

Buckinghamshire Services for



Children and Young People

Create Shape Curate

Creativity within the curriculum

Ashmead School

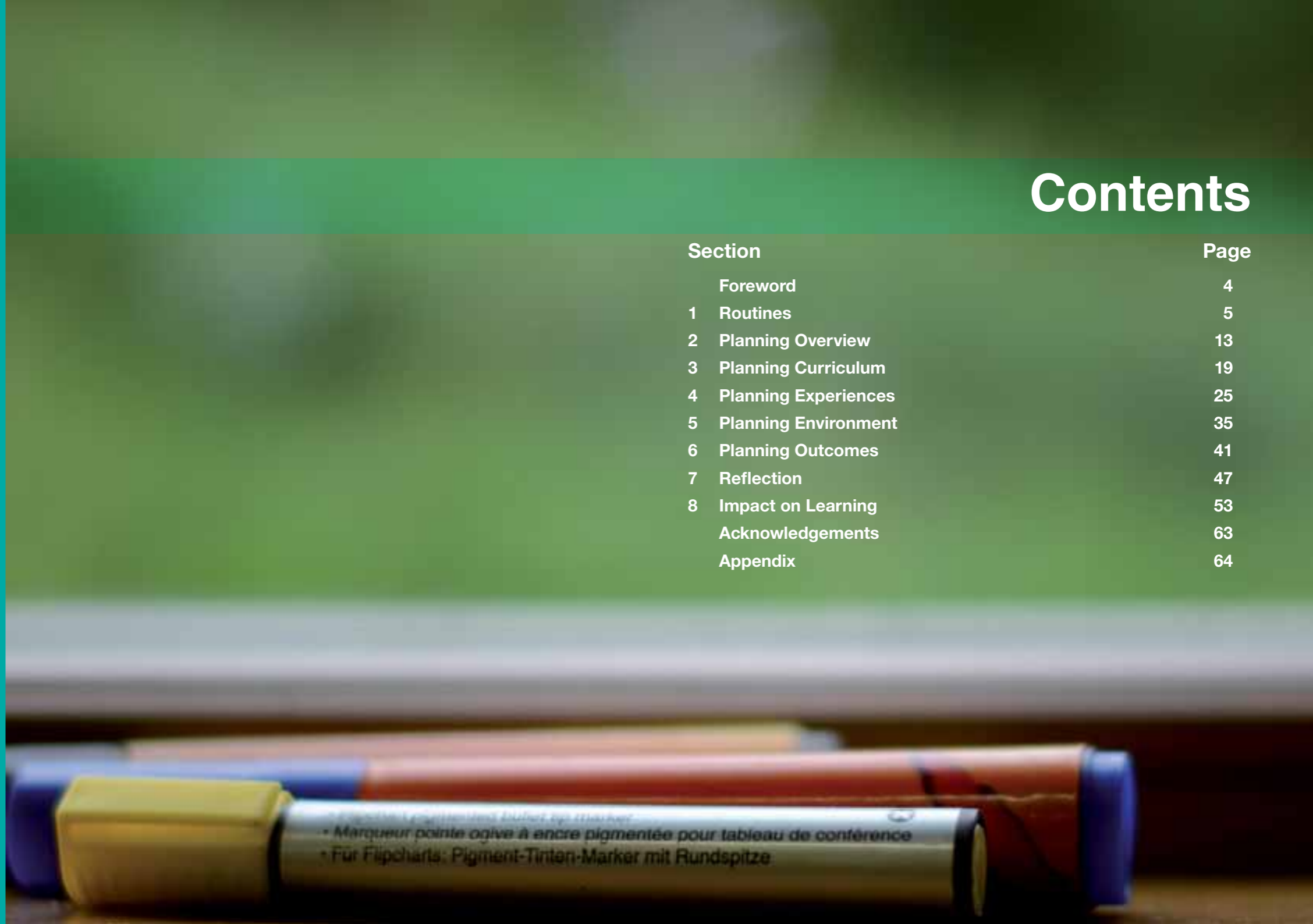


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Front Cover: photograph by Georgia Francis Year 5

Back Cover: photograph by Joseph Lawton Year 5



Foreword

We are fortunate as a school in having a curriculum that has developed over many years, culminating in the outstanding one we now enjoy.

It has proven itself to be a successful model and is one we are determined to preserve and build upon; succession planning is crucial to its future. Training for new staff is a significant aspect of this planning and the idea for this publication came as a means of illustrating rather than explaining our practice.

Our practice is fluid and consequently this document is not intended as something that will provide all of the answers. However, it will provide many opportunities for discussion and through reflection we can develop further.

As a school we are very proud of the interest we receive from local, national and international settings who wish to share our experiences alongside their own. We hope you will find this document valuable.



Routines





Consistency

It makes such a difference to have classroom management routines so there is uniformity throughout the school.

This consistency brings familiarity and with it the security that allows children to explore independently with confidence.

Routines bringing familiarity include consistent lettering on doors, uniformed labelling of displays, backing papers and borders.

The availability of quality resources should also be considered a routine and ought to be carefully organised in a consistent fashion.

However, this uniformity does not exclude opportunities for individual expression and staff are encouraged to be creative within these guidelines.

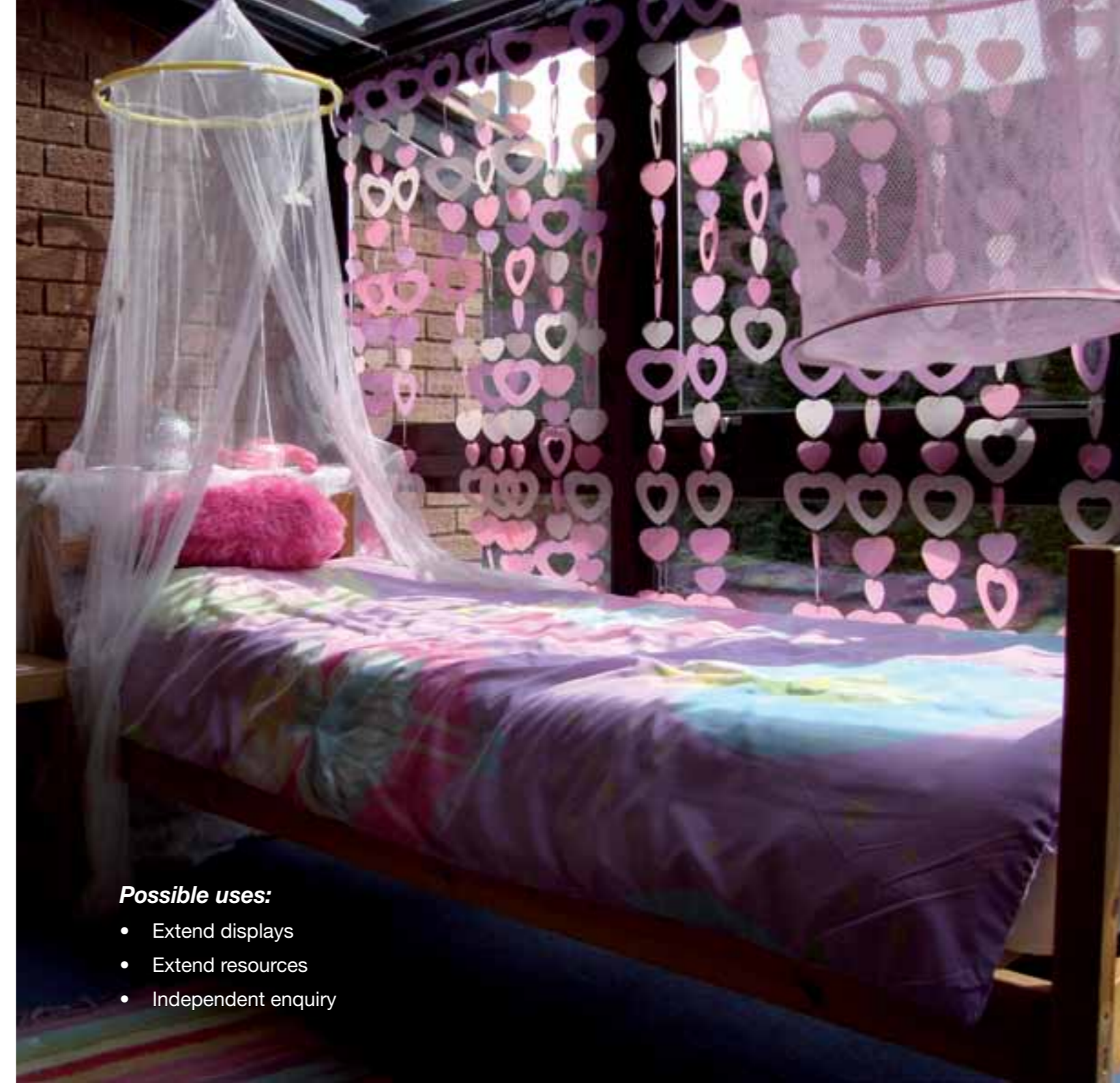
Classroom Displays

Displays within classrooms create the initial “wow” factor which really helps to engage the children.

Timing is crucial and displays should be ready to create impact on day one of a new topic. When preparing displays, the following considerations may be useful:

- Can 3D objects be included to give the subject life?
- Which style of lettering would best reflect the nature of the topic?
- Changing backing paper, borders and drapes can dramatically change the feel of a space.
- If writing on displays, ensure it models good practice.
- Will the inclusion of key vocabulary help learning? Will the inclusion of key questions invite enquiry?

Leave space to include pupil questions, quotations and outcomes as the topic develops.



Possible uses:

- Extend displays
- Extend resources
- Independent enquiry

Corridor Spaces

If corridor spaces can be seen as an extension of the teaching environment an alternative context for learning is provided and experiences are further enriched.

(Remember this space is a shared area, consider other users. Ensure the flow of movement is not inhibited or safety compromised.)

Consider the intended use of the space, is it purely for display or is it to be used for individuals and groups to undertake tasks?

Would it be beneficial to use the space for independent enquiry? If so consider what needs to be present to allow pupils to access these opportunities.

Enquiry

In creating rich and stimulating environments provision should be made for individual learning to promote independence, engagement and further enquiry.

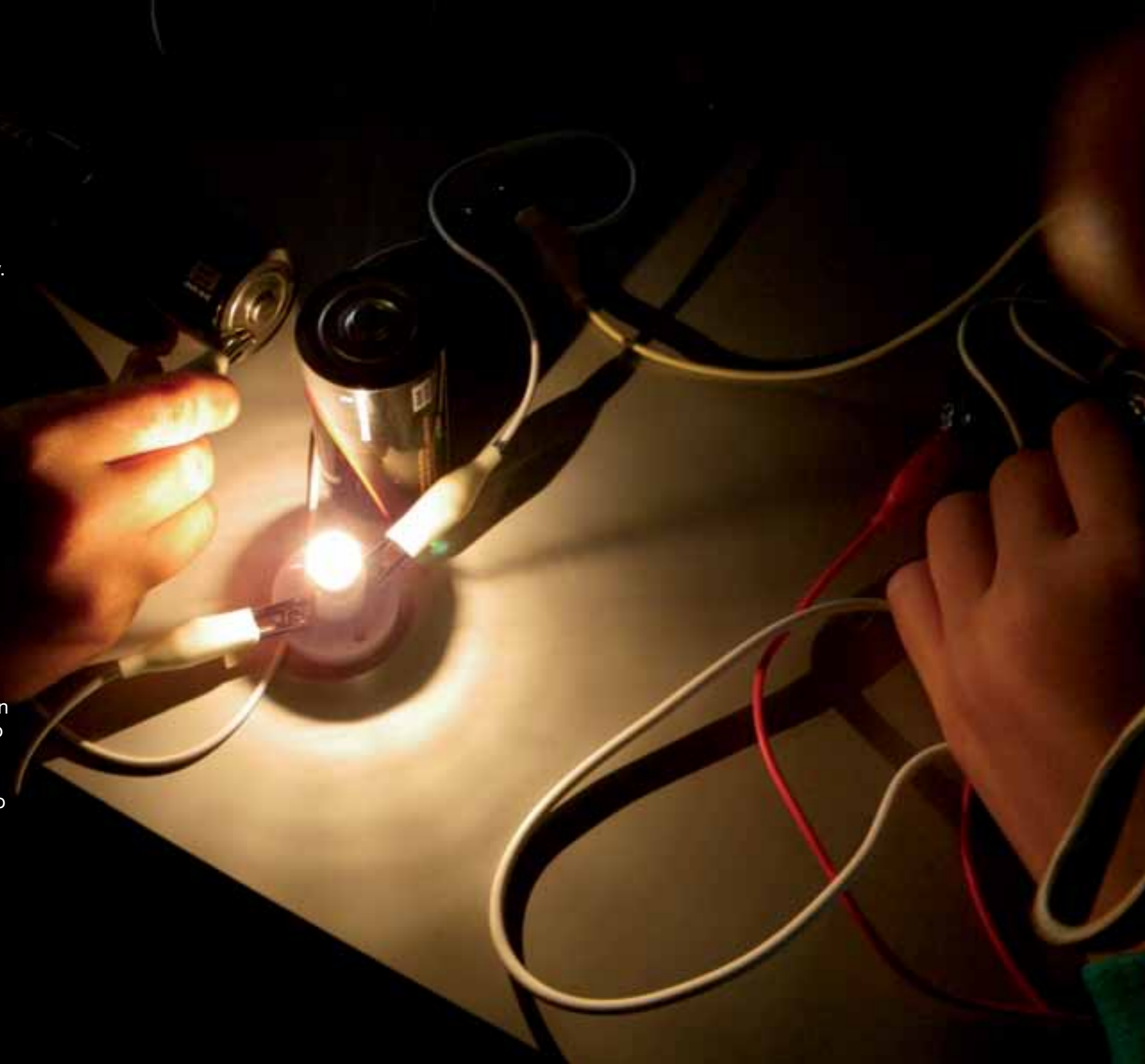
Things to consider:

The placement of materials and resources within the working space. Avoid clutter, quality resources deserve space and the children need space to explore them.

Resources that are not relevant to the line of enquiry should not be present.

The inclusion of questions or photographs to model possible tasks may support independent enquiry.

Ensure that the resources remain fit for purpose and accessible to all. Children should be central to this: "We leave the things we use, ready for the next person to choose."



Shared Spaces

As much pride should be taken in the displaying of work as the children took in its creation.

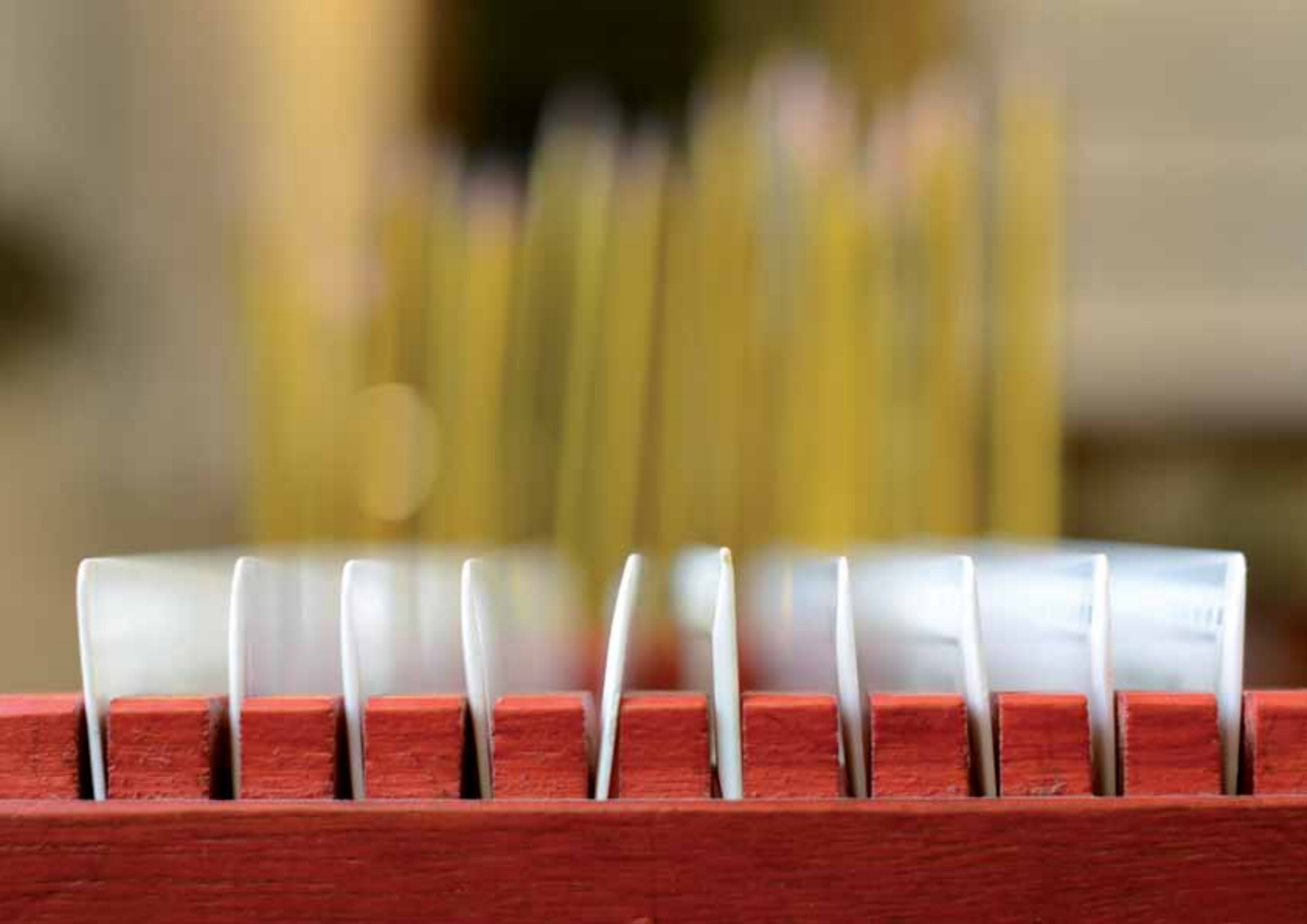
Consider displaying pupil work alongside the initial stimulus.

Displays may also include photographs that capture the learning journey, staff observations and pupil quotations.

To help get the best displays, consideration could be given in advance to the size of work being done and choices made with mounting papers. For best effect, agree within the team the colours to be used for the display of work.

If it is intended that work being done will be displayed within picture frames, it is important to check the size of the paper against the size of the frame before work commences.





Planning

Planning curriculum

In the initial planning of a topic it is suggested that the following four areas are considered: curriculum, experiences, environment and outcomes.

By linking all learning in this way we provide children with a platform from which to learn. The topic absorbs them and through this familiarity, learning has relevance and they become engrossed.

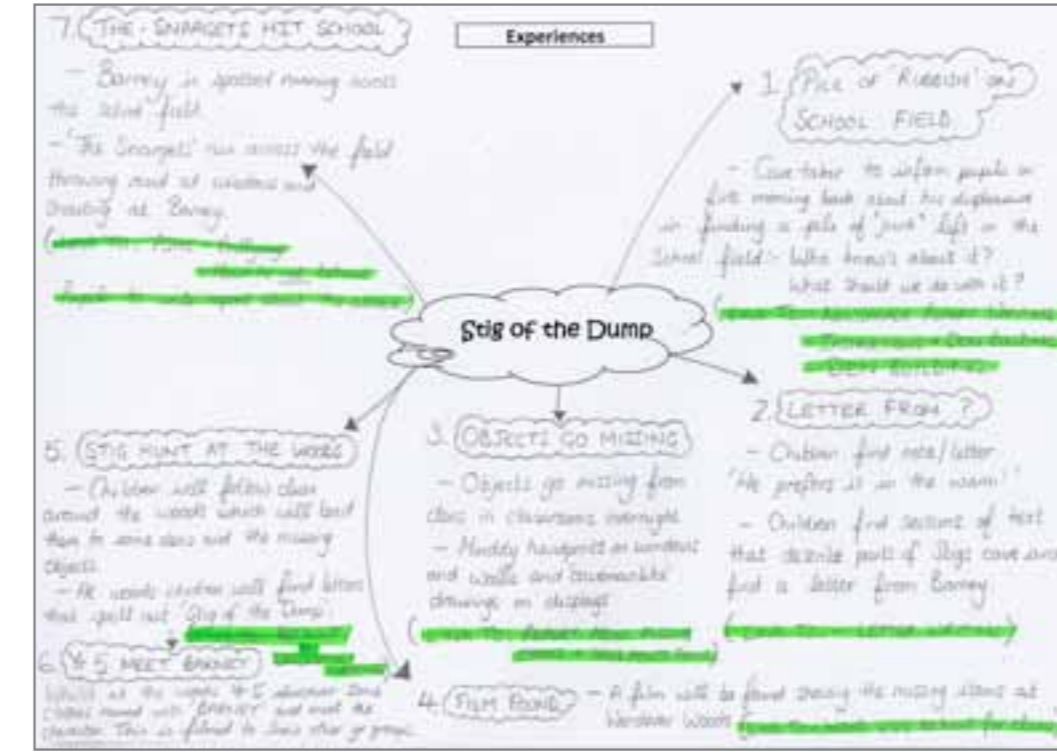
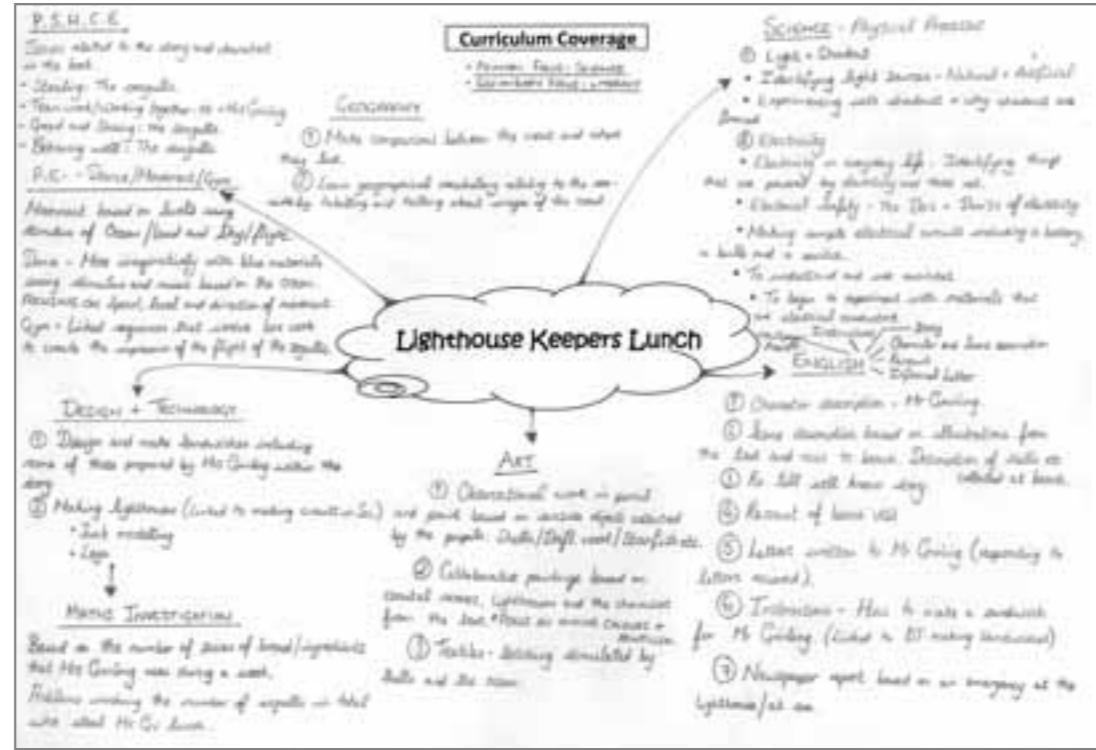
Curriculum is the obvious starting point, but it should be stressed that at this point reference to the National Curriculum is not a concern as it may confine creative thinking.

The content of the curriculum map at this stage is to provide an overview only; reference to the National Curriculum and the programmes of study should be considered at the later stage of mid term planning when detail will be added.

At this initial stage the main consideration is the identification of the two main curriculum focus areas to be covered; once these have been established consideration can be given to the other curriculum areas.

Topics are not chosen in isolation and are considered alongside others to ensure there is a breadth of cover; as such, topics should not be changed at random without consideration of the whole curriculum plan.

Remember - less is more, and as such we do not attempt to cover all curriculum areas each term. In choosing which areas shall be covered there should be a clear link to the topic, its accompanying text and the previously agreed areas of study to be taught.



Planning experiences

Experiences are a fundamental element of our creative approach to the curriculum. Initial experiences are particularly vital in capturing the imagination and should be planned carefully. Equally, experiences spread throughout the remainder of the term will help to ensure that the topic remains fresh and that the pupils in turn remain excited and enthused.

As a topic develops, the time for planning experiences may not be so great as the children and their outcomes present new opportunities. While we must not lose sight of our learning objectives, worthwhile opportunities should be seized.

Where mystery is a part of the experience and an element of role play is present, the impact will be far greater if all staff are engaged; including support and senior staff. The unexpected and unpredictable aspect of such experiences will capture the children's imagination and provide an ongoing impetus for their learning.

Partnerships with external providers has proved very successful in extending the impact of experiences but to maximise this, time must be incorporated for both planning and reflection alongside those partners.

When considering educational visits as experiences, it is vital that all are clear about the purpose of the visit as this will help determine whether it is best placed towards the beginning or the end of the term. Equally, if the impact of the visit is to be maximised, careful consideration of tasks to be completed before, during and after the experience should take place.

Planning environments

The environment creates the first impression, the initial 'wow' factor. It must be planned in advance and appropriately resourced.

For maximum impact the environment must be ready for day 1, but never present at the end of the previous topic.

Consider carefully the colour of backing paper, borders, lettering and any fabric in use to complement the subject matter. For uniformity, consider consistency across a year team or key stage.

The environment should reflect the new topic and the curriculum areas to cover. In Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2 it should not disclose the 'full identity' of the topic or the book as this will remove the element of mystery that is proven to capture pupil interest and engagement. In upper Key Stage 2 the title of the book may be present from the start, it is then through experience that the children anticipate the arrival of the text itself.

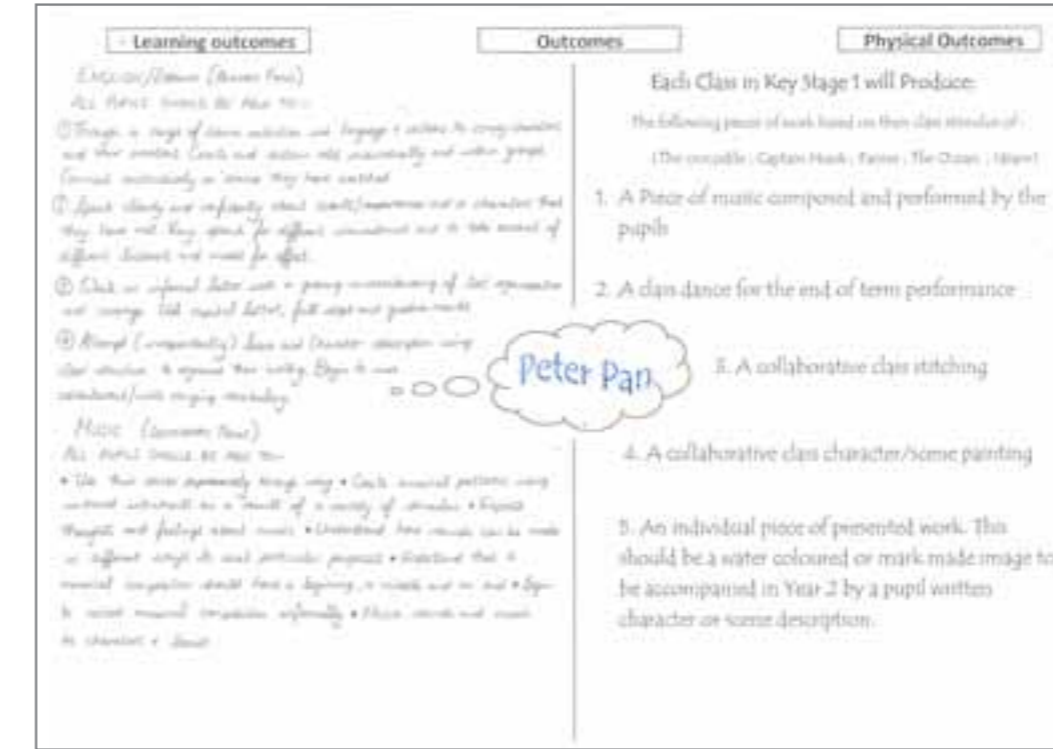
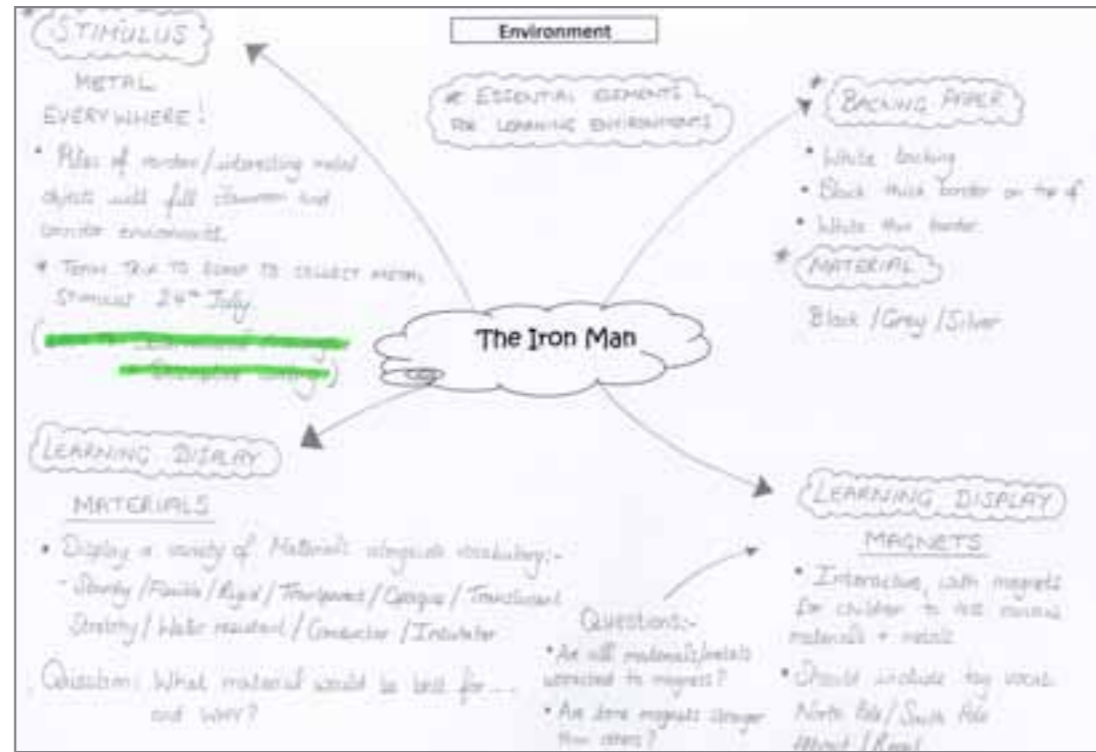
In planning the use of space, consider which display boards are best placed for stimulus and which should be saved to present work as the topic progresses.

The inclusion of a working wall to record the classes learning journey is proven to be successful and space should be given for pupils and staff to record comments, questions, observations and work in progress.

Environments are not static, they should evolve as the term and work progresses.

As a topic concludes, pack and store successful resources carefully for future use.

Remember – first hand experience is the staple ingredient of our curriculum, it starts here!



Planning outcomes

When consideration has been given to curriculum planning, expectations for minimum outcomes should be agreed for all to adhere to. Areas of focus may differ between classes and indeed could be encouraged, but for maximum impact minimum outcomes should be shared and planned for.

While considering these learning outcomes thought should also be given to the appearance of the work. Presented work should be a factor of every topic and provides an opportunity to showcase achievement and celebrate success.

In planning outcomes it may help to imagine what the end point looks like; whether it be a book, a performance, an exhibition or merely a series of final pieces. Working back from this end point may assist when undertaking more detailed planning to ensure the necessary skills, materials and resources are present in order that quality outcomes are achieved.

Ensure sufficient time is available for the creation of all presented work.

Remember – Less is more, and as such the curriculum coverage plan should be reviewed critically to ensure there is a balance between breadth of study and the quality of outcome.



“The curriculum is another key factor in pupils enjoyment of school and their achievements. Pupils like the themed approach. ‘They make learning fun’ and ‘They cover all the subjects we do in school’ were typical of their comments.

One parents comment, ‘I am very pleased with the creative way in which my son is learning, typified many.’ Modern technology is used well, including the use of film cameras to help pupils reflect on what they have learned during a unit of study.”

Ofsted



Curriculum



“Creating a curriculum that was flexible enough to enable child-led learning enabled us to change the direction of the topic using children’s ideas.”

The curriculum is built around a rolling programme that reflects the structure of the school with topic cycles being found in Reception, Years 1 & 2, Years 3, 4, & 5 and Year 6. Within each cycle the topics each last one term and are usually, although not always, underpinned by one or more texts.

Texts are selected around which teams can create topics that cover identified curriculum areas; these include a primary subject of either Science, History or Geography supported by another subject chosen from the non core curriculum. Beyond these two subjects, other curriculum programmes of study are identified that clearly link to the text.

The teaching of English comes through these focused areas and in all topics the development of language and literacy are key aims.

A rolling programme of topics is planned to accommodate focused in depth work on identified non core subjects. Consequently it is important that staff do not deviate from the agreed minimum outcomes within a topic to ensure broad and balanced curriculum coverage.

On the few occasions where programmes of study cannot be linked to the chosen texts, discrete lessons are planned.



“The medium of film has enabled children to take the camera away from the classroom and talk ‘video diary style’ about their experiences, which then can be watched back by teachers at a later time, this has provided teachers with really useful insights about the children’s experiences throughout the topic.”





I was the
Captain and in
charge of the
Ship.



“The children needed some demonstration of how to use the props for each character first before they could co-construct effectively.”

Delivery of the curriculum is changing. First hand experience has always been fundamental but increasingly role play is being explored as an avenue through which that experience can be gained.

Pupil experiences have in turn provided staff with direction for further learning opportunities; and while initial curriculum planning of agreed minimum outcomes is done in advance, flexibility should be accommodated in planning to allow for co-construction.



“The planning meetings to start and throughout ensured joint vision and ownership.”

Teachers plan as a team and agree the minimum outcomes to be covered. Teachers may decide to take individual approaches, but the outcomes should remain shared.

Once the areas of study and the minimum outcomes have been agreed, the team need to consider how these are to be taught and the experiences that are to be planned. For this reason the initial planning of a topic should be at least half a term in advance.

Practice indicates that a curriculum built around first hand experiences better captures the children's imagination and further extends their understanding; in turn this experience and understanding is reflected in both their attitude to learning and the quality of their outcomes.



Experiences

“First hand experiences of meeting the characters gave the children excellent memories to draw on when writing.”



“All teachers recognised the impact of an actor in role against a teacher in role and how the two can be used to achieve different learning opportunities.”



First hand experiences can take a number of forms; including educational visits, access to artefacts, opportunities for role play and engagement with outside partners.

These experiences provide depth, understanding and emotion from which pupils are better placed to express their thoughts and feelings. They are proven to engage children in their own learning and provide a purpose for writing.

we had to follow
the clues outside
to find the treasure
I said we should
leave it 'cos
maybe everyone else
might be able to
take it. I wanted
to write a letter
to the captain saying
it wasn't me

It has been noted that both teachers and pupils raise their expectations when engaged with external partners; the opportunities for social and emotional development are also significant.

“Teachers were in agreement that working with the theatre company and ex-pupils had a significant impact on the children’s learning; both socially, emotionally and as a stimulus for writing.”



“Children were able to phrase questions and have a real context to practise them in.”

In addition to working with professionals, other partners have included parents and ex-pupils; to maximise the impact of these opportunities planning should be thorough and expectations shared.

Where role play has been a feature of working with partners the impact on pupil engagement has been noteworthy. There is a context for their work and purpose is evident in both pupil questioning and writing.



It was fun playing in the cave and I asked lots of questions.



“Amazing!”

“The opportunity to perform alongside the ex-pupils in the final production was both engaging and motivating for the children.”

“Teachers felt that this was a real strength of the topic with ex-pupils and actors being used at intervals throughout the topic to maintain interest and engage the children in the next part of the story.”



“Children raised their expectations of what they could achieve when working alongside older pupils.”

Reflections: The Iron Man

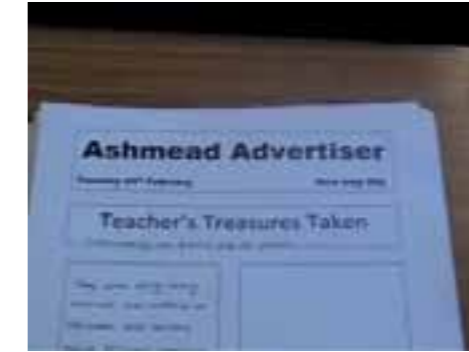
Topics may be introduced in a variety of ways with carefully planned stimulus and experience building on the initial classroom environment. In lower school frequent experiences are planned which lead to the introduction of the key text and the meeting of characters throughout the term. In the upper years children anticipate what will happen within a topic and experiences are more likely to then be based upon their questions and reactions as the journey unfolds.

Stepping into the mindset of an intrigued and excited child is a key part of this planning process. The older children are more likely to be left to wonder, their imagination feeding the creation of their own characters; characters who in fact they may never meet. This approach allows them to use their own individuality and creativity; building on the personal skills that have been nurtured throughout the school and are now embedded.

The Iron Man was one such topic which children have continued to refer to and reflect upon as they have progressed throughout the school. The initial metal and material environment allowed children to build their scientific knowledge, vocabulary and language skills which then gave them the underlying understanding and empathy with a character they were yet to discover.

A car stuck on the field was the initial starting point to begin the mystery. Later it was found vandalised; 'Feed me' had been scratched upon a door and children investigated a whole series of events over the forthcoming weeks.

The text finally appeared but not as a book; this was never present in the classroom until it was brought in by a child. Even then no-one ever read ahead; The Iron Man would be the one to make the next move.



*Some topics create
a special bond
within a class.*



“They are given excellent opportunities to experience awe and wonder in the curriculum which leads to a sense of spirituality. Pupils are given regular opportunities to work with creative agents such as musicians, artists and dancers from the local community which enables excellent cultural outcomes.”

Annual SIP report

“Teachers and pupils were enjoying learning together without feeling threatened by each others traditional roles as all had new roles as musicians. Pupils were bringing ideas from other lessons and improvising together with staff to produce ‘on the spot’ music.”

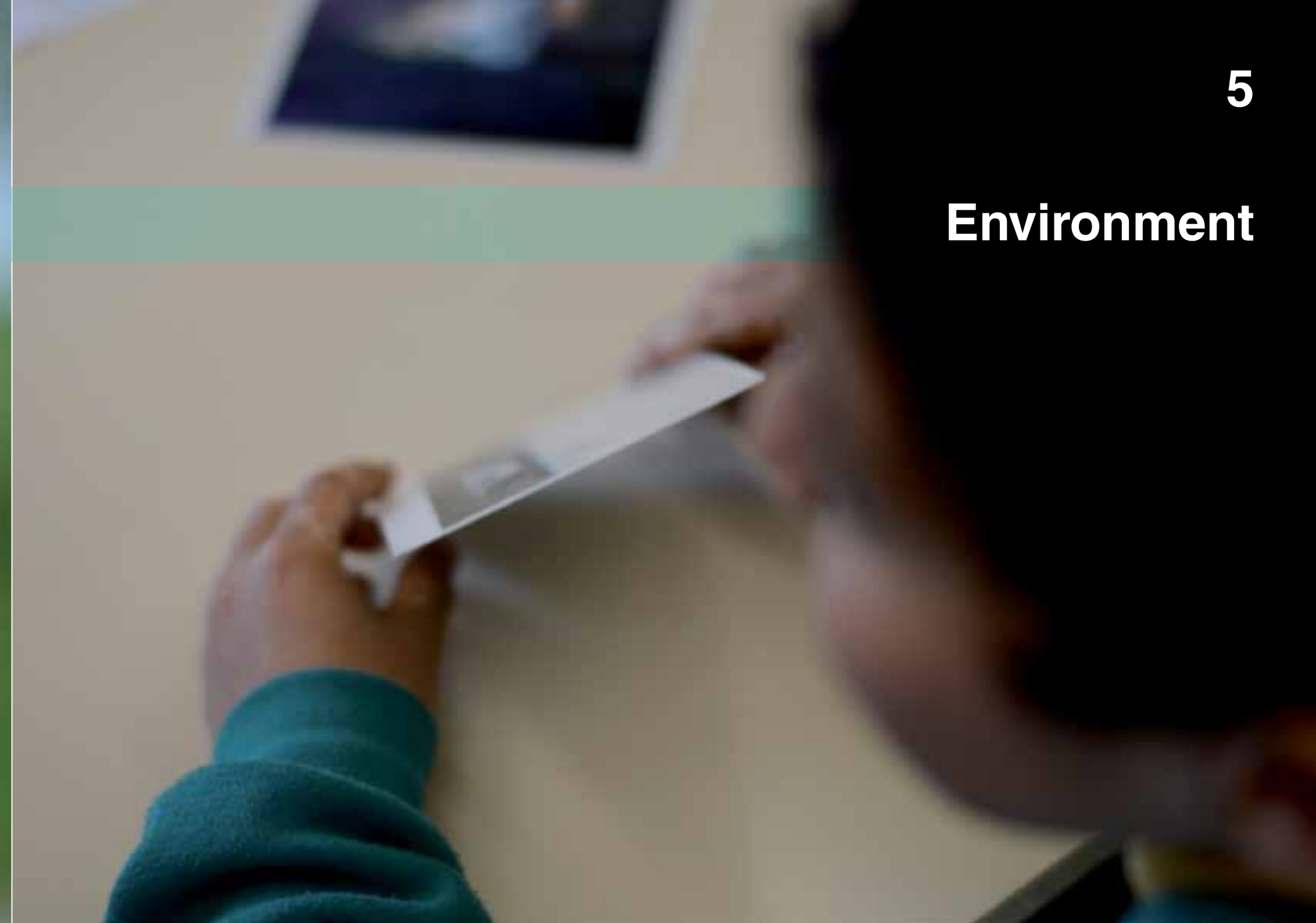
Working with professionals has also provided opportunities for staff to work alongside pupils and learn new skills together; this has led to the co-construction of future learning which in turn has engaged pupils and staff in personalised learning journeys.

Such learning opportunities at the outset may be unseen and are unlikely to have been planned for, but when they present themselves they should be seized.

It is important to reflect on such events and evaluate their impact; in turn they may influence planned events for future topics.

The Iron Man was the first topic to be filmed at the school with a record being kept from the first day until the last, three months later. Filming was intended to provide no more than a document of the journey; in fact it provided a shared learning opportunity for both staff and pupils which has been built upon in subsequent topics across both Key Stages 1 and 2. Film and photography are now used regularly by both pupils and staff. They are used to create outcomes, as tools to inform future planning and for reflection at both a professional and personal level by adults and children.





Environment

Our teachers make the classrooms come alive at the beginning of each new topic so we are inspired and intrigued.



Just as the curriculum is tailored to fit a topic, so is the environment. As the topic changes, so do all elements of display within the team; immersing the children in the current theme.

This is an important aspect of first hand experience and in changing stimulus to reflect a new topic the children become absorbed as they begin a new journey.



“Using observations of the children exploring the areas to inform planning for child led and teacher led sessions was a good way of involving the children’s ideas in the planning. Subsequent weeks were planned following weekly reflections.”

Increasingly the environment reflects the emphasis being placed on role play, particularly in Key Stage 1. Here, displays are increasingly interactive and allow children to develop academically and socially through directed ‘play’.

In Key Stage 2 the environment is equally as stimulating but the emphasis is on the development of language and enquiry.

To maximise resources and the opportunities they offer, planning needs to identify the agreed minimum outcomes of such activities and consider the support that children may need to initiate self directed learning.



The impact on learning and social development through role play in the interactive spaces created has been significant and supports the need for careful advanced planning when considering how the main objectives for learning are to be delivered.

“Children were engaged and confidence increased.”

“SEN children were involved, motivated and given an opportunity to succeed.”

“Opportunity for children to explore different emotions.”

“EAL vocabulary improved dramatically.”



An interactive display that children could climb into.

“The children could talk about lots of the activities we had done and the ‘journeys’ we had been on during the session. They could also talk about the games they had made up in the role play areas.”



“An opportunity for children to explore and learn literacy skills without always having to write.”



“So many different role play opportunities fired children’s creativity.”

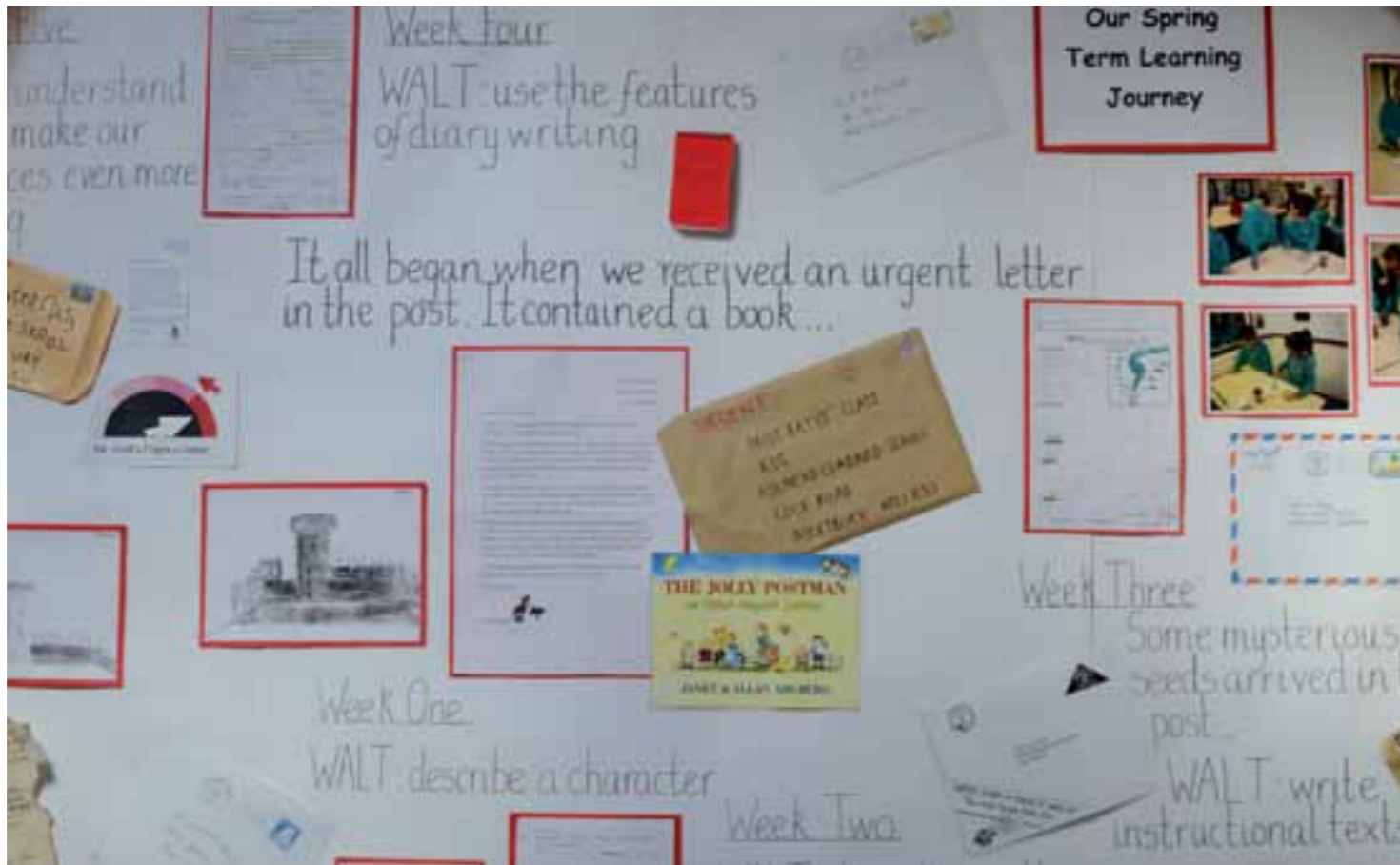


Outcomes

Outcomes can be both seen and heard and should always be remembered by both teachers and pupils.

Ongoing visual learning journeys provide opportunities for discussion and aid evaluation of outcomes throughout the topic as a whole.

Children need to know they are on a journey together and the visual learning journey supports this. Alongside this, they also need reflection time to acknowledge the difference an experience, stimulus or event has had on them as individuals.



Reflection is important to help you build on what's gone before.



When considering the outcomes of the curriculum, the love for learning it fosters should not be overlooked. The approaches taken capture the imagination and create an enthusiasm for learning; confidence and independence have the opportunity to flourish.

Outcomes take many forms with curriculum coverage and differing skills being evident through a range of media.

A piece of writing for example will not just show evidence of literacy, but cross curricular learning which has been interleaved and embraced throughout the topic.

Children are given a range of opportunities to shine; displaying individual strengths while being supported in those skills still being developed.

The celebration and high quality display of children's work demonstrate the pride we take in children's achievements which in turn reinforces the self esteem and pride of the child. It inspires others and gives children a benchmark from which to work.



We believe that it is difficult to ask a child to do something which we would not have confidence in doing ourselves. Sometimes this means attempting something beforehand. Sometimes this means working alongside the child and learning together.

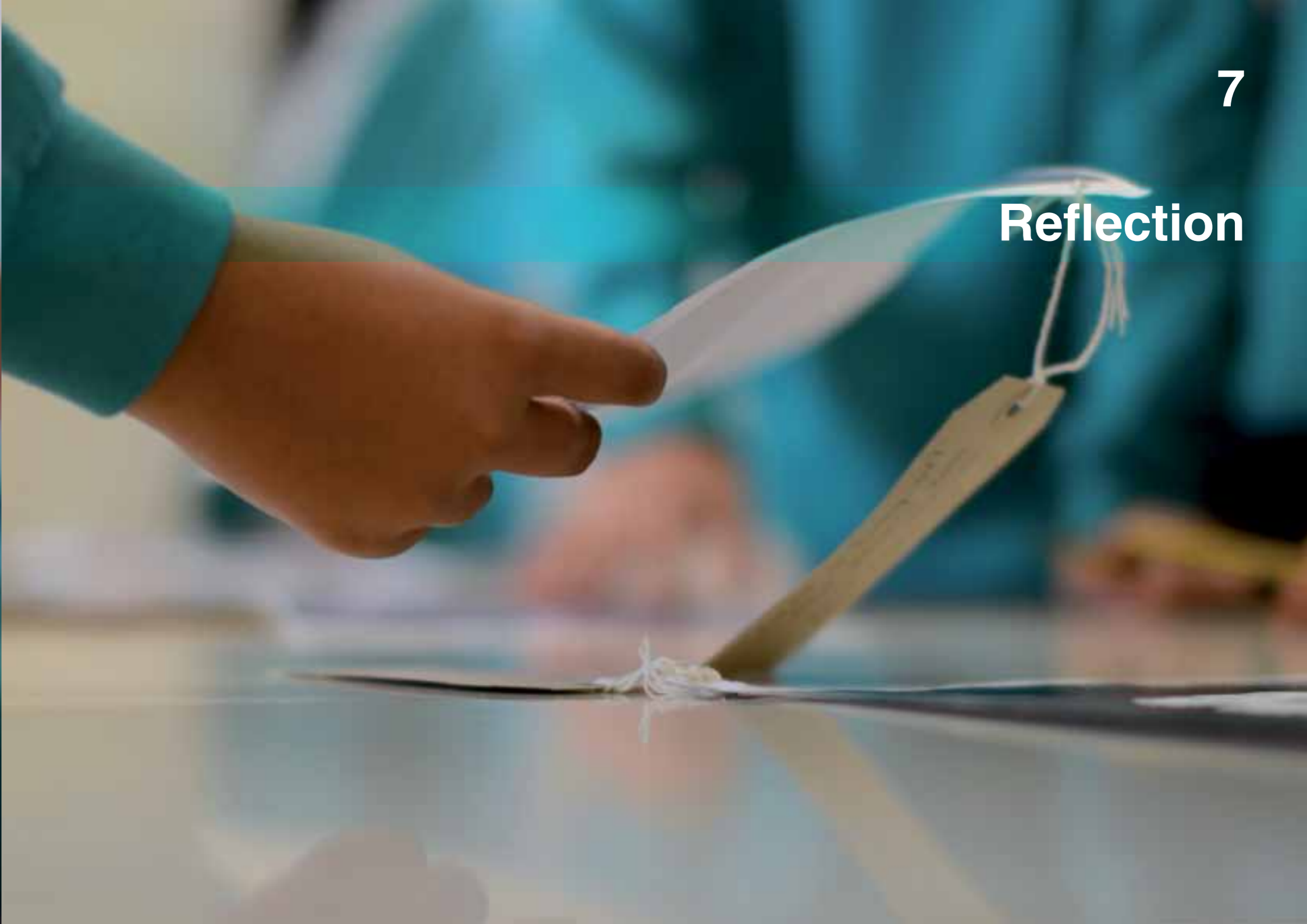
Our aim is to create a curriculum that is tailored to suit our pupils rather than lead them through a predetermined model.



The school day is flexible and can accommodate change. Time is there to be managed and the flexibility it offers imposes the minimum of pressure on outcomes.

Expectations do not revolve around quantity, it is quality that counts. Quality should be evident in materials, in expectation, in preparation and the presentation of the outcome less is more.

*People around You
Make a big impact
Which then helps
You make a big
impact on people
around You.*



Reflection



Reflection is an important part of ensuring learning has taken place, building upon what has gone before.

If both pupils and staff share their reflections they can further connect through a shared learning journey.

Through reflection we have found that topics don't just end. The children become emotionally attached to their experiences so that a transition or closure is needed before the next journey begins. By teaching in this creative way we have seen how links between topics keep the learning alive for the children.

Stig left us a present which was a piece of a Lowry painting. That's how we moved into our next topic.

Reflection is something we use a lot at school. It shows thought, discussion, questioning and most importantly collaboration.

Having the confidence to challenge or support the ideas of others in a safe and respectful environment enables clear and mature discussion and reflection to take place.

Through reflecting we learn more about individual children as do they about us. It is not a divide between teacher and child, it is having the confidence to share, and showing them at times teachers experience the same learning and emotions as they do.



“Videoing our topic made us more aware of what we actually do ... we are raising questions and thinking about what is actually going on.”



“Film has definitely allowed us to capture pupil responses which will in turn inform future planning, but it has evolved beyond that to enable us to do so much more.”

Film is like a memory and now we use it in different ways.

Collaborate: *Gathering pupil reflections to inform future planning.*





“Good teaching and highly imaginative approaches engage pupils and stimulate their interest.”

“Boys, who were previously outperformed by girls, are equally keen to write because of a range of successful initiatives to capture their interest.

Consequently, the gap between boys’ and girls’ attainment is narrowing quickly.”

Ofsted



I find it easier to write now because I have more experience which gives me something to write about,

We are all little but when we work together we are big.



The impact a successful topic has on all involved is huge, but the hard work, determination, flexibility and spontaneity involved must be recognised.

The skills learnt, the shared ownership, the shared passion and the shared excitement, not just for school but for learning, are the reward.

The impact on children's physical, social and emotional development is huge, and the skills which they develop are key; skills for life that they will draw upon in the future.



The Iron Man took us on a journey of discovery and friendship through which we fell in love with a character we were never to meet. No-one could have predicted the children's response to the end of the topic when they knew it was time for him to go; an impromptu Iron Man funeral was held on the school field.

***Real tears were shed,
real emotions shared and
real memories made.***

The children within this topic shared a bond and maturity which then allowed them to develop and share their skills with younger children as well as draw on these experiences outside of school.

They began to lead the learning in future topics for others, creating the experiences which they had once been part of, and reflecting on these using what had happened to them in the past to guide the teachers. They grew in independence, grew in confidence and were able to take risks to achieve things which once they had never thought possible.

As teachers we need to allow the children opportunity to lead, debate, discuss and share with us their thoughts and opinions.

We listened and we took notice. We didn't feel offended or belittled but we welcomed the children's input and used this to develop our own practise.

Our job is to allow children to be the very best that they can be; to achieve and develop not just as learners but as people; individuals.

For teachers letting go can be a difficult concept, but if we have provided a strong foundation of roots, it is our duty to allow our children to fly.

*We learnt from
the role models
and now we are
the role models.*





“Older pupils work effectively with partners and in small groups. The seeds of this are sown in Years 3 and 4 during ‘philosophy for children’ lessons, where pupils show a remarkable degree of maturity.

*Pupils demonstrate an expressive and creative impulse, seen in their artwork and the way they express their feelings. For example, they talked movingly about their personal responses when exploring ideas of friendship and bereavement emerging from the study of *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes.”*

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“The introduction of new skills has enhanced a creative curriculum previously focused on movement and art. Film and photography have added a new dimension to teaching and learning, contributing not only to the arts but to other areas of the curriculum; particularly speaking and listening.”

I think that film has made our class more confident in expressing our opinions. We are much better at listening to each other.





“The curriculum enables pupils to explore ideas about friendship and bereavement enabling excellent personal development and well being. The curriculum enables pupils to develop independence confidence and self esteem.”

Annual SIP report

By reflecting I started to evaluate and become more aware of myself. We could let our emotions out in a safe place.





Acknowledgements

The dedication and enthusiasm shared by the school staff, past and present is the lifeline of this wonderful curriculum; a love of learning has been nurtured in many and for that we sincerely offer you our gratitude.

For those who have shared the journey; the pupils, the parents, past pupils, friends and professionals – your enthusiasm and your support have been considerable.

Thank you.

*Don't look back
with regret,
reflect
and be inspired*

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40	2	The Iron Man	Pupils work alongside staff in creating a film that covers the three month topic.	
40	2	The Iron Man	Ink drawing of the Iron Man.	
41	2	The Iron Man	Painting on canvas including found metal objects.	
42	2	Take One Picture	Pupils in Year 3,4 & 5 developing photography skills off site.	
5	46	2	Wind in the Willows	A map and a detail of Toad on a wall display in Year 5.
	46	2	Wind in the Willows	Moles House, created in the classroom by a teacher in Year 4.
	47	1	The Nutcracker	Skeleton in Franz den, Key Stage 1 classroom.
	47	1	The Nutcracker	Nutcracker on display.
	47	1	The Nutcracker	Key Stage 1 children prepare for the battle between the mice and the tin soldiers.
	48	1	Peter Pan	The Pirate Ship, built by creative partners, role play use.
	49	1	Peter Pan	Key Stage 1 role play.
	50	2	Take One Picture	Year 3 pupil editing photographs and poetry using ICT.

Section	Page	Key Stage	Topic	Details
6	54	1	Lighthouse Keepers Lunch	Wall display in Year 2 prompts sentence openings for descriptive writing.
	54		Lighthouse Keepers Lunch	Learning Wall in Year 2 records the learning journey as the topic progresses.
	55	1	Peter Pan	Water colour study of Tinkerbell following visit, Year 1.
	55	1	Peter Pan	Tinkerbell visits the class unannounced during lessons, part played by a secondary school pupil.
	55	1	Peter Pan	Tinkerbell returns to take part in the team production.
	56	2	The Iron Man	Display of written work and accompanying illustrations, work by Years 3 & 4.
	56	2	Stig of the Dump	Display of written work and accompanying illustrations, work by Years 3 , 4 & 5.
	56	2	Take One Picture	Exhibition of writing, art, photography and film by Years 3 , 4 & 5.
	57	2	Take One Picture	Year 5 perform a dance in Trafalgar Square, London.
58	2	Take One Picture	Year 4 & 5 pupils working alongside a creative partner describe what they appreciate about a chosen picture.	
7	62	7	EY About Me	Outdoor studies.
	63	1	Peter Pan	Exploring Shadows in Science.
	64	1	Peter Pan	Further exploration of shadows in music.
	65	2	Take One Picture	Collecting pupil reflections.
8	68	2	The Happy Prince	Written work and watercolour detail by Year 6 pupil.
	69	2	Where We Live	Layered press prints, group work by pupils in Years 3 & 4.
	70	2	Take One Picture	Year 5 pupils escape from a Lowry painting and are hot seated by children in Year 4.
	71	2	Stig of the Dump	Year 3 pupil suggests making a den after a pile of materials is found on the field.
	72	2	Wind in the Willows	A1 observation using pastel by Year 5 pupil.
	73	EY	Wind in the Willows	Weaving by Reception pupil.
	74	1	Wind in the Willows	Pupils baking.

“Ashmead gives its children two everlasting things One is roots, the other wings”

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