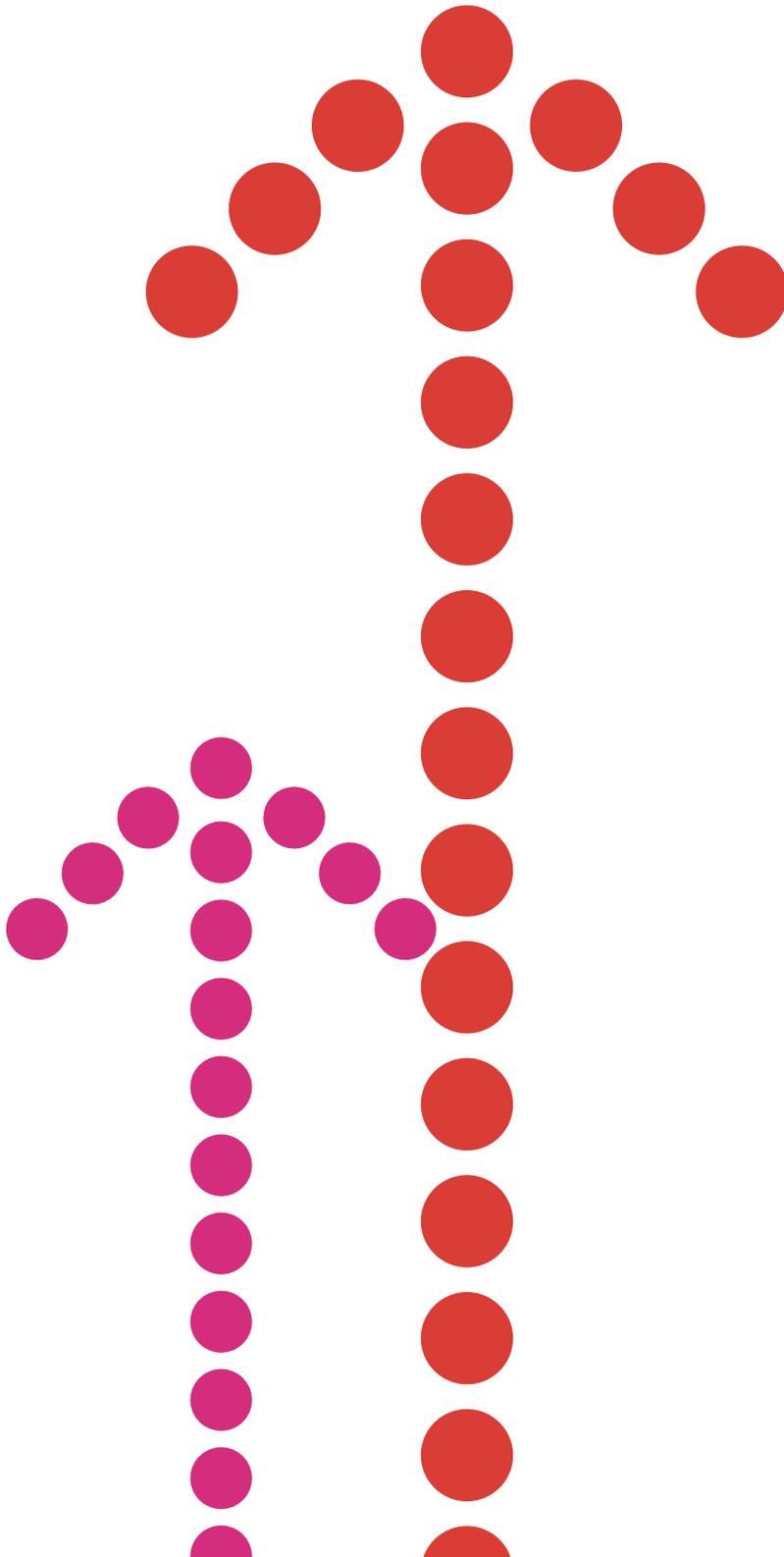


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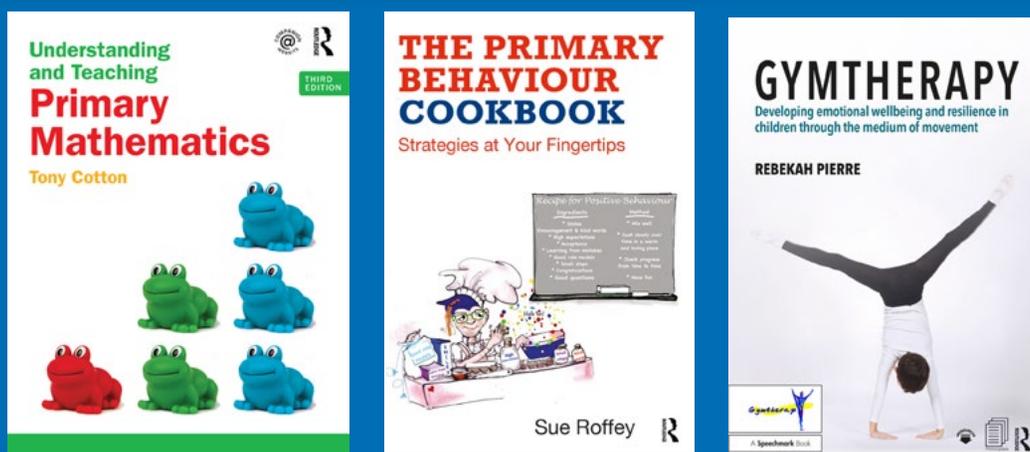
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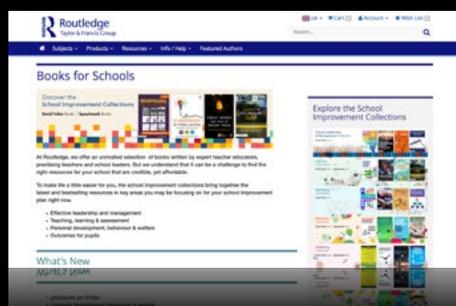
*From **Gymtherapy** by Rebekah Pierre.*

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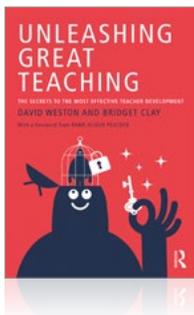
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FINDING TIME FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING – FROM THE QUICK WINS TO THE TOUGH

Excerpted from *Unleashing Great Teaching – The Secrets to the Most Effective Teacher Development*



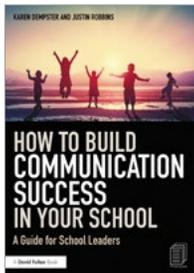
The following is excerpted from *Unleashing Great Teaching – The Secrets to the Most Effective Teacher Development* by David Weston and Bridget Clay.

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Here are some of the ways that you could re-engineer your school schedule in order to create opportunities for professional development. Not all of these will work or even be seen as acceptable in every institution and many of them need careful discussion with staff, parents and students. Nevertheless, it's useful to see the range of approaches taken.

Quick wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule music, sport, art, reading sessions and/or religious education with external facilitators. • Staffing assemblies with fewer staff and/or teaching assistants and external facilitators, freeing up others to meet and discuss pedagogy. • Allocate statutory in-service training day time for Responsive Professional Learning, co-planning, discussion and enquiry. • Ask a few classes to come in for a small part of a school-closure training day so that a few lessons can be undertaken with several teachers and/or observers. • Schedule student trips with more (suitably prepared) volunteers and fewer teachers, use the released time for professional learning. • If there are common tests/assessments, sit them together in larger groups, free up other teachers. • Schedule demonstrations, singing, plays and videos in larger groups.
Medium wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend team meeting times to encourage subject-specific or topic-specific professional development discussion instead of time spent as a whole staff discussing general pedagogical principles. • Disaggregate statutory in-service training days, use the time instead for several twilight or dawn sessions. Be aware that there's an important balance to be struck here to ensure that teachers still have sufficient planning and preparation time at the start of term as well as time for key activities such as moderating coursework. • In secondary schools, use freed-up time after exam groups have left. In primary schools use Year 6 secondary-visit days. • Arrange for community service or work experience days, or half-days. • Schedule online revision or interactive learning sessions, supervised by an assistant, or sat in larger groups.
Big but tough wins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule teacher non-contact periods so that groups can work together (e.g. phase teams, subject departments or faculties, year teams). • 'Bank' fifteen to thirty minutes of extra professional development time by finishing school lessons slightly later on four days of the week and then using that time on the fifth day – e.g. pupils arrive later than usual, or leave earlier than usual. • Schedule similar classes together (e.g. KS2 literacy periods, Year 10 maths) so teachers can more easily swap classes or see each other's lessons, and more easily engage in joint planning and assessment. • Schedule two staff to the same class to facilitate co-teaching.



The following is excerpted from *How to Build Communication Success in Your School* by Karen Dempster and Justin Robbins.

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These tests are designed to help you assess how communication within your school is currently working— one set is for you as a leader and the other is for your school. Answering the questions will produce a range of results that are aligned to the Ofsted rankings of Inadequate, Requires Improvement, Good and Outstanding. From this starting point you can identify areas you need to work on.

YOUR PERSONAL COMMUNICATION FITNESS TEST

To get an indication of your own communication fitness, complete the first test below and see how you score. For all questions, score yourself where 1 is the least favourable and 5 is the most. Please be honest (with yourself)!

1. How confident are you in your ability to communicate with students?
2. How well equipped are you to respond to difficult and unexpected situations with students?
3. Would your students say that their views are listened to?
4. How committed are you personally to improve your communication skills?
5. How well do you understand your school's vision or purpose?
6. How confident are you in communicating with parents?
7. Do you feel equipped to deal with difficult conversations with parents?
8. How confident are you in sharing your ideas with colleagues?
9. Do you feel equipped to influence others who have a different view to your own?
10. How often do you check if people have understood what you said?
11. How well do you believe you listen to others? How are you doing?
12. Are you clear on what you should and shouldn't say about your school on social media?
13. How confident are you in speaking to larger groups of people?
14. How strongly does your communication (written or spoken) reflect your school's purpose?
15. How clear are the messages you write or say to others?
16. How likely are you to experience misunderstandings and confusion when you communicate?

HOW DID YOU SCORE?

16–25 Inadequate

It might be time to build your communication skills. The good news is that you've made a start by being more self-aware. By making some simple changes, you'll see some real benefits and will be more fulfilled in your job. You've started to understand some of the areas where you are less confident. We'll guide you through how to improve in this book. So let's start the journey together.

26–45 Requires improvement

You are doing okay, but there is some room for improvement. There are simple things you can do to improve on the basics you have already. Think about where you felt least confident and target these areas as you go through this book. Being self-aware is important, and you've taken a first step. Keep an eye and ear out for opportunities to understand more about how you are doing in your day-to-day job.

46–65 Good

You are doing well and have a great foundation in place to build on. It won't take much for you to get to 'Outstanding'. Think about the areas where you felt less confident and keep them in mind as you go through this book. Actively ask for feedback from your peers to improve and continue to be self-aware.

66–80 Outstanding

You are doing very well and are a communication role model! But remember that even the best of us have to keep improving. Ensure that you stay at the top of your game and continue to be the best by learning from some of the best practice in this book and asking for regular feedback from your peers.

YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNICATION FITNESS TEST

Now, think about how your school is communicating overall. Again, for all questions, score your school where 1 is the least favourable and 5 is the most.

1. How well does everyone understand your school's common purpose?
2. To what extent are good teachers staying with your school?
3. To what extent are good teachers attracted to your school?
4. How positively is your school talked about on social media forums, local media and sites?
5. How strongly do all of your communication materials (newsletters, letters, printouts from your website, your prospectus) reflect your common purpose and reinforce your brand?
6. How clear is your school of the return on investment from your marketing or communication channel (text, email, intranet, website) spend?
7. How much time is invested in improving the communication skills of teachers?
8. How clear is day-to-day communication in terms of where to find information and what to do with it?
9. How easy is it for parents to share their views about your school?
10. To what extent would students say that their views are listened to?
11. How well informed are teachers about trends in education?
12. How well are your school leaders communicating, inspiring, motivating and listening?
13. How well do staff share their ideas and work together on issues to improve the school?
14. How well equipped are teachers with the tools and technology to communicate well with parents in your school?

HOW DID YOUR SCHOOL SCORE?

14–25 Inadequate

A score in this range indicates work to do within your school to get everybody aligned and on board with your common purpose. It is then necessary to communicate it well with all key stakeholders. Our best-practice guide will help you to put this all into action. How are you doing?

26–40 Requires improvement

You may have a common purpose in place, but more could be done to align teachers and parents behind it, to ensure that you are giving the best impression of your school at all times. Look for the gaps compared to our best-practice recommendations and aim to close them.

41–55 Good

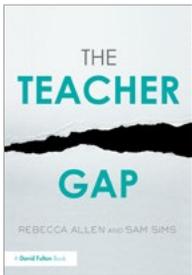
You are clearly well aligned across all areas, and parents are generally positive about your school. If you are looking to become 'Outstanding', there are a few more steps to take.

56–70 Outstanding

Your school is doing very well, and is a role model for communicating and engaging key audiences. However, to ensure you stay where you are and continue to be a leading school, ensure you continue to follow best-practice guidelines.

FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE TEACHER MOTIVATION WITHOUT WAITING FOR POLICY MAKERS

Excerpted from *The Teacher Gap*



The following is excerpted from *The Teacher Gap* by Rebecca Allen (@profbeckyalen) and Sam Sims (@Sam_Sims_).

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- 1. Encourage your teaching staff to set their own performance targets for the coming year**

Teachers need a sense of autonomy, but this does not mean leaving teachers free to do things that undermine collective organisational structures or pupil learning. The role of school leaders is to support teachers in crafting plans that really will improve their practice.
- 2. Support your teachers in getting better at their job**

Create multiple, low-stakes approaches to helping them measure improvements in their practice, whether this is through developing tests and quizzes to monitor pupil learning or lesson observations to watch how a specific technique they are trying out is developing.
- 3. Encourage your teachers to work and learn alongside each other to help them achieve their goals**

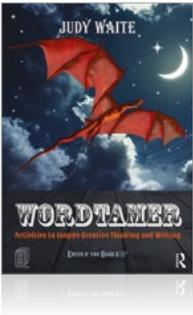
Create channels – whether through development sessions or noticeboards – for teachers with similar goals to find each other in the school. Seek out the local events or forums to make connections across schools. If any of your teachers choose to attend a TeachMeet or conference in their personal time, give them a 3-minute platform to tell others about it, both to celebrate the commitment they have made and to let others know what is out there.
- 4. Review your performance-related pay policy**

Remove targets that are based on things that are partly outside the control of a teacher, such as GCSE grades. Link performance appraisal specifically to an agreed professional development plan, where the teacher commits to improving their practice and the school commits to giving them the time and space to learn. Make it clear that teachers in your school are not competing with each other and that it is possible for all teachers to succeed in meeting their goals.
- 5. Recognise your own fallibility in making judgments about other teachers.**

Headteachers do know quite a lot about the quality of their own teachers, but they acquire this through slow accumulation of soft evidence. We now know that our capacity to judge high quality teaching in a lesson observation is rather limited and is affected by classroom pupil composition. We also know that pupil test scores do not cleanly capture teacher quality. Do not place too much weight on any single measure of a teacher's performance.

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY – THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

Excerpted from *Wordtamer*



The following is excerpted from *Wordtamer* by Judy Waite

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ACT THREE: SEA WORLD

THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

A visual focus to writing using imagery, group work and discussion. Pupils develop scenes of descriptive writing that are backdrops to characters and story ideas. Pupils will evolve under-the-sea settings inspired by sounds and images, collaborate on characters who might inhabit this world, then apply freewriting techniques to explore story ideas.

LEARNING AND CURRICULUM VALUES

Creative writing skills: Explore ideas, character development, empathy, motivation and voice, setting development, visual writing, descriptive writing, suspense writing, cliffhangers, story development.

Literacy skills: Genre awareness (fantasy), reading, reading aloud, note taking, shared writing, independent writing.

Extended topic potential: Oceans, sea life, famous shipwrecks.

Cross-curricular skills: Mindmapping, awareness of life forms under the sea.

Life skills: Discussion, collaboration, purposeful talk, thinking, visualisation, listening.

Outcome: Pupils will produce the beginning of a potentially longer piece of fiction developed from discussion and engagement with images; they will learn how to use visual description as a backdrop to story, to develop characters appropriate to the setting and write a story that emerges organically from these combinations.

PROPS, PROMPTS AND MATERIALS

- Selection of 'undersea' prompt images (could be shown on screen)



CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY – THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

Excerpted from *Wordtamer*



- Ambient underwater sounds (www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjQxhOXco_k)
- Selection of 'undersea' prompt nouns: fish, weed, coral, rocks, caves, sea snakes, sea horse, shells, star-fish, anemone, etc.
- Selection of 'undersea' prompt adjectives: glittering, shimmering, murky, wild, calm, lapping, roaring, eerie, silent, bubbling, etc.
- LED tealight candles
- Flipchart-size sheets of paper
- Marker pens (ideally for all pupils)
- Writing paper
- Notebooks
- Pens, erasers, sharpeners, etc.

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY – THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

Excerpted from *Wordtamer*

ACTIVITY: SEA WORLD

Teacher: The initial aim is to create an underwater mood, drawing imagery from sound, images and visual thinking (see Chapter 7). The ambient music can play very softly in the background, the volume raised when pupils are visualising early ideas in silence (see Chapter 6). However, once the story ideas begin to take effect, it is best to fade the sounds out. This is because these more generic sounds won't be suggestive of action, drama and suspense (see Chapter 11).

Arrange pupils in groups of four to six: one flipchart sheet of paper per table.

Pupils: Collaborate on ideas, producing a mindmap (see Chapter 9) of what it is like under the sea. Don't start stories. Just discuss and write down all suggestions.

Teacher: Show images, and suggest additional possibilities with noun and adjective prompts. What else might there be under the sea? Shipwrecks, sharks, jellyfish and other sea creatures.



CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY – THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

Excerpted from *Wordtamer*



Consider additional detail using metaphors and similes:

Eerie squid with snaking, twisting tentacles. Starfish glittering like underwater treasure.

Pupils: Visualisation – create an ‘under the sea’ scene (see Chapter 6).

Pupils: Make notes and ‘dabble’. Write independently; create a descriptive setting story-starter.

WORDTAMER SAMPLE MODEL

The water glowed turquoise blue. Seaweed swayed across the rippling sand. Deep down amongst the rocks a squid snaked its tentacles. A glitter of glowing starfish shuffled sideways to escape its reach.

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY – THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

Excerpted from *Wordtamer*

Teacher: Turn the mindmap sheet over: each group is to create a 'mer-child' – either a boy or girl.



Whole class discuss traits of mer-child as opposed to a human child. Also consider names appropriate to underwater characters: Rocky, Tyne, Pearl, Coral, Shelly, Sandy, Marina, Brook, Bay, Caspian, Aqua, Hydra, Jordan, Nerio, Lily.

WORDTAMER SAMPLE MODEL

Dark green curly hair. His 'fish' body is a greenish blue and the fin at the end glimmers as he swims. He enjoys swimming, and exploring old wrecks with his friends. He is friendly and confident but is sometimes a bit lazy at sea-school.

His name is Jordan.

Pupils: Work in groups. Create a 'mer-character' using the mindmap technique (see Chapter 9). What do they look like? What do they enjoy doing? What is their personality like? What are they called? Where might they live (see Chapter 8)?

Pupils: Each group shares their mer-child with the whole class.

Pupils: Returning to the description at the beginning of the story, visualise this mer-child entering the scene. Where are they going? What else might they swim past?

Teacher: Use visualisation techniques to enable ideas to grow.

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY – THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

Excerpted from *Wordtamer*

Pupils: Write independently. Describe a detailed, visual scene that adds on to the original beginning.

WORDTAMER SAMPLE MODEL

The water was turquoise blue. Seaweed swayed across the rippling sand and deep down among the rocks a squid snaked its long tentacles. A glitter of glowing starfish shuffled sideways to escape its reach. **Jordan saw the starfish move as he swam by, and smiled to himself. He loved the way they shone like treasure, but he didn't stop to collect one. Instead, he swam on past the empty sand-palace towards the coral forest.**

Teacher: In all the best stories, lovely or vivid description isn't enough. Something needs to happen. Will it be something dangerous, or wonderful? Consider the character and the ways they might behave, and consider what dramatic event might happen next. Discuss cliffhangers.

Teacher: Use visualisation techniques to enable ideas to grow.

Pupils: Write independently; bring drama and action into the story, adding on from the previous scene.

WORDTAMER SAMPLE MODEL

The water was turquoise blue. Seaweed swayed across the rippling sand. Deep down among the rocks a squid snaked its long tentacles. A glitter of glowing starfish shuffled sideways to escape its reach. Jordan saw the starfish move as he swam by, and smiled to himself. He loved the way they shone like treasure, but he didn't stop to collect one. Instead, he swam on past the empty sand-palace towards the coral forest. **He saw the shadow of the wreck before he saw the wreck itself. It darkened the seabed, as if it were sucking away all the light. Jordan felt cold as he swam towards it. He could see strange shapes drifting across the deck, and wondered if they were the spirits of the doomed humans. As he reached the rotted hull, he put his hand out to pull himself up, but something rushed at him. Something huge and white. Its jagged teeth were bared, and its dark, evil eye gleamed like a black diamond through the quivering shadows.**

Pupils: *Go it alone* – carry on the story, keeping the detail going, and stopping to 'see under the sea' through visual thinking. End on a cliffhanger (see Chapter 11).

Teacher: Feedback based on characterisation and setting. How well has the setting informed the writing? How has imagery been utilised? Does this feel like a place under the sea? Are scenes easy to 'see' because of the descriptive language used? Do the characters behave consistently and has the under-water theme been established throughout?

CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITY – THRILLER/ADVENTURE SET UNDER THE SEA

Excerpted from *Wordtamer*

NON-FICTION EXERCISE

As a class, create a school for mer-children using ideas drawn from an under-sea setting. Decide a list of school rules.

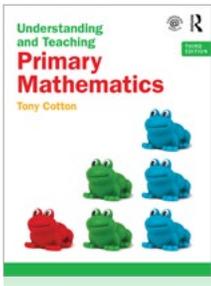
Create a lunchtime menu.

Write a list of ideas for book titles for the school library.

Plan the mer-child school summer fete, create rides and activities and then write a letter on a shell to the 'mer-parents' outlining the event.

LESSON PLAN – NUMERACY

Excerpted from *Understanding and Teaching Primary Mathematics, 3rd edition*



The following is excerpted from *Understanding and Teaching Primary Mathematics, 3rd edition* by Tony Cotton

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The following lesson plan can be used to draw on a group's current understandings of number bonds to 10 to begin to develop an understanding of place value in decimals. I did this through asking them to find pairs and triples of numbers that total 10 or 100 including decimals. This allowed them to use the knowledge that $45 + 55 = 100$ to deduce that $4.5 + 5.5 = 10$. The plan includes ICT to support the children's learning.

Topic: Numbers totalling 10 or 100

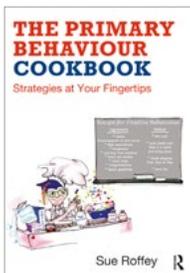
Age Group: Lower Primary

Objectives:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Use knowledge of place value and addition and subtraction of two-digit numbers to derive sums and differences, doubles and halves of decimals2) Explore properties of numbers and propose a general statement involving numbers. Identify examples for which the statement is true or false
Key vocabulary: Units boundary, tenths boundary, addition, plus, pattern	Context: This is the first lesson in a series of five. This lesson supports children in finding pairs and triples of numbers that total 10 or 100. Future lessons use this understanding to carry out calculations arising from word problems. This lesson should support the children in devising mental strategies so that they can effectively carry out the calculation
Resources: 0–9-digit cards 6×4 grid	Starter activity: I will use the interactive whiteboard and the program 'Number Boards'. This provides a 6×4 grid of pairs of numbers which add to 10. The first run-through uses whole numbers. I will ask the children to work in mixed ability pairs and give them 1 minute to find as many pairs as possible which add to 10. They will record this on mini whiteboards. After a minute I will ask each pair to come up to the board and select a pair of numbers to check if they are right. I will repeat the activity using numbers to 1 decimal place. Finally I will use the two versions of the program again – this time one of the children will come up and select a number and I will then pick someone to tell them what the 'complement to 10' is.

LESSON PLAN – NUMERACY

Excerpted from *Understanding and Teaching Primary Mathematics, 3rd edition*

Main activity	Teacher	Pupil activity
<p>Group activity: Children operating above expected levels</p>	<p>The children will work in pairs. Each member of the pair creates a 'pairs' and 'triples' board so that it contains sets of numbers that add to 10. This should be decimals. They will then give them to a partner who will shade in the pairs</p>	<p>Pupils will list pairs and triples of numbers and decide how to make the board 'challenging'. The TA who is working with this group will ask the children to explain their thinking and to describe the patterns they notice when they are finding pairs and triples of numbers</p>
<p>Group activity: Children operating at expected levels</p>	<p>The children will work in pairs. Each member of the pair creates a 'pairs' board so that it contains 12 pairs of numbers that add to 10. This should include some that are decimals. They will then give them to a partner who will shade in the pairs on the number grid</p>	<p>Pupils will list pairs and triples of numbers and decide how to make the board 'challenging'. I will work with this group and will ask the children to explain their thinking and to describe the patterns they notice when they are finding pairs and triples of numbers</p>
<p>Group activity: Children operating below expected levels</p>	<p>This group will continue to use the program on the laptops. I will use the program which asks the children to find pairs of numbers that sum to 100</p>	<p>The children will record the pairs of numbers that they find sum to 100. They will organise this list so that they can report back on any patterns they have found</p>
<p>Plenary: The group who were summing to 100 will report back on the patterns that they have found. I will ask the other two groups if these patterns are reflected in the patterns that they have found. Hopefully they will notice, for example, $45 + 55 = 100$ and $4.5 + 5.5 = 10$. We will then revisit the activity from the starter. This time we will only use the decimal grid. As a child finds a pair they will describe to the group the mental process they are using</p>		



The following is excerpted from *The Primary Behaviour Cookbook* by Sue Roffey

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THE OVEN

THE EMOTIONAL CLIMATE OF THE CLASSROOM

If your oven is too cold or too hot, nothing you put in to cook will come out right. Similarly, whatever strategies are put into place for behavioural issues, the chance of their effectiveness will be determined by the context – the emotional climate of the classroom.

There is a raft of evidence that supports the importance of the emotional climate of the classroom for both learning and behaviour. How people feel in a learning environment matters. This is determined by relationships between peers and between the teacher and the pupil; clear, high expectations and support given to meet these; how people talk to and about each other; a sense of belonging; and the level of good humour in everyday interactions. Much behaviour is an outcome or expression of emotions, so it makes sense at every level to promote the positive.

The following recipes are appropriate for a range of ages.

THE PROBLEM: NOT TAKING TURNS OR SHARING

THE RECIPE: BEING FAIR

A pupil needs to understand that being fair is in their best interests.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Learning: Has the child learnt to share time or equipment in any situation? What happens then? Has any specific teaching on sharing taken place?

Issues: Are there specific difficulties for this child?

Emotions: Is the child anxious about sharing things they regard as theirs? Is there an evident reason for this?

Onset: For behaviour that has suddenly appeared, what has changed in the child's life?

Perceptions: How does the child understand the concept of fairness and how it applies to them as well as others?

TODAY IN THE CLASSROOM

Ask the student gently if they know what taking turns/sharing means. If they do, ask them to please show you now. If they do not then ask another student to demonstrate. You may want to add – 'now you have a go'. Follow any success with congratulations for being a learner and a sharer.

Negotiate. For example, ask the student 'Do you need this?' 'How long do you need it?' 'When can someone else have it?'

Re-state class expectations: 'In this class we all take turns, so you can have your turn and so can everyone else, ... you have had your turn, who will be next?' If the child does not respond say 'It is ... 's turn now'.

*'Take Two'

If resources are in short supply it may be that a clear system needs to be in place for sharing rather than leaving this up to individuals.

Use strengths-based language: *'I know you are a fair, kind person because I have seen you ... so please show that you are being fair now'*.

*Proximity praise

*Paula Pane

LONGER TERM CHANGE

Raise awareness by talking about fairness in everyday activities – e.g. borrowing books.

Give pupils practice in turn-taking games.

**Circle Solutions activity:*

Mix students up and place them in groups of three. Have a number of scenarios with pictures that present potential classroom dilemmas, e.g. *'Liam has been playing on the bike for nearly all of playtime but won't give Ash a go even though she has been waiting and asking'*. The students are asked whether this situation is fair or unfair and what should happen. This means that all pupils are working on the same understanding of fairness and how to put this into practice.

Give the student responsibility for distribution of material/equipment. Students who struggle with this may need practice in pairs before working in a small group and then the larger group.

Charts to show turns at various classroom activities, e.g. being a monitor, *star of the day.

THE PROBLEM: HIGH LEVELS OF ANXIETY

THE RECIPE: INCREASED CONFIDENCE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Specifics: Is this unfocused general anxiety or more specific, e.g. taking tests, harm to family members? How is the anxiety presented and how does this impact on what happens in the classroom? Are there psychosomatic symptoms – headaches, tummy ache etc.?

Exceptions: When does the student display most confidence? With whom? Doing what?

Triggers: Does low level anxiety become panic in certain situations? What triggers this? Frequency: If so, how often does this happen? Is it getting better or worse?

At home: Are there changes at home that are contributing? Does the child have access to TV and social media that are increasing anxiety?

Expectations: What are the conversations about success and failure that may be contributing?

History: Has anything been tried in the past that has had a positive effect, even if small?

TODAY IN THE CLASSROOM

Acknowledge and validate feelings.

Reassurance needs to be specific, otherwise it may sound dismissive e.g. *'Remember the time when you were able to ...'*

Do not single the pupil out.

Comment positively on effort and any achievement

Use *strengths-based language where possible, e.g. *'I can see you are becoming more courageous'*.

Give warning of any changes in routine.

Give the student time to calm down when in a highly anxious state.

*Calming corner

*Co-regulation Be aware of messages about assessments that may raise anxiety about performance.

Link new activities to more familiar ones

LONGER TERM CHANGE

Talk to the child about what they would find helpful when feeling anxious.

*Mistakes as part of learning

Regular relaxation activities with the whole class – reducing physical symptoms of stress. Simply standing and stretching for a couple of minutes has multiple benefits for all students.

**Circle Solutions activity:*

Raising awareness of self-talk

Mix the class into groups of three. Give them the following phrases on separate pieces of card stock or paper. These are things we might say to ourselves. Ask students to place them in two piles according to whether they will increase confidence or raise anxiety.

I can have a go:

Everyone will laugh at me:

I can learn from mistakes:

Just do one thing and see how it goes:

It will be a disaster:

Where can I hide? I will never learn:

Success begins with the first step:

I'm no good:

Take a chance:

I can't:

*It's too hard:
I can do this!
Take a deep breath and try:*

Making a confidence cake

Mix students up to work in groups of four. Give them a large piece of paper and felt pens.

Ask them to devise a recipe for a confidence cake. What would go into it, what ingredients would you need, how would you bake it, how might you decorate it? Encourage them to draw the cake. Each group displays their cake for others to see.

Use the findings from this activity to develop whole class strategies to build confidence.

See *William and the Worry Wart* in the **Wellbeing Stories in Resources and further reading**.

SPECIAL INGREDIENTS – STARRED STRATEGIES

Where you see a *, e.g. '*Assertiveness skills', in the text, it refers back to these strategies.

CALMING CORNER

This is an area in the classroom to support children to develop self-regulation, i.e. calm themselves down when strong emotions take over and/or provide brief respite from stress. It could contain items such as stress balls, stretchy resistance bands, a pot of bubbles, a soft cushion, noise cancelling headphones, puzzles, focus items such as a snow-globe or kaleidoscope and visual posters to encourage breathing, mindfulness and yoga poses. There need to be clear criteria for entry and to be time-limited.

CIRCLE SOLUTIONS (CS) ACTIVITIES

This is a whole class intervention that takes place within a Circle incorporating the ASPIRE principles (see earlier). This creates an opportunity to explicitly teach the behaviours/attitudes/values you want to see in your classroom. Although one pupil might be the main target of this intervention, doing the activity with others will not only enhance individual skills for everyone, it will also reinforce these by having peer support and involvement. Many of the strategies here can be developed within a Circle Solutions session.

CO-REGULATION

Some pupils do not have the skills to self-regulate their emotions, so need adult support to do this. This usually happens with parents in infancy, but a version can take place with teachers in the classroom. Although co-regulation is more often used with children on the autistic spectrum others can also benefit. It is where a trusted adult tunes into the child and shows empathy for what they are feeling by mirroring

their facial expressions. They give a name to the feelings and a model for the child to copy in reducing intensity

MISTAKES AS PART OF LEARNING

Everyone makes mistakes and young people need to not fear them. Very few people get things right the first time. All tasks become easier with practice. It will help if mistakes are overtly accepted as part of learning in the classroom and the teacher also acknowledges making them from time to time.

PAULA PANE

Have a drawing of a life-sized child on the classroom window or use a puppet or soft toy instead. The idea is to have a conversation with an imaginary person about the class and how well they are doing (or sometimes not doing). This brings in some humour, reinforces expectations, and does not single out individuals. Works brilliantly!

PROXIMITY PRAISE

The teacher chooses students near to the one who is not responding to request and briefly thank them for the specific behaviour required, e.g. *'Thank you Molly for waiting quietly'*, *'Well done Pedro for looking this way'*. This alerts the pupil to what is expected and gives attention to those who are compliant.

'TAKE TWO'

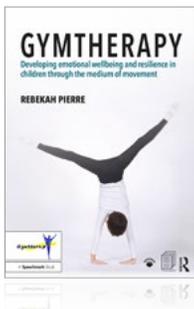
You pretend to be a film director. When a pupil says or does something that is inappropriate you say *'Cut!'* then *'Take Two'*, and say the script that you want the student to copy. Even if they do not follow through, it provides the necessary learning about a more acceptable alternative. It also reduces the heat in a stressful situation.

STRENGTHS-BASED CONVERSATION

This conversation between teacher and pupil reframes behaviour in terms of a student's strengths and then looks to a student's qualities for repair, e.g.

'I know you attacked Josh because you are protective about your mum. You are a loyal and caring person. But you hurt Josh. What could you have done instead?'

'You have a great sense of humour, Emily, but when would be a better time to make everyone laugh?'



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SESSION 4: MINDFULNESS

OBJECTIVES

- To continue to develop the ability to engage with the immediate environment through mindful concentration of the senses.
- To understand the concept of attaining an 'attitude of gratitude', and the subsequent benefits this can have upon emotional well-being.

Equipment: Small drum, Yoga prompt cards, small box, felt tips, paper, ribbons, mindfulness music (or tranquil sounds), 'box' or other container to be used as a time capsule.

INTRODUCTION

Gratitude groove: Pupils will pass around a small bongo and reciprocate a simple beat. They will chant '1-2-3-4, ----- is what I'm grateful for' before saying the name of a fellow pupil who must start the beat on time. This will encourage students to both reflect on a positive area, whilst encouraging concentration and focus upon the immediate moment.

Gymtherapy warm-up routine: The facilitator will lead the pupils into a full body stretch, encouraging pupils to contribute suggestions to this activity. Following this, the facilitator will ask pupils to walk around the hall, being mindful to walk according to the pace of their drum (or other percussive instruments). The facilitator will ensure that the speeds are varied. In addition, the facilitator will make 'loud' or 'soft' sounds, which pupils should respond to by stamping or tiptoeing respectively.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Yoga poses: A set of yoga pose prompt cards will be set about the hall. Pupils will be given 30 seconds at each station to 'master' the poses. On the back of each prompt card will be a 'visualisation' theme. Pupils will then be given a further 30 seconds to attempt to visualise the suggested theme whilst in the position of the yoga pose. This will be followed by a reflective discussion, whereby pupils will be given the opportunity to share any insights they may have developed regarding this experience.

Mirroring: The facilitator will communicate that being mindful means adopting an awareness of the environment around oneself, extending to other people. Pupils will then be divided into pairs, whereby they will be labelled 'A' or 'B' respectively. The facilitator will then say 'A' or 'B' depending on who they want to lead or copy, followed by an emotion. This exercise will provide children with the ability to recognise their own emotions in others, and therefore develop a greater sense of empathy and awareness of needs and feelings beyond their own.

Choreography: Pupils will be divided into pairs, and will be provided with two yoga prompt cards. Pupils may use ribbons if desired. Each pair will be given the task of creating a short routine, which must incorporate the two suggested yoga poses, to illustrate a journey from stress to mindfulness. If pupils require further inspiration,

the facilitator may suggest that a storyline is based on the experiences of an animal in their habitat.

Cool-down activity: Pupils will play a game named 'silent starfish'. Here, pupils will find a space in the hall and lie down imitating a starfish. The facilitator will then read out the following paragraph, whilst walking among the starfish, in order to encourage a mindful response. If pupils 'move', they will be tapped lightly on the shoulder and will be asked to move to the side of the hall. The last 'remaining' starfish is the winner.

Once upon a time deep in the heart of the ocean, lay a school of starfish. Like the stars in the sky, they stood out brightly against a blue backdrop, the backdrop of the sea. One day, a deep-sea diver dived down down down, to check how the starfish were doing. He knew that if the starfish wiggled, even a little bit, that they were not having nice and pleasant dreams. But, if the starfish were perfectly still, he knew that they were having nice and pleasant dreams. As the diver walked amongst the starfish, he could tell they were having wonderful dreams. He could see that they could feel the sand beneath their arms, the waves above their heads and the seaweed rustling about at their feet. Content that all of his starfish were having good dreams, he swam back to his boat, ready to return tomorrow.

[If pupils move during this game and need to be tapped on the shoulder, the facilitator should say 'this starfish looks like he/she isn't having such a good dream. Go and stand over by the sea wall and wait for the other starfish nicely.']

REFLECTIVE CRAFT

Attitude of gratitude: Pupils will contribute to a 'time capsule' containing things to be grateful for in the current year. Pupils will be provided with a felt tip and some paper, and will be asked to draw around their hand. In each finger, the pupils should write what they are grateful for, and may illustrate this if desired. Dependent upon resources and availability, the facilitator could encourage the wider organisation/school to become involved with this task, and small items representing the current year may be added to the capsule. At the end of the session, pupils will be encouraged to share what they are grateful for. The facilitator should make an effort to highlight suggestions relating to the 'free' things of life.



Rotating Clockwise:

Cobra Pose – What to look for: Pointed toes, palms in front of shoulders, thighs on floor.

Downward dog – What to look for: Straight legs and back, head in line with hands, flat feet.

Tree pose – What to look for: Stretched out posture, toe of raised leg above knee, hips in line with body.

Warrior pose – What to look for: Front foot forward, back foot at 90-degree angle, wide lunge, shoulders down.