PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Key Concepts

Denis Hayes

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PRIMARY EDUCATION:

THE KEY CONCEPTS

Written for students, practitioners and policy makers, *Primary Education: The Key Concepts* is a clear and accessible guide to the most important ideas and issues involved in the education of children at this crucial and formative time in their lives.

Alphabetically arranged and fully cross-referenced to ensure ease of use, entries include both curriculum-specific and generic theoretical terms, such as:

- Assessment
- Objectives
- Coping strategies
- Differentiation
- Behaviour
- Special needs
- Time management

Written by an experienced teacher and lecturer, *Primary Education: The Key Concepts* is a concise yet comprehensive text that takes into account the everyday realities of teaching. Readable and user-friendly, it is a first-class resource for the primary practitioner at all levels.

Denis Hayes is a lecturer in teacher education at the University of Plymouth, and has seventeen years experience of teaching primary school age children. His recent publications include *A Student Teacher's Guide to Primary School Placement* (RoutledgeFalmer, 2003).

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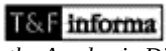

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INTRODUCTION

Background

The idea of bringing children together for the purpose of formally educating them has its roots deep in history. Some historians claim that English education began with the arrival of Christianity to Kent in AD 597 and the subsequent establishment by St Augustine of the cathedral church at Canterbury. By the end of the seventeenth century the newly formed Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was encouraging church parishes to set up their own schools. The movement was extended throughout Wales by the Reverend Griffiths Jones through a large number of 'Circulating' schools, staffed by peripatetic teachers, principally to teach children (and adults) to read in the Welsh language. There followed a series of voluntary schools, often led by teachers who were little better educated than the pupils.

In addition to the formal church-based initiatives, pioneers such as Robert Raikes, the founder of the Sunday Schools' movement (in 1780), Charles Gordon, who built 'ragged schools' to educate and provide sustenance for the destitute, and Charles of Bala in Wales were convinced about the inseparability of education and social action. The first publicly funded schools in the UK were founded in the mid-nineteenth century to give a basic education to children from poor families and teach them to read the Bible. Over succeeding years, control of education gradually switched from the Church to the state, though provision was uneven. Between 1846 and 1848 the Welsh Education Committee and the Cambrian Society were formed, which evolved into national schools. In Scotland, the 1867 report of the Royal Commission on Education led to the Education Act of 1872 that resulted in improvements in primary education for every child in Scotland and not merely for the labouring classes, as implied in the equivalent English reforms of the time. In the period running up to the setting up of the Northern Ireland state in 1920, education became one of the battlegrounds between Ulster unionism and Irish nationalism. Before partition the overwhelming majority of Irish schools were under denominational control, even though they were financed chiefly by the state.

Following the 1870 Elementary Education Act in England, education was gradually provided free of charge for all pupils, though the government's obligation was at this stage merely to 'fill the gaps' where voluntary provision did not exist. Reforms were slow in being implemented and even at the commencement of the twentieth century schooling was inconsistent and attendance spasmodic. By 1926 the Hadow Report was recommending that the 'primary' phase of education in England should conclude for pupils at age 11 and secondary schooling commence. There were many important Education Acts over the following years, including the highly influential 1944 Act, but it was not until 1989 that a national curriculum was introduced into maintained schools (i.e. schools that are funded out of general taxation) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Although most of today's primary schools are similar in physical layout, they have not always existed in such a form. Separate classrooms of the size and shape we recognise today did not become common until the late 1800s. In many elementary schools prior to the end of the nineteenth century, children of all ages were put together in a single large room with one teacher and a variety of helpers, some of whom were older pupils. Many of the teaching approaches commonly used by primary teachers today, such as grouping pupils by ability and encouraging children to talk about issues, were largely unused until the mid-1900s. Most teaching was dominated by instruction, memorising and reciting facts, learning to read in unison from words written on the board and learning to write by copying from an original.

The evolution of formal schooling gave rise to the concept of a body of knowledge that had to be mastered (a 'curriculum') and words like 'pupil' and 'scholar' were introduced to describe those who attended school, and 'master' or 'mistress' for those who taught them. Today, it is normal for children in primary schools to be referred to as pupils and young people in secondary education as students. Agreement about the need for a general education for children up to the age of 11, subject-specific teaching up to the age of 16 and selection of specialist subjects thereafter has become deeply rooted in the national system. However, during the last decade of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, primary schooling became more subject focused, with the introduction of standard lessons of fixed duration located within a predetermined timetable. Despite the additional resources that have been allocated to primary schools in recent years, there is a concomitant increase in the number of children that are educated at home and through alternative forms of independent schooling.

The majority of primary schools in the UK are for children aged 4 or 5 to 11 years; in Scotland, the primary age profile is from 4 to 12. Children aged between 4 and 5 years are educated in foundation classes in mainstream primary schools, where teachers follow specific curriculum guidance that emphasises social as much as academic development. A smaller number of schools are designated infant (ages 5 to 7) or junior (ages 7 to 11). A very small number of schools are deemed middle (ages 8 to 12 or 9 to 13) or first (ages 5 to 8 or 9). At the start of the twenty-first century the vast majority of primary schools cater for children aged 5 to 11, after which they move on to secondary education. Small village primary schools in sparsely populated areas may have only a handful of teachers, one of whom is a 'teaching head' (i.e. with part class responsibility). Smaller schools often have to be organised so that there is more than a single year group in the same class and tend to be more flexible about teaching arrangements and timetables.

The governing body ('school board' in Scotland) for each school consists of elected parents and staff members with representatives from the local community. The members have a special responsibility to represent and communicate with parents and deal with matters as diverse as:

- Appointment and dismissal of staff
- Repair and maintenance of school buildings
- Approval of head teacher's spending proposals on books and equipment
- Use of school premises outside school hours
- Discussing matters of interest to parents such as homework, bullying or school uniform

Increasing recognition has been given to the vital role played by parents as the 'first educators' and as co-educators with teachers. Head teachers and school governors are anxious to improve community links and satisfy parents, and many primary schools are categorised as community schools to emphasise this priority. In some parts of the country there are large numbers of schools that were founded by the established church, where governors have more control over religious education (RE) and, therefore, the spiritual and moral ethos of the school. Foundation schools are broadly of two types: Aided and Controlled. The Aided schools are more closely attached to the Church/Mosque; their representatives on the governing body are in the majority and responsible for monitoring the teaching of RE. In Controlled schools, links with the Church are less tightly bound. Over recent years there has been an increase in the number of foundation schools based on different world faiths. However, the principle of segregating children on the basis of religious belief has created active debate on the possible destabilising effect that this policy might have on society.

Despite the additional funding made available to schools in recent years, teacher recruitment and retention is still an issue in some parts of the country (notably where housing and living costs are high). Teacher shortages at the end of the twentieth and start of the twentyfirst century have meant that newly qualified teachers' job prospects are better than they were in the past. However, the falling birth rate in the UK is resulting in the need for fewer primary teachers. For this reason and (more particularly) the heavy workload they carry, only about half of all newly qualified teachers are in permanent posts after five years' service.

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PRIMARY EDUCATION

The Key Concepts

ABILITY

Ability is variously defined as competence, power or talent, and indicates a capacity, expertise or proficiency in a defined area of learning. Ability is also affiliated to concepts such as flair, skill, aptitude and intelligence. At one time it was believed that ability was fixed, and people either possessed it or did not. However, it is now generally accepted that far from being innate (i.e. fixed at birth) ability develops in response to the environment in which children are nurtured (i.e. the specific and particular human and material influences affecting them). Educationists have come to acknowledge that a number of other variables influence progress and attainment, including adult/child relationships, the child's motivation, **creativity,** personality and peer pressure. The concept of a single fixed ability has been modified to encompass an understanding that people are capable of increasing their capacity for certain kinds of intelligent behaviour and attainment over time, providing the conditions are suitable.

Many teachers and adults working in school tend to categorise people according to their perceptions of their abilities and identify pupils by using labels such as 'good' or 'naughty' or 'clever' or 'fast' or 'slow'. Some educationists argue that ability labelling is unnecessary and may actually damage children's learning owing to its potential negative impact on pupils and the way that it influences teachers' **expectations**. An alternative approach to ability-based teaching is posited on a belief that pupils' capacity to learn has no limits, providing they are given relevant work, imaginatively presented and rooted in their interests.

While primary teachers carry out an initial **assessment** of children when they enter school to gain a better understanding of their **knowledge,** understanding, **skills** and potential, the process carries with it a danger of stereotyping pupils. Teachers may build a mental image of a pupil's ability that fixes what they believe a child is capable of achieving. Although assessments at all stages of primary school are helpful for teachers in setting work appropriate to the needs of the child, they can also establish arbitrary boundaries for **achievement**. Pupils then carry the 'limited ability' label throughout their school life so that teachers do not expect them to achieve anything of note, and the negative image continues into secondary education. As a result, pupils do not fulfil their potential and may become disenchanted with school or accept their lowly status.

Exceptional ability is frequently equated with **giftedness and talent**. Gifted pupils are defined as those who excel in academic subjects such as mathematics and English. By contrast, talented pupils excel in subjects like physical education, art and drama. Some gifted children struggle to complete their work on time because they want to try out their own methods or simply like to spend time pondering issues. At the start of lessons, teachers clarify their **expectations** for pupils of different abilities, taking account of the fact that all children are stimulated by opportunities to consolidate their learning through open-ended **activities,** problem-solving tasks and investigations. If pupils are all engaged

in the same task, teachers take account of the child's ability when evaluating the quality of the work and providing **feedback**.

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ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability has been central to the educational reforms that have been introduced in recent years, particularly since the highly significant Education Reform Act of 1988 that heralded the arrival of a national curriculum in England and Wales. As a considerable amount of public money is allocated to education and it has importance for the economic prosperity of the country, education providers (teachers, lecturers, etc.) are accountable to the taxpayer. Although some educationists argue that teachers should be much freer to exercise professional choice about what they teach and how they do it, teachers have had to adjust like other professions to the new demands placed on them by their clients.

The monitoring of teachers and schools takes various forms but is broadly considered with regard to financial accountability and professional accountability, the former rooted in value for money and the latter in pupil progress. Financial accountability is ultimately invested in the school governors/school board, the body that has responsibility for safeguarding the interests of the school. The role and purpose of governing bodies is to monitor education provision, advise and support the head teacher about key decisions and make a public response to inspection reports about the school. Governors themselves are also accountable to the parents and local community through the local education authority.

A problem with accountability is that of choosing the criteria for successful teaching to which a teacher can be held accountable. Most discussion has settled on pupil **achievement** as the chief measure of teaching success, but the relationship between achievement and teaching quality is inconclusive. Educational research is unable to show significant differences between teaching methods and their impact on cognitive and affective learning. The aggregated grades from national **testing** of pupils at age 11 years contribute to school performance tables, which are used for a yardstick for accountability to the local community. However, there has been considerable disquiet among teachers about whether test scores should be used as an indication of teachers' **ability,** as many other factors such as home circumstances and the work of previous teachers influence pupil performance.

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ACHIEVEMENT

Achievement is important in all areas of life and people are often judged on their public successes, particularly in academic and sporting fields. Children revel in the thrill and excitement of winning a race, being awarded a certificate for good work, earning a star after helping the teacher with a job or colouring in a square on a chart for finishing another **reading** book. It is less fulfilling for children whose achievements are limited, who struggle to finish the race, complete the work or compete with their illustrious classmates. An emphasis upon matching tasks and activities against pupil capability ('differentiation') to ensure that children succeed with their work cannot conceal the reality that there are winners and losers in school life as elsewhere. Adults involved in educating primary-age pupils have to be sensitive to the fact that pupils are not participating in an adult game known as 'school' but trying to understand life's complexities and their own place in it.

Achievement in learning is the ultimate goal for everyone involved in primary education, but identifying the nature of the achievement is problematic. In its simplest terms, pupils achieve when they gain measurably good results in their academic work. Most children are willing to persevere with their work for three reasons: to gain satisfaction from it, to contend with their friends and to please the teacher. Children are motivated to a different extent by each of these three factors, depending on the relationship they have with others and the interest they possess in the subject matter. Some children are strongly self-motivated and show a relentless determination to do well and find fulfilment in completing a task to their own satisfaction. Other children are highly competitive and view every piece of work as a challenge to outperform everyone else. While competitiveness can act as a spur to achievement, it can also lead to an unhealthy and strained classroom climate if it becomes the dominating factor. Educators have an essential role in encouraging pupils to feel proud of their achievements and to affirm children's successes warmly, while allowing a degree of competitiveness without tolerating rancour.

Achievement plays a big part in motivating pupils to learn and progress. It is good for children to do well and for their successes to be appreciated by adults and their peers. Many children work extremely hard and strive to attain their goals; they rightly receive recognition and praise. Nevertheless, children who equate achievements with evidence of their personal worth will become dissatisfied when the cheering fades, certificates crinkle, sparkling reports become an archive and others receive more approval. To base

the worth of individuals solely on certificated or measurable successes while overlooking their personal qualities runs the risk of burdening children with the need to gain further achievements as a means of recognition.

In reality, success is judged not only through identifiable and visible outcomes but in how the outcomes affect the child's character, aptitude to cope with life, confidence and attitude to others. For young children in particular, both the winners and losers deserve praise: winners because of their victories, losers because of their tenacity and determination. Achievement is kept in perspective when the genuine efforts of every child are recognised and acclaimed, regardless of the child's place in the order.

Less able children will normally need more time to reach the same point in their learning than more capable ones. A small number of capable children are slow and methodical in their work, not because they lack the **ability** but because they are conscientious and anxious to avoid making mistakes. Some less able children complete work quickly because they can only engage with the concepts at a relatively superficial level and need to be encouraged to try more demanding tasks. More able children need opportunities to extend their **thinking,** rather than merely doing more of the same activity. Teachers try to ensure that every child gains initial success before progressing to tasks that require greater determination and knowledge to complete.

While pupils need to be encouraged to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable, low-attaining children need help if they are to avoid spiralling into an attitude of negativity towards learning. Some pupils seem to find everything a constant struggle, unable to compete, fearful and defensive lest they receive criticism from adults and always struggling to make an impression. It is unsurprising if, after a few years of this experience, they decide that they are not prepared to make an effort to try any longer. Such children prefer to put their efforts into other more disruptive behaviour over which they have some **control.** Treating children as individuals and sensitivity with regard to their emotional as well as their academic needs plays a major role in preventing these unhelpful attitudes from taking root. Caring adults in school help alleviate children's anxieties by being calm when dealing with their fears, sensitively encouraging pupils to confront their doubts and view the route to achievement as an exciting challenge.

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ACTIVITIES AND TASKS

An activity is a practical or reasoning task engaged in by one or more pupils to enhance and enrich learning. Activities are used in primary classrooms for one or more of four purposes. First, they help to reinforce pupils' **knowledge.** Second, they extend pupils' understanding. Third, they allow pupils to explore through problem solving and investigation. Fourth, they promote social contact (such as through the medium of **play**) and illuminate moral **dilemmas** (such as through the use of drama).

There is no sharp distinction between a task and an activity, but whereas the former tends to be associated with evaluating individual pupil performance, the latter often involves two or more children working cooperatively or collaboratively to achieve a common goal. Effective learning is assisted by meaningful activities that are relevant, interesting and motivate the children, with a teacher or assistant on hand to offer guidance, advice and **encouragement.** The activities that best motivate children include investigations, problem solving, making posters, writing short plays, creating poems, devising experiments and producing drama or dance routines. In many cases pupils like to demonstrate the final product or outcome to other members of the class or in **assembly.**

In determining which activities are suitable for pupils of a particular age and experience, teachers take account of the children's academic strengths and limitations. Suitable activities for younger pupils often require more direct adult involvement and structuring than those for older children who exercise greater flexibility. However, it cannot be assumed that children have the cognitive or social **skills** to engage with a group activity effectively. The best activities do not merely keep the children occupied but utilise their previous learning and extend their experiences.

Pupils often have interesting ideas about activities that will assist learning and will, if asked by a teacher, make sensible suggestions. Whereas in systematic **instruction** it is the teacher who makes decisions about the content of activities, in a project **(topic-** or thematically based) approach the children's preferences feature far more significantly. The teacher does not abdicate responsibility in the matter but acts as an adviser to help children make appropriate choices about the activities in which they engage until they become more independent in doing so. The difference between the project approach and more formally designated task allocation based on **ability** groupings is that children do not feel compelled to work constantly at the upper limits of their potential. In such instances, children select from a range of options rather than being given a set task that corresponds as precisely as possible to an identified learning needs. The advantage of using a flexible approach is that children are more likely to be motivated by being able to do things they enjoy using a variety of learning options. The disadvantage is that children may not engage with more challenging tasks that stretch their minds. The availability of adequate resources is also a factor, as structured activities that are planned in advance allow the teacher to organise resources, whereas spontaneous ideas may be problematic owing to resource limitations.

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ADHD

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) was first described by Dr Heinrich Hoffman in 1845 and is a condition that becomes apparent in pre-school children or soon after they begin school. The principal characteristics of ADHD are inattention, hyperactivity and impulsive behaviour. Typically these children struggle to **control** their behaviour and have short attention spans. Since Hoffman's original study and the work of George Still around the start of the twentieth century, ADHD has received considerable attention and been the focus of numerous studies about its nature, cause and treatment.

ADHD is primarily a condition of brain disorder and is seen in a variety of forms depending on the situation and the child's temperament, but is commonly manifested through difficulties in concentration, rule-governed behaviour, variable motivation and lack of awareness of time factors. The wide variation in symptoms means that any restless children will soon come to the teacher's attention, while the constant daydreamer may be ignored as merely inattentive. Similarly, the impulsive child may be viewed as a discipline problem, while the passive or sluggish child, who also suffers from ADHD, may simply be thought of as unmotivated. It is likely that every class contains one pupil with ADHD, but because many children without the condition show some signs of the symptoms, teachers can wrongly attribute erratic or mischievous pupil behaviour. All children are occasionally unsettled or act unthinkingly or daydream; it is when the extent of distraction, poor concentration and impulsiveness affect performance in school and social relationships with other children that ADHD is likely to be relevant.

Pupils that suffer from ADHD present parents and teachers with a range of challenges. When children begin school it is likely that there will already be a case history of inappropriate behaviour and limited concentration in pre-school settings. Depending on the amount of help and advice that they have received, parents may not have been able to provide their children with the usual basic **skills** that would be anticipated in school-age pupils or the necessary social skills for them to orientate to mainstream primary school life.

If children suffering from ADHD are doing something they really enjoy, they are capable of concentrating for a considerable length of time; by contrast, giving specific attention to organising and completing a task or learning something new often proves difficult for them. They struggle to follow instructions and often lose or forget common items that are required for their work. Maintaining high levels of motivation by involving them in relevant and interesting work is therefore a priority for teachers and teaching

assistants. The setting of **homework** produces particular challenges, owing to the high degree of organisation and self-discipline involved.

Hyperactivity is one of the most critical features of many pupils with ADHD, characterised by fidgeting and unpredictable movements around the room, and touching or playing with accessible items. In addition, children may move different parts of their body, tap on the table or **talk** incessantly; these actions make simple tasks, such as sitting still for a meal or concentrating during a school lesson or listening to a story, a considerable challenge. Impulsive behaviour may also be manifested through inappropriate comments, exhibiting extreme **emotion** or acting without regard to the consequences to themselves or other pupils. In the classroom, the impulsiveness may make it hard for children to wait for things they want, take their turn in games or line up patiently. Hyperactive pupils prefer to engage in activities with short-term **rewards** rather than persevere with those that take more effort yet provide them with more substantial longterm benefits.

By contrast, pupils with the *inattentive* type of ADHD are seldom impulsive or hyperactive, but struggle to pay attention. They appear to be daydreaming, easily confused, slow in reacting and rather lethargic; they also have difficulty processing information as quickly and accurately as other children. Although the inattentive group of children cannot easily grasp an adult's oral or written instructions and make frequent mistakes, they tend to be unobtrusive and may appear to be working well. In this way they tend to avoid adult intervention. These pupils socialise better than do children with the more impulsive and hyperactive type of ADHD; because their behaviour is less intrusive and disrupting, their problems can be overlooked.

Pupils with ADHD prosper in schools where they are encouraged to learn in a variety of ways with an emphasis upon a practical approach and the opportunity to be spontaneous and use their intuition. It is essential for adults to maintain a calm, encouraging and consistent approach, with well-structured (but not rigid) routines, clear **rules** and standards of work. During **lessons,** children benefit from having opportunities for active participation and plenty of opportunities to develop their non-academic strengths. As with all emotionally vulnerable children, pupils with ADHD are unpredictable and adults working with them in school require infinite patience and access to specialist advice.

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ANXIETY

Anxiety is common to adults and children in every walk of life, but school can create the circumstances for additional concerns because of the specific and identifiable goals that confront both children and adults and the high **expectations** placed on them by parents, teachers and the local community. Children become anxious for many reasons, not all of which are directly related to school life. Circumstances at home, ill-health and feuds sometimes affect children adversely; they carry these concerns into the classroom with them and, inevitably their work is affected. As one of the most significant adults in children's lives, each teacher or assistant has a considerable responsibility to ensure that a **learning climate** is provided in which pupils can be safe, motivated and supported in their learning. Although a few pupils are careless about their attitude towards their school work and appear disdainful of teachers' opinions, the overwhelming majority benefit from reassurance that the teacher is pleased with them and enjoys their company.

Extremes of anxiety may result in a child being unwilling to attend school, a condition sometimes known as 'school phobia'. Younger children may refuse to come to school because they are unwilling to be separated from a parent and feel more secure at home. School phobia tends to be most prevalent in pupils between the ages of 8 and 13 years with sensitive natures, who struggle to control their emotions. As a result of their emotional vulnerability they fear ridicule, criticism and work assessment (marks, grades, written comments, etc.). In a few cases, children have a specific anxiety, such as about going swimming or sitting with other children eating their lunch; consequently, they pretend that they hate school in general when, in reality, it is the specific event that frightens them.

Adults in school have to look out for children with weak interactive and social skills, as these inadequacies may signal deeper anxieties or previous negative experiences that have not been dealt with satisfactorily. In the most severe cases, children exhibit symptoms such as moodiness, withdrawal or even aggressive behaviour. Memories of a traumatic event in school can continue to haunt children for a long time unless there is appropriate intervention and counselling.

While the large majority of primary-aged children relish a degree of challenge, there are limits to their success in being able adapt to changing circumstances. Pupils who are weak in a subject areas used as a benchmark for school success (such as **reading**) may encounter demands that exceed their power to cope and result in anxiety or paranoia about the subject. Close liaison between school staff and parents of young children is essential if extreme forms of anxiety are to be dealt with satisfactorily, avoiding the onset of school phobia and the truancy that may follow later in the school career.

Adults in primary school are also subject to anxiety, especially during formal **inspection** of educational provision. School inspections provide schools with their greatest challenge, not only ensuring that standards of teaching and pupil attainment are satisfactory or better, but in the emotional and physical demands that they make of staff. Effective **leadership,** self-confidence and a positive whole-school spirit mitigate the

worst effects of an inspection, though many teachers find it unnerving to be observed and assessed by an external person, especially when the stakes are high in terms of the school's reputation and its future.

For teachers in training, the requirements of a school placement create emotional tensions and fears that may detract from the job of teaching and hinder progress. Excited anticipation is healthy; darkening fears that undermine confidence and erect a wall of doubt instead of providing a path of certainty are not. Trainee teachers in particular have to adopt a resolute approach to their school placement and not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the challenge. Although there are no short-term remedies to dispelling anxiety, novice teachers can position themselves into a more positive frame of mind, resisting the temptation to be gloomy and refusing to allow their past failures to hinder future success.

Even at the best of time, teaching is emotionally draining as well as liberating and there are few practitioners who do not suffer from occasional anxiety. Working with active youngsters each day has the potential to wear down even the most assured and confident teacher. It is therefore important for all teachers, regardless of their experience, to keep the job in perspective and remember that they have an identity outside school, as parents, sisters, brothers, neighbours and friends. Success as human beings does not reside solely in their achievements as teachers.

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APPRAISAL

Appraisal for adults working in primary schools is a means of identifying good practice and areas for further development and forms an integral part of staff development. Appraisal is a method by which an individual's work, commitment and aspirations are formally recorded. The process involves noting areas of strength and areas for development, followed by a formal interview with the head teacher or nominee in which priorities for the year are agreed. In the case of teachers applying for promoted posts, an integral element of the appraisal may require a designated external assessor to evaluate evidence of proficiency provided by the individual being appraised.

Appraisal is posited on a belief that although some teachers have a surfeit of natural talent, all teachers benefit from identifying professional goals to which they can aspire. Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) in their first (**induction**) year will be appraised by a

mentor (induction tutor) about once every half-term for the purpose of noting progress and setting targets for **achievement.** If the NQT has encountered significant difficulties, it may be appropriate for a designated person from the local education authority to take part in the appraisal. All teachers in their first year of teaching or its equivalent must undergo a final appraisal so that they can be recommended for full status as a qualified teacher. It is normal for the NQT being appraised and the appraiser to meet beforehand to discuss priorities, aspirations and the NQT's perceptions of his or her progress, needs and concerns.

For classroom teachers, observation of their teaching forms part of an appraisal. Both the appraiser and the person being appraised have to discuss the criteria involved in the observation and agree on what constitutes satisfactory practice. Correct interpretation of a classroom situation requires the appraiser to gain accurate perceptions from what is seen and interpret classroom events fairly. In doing so, the appraiser normally uses a checklist as a **memory** aid. However, itemising every aspect of a teacher's classroom behaviour runs the risk of being unmanageable and is open to the charge that a sum of the individual components does not necessarily equate to the outcome. A teacher may satisfactorily meet the criteria, such as employing good **time management,** providing well-differentiated tasks for pupils to complete and offering appropriate **feedback** on work, yet be uninspiring and fail to capture children's imaginations. Furthermore, the use of lists of criteria assumes parity across each criterion when in reality some things (such as maintaining discipline) are essential, whereas others (such as providing adequate resources) are fluid. Even allowing for the fact that criteria can be agreed, their interpretation may not prove straightforward. Post-session discussion between appraiser and appraised is therefore an essential part of the process in evaluating the impact of the lesson or session.

The word appraisal is not generally used when viewing pupil progress, though the use of the associated term 'conferencing' is fairly widespread in primary schools. Conferencing is a designated time when the teacher speaks individually to each child, examines a range of work, takes account of the child's view of his or her strengths and weaknesses and establishes learning targets. The conference is intended to act as a staging post in the overall assessment of progress and may contribute to the end-of-year report.

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ASSEMBLY

An assembly is an occasion when some or all of the school community meets together to share and celebrate worthwhile and praiseworthy areas of living; it also provides a medium for communicating matters of significance. Assemblies have the potential to affirm the school's identity, develop a positive learning ethos and create and enhance a sense of community. In England, an act of *collective worship* is often incorporated into an assembly as it has been a legal requirement since the 1944 Education Act.

An effective school assembly offers an opportunity for pupils to consider significant human **values,** such as love, peace, truth, cooperation and respect, and has the potential to touch children's inner being and nurture their intrapersonal skills. In turn, the development of values acts as a foundation for religious education; personal, social and health education (PSHE); **citizenship;** and the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) elements of the **curriculum.** Assemblies offer support for the school's fundamental ethic in as much as pupils are influenced by the attitudes, involvement and contributions that each staff member makes during these occasions. In this way every adult becomes a role model for the pupils to admire and imitate.

It is a prerequisite that any member of staff who leads an assembly is convinced that developing and deepening the spiritual dimension of children's lives helps them to mature into considerate and welladjusted young people. The head teacher or teacher that takes responsibility for an assembly is also conscious of the need for pupil and adult comfort and creating the right atmosphere in the room to help children focus on the benefits that they enjoy. The use of genuine **reflection** (as opposed to hypnotic practices that limit thought rather than allow it to expand) allows children to tap into their **imaginations** and stimulates the creative part of their brains. The imposition of assembly on pupils by a reluctant and unenthusiastic staff is likely to create negative attitudes that impact unhelpfully on the rest of school life. Parents can request that their children do not attend assemblies of which an act of worship is a part.

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ASSESSMENT

The assessment of children's progress in learning is a key element of educational practice at all levels. It is based on the assumption that it is possible for teachers to be able to identify what pupils know and understand. Assessment is used in three principal ways. First, teachers assess how well pupils cope with the **activities and tasks** they undertake as a means of evaluating how much support and guidance is required, a process sometimes referred to as 'formative' assessment. Second, teachers assess diagnostically by taking note of the extent of understanding and misunderstanding that pupils expose in regular classroom work. Third, teachers assess by marking and evaluating pupils' completed work, a process sometimes referred to as 'summative' assessment.

The assessment of children has to serve a variety of purposes, but it is principally to inform decisions made by the teacher about what work a child is capable of managing. This process places a considerable onus on the teacher to make an accurate evaluation of progress so that there is a reasonable match between the work and the child's capability. In addition, assessment is a means of providing information for pupils, parents, the next teacher, professionals such as educational psychologists and, indirectly, the general public, by using data from national test results. Assessment takes account of a pupil's previous attainment and potential and is therefore a strategy for identifying individual learning needs and offering direction for the future (a strategy commonly referred to as **target setting**). Teachers also use assessment opportunities to celebrate progress and sincere endeavour.

Assessment relies on evidence, but not on proof in the way that (say) a court of law demands. The evidence is normally accumulated over a period of time rather than relying on a one-off snapshot of attainment by scrutiny of a single piece of work. Most assessment evidence is drawn from what children say, what they write and record during regular classroom activities, and the way they answer questions during sessions or formally in a test.

Assessment has to be manageable for teachers and relate to what they are trying to teach the children. In offering summative **feedback** on work, teachers have to use comments and grades consistently and ensure that pupils understand their significance. Whereas older children may receive a mark (especially in mathematical computations) or a grade on an A to E continuum, it is more common for teachers to offer a written or spoken summary. Ideally, children are given the time to think and respond to the teacher's comments and be involved in the assessment process rather than passive recipients, as this gives them a sense of ownership over their learning. Teachers encourage children to self-evaluate their work and, for older children, sometimes respond to the teacher's written comment with a written comment of their own.

In addition to assessing **reading,** writing and mathematical **ability,** teachers have to take account of younger primary pupils' personal, social and emotional well-being and their attitude and disposition to learning. Consequently teachers assess pupils' social skills, their attention skills and persistence, and their language and **communication**

competence. Children's understanding of their own and the wider world, and their physical and creative development, are also included in an assessment portfolio for new entrants to school.

When marking work and making suggestions about how it might be improved, teachers like to take account of the effort made by the pupil as well as the outcome. If teachers mark work with the child present, verbal explanation can accompany the written comments. The child's presence also facilitates praise and **celebration** of achievements that are balanced with critical ones to ensure that children are encouraged yet motivated to address shortcomings. Teachers take account of children's attitude towards their work and the way they persevere, reflected in the level of their enthusiasm and motivation, the extent to which they become self-sufficient and independent, and their growth in confidence. Errors are viewed as opportunities for restructuring work and making improvements rather than punitive. Judgements of attainment take account of practical factors, such as the time available for completion of the task, the level of difficulty of the work and whether the child was trying to be innovative or simply following the prescribed method.

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ASSISTANTS

The use of paid assistants to support children's learning and help the teacher to organise and manage the classroom is common in primary schools. Voluntary help from parents and people on work experience also makes a significant contribution to the process of teaching and learning. If assistants are paid, they are normally referred to as teaching assistants (TAs) and have a job description to guide them. The title of Learning Support Assistant (LSA) is often applied to someone who is working one-to-one with a child who has been identified as having **special educational needs** (SEN). TAs have been employed in most primary schools over many years to undertake general duties but they are gradually assuming more responsibility for pupils' learning and there has been a large increase in their numbers to support the work of class teachers. The introduction of Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) to take a more active and direct role in pupils' teaching is a key initiative in England, though their role is under negotiation with teaching unions. The Training and Development Agency has published a set of professional standards for the award of HLTA status (TTA 2004) under the headings of

professional **values** and practice, **knowledge** and understanding, teaching and learning activities.

The UK government is keen to recruit tens of thousands of support staff and exploit their expertise in the classroom. Increasing the number of assistants is supposed to mirror the situation in hospitals where a senior professional (such as a consultant) is involved only with key **decision making** and advanced practice, leaving the subordinates (junior doctors, nurses) to carry out the orders and perform most of the regular work. Using this analogy the teacher represents the consultant and the TA represents the junior doctor.

The number of assistants is affected by the size of the school. Small schools with fewer than a hundred pupils do not have the infrastructure, physical space or finance to operate like larger schools, with dedicated spaces and specialist support staff. Small schools are more likely to utilise voluntary adult help or employ part-time assistants, often shared across several classes. Consequently, the deployment of support staff involves considerable flexibility and close teamwork to ensure equity.

Increasingly, TAs possess a qualification and attend further inservice courses to develop their expertise. Some assistants are former teachers who no longer wish to teach, but the majority are people drawn from the local community who enjoy working in school, have their own children there and have been appointed to support the work of teachers. Owing to funding limitations, assistants are often employed on temporary contracts.

Primary education specialist Mike Waters suggests that adult assistants can be used in one or more of seven ways. (1) Being involved as a genuine participant in pupils' activities. (2) As a detached observer of how pupils cope with tasks. (3) As a scribe for pupils who struggle with writing. (4) Doing a variety of menial tasks. (5) Checking what pupils are doing. (6) Listening to what pupils want to read to them, tell them about and discuss. (7) Helping pupils to review their work. Although some assistants have their own clear view of what they are and are not prepared to do, it is up to the teachers to be specific about their requirements, especially in **early years'** classes where additional adult support is often interwoven into the fabric of the teaching day. There are numerous routine tasks that teachers have always carried out in the classroom that are now deemed more suitable for support staff, though not all of the tasks are equally important or relevant to primary education. The most appropriate responsibilities for TAs (apart from assisting pupils in class) include collecting money, collating pupil reports, stocktaking, bulk photocopying, record keeping and filing, putting up displays, carrying out minor repairs for ICT equipment within **health and safety** guidelines, ordering supplies and equipment, issuing and maintaining equipment and materials, seeking and giving advice to pupils, managing and inputting pupil data.

Employment of TAs is intended to lead to more flexible models of teaching and learning. In practice, this means that teachers have become principally responsible for ensuring that pupils achieve learning outcomes than taking responsibility for every aspect of the teaching and learning process. In theory, being freed from more routine tasks means that teachers can concentrate on the more specialised elements of their role, especially the planning, preparation and assessment (referred to as PPA) of pupils' learning. The application of this strategy necessitates that assistants are suitably trained to ensure that they possess the appropriate **skills** to complement the work of teachers. The

relationship between teacher and TA must be harmonious to maintain the delicate balance of trust and mutual support that exists between them.

The involvement of large numbers of TAs to support children's learning requires teachers to develop new management acumen, in knowing how both to relate to TAs and use them profitably. If teachers fail to offer adequate support and direction, assistants understandably become frustrated or insecure and begin to create their own patterns of working which may not suit the teacher. Many teachers try to set aside a time each week to discuss matters of mutual concern and take every opportunity to thank assistants for their efforts and recognise their contribution to the life of the class. TAs become irritated if teachers make unjustified assumptions about their capability and level of responsibility or take advantage of their goodwill. Assistants expect appropriate respect and understanding from teachers, clarification about the nature of their work and being kept informed about timetable alterations. If the assistant is a parent, the teacher's reputation can hinge on the informal conversations that the assistant has with neighbours and friends about school life.

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BEHAVIOUR

Every living thing ‘behaves’ in as much as it responds to changes generated both internally and externally. Behaviour does not depend solely on stimuli, though in the absence of stimuli a sentient being will actively seek to be aroused. Thus, in a school situation, a bored pupil will look for sources of amusement; a mischievous pupil will enjoy bating a teacher. It is perfectly normal for children (and adults) to seek the establishment and maintenance of active, continuous and gratifying transactions with those around them. In classroom life this gratification is likely to include creating friendships, responding to what people say, looking at pictures and graphic information, asking questions, catching someone’s eye, laughing, responding to teachers’ comments, and so forth. Children do not necessarily misbehave because they are under-stimulated, but if teachers fail to provide a medium in which this need for internal fulfilment is satisfied, children will seek other means to do so.

Behaviour is closely allied to discipline. Behaviour is a term that relates to pupil conduct, whereas discipline is the rule framework for behaviour imposed by the responsible adult. Thus, adults explain and reinforce for children the parameters, **rules** and regulations governing their behaviour. In turn, the children learn to modify their behaviour to conform to the agreed discipline structure. In this respect, it is not really possible for a teacher to ‘make’ a pupil behave, inasmuch as behaviour is based upon children’s decisions about their own actions.

Appropriate behaviour should emerge naturally from effective discipline but in reality the maintenance of active, continuous and satisfying adult-child transactions means that the situation is much less settled. Two children may behave similarly but a teacher will employ different approaches according to the specific circumstances and the individual’s experience, history and emotional state. For instance, the significance attached by a teacher to a child calling out in the middle of a maths lesson is different from the same pupil calling out in the middle of a sports’ day race. Similarly two children may snap a pencil: the first child accidentally the second child through carelessness. In such circumstances, the teacher’s response is likely to be different for each child despite the identical outcomes.

Children learn about appropriate ways to behave through trial and error, observing and imitating, discovering what actions are rewarded and being given direct guidance by an adult. Consequently, the adult-child relationship is crucial to the speed and efficiency with which children learn to behave appropriately. A teacher’s authority is not ultimately found in formulaic approaches or implementing agreed school strategies but in effectively organising learning, presenting information with spirit and sensitivity to pupils’ needs, communicating ideas using appropriate terminology, and monitoring pupil progress fairly. Most pupils respond well for the large majority of the time in school when treated firmly, but also with kindness and respect. They appreciate boundaries of acceptable behaviour that are consistently maintained by adults in school. Primary-aged

pupils respond better to praise than to criticism and are more willing to persevere when the content is interesting and worthwhile.

The establishment of rules and **expectations** that can be explained to children and understood by them helps to promote a harmonious classroom climate, so that the imposition of rules does not mean that children are prevented from expressing their opinions and offering their ideas and perspective on situations. It is not always easy for teachers to balance individual choice with the demands of the statutory **curriculum;** nevertheless, choice with responsibility is the principal objective for all teachers to inculcate in their pupils. The teachers who incur fewest discipline problems are those who are willing to review procedures regularly, ensure that resources are available and fairly distributed, and willing to explain to children rather than harangue them. Pupils are drawn to adults who speak naturally, avoid nagging and keep things in proportion. Every child wants to be reassured that the teacher is concerned with his or her welfare and willing to make learning relevant and fun.

Many teachers use noise level as an indicator of whether pupil behaviour is acceptable, though this yardstick is a rather crude measure as some children naturally speak loudly and young children in particular may need numerous gentle reminders to moderate their tone of voice. Teachers have to distinguish between intrusive forms of noise that come from inappropriate behaviour and constructive forms of noise due to an engagement with the task. Teachers use a variety of strategies to keep noise levels in check, including having a 'tiptoes time' for younger children (tiny voices and quiet movements) or a 'lost in space' time for older pupils, both of which signal that children must work quietly. If the **activities** require **collaboration,** some noise is inevitable while children discuss and grapple with the problem or investigation. To improve their authority in a situation, many teachers deepen their voices and speak more slowly rather than raising the pitch and occasionally punctuate their normal way of speaking with short bursts of staccato speech to emphasise a point. Deepening the voice is particularly important for women, as their higher-pitched voices tend to blend with the children's voices and lose their distinctiveness. If teachers shout or attempt to over-speak the pupils it merely adds to the cacophony.

Inexperienced teachers may unintentionally invite poor behaviour by becoming too informal. Any mention of birthdays, children's parties, outings, sports' days and concerts evokes interest but also invites excitement and distraction. If one of these subjects emerges unexpectedly, experienced teachers allow the initial wave of chatter to be expended before insisting that the children give their full attention to the work. Inexperienced teachers are more inclined to panic when there is a flurry of spontaneous chatter because they imagine that they are losing **control** of the class. Teachers require a considerable amount of confidence before they can enjoy a few moments of **celebration** with the children without being sucked into the maelstrom, knowing that they can quickly retrieve the situation.

The transition times between different phases of the lesson test the quality of pupils' self-control as they move about, access their trays or lockers and settle to the new task. These changeover times benefit from very specific teacher direction, ensuring that the children know precisely what they are supposed to do. It is essential, though far from easy, for teachers to balance the need for speedily explaining the next stage of the lesson

sufficiently thoroughly and keeping the children for too long, thereby inviting restless behaviour.

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BEHAVIOURISM

The behaviourist theory is based on an assumption that an external stimulus produces an inner reaction in a person that then results in an outward response. According to behaviourist theory, terms such as mind, sensation and feelings should be discarded in favour of things that can be readily observed and measured. Early behaviourists such as B.F.Skinner emphasised the way in which it is possible to condition animals to behave in certain ways through a process known as 'conditioning'. The process of conditioning is commonly seen during adult-pupil classroom **interaction,** in which teachers respond approvingly or disapprovingly to children's comments, answers or responses. In the classroom, the teacher's tone of voice and **questioning** elicit observable responses from the children, as witnessed by their facial expressions, the things they say and how they react. Satisfying the teacher therefore becomes a critical factor in the way that children behave.

Teachers make use of behaviourism in emphasising the place of **instruction** and the way in which adults monitor children's learning. In turn, learners assume a relatively passive role, responding to the teacher's instructions with regard to the content, pace and evaluation of the lesson. The teacher transmits information to pupils in a systematic way, using rituals, **rewards** and sanctions as appropriate. Such a **teaching approach** emphasises repetition, rehearsal, revision and regular practice until the teacher is satisfied that mastery has been achieved. Teachers also develop **skills** of close observation of children's actions, making painstaking records of those actions and utilising rewards and sanctions as a means of altering pupils' **behaviour.**

Adopting a behavioural approach to teaching rests on a number of assumptions. First, it deals with what can be observed, such that teachers concern themselves with what a child actually does as opposed to speculating about the underlying causes. Second, it assumes that ways of behaving are learned, so although adults in school are unable to influence pupils' upbringing and social background, they can nevertheless influence their behaviour by controlling the learning environment. Third, it anticipates that learning will

involve a change in action as evidenced by applying specific criteria. Fourth, it presumes that the changes are strongly influenced by consequences; actions that lead to reward are likely to become more persistent, whereas those that lead to sanctions are likely to diminish. Finally, it supposes that all behaviours are governed by the contexts in which they take place, so children do learn not only how, but when and where to invoke a particular way of behaving.

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BODY LANGUAGE

Body language is a term used to describe the non-verbal signals that one person gives to another, either deliberately or unintentionally, and exercises a significant part in social **interaction** within the classroom. Pupils closely observe their teachers' body language; they take close note of facial expressions and the attention that is paid to them when they speak, and draw conclusions about their teachers' feelings towards them.

Pupils receive information from both auditory and visual sources. The auditory sources consist of not only the words that are spoken but the sound of the voice, which may be an even more significant factor than the specific words used. The visual sources are most forcefully conveyed through facial expressions, especially the use of the eyes. Although words can be falsified, the eyes cannot easily lie, so they are the principal means of communicating an intention from adults to pupils. Teachers also use hands and face gestures to communicate a variety of messages, including the use of signals to support class discipline. Posture, clothes and grooming are also important visual factors. As children gain experience in the classroom, they become skilled in interpreting the way that teachers respond, look and stand, and adjusting the way they act accordingly. Positive nonverbal affirmation from teachers in the form of nods of the head and non-threatening body stance lets children know that they are being acknowledged and approved. Teachers adopt an open body position when addressing pupils one-to-one, rather than a closed one, based on the principle that facing pupils directly aids communication. That is, they adopt a 'face-to-face' rather than a 'side-to-face' orientation.

Pupils also use a variety of signals to indicate the extent of their involvement in a session. The most common example is the use of a 'hands-up' to communicate to an adult that a child has something to contribute to the proceedings or wishes to ask a question.

There is some evidence that physical passivity may indicate a lack of engagement with the lesson content and a refusal or inability to think. Whereas flapping hands, pulling faces, running fingers through hair, grimacing and similar actions, often accompanied by grunts and groans, may be delaying strategies to convince the adult that they are close to reaching an answer or solution, it can also assist some pupils to think. The belief that children are only being serious about learning if they are sitting still and silent does not accommodate the needs of those who prefer a more active mode.

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BULLYING

In primary education, the word ‘bullying’ is normally used to describe a range of situations in which a child’s physical or mental welfare is threatened by the deliberately vindictive actions of another child or group of children. The circumstances that give rise to bullying are a form of disruptive **behaviour** whose effects can be long term and deep rooted, in extreme cases resulting in self-harm. It takes various forms, from name calling, teasing and physical abuse, to intimidation, extortion and serious physical assault. Bullying includes spoken insults, racist remarks, physical spite, such as hitting, and indirect manifestations, such as spreading rumours.

Lawson (1994) suggests that there are three types of bullies: aggressive bullies, anxious bullies and passive bullies. The *aggressive bully* is the most serious type, as children may be physically injured. Aggressive bullies are often badly behaved in school and require close supervision and monitoring throughout the day. Controlling aggressive bullying requires all adults to ensure that the malefactors are made to adhere to a strictly enforced set **of rules** governing their actions. **Parental involvement** is also essential in setting targets for improvement.

Anxious bullies see themselves as failures and vent their frustrations on other children by making cruel comments to them and undermining their achievements. It is often younger, vulnerable children who are subjected to their taunts, as they are unlikely to retaliate. Although anxious bullies create distress for other children, the bullies also need to be helped to gain **self-esteem** by placing them in a position where they can succeed. For instance, they may relate well to younger children in a structured environment, supervised by an adult who can monitor the situation and offer **encouragement** and direction.

Passive bullies are the support members of bullying gangs but not the principal perpetrators. The expression ‘passive bully’ is not wholly satisfactory as it implies that such types are less culpable. It is probably true to say that many passive bullies do not

particularly relish their role and would prefer to expend their energies in other ways. Their fear of losing credibility with the aggressors, and perhaps becoming victims themselves if they do not conform, deters them from breaking free. Adults can help them to develop a new identity by providing them with positive alternatives and ensuring that they have a busy interesting schedule, especially during break times. The process of restoration is often a long one and the adults involved in finding a resolution have to take into account the fact that bullying habits often continue after school as well as during it.

It is not always easy for adults to discriminate between high spirits and bullying, as all children occasionally have squabbles that to adult eyes look more serious than are truly the case. The animosity soon passes and the two opponents resume their **friendship** as if nothing had happened. On the other hand, conflict situations can create the circumstances for distress and unhappiness for children, so adults in school have a responsibility to be vigilant and intervene to prevent suffering. Racist bullying is a particularly unpleasant area of school life that has received a great deal of attention in recent years. All schools have to demonstrate that they not only have a policy to combat racism, but are also active in ensuring that it is implemented and monitored. Teachers have a duty of care towards pupils and have to take reasonable steps to prevent pupils from being verbally or physically abused. If they fail to do so it not only puts children at risk but also opens the teacher concerned to being accused of negligence. New teachers to a school have a responsibility to become familiar with its anti-bullying policies and procedures for dealing with incidents.

Common signs that children are victims of bullying include regular headaches, stomach aches, **anxiety** and irritability, and parents who suspect that bullying is contributing to the symptoms in their children are advised to contact the school immediately. It is important to deal with bullying because it can adversely affect children's mental and psychological health, induce social maladjustment and even be the cause of physical illness. Physical bullying is thankfully rare in primary schools, but unless it is dealt with during time in primary school, it is likely to continue once the pupils transfer to secondary school and perpetuate the climate of fear and uncertainty for the victims.

Teachers make a considerable difference to pupil attitudes by modelling a caring attitude, valuing each child as an individual and listening carefully to explanations. They can also promote opportunities for children who have been bullying others to become involved in positive, supportive activities that are more worthwhile than the bullying. The victims, as well as the perpetrators, need to be monitored, as there is a tendency for those who have been bullied to bully others in turn. Consequently some children are victims, some are bullies and some are both victims and bullies.

One of the problems facing teachers is that bullying becomes a habit that eventually acts like a stimulant, such that the act of bullying becomes enjoyable for the perpetrator. If bullying is not dealt with sooner rather than later, it becomes habit forming and intervention to stop it being repeated becomes more difficult. Although pernicious bullying that brings distress to other pupils cannot be tolerated, the children concerned must also be shown that there are benefits attached to kindness, consideration and self-sacrifice that cannot be matched by tormenting a weaker child. The involvement of parents at an early stage normally falls under the head teacher's remit, supported by the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and, where appropriate, advice from

external bodies, including the DfES web site on bullying, 'Don't suffer in silence' (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying).

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CARING

All adults with responsibility for children have a duty of care placed upon them to ensure that, within their means, they do not suffer physical, emotional or psychological hardship that is incompatible with their age and maturity. The exact nature of this **accountability** is defined in law but can broadly be thought of as teachers exercising judgements in respect of a child's welfare that could be expected from a responsible parent. Primary schools are havens from the uncertainty of the world and offer a settled environment for young lives to be nurtured and developed.

Teaching **assistants** often have a designated caring role in dealing with personal and social needs and the majority are skilled at getting alongside children, advising them about decisions, comforting them in times of distress and offering an encouraging word. Their nonofficial status allows pupils to feel easier about approaching them and gaining a sympathetic hearing about issues that affect them.

Care is an approach that goes beyond a tender emotion or sympathy. It reflects a desire to seek the emotional and academic good of pupils and other adults in school and to behave in such a way that they are able to learn and develop without undue hindrance. This process requires that teachers explain their decisions (but do not try to justify them) and persevere to promote equality of opportunity and affirm children's genuine efforts. In turn, pupils can be helped to develop a sense of compassion through taking care of a younger child in the school, helping in charity fund-raising events or befriending elderly members of the community.

One of the reasons that people elect to become primary teachers is that they value the caring dimension of their work, which makes them feel positive about their teaching and sustains them during periods of difficulty. It is important for pupils to know that adults are considerate and want the best for them. Care lubricates adult-child relationships and enhances both pupils' and teachers' feelings of selfworth and respect. This form of caring is different from pampering the children or 'smothering' them and restricting their independence or hindering them from making their own decisions. Premature **intervention** and high levels of support to pupils brings great satisfaction to adults but may stifle initiative and make children overly dependent on assistance. Intervening in such a way that pupils have insufficient time and opportunity to grapple with problems does not help children to become self-sufficient or foster perseverance in them. Schools are social settings and although teachers are not social workers they work within a social climate that is created through the agreed priorities of the staff. Teachers have a professional responsibility to intervene in such a way that children's problems are lessened or solved and to intercede to resolve conflicts.

Unless teachers distance themselves from the children and become mere agents for delivering **lessons,** they cannot avoid being influential and significant. A school world in which teachers and children never spoke of birthdays, outings, brothers and sisters, world events and relational tensions, as well as fears and disappointments, would be a bleak one indeed. In March 2004 the Department for Education and Skills published *Every Child*

Matters: The next steps (DfES 2004a) stressing the importance of establishing a framework to protect, to promote the well-being of, and to support all children and their families. At about the same time the government published its strategy for pupils with special educational needs, entitled *Removing Barriers to Achievement* (DfES 2004b) in which it accepted that children's emotional and mental health needs and family circumstances may have a significant impact on their capacity to make the most of their opportunities in school.

In every school there is a designated senior teacher for child protection and a deputy for occasions when the designated person is absent. Each school produces a child protection policy and procedures; monitors and maintains a confidential **recording** system; and produces information for parents in the prospectus, brochure and (in many cases) home/school agreement document. Child protection issues are also addressed through the curriculum, particularly in the areas of personal safety, **self-esteem,** relationships, **bullying** and safe access to the Internet.

Despite the timely warning issued by the noted education writer and researcher, Jennifer Nias—that it may be unhealthy for teachers to care too much owing to the heavy demands it places on them to the detriment of intellectual aims—it is undeniable that the caring attitude that inspires primary teachers is rooted in a desire for the good of humanity in general.

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CELEBRATION

There are many occasions when the staff and pupils in primary schools have cause to celebrate, some of which coincide with religious festivals; other times are to indicate milestones in the schools' history, such as a centenary or the opening of new buildings. Yet other celebrations are to signify special achievements, such as a successful school inspection or gaining a coveted trophy. Celebrations are sometimes intimate, involving a class or small group of children, but in primary schools they are more often whole-school events.

Celebration is often associated with academic or sporting success. Teachers who focus on positive aspects of children's work and celebrate success are more likely to enjoy a strong rapport with pupils and fewer **control** problems. Children that are well occupied with interesting work in an upbeat working environment provide less challenge than those who are trapped in a mundane one. Pupils who can ask for clarification about the work from teachers without fear of being criticised, supported in trying things for themselves and congratulated for making a genuine effort are usually contented.

In most teaching sessions, but notably during **literacy** and **numeracy** lessons, the final few minutes are frequently used by teachers to review the lesson, point out common misconceptions and indicate ways forward. This **lesson review** time (often referred to as the 'plenary') also provides an opportunity for teachers to celebrate children's achievements, salute the effort they have made and create a positive end to the session.

Pragmatic considerations about preparing and teaching **lessons** and striving to keep pace with the heavy demands of school life can cloud teacher memories of being a child. Celebrating the regular features of **childhood** experience, such as the excitement generated by a special school event, being in school after hours for an **extracurricular activity** or hearing the class sing a birthday song, reinforces the fact that a rounded education is composed of more than academic success.

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CHILDHOOD

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as a person under the age of 18 years. The concept of childhood involves the separating of two phases of life, pre-adulthood and adulthood, but has not always been defined by reference to age. The difficulties involved in identifying childhood as something distinctive is underlined by the fact that eighteenth- and early nineteenthcentury concepts of childhood applied only to children under the age of 5. Those over 5 years of age were often economically active in factories and mines alongside adults until the pioneering work of social reformers in the 1800s. During the latter part of the nineteenth century younger children were increasingly viewed as vulnerable and in need of adult protection. Regulation of the workplace introduced their right to a systematic education and social welfare. Concern about the moral development of children and the changing patterns of work and family life led to a fresh understanding about the responsibility of parents and

the importance of privacy, morality and a settled home life in the development of the child. However, regulation also introduced the notion that the state has the right to intervene within the family to protect the child from parents and to ensure that the child has access to education. Perceptions of the position of children in society is seen by some as precarious owing to the increase in divorce rates, irresponsibility by absent fathers, larger numbers of mothers in full-time employment, sexual abuse and the rise of the single-parent family that requires children, especially elder siblings, to take a lot of domestic responsibilities from an early age. Some social observers even argue that the whole concept of childhood is under threat.

Childhood is not a universal phenomenon but a socially constructed one that regulates and reproduces the language, **expectations** and nature of the relationship between adults and children. In Western society the concept of childhood is reflected in the legal requirement for children to undertake compulsory schooling and to be protected from economic, sexual and other forms of exploitation. Adults working in school have a duty of care which includes showing patience and sympathy towards children's failure to understand and make mistakes, and their vulnerabilities. Childhood is important as a time when children find their own individuality so that they can stand firm when challenges arise later in life. The security and confidence gained during childhood allows children to reach the end of their primary years feeling comfortable with their place in the world prior to the demands of the teenage years. Ideally, this sense of selfbelief can be translated into a positive attitude towards other people and a sympathetic approach to human relationships. Every adult in school has a measure of responsibility to contribute to the development process.

Teachers are influential in helping to shape and direct the way in which pupils mature and understand the world and themselves, so teachers have to be sensitive to the way in which their attempts to influence children may unintentionally upset the fine balance that always exists between natural development and adult intervention. Different cultures, religions and races also have particular priorities for their children to which teachers and other adults in school must be sensitive.

In the UK, the Children Act 2004 provided a legislative spine for the wider strategy for improving children's lives, covering the universal services to which every child has access and more targeted services for those with additional needs. The overall aim is to encourage integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of services, as well as strengthen multidisciplinary working, remove duplication, increase **accountability** and improve the coordination of individual and joint inspections in local authorities. The legislation is intended to be enabling rather than prescriptive and provide local authorities with flexibility in the way that they implement its provisions.

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CIRCLE TIME

Circle time is a group activity in which children sit down together with the purpose of better understanding themselves and one another, building relationships and facilitating dialogue between pupils and teachers, and between pupils and pupils. Circle time is an opportunity for children to learn the skills they need to prosper socially, including effective communication, emotional literacy, anger management and conflict resolution. The development of these skills may subsequently have a positive impact on pupil behaviour but this outcome is not the principal purpose of circle time and even the best-behaved pupils benefit from involvement. The experience is not a subtle form of coercion, reprimand or correction, but aims to create a space in which pupils can discuss, reflect, probe their emotions and feel empowered. At its best, circle time helps children to celebrate their personal identity.

Teachers create the atmosphere of circle time events by setting up an open circle of chairs or cushions for everyone to sit on, so that there are no barriers between pupils. One common activity is for an object (such as a toy or familiar object) to be passed around the circle with only the person holding it being allowed to speak about the topic at any time. Adults also sit within the circle and may participate as a member of the group or act as a facilitator. Most pupils enjoy circle time, as it gives them an opportunity to talk about themselves and one another, but rules have to be established and enforced if the time is to be effectively spent. The rules may include only one person to speak at any one time; that no one is obliged to contribute; and that comments must be temperate, free from personal slights. The rules help the children to feel secure so that they can express themselves freely and without fear of rebuke.

Topics for sharing or discussion during circle time depend on the age of the children and the existing relationship within the group. Many teachers of younger children use the opportunity to celebrate special occasions, share ideas and hobbies and even commiserate with a child who has undergone a miserable experience. Naturally, teachers have to be extremely sensitive that circle time does not become too intense or a time-filling activity. Some teachers use the time to select children who take it in turns to be ‘special’ for the day and receive small privileges as a result.

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CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship education in primary schools offers pupils opportunities to grapple with difficult life issues and **dilemmas** through discussion, collaborative activities and problem solving. In most schools attention is given to ways in which pupils can make a difference in the world (locally or globally) and they are encouraged to take an active role in fund raising for poor communities, befriending the elderly and recycling materials. The principle underlying social action is to ensure deeper and lasting change in pupils for the benefit of everyone.

In the UK the development of citizenship for pupils of primary age is non-statutory but is nonetheless followed by every primary school in one form or another. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) provides a scheme based on twelve individual units, including topics such as 'choices', 'people who help us' and 'local democracy for young citizens'. Under the banner of PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education) and citizenship, the national non-statutory guidelines provide a framework under two main headings of (1) **knowledge, skills** and understanding and (2) breadth of study. The first category focuses on developing confidence and responsibility, helping pupils to make the most of their abilities, preparing them to undertake an active role as citizens, developing a healthy, safer lifestyle, securing good relationships and respecting the differences between people. Aspects of citizenship are frequently introduced and promoted during occasions such as a whole-school or class **assembly** to share and discuss ideas about appropriate personal conduct and ways to be a responsible member of society, especially at local neighbourhood level.

Citizenship education is a means through which teachers help pupils to orientate towards a world in which there is a surfeit of information, yet little wisdom about its use or guidance about making sound choices. The successful preparation of children as responsible citizens depends to an extent on the moral lead that teachers are willing and able to provide for them, not only through formal citizenship **lessons** but in the way they behave and put their words into action.

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CLASS SIZE

Class size has always been an important issue for teachers. Numbers of children in infant (**Key Stage** 1) classes have been reduced over recent years and are normally fewer than thirty; numbers in junior classes (Key Stage 2) have changed little for a generation. Today in nearly all maintained (state-funded) primary schools there is considerable use made of teaching assistants (TAs), increasing the frequency of child-adult **interaction,** though children may become unduly dependent on their support. The concept of one teacher being wholly responsible for the education of one class has gradually been replaced by more emphasis on specialist teaching, especially for older primary children. At the same time there has also been a slight increase in numbers attending private school, where the pupil-teacher ratio tends to be much better than in state schools. Although the majority of teachers welcome moves to reduce class sizes, the restriction on numbers has led some parents to complain that it has worsened the problems they have experienced of trying to get places for their children in popular, over-subscribed schools.

Common sense suggests that smaller classes must inevitably lead to higher standards and greater pupil **achievement** because teachers have more time to spend with each individual child. However, other factors impact upon attainment, including pupils' academic **ability,** level of motivation for the subject and availability of adult assistance and resources. The clearest evidence of positive effects of smaller class size is found among infant children; reducing class size can be especially helpful for disadvantaged and minority ethnic pupils.

The positive effects of small classes diminish if teachers persist in using instructional methods and formal classroom procedures that are more suited to larger, whole-class teaching styles. The greatest potential benefit to pupils in smaller classes is the quality of teacher-pupil **interaction,** facilitated by the teacher's insights into the children's educational and social needs. For new school entrants, a more favourable adult-child ratio increases the likelihood that the children will adjust rapidly to the requirements and routines associated with school.

There is some disagreement among educationists about the length of time that the positive effects of smaller classes persist after pupils move to larger classes, but there is a consensus about the fact that class size reduction for new entrants to school (aged 5 years) facilitates greater academic success. The impact of smaller classes for older primary-age children (aged from 7 to 11 years) is less clear, though when class size drops below twenty there appears to be a sharp accompanying improvement in attainment, especially for less confident pupils.

Class size has implications for the type of **teaching approach** used by teachers dealing with larger and with smaller classes. Smaller classes offer the chance of a more relaxed classroom atmosphere, due in part to the individual attention that each pupil receives, thereby reducing the frustrations in waiting for help from an adult. Furthermore, in whole-class discussions and times when pupils are brought together, children are statistically more likely to be chosen to answer questions and given greater opportunity to contribute ideas than pupils of similar age in large classes. The smaller the class size, the greater the chance that pupils receive a high proportion of educational resources. Teachers are likely to spend more time in larger classes on non-teaching activities and

have to deal with more complex issues regarding classroom management owing to the logistics of coping with more pupils.

Larger class sizes do not necessarily disadvantage pupils but they make a teacher's life more onerous owing to the heavier workload of marking and report writing. Teachers dealing with larger numbers of children have to employ teaching and management strategies that allow them to avoid an excessive workload. For example, they may make greater use of pupil self-assessment (to reduce the extent of marking), more straightforward **homework** tasks, employment of computer software in producing reports, and collaborative learning. A study commissioned by the DfES in December 2004 (DfES 2004c) indicated that test results in mathematics, English and science were not appreciably different for children in larger and smaller classes, though the demands on teachers of large classes were considerably heavier.

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CODE OF PRACTICE

The duties of schools and teachers are clearly laid out in the **special educational needs** Code of Practice and the Special Needs and Disability Act (http://www.dfes.gov.uk/sen/). The Code outlines the framework for identifying, assessing and making provision for children's needs, though the actual assessment and teaching measures used are left for individual teachers and schools to devise. The Code sets out a graduated approach to the identification, assessment and provision based on pupils' special needs. It makes clear that the Code is only concerned with interventions that are additional to or different from those provided as part of the school's normal differentiated **curriculum.** The Code sets out the framework in an accessible form for all teachers, who may also need to involve and inform the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO). In addition to the main document, teachers also use accompanying support materials (known as a 'toolkit'), consisting of a set of practical pamphlets on implementing the Code.

The Code describes two stages at which a more focused assessment and provision operate, referred to as School Action and School Action Plus. At the level of *School Action,* teachers decide on the basis of working closely with a particular child and

consultation with parents that further support is required for him or her to make satisfactory progress in learning. The SENCO may advise that short-term support from outside agencies such as an educational psychologist or speech therapist is appropriate. Information about the child's academic progress is accumulated and evidence collected about previous educational initiatives. All the information is recorded on the child's personal record and an individual education plan (IEP) is produced specifying the educational strategy for the next stage of the pupil's education. *School Action Plus* involves a request for longer-term assistance from external agencies following a decision made by the SENCO and colleagues, in consultation with parents. Subsequently, a range of specialists may be approached and involved, depending on the nature of the need, and a new IEP is produced.

As the IEP is reviewed and monitored, the school may request a statutory assessment from the local education authority if the pupil has demonstrated a significant cause for concern. This assessment process may lead to a formal statement of special educational needs that will specify the additional support required or, in some cases, a move to specialist provision from outside the school. At this stage it is necessary to define more specifically the nature of the child's special need to facilitate decisions about the most suitable level of provision.

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COLLABORATION

Collaboration is the process by which pupils work together to reach a specified and predetermined **learning objective.** Collaboration is different from cooperation, which is a general term for courtesy and thoughtfulness. Consequently, children may be cooperative while not collaborating, though effective collaboration relies on a high level of cooperation between pupils. Work-related collaborative **interaction** between primary-aged pupils accounts for less than 15% of the total time they spend on learning, and much of the collaboration takes place in pairs rather than in larger groups. In a collaborative enterprise, each member of the group fulfils a particular role; for example, one child may be leader and orchestrate the proceedings, while another child may say little but contribute practical **skills.** Teachers have to determine how much pupils should record in writing or pictorially and make decisions about seating arrangements for the groups and the identification of targets for **achievement.** Teachers also think ahead about the way in which ideas might be disseminated after the end of the session and the next steps in the learning process.

One of the key issues in collaborative learning is the amount that pupils contribute to the discussion and how much being part of a group enhances the quality of their **thinking.** Dividing children into groups can be an organisational device to expedite the allocation of activities of differing levels of difficulty, each group containing children of similar **ability** ('differentiation') or for the purpose of combining pupil expertise. Teachers of young pupils often use group collaboration to promote social awareness and develop interpersonal sensitivity, expressed through listening to one another, taking turns, showing consideration, and so on. For example, children may work in groups to solve a mathematical problem, act out some improvised drama or produce a complex piece of artwork. Younger pupils might also be encouraged to **talk** about ways to ensure that every child is included in playground games during break (recess).

With older pupils, the teacher sometimes presents an ethical dilemma (based, perhaps, on an aspect of **citizenship)** in which the members of the group have to discuss the options and arrive at an agreed solution or position. The teacher outlines the issues, invites preliminary comments from the children and presents them with the problem to be discussed in groups of four or five children. Pupils may also collaborate to discuss an issue about which they rather than the teacher, feel strongly. For example, children have firm opinions about **friendship** patterns, **homework,** children's television programmes, playtime, school **rules** and associated topics, all of which provide fertile ground for exploring important principles. Separate groups may address the same issue and later combine to contribute their ideas; after further discussion a consensus is reached across the groups or, if not, the teacher summarises the conflicting positions to show children that having different views about issues is acceptable, providing there is evidence to support the assertions.

Teachers are not able to assume that children are capable of instant collaboration simply because they are put in groups to work together. Collaboration, like any other skill, has to be explained, developed and practised so that it can become refined into a powerful learning tool. While freedom of expression is important, children have to learn to show respect for other people's opinions while, as far as possible, expressing their own ideas openly. One of the most difficult attitudes for children to develop is having an open mind, such that they do not summarily dismiss views, pour scorn on unusual suggestions or marginalise other children in the group. Teachers stress with children the need for careful and respectful listening when working in pairs and in small groups, and as part of this preparation children are taught to summarise what others have said and ask sensible questions about their ideas. Meanwhile, adults enthuse about children's verbal contributions, offer new perspectives and add occasional comment to reignite discussion or provide a moderating influence when pupils make unbalanced statements.

The process of engaging mentally with a subject before offering an opinion or suggestion is a related skill that pupils need to develop before they can make an effective contribution to a collaborative venture. Younger children find this process difficult because they struggle to formulate ideas in their heads. Allowing children opportunities to **talk** to others enables them to move outside their immediate world, to recognise life's complexities, to gain selfconfidence, to learn from sharing ideas, to evaluate opinions and to find ways to offer support to their classmates.

Adeptness in collaboration is also an essential skill for teachers as they liaise with colleagues to discuss educational issues and make decisions. The process helps teachers

to explore and interrogate taken-for-granted aspects of practice and provides opportunities to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy. Teacher collaboration has to be authentic and not contrived, conducted within agreed professional boundaries and pedagogically sound; that is, it must be manageable and beneficial for teaching. Much of what passes for collaboration may lack rigour and lapse into low-level debate when it has the potential to offer opportunity for enquiry into aspects of practice and agreed strategies to enhance the educational provision within the school. It is even possible that a group of teachers' desire to conform or worries about upsetting colleagues may suppress more creative and spontaneous teaching ideas and suggestions for innovative practice that collaborative decision making could provide.

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COLLEGIALITY

The concept of collegiality, based on the root word 'college' to signify a society of scholars or an association of likeminded people, has become an integral feature of school life. Since the early 1980s the role of parents and school governors/board members in helping to shape priorities and determine the direction of education has been enshrined in legislation. A belief that the head of the school has to take the full responsibility for all the decisions that take place in a primary school is an outdated one. In fact, head teachers require and seek as much assistance as possible in the complex task of leading a school and ensuring its success.

Crucial to the ultimate success of any organisation is the commitment, motivation and satisfaction of the people who work there. In a primary school there are many more adults involved in educational provision than in the past, each person with a stake in its future and a specific contribution to make. Thus, teaching and ancillary staff, administrators and parents are invited to contribute directly (through attendance at meetings) or indirectly (through informal contact with the head teacher or one of the governors) when key decisions are being made.

Collegiality goes deeper than the mere establishment of systems and hierarchies. It is primarily rooted in the active participation of staff members in such a way that they feel that their views on school priorities are welcome and taken seriously. Most primary head teachers actively promote dialogue with colleagues: sharing plans, soliciting ideas, reviewing procedures and discussing the implications of proposed innovations, such as changing the structure of the school day.

It is not practical or desirable for every decision to be discussed and affirmed by every member of the staff. However, primary schools in which collegiality is genuinely espoused ensure that all major decisions are taken with full or majority support. Teachers are comfortable with a collegial approach if they feel that their views are not only sought but also taken into account when decisions are being made. Teachers are unimpressed with a situation in which a head teacher declares an intention to involve everyone but to all intents and purposes makes the decision in isolation.

Effective schools are places where teamwork and staff loyalty are embedded into the fabric of everything that takes place and teachers therefore need to be as sensitive to corporate endeavour and teamwork as to the technical competence to teach. All teachers have responsibilities to children, parents, governors, members of the community and colleagues, and are required to demonstrate a willingness to support one another in the educational endeavour. Adults in school respond to genuine expressions of appreciation and considerateness from colleagues, thereby creating a bank of goodwill and strong feelings of camaraderie that are essential for effective teamwork.

Trainee teachers contribute to the collegial atmosphere by displaying a willing, enthusiastic approach to the job, doing their best to value those around them and being patient with situations that they find irritating or frustrating. While a head teacher may strive to enhance the level of participation and involvement among the whole staff, trainee teachers need first to demonstrate their sense of vocation, professional attitude and teaching potential before they are fully accepted into the discussion and **decision making** forum. Most schools have methods for canvassing pupils' views by establishing forums, school councils (composed of pupil representatives) or inclass discussions and feedback.

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COMMUNICATION

Every adult working in primary education needs to possess strong interpersonal and communication **skills** exercised within a climate of patience, flexibility and dependability. Effective communicators are characterised by being able to make decisions with confidence, demonstrating a willingness to ask for help when needed and being open to suggestions and ideas to help their teaching. Teachers, trainees, ancillary staff and pupils have to persevere to interact with one another using supportive comments and showing a proper sense of decorum. They avoid confrontation by being sensitive to other people's viewpoints and showing sympathy for a position even if disagreeing with it, recognising that impressions are constantly being created through use of voice tone, gesture and attitude to what is being said. Class teachers and **assistants** learn children's names as quickly as possible, aware that the use of a name is a powerful tool in establishing and maintaining strong links with the individual concerned. In communicating with pupils, adults take account of their age and maturity and try to explain things calmly and carefully.

Every adult encounter with pupils in school involves establishing a rapid rapport with them. Teachers and assistants need to have insight into the things that children find significant if they wish to create effective communication networks that will enhance learning and maintain good relations. Children appreciate teachers who are fair, interested in them as individuals, transparent in their dealings, clear about their intentions, helpful in their explanations, non-judgemental in their attitude, yet unflinching in confronting unsatisfactory situations. They benefit from teachers who are prepared to listen carefully to what is said to them, leading to improvements in **self-esteem,** motivation and academic success.

To communicate well, teachers have to take account of the speed with which they **talk,** the frequency and length of pauses and the smoothness of their delivery. In this regard they have to bear in mind the likely significance of, and differences between, fast and confident speech. Fast speech can be used to disguise adult insecurity as it discourages interruptions and overwhelms the pupils with a flow of words, whereas confident speech is rich in character and interest. Effective teachers vary the speed of their delivery and use deliberate pauses while they establish extended eye contact pauses. Whatever the nature or intention of the communicative act, all teachers benefit from giving careful attention to a range of practical considerations, the first of which is audibility, which can be impaired by slurring of words and poor articulation. Careful articulation, firm use of consonants and the correct forming of vowels assist audibility.

The second skill relates to pace of speech. Inexperienced teachers sometimes speak too quickly owing to nervousness; others speak too slowly and solemnly in an effort to be precise. Some change of pace to emphasise specific points and variations in inflection to indicate a conclusion (downward inflection) or invite speculation (upward inflection) can also be used to good effect. The third skill is the selective use of pauses that offer pupils the opportunity to think and capture pupils' attention if mixed with regular speech.

However, the excessive use of pauses and hesitations, such as ‘uhm’ and ‘like er’ and ‘you know’ irritates children. The fourth skill is injecting enthusiasm, transmitted through physical and mental energy, accompanied by appropriate gestures and the employment of dynamic verbs to inspire pupils rather than bland ones. The fifth skill is using ‘bright’ eye contact to engage pupils, demonstrating a personal interest in them and inviting their participation. The final communication skill is adopting an upright stance with good posture to indicate alertness and a resolute disposition.

Communicative acts are important in **behaviour** management and discipline. Children are very observant to variations in teachers’ moods and the way that this impacts on their attitude and behaviour. Children favour teachers who do not resort to sanctions without first exploring other avenues of dealing with a situation, those who allow pupils to talk without interrupting them and those that explain work clearly without sounding irritated if the explanation has to be repeated. Children like teachers who are friendly and sympathetic, have a sense of **humour** and are interesting people, while still able to maintain class discipline without employing fierce methods. Teachers that use sarcasm and hectoring are particularly disliked. Thankfully, the use of **encouragement** and praise forms the bulk of adult-pupil verbal communication in school.

Communicating with parents is an essential element of the educator’s role, both formally through planned meetings to discuss pupil progress and give information about proposed events, and informally through casual encounters that happen before and after school. Parents, guardians and relatives of younger primary-age pupils are most likely to have regular informal contact with teachers and support staff as they accompany the children to and from school. Parents of older primary-age children are more often constrained by work commitments. The growth in ‘dawn until dusk’ schools that provide extended childcare facilities in addition to the regular teaching day might increase the frequency of contact with parents. One measure by which parents judge school staff, especially teachers, is the quality of their receptiveness, pleasant manner and willingness to offer helpful comment about the child’s progress.

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COMPETITION

Competition has always existed between pupils in school and out of school and will continue to do so. Parents contribute to this competitive element when, for example, they ask their children which book they are **reading** and how it contrasts with those other pupils are reading in the class, compare reports with other parents, scan lists to see where a particular school is placed in a league table of performance and urge their children to work harder to gain better grades. During sports' days, parents cheer and urge their children to run faster, jump higher or get ahead of the others. Pupil **activities** are often naturally competitive, but sometimes adults and older children can become extremely intensive about winning; for example, junior-age children become animated and exuberant about team games.

Although competition provides an important element of a pupil's desire to accomplish more and aspire to greater heights of scholastic and sporting **achievement,** children also need time to relax and have fun. Many parents want their children to develop their experience beyond the realm of academic subjects, which is partly the reason why so many children study dance, singing, piano, painting and so on, even though only a very small number of them will become professional artists or musicians etc.

The introduction of extra classes to refine and rehearse and reinforce **knowledge** is commonplace in school, especially sessions that are run after hours for children to master weaker areas in English and mathematics and help them to improve their national test results. In addition, most pupils receive regular **homework** from the time they enter the formal school system. Out of school some children are encouraged and cajoled by parents to undertake additional academic activities to ensure that they are one step ahead of their classmates and better placed to claim a place in the best schools, colleges and universities. Even very young children soon detect that one way to gain adult approval is to be performing near or at the top of the class. While excessive competition may be unsatisfactory it is equally true that a lack of competitive stimulus often leaves pupils intellectually dissatisfied and underachieving.

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CONCEPTS

A concept can be defined as the idea a person possesses about a particular class of objects (animate or inanimate) or events, grouped together on the basis of their common characteristics. A child initially makes sense of the world through concepts such as big things, small things, wetness, dryness, and so forth. Children also classify things that they like and dislike, and make sense of new situations by referring to concepts that they already hold. For instance, very young children may begin to cry and repeat that they do not like something because they are unable to make sense of it using their existing experience of life. Thus, the presence of a real circus clown making squeaky noises, for example, may initially frighten a 3-year-old girl because she has never had such an experience other than via the medium of television in the safety of the home. The parent, laughing gently at the child's disquiet, may attempt to reassure her by saying things like: 'It's only a man dressed up.' However, if 'pretending' or 'dressing up' are unfamiliar concepts to her, she will still take a lot of convincing.

Concepts compose the main ideas and principles that are important to a learning experience, often referred to as 'understanding'. In lesson preparation, teachers identify the concepts from previous teaching that require reinforcing or revising, and those that are being developed or introduced. Conceptual development is difficult to pinpoint in a lesson plan, as it encapsulates a large number of variables and modes and reinforces the principle that understanding is gained over time. Deep understanding of a concept is promoted through careful explanation, engagement with practical tasks, discussing the relevant issues, trying things out, making errors, adjustments, revision, rehearsal and repetition. Every teacher has experienced the frustration that comes when pupils, especially younger children, appear to understand the work one day, only to have forgotten by the next.

It is important for primary teachers to understand concept formation because it provides four pieces of vital information that impact on learning. First, children's failure to understand something may be borne of the fact that they have not yet reached the point where they can make sense of the situation or event. Teachers have to be careful not to confuse children's unwillingness to think with their inability to think in particular ways that are necessary for understanding the problem. For instance, 7-year-old pupils can observe and accept that white light splits into a rainbow of colours but be unable to grasp the key concept of refraction or offer any explanation for the phenomenon. Similarly, understanding concepts like 'guilt' and 'innocence' are grasped slowly through repeated exposure to illustrative examples that provide children with a structure within which to explore the concept. Second, children are often helped by visual aids, the opportunity to work practically or experiment. Teachers are faced with the difficult choice about how much to allow children to investigate new experiences and how much to inform them directly. Third, appropriate use of vocabulary performs a vital role in assisting children to grasp a concept. The use of advanced terminology will only serve to confuse children, whereas straightforward language, while not necessarily conveying the complete

meaning, will allow children to begin the mental processing that ultimately leads to understanding. Fourth, children need time and space to grapple with difficult concepts. The pace of interactive teaching that characterises so many **lessons** in primary schools does not allow for the **thinking** time needed for deeper understanding. When a teacher asks a class whether they understand something and they chorus 'yes' in return, each child will understand in ways substantially or subtly different from every other child.

Concept development is closely related to children's age but also to their maturity and life experiences. Pupils in the same class may be of similar age but have greater or less understanding because of their educational and socialising experiences in and out of school. Some young children have a profound grasp of moral **dilemmas** and societal challenges that are normally equated with much older pupils. Other young children make astounding progress in formal learning and tackle work that would tax someone a number of years their senior. These variations in conceptual sophistication may be attributed to an innate **ability** (i.e. a belief that some children are more able because they were born with superior brains) or they may be seen as a consequence of a child's access to informed adults and opportunities to benefit from a variety of enriching life experiences.

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CONSTRUCTIVISM

Constructivist theory suggests that pupils learn best when thought and experience interact, resulting in the sequential development of more complex understanding (referred to as cognitive structures). The most influential constructivist was Jean Piaget (1896–1980), the Swiss psychologist and teacher who argued that children accommodate their existing **thinking** into new experiences and gradually assimilate aspects of the new experience to construct a more detailed and accurate understanding. Piaget suggested that the construction of these stages follows a distinctive sequence, characterised by the type of thinking the child uses at each stage.

Pupils' learning needs vary with age and are characterised in specific ways. Younger primary children tend to learn through concrete (hands-on) experiences, be less aware of other people's perspectives and the consequences of actions, and more egotistic. Older primary children tend to be more flexible, accommodating of other people's opinions,

sensitive to the way things relate to one another and able to extract principles from a series of instances.

The impact of constructivist theory in classrooms has been to emphasise the need for children to **play,** discover things for themselves and carry out practical investigations. The notion of 'childcentred' learning, the integrated day (where subject boundaries and timetables are flexible) and stimulating classroom environments are, in part, based on constructivist theory. Constructivism puts children into the role of active participants in learning in which they exercise some choice about the work they do and how they carry it out.

During the mid twentieth century one of the unfortunate consequences of constructivist theory was in restricting the progress of more able primary children because teachers did not consider them 'ready' to progress to the next stage. In fact, although conceptual sequencing is ordinal (i.e. sequential) children move through the stages at different rates. Consequently, teachers now encourage pupils to reach their full potential by giving them opportunity to progress as far and fast as possible, providing their present understanding is secure and they know how to transfer it to new situations.

Constructivist theory is also associated with a form of teaching in which the teacher takes on the role of facilitator in meeting the children's resource needs, advising them about alternatives and steering them into new areas of learning. Critics point to this teaching approach's lack of structure, the level of responsibility entrusted to the children and the difficulty in monitoring subject coverage. Most recently, one casualty of this widespread criticism has been a reduction in the amount that children have been allowed to experiment with practical and cerebral ideas and learn through discovery. However, if children are given the opportunity to construct their understanding through practical and experiential means it stimulates their curiosity, enhances their motivation and can lead to innovative approaches when solving problems.

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CONTEXT

Learning does not take place in a vacuum. It relies on a purposeful **learning climate** to motivate children and make them feel that the effort is worthwhile. Context refers to the prevailing physical, practical and emotional circumstances that influence pupils' capacity to learn and develop. Identifying the contextual factors that contribute to, or detract from, effective learning is difficult, owing to the distinctiveness of each situation. For example,

a child in class A with teacher X may do better or worse than in class B with teacher Y depending on the nature of the work, the adult-pupil relationship and the home circumstances.

The most significant contextual factor is the person of the class teacher, whose influence pervades every aspect of classroom life. Thus, one teacher's approach inspires and encourages a class, while another teacher creates unease and restless behaviour with the same class in the same room. Teachers are obviously interested in creating an environment that facilitates learning rather than detracts from it. They have a major role and responsibility to provide these conditions but some elements are not within their influence, such as the impact **of friendship** patterns, family events and health.

Apart from people and facilities, the most important parts of a school system that create the context are its organisation, **curriculum** and instructional materials and technologies. Decisions about the use of time and the allocation of room space and personnel are made to benefit pupils' learning; however, learning can equally be constrained by their lack of availability. Consequently, the context that an individual teacher tries to establish is directly affected by whole-school decisions (how time is configured, space allotted, staff hired and assigned) as well as the availability of resources (learning materials) and instructional technology (IT support).

The vast majority of primary schools promote active learning for all pupils in a caring environment and are committed to equity, empowerment, independent **thinking,** excellence and individuality. The key purpose of each school is to promote learning and teaching in a safe and supportive environment, supported by policies and practices with regard to monitoring pupil progress, behaviour management, countering harassment, monitoring pupils' attendance and ensuring their safety.

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CONTROL

The terminology used for class control issues varies. The word **behaviour** tends to be used with respect to the child's actions and 'control' and 'discipline' with respect to the teacher's actions. That is, the teacher attempts to influence the child's behaviour through effective discipline in the belief that this is the most effective way of exercising control.

However, the imposition of external constraints may have limited long-term value inasmuch as children ultimately need to exercise self-control rather than have it imposed on them. Teachers have an obligation to maintain discipline in the classroom and provide an environment for pupils to exercise self-control, but this is different from coercion. The only exception to this principle is in matters **of health and safety,** where adults often need to insist on rigid conformity to **rules** and procedures.

There are a number of negative terms associated with control, such as 'indiscipline', which occurs when children know what they are doing and choose not to do it, and 'bad behaviour', which occurs when children do not know *how* to behave. In the latter case, it is pointless for a teacher to tell a child to behave unless the child understands what behaving means. Teachers try to operate within a rule framework that can be enforced and easily understood by pupils and through which children can gradually strengthen their own selfcontrol. Nevertheless, adults and pupils have to interpret rules within a particular classroom and school **context,** and effective teachers take time to explain and discuss the degree of latitude permitted.

The vast majority of children want to behave well but adults do not help this process if they are harsh, unreasonable, condescending or insincere. For instance, a teaching strategy that teachers can use for maintaining control is through the use of bogus questions, by employing the word 'really' in phrases such as 'Do you really need to chat to Imogene?' where the intended meaning is 'Stop talking to Imogene.' Similarly in 'I am not really sure that it is really that important, is it?' where the intended meaning is 'I do not think that it is important.' The improper use of a question can even be used to avoid confronting poor standards of work. For example, 'Have you really done your best?' is an indirect way of stating displeasure. Although every teacher occasionally employs questions as a control strategy, its excessive use can lead to children becoming confused and uneasy about the genuineness of all the other questions they are asked and invokes stagnation rather than fostering effective **communication.** The teacher who asks if the child really needs to chat to a friend is better advised to make a direct statement, such as 'Amy, please don't talk to Abigail, and finish your writing. Do you need any help?'

Classroom control is assisted by teachers being firm but tolerant, natural and sincere. Teachers win pupils' cooperation when they take a genuine interest in them, listen to what they say and respond appropriately, praise, explain calmly avoid nagging and trust children to be sensible. Although such an approach takes longer to secure order than coercion does, it provides for a more secure **learning climate** and stores up a bank of pupil goodwill from which teachers can draw throughout the year.

Many control problems are avoided through thorough lesson preparation and by teachers practising the art of mentally envisioning the session from start to finish, as a lesson cannot run smoothly if it is punctuated by stops-and-starts in dealing with trivial matters that should have been foreseen. Not only do diversions disrupt the lesson, but also they exhaust the teacher and create an unsettled atmosphere. Teachers have to strike a balance between allowing pupils 'freedom to'attempt something and 'freedom from' constraints of any kind. Obvious contraventions of rules have to be dealt with but wise teachers find that it pays to take time finding out the facts before making accusations. Most incidents can be dealt with without causing humiliation or loss of face for child or teacher.

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CREATIVITY

Creativity releases pupils from the rigid constraints of a formalised scheme of work to explore and investigate by active participation in genuine events and enterprises that delight them. Primary children of all ages are stimulated by hearing stories from real books, purely for pleasure, without then having to complete a worksheet. They prosper when they meet poets and authors instead of just seeing photocopied extracts of their work. Theatre attendance, visits to art galleries, museums, exhibitions and concerts all help to stir pupils' enthusiasm, promote purposeful conversation, excite their emotions and extend their horizons. Primary-aged children develop a sense of wonder by spending regular time outdoors to appreciate seasonal change, by tending a garden and by collaborating on projects. Methods for creative teaching and learning therefore include imaginative use of the school grounds, close involvement with the local community and an emphasis on children gaining direct experience of people, places and events.

There has been a lot of debate about whether creativity is an innate **ability** that is possessed or not possessed, or a skill that can be developed, caught, taught or wrought. Two key issues underpin a search for answers: first, whether a creative child behaves non-creatively in particular situations and creatively in others; second, whether an apparently non-creative child can discover a reservoir of creativity that no one (including the child) realised existed until that moment.

Teachers are sometimes categorised as creative types and noncreative types but this simple polarity fails to recognise the complexities involved in defining creativity. Teachers may find it easy to introduce creativity into their teaching in one school situation but fail to do so in another owing to the prevailing conditions that release or suppress their creative tendencies. A popular view among education specialists is that creativity is not a fixed entity but one that relies upon judgement, discernment and confidence to produce new and original ideas.

Creativity does not occur in a vacuum, but relies upon a framework of understanding, skill acquisition and **knowledge** that facilitates and supports a climate of problem solving, investigation and experimentation. True creativity is characterised by teaching that takes account of every child's interests and styles of learning and encourages them to employ their abilities in new contexts. Creativity is therefore closely linked to **thinking,** which in turn is related to freedom of opportunity, for thinking can start at any time and lead in many directions if given opportunity. Creativity can therefore flourish in any subject area, providing the conditions are suitably unconstrained by external demands and requirements (such as preparing for national tests).

The very best primary education is rooted in maintaining a sensible balance between mastery of essential **skills** and promoting activities that allow children to explore and interrogate ideas actively. Two of the most influential educationists in the UK with respect to creativity, Bob Jeffrey and Anna Craft, argue that there is a need for not only teaching creatively and teaching for creativity but also creative learning. That is, that children are liberated to engage with learning in such a way that it allows for their proclivities and instincts. This issue is of particular relevance to boys, of which a sizeable minority will happily discuss, experiment and compute, but may show a reluctance to work systematically and provide a written record of their findings.

Views about the factors that characterise creativity vary though it is often thought of with regard to arts' activities (painting, drawing, making models, ceramics, and so forth) and examples of creative practice are often found in non-core areas; that is, all subject areas apart from mathematics, English and science that were formerly and rather oddly known as the 'foundation' subjects. Creativity seems to lend itself more naturally to subjects that are not desk-bound owing to the problem-solving component that often characterises work in these areas. Thus, children express their feelings in drama, experiment with models in technology, work out solutions in PE and pour out their inner consciousness through painting.

It is in the day-to-day business of teaching primary mathematics and **literacy** that the biggest challenge lies for teachers to sponsor and encourage creativity. First and foremost, teachers have to ensure that the work is interesting for the children, with the potential to be inspiring. Second, teachers have to offer pupils clear direction in their learning without unduly constraining their enthusiasm and thirst for understanding. Third, teachers open up possibilities for children to think deeply, engage with challenges and use their ingenuity to solve problems. A systematic approach to teaching does not exclude promoting imaginative engagement with the lesson content; on the contrary it stimulates expressiveness and awareness of possibilities.

Creative accomplishment is facilitated by good teaching, rather than hindered by it, as children need both opportunity to explore and adult guidance to exploit their creative potential. Merely being given opportunity to experiment with ideas without basic skills and adult intervention is more likely to lead to chaos than to facilitate creativity. Too little guidance may lead to aimlessness. Too little opportunity will almost certainly lead to pupil frustration. On the other hand, too much skills training runs the risk of divorcing the child from the circumstances in which the skills are employed. Too much guidance can reduce self-sufficiency. Too much opportunity may give children the impression that learning is a random process.

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CROSS-CURRICULAR WORK (CURRICULUM INTEGRATION)

Most definitions of cross-curricular work, also known as curriculum integration, emphasise how combinations of subjects are used within project or thematic work, incorporating a wide range of sources, related **concepts** and flexible schedules. Cross-curricular work is closely related to interdisciplinary teaching, thematic teaching and synergistic teaching. The integration element emphasises the fusion of ideas and concepts within and across subject areas and broader life experiences in an attempt to make education more relevant and meaningful for children.

By teaching the **curriculum** as an integrated whole, pupils' view of learning is likely to be more rounded, whereas if teachers emphasise the separation and discreteness of subjects, it can establish artificial barriers in younger children's minds and they may fail to make secure connections between knowledge components. Cross-curricular work is seen as a way to make education relevant for pupils by establishing links between the humanities (history, geography, RE), communication arts, natural sciences, mathematics, social studies, music and art. The things that pupils learn and apply in one area are then used to reinforce and expand their learning in other areas, organised in such a way that it cuts across subject barriers, affiliating fragments of subject curricula into a composite whole.

Supporters of an integrated approach to teaching and learning reject a philosophy of education that is rooted in **memory** and recitation of isolated fragments of **knowledge** and promotes the construction of more meaningful concepts and connections between them. They argue that crossing and combining traditional subject boundaries into one active project reflects pupils' experience of the world and goes beyond a superficial understanding of isolated facts to create insights that are established through seeing the interconnectedness of all learning. The increase in the world's complexity means that pupils need to develop an adeptness to draw from different areas of knowledge and solve problems that involve many and various factors. Pressures on primary school teachers have tended to result in subject-specific teaching, rigid timetables and teacherdirected learning, and treating subject areas as discrete learning units has sometimes made it difficult for teachers to relate the content to pupils' whole-life experiences. By contrast, an integrated view of learning enables children to make sense of complex issues and information by seeking solutions located in familiar life contexts.

A cross-curricular approach has the potential to offer pupils greater opportunities to explore, imagine, deviate from the norm and engage with concepts that span subjects, supported by: (1) Good quality **communication** through speaking, listening, **reading** and writing. (2) The practical application of number, involving a range of mental calculation techniques and the **ability** to apply them within a variety of contexts. (3) IT, using a

range of information sources and ICT tools to find, analyse, interpret, evaluate and present information for a range of purposes. (4) Collaborating with other pupils by way of paired, group and whole-class discussions. (5) Reflecting on and critically evaluating work to ascertain what has been learned and what remains problematic. (6) Problem solving expressed through identifying and employing key strategies in finding answers. An integrated approach offers children more space and opportunity to pursue their interests and enthusiasm, allowing maximum freedom to explore ideas, as well as the motivation and capacity to grasp interrelated information, systems and structures. Proponents of integration argue that it is the most effective means of developing abilities that children will need in the future, and that integration based on these principles is an educational approach that prepares children for lifelong learning.

Opponents of integration argue that it is insufficiently rigorous, especially in ensuring that children have focused and regular opportunities to gain fundamental skills in key subjects. They insist that too much choice allows pupils to avoid areas of learning that they find hard, thereby inculcating poor work habits and attitudes.

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CURRICULUM

It is far from easy to find an agreed definition for 'the curriculum' other than as the sum total of what pupils need to learn. The term derives from a Latin word meaning a racing chariot, based on the notion of a racetrack or course to be run and, by association, a course of study. Over the past century a variety of definitions have been proffered, including one in the 1904 *Suggestions for teachers code:*

> The curriculum of the primary school…should provide a training in the English language…handwriting to secure speed as well as legibility; arithmetic, including practical measurements; drawing from objects, **memory** and brush drawing…geography, history, music, hygiene and physical training…and moral **instruction,** given both directly and indirectly.

By 1931 the Consultative Committee was suggesting that the curriculum should be thought out in terms of **activities** and experience rather than facts to be stored. In 1985

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools offered a sweeping definition, claiming that a school's curriculum 'consists of all those activities designed or encouraged within its organisational framework to promote the intellectual, personal, social and physical development of its pupils' (para 11). More recently, curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA/DfEE 2000) offers a very broadly based definition: 'The term curriculum is used to describe everything children do, see, hear or feel in their setting, both planned and unplanned' (p. 1).

The scope and content of the school curriculum has also changed over the years, as have the names of the different government organisations regulating national policy. Only a generation ago, teachers were broadly at liberty to make their own decisions about what to teach and how to teach it. In fact, the freedom that teachers enjoyed to organise learning in a way that suited the classroom circumstances was considered to be an essential element of their professional autonomy. Since 1989, the National Curriculum (NC) has operated in all state-maintained schools and many private ones in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (through the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, DENI).

In Scotland there are national, non-statutory guidelines for Scottish local authorities and schools. They cover the structure, content and assessment of the curriculum in primary schools and in the first two years of secondary education (ages 5 to 14 years). The curriculum is divided into five broad areas: language, mathematics, environmental studies, expressive arts, and religious and moral education. For each curricular area there are broad attainment outcomes, each with a number of strands or aspects of learning that pupils experience. The aim of the 5–14 programme is to promote the teaching of a broad, coherent and balanced curriculum that offers all pupils continuity and progression as they move through school. The curriculum in Scotland is not set by law. It is a flexible system that places responsibility on individual education authorities and schools. National guidelines direct teachers by describing the subject areas which are to be covered but they do not give detailed instructions about exactly what and how these areas are to be taught to pupils.

The reason for the introduction of national curricula is three-fold. First, to ensure that learning is systematically structured and not randomly designed. Second, to ensure that those children who move school are able to continue their education without repeating work they have already covered. Third, to ensure that children's progress can be closely monitored through national tests. There have been a number of versions of the NC for England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1989 and the present edition is referred to as NC2000 to signify the year of its adoption. In particular, there has been considerable emphasis upon the teaching of English (through **literacy)** and mathematics (through **numeracy).** In 1999 a Foundation Stage curriculum was published for children aged 4 and 5 in nursery and reception classes.

Mathematics in the NC2000 has three elements for pupils aged 5 to 7 years: (1) using and applying mathematics, (2) number and algebra, and (3) shape, space and measures. In addition, children aged 7 to 11 have to study a fourth element: handling data. There are also four elements in science: scientific **enquiry,** life processes and living things, materials and their properties, and physical processes. All other (non-core) subjects have a single element. Guidelines about personal, social and health education, and about **citizenship,** are also provided in the NC document. At Key Stages 1 and 2 the

knowledge, skills and understanding that all children should gain include developing confidence and responsibility and making the most of their abilities, preparing an active role as citizens, developing a healthy, safer lifestyle, good relationships and respecting the differences between people.

National curricula are explicit about the overall aims and **values** of primary education in that the school curriculum should aim to provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and to achieve, promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. In the UK (with the exception of Scotland) the curriculum contains a common structure and design for all subjects divided into **Key Stages,** for which there is a *programme of study*. This programme sets out what has to be taught in the subject to equip children with the necessary knowledge, skills and understanding and the **context,** activities, areas of study and range of experiences through which learning should take place.

Together with the programmes of study, notes of guidance, definitions and links with ICT and with other subject areas are appended. In addition there are *attainment targets* for each subject, setting out all that pupils of different abilities and maturity are expected to have gained by the end of each Key Stage. At the primary phase, each attainment target consists of six *level descriptions* of increasing difficulty; at secondary school level the number increases to eight. English has three attainment targets for children at Key Stages 1 and 2: speaking and listening, **reading** and writing. Each level description describes the types and range of understanding that pupils working at that level should demonstrate. On the basis of children's attainments, teachers have to decide which description best fits their performance. It is anticipated that the majority of children aged 7 years will reach level 2 and the majority of 11-year-olds will reach level 4 in English and mathematics, though there is government pressure for more able children to attain higher grades. Many primary teachers complain that an emphasis on improved test scores narrows the curriculum at the expense of the more creative elements such as drama and art. In the Scottish 5–14 curriculum, most strands have attached to them attainment targets at five or six levels: A-E or A-F. Assessment to attain these target levels can be taken by individuals or groups as and when their teacher considers them ready. Whole classes or year groups do not sit tests; they are designed such that teachers can use them as a confirmation of the progress that pupils have made.

The curriculum requires teachers to have due regard for **inclusion** principles that incorporate setting suitable learning challenges for all pupils so that they can experience success. This process necessitates that teachers respond to children's diverse needs and facilitate learning and assessment for individuals and for groups of pupils. These requirements mean that those children with learning difficulties and disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, are equally entitled to a relevant, broad and balanced curriculum. Children from all social backgrounds, gender and races must receive the highest quality of education, regardless of their physical and mental condition.

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DECISION MAKING

The governing body/school board and head teacher, supported by the local education authority and, in the case of church foundation schools, the appointed religious representatives, make most of the major decisions that impact upon the school community. Decision making tends to fall into one of two broad types, the first of which concerns how to implement statutory requirements (such as **health and safety** legislation), the second of which concerns internal school matters (such as organising the curriculum or the structure of the school day). Most primary head teachers involve staff, parents and pupils in making decisions wherever appropriate, in the belief that collaborative decision making is more effective than single decisions. Many primary schools promote the involvement of the children in making procedural and practical decisions that have a direct impact upon their lives (such as where to site a school garden or games suitable for the break time), often by establishing a 'school council' that consists of delegates drawn from each class.

Teachers make hundreds of decisions every day about how to allocate their time, express ideas to pupils, introduce new concepts and teach fresh **skills.** They have to decide when to assist pupils and when to leave them alone, where to store resources, which teaching strategies to employ, how to handle a recalcitrant child, and so on. Other decisions involve judgements about the allocation of grades or marks, classroom management, **curriculum** implementation, task **differentiation** and pupil assessment.

The decisions that teachers make are rooted in their beliefs and **values** about educational provision and professional conduct. The wisdom and efficacy of moral choices that teachers make to ensure fairness and equity, the majority of which have to be made rapidly, are major factors in determining the quality of a teacher's relationship with pupils and colleagues. There are also four considerations that teachers are sensitive to when making decisions about classroom practice. (1) Whether the decision reflects their beliefs about education. (2) Whether the decision is pragmatic and results in greater efficiency. (3) Whether the decision is supported by empirical evidence; for example, data from formal tests to support a particular **teaching approach.** (4) Whether the decision takes sufficient account of external requirements. Teachers' decisions are not only based upon their ideals but need to be set against a variety of constraints, such as the views of the head teacher, government stipulations and community priorities.

Trainee teachers also have to make numerous daily decisions but they are constrained by the beliefs and value-system of the class teacher and the school policies about (for instance) discipline and pupil work habits. For inexperienced teachers the process of decision making requires thoughtful engagement with the issues through discussion and analysis of issues, informed by personal experience and advice from others. Teachers in training tend to draw insights about teaching from other practitioners and gradually develop a framework for action honed by time spent in school. In situations where qualified teachers have convictions that differ from those of the trainee, active dialogue

and a degree of compromise are necessary to maintain consistency and harmony in the classroom.

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DIFFERENTIATION

All classes and groups of pupils contain children of mixed **ability,** slower and faster workers, less and more intelligent, keen and apathetic, confident and insecure. Regardless of the basis on which pupils are divided, each group will contain children whose varied learning and academic needs have to be taken into account in planning and teaching. Differentiation is based on the belief that pupils differ in the extent to which they can absorb information, grasp ideas and apply themselves to a task. Some children have sharp minds and mental agility; others are ponderous and slow. Some children are fascinated by facts; others need to be inspired before they demonstrate any interest in a topic. A small number of children are exceptionally clever and capable of high **achievement** or find learning difficult and require additional adult support. Some children are talented in areas such as music, art, drama or PE; others excel in mathematics and English but have little natural **ability** in other subject areas; yet others are good at everything or, if they are not, possess the character and perseverance to succeed. It is not easy for teachers to ensure that their teaching and the tasks and activities they set pupils to complete will meet the diversity of learning needs because the extent of a pupil's knowledge can never be fully understood by any teacher. The best that teachers can do is to monitor pupils' progress, talk regularly to them about the subject content and assess their progress systematically through formal and informal means.

There are two main types of differentiation used by primary teachers. The first type is where all pupils are given similar tasks to do but the expectation differs according to the pupil's academic competence. The second type of differentiation is where pupils of different academic proficiency are given distinctive tasks and activities on the same subject but with differing levels of challenge. This second form of differentiation often involves pupils of similar competence across several parallel classes being taught together ('setting'). Setting allows the planning to be more specifically targeted towards the academic needs of a narrower ability range of pupils, though even within a single group there will still be considerable variation in aptitude for learning.

Every teacher has to take account of the resource and time implications of trying to develop too many tasks and activities for children in an attempt to cater for everybody's

individual needs. An individually tailored **curriculum** is impractical other than for classes numbered in single figures. Differentiated planning must rely on a satisfactory grouping of children such that each individual child in the group can cope with the demands of the work provided.

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DILEMMAS

Every day teachers face numerous problems and challenges that cannot easily be solved because competing influences produce a situation where straightforward solutions are not available (a 'dilemma'). The polarised language used to describe dilemmas that exist for teachers in areas of their work such as **teaching approach** and discipline can set up unhelpful dichotomies that oversimplify the intricacies of classroom life and the many stark choices facing teachers at each point of the day. However, although they can lead to inertia, dilemmas can also help to promote an understanding of issues impinging upon educational decisions because they help to clarify competing views. The unpredictability of school life means that it is preferable to view dilemmas as a vehicle to accommodate and explore uncertainties and contradictions in education. Every class of children, staff and school ethos is different and every working environment influences, and is influenced by, the unique characteristics of the situation. Consequently, the **context** in which teachers work must be taken into account when interpreting situations, allowing for a consideration of the larger issues that are embedded in everyday experiences of adults and pupils.

Teachers face numerous emotional dilemmas in their work. They gain immense satisfaction from teaching, yet they are aware that they can never give to the job what it demands. The tension between gaining satisfaction and the limitations imposed upon staff by time factors, deadlines and competing commitments is an issue faced daily by everyone who works in primary schools. Despite the commendable aim of achieving a work—life balance through remodelling the workforce, it is common for primary teachers to admit that the energy they expend in performing the job prevents them from leading a normal life outside school. Teachers are also subject to the aspirations and desires of other interest groups, including the head teacher, governors, community, and local and central government. They have to accommodate the competing demands made by these groups while remaining true to their personal and professional convictions.

Dilemmas exist for teachers in that the majority of them make their career choice based on a desire to make a difference to the lives of children by having the opportunity to show initiative and employ a high degree of autonomy through the medium of teaching. On the other hand, they are also conscious of the constraints placed upon them from the agreed programmes of study, internal school guidelines, parental demands and government legislation that stress the importance of test results. Thus, teachers have a personal agenda for teaching and know what they would like to achieve, but at the same time they have to take close account of other competing agendas.

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EARLY YEARS

Early years is a term used to describe children who are not yet of formal school age but are receiving a recognised form of education in nurseries, playgroups or pre-school centres. The development of a Foundation Stage **curriculum** for pre-school pupils in most parts of the UK (QCA/DfES 2000) and the accompanying handbook of guidance is recognition of the fact that young children require a special type of education that forms the basis for all that follows. The justification for the large amount of funding that has been allocated to this phase of education is underpinned by a belief that pre-school education intervention is amply rewarded by later academic success and increased social stability.

Children who start primary school with significant disadvantages in areas such as language and **communication,** attention span, **reading** and writing, and social finesse receive additional support through the UK government's Primary Excellence in Cities project that focuses on working closely with parents. The project is linked to another initiative, *Sure Start,* a programme that aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by increasing the availability of childcare for all children and improving the emotional development of young children. *Sure Start* also aims to support parents in their aspirations towards employment by the development of helping services in disadvantaged areas, alongside financial help for parents to afford childcare. Primary Excellence in Cities has four main objectives:

- To target the most needy children and build on the work of the *Sure Start* scheme, involving parents as much as possible.
- To bridge the transition from early years' settings to primary school, and from the Foundation Stage to **Key Stage** 1 (KS1, for children aged 5+ to 7 years) by offering needy children extra support.
- To utilise the expertise of experienced teachers in training and equipping other teachers and other staff in early years' settings
- To support parents in developing their children's **skills,** making packs and videos available for parents to explain what children are learning at school and how they can be helped at home.

Six developmental priming mechanisms to enhance learning have been suggested for young primary-age children. First, encouraging them to explore their environment. Second, close involvement of adults to assist with basic intellectual and social training. Third, celebrating new expertise that children acquire. Fourth, rehearsing and expanding their new skills. Fifth, protecting children from inappropriate **punishment** or ridicule for developmental advances. Sixth, stimulating language and **communication.**

In the UK, discussion about formalising further the assessment of children at the Foundation Stage is ongoing. For example, the DfES is promoting the use of an assessment framework to include personal, social and emotional development. Improvements in young children's language and **literacy** involve teaching strategies and

learning opportunities to stimulate thought, link sounds and letters, and gain mastery in reading and writing. Mathematical development includes using numbers as labels for counting, calculating, shape, space and measures, **knowledge** and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. Practitioners working with disadvantaged young children need to show their achievements in percentage form, using the following scale ranges: 0–3, working below the goals; 4–7, working within them; 8–9, meeting or exceeding them.

A Foundation Stage *Profile* (QCA/03/1006) was published in January 2003 to build on the existing curriculum guidance for teachers, emphasising the key role of skilful and well-planned observations in providing reliable assessment information on young children and setting out a way of summarising young children's achievements at the end of the Foundation Stage. These data provide information for parents and teachers of 5-year-olds (new entrants). The document contains guidance on how teachers can develop a broad curriculum, respond flexibly to children's needs and track their progress. It also outlines areas of learning, assessment scales and how to record children's development in the form of a profile.

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EDUCATIONAL VISITS

Educational visits are the most exciting part of the school year for many children and schools usually have a well-ordered programme of visits to museums, landmarks, ancient monuments and adventure courses. Careful planning and organisation is essential and the energy expended on making the appropriate practical arrangements is considerable. Strict rules govern charges made to parents for curriculum visits arranged by schools and no child may be excluded for financial reasons. Many teachers use a visit as a starting point for the production of stimulating displays and investigative work. Trainee and newly appointed teachers normally collaborate with a more experienced colleague jointly to plan the enterprise.

Educational visits and other field activities provide a wonderful opportunity for children to learn things first-hand and to seal adult-pupil relationships in an informal

setting. Trip organisers have to send letters home detailing the itinerary, receive permission slips from parents, order transport, check out insurance and liaise with colleagues whose lessons are going to be affected by pupil absence. A good practice guide, *Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits* (DfEE 1998a) is designed to help head teachers, teachers and governors to safeguard pupils from potential hazards. The guide includes chapters on legal responsibilities and a number of model forms that can be copied or adapted. A three-part supplement to the good practice guide was produced in 2002 (http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/healthandsafety):

- *Standards for local education authorities in overseeing educational visits* sets out good practice for local education authorities in overseeing educational visits carried out by schools, youth services and other organisations.
- *Standards for adventure* is aimed at the teacher or youth worker who leads young people on adventure activities.
- *A handbook for group leaders* is aimed at anyone who leads groups of young people on any kind of educational visit. It sets out good practice in supervision, ongoing risk assessment and emergency procedures.
- *Group safety at water margins* is aimed at anyone who organises learning activities that take place near or in water, such as a walk along a river bank or seashore, collecting samples from ponds or streams, or paddling or walking in gentle, shallow water.

Even when all the planning and organising is complete, teachers have a lot of work to do in ensuring that the day runs smoothly, including carrying out an assessment of potential risks and trying to anticipate problems, together with the appropriate action needed to respond to particular situations. For instance, teachers should not only have access to a mobile telephone for making contact with emergency services, but also carry a list of key contacts, including direct-dial numbers for children with health problems.

Thorough preparation is essential if the trip is to be a success. Some visits are not viable because of the cost of travel or entrance fees. Coach travel is slower than travelling by car because the coach driver is obliged to follow a prescribed main-road route. Coaches must conform to minimum safety standards, such as the requirement to fit safety belts. If private cars are used, a list of experienced drivers with current licences has to be compiled and checked with the head teacher. If the venue involves any activity that carries some risk (such as an adventure course) basic health and safety regulations must be strictly observed and the activity centre's own safety procedures verified. Local authorities have guidelines for the amount of adult help required for an educational visit. Younger children require a higher level of supervision than older ones and under-5s need one adult per two or three children. The experience and competence of the adults involved also has to be taken into account when responsibilities are drawn up and every helper has to be fully briefed before the visit.

Parents must be notified well in advance of the proposed visit about the purpose of the visit, suitable clothing, eating arrangements, and the physical demands being made of the children, together with an invitation for parents to contact the teacher in charge should they have any queries. The permission slip has to include space for the child's name, address and a contact number, and for the parent to mention any special circumstances, such as the child's need to carry an inhaler or fear of heights/water. Schools often send

out two letters: a preliminary note with the basic details requesting parental permission and, nearer the time, more detailed information.

Timings for each stage of the visit have to be allotted and given to parents in advance of the visit: the departure, stops and starts, breaks and anticipated time of arrival. Parents also have to be told if the visit is likely to continue beyond normal school hours; this helps to facilitate arrangements for children being picked up after returning to school. Clipboards, paper, pencils, activity sheets, maps, measuring tapes, cameras and other necessary equipment have to be gathered in advance, using the help of teaching assistants where possible. In most schools, caterers and the teachers who normally hold extra-curricular activities have to be informed that children will be away during the day. A playground duty may have to be swapped. Children whose parents do not have to pay for meals are entitled to a packed lunch on the day of the visit. All these details have to be sorted out in advance to avoid misunderstanding, annoyance and complication.

The purpose and place of the visit will determine the practical arrangements and level of direction provided for children. If the visit is to an established and supervised venue, the pattern of the day is normally quite predictable, though the majority of visits incorporate a degree of freedom for children to explore and exercise autonomy, a fact that must be taken into consideration with regard to safety and supervision. Depending upon the age of the children and the purpose of the visit, most teachers prepare worksheets for completion or guidance about information to be noted by pupils in their notebooks. Larger venues (such as zoos) normally have an education department, appropriately staffed and resourced. In the days and weeks following the visit there is opportunity for children to draw upon their experiences or utilise their new-found skills, understanding and knowledge in a variety of learning contexts. Educational visits are frequently linked to **topic work** and result in the production of displays and other artistic outcomes (such as a drama sketch for an **assembly**).

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EFFECTIVENESS

Effectiveness in education has become equated with practitioners meeting predetermined performance targets; consequently, close monitoring of their performance has dominated education discourse in recent times. For qualified teachers, the implications of effectiveness are significant for their salary and promotion prospects; for trainee teachers effectiveness is measured by the level of their success on school placements for work experience. National criteria for teacher effectiveness rely heavily on pupil test results

and what is referred to as the 'value-added' factor; that is, the measurable improvement that pupils make from the time they enter a teacher's influence to the point at which they leave it. Though logical, the value-added approach to judging effectiveness is crude and has severe limitations, as progress in learning cannot be itemised and checked off like a shopping list. Furthermore, an instrumental view of teaching, in which **skills** and strategies are identified, isolated and implemented as part of a seamless robe, belies the complex nature of the job and the many other influences outside the teacher's **control** that influence attainment (notably home circumstances). Nevertheless, a belief that attainment is directly attributable to the effectiveness of teaching underpins the production of the numerous competence statements that have characterised teacher education and training in recent years. There are implications for trainee teachers in acquiring good grades for their school experience, the quality of their reports, getting a teaching post and coping with the demands of the first **(induction)** year of teaching. Furthermore, parents are greatly influenced by schools that are officially pronounced good or excellent by inspectors, reflected in the house prices in areas where school test results are strong and the clamour to get their children into schools perceived to be the best.

Effective teachers have open and accessible paths of **communication** to colleagues, parents and pupils, and succeed in making each child feel valued, happy and confident. They use techniques that motivate children and maintain discipline while demonstrating genuine care, and adapt their teaching methods to suit and satisfy children's varying needs. Effective teachers enjoy working with children and have patience to help and encourage them in their learning. They look beyond pupils' immediate abilities and see the potential in every child. They observe and listen to children in the class, both as individuals and within a group, assessing the academic needs of each one and organising the learning to give everyone a chance to succeed. They help and encourage the children to become independent thinkers and self-motivated learners, providing the necessary resources and support for learning. The effective teacher needs to possess solid subject **knowledge,** but also to be adept at putting across information in an accessible way such that the child will remember the facts and be enthused to find out more.

Effective teachers build on the knowledge and understanding that children already possess instead of focusing on their inadequacies. They make a conscious effort to be liked by the pupils but do not try to ingratiate themselves, as children work better with teachers they admire and respect. Effective teachers have clearly established classroom routines with manageable procedures that make sense to the pupils, who are not afraid to approach them for academic or welfare support. Ultimately, the best teachers succeed in making the children think for themselves and thereby extend their ownership of new learning instead of making them passive recipients of information.

Even when set criteria are used to measure effectiveness, they still need to be interpreted with a high degree of professional judgement and awareness of the prevailing school and classroom climate. Teachers and trainee teachers who are grappling to engage with heavy workloads, demanding pupils and challenging situations, or struggling to move beyond 'coping' and reach new heights of expertise, may initially underachieve and require additional support from the head teacher and colleagues. Many educationists have pointed out that a teacher may achieve miracles in motivating a group of underprivileged children who, nonetheless, perform quite poorly in formal tests. Different

governments have made a good job of convincing the public that the only success criteria that warrant serious consideration are measurable ones, despite the self-evident truth that (non-measurable) moral and social factors are immensely important in creating a civilised, peaceful society. Parents are interested to know that their children are valued, that teachers are doing their best for them, and that their sons and daughters are happy, well adjusted and fulfilled. The need to conform to externally imposed stipulations means that inexperienced teachers and those in demanding situations sometimes hesitate to employ more innovative teaching methods for fear of disapproval or recrimination or lower grades in formal tests.

Effectiveness in teaching is ultimately posited on a belief that all children should have the opportunity to succeed at their own level of understanding and feel fulfilled and satisfied. Teachers act as guides inasmuch as they can show pupils that learning is exciting and worthwhile, thereby promoting a spirit of **enquiry,** offer tantalising glimpses into fresh areas of knowledge and actively encourage children to think laterally by posing problems and setting up challenges for them to overcome.

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EMOTION

Emotional experience is integral to all life experiences and the significance of emotions in the work and motivation of teachers has long been recognised, but the theory that there is a separate type of social intelligence, unrelated to traditional abstract intelligence, is a relatively new idea. The concept of *emotional intelligence,* drawn from the work on multiple intelligences by the American psychologist Howard Gardner, has been made popular by another American psychologist, Daniel Goleman. Emotional intelligence as defined by Goleman is basically another name for the personal intelligences observed by Gardner.

Gardner initially formulated a list of seven intelligences (he has subsequently extended the number). Linguistic intelligence involves sensitivity to spoken and written language, the **ability** to learn languages and the capacity to use language to accomplish certain goals. Logical-mathematical intelligence consists of the capacity to analyse problems logically, carry out mathematical operations and investigate issues scientifically. Musical

intelligence involves skill in the performance, composition and appreciation of musical patterns. Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence entails the potential of using one's whole body or parts of the body to solve problems. Spatial intelligence involves the potential to recognise and use the patterns of wide space and more confined areas. Personal intelligence includes two separate categories: interpersonal intelligence and intrapersonal intelligence. Interpersonal intelligence is concerned with the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people. Intrapersonal intelligence entails the capacity to understand oneself, to appreciate one's feelings, fears and motivation.

Goleman has been instrumental in alerting educationists to the central role played by the emotions in decisions and actions. He argues that human competencies like self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence and empathy are of greater consequence than IQ in much of life, and that we ignore these competencies at our peril. Research about the demands made on teachers suggests that their emotional condition has a major role in the ease with which they handle pressure. It is important, therefore, for teachers and pupils to understand and manage their emotions, learn how to communicate effectively and gain insights from a range of life experience. Such emotional **literacy** includes reflective listening, focusing on non-verbal clues and becoming more imaginative.

It is in the classroom that the impact of a teacher's emotional sensitivity is most readily exposed, as the basis of effective teaching is located in communicating and connecting with pupils through care, trust, mutual respect and establishing a rapport. The best primary classrooms are those characterised by purposeful work that is also enjoyable and motivating for children. The emotional attachment that exists between teacher and the children and the sense that they are doing a significant job is a strong motivating factor and provides everyone involved with a sense of purpose and fulfilment.

Emotionally sensitive teachers make an effort to engage with children at two levels. (1) They seek to understand the way children think and demonstrate a genuine interest and concern in their welfare. (2) They offer direction through suggesting possibilities and alternatives. Emotional intelligence also alerts a teacher to the motives that underpin a pupil's behaviour, including non-verbal clues such as facial expression (especially use of the eyes), gesture, breathing, voice tone, speed of speech and pacing of speech. Thus, a pupil's distorted facial expression may indicate that the pupil is trying to make sense of a problem. Poor eye contact may mean that the child is feeling alarmed, guilty or under-confident. Rapid speech can indicate enthusiasm, commitment or confusion, whereas hesitant or slow speech indicates confusion or mental overload. One of the many challenges facing teachers is rapid **decision making** about what is genuine and what is contrived emotion. These insights are gained through becoming familiar with the children's dispositions and backgrounds, identifying their individual needs and responding appropriately to their disparate behaviours.

As emotions are central to teachers' work and lives, they merit a significant place in the mind of every aspiring teacher. This fact is especially significant for trainees on work placement as they enter a school that is largely unknown to them in respect of its ethos, interpersonal relationships and patterns of behaviour. Trainee teachers have to cope with adjusting to the prevailing norms; establish and maintain relationships with staff; learn procedures and adapt to the school's priorities, some of which may be abstruse and difficult to interpret.

The impact of emotion has implications for children's learning. Some pupils fear failure and worry about getting things wrong and being in trouble as a result. Other pupils are unwilling to persevere when faced with challenges, either because they are unable to cope with the situation or because they avoid making more than a nominal effort to achieve a satisfactory outcome. As these negative responses are the result of emotional insecurity, teachers spend a lot of time seeking to understand the root causes of behaviour and strengthening each child's sense of well-being. Teachers encourage pupils to persevere with work and not be afraid of making genuine errors; they also use mistakes positively by explaining the alternatives and using the opportunity to deepen children's understanding of concepts.

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ENCOURAGEMENT

Encouragement and praise are both important strategies to promote pupils' enthusiasm for learning. Encouragement can be given to children to help them improve a draft version of their work or complete a difficult piece of work or concentrate harder in order to achieve a higher standard. Praise, on the other hand, is offered for good-quality work, real effort, sensitivity and responsibility. Encouragement recognises that the present level of attainment is acceptable but that there is even more to achieve. Praise recognises that the very best outcome has been achieved in the circumstances. When encouraging children, teachers use a variety of expressions to cajole, chivvy, motivate and offer support, often accompanied by bright eye contact, congratulatory claps, smiles, open faces and close (but not inappropriate) body proximity. Both encouragement and praise open dialogue that helps pupils to evaluate their present attainment and monitor their own progress.

Adults that encourage children in the primary classroom help to create a **learning climate** in which **creativity** and problem solving can flourish because pupils know that

they are going to be supported in their endeavours. Such positive encouragement allows children time to think, defers judgement, promotes independence, actively listens, follows the child's interests, uses mistakes constructively and promotes imaginative **play.**

Children do not accept encouragement or praise from an adult they do not respect, but perceive it as being a subtle form of coercion. Even young children are quick to spot insincere encouragement and praise. The unthinking 'That's good' or dismissive 'Yes, fine' (without paying any real attention to what the child has done or said) is likely to lead to reduced motivation as children see how little they can get away with and still receive teacher approval. Consequently, praise has to be merited and not offered lightly. Experienced teachers bide their time and are gently approving rather than letting loose a flood of commendation prematurely. Inexperienced teachers sometimes expend too much encouragement and offer praise for work and effort that does not merit it.

Encouragement is most effective when it is used constructively, without rancour and with reference to clearly defined tasks and **expectations.** Praise, publicly and sincerely given, is reserved for genuine instances of quality work and effort. For children who trust their teacher, there is no greater source of satisfaction.

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ENJOYMENT

The UK government has been so keen to advance the notion that learning can be enjoyable that one of its most influential documents is entitled *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES 2003a) to convey the impression that high standards and pleasure in learning are compatible. Pupils are engaged with work by learning in such a way that it expands their **thinking** and promotes their inventiveness. As a result, children enjoy the diversity of their learning, both in the variety of topics that are presented to them, but also in the different ways that they learn, such as in small groups, through the arts, **extra-curricular** activities and the involvement of parents and friends at home. Part of the enjoyment is gained through the interactive nature of learning and the excitement that comes from mutual discovery and **collaboration.**

Enjoyment is a prerequisite for making optimum progress in learning. There are two principal forms of enjoyment: enjoyment *of* learning and enjoyment *in* learning. Enjoyment of learning involves a **passion** for finding out and discovering new things.

Enjoyment in learning means that the processes used in finding out are satisfying and meaningful. The two forms of enjoyment, though distinctive in character, form two sides of the same coin, as children who enjoy learning for its own sake will find satisfaction in reaching their goal by whatever means is necessary; similarly children who enjoy what they are doing are likely to learn more. Teachers who are able to inspire a love of learning in children and provide interesting and relevant ways of helping them to do so provide the best possible **learning climate.** By contrast, teachers who present pupils with unimaginative and tedious means to address the lesson content are in danger of squeezing the enthusiasm from them. Some pupils, especially older ones, become disillusioned with learning in school if they are bored and it then takes perseverance for even the most talented teacher to reignite the spark.

Enjoyment of learning is sometimes confused with casual and random **teaching approaches.** The belief that children do not come to school to 'have fun' but rather to take their work seriously—a view popular among some politicians and parents—may be borne of such confusion. While a combination of attractive lesson content and a persuasive teaching approach creates the best circumstances for enjoyment, not all content is intrinsically enjoyable, so the challenge for every practitioner is to find ways to present **knowledge** in ways that inspire and motivate pupils. In recent years there has been a considerable emphasis placed upon the importance of adjusting the teaching approach to accommodate the learning styles of the pupils. Thus, some children particularly benefit from visual support, others from illustrative stories, yet others from detailed verbal explanations.

Studies show that the majority of any school staff finds work enjoyable and fulfilling. Teachers, administrators and ancillary workers are agreed that their role is significant and that they benefit from the companionship and sense of mutual endeavour that working in primary schools offer them.

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ENQUIRY

Enquiry-based learning is closely related to problem solving and investigation, two terms that share common features. Both processes involve finding solutions to an aspect of knowledge that is unknown or problematic, but they can be distinguished on the basis of the methods used to arrive at a result and the diversity of solutions. The term *problem*

solving is frequently employed when there is a single solution, whereas *investigation* tends to be used when there are a variety of possible outcomes. Both terms, however, are subsumed within the umbrella term ‘enquiry’.

Enquiries can be conducted by individual pupils but are generally more effective as a group effort, as the opportunity for pupils to cooperate in solving problems contributes to academic advancement, social development and increased **self-esteem.** Interacting with children of their own age fosters a climate in which active discussion about issues is more natural for the pupils concerned. Furthermore, the existence of disagreement forces the children to attend to aspects that they will miss if they are working alone. The search for clarification and truth during an enquiry allows pupils to reconstruct their present understanding and adjust their perspectives on issues.

Enquiry-based learning relies on pupils as active learners, who exercise some ownership of the activities (rather than being wholly directed by the teacher) and have the opportunity to reflect upon the processes that contribute towards their grasp of the things they learn. Janet Moyles, the noted educationist, offers an eight-point approach to promote this sort of active learning. (1) An entering strategy, consisting of starting points and introduction. (2) An exploration mode, where pupils engage with the task supported by adequate resources and directed by adults. (3) Consideration of content in respect of the subject, processes and **skills** that the children are intended to learn. (4) Clarification about ownership and responsibility, especially the presence or absence of adult supervision. (5) Adult intervention, **interaction** and level of support for children. (6) Evaluation and analysis of children’s learning. (7) Opportunities for children to reflect on their learning. (8) Justification for the work completed and its outcomes. Failure to provide opportunities for this type of experiential learning can result in uninspired pupils who comply with the teacher’s wishes but have little understanding of the lesson purpose or their own responsibilities as learners.

Enquiry-based learning is constrained by the need to address stipulated schemes of work and timetable factors. However, the use of unstructured days and an emphasis on **topic work** rather than singlesubject work, with timetable barriers relaxed, allow pupils to probe and explore areas of knowledge more freely.

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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Nursery and primary education provide a starting point for meeting the needs of individual children and groups of children. Teachers aim to offer every pupil the opportunity to experience success in learning, setting high but sensible **expectations** for each boy and girl, pupils who have special educational needs and those with disabilities, pupils from different social and cultural backgrounds, ethnic groups, refugees and asylum seekers. The essence of equal opportunity is to provide a more inclusive **curriculum,** available to as wide a range of children as possible, founded on three tenets. First, to set pupils suitable and relevant learning challenges. Second, to respond to their diverse learning needs. Third, to overcome potential barriers to learning that may hinder optimum progress.

In attempting to ensure that all pupils experience success in learning and feel confident about themselves, teachers have to take account of unusual circumstances, such as extended absence, and the need for **differentiation** of tasks and activities to provide appropriate work for children with exceptional learning difficulties or abilities. For example, a child who has been away from school for several weeks may need to be given an individualised work programme to allow for 'catching up' and regaining momentum in learning.

In responding to pupils' diverse learning needs, the aim is to provide equal opportunity for all children, regardless of gender, race or disability, by motivating them to work hard, make regular assessments of their progress and set appropriate targets for learning. Particular care has to be paid in communicating effectively with children for whom English is an additional language. In such cases, strategies include the use of steady, well-articulated speech, a good range of tactile experiences and making a special effort to involve all the children in creative activities where spoken language is not necessarily essential to complete the work. As some children from atypical cultural backgrounds may be frustrated by their inability to conform and contribute to classroom discussion, enlisting the help of a sympathetic child (a 'buddy') to help them find their way around, and the close involvement of teaching **assistants** who possess appropriate language proficiency, are significant strategies. Teachers are also aware of the potential value of support agencies, such as social services and the educational psychologist.

The principle that every person deserves to receive a good education is reflected in official documentation. The National Curriculum 2000 for England and Wales (DfEE/QCA 1999) insists that:

> When planning, teachers should set high **expectations** and provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve, including boys and girls, pupils with special educational needs, pupils with disabilities, pupils from all social and cultural backgrounds, pupils of different ethnic groups including travellers, refugees and asylum seekers, and those from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

(p. 31)

A raft of legislation in recent years, supported by active public debate of the issues, has emphasised that unfair discrimination is not allowed in schools on any basis whatsoever. The principle is well expressed in the following: ‘Our education system must support all pupils well and unintentionally discriminate against any particular group of pupils’ (DfES 2003a, p. 42). Furthermore, all qualified teachers must recognise and respond effectively to equal opportunities issues, and challenge incidents of bullying and harassment. Deliberate or unintentional bias towards pupils which can be construed as discriminatory leaves teachers open to charges of unprofessional conduct, so it is important that they are as impartial as possible at all times. Not only must all children be granted the same opportunities, support and **encouragement,** but it is not appropriate to label children owing to circumstances such as home background or physical appearance. A teasing pleasantry about a child’s looks or domestic circumstances may be more hurtful and inflict greater damage than a teacher intends or imagines. A useful antidote to discriminatory attitudes is for adults to develop a positive attitude towards what can be accomplished and to adopt an ‘all things are possible’ **learning climate** in which all children can fulfil their potential. One way and another, it is part of every teacher’s responsibility to treat children respectfully, regardless of the provocation or the need for firmness.

In a DfES publication dealing with raising the achievement of minority ethnic children (DfES 2003b) three characteristics are identified as significant for helping to improve the educational attainment of minority ethnic pupils. The first is establishing an agreed strategy that applies across the whole school. The second is to strive for effective learning and teaching, including support for bilingual pupils. The third is to create an ethos of respect, with a clear approach to issues relating to racism and behaviour. In addition, parents and the community are encouraged to undertake a full part in the life and development of the school. The study revealed a complex picture of minority ethnic attainment and participation. In broad terms, black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils perform less well than other ethnic groups during the time of compulsory schooling; by contrast, Indian and Chinese pupils perform better than any of the other ethnic groups included in the survey. Proportionately more black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi pupils were recorded as having special educational needs, though regional variations were apparent.

The reason for underachievement of some minority groups is partly explained by the social and material deprivation that characterised those groups, as indicated by the incidence of free school meals. For instance, over 30% of Pakistani and black pupils, and over half of all Bangladeshi, Gypsy/Roma pupils were eligible for free school meals, compared with 14% for white pupils. However, there was not found to be a simple relationship between these figures and academic progress, as the biggest gap in attainment was between white pupils with and white pupils without free school meals. Clearly, then, there are other factors that need to be taken into account when addressing issues of under-performance.

There has also been a great deal of discussion about the challenges facing educators to ensure that pupils receive a full and appropriate education, regardless of gender. Concerns have been expressed about the limitations that teachers sometimes place upon

girls in subjects like science and the tendency for them to direct more time and attention towards boys. However, results from national tests indicate that the position is more complex and that girls are forging ahead of boys in most areas of work, especially in language-based topics. A report by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) found that although girls outperformed boys in almost every area of academic work, some schools and teachers were able to help boys achieve their potential, especially in the problem area of writing (OFSTED 2003b). In such schools there was a culture where intellectual, cultural and aesthetic accomplishment was valued by boys as well as by girls. In schools where boys perform well, they are encouraged to read widely and offered choice about the content of their writing, even when the form (genre) is prescribed. Teachers in such schools make every effort for children to write to 'real' audiences where possible. Effective planning and teaching are accompanied by frequent and formative assessments of boys' writing, and a culture that enables them to take pride in what they produce. There appears to be a clear link between the development of independent **reading** habits and enthusiasm for writing on the part of the teacher and the pupils.

While it is necessary that impartial decisions are needed as far as possible when dealing with children, male and female, the principle must not be confused with a need to take account of individual differences. Children respond differently to situations and circumstances, and adults must be prepared to adjust their responses and actions accordingly. A **dilemma** exists for teachers because on the one hand it is necessary for them to be consistent in their treatment of children, but on the other hand children respond differently to similar treatment. For example, being stern with one child may have little effect, but may be upsetting to another child in the same class. Teachers have therefore to be wise in the way that they approach all interpersonal encounters. However, blanket stereotyping of children on the basis of gender or any other defining characteristic is deemed unacceptable. For example, studies have shown that adults tend to expect tall children to be more emotionally mature than small children of the same age.

A teacher's assumptions about children's potential to learn and make progress may have a direct influence upon their attitude to school in general, their willingness to cooperate and persevere, and ultimately their achievements. Attention to equal opportunity provision improves the **learning climate,** eases classroom management and enhances **pupil motivation.**

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EXPECTATIONS

Expectation is a more involved concept than it may initially appear to be, consisting of an amalgam of teacher and pupil aspirations, attempts to achieve the lesson purpose and account taken of individual pupil targets for improvement, time constraints, adult support and resource factors. One of the requirements for qualified teacher status is to demonstrate high expectations of all pupils, to respect their social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds and be committed to raising standards. It is taken for granted that every adult wants pupils to succeed in their academic work and mature in their social development; to achieve this aim teachers have to transmit a positive message to their pupils about the quality of work that has to be attained and the effort that has to be expended to reach the expected standard. Putting these worthy aspirations into practice is not always easy because sophisticated judgements are needed to strike a balance between high and unreasonable expectations, especially for pupils who possess limited intellectual capacity. Teachers also have to take account of the possibility that a highly demanding expectation for a pupil working alone may become manageable for (say) a pair of children cooperating or a collaborative enterprise involving four or five pupils. Expectations therefore vary depending on the demands of the task, the time available for its completion and the extent of adult support offered to the child.

Expectation may relate to a specific aspect of learning, depending on what has been identified by the teacher as especially significant (the learning objective). For instance, in a piece of extended writing the emphasis may be upon developing a storyline or constructing the piece in a prescribed manner using a predetermined framework or writing neatly or inserting a creative element or enthralling the reader or accurate grammar or a combination of several things. Teachers have a responsibility to clarify their expectations and involve children in determining what is particularly important to their individual learning. Thus, in the same piece of writing, a child may have struggled with conveying meaning and the need to concentrate on rectifying the deficit; another child may have lots of good ideas but write incoherently; yet another may need to improve handwriting. Within a single session, therefore, there may be general expectations for all pupils but also a specific target for an individual child to succeed in a particular aspect of the work.

Expectation does not just apply to academic attainment. A key element of primary education is to work with parents in the task of developing confident and well-adjusted children who are capable of exercising a mature role in society. To assist in the process, all primary schools emphasise the need for pupils to exercise self-discipline and take responsibility for their actions. School governors and staff draw up a general **behaviour** policy for the school and each class teacher establishes and reinforces discipline through class **rules,** with sanctions for flagrant and persistent violation of the agreed code of conduct. Despite the efforts of teachers to impress on pupils the importance of high expectations, their quest is sometimes undermined by an increase in the number of emotionally unsettled children in mainstream primary education and the eclectic range of moral norms in society.

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EXTRA-CURRICULAR

The expression 'extra-curricular' denotes the fact that activities are outside the remit of the prescribed **curriculum.** Primary teachers have always been involved in providing educational and recreational opportunities for children outside school hours and extra-curricular activities play an important part in the life of most primary schools. However, the close regulation of teachers' working conditions in recent years and the additional demands made of them to maintain detailed records, carry out extensive assessment procedures and provide justification for every aspect of pupils' learning have led to a general curtailment of voluntary activities. Issues of **health and safety,** child protection and increase in litigation have also contributed to a situation where teachers are more cautious about committing themselves over and above the demands of regular teaching. The introduction of financial incentives for teachers to undertake extra duties, the increase in the number of ancillary staff, together with the provision of pre-school and after-school opportunities, have helped to ease this situation.

The use of the expression 'extra-curricular' has broadened in recent years and now incorporates a range of activities and opportunities for both children and adults that transcends the more familiar after-school football practice and lunchtime recorder club. Depending on the size of the school, the age of the children and the availability of staff, a range of opportunities, covering musical, sporting, academic and more general interests, are offered. The artistic, musical and dramatic talents developed during extra-curricular sessions are sometimes employed for school productions and seasonal celebrations. As part of the extra-curricular dimension, schools run 'booster' classes and additional **lessons** that take place outside the regular school day to improve pupils' academic performance (such as **homework** clubs). Some schools are designated 'community school' owing to their close ties with the neighbourhood and the use of their premises for a variety of activities for local residents. Some schools open early to provide breakfast for children and continue until early evening by employing ancillary staff to provide childcare facilities.

ContinYou is a UK learning charity that has played a role in shaping the out-of-school hours learning and study support movement in education, striving to ensure that extra-curricular activities are kept at the centre of the education and policy agenda. They support and promote out-of-hours opportunities (known as Extra Hours) through programmes such as breakfast clubs. Their aim is to enrich the lives of children and young people, provide new opportunities for learning, enable them to develop new skills

and build on existing provision. Many educationists believe that out-of-hours activities help to raise attainment, improve attendance, increase aspirations, build confidence and remotivate disaffected pupils.

Recently qualified teachers seeking employment are frequently asked what additional contributions they can make to school life and the appointing panel are usually keen to hear that candidates are willing to commit themselves to the school over and above their immediate contractual obligations. However, head teachers are keen for new teachers to settle into the regular pattern of teaching and learning before extending the range of their responsibilities.

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FEEDBACK

The process of evaluating the merits and limitations of pupils' work, approach to task completion or finished product, where an informed adult offers constructive comment to a pupil, is usually referred to as 'feedback'. High-quality feedback informs children in such a way that they are left more confident about the way to achieve greater success by better comprehending how they can improve their work. Pupils rely heavily on teachers to provide them with good-quality feedback such that they can adjust their priorities, correct misunderstandings and advance their knowledge and thereby proceed with assurance. Poor-quality feedback leaves pupils dissatisfied, unclear about the task requirements and unsure about methods to enhance their output. The act of providing feedback is, therefore, an essential skill for every teacher and assistant who works with children.

The type of feedback given to pupils tends to fall under one of three broad categories: instructional, procedural or advisory. Instructional feedback occurs when the adult gives the child unambiguous commands about what needs to be done to improve, remedy or enhance work. Procedural feedback clarifies the teacher's **expectations** about how, why and when the task is done; it does not concern itself with the quality of the work directly. Advisory feedback offers suggestions about options and alternatives available to the children; the onus is placed on pupils to determine the most appropriate course of action. Teachers have to ensure that children are clear about which type of feedback is being given or pupils may (for instance) interpret advice about ways to proceed as an **instruction.**

The content of the feedback to pupils from adults depends upon five factors. First, the **learning objectives** act as a beacon for the advice and guidance that is offered, as the tasks and activities with which children engage are inevitably closely linked to what children are learning. Second, the relationship between teacher and pupil will influence the tone of the feedback, as the more intimate the relationship, the more relaxed and interactive the exchange is likely to be. Third, the working **context** is important, as a more formal situation (such as a test or a specific task undertaking requiring silence) will limit the extent of the feedback; such feedback is likely to be more procedural than instructional. By contrast, an informal collaborative task provides for a great deal of spontaneous feedback of different kinds. Fourth, the nature of the work will have a bearing on the specificity of the feedback. Open-ended tasks (especially investigative and problem-solving ones) require the teacher to 'stand back' and allow pupils to persevere without excessive guidance, whereas situations in which there is a defined and single answer or solution requires close monitoring. Fifth, the confidence of pupils and their experience in the area of learning dealt with will affect the composition of the feedback. Thus, confident children with a strong track record in coping with the demands of the work benefit from questions from the teacher that extend their **thinking** and cause them to reflect more deeply on the issues attached to the work. On the other hand, timid children or those with little experience in the area of work require more specific direction until they gain confidence.

Teachers have to exercise fine judgement when offering feedback to children about their work and effort. At one level there is a need for them to explain to children how things can be improved. At another level there is a pressing need, especially with children who have experienced limited academic success in the past, to encourage, praise and celebrate small achievements. Consequently, successful feedback is a skill that requires considerable sensitivity and professional adeptness if it is to be fully effective.

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FRIENDSHIP

Helping children to develop friendships is not the principal purpose of primary education, but attention to the implications arising from good relationships is important in the quest for a positive teaching and learning environment. Children attach great importance to learning alongside their friends, so teachers have a responsibility to identify and promote such groupings, though friends do not necessarily work well together. When establishing groups, teachers may take pupils' views into account with regard to their academic and social compatibility, as children usually know who they work well with and their comments can usefully inform decisions about grouping. These decisions are often far from straightforward, as teachers need to distinguish between friends who work well together and friends who are a distraction. Most pupils want to have friends in the same class but they are not always strong-willed enough to resist the temptation to divert from the task and chatter to them.

Strong friendships between children bring them joy and satisfaction and impact positively upon their attitude to learning. There is a growing concern about the loss of **childhood,** as reflected through the reduced amount of time that children spend with parents, the flood of media images that saturate their minds and the speed with which children are expected to absorb adult perspectives and practices. Sincere friendships between adults and children can have significant benefits far beyond the immediate situation and offer hope and security for children. In a time when there is often a suspicion of adults who express a loving interest in children's welfare, positive teacher-pupil relationships provide considerable reassurance for those who view compassion as a key dimension of their role.

Teachers work hard to build a rapport with children and thereby place themselves in a much stronger position to influence pupil attitude and behaviour, as the extent of their influence is severely curtailed if they are emotionally detached. While it is not necessary for adults in school to be friends with pupils, it is essential for them to be friendly, warm and accessible. At the heart of the friendship between an adult and a child is a question of trust, for which a prerequisite is that the adult proves to be reliable, consistent and fair.

Pupils may be without friends for a variety of reasons. Sometimes a child has recently moved to the school or has joined mid-year at a time when friendships are already well established. Sometimes a child is different from the majority of pupils in ways that other children find it hard to accept. Sometimes a personality quirk creates problems and invites ridicule that may verge on **bullying.** Most teachers help new pupils to find their feet and make friends by pairing them with sensible and helpful members of the class. Friends offer one another mutual support, so when friendships go wrong they often need adult support to resolve the matter. Girls tend to have two or three very close friends while boys tend to have a larger and more fluid group of friends. Whereas breakdowns in friendships between boys are normally short and quickly resolved, breakdowns in friendships among girls tend to be more prolonged owing to the emotional intensity of the relationships that may intrude on their classroom work.

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GIFTEDNESS AND TALENT

There are numerous definitions of the terms ‘gifted’ and ‘talented’. However, a commonly held view is that *gifted* denotes an exceptional **ability** in English or mathematics. Gifted children are characterised by being able to apply their **knowledge** widely and utilise a variety of resources, ideas, methods and tasks. The word *talented*, on the other hand, tends to be reserved for children who display exceptional skill in other **curriculum** areas where there is more of an arts or public performance element. Gifted and talented pupils typically comprise between 5% and 10% of the population; consequently, in a class of thirty children there is likely to be between one and three children in the gifted or talented category. Over recent years, a lot of attention has been given to the needs of less able children in school but rather less time has been allocated to the needs of the more able. This imbalance is gradually being rectified in primary education and there is now more attention given to the potential of gifted pupils by setting more challenging tasks and providing **extra-curricular** classes to help children achieve optimum success in formal examinations.

Both talented and gifted children tend to possess similar attributes. They are creative and imaginative, possess keen insight and intuition and can work independently of others. Gifted and talented children often have a good, if sometimes unconventional, sense of **humour** and are highly motivated (particularly in self-selected tasks), demonstrating exceptional critical **thinking** and **skills** for problem solving. Gifted pupils will often have widespread interests, superior powers of reasoning, intellectual curiosity, a broad attention span and a superior vocabulary. They are capable of employing advanced **reading** strategies (such as the ability to scan text) and possess strong powers of observation and originality in their approach to solving problems. Gifted children tend to respond quickly to new ideas and memorise facts quickly. They may demonstrate maturity beyond their years, expressed by an interest in people and the way that situations interrelate.

Helping children who are gifted in English and mathematics is fairly straightforward for teachers in that there is a considerable amount of time spent in schools on **literacy** and **numeracy,** so it is easier to spot exceptional capability and adjust the demands of the work accordingly. By contrast, talented children may remain ‘hidden’ owing to the small amount of time allocated to other subjects in the primary curriculum. For both gifted and talented pupils, the teacher has to take account of the learner’s own interests and preferred style of learning, and provide opportunities to be independent and autonomous. There is also a need to make it possible for pupils to share ideas and initiatives with others and find connections across areas of learning through engagement with **cross-curricular work,** projects, themes and topics. It is particularly important that children are encouraged to think deeply about the process of learning in such a way that they are not merely complying with adult demands but actively interrogating the implications of their actions and decisions. A teacher’s good practice with very able pupils provides a model for effective practice with all children.

The learning environment has an impact on the emergence of the gift or talent. A creative **teaching approach** is likely to draw out children's best endeavour, whereas a rigid one is more likely to suppress it. It is essential for teachers to ask searching questions that force able pupils to apply their reasoning and logical powers. While nongifted pupils may not be able to employ such abstract thought, they can learn from the astute comments and insights provided by their more illustrious classmates.

Experience suggests that teachers are sometimes tempted to leave bright pupils alone to work independently or simply give them additional work to keep them busy while attention is given to slower learners. In fact, the highest levels of academic performance are achieved when teachers interact with pupils in a way that encourages them to grapple with demanding concepts and levels of understanding. The imposition of artificial ceilings in the level of difficulty of tasks can lead to gifted children becoming dissatisfied and frustrated. Capable pupils find fulfilment through active dialogue with the teacher and prefer to be challenged within the regular teaching programme rather than by being given special provision outside it. They do not benefit from being isolated from the regular tasks and activities but prosper when they are given the opportunity to explore ideas and be innovative. Gifted and talented pupils are more motivated by a teacher's honest evaluation of their work (written or spoken) than by the provision of grades, providing the **feedback** is constructive and challenging.

Most exceptionally able pupils take their work seriously and want to do well. Their attainment can be suppressed by adult insensitivity, a preponderance of mundane tasks and being made to feel different from everyone else, thus gaining a reputation as a 'swot', 'nerd' or 'square'. Able pupils can underachieve in the same way as other children, especially if they lack motivation or if teachers consider them to be uncooperative instead of welcoming their perceptive contributions. The challenge of presenting academic success as desirable is most challenging among a small percentage of older primaryage boys, though a competitive climate may help to offset this tendency.

Some gifted and talented children are unconventional; their **behaviour** may be interpreted as being anti-social by adults because they ask probing questions and insist on using their own ideas rather than familiar ones. Talented children may not shine at mathematics and **literacy;** as a result they can be made to spend additional time on these subjects, thereby reducing the opportunity for them to display their creative abilities in the areas in which they excel. Others pupils do well in every subject area (including sporting **activities)** and thereby attract considerable admiration from their peers. Yet other children have latent talent that requires a stimulus before it is released. For example, children from less affluent homes may not have a chance to attend out-of-school ballet, dance, craft or sporting sessions, at which they might have excelled had they been offered the opportunity to do so.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY

In recent years there has been a considerable amount of attention given to ensuring that pupils are protected from hazards and avoidable injury at school, through carelessness, neglect or ignorance. Sensible health and safety precautions are not intended to limit pupils' learning or their participation in practical activities, but to liberate the children to work confidently and assuredly. The increase in litigation and highly publicised cases of teachers and local education authorities being taken to court by parents over health and safety issues has heightened awareness of the need for increased care. It has also created a climate of extreme caution about pupils undertaking any **activity** that carries a risk. Most lesson plans used by teachers in training include a 'risk assessment' category, where potential dangers to pupils have been identified beforehand. These issues are particularly relevant for vulnerable pupils, including the very young, those with disabilities and children with allergies.

Considerations about children's well-being have to take account of both emotional and physical factors; there are at least ten health and safety rules that teachers are constantly alert to. First, pupils and adults must be able to walk around the room unhindered by obstacles such as poorly positioned furniture or articles lying on the floor. Second, pupils carrying out activities that require large areas must be given the appropriate space in which to work and not expected to squeeze into a confined spot. Third, equipment and resources have to be stored so that they can be reached without having to stretch or pull items down from the shelf. Fourth, wet activities have to be restricted to a designated area away from main walkways, and sink areas are kept free from furniture. Fifth, pupils must be taught how and when to wash their hands thoroughly before meals, after messy activities and after contact with soil, flora or fauna. Sixth, teachers need to ensure that pupils' view of the board and other visual aids is unhindered and does not require children to twist unnaturally or squint. Seventh, seating has to be organised in such a way that pupils do not sit next to a draughty window, hot radiator or a tall piece of furniture with freestanding objects resting on top. Eighth, pupils must only use specialist equipment with adult supervision and after appropriate training. Ninth, pupils must be regularly reminded not to suck or put small objects in their mouths. Finally, class rules need to stress that pupils walk and do not run in the classroom.

The use of computer equipment raises specific issues with regard to electrical safety, ensuring that children are properly supervised, liquids are not permitted in the area of the machines and attention is given to the possible hazards from trailing leads and flexes. Teachers are also careful that pupils do not spend an excessive amount of time in front of a computer screen and that chairs are correctly positioned and suitable for the purpose. The danger of repetitive strain injury caused through excessive keyboard work is not a serious problem for pupils in school, though it may be a problem in the home if adult supervision is slack. Teachers, too, have to be cautious that when they spend time entering data into a computer or (especially) writing reports they abide by the same safety considerations that they enforce with pupils in the classroom or computer suite.

Healthy eating, personal hygiene and awareness of the dangers from drugs form an important element of primary pupils' education. All children require nutritious food, regular exercise and appropriate amounts of rest and sleep to function efficiently during the day and make the best use of the learning opportunities provided in and out of school. Schools promote healthy eating, encourage children to eat fruit rather than snacks, and pay close attention to the nutritional value of school meals. School safety programmes tend to reflect adult concerns about children's safety, such as accident prevention, ensuring that pupils are taught about hazards from traffic and roads, trains and railway lines, electricity, fire and heat, machinery sharp objects, medicines, poisons, and so forth. Danger from strangers is also commonly emphasised in primary school safety programmes. Children, however, may harbour more concerns about burglars and violence. Younger children may be worried by imaginary dangers, especially those that result from exposure to unsuitable television programmes.

Inexperienced teachers tend to take advice from senior colleagues about health and safety issues, especially when using specialised equipment and during apparatus work in the gymnasium. Should an injury occur then national laws about appropriate adult and child behaviour and relationships, regional guidelines about procedures and agreed school policies are activated, depending upon the nature of the incident. In situations where a number of different activities are taking place in the room simultaneously, teachers have to ensure that sufficient adult help and supervision is available. In large-space activities involving heavy or potentially hazardous equipment (in aspects of physical education, for instance) teachers carry out safety checks beforehand and monitor pupil access closely. Teachers generally use a limited range of equipment safely than attempt too much at one time, which might create unsafe working conditions.

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HOMEWORK

Most primary teachers provide relevant forms of homework and other out-of-class tasks for pupils that help to consolidate and extend the work that has been carried out during the school day, involving parents where possible. The homework has to be manageable, as there is little point in setting work that is impossible for the children to complete or that requires expensive ICT resources that may not be available at home. Government guidelines suggest that children as young as 5 should spend up to an hour a week doing homework on **reading,** spelling and number.

Homework is particularly useful if it builds on previous schoolbased work or teases open intriguing new avenues of learning, with tasks organised in such a way that children can cope unaided if necessary and directly linked to the **learning objectives** that the teacher has established for the lesson. Some homework consists of 'finishing off' incomplete work from the day; however, this penalises slower workers and does little to extend the more able. Commonly, children are given a number of activities that have to be completed over a period of time (a half-term, say) in addition to short-term tasks such as learning how to spell a list of words. Homework can provide a starting point for discussion and sharing experiences, and a useful spur in promoting dialogue in learning.

Typical homework tasks include giving the children work to do that is based on observation, consulting with an older adult about 'living history' (events that occurred during the lifetime of the adult) or paper and pencil activities, such as completing a set of mathematical computations. The simplest form of homework is when the same task is given to all the children such that they are all able to engage with it at their own level, and where the end product can be marked easily or shared with others. For younger children, additional reading is frequently used, with a parent signing in a reading record book to confirm that it has been completed. Homework has to be monitored and assessed by the teacher if it is to be fully effective, so the more elaborate it is, the more time and effort has to be expended in dealing with the outcome. Some teachers use teaching assistants to monitor completion and check accuracy.

There is general support among primary educationists for homework as a method of enhancing learning but a few studies suggest that it might have a negative impact because it places a strain on family relationships that may outweigh the educational benefit. Research at the University of London's Institute of Education found that helping pupils with homework can exacerbate or create family tensions (http://www.literacytrust.org.uk/Update/homework.html). One of the study's conclusions was that parents may inhibit learning by exercising strict **control** over the way homework is done, instead of helping the children to interpret for themselves. The authors conclude that the most effective help that parents can provide is in offering moral support to children, but only helping them directly when specifically asked to do so. The study acknowledges that homework can have modest benefits for academic progress but that brighter pupils and older pupils are the main beneficiaries. The author of the London Institute research, Susan Hallam, claims that 'homework clubs' in school give pupils the benefits of homework without creating antagonism in the home. In addition, children also have access to resources and informed adults.

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HUMOUR

The word humour derives from the Latin term *humourem* and has many potential benefits in promoting classroom harmony and enhancing adult-pupil relationships. Humour can lift spirits, increase enthusiasm for learning, act as an antidote for stress by stimulating the immune system and empower pupils and adults in school by giving them a different perspective on familiar situations. Other claims for the value of humour include helping to create a positive classroom environment, reducing pupils' **anxiety,** holding their attention and encouraging their involvement in lessons. With regard to learning outcomes, there is some evidence that humour can promote comprehension and retention and foster cognitive development. It may also help in managing undesirable behaviour and building self-confidence. Despite the potential benefits, some teachers are reluctant to use humour for fear of creating a climate of indiscipline or appearing unprofessional and not taking their work seriously enough. By contrast, other practitioners believe that laughter serves to bring about a closer working relationship between pupils and adults in the classroom.

Although humour is important in teaching, teachers have to be careful in its use, as too much of it can prove unhelpful if children find it difficult to distinguish between the serious and the trivial. Adults have to be careful to ensure that pupils know when humour is being employed or the children may respond by being silly or acting inappropriately. The most effective form of teacher humour is when it is integrated within the fabric of the lesson rather than presented as a series of jokes. Teachers also have to be wary of humour that may be construed as coarse or misinterpreted by children. In a settled classroom environment, pupils are often encouraged to develop a sense of humour by enjoying the time they spend with adults and other children, sharing amusing incidents, telling jokes and having opportunities to express their joy. Respectful humour between adult and children signals an appropriate and comfortable relationship and is wholly different in kind from cynical forms of humour used as a subtle form of coercion or ridicule. Unkind jesting between pupils (especially older ones) that seems to be targeted at a particular pupil is construed as **bullying** and treated as such.

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IMAGINATION

Stimulating pupil imagination is seen by many teachers as a prerequisite to making an activity of educational worth. Authentic imagination prompts positive action and differs from hopeful imagination characterised by a passiveness that leaves the active work to others. Imagination provides pupils with a vehicle to visualise new possibilities and prompts educators to visualise and shape their ideas to make them into something workable. The power of imagination creates vision that empowers pupils and adults to act resolutely and achieve the desired goal, regardless of setbacks and disappointments. Stimulating children's imaginations through stories, songs, visual resources and other means taps a rich source of learning in primary-age children.

In an education climate that increasingly advocates high standards through standardisation of **teaching approach** and **pupil learning** style, the promotion of imagination and **creativity** is an alternative means of achieving rich forms of learning. A political climate in which evidence of success relies on measurable outcomes does not encourage teachers to use their imaginations or encourage children to use theirs, because imagination is a quality that is impossible to quantify. Although a small proportion of primary teachers prefer being told what to do and how to do it rather than being given freedom to be innovative, the majority of educators prefer greater flexibility in covering the curriculum so that they can foster imaginative practice. In preparing pupils for tests and examinations there is little manoeuvrability within the timetable to give pupils the time and space they need to explore and imagine.

Kieran Egan, a noted education thinker, claims that imagination is not a desirable-but-dispensable frill and should form the heart of any truly educational experience. Consequently, imagination should be integral to basic training or disciplined thought or rational enquiry, as it gives them life and meaning. Furthermore, imagination is not the sole province of the arts in education or a leisure **activity,** but is central to all areas of learning. Egan goes so far as to say that imagination is the hard pragmatic centre of all effective human thought.

Within the constraints of working within a national curriculum framework, imagination is seen as a means of supporting and sustaining the kind of enterprising approach that is needed to invigorate learning and raise standards of **achievement.** Such a philosophy requires a fresh understanding of ways in which children are motivated to learn. Imagination is therefore not in opposition to the practical demands faced by teachers and learners but a way to energise them.

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INCLUSION

Inclusive education is concerned with minimising barriers to learning and participation in educational settings, including primary schools, in terms of both the adequacy of provision and issues of equity. Schools are charged with offering an education to all pupils by modifying the way that practitioners approach their work such that no child is excluded who could, with appropriate human and practical resources, be incorporated into the warp and weave of regular school life. Schools that formerly excluded pupils with particular disabilities and learning needs (including children with emotional vulnerabilities) are now obliged to include them whenever the resources are available to make it possible. It is no longer acceptable that children with disabilities who have the intellectual capacity to learn are hindered from doing so on the basis of their physical limitations.

Three principles underpin the provision of effective learning opportunities for all children in school. The first is that teachers are required to set suitable challenges for all pupils, including less able and more able ones. The second is for teachers to respond to pupils' diverse needs by creating a productive learning environment, offer all children an equal opportunity to access resources and participate in activities, assess their progress and set them suitable challenges. The third is for teachers, in conjunction with other colleagues where necessary, to combat potential barriers to learning for individuals and groups of pupils with disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language.

Whereas the majority of physically disabled pupils can be comfortably incorporated within mainstream activities, teachers find the presence of emotionally vulnerable children to be a much greater challenge. There is an increasing body of evidence to show that disruptive pupils tend to affect adversely the education of other children, even with the presence and involvement of an assistant to provide learning support. Although the pupils that experience the greatest difficulties in learning and conforming to behavioural norms provide a useful barometer for teachers about the quality of their organisation, clarity of explanations and relevance of **lessons,** they also absorb a considerable amount of time and energy. Nevertheless, teachers that succeed with pupils experiencing the greatest difficulty in concentrating find that they can use the same principles of curriculum relevance, clarity of expectation and calmness of approach to improve learning for the rest of the children.

The involvement of Learning Support **Assistants** is important in helping to meet the learning needs of included pupils, though there is always a risk of the child becoming too dependent on the adult or, especially in the case of older primary children, feeling resentful about the constant close attention they receive that highlights their different status. To combat the 'exclusive attention' factor, an assistant is sometimes deployed to oversee the work of a group of pupils, of which the special needs child is one. Pupils are most likely to require additional support at the beginning of lessons and when they move away from whole-class to small-group situations. Adult intervention is also necessary to redirect children's attention and energies when they are wandering off task, especially pupils diagnosed with **ADHD.**

Supporting pupils with special needs necessitates cooperation with a range of other professionals from outside the school, such as the educational psychologist and local

authority advisory teachers. Specialist expertise is normally available in teaching the hearing impaired and visually impaired and a range of paraprofessionals such as speech therapists and physiotherapists, social workers, educational welfare officers and medical services are occasionally involved in providing support to teachers, pupils and their parents. The Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is often the person in school who liaises with these agencies, as well as providing ongoing support for class teachers. All adults in school have to be alert to ways in which they are able to assist in servicing an inclusion policy, not only for pupils' benefit but also to ensure that each adult in school feels significant and valued by being 'included'.

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INDUCTION

Induction refers to the process by which pupils and new teachers are inculcated into the working practices of a school and become, through structured support and guidance, better able to understand and cope with the procedures, routines and covert agendas that exist there. For children who have never been to school it can be a shock for them to discover that the freedom and spontaneity of pre-school is curtailed and they have to conform to specified practices. To reduce the impact of the change there is normally close liaison between reception teachers (who teach new school entrants), preschool workers and parents, and between teachers teaching pupils in their final year at primary school (year 6) and staff in the receiving secondary school. Thus, year 6 pupils meet their future secondary teachers and spend some time in the new school during the term preceding transfer. Brand new school entrants ('rising fives') may spend half a day in school initially, increasing to full time after a suitable period of time (a half-term, say).

Arrangements exist to provide all newly qualified teachers (NQTs) with a bridge from initial teacher training to regular teaching. An induction programme to provide well-targeted monitoring and support within the framework of a reduced timetable and to help embed an ethos of continuing professional development and career development during the first year of teaching facilitates this process. At its best, induction helps new teachers to show their potential, make rapid progress in becoming effective practitioners and exert an impact on the school's overall development and progress. NQTs are expected to benefit from and contribute to the sharing of effective practice, extend their vision of the

teacher role, experience opportunities for subject specialist and classroom-focused development, contribute to the workforce reform agenda and begin developing **leadership** qualities. Naturally, these qualities are not present in every NQT to the same extent at the same time and require nurturing if they are to mature over the months and years as experience is gained in the job.

National standards for new teachers are not dissimilar to those for qualified teacher status. Thus, a new teacher needs to be able to demonstrate competence in planning, teaching, class management, monitoring, assessing, **recording** and **reporting.** A vital element of demonstrating this competence is for the teacher to take close account of the needs of individual children and ensure that every one is offered the best chance to be exposed to the full **curriculum.** There are also demands made of new teachers with regard to deploying and working with other adults (including parents), implementing school policies (such as dealing with bullying and racial harassment) and taking responsibility for their own professional development.

As part of a new teacher's development, a fellow staff member is allocated as mentor (officially known as the *induction tutor).* In a larger primary school the induction tutor is likely to be a senior teacher; in a smaller school it may be the deputy head or head teacher. In addition to offering general advice and **encouragement,** the tutor encourages the new teacher to contribute to working parties and visit other local schools to enhance his or her experience of primary education. The induction tutor is also available to offer advice about diverse aspects of school life, such as **time management,** handling paperwork, dealing with troublesome children, relating to parents and maintaining a reasonable work/home balance. By the end of their induction year, all new teachers must have demonstrated that they can teach on a consistent and sustained basis, with the direct and personal responsibility and **accountability** for pupil performance that accompanies it. They must also show that they have made progress in key areas such as managing pupil behaviour and contributing to pupils' learning, and to planning and attaining the school's performance targets.

NQTs will not normally be expected to endure excessive demands by (say) having to take a very large class or a group of particularly difficult pupils. They should only teach for only about 90% of the time to give them opportunity to gain wider experience by working alongside colleagues, observing successful teachers at work and attending courses to enhance their knowledge and understanding of primary education issues and practices.

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INSPECTION

Inspection is a formal procedure, funded by the government, to determine the value for money of schools and colleges (including pre-school and nursery units). The quality of teaching, **leadership,** management and partnership with parents is graded according to set criteria and a report is provided for the school governors/school board and subsequently made available to the general public. In England, the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) is officially the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools. It is a non-ministerial government department set up in 1992, principally for the management of the independent system of inspection of all schools that are wholly or state funded. A similar system of inspection applies to all institutions in receipt of public funding providing education for children under 4 years old. Similar bodies exist in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, though the criteria used by inspectors differ slightly from country to country. All inspections involve observations of teachers while they are teaching, scrutiny of documentation, a discussion with parents, and interviews with governors, staff and head teacher. Older pupils may also be asked to offer a perspective on school life, though this practice has been criticised by some teacher unions as potentially divisive.

Inspectors are looking for schools that are well led, creatively follow the prescribed **curriculum** and possess a strong sense of purpose to achieve high academic standards and inculcate positive qualities in children. Head teachers and subject leaders are questioned to ensure that there is whole-staff agreement about issues as diverse as resources, **teaching approach,** assessment procedures, and ways of **recording** pupils' achievements and progress systematically.

The announcement of a coming inspection has a dramatic impact on school staff and during this period of time head teachers have a crucial role in maintaining stability and providing **leadership.** Inspections have an impact on teachers' professional relationships inside school and on their personal and social relationships outside school. Many teachers view inspections as a necessary evil and a distraction from children's learning, and conscientious teachers seem particularly vulnerable to suffer **anxiety.**

The experience of class teachers being observed teaching by an external evaluator whose judgements have great significance for the reputation of the school is emotionally stressful and professionally demanding. The ordeal is less severe if teachers are used to being observed by a colleague or the head teacher, so a team spirit needs to be embedded in school life long before the inspection takes place, to ensure smoother liaison across the staff members when the pressure becomes intense during the period of the visit. Inspections are also mentally and physically exhausting for teachers and even a successful inspection often has a debilitating influence on staff efficiency for some time afterwards. Some head teachers equate the inspection aftermath with post-traumatic stress disorder. Staff absences through illness tend to rise and it usually takes a school some months to recover fully and return to normality. Primary schools that receive a good report are not inspected as often as those deemed to be weaker.

The stresses created by having a long period of time between the announcement of the inspection and the event occurring are such that the notice of inspection is being reduced considerably for successful schools. Schools in which standards are judged to be

unsatisfactory can be placed under a series of special measures in which their progress is closely monitored until they rectify the shortcomings (frequently identified as one or more from: weak leadership, indiscipline, low expectations of pupils). In a small number of cases a school regarded as failing is closed and reopened with a new head teacher and under a different name.

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INSTRUCTION

Instruction is an essential component of effective teaching and a necessary skill for every teacher, both in learning and in maintaining discipline. As a component of learning, instruction takes a variety of forms: explanation, exposition and demonstration. *Explanation* is a method by which a teacher offers information, explores situations and justifies decisions or positions in a rational, structured manner. It is a technique that frequently employs examples to illustrate key points. Explanations take account of the age of the children and teachers adjust their language and terminology accordingly, such that children are given time to absorb what is said, think about the implications and ask questions of clarification. Like all good teaching, explanations build on the children's existing **knowledge** and understanding.

Exposition is a more complex form of explanation, involving graphic illustrations, critique or commentary on an aspect of work or a specific occurrence. Exposition is literally an 'exposing' or revealing a situation or value position as viewed from a variety of perspectives. During exposition, teachers use persuasion, project their personalities into what they say and often exhibit a little flamboyance. For instance, an exposition to older primary children might highlight the harmful exploitation of indigenous populations. In this case, illustrations may include statistical details of economies before and after foreign intervention and a critique of the benefits and losses that accrued. The teacher might encourage the children to raise their own questions after carefully considering the issues. With younger children, an exposition might deal with issues of road safety, healthy eating or moral issues such as kindness.

Demonstration includes elements of exposition but makes use of more varied resources and equipment, together with presentations of the techniques, **skills** or procedures associated with the task. For instance, a teacher may demonstrate the correct handling and techniques associated with a variety of percussion instruments or the way to

access an index or employ strategies in a sport. Demonstration depends on the teacher having a firm grasp of the processes and being able to show them to the pupil audience at the same time as talking to them about the conceptual or practical stages involved.

Pupils need help from adults to distinguish between instructional and invitational comments. Thus, the instructional comment anticipates compliance, whereas the invitational comment is a recommendation rather than a command. Inexperienced teachers sometimes present children with a choice when they intend to project a command and find that they have to revert to a formal instruction after initially using an invitation. It is possible for what is intended as a command to end up sounding like a choice or an aspiration. For example, there is a significant difference between statements such as 'Can you sit still, please?' (choice) and 'I would be pleased if you sat still' (aspiration) and 'Please put your pencil down and sit still' (command).

Primary teachers make increasing use of computer technology to aid instruction, notably *interactive whiteboards* that provide access to the Internet and in-school computer systems. The technology allows teachers to draw from a wide range of information, including charts, diagrams, photographs and other data, and also to display an example of a pupil's work on screen for the attention of the whole class (by employing a digital camera). Children's work that would have been erased using a conventional board can be saved on the computer for future use.

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INTERACTION

It is no exaggeration to claim that adult-child interactions lie at the heart of effective primary education. Interaction is a broad term to describe the numerous instances when adults in the classroom make some form of verbal or non-verbal connection with pupils, or pupils with adults. The formality or informality varies as the circumstance dictates. Thus, in a teacher-led lesson phase the interaction is normally initiated by the adult and is closely controlled by the adult. By contrast, out-of-lesson interactions are frequently informal (unless discipline needs to be exerted) and may be initiated by adult or child.

Teachers work to produce a purposeful **learning climate** in which they can exert a positive influence on the way that pupils react and behave, taking special care over their words and the way in which they respond to children's comment. In particular, the provision of direct information and instructions to children forms a key part of the interaction process. To ensure that pupils hear and understand what is said, teachers have to be clear about the information and **knowledge** they want to convey and to engage the children's interest as they do so. Careful sequencing of points is important, especially for less able children and younger children, as this offers them a framework within which they can build their understanding. There is also a limit to the amount of information that children can hold in their minds at one time; so visual supports such as a picture, chart or summary sheet are often used as memory aids. In the richest form of interaction, children are given an opportunity to ask questions, both to clarify what has been said and to expand the scope of their ideas.

Teachers commonly interact with pupils by asking a question, affirming the response, commenting further on the points that have been raised or alerting the children to the errors in their reasoning. Sometimes a teacher asks another child to provide an answer or offer a perspective. The need to teach **lessons** within a given time frame means that there is a limited amount of time available for childinitiated conversations; this time limitation has the effect that adults initiate nearly all the verbal exchanges and restricts pupils' opportunities to respond. Some educationists argue that teacher-dominated sessions are unhelpful, as pupils learn more effectively when they are given the opportunity to **talk** about their work, express their feelings and freely offer comment on relevant issues. Teachers of younger children, in particular, tend to employ a **'circle time'** approach in which every child has a chance to speak and contribute in an affirming atmosphere.

Interactive teaching in which extended forms of pupil-pupil or adult-pupil dialogue are involved has become less common in primary teaching because teachers have been encouraged to inject 'pace' into the sessions, reducing the opportunities for reflective dialogue. As a result, some teachers do not feel comfortable in allowing children room to pursue an argument, explore an issue or express an opinion unless it can be done succinctly. In addition, some younger children speak slowly and others need to ponder, pause and retrace the steps of their thinking, so that even more time is needed to complete what they want to say. If time is absorbed by a child's extended verbal contribution, the squeeze on the remaining lesson phases becomes a serious factor in fulfilling the intended learning outcomes. Teachers wishing to develop children's verbal competence sometimes use the strategy of 'tell a friend what you think before you tell an adult' during interactive sessions and make stronger use of collaborative work, whereby a number of children work together initially to discuss ideas and formulate suggestions that are then more widely shared.

On the occasions when pupils initiate a conversation with an adult about learning, they tend to do so by asking one or other of two types of work-related questions. By far the most common type of question is about work procedures to clarify what they are meant to be doing. However, less confident children sometimes prefer to struggle on uncertainly rather than risk a teacher's wrath by asking about an aspect of the work that they feel they should already have grasped. Teachers find that there is less need to repeat what has been said if information and instructions are given precisely to pupils in the first place. The second type of query that children frequently raise is uncertainty about how to work

something out or the way to employ essential **skills.** Teachers are regularly faced with a choice about whether to tell children, encourage them to try and find a solution for themselves or give them general guidance in the expectation that they will gradually make sense of the problem with which they are grappling.

Teachers have to master a variety of interactive techniques, not least the use of demonstrating skills, strategies and practical procedures to pupils. There are a number of instances when demonstrating techniques can be a highly effective way of introducing ideas, reinforcing learning and motivating children. For example, a demonstration and explanation of the correct usage and limitations of equipment or resources is often necessary in advance of a practical lesson. Demonstrations for the purpose of reinforcing learning can be linked with the children's wider experiences, using familiar situations from every-day life. If a demonstration requires the use of specialist equipment or is potentially hazardous, then teachers have to take close account of **health and safety** considerations before and during the lesson.

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INTERVENTION

An integral part of a teacher's classroom work is monitoring pupil progress by keenly observing how the children are coping with the set tasks and activities, and then intervening by offering appropriate support to them. Teacher intervention is necessary for any one of at least five reasons. First, the teacher's poor initial lesson introduction, organisation or resources mean that further explanation is necessary. Second, poor matching between child and task results in confusion or uncertainty. Third, the child's lack of confidence creates tentativeness. Fourth, a child's failure to grasp what is required results in uncertainty about how to go about the task. Fifth, the child's lack of concentration necessitates regular reminders from teachers about remaining on task. The majority of pupils let a teacher know if they have concerns or questions about what they are doing. However, teachers and assistants have to develop the skill of monitoring that consists of scanning the room to gain clues about the way that children are attending to their work and the level of adult support that needs to be provided.

The relationship between monitoring and intervening is fluid. Sometimes a teacher may be aware that a child is struggling but decide to delay intervening to allow opportunity for the child to think and engage with the problem. On other occasions the teacher may decide to be highly specific and tell the child precisely what must be done. Awareness of children's progress through observation of behaviour and information from their written work provide numerous insights into a child's conceptual grasp of the task, confidence in tackling the set work and, ultimately, the nature of his or her achievements. In this regard, all primary teachers need to be skilled observers of children and keen judges of how much support to offer.

The extent of adult intervention depends on the specificity or flexibility within the task, the teacher's knowledge of the child's willingness to persevere and how much the work has been understood. If the pupil is unwilling to persevere, it may signal a poor attitude or a weak aptitude towards learning. If pupils lack understanding, it may be that the teacher has assumed too much or failed to explain adequately. If the pupil lacks confidence, adults have a significant part in helping to build **self-esteem** by using praise and **encouragement.** If the end product is still disappointing, teachers have to give serious attention to issues of task clarity, lack of understanding, poor attitude and lack of self-confidence as they make instant judgements about the type and quality of their intervention.

Unless the occasion is a formal test in which assistance is not permitted, every teacher has to balance the importance of offering guidance to children against intervening to such an extent that the child loses ownership of the task. Consequently part of a teacher's skill in knowing when to intervene is discerning when it is better *not* to intervene. Experienced teachers develop an aptitude for spotting events and noting pupils' comments and behaviours that require immediate attention, those that can be left for a while and those that are best ignored. Sometimes teachers find it useful to allow time for the pupil to self-correct rather than rushing in immediately particularly if the lesson purpose is principally about allowing pupils to grapple with problems rather than providing immediate solutions. The principle underpinning 'standing off' from children as they struggle is that they need to be taught self-sufficiency rather than promoting their over-reliance on a teacher.

Some children are happy to be told the answer by an adult instead of putting their minds to a problem. A pattern of behaviour emerges whereby the child engages with a task, encounters difficulty and immediately asks for assistance and advice, which the teacher dutifully provides. However, the behaviour pattern can be gradually changed, such that the child engages with the task, encounters a difficulty, thinks intently about solutions, seeks advice from a friend and only as a last resort seeks advice from an adult. A delayed intervention strategy is supported by phrases such as 'try it yourself first and I'll come back in a moment if you are still stuck' or 'ask a friend first then ask an adult'. However, leaving a child to flounder for too long without adult help is counter-productive if it leads to disillusionment or creates restless behaviour.

Further reading

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KEY STAGES

Since the introduction of the National Curriculum in England and Wales, coverage of the curriculum has been divided into four Key Stages. Key Stage 1 (KS1) is designed for children aged 5 to 7 and follows on directly after the Foundation Stage; it applies to pupils in year 1 (5 to 6 years of age) and year 2 (6 to 7 years). Key Stage 2 (KS2) is designed for children aged 7 to 11 years and follows after KS1; it applies to pupils in year 3 (7 to 8 years), year 4 (8 to 9 years), year 5 (9 to 10 years) and year 6 (10 to 11 years). Key Stage 3 (KS3) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) are the curricula for secondary-aged pupils: KS3 for pupils aged 11 to 14 and KS4 for pupils aged 14 to 16. Statutory examinations exist for pupils at the end of each Key Stage (in England); Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have slightly different systems but the concept of a 'key stage' is implicit throughout the UK.

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KNOWLEDGE

There is a lot more information available to pupils today than a generation ago, so they face both immense opportunities and challenges in negotiating the available knowledge. As the amount of information in the world is estimated to double approximately every seven years, this fact has implications for **curriculum** content and selection. There are many different forms of knowledge relevant to primary education, including knowledge of facts, practical **skills,** controversies, situations, procedures and people; each form of knowledge can be transitory or deeply embedded in a pupil's mind. Knowledge of facts involves more than memorising; it also needs to take account of new understanding. Knowledge of skills requires tuition and opportunity for careful practice. Knowledge of controversies requires an awareness of key facts and opinions that impinge on the dispute. Knowledge of situations demands a wide view of related factors and the capacity to make judgements about their relevance and importance. Knowledge of procedures is necessary for task completion. Knowledge of people is required to negotiate social situations. Knowledge evolves and deepens with age, experience and increased language acumen.

Most knowledge needs to be immediately accessible, such as remembering a multiplication table to employ in solving a mathematical problem; but children

sometimes seem to be locked in a transitory knowledge zone, apparently learning something one day and seemingly forgetting it by the next. Sometimes the knowledge is locked into a child's recall system but cannot be accessed, either because it is too deeply stored and requires a verbal or visual stimulus to extract it, or because the child is tired or circumstances (such as stress) create a barrier to recall. Primary-age pupils also need to gain wisdom about the appropriate use of knowledge, its relevance and its function in life. Teachers face the interesting challenge of helping children to apply what they learn to a variety of contexts.

Although at one stage of a child's development it may be sufficient to 'know something is true', it is necessary for adults to point out that things are not always as straightforward as they appear. For example, 7-year-old children may be told that all solid objects fall towards the ground at the same rate, but 11-year-olds also need to be aware that the principle only holds under constant atmospheric conditions. Pupils therefore acquire knowledge at a variety of different levels. They may know something because they are able to repeat what they have been told or read. They may know because they can explain why something happens or because they can observe, describe and comment on an event.

Most powerfully, children can apply their knowledge to other situations (knowledge in use) of which three types have been identified: knowledge by association, knowledge through replication and knowledge through application. Knowledge by association allows links to be made with previous learning. Knowledge through replication is being able to remember and reproduce facts when required to do so. Knowledge through application is for use in solving problems and is the most significant of the three as it necessitates making connections between what presently exists and what might exist. Consequently, the most powerful forms of knowledge facilitate understanding across a variety of contexts rather than being restricted to the understanding that is attached to it by the learner in the present situation. Primary teachers that espouse such a view are likely to promote **enquiry**-based learning in which children have to apply their knowledge to solve genuine problems. The most effective teaching incorporates both the transmission of knowledge and its application.

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LEADERSHIP

The senior primary school leader is normally designated ‘head teacher’ (or ‘Principal’). He or she is a person appointed to manage the day-to-day running of the school and ensure that staff behave in accordance with professional codes of conduct. The head teacher has the final responsibility for managing the **curriculum,** finances and teacher and pupil activities, and for maintaining school property. The head teacher must also build and enhance the reputation of the school with respect to academic standards and the service it provides to the community. Primary school head teachers are both the professional leaders and managers of primary schools and are assisted by the governing body, consisting of volunteers who carry ultimate responsibility for education provision at an executive level. Head teachers have had to oversee and implement the vast array of government initiatives that have impacted on primary education over recent decades, including the government’s strategy for primary schools launched on 20 May 2003 through the document *Excellence and Enjoyment* (DfES 2003a).

Primary school head teachers are guardians of the reputation of the teaching profession by ensuring their staff deliver high-quality education. Consequently, they are leaders of learning (both within individual classrooms and at a school-wide level), the assessment of pupil **achievement,** innovations and improvements in classroom practice, and the monitoring and evaluation of teacher performance.

All teachers in primary schools other than newly qualified ones are expected to be subject leaders, though sometimes a new teacher will help a colleague in a supportive capacity. Over recent years the role has changed from one of being a subject *coordinator* who is only responsible for maintaining an overview of what is being taught in the school, to one of subject *leader* who is actively managing the subject. Subject leadership in primary schools is generally exercised in two ways. (1) By controlling resources and offering advice about their implementation. (2) By promoting curriculum development and change. The national standards for subject leaders (Teacher Training Agency 1998) state that they should aim to provide professional leadership and management for a subject (or area of work) and to secure high-quality teaching, effective use of resources and improved standards of learning and **achievement** for all pupils. Subject leaders are most effective if:

- They possess a high level of subject **knowledge.**
- They are able to relate their subject to other subject areas.
- They have a secure grasp of the strategic development needs of the school and their subject.
- They are very good teachers who can and do model good practice.
- They can lead staff by inspiring them to believe pupils can achieve better results.
- They can communicate effectively and build good relationships with staff, pupils and parents.
- They know how to plan and implement change.

- They manage resources effectively.
- They monitor staff and pupil performance and give objective **feedback** whenever possible.

Leaders strive to ensure that they remain at the cutting edge of their subject and promote its ongoing development through staff development and guidance to colleagues. They keep abreast of local and national initiatives and practices and keep colleagues in touch with new educational initiatives that may impact upon their work. The best leaders foster excellence in teaching, facilitate discussion and advise about particular **pupil learning** needs. Many primary leaders are given a small amount of relief from regular timetable commitments to pursue their extra responsibilities, though balancing class teaching and subject leadership can be onerous and demanding.

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LEARNING CLIMATE

A learning climate is also referred to as a learning 'environment' or an 'atmosphere'. Positive learning climates lead to motivated pupils and optimum attainment; negative learning climates tend to have the opposite effect. When the learning climate is relaxed yet purposeful, there is a strong sense of expectancy among the children and they do not have to expend energy on worrying about whether or not they are doing the right thing. When the relationship between adults and children is mutually respectful and everyone knows where the boundaries of appropriate behaviour lie, it saves having to waste time on constantly exploring what is and is not acceptable behaviour. Where children can take risks without fear of being censured and ideas can be exchanged in the certainty that they will be treated seriously, a fertile environment for innovation exists and creativity flourishes. A learning climate where mistakes are not tolerated and boundaries are blurred leaves children feeling vulnerable and restricts their curiosity and imagination, as

instead of channelling their energies into creative approaches to work they spend their time acting defensively to avoid blame or recrimination.

The bedrock of academic success is found in creating a learning climate in which pupils have self-confidence, feel relaxed in the company of other children in the class and enjoy an easy relationship with the teacher. Pupils not only need relevant work but also positive experiences of their engagement with learning that will equip them with the skills they need to prosper in the future. Teachers facilitate these positive experiences by establishing and maintaining a calm and expectant climate, within which a variety of learning approaches is encouraged. Pupils help themselves by being taught the skills of conflict resolution, collaborating, reflecting, discriminating, listening and sitting quietly. Teachers promote pupil satisfaction by ensuring that lessons are relevant, accessible, engaging and interesting, and organising the classroom such that children are so engrossed in the tasks that they have no desire to be mischievous.

The most productive learning climate is one in which each child is valued and accorded the same chances to achieve success, where competition is with the self as much as with others, and one pupil's triumph is shared by all. Teachers help to promote a healthy learning environment through their own positive attitude, striving to be fair, promoting equal opportunity and considering children's emotional as well as their academic needs. New teachers soon discover that speaking to children warmly whenever possible, valuing their efforts and encouraging them to reach their potential, all contribute towards the positive climate that they seek. Consequently, teachers enhance the climate by showing a personal interest in individuals, communicating in ways every pupil can understand and encouraging everyone to do their best. Learning is promoted as a worthwhile and collaborative effort that allows children to build high self-esteem and make best progress within a supportive environment, whether in the classroom or in other areas of the school.

A thoughtfully arranged and clean classroom in which children are helped to value the physical environment is more inviting than one with an air of disarray and dowdiness. Small adjustments can make a considerable difference to the ambience; for instance, checking that tables and chairs are of suitable size for pupils and that trays, books and resources are clearly marked and accessible. Rooms that look cared for and give the impression that they are places where everyone can work safely and efficiently and with a sense of purpose are likely to be enhanced by interactive displays, with examples of good-quality children's work on the walls. Displays, paintings, models and exhibits enliven many primary school classrooms. Some corridors are festooned with colourful motifs and stimulating pictures, all of which take considerable time and energy to produce, mount and maintain.

Despite the orientation of modern primary school life, in which competence is judged largely by academic outcomes, many teachers extol the need for colourful and well-displayed classrooms and invest a lot of energy into ensuring that pupils' work is prominent. Teachers of younger children often establish different areas in the classroom to stimulate the children's imagination, such as a story corner surrounded by lavishly painted pictures of characters from fairy tales, a writing corner separated from the rest of the room by curtains from which hang samples of completed stories and pictures, a mystery corner with unusual items of interest and a home corner full of household items. The same classroom may have a number of tables with specimens collected during walks,

mathematics equipment and small-scale construction materials to handle, **play** with and enjoy. Cards with carefully framed questions or challenges to find out more are placed alongside the displays, prompting children to engage with the theme by handling the objects and talking about them to their friends. The pupils in these classrooms encourage their parents to come and admire their contributions. The class teacher is known throughout the school as having a 'fantastic classroom', though it is not intended to be a **competition** between teachers and some head teachers worry that time spent on display can mean time lost in promoting standards in the core subjects. In fact it is sometimes the teaching assistant that takes the main responsibility for displays, though the TA may not receive the public credit for doing so.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The term 'objective' in the phrase 'learning objective' derives from the root word 'object', one definition of which is an intention or target. In education parlance it has come to mean the product of a learning experience. Thus, a learning objective represents the focal point of teaching, by which the teacher organises and manages pupils' learning in such a way that they gain new or deeper levels of insight in the subject.

The process of identifying pupils' present state of **knowledge,** then teaching and setting tasks with a view to improving their learning, evaluating the outcomes through assessing progress and organising activities to take account of this information underpins much of mainstream primary education today. Each lesson or session is characterised by the establishment of clearly defined learning objectives followed by systematic teaching to achieve the intended outcomes. However, primary education that is based on this objectives-led model of teaching and learning has to be reconciled with the well-established fact that children learn best when motivated, given some choice about their activities, encouraged to explore and investigate phenomena and use spoken language in natural settings. As a result, objectives-led teaching and the need for flexibility in learning sit uneasily together.

Learning objectives that are expressed in terms of desirable learning outcomes for pupils, while promoting a systematic approach to teaching and learning, have also attracted criticism. Concerns are rooted in a belief that too much precision about the things pupils must learn leads to having an unmanageable number of objectives that, if

pursued laboriously, create a pedestrian approach to learning. There are three specific concerns attached to reservations about the efficacy of learning objectives. First, many objectives can only be loosely described. For instance, the intended learning outcome may be for children to understand how to employ adjectives as a means of describing nouns with greater accuracy. However, the understanding may reside at the level of knowing that adjectives are also known as add-nouns (adding to the meaning of the noun) or may involve familiarity with a range of adjectives to provide a choice when describing the noun or may incorporate subject-specific adjectives (e.g. the *evaporating* liquid) or colloquialisms (such as 'the *cool* attitude'). Again, the concept of 'greater accuracy' in writing is a subjective judgement, requiring an understanding of audience and the meaning that is being conveyed. Consequently, what appears to be a straightforward learning objective is extremely sophisticated and requires considerable skill in interpreting and managing.

The second concern associated with the identification of specific learning objectives is that it is difficult for teachers to quantify pupils' existing learning, as all tests and measures are subject to the limitations of the measure being employed. There are also many aspects of learning that defy straightforward evaluation, such as innovation, insight, wisdom and team membership. Objectives-driven learning is based on an assumption that it is possible not only to specify what children presently know but also to direct their learning so precisely that they will learn exactly what the teacher intends. The implication is that if teachers fail to discern pupils' needs precisely, they cannot possibly provide a matching set of tasks and activities to promote their learning. In fact, such precision between needs and tasks is very difficult to achieve.

The third issue raised by an objectives-driven process is the fact that children are capable of learning many things over and above the intended outcomes that have not been anticipated by the teacher. By strict adherence to the approach of establishing objectives, designing work through which children attain them and monitoring their progress towards the narrowly stated objectives, teachers may inadvertently suppress or restrict unforeseen learning opportunities.

The establishment of learning objectives offer teachers a useful means of controlling lesson content, covering the curriculum and focusing pupils' thinking on an identified area of knowledge and understanding. Objectives also facilitate closer monitoring of the curriculum because they provide a straightforward means of checking what children have learned and what remains to be learned. However, strict adherence to this approach tends to oversimplify the intricate nature of learning.

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LEGALITY

Over the past twenty years or so a considerable amount of legislation has been passed that is specific to education. Other legislation outside the immediate field of education, such as the Children Acts of 1989 and 2004, have also had an impact on the way that adults in school relate to children. In addition, there has been a substantial increase in the amount of litigation in society and this trend has impinged upon the work of adults in school. Consequently, all teachers are obliged to keep abreast of the way in which laws and codes of practice impact upon their classroom and teaching. They must also conform to their professional duties as required by the head teacher, as explicitly stated in their contracts of employment. A refusal to do so can be interpreted as a breach of contract and invite disciplinary procedures. In this regard, all new teachers receive a letter of appointment from the school governors/school board specifying matters such as salary, duties and tenure.

Common law requires that teachers have a duty of care towards pupils in a way that reflects the behaviour of sensible parents. It is assumed that teachers will conduct themselves while they carry out their professional duties in a way that benefits the children and the other adults in the school; for example, being honest and protecting vulnerable pupils from harm. In extreme circumstances this duty may extend to administering medicine or taking action in an emergency, though teachers are not contractually required to act as medics. They can, however, volunteer to occupy such a position if the local education authority indemnifies them. Primary teachers may be responsible for children of 4 or 5 years of age, with the attendant close level of care and supervision that is necessary to ensure their safety and welfare. Teachers of older pupils have to be particularly aware of the sensitivities and privacy issues relating to fast-maturing young people, and adjust their words and actions to take account of the possibility that their actions might be misconstrued or their comments misinterpreted. Teacher concerns about litigation and culpability have resulted in a curtailment of outdoor activities and **educational visits,** especially those involving an element of risk.

Workforce remodelling is having an effect on the role and responsibility of teachers. Teachers' contracts now state that teaching **assistants** rather than teachers should undertake routine clerical and administrative tasks (e.g. extensive photocopying), though this rule is deemed normal rather than inviolable. Space in the school day must also be found for teachers with special responsibilities to carry out their roles and, in theory, all teachers should have adequate preparation, planning and assessment (PPA) time. Head teachers in smaller primary schools especially (with number of pupils on roll fewer than 100) often struggle to provide substitute teacher cover from their budgets.

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LESSONS

A generation ago, the word lesson tended to apply to secondary education where different subjects were taught within an allocated time frame. Primary education was based largely on integrating subjects within a 'topic' **(topic work)** or 'thematic' framework (laying the stress on one particular subject above others) that emphasised the interconnectivity of learning through **cross-curricular work**. Nevertheless, mathematics and English were taught separately as well as being incorporated into the topic. In recent years, the emphasis upon **literacy** and **numeracy** (and to a lesser extent, science) as subjects in their own right has given rise to the term 'lesson' being applied to distinct subject sessions. A lesson has thereby acquired dual meaning: (1) the subject content covered over a given period of time; (2) the time allocation for content coverage specified within a set timetable.

Lessons have to be manageable, with clearly identified **learning objectives** that are normally linked to the requirements of a nationally monitored system. Most teachers share the intended learning intentions with the pupils, either verbally or through a written reminder, or both, so that pupils are aware that lesson tasks and activities do not constitute an end in themselves but are part of a larger educational endeavour. The concept of a lesson is therefore based on the assumption not only that teaching should focus on identifiable learning outcomes during the period allotted to it, but also that the process can be precisely planned, organised and monitored to correspond precisely with the allocated time period.

Lesson content is determined by what the teacher intends that pupils should learn and understand and must be straightforward to teach, allowing the teacher to introduce the aspect of learning, supply children with tasks to complete and rapidly evaluate their progress. Lesson structure has to take account of the pace at which pupils learn and the manner in which they do so, as some children work quickly and efficiently, while others work laboriously. Some children like to think deeply before proceeding, others are spontaneous and (sometimes) over-eager to complete the work. Some pupils can think abstractly (i.e. they can figure things out in their heads); other children require visual, verbal or even kinaesthetic resources (such as materials of different textures to assist partially sighted children) to assist them in their work. Teachers also have to ensure the

proper **differentiation** of the tasks and activities undertaken by pupils to allow them to finish the allocated work within the lesson time frame.

The most productive lessons are those in which teachers have high (but sensible) **expectations** of the children; offer clear instructions; help them to identify their own learning targets; and encourage an active, purposeful dialogue about the content. By contrast, weaker lessons are vague, teacher dominated, routine or repetitive and badly paced. The best lessons are those in which the teacher uses an appropriate range of teaching strategies (giving information directly, using IT resources, employing question and answer, making children think and reflect, etc.), sets appropriate challenges with respect to the **ability** range of children, monitors progress and intervenes sensitively. Effective teachers provide pupils with stable learning conditions under which they can prosper by organising work that is based on their present knowledge and understanding, and within the time and resource constraints that operate. The majority of lessons conclude by spending a few minutes reviewing what has been learned, a time that is commonly referred to as a plenary or **lesson review.**

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LESSON MANAGEMENT

There are different ways to understand the term 'management'. The most immediate definition for teachers is with respect to managing a group or class of children, which has practical implications for the satisfactory running of sessions, efficient organisation, provision of resources and negotiating the direction of **pupil learning.**

Effective management ensures that pupils understand the procedures attached to the process of learning, which is made more likely when teachers are explicit with their instructions, explaining precisely what is expected of the children and involving them in decisions where appropriate. Teachers improve the **effectiveness** of their management by starting **lessons** promptly, showing enthusiasm for their content, checking that pupils have the necessary information to cope with the work tasks and making resources easily available to every child. Good class management is enhanced when the lesson is carefully paced and teachers insist upon careful work and enthuse about children's effort and successes.

Good class management involves taking practical considerations carefully into account. For example, teachers do not keep children sitting for too long on the carpet at the start of the lesson or organise too many messy activities at one time or work up to the last moment, thereby failing to leave sufficient time to clear up and discuss the lesson, all

of which might invite unsettled behaviour. During the session it is also possible for adults to give too much time to one group of pupils and neglect others that require guidance. Although some tasks require more adult involvement than others, smooth management necessitates that teachers are careful not to become indispensable to pupils, but rather encourage them to be curious, imaginative and independent as much as possible.

Well-organised teaching leads to satisfied children and thereby improves the learning experience. Inexperienced teachers sometimes leave insufficient time during one lesson to achieve all that they planned or fail to sort out in advance the activities that different children will be involved in doing. More experienced teachers know that there are likely to be interruptions during the lesson that need to be taken into account in the planning and that lessons immediately before or after any events (such as **assembly,** singing practice or rehearsals) might affect the time available or pupils' concentration levels.

Good management is particularly important towards the end of the lesson, as poor use of time may mean that the lesson overruns and children have to leave the room before it is tidy or are delayed from going out to the playground or late starting the next lesson. An orderly exit is essential, both from a discipline and a **health and safety** perspective.

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LESSON PLANNING

The ultimate purpose of lesson planning is to produce plans that facilitate the implementation of a systematic teaching programme. Specific lesson plans relate to a particular class or group of children, requiring teachers to give careful thought to the pupils' learning needs and the circumstances in which they take place. Although all teachers are pleased to have lesson ideas and topics, they take ownership of the plan by mentally rehearsing the planning process and adapting it to their situation. Thus, teachers must know something about the origin of the plan, where it fits into the longer-term learning aims, what it assumes of children and what modifications are necessary to accommodate the needs of individual pupils. Lesson plans are formulated with an awareness of pupils' previous learning and longer-term goals. In addition to the formally prepared content, effective teachers ensure that unpredicted opportunities for learning that emerge during the lesson are seized and exploited.

A lot of the preparation that contributes towards effective teaching happens away from the classroom, which can make it appear to an observer that the teacher has some innate qualities that make things run smoothly with minimum effort. In reality, the lesson planning is an active process, requiring a familiarity with the school's broader educational

priorities and children's individual learning needs. In drawing up successful lesson plans, teachers do so with reference to the school's existing medium-term **curriculum** plans (often spanning half a term) and through working closely with other teachers who have responsibility for the same age group or subject (often meeting fortnightly to formulate plans and share ideas).

A lesson plan can be compared with a map of an underground railway system that offers guidance about going from one place to another with minimum delay by using a net of coloured lines between stations. The map does not give or intend to give any information about the state of the trains, the exact distance between stations or the air quality in the tunnels; it simply points the way to get from the start to the finish most efficiently. A lesson plan parallels the principle of a tube train map by setting out the chronological steps in such a way that the session runs smoothly. It does not contain details of how the children will behave, make predictions about whether the equipment will prove to be satisfactory or describe the nature of the classroom climate, and is not intended to do so. However, if the journey' through the lesson is to be a success, the planning must take account of time constraints and anticipate factors that may detract from learning or enhance it. The more thoroughly teachers think through and prepare for the predictable elements, the easier they find it to cope with the unexpected events.

Every lesson plan is based on specified **learning objectives,** though learning *intentions* is sometimes a preferred term, as it is not always possible to predict precisely what children will learn and sometimes the same objectives apply to several consecutive sessions, requiring only minor adjustments in the focus of teaching. Although the objectives apply to every child in general terms, the specific needs of particular children have to be taken into account through **differentiation** of the vocabulary questions and tasks that are used to reinforce learning. Lessons do not take place in isolation and a lesson plan has to indicate the links with previous lessons to strengthen continuity and the developmental nature of learning. Pupils are not involved in lesson preparation, so teachers have to explain to pupils what is happening in the lesson if the children are to engage fully with it.

Children take differing amounts of time to grasp concepts and remember facts, so in addition to addressing the needs of less able and more able pupils, lesson plans have to make allowance for faster and slower workers. Plans differ according to the subject matter, location and age of children. Thus, a shortened maths lesson with bright 11year-olds following an unexpectedly long **assembly** makes different demands from a lengthy outdoor games' session or a period of adultdirected **play** for 5-year-olds.

Experienced teachers make far less detailed plans than a trainee or new teacher would be expected to keep but still have to be conscientious in preparation. They can only teach efficiently and respond adeptly to unexpected events because they have got other aspects of the lesson firmly under control, using techniques gained from hardwon experience. By contrast, inexperienced teachers rely heavily on the lesson plan and cannot imagine teaching without it. As they become more confident, they are able to set the plan aside and concentrate on improving their lesson presentation, interaction with pupils and promoting effective learning.

Teaching and learning are a continuous unfolding of **knowledge, skills** and understanding across periods of time. Over a series of lessons, each new session begins by rehearsing some of the key points from the previous one. **Assessment** of what took

place in one lesson enables the next one to be planned more accurately by using evidence about the way that the children responded to the tasks, answered questions and completed the work. Consequently, progress in learning is reinforced from one session to the next as the threads of learning are woven together and teaching becomes more sensitive to children's needs.

All lesson planning takes note of the key resources that are required, both the practical items and the human assistance (teaching **assistants** or voluntary parental help). If equipment requires special training or there are **health and safety** factors to consider, these are taken into account when planning the lesson, as even commonly used resources can pose dangers if procedures are not correctly followed. Lesson plans often contain a list of significant words and expressions, especially subject-related ones. The extent to which key spellings are made available to pupils and the extent to which they try to spell the words unaided or with the aid of a word bank is a decision that has to be made by each teacher. The majority of teachers encourage children to try and spell words for themselves before asking an adult. Subject-related terms require special explanation.

The **inclusion** of each child is an essential factor for teachers to consider when planning a lesson or session, which might entail preparing separate tasks for the less able children or modifying the lesson so that they are able to find success in an elementary task, while the more able extend their learning through more challenging activities. If less able children are extracted from the lesson for tuition purposes, teachers have to take account of the way in which they will be incorporated into the lesson on their return.

Assessment criteria, linked closely to learning objectives, are normally noted in the planning to provide indicators by which pupil progress and attainment can be judged. Although it is impossible to observe every child closely during each lesson, teachers often employ a straightforward categorisation to indicate how pupils engaged with the knowledge demands: coped comfortably struggled to cope, require more challenge. The three categories provide a starting point for a more sophisticated evaluation of progress, which normally relies on an assessment of children's written output after they have handed in the work (sometimes referred to as 'summative' assessment).

The final phase of a lesson (the **'lesson review')** allows the teacher to summarise what has been achieved, draws together the threads of learning that have characterised the lesson, including **mistakes and misconceptions,** offers pupils the opportunity to share with others in the class what they have done and achieved, and indicate what will follow in the next lesson.

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LESSON REVIEW

The process of lesson review or 'plenary' (a term denoting that the whole class or group is present and involved) is an important part of the learning process, as it gives an opportunity for the teacher to encourage pupils to **talk** about their work, draw together the key points from the lesson and point out **mistakes and misconceptions** and errors.

Reviewing lesson outcomes does not have to be prolonged. Teachers sometimes use the plenary to go through the lesson's key vocabulary list or ask selected pupils to explain the way they have worked out a problem or tell the rest of the class what they have found out or achieved. Occasionally it involves one child speaking on behalf of the collaborating group to explain what they have decided or summarise the results of their efforts. Children also love the opportunity to show off their models, charts, pictures and drawings, though the plenary is not necessarily used solely for 'show and tell'. Other plenary approaches include children saying what surprised or pleased them about what they have done, what problems they encountered or **reading** an extract from a piece of written work.

Teachers have a key role in bringing to a halt the work being undertaken by the children, gathering the class together with minimum disruption and enthusing about pupils' achievements. Whichever method (or combination of methods) is used to involve pupils, teachers endeavour to receive every contribution enthusiastically. Very young or shy children also need to feel that they have contributed towards the review phase, even if they have not actually spoken; this is often achieved by asking for a show of hands about different aspects of the lesson, to which all children can contribute, or finding a child who has done well and letting all the children bask in the reflected glory. There are many occasions when these final moments of a lesson are used to remind the children of what is following the break or during the next lesson and to end positively by celebrating all that has been achieved. In these ways, a plenary session not only reinforces learning but also provides the whole class with a sense of fulfilment.

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LITERACY

Fundamentally, a literate person is someone who is able to read and write, and the term 'literacy' largely replaced the more general word 'English' in primary schools around the end of the twentieth century to describe the process by which children become literate. The teaching of literacy has always been a priority in primary schools, but in recent years this priority has been given additional impetus through a large number of government-

initiated **curriculum** reforms and the use of national **testing** as a crucial indicator for school success. This emphasis has been particularly pronounced in England.

Literacy in primary education is principally concerned with the process of **communication** between pupil and pupil or pupil and adult. The more opportunity that children have to communicate verbally and make use of well-informed adults who will inspire and motivate them, the faster is their progress towards linguistic competence. Teachers work hard to encourage children to see themselves as active in their own learning, rather than as passive recipients of information. Research into the literacy development of young primary children has focused on the important contribution made by the school and the home and confirmed the importance of spoken language as a prerequisite to proficiency in written language. Young children are faced with the considerable challenge of grasping the concept that printed text is the means of representing recorded speech; they must also understand that writing provides the vehicle by which the conversion from spoken to written form takes place. Some pupils face considerable difficulties in comprehending the connections between spoken and written language, not least the fact that words are units of meaning and punctuation conventions are signposts that they must use to negotiate the written code. Statistically these difficulties are more prevalent in boys than in girls.

Within any class of children there will be considerable variation in the previous experience of the spoken and written word. Some children come from linguistically rich homes, in which there are active verbal exchanges promoted by loquacious adults. Other children come from homes where there is little emphasis on **reading** and a restricted vocabulary range is employed by adults. Some children speak a different first language from English; in such instances English is referred to as an additional language (EAL). Studies suggest that many EAL children are effective decoders of print but may struggle with the rhythm of words and find it hard to grasp the deeper meanings of text. Teachers have to take close account of pupils' different language experiences when planning and teaching.

The concept of a *literacy hour* is rooted in the Dearing Review of the National Curriculum in England and Wales (Dearing 1993) and based on an assumption that pupils should receive 180 hours of English teaching each year. The literacy hour has received official support through the publication of a national literacy strategy, NLS (DfEE 1998c). The 180 hours of teaching provides for five hours of literacy teaching each week over the thirty-six weeks of the school year, or one hour per day. The NLS framework for teaching recommends that each lesson consist of four elements that have to be kept in balance. The first element, led by the teacher with the whole class, is based on scrutinising a specific portion of text ('shared text' work). The second element, also led by the teacher, focuses on individual key words for 5- to 7-year-olds and sentences for 7- to 11-year-olds. The third element is independent **reading,** writing or word work for 5- to 7-year-olds while the teacher works with children on tasks associated with the chosen text ('guided text' work), while for 7- to 11-year-olds the teacher works closely with at least one group on the significance and use of sentences from the text. Finally, the whole class is assembled for the **lesson review** to celebrate what has been learned.

The literacy hour framework is posited on a firm commitment to a view of learning, in which children learn incrementally, with each piece of learning being dependent upon previous mastery. Many teachers have modified the literacy hour framework to allow

greater flexibility, based on concerns about the fact that children working independently do, in fact, require adult support and intervention, and the limited opportunity for extended forms of writing in the short time available. Some teachers dispense with the plenary to allow more time for the main written task.

Many literacy subject leaders discover that although there is a need to develop a programme for teachers to engage in systematic language teaching, even a carefully designed programme can be uninspiring for children unless the teaching environment emphasises the usefulness and **enjoyment** to be gained from the endeavour. Children who have been under-stimulated at home or who struggle constantly with learning to read and write take a lot of persuading that the effort is worthwhile. Unlike some other aspects of learning, weak literacy cannot easily be concealed by children and if problems persist, they quickly become demoralised. The considerable challenge for teachers of younger pupils is that if children are still finding difficulty by the end of KS1, they will probably continue to be academically handicapped throughout their primary schooling and beyond.

Teaching **assistants** exercise an important role in supporting the needs of children that struggle with literacy. Pupils who are deemed to be underachieving are sometimes given additional 'booster' classes as a means of enhancing their competence and gaining better results in national tests.

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MEMORY

Memorising is a complex phenomenon, the most familiar aspect being an *active working memory* that pupils use immediately after they see or hear something. Some psychologists refer to this form of memory as a temporary storage facility where information is located until the brain can process the information into what is commonly referred to as *short-term memory,* which is effective for brief periods of time but does not accommodate complete retention. Thus, children may appear to learn something one day but forget it by the next and have difficulty transferring the information to the second type of memory, popularly known as *long-term memory* (permanently stored). In extreme cases a child will have difficulty grasping information for long enough in the active working memory to transfer it to the short-term memory. However, when memory works well, **knowledge** will be transferred from the active to the short-term and eventually to the long-term memory with minimum intellectual effort. There is general agreement that brain development and memory are closely related to the amount and quality of sleep that children get each night.

Both 'episodic' memory (memory for events) and 'semantic' memory (memory for facts) are significant for young learners. Some children who are brain damaged at birth struggle to recall episodic events from their everyday life with any reliability but are still capable of gaining average grades in work that relies on semantic memory, particularly in speech and language, **reading** and writing, and recall of well-ordered facts.

Children with memory strengths are easy to identify because they can accommodate large amounts of information and retain it effortlessly from a variety of sources. While such children may participate well in class discussions and offer interesting perspectives on complex issues, they may struggle to do well in tests, especially if it involves writing answers down. These pupils (more often boys than girls) present a considerable challenge for teachers and may, in exceptional cases, require additional adult support or regular access to IT support materials.

The way that pupils use what they have absorbed influences the reinforcement of concepts and **skills.** Children who struggle with memory weaknesses may appear to understand a concept, yet need a considerable amount of repetition, careful explanation and opportunities to explore ideas through problem solving and investigations. A common way in which teachers are alerted to a pupil's weak memory is when the child's written work is characterised by poor sequencing, missing words and inadequate grammar, despite the fact that the child can articulate his or her ideas. For these children, any sort of written work seems to hinder the process of organising their thoughts. If pupils have problems in absorbing information that is communicated verbally or are simply poor listeners they need to have directions explained and visually reinforced (with a diagram, for instance). If pupils have poor visual recall they may forget what they have read or been shown and need to have their learning supported through careful explanation and 'hands-on' experiences.

Teachers are regularly faced with determining whether children cannot remember because they are unable to do so or because they are unwilling to give the subject sufficient attention. Problems can also be created by the teacher's inadequacy to explain clearly use appropriate vocabulary and inspire children, which in turn leads to a low-key **learning climate,** tedium and reduced motivation. Children are more likely to remember and understand when the topic is interesting and relevant to them.

There are a number of strategies that teachers use to build memory in primary-aged children. The first is to offer children opportunities for regular practice (for instance, in learning sets of numbers or lists of spellings). Second, teachers utilise the odd moments to remind the children about key facts and engage them in simple **activities** to reinforce the concepts. Third, **reading** well-loved books serves as a memory tool for pupils; in particular, reading aloud exposes them to language that will be of long-term benefit. When younger children ask the teacher to read a book again and again, the repetition assists memory of the story, sequencing of events and the satisfaction that they receive from grasping the plot. Fourth, teachers stimulate children's memories by enquiring what happens next or asking them to summarise what has happened so far and making a game of retelling the whole story by moving from child to child, each one making a small contribution.

Rhyming is an important language skill that encourages memory growth as well as teaching letter sounds, and is most commonly employed in poetry. Well-written prose, especially amusing pieces, is greatly enjoyed by primary pupils and can also be memorised. Once mastered by the majority, speaking the passage in unison allows less confident children to be included within the group enterprise and conceal individual shortcomings. Using multiple and entertaining ways to study enhances learning for all children, but especially for those with poor recall, as the combination of different and captivating approaches literally makes the work 'memorable'.

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MISTAKES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

The Victorian politician E.J.Phelps is credited with coining the maxim: 'the man who makes no mistakes does not usually make anything' in a speech at Mansion House, 24 January 1899 *(Penguin Dictionary of Quotations).* There is, of course, a difference between genuine errors made in the legitimate pursuit of a goal and errors that result from weak application to the task. Mistakes can be categorised under four broad headings: slips, misunderstandings, misconceptions and misapplication. Slips result from a lack of

concentration and momentary lapses. For example, a young child might reverse letters or numbers. Misunderstandings lead to adopting an incorrect approach and, as a result, an inappropriate outcome. For example, a child may confuse numbers on the *x*- and *y*-axes of a graph. Misconceptions lead to confusion, as the insights and grasp of basic principles that are necessary for completion are inadequate. For example, a child may not understand the relationship between heat loss and the materials used for insulation. Misapplication occurs when, despite possessing the **knowledge** and practical strategies, they are not employed correctly. For example, a child may know how to use a dictionary but always start the search at the beginning instead of estimating the position of the word and turning to approximately the area in which it is located. Some teachers are inclined to spend more of their time dealing with relatively minor slips and misunderstandings, rather than the more profound misconceptions and misapplications.

To teach in a way that prevents pupils from developing any misconceptions (sometimes called 'faultless communication') is desirable but difficult in practice, and teachers have to accept that pupils will make some generalisations that are not correct. Sometimes, pupil misconceptions remain hidden unless teachers make a specific effort to disclose them, so a style of teaching that seeks to expose and rectify misconceptions through careful questioning and encouraging pupils to share their concerns openly is essential.

Advice given in the National **Numeracy** Strategy, NNS (DfEE 1999b) suggests that during the last phase of the lesson it is appropriate for teachers to work with the whole class to sort out any misconceptions when identifying their progress, to summarise key facts and ideas and what to remember, to make links to other areas of work, discuss the next steps and, where appropriate, set **homework** tasks. Results from the Diagnosis Teaching Project, conducted at Nottingham University's Shell Centre for Mathematical Education by Mike Askew and Dylan William, indicate that learning is more effective when common misconceptions are addressed in teaching. Two important issues are significant. The first is that addressing misconceptions during teaching improves pupils' achievements and long-term retention of mathematical concepts. Allowing the children to make their mistakes and then clarifying the position through constructive discussion seems to be more effective than drawing attention to a misconception before giving the examples. The second is that the intensity and degree of engagement with a task that pupils demonstrate in a collaborative group discussion is much more of an important influence on their learning than the amount of time spent on the task. Intensive discussions usually involve spending much longer on small but important teaching points, but this approach results in a much higher level of long-term retention than in situations where more **curriculum** content is covered superficially over the same period of time.

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MONITORING PROGRESS

Monitoring is a process by which children's work is regulated through close and active attention from teachers and support staff. Monitoring is closely associated with **intervention,** a process that follows monitoring through which teachers offer specific guidance and direction to pupils to correct errors, challenge their thinking and focus their attention on a specific area of work. Perceptive monitoring of pupil progress is an essential component of teaching, as there is a close correlation between how well it is carried out and the quality of children's learning. Monitoring and intervening allow teachers to offer **feedback** that will assist children in formulating ideas, understanding the work they are engaged in, and helping them to make sense of their learning. Fostering intrinsic **rewards** (self-satisfaction) as well as extrinsic rewards (based on adult satisfaction) impresses upon pupils that work is worthwhile for its own sake and not merely to please and satisfy others. Another important dimension of monitoring is that it is a means by which teachers ensure that pupils concentrate on the task they are undertaking and behave appropriately during **lessons.**

Under formal test conditions, the process of monitoring consists of ensuring that pupils conform to the required conditions (silence, individual working, etc.). However, in the vast majority of primary classroom learning situations, monitoring involves close observation of children as they grapple with tasks and respond to the demands made of them. Monitoring of work in response to children's requests for clarification leads to active intervention and the provision of appropriate feedback to them about the direction and quality of their work. Monitoring is more straightforward when teachers have clarified the **expectations** for pupils in advance of starting the tasks or **activities** and explained what constitutes satisfactory work.

When adults and children enjoy a comfortable working relationship, then constructive and sensitive criticism that results from monitoring acts as an **encouragement** and stimulus to pupils as they grapple with concepts and master practical challenges. If the monitoring is perceived by pupils as an attempt to 'catch them out' it leads to defensiveness and resentment. Many teachers invite pupils to be selfcritical and evaluate their own or other pupil's work ('peer assessment') as an important contribution to the sense of shared endeavour.

Further reading

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MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Morality is a term applied to issues about caring relationships, universal principles that regulate forms of behaviour, right (virtuous) and wrong (inappropriate) conduct, and character. It is closely related to 'ethics' and forms part of the (non-statutory) **citizenship** curriculum in primary education. During the formative years at school, children's needs are not purely academic, but also social, spiritual and emotional. There are strong indications that while examination results are improving, there is a concomitant increase in drug-dependency, sexually transmitted diseases, self-harm, dissatisfaction with school among sections of the community and an expanding group of disafFected youngsters who resort to extreme forms of behaviour. Even children of primary school age are not immune from the impact of social division and strife. One of the aims of primary education is to help pupils to understand their place in society and encourage them to empathise with the views of others. Children can also be enthused to discover their own strengths, passions and gifting.

One of the UK government slogans, 'Use your head, teach', is one indicator of a move towards teaching as being, first and foremost, a profession requiring intelligent and knowledgeable members. However, there is unease among primary practitioners that the emphasis on academic attainment may be viewed by the public and politicians as incompatible with demonstrating and practising a caring and **nurturing** attitude towards children. For primary educators, pressure to achieve standards means that there is sometimes a tension between the time and effort expended in striving for higher test results and the attention paid to moral and ethical issues.

Adults that work in schools are not directly responsible for children's moral development and every primary teacher is conscious about trespassing on areas that are rightly the business of parents. Nevertheless, each time a child is admonished by a teacher, told how to behave or presented with choices, an ethical position is being established and a moral statement is being made. One way and another, deliberately or incidentally, teachers have an influence on the development of children's characters and are therefore locked into a position in which they exercise moral authority. Parents appear to recognise increasingly that children need and benefit from spiritual influences, as manifested through the popularity of schools with a religious foundation or strong moral ethic.

Primary educators grapple with questions about what form of education will help to develop young citizens who are not only academically sound but also wise and morally discerning in their decisions. In doing so the educators have to balance curriculum demands with the requirement to promote acceptable standards of behaviour. The imposition of a code of conduct shaped by a school discipline policy may bring about positive changes in pupil behaviour while constraints are in place but fail to provide the moral certainty that will lead to appropriate choices about lifestyle when children move outside the school influence. No teacher wishes to educate young people to be reckless and foolish, yet recklessness and foolishness have become all too familiar in society. It is clear that **knowledge,** examination success or even an intelligent understanding of issues cannot create a civilised and just society unless it is underpinned by more deeply seated moral imperatives.

Adults that work in primary schools care deeply for the pupils they consider to be 'their' children and want them to do well in their studies, to prosper in their relationships and to be satisfied with their successes and endeavours. Teachers and assistants want to use their influence to reveal something profound to children about life and its meaning and help them to appreciate that with perseverance and determination they can not only achieve commendable academic standards but also discover something about their personal worth and the worth of others.

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MOTIVATION FOR TEACHING

Surveys about motivation for teaching conclude that altruism, a love for children, a desire to help pupils learn and the pleasure associated with the job are highly significant factors for new recruits to the profession. People decide to become primary school teachers because they feel that it is a useful and worthwhile way to spend their working lives through making a positive contribution to the well-being of society. Research shows that many of the key factors that provide the initial spur for becoming a primary teacher are rooted in caring, selffulfilment and the positive impact it has on young people's lives. Studies based on the views of trainee teachers reveal that their motivation rests on a belief that they can not only contribute to children's academic progress but also influence their social and **moral development.** These altruistic desires do not mean that teachers are uninterested in good working conditions, a respectable salary and opportunities for career enhancement, but that nothing can match the satisfaction that comes from making a significant difference to the life of each child.

One of the challenges associated with an educational climate in which success is largely measured through quantitative test results is that it may be at the expense of the caring and **nurturing** atmosphere that many primary educators extol. Advocates of this 'childcentred' approach to education claim that the principle of caring for all of a child's development needs forms the bedrock of a successful education. Child-centred educators argue that when teachers' practice is based on an ethic of care it provides the motivation and commitment for them to persevere and helps to compensate for the exhausting effects that the intensification of their work has created in recent years.

In an attempt to recruit a larger number of teachers, the web site of the Training and Development Agency, TDA (the government body responsible for monitoring the

recruitment and training of teachers) is now replete with stimulating statements such as 'Teaching is like no other job. It is as inspiring, challenging and unique as each child you teach' and 'Talk to teachers, pick up the exhilaration they feel' and 'You will be working…with other intelligent and likeminded people.' This emphasis is a response to concerns that the previous recruitment campaign relied too heavily on the belief that altruism was the prime motivating factor for aspiring teachers. The TDA was concerned that it might deter potential applicants who were seeking a career that offered intellectual satisfaction, good conditions of service and personal fulfilment, rather than one that required self-sacrifice (http://www.useyourheadteach.gov.uk/).

The retention of teachers is considerably more problematic than their recruitment, and the number of teachers that withdraw during training or who qualify but fail to remain in teaching for more than a few years has created a considerable problem for the government. Studies carried out during the early years of the twenty-first century indicate that around one-third of trainee teachers qualify but do not enter teaching; a further one-fifth leave the profession within three years. In total, almost one-half of new teachers leave the profession within five years. A mismatch between the aspirations of new teachers and the external demands placed on them when they are appointed is the most common reason offered for quitting. In particular, the plethora of paperwork tasks, the closely prescribed **curriculum,** scrutiny of teaching methods and the **testing** regime have been cited as principal reasons for disillusionment.

One of the paradoxes about teacher recruitment and retention is that the effort to improve the financial inducements for teachers has created a focus of attention on the pecuniary benefits of the job (which generally fall below those in many other professional settings) and away from the personal satisfaction element. This emphasis is perplexing, as personal satisfaction is the single most important motivating factor for the majority of qualified teachers and aspiring teachers.

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NUMERACY

Numeracy is the **ability** to use number in calculations, including counting. However, since the introduction of a national strategy for numeracy in primary schools, some teachers use the term as shorthand for all work in mathematics. The National Numeracy Strategy, NNS (DfEE 1999b) has two main aims: first, to improve the teaching of mathematics in the classroom; and second, to improve the management of numeracy at school level. The NNS is supported by a document, the *Framework for teaching mathematics*, which is intended as a working document for teachers, providing yearly teaching programmes to help them set appropriately high **expectations** for their pupils and understand how pupils should progress through the primary years. It also outlines appropriate teaching methods. The guidance is not statutory, but it sets out a very clear and precise strategy which schools are expected to follow. The guidance makes clear that it is the responsibility of the governing body and the head teacher to manage the overall direction of the school and the setting of high standards of pupil **achievement** for staff and children.

To achieve the required objectives, the NNS promotes the use of a daily mathematics lesson to provide a practical structure of time and class management, based on a three-part framework. The lesson begins with oral work and mental calculation using whole-class teaching, frequently referred to as the mental-oral phase. The central lesson phase is used to introduce new topics or consolidate previous work, clarify **learning objectives** and offer the opportunity for pupils to implement their knowledge and rehearse their understanding by practising mathematical examples (traditionally known as 'doing sums'). The final phase (referred to as the plenary) is to allow teachers to draw together what children have learned and to deal with any **mistakes and misconceptions** or misunderstandings. Many teachers use the final few minutes of a session as an opportunity to celebrate success, identify areas of confusion and indicate the direction of future learning.

Mathematical development in young children is, to an extent, influenced by social and contextual factors. Parental attitudes towards the subject and the general absence of mathematics featuring in conversations at home, other than those involving basic counting, mean that many children come to pre-schooling and the reception class with an underdeveloped sense of the subject. Other children view mathematics as being detached from real life. Despite these reservations, however, children entering school may also bring with them a fund of insight into different aspects of mathematics, such as numeral recognition, simple addition, subtraction and sharing. Teachers encourage pupils to explore the implications of their existing knowledge through **play** and shared experiences. Although older primary-age children may be able to work out computations correctly and score good marks in national tests, they are not necessarily able to apply their mathematics to problems and investigate unfamiliar situations that would provide evidence of deeper understanding.

Teachers pay close attention to a number of issues when planning for and teaching mathematics. First, recognising that the time they spend in eliciting existing pupils' **knowledge** and understanding helps to clarify future learning needs. Second, being sensitive to the fact that the children may have a dearth of experience in using mathematical language and must be exposed gradually to key vocabulary with careful explanation and practical involvement to reinforce concepts. Third, ensuring that the emphasis on formal teaching of number is not at the expense of investigative work and does not deprive children of opportunities to find out things through direct experience. Fourth, offering younger pupils a chance to explore ideas, sensitive to the fact that without active teacher involvement this opportunity does not in itself guarantee understanding. Fifth, translating perceptions into mathematical notation and symbols is a major challenge for many pupils, some of whom will struggle to grasp the significance of mathematical notation. Sixth, talking to children about work in mathematics to foster interest and learning. Finally using mathematics to solve genuine problems and promote a belief in children that the subject has relevance for everyday living.

Studies indicate that primary teachers who are prepared to spend time dwelling on key areas of understanding and exploring the implications are more successful than those that speed along in a vain attempt to 'cover' the **curriculum** content. Teachers who are prepared to ask challenging questions, give pupils time to think and offer their own insights, and use a variety of reinforcing strategies (repetition, worked examples, **collaboration** and problem solving) cultivate the most highly motivated and mathematically astute children.

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NURTURING

One of the longstanding questions about influences on human development has centred on a debate about whether nature (what a person seems to be disposed towards) or nurture (the environment in which children are raised) has the most pronounced impact. There is general agreement that both factors are significant, though opinions differ about which influence is the more powerful. The 'nurture' school of thought was championed by American psychologists, who argued that behaviour is learned and modifiable through experience. The 'nature' school of thought came to the forefront in the early to mid-twentieth century among European biologists such as Konrad Lorenz, best known for his

pioneering work on imprinting in young animals. The controversial aspect of nature theory is the claim that behavioural tendencies are instinctive and cannot be changed by life experience. The implication of this claim for parents and teachers is that children are predisposed to particular actions and attitudes that cannot easily be remedied through intervention. Unfortunately, this argument has been used to maintain that certain races are inferior and justify certain types of anti-social behaviour by arguing that it is merely a reflection of what comes naturally to the people concerned.

Marjorie Boxall pioneered the setting up of nurture groups in the London Borough of Enfield in the early 1970s as a response to social deprivation and its consequences for children in school. Boxall argued that without adequate nurturing, the fabric of society is at risk, for with each generation there are fewer people to provide good nurturing and more children who have been deprived of it. She has been particularly keen to promote nurture groups that provide children with social and emotional experiences that are necessary as a prerequisite for formal school learning. In support of Boxall's view, school inspectors increasingly acknowledge that formal education is enhanced when schools provide high-quality nurturing environments. A nurturing environment is not incompatible with high standards of attainment and **expectations.**

The majority of primary teachers, especially those working with young children, are comfortable with the nurture theory, pointing out that there appears to be a causal link between weak progress, poor behaviour and troubled family backgrounds. In school, a nurturing environment depends upon a welcoming and warm atmosphere where the academic, developmental, behavioural and emotional needs of each pupil are all considered to be important. At the same time, work patterns for pupils are set at an appropriate level and the work content is meaningful and presented creatively so that children find the work satisfying and enjoyable. Most primary teachers are highly motivated by the responsibility for children's welfare that is attached to the job.

Nurture also extends to a concern for adults. A supportive pastoral climate for all members of the school community is an essential characteristic of primary schools, such that a distinctive feature of effective schools is the quality of relationships between teachers, support staff, parents and visitors. In turn, this caring attitude provides an example and role model for the children. In such circumstances, every aspect of school life exudes purpose and **celebration** of genuine effort and success, with the concomitant high morale and enthusiasm that is engendered.

Nurture has **health and safety** implications. For instance, some children come to school with little or no breakfast and benefit from the availability of food through pre-school 'breakfast clubs' and the like, leading to an improvement in behaviour and concentration. Similarly, the development of **homework** clubs and childcare facilities after school provides security for otherwise vulnerable children. An important aspect of nurture is respecting pupils' right to privacy and opportunity to sit quietly and undisturbed where practical to do so. The fostering of mutual respect between adults and children has been shown to lead to an improvement in behaviour and a more purposeful **learning climate.**

Extra-curricular provision promotes the development of a variety of social skills, such as teamwork, children helping each other to succeed and learning to take turns. A more informal setting increases the likelihood that children will initiate conversations (as happens in the home) rather than the adult-initiated discourse that characterises much of

school life. The practice of gathering children together in a circle **('circle time')** encourages pupils to contribute ideas safely, knowing that others are likely to listen and acknowledge their contribution. These nurturing opportunities are often a forerunner of more open discussions and collaborative tasks, by which ideas can be voiced and opinions exchanged without rancour.

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ORACY

Oracy is based on the root word ‘oral’, shorthand for the speaking and listening that takes place during collaborative sessions. Its educational value is predicated on a belief that allowing children the space and time to **talk** together about a topic of common interest, and thereby combining their **knowledge,** understanding and wisdom, leads to a more satisfactory outcome than with one person working alone. Speaking and listening forms an integral element of communicating with others and is a fundamental part of **literacy** education because research shows that exploratory talk is an effective way of using language to think, which forms one of the principal building blocks of literacy. Where there is effective discussion it leads to significant gains in pupils’ ability to recall, understand and respond to deeper meanings that are found in literature. In the UK, a number of government publications offer support in the area of speaking and listening to complement the objectives for **reading** and writing set out in the NLS, *Framework for teaching* (DfEE 1998c). The materials reflect the requirements for teachers to extend and reinforce speaking and listening in every subject area, building on and extending the approach outlined in *Teaching Speaking and Listening in Key Stages 1 and 2* (QCA 1999). The document places a lot of emphasis on the potential for learning when children are given properly constructed opportunities to explore issues, make decisions, experiment with ideas and draw conclusions through working together rather than singly. Oracy is not included in the **learning objectives** of the primary literacy strategy, although it is central to the teaching process to ensure a successful outcome.

To promote listening, children are encouraged to wait their turn while another child is speaking and carefully attend to what others are saying. Effective listening involves more than hearing the words and understanding their meaning. It also entails observation of the speaker’s body language, registering the feelings and perceptions that lie behind the words, being sensitive towards verbal clues and making inferences from the tone of voice. The skill can be improved and refined by the teacher modelling careful listening by repeating or summarising for the benefit of the whole class what a child has said and giving selected children the opportunity to do the same. There are also a variety of fun ways used by primary teachers to improve pupils’ listening skills, such as the ‘repeat after me’ game where the children echo the leader’s statements using the same tone of voice. During **circle time** discussions pupils can maintain eye contact and have more opportunity to adjust to what a classmate is saying and understand why it is being said.

In addition to organising pupils in pairs or groups to assist their oracy development, teachers perform one or more of three teaching roles during speaking and listening sessions: as an expert, as a facilitator, as a participant. As an expert, teachers provide insights and advice while the children discuss things. As a facilitator teachers ensure that they have prepared the ground by explaining the purpose of the exercise, reminding children of the rules and steering them towards reaching a conclusion. As a participant teachers are involved as a temporary member of the group, contributing ideas and suggestions.

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ORGANISING FOR LEARNING

Organising for learning involves teachers preparing for **lessons,** ensuring that appropriate resources are available and setting out the classroom so that children can work efficiently. Whereas the *management* of learning is largely confined to the period of active teaching, the majority of organising happens before lessons commence and facilitates their smooth operation.

One of the most important areas of a teacher's responsibility involves organising resources, including working space, equipment and consumables. The provision has to be appropriate to the tasks undertaken by pupils, though **enquiry**-based activities (e.g. investigations in science, problem solving in mathematics) require a more diverse range of resources owing to the less predictable direction that learning might take. The availability of resources is also important. Equipment must be stored safely but conveniently. Not only must consumable items (such as paper) be readily available, but also pupils have to be informed about when they can be used and for what purpose, as there are financial and practical implications if resources are abused. Incorrect use of tools can lead to expensive breakages and also deprive other pupils of the opportunity of using them. The higher the risk factor, the more immediate the adult presence, high standard of discipline and training about the correct use of equipment need to be.

Large-space activities (e.g. for PE, dance and drama) and 'design and make' tasks (especially in design and technology) carry significant resource implications: adhesive tape and pots have to be distributed in advance; clay has to be accessible; tables have to be relocated; and so on. Similarly, equipment has to be checked in advance of PE lessons; drama 'props' have to be put in position; the floor space has to be cleared before a dance session; computers have to be switched on, programs set up and paper trays filled for printing. If arrangements are not in hand, the lesson stutters because the process of organising resources absorbs the time and effort that would have gone into active teaching, the exception being when the involvement of the children in the organisation forms an important part of the lesson. For example, pupils may be asked to arrange equipment or furniture as a component of their **play.**

Despite modern architectural designs and advances in materials and construction techniques, few classrooms are ideal for every **teaching approach.** Pupils spend long periods of time in the room that they consider to be a 'second home' and a consideration of their needs is a priority. Whether a classroom is brand new or a Victorian edifice, the children need to be able to move around comfortably and safely. Teachers eliminate the

majority of hazards by ensuring that the room is orderly and having a place for every item; they view the classroom as a busy workshop rather than a lounge.

Organising the room also involves decisions about seating. Most teachers allocate children a specific place for the majority of lessons unless they are moved for a particular purpose, such as working collaboratively on an art project or collaborative craft activity. A minority of teachers give pupils complete freedom about where they sit or may allow children to sit where they prefer for a few days at the start of the year until the children's self-discipline and inclination to work become apparent, when changes are made accordingly. Seating arrangements can make an educationally important difference to the quality of learning. For instance, seating pupils in rows rather than grouping them tends to foster an improvement in children's concentration levels and work output, though it does not facilitate group activities. There are some advantages in creating a horseshoe pattern of seating as this design allows every child to see every other child during class discussions or question-and-answer sessions; however, few primary school classrooms are sufficiently large to allow for such a configuration. If teachers use a board or visual forms of technology to illustrate what they are teaching, children have to be seated in such a way that they can see and hear clearly.

Many teachers take account of **friendship** factors in organising seating, though if children sit with their friends around nests of tables it can result in them spending too much time on 'off-task' conversation. On the other hand, pupils are more likely to cooperate with those to whom they relate well. If friends are separated they may be tempted to wander across the room to each other, send hand signal messages or even call out openly. Although a seating arrangement where friends sit together is popular with children, it can create organisational complications when pupils of similar academic strength need to be grouped. Most teachers try to strike a balance between keeping friends together in situations where grouping does not rely principally on **ability** factors (such as in artwork) and separating them where this is necessary because of the differentiated requirements of tasks and activities. The structured patterns of **literacy** and **numeracy** lessons do not leave much room for manoeuvre, as pupils are together at the start and conclusion of the lesson and separated into ability groups for the rest of the time.

Most teachers have a basic pattern of organisation for activities, but vary the set-up according to the circumstances. For instance, tables may be placed together for the purpose of sharing resources when working on a large-scale project. Children may need to move around the room to complete a series of tasks in a given time, each task located in a different part of the room. There are also practical factors to be taken into account if children require more space for wheelchair access or specially adapted working surfaces for children with limited upper-body mobility. In addition, all schools now have a range of computers, interactive whiteboards and other equipment to support learning. If there is a computer suite situated away from the classroom, supervision of children to and from the room has to be considered. If computers are located in classrooms, managing fair access for all pupils is a priority, as more assertive children are inclined to dominate their use. Teaching **assistants** are frequently involved in supervising and advising children about effective use of technology, especially computers.

Effective organisation has to take close account of **time management.** Teachers have to 'think ahead' by deciding in advance what is essential, what is necessary and what is

non-essential. They then decide what is urgent and what can wait. Obviously the combination of ‘essential’ and ‘urgent’ has to be tackled first; all else can wait. However, if too many tasks become essential and urgent, it acts as a warning to teachers that they are failing to plan sufficiently far in advance, though in the intensity of school life there are occasions when unexpected events conspire to upset the most carefully laid plans.

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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parents' interest and involvement in their children's learning is widely recognised as having a significant impact on the extent to which children realise their full potential. Pupils with parents who are involved in their education tend to have fewer behavioural problems, achieve better academic performance and are more likely to complete secondary school than pupils whose parents are uninvolved. Parental interest in school means that parents are more closely aware of school and classroom activities and able to coordinate their efforts with teachers. Studies have also indicated that pupils with highly involved parents tend to receive greater attention from teachers, who are therefore more likely to identify problems that inhibit children's progress. Liaison with parents has become a necessary and important part of every teacher's role, especially those working with young children and pupils with special educational needs.

Warmth and affection in the parent-child relationship is related to positive outcomes for children, including higher **self-esteem,** better levels of **communication** and fewer psychological problems. Parental warmth is even found to encourage children's use of social support and proactive, problem-focused coping strategies. Conversely, insufficient levels of parental support foster feelings of alienation, expressions of hostility and aggression, low morale and anti-social behaviours. The publication *Every Child Matters* (DfES 2004e) suggests that 'The bond between the child and their parents is the most critical influence on a child's life. Parenting has a strong impact on a child's educational development, behaviour and mental health' (p. 39). Head teachers and governors/board members of schools are acutely aware of the need to maintain an open relationship with parents: engaging and involving them through newsletters; providing information about educational initiatives; canvassing their opinions about key issues where appropriate; and actively supporting parent-teacher association meetings.

All adults that work in primary school are required to help in promoting partnerships with parents and other members of the community by acknowledging how experience and learning are shaped by cultural and linguistic heritage, gender, family and community. Every person working closely with children must keep confidential the information they possess about them and their families, and only use it in the pupils' best interests. Most inspections of schools include a consultation with parents and (sometimes) a questionnaire to ascertain their satisfaction with the quality of education and school-home communication.

In circumstances where there is more than one school in the locality from which to choose, parents principally base their choice on oral information from other parents and a visit to the school to satisfy themselves about the prevailing climate and quality of education. Parents also gain information about the school from written information produced by schools and the latest school inspection report (paper copy or electronic).

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PASSION

Passion is used to describe teachers' emotional commitment to connect them to the children and their colleagues. Without passion the work of a teacher can become lacklustre and lose all sense of intimacy. Teachers that are keen to inspire, motivate and engage with their pupils, both relationally and in communicating the wonder of the subject they are teaching, are invariably passionate about the job.

Passionate teachers consider their pupils to be immature human beings trying to make sense of life, rather than mere recipients of information. Children are seen as curious and creative beings with the potential for advancement that sensitive adults can help to unlock and promote. Passion in teaching gives priority to the needs of individuals and their desire to explore new areas of learning; it is therefore the antithesis of a standardised and system-driven view of primary education. Some educationists argue that the requirement for teachers to 'perform' in response to government agendas absorbs time and energy that threatens to squeeze spontaneity and passion out of teaching in a thrust to meet targets.

Passion in teaching may also be expressed through an enthusiasm and commitment to a subject area. This form of passion is typically associated with secondary education where teachers spend a lot of time teaching one or two subjects to a wide range of pupils, but the increasing emphasis on subject expertise in primary schools and the emphasis on **curriculum** and **leadership** have increased its significance. Passion of itself will not guarantee an appropriate and suitable education or children learning. However, a **learning climate** in which characteristics such as empathy, compassion, commitment, patience and spontaneity are used in harness with subject expertise provides the optimum conditions for progress. Passion for a subject elicits a comparable response in children if there is an atmosphere of trust and sincere respect existing between the teacher and the taught.

Passionate primary teachers vary in personality and approach, but if pupils sense that teachers have a genuine commitment towards them and a sincere desire to help them, they are invariably more positive about learning than children taught by a technically

proficient teacher in an emotionally detached manner. Such caring is signalled in many and various ways, in particular the teacher's tone of voice, willingness to listen and natural behaviour. Passion *in* teaching and *for* teaching is not about pity or allowing pupils to please themselves but about making learning a worthwhile experience all of the time, pleasant for much of the time and wonderful some of the time. It is adults conveying to children that because they are cared for, everything possible will be done to make life in school happy and fulfilling.

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PHONICS

The phonics method is probably the best known and widely used method to teach **reading** and writing in the English language. It relies on children first being taught the alphabet, learning the names of the letters and the sounds they make. Once they have learnt the letter sounds, they begin to blend two letters together to make simple words, then three letters, then four, and so on. Eventually the words combine to create simple sentences. Phonics is generally applicable to teaching pupils during their first few years of formal education, though it can be useful in teaching an older primary child who has experienced learning difficulties.

Even though children need to be read to in school and at home, and pick up familiar words and phrases from daily life, a programme of targeted tuition is still necessary, of which phonics forms an integral part. Teachers use two broad approaches. In *analytic* phonics the teacher builds up the sounds to make a word, which is shown to the child at the same time; for example, a teacher might sound out the letters of 'f-l-a-g' and then ask the child to repeat the word. In *synthetic* phonics the children learn forty-four sounds of letters or groups of letters before being encouraged to look at books containing the words. Most teachers use a balanced combination of the two approaches.

Some reading specialists argue that the spelling-to-sound correspondences of English are so confusing that blending and sounding out is likely to lead to confusion rather than enlightenment; however, the majority of educationists believe that phonics has an important role to play in learning to read. Whatever method of phonics teaching is favoured, there is agreement among educators that for young children to learn to read effectively they need access to books containing common words that are interesting to them and capable of being sounded out. However, learning the sounds and their blends is not always very exciting, so teacher input and time spent on practice tends to be short and employ imaginative approaches supported by visual stimuli, puppets and pictures.

Children can be so busy concentrating on sounding the words and blending the sounds that they do not think about their meaning, so teachers have to remind children about the significance of words, relate them to the accompanying pictures and use example sentences that include the word or words. Reading becomes more meaningful as children master the connection between different sounds and become familiar with the written words through stories, rhymes and songs. Most children want to learn to read and enjoy seeing concrete signs of progress; phonics is a systematic method by which this advancement can be realised.

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PLAY

Play has an important role in early learning and serves as a development tool because it helps in the establishment of social relations, an understanding of natural and physical properties and the development of fine and gross motor **skills.** Play also assists children in utilising spoken and other non-verbal forms of language effectively. It offers pupils in school opportunities to converse meaningfully with other children and understanding that their words and actions can evoke a variety of responses in their peers. There is a considerable body of evidence to support the view that play helps to develop children's **imagination** and ultimately helps them to distinguish between fantasy and reality.

The social aspect of play is useful in developing self-control, a consideration for others and empathy. Children benefit from regular **interaction** with their peers from an early age, learning to share, negotiate and understand the world. Whereas new entrants to school tend to concentrate on their own concerns, a variety of play experiences help them to view events from the perspectives of other children and create a sense of their own self-worth through the regular contacts they enjoy. Children's play is nourished when adults provide or inculcate ideas that children can use as starting points for harnessing the power of their imaginations and **creativity.**

Jean Piaget, the Swiss psychologist, has had a considerable impact on the way that teachers perceive play in learning. In trying to classify how concept development takes place from early childhood to adulthood, Piaget argues that as children grow physically and intellectually, they expand the limits of their play in stages. The first stage is *sensorimotor play* in which infants and toddlers experiment with bodily sensations and motor movements involving objects and people. As children grow older and gain more motor skills (ability to manipulate objects and their own bodies), they also start to see the world in symbolic terms and begin to understand the social function of objects. Thus,

they feed their teddy bears pretend food with a spoon or offer a grown-up an invisible drink in a cup. The second stage is *symbolic play* when children use simple objects to represent more sophisticated ones. A 3- or 4-year-old may use a coat as a superhero's cape and a cardboard roll as a light sabre. The space beneath a living-room chair becomes a cave and the stairs substitute for a mountain. By the age of 4 or 5, children's ideas and experiences with their immediate family and the wider social world provide material for imaginative games. Many new entrants to primary school are fascinated by construction play, building and spontaneously exuberant games, such as chasing.

Piaget refers to the next stage of play as *mastery* when children gain increasing **control** of their bodies and actions, while simultaneously incorporating imaginative forms of play. For example, mastery of riding a tricycle becomes a motorbike stunt in the child's mind. By the time they leave the Foundation Stage (for pupils aged 4 to 5 years) and enter the more formal period of primary schooling in **Key Stage** 1 (for pupils aged 5 to 7 years) children begin to develop an interest in formal games with **rules,** two or more sides and explicit activities in which issues of fairness become increasingly significant. As they mature children begin to think more abstractly, being dependent on what they can envisage and work out in their minds, rather than relying on visual stimuli and physical contact with resources. Thus, whereas a 5-year-old boy may count on his fingers to work out an addition sum, an 8-year-old is likely to be able to calculate similar problems in his head without recourse to practical aids.

Adults responsible for young primary-age children take account of the different forms of play when organising and monitoring activities. For instance, *parallel play* describes a situation where pupils play side by side, but with little or no **interaction.** Teachers in the Foundation Stage are particularly alert to pupils who regularly prefer to play alone, as this separateness is more typical of pre-school children. A desire for isolation during play is perfectly normal, providing it is not excessive, as a balance of social and solitary play is necessary for all children. Pupils benefit from the social learning that is gained through sharing and cooperating with other children during *group play* and it may signal a problem if children insist on playing on their own for most or all of the time. Playing will normally involve conversations (real or imaginary), taking turns, organising sequences of events and sharing. Elements of *imaginary play* are also significant for older primary pupils engaged in producing spontaneous drama sequences and acting out contrived scenes.

Break times in primary schools are often referred to as 'playtime', during which time children are told to 'go and play'. This *enforced* form of play, with the uncertainties of climate and physical hazards, contradicts the notion that play should always be spontaneous, stressfree and valuable for learning. Unlike school playtimes, the time, place and location of the play that occurs outside school hours is normally chosen by the children and not by adults. Either way, regular opportunities to play are essential for children's development, as deprivation can result in maladjustment and personality defect in later years.

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PROFESSIONALISM

Arguments about whether or not teaching is a profession, comparable with (say) doctors and lawyers, have raged for many years. Only a generation ago, secondary teachers were paid more than primary teachers in the belief that their superior subject knowledge justified the differential because it enhanced their professional status. Contrarily, new secondary teachers were not required to possess a qualified teacher certificate until 1971, some years after this stipulation applied to primary teachers. Since that time, all new members of the teaching profession are expected to have a minimum level of teaching ability, formally recognised by a teacher-training provider. The document *Qualifying to Teach* (DfES/TTA, 2002) stresses that teachers' professional **values** and practice include having high **expectations** of all pupils, respecting their social, cultural, linguistic, religious and ethnic backgrounds, being committed to raising educational standards and showing concern for their development as learners. The establishment of standards for qualified teacher status and what amounts to a national scheme for teacher training (in the UK) helps to safeguard overall competence. The academic content of courses and the use of research to support and enhance approved teaching methods have also been the subject of considerable attention, with close monitoring of primary teacher's subject knowledge, especially in the teaching of **literacy, numeracy** and IT. More recently, the increase in numbers of teaching **assistants** in primary schools and the arguments about their role as substitute or ancillary teachers has reignited a debate about what constitutes professional competence.

As professionals, teachers are bound by formal and implicit codes of ethics that specify how they are to fulfil their duties and obligations with respect to the education they provide. Being bound by the same code, and having similar levels of competence and training, helps to promote a sense of collegiality and consistency across the teaching profession. The existence of General Teaching Councils (GTCs), established through the Teaching and Higher Education Act (England and Wales) 1998, largely supersedes previous attempts to define professional behaviour. The GTC for Northern Ireland was established under the auspices of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. The newly established GTCs are modelled on the Scotland TC that has been in existence since 1965.

GTCs are statutory self-regulating professional bodies for teachers. They seek to raise the quality of teaching by maintaining and promoting the highest standards of professional practice and conduct in the interests of teachers, pupils and the general

public. It is a legal requirement for teachers with Qualified Teacher Status to be registered with the respective GTC. Trainee teachers and overseas teachers qualify for provisional registration. Although teaching councils monitor behaviour nationally, it is for school governors/board to determine initially whether a teacher's conduct is acceptable and adjudicate in cases where it appears to be unsatisfactory.

One of the functions of a GTC is to investigate and hear cases against registered teachers through its disciplinary committees. Even if teachers have not been convicted of an offence in court, inappropriate behaviour in and out of school may constitute unprofessional conduct or incompetence that indicates unfitness of character to be a registered teacher. Teachers can be reported to the GTC for offences as diverse as repeatedly failing to hand in planning and assessment files to the head teacher for monitoring; demonstrating overt insensitivity to children with special needs; or using inappropriate language in front of pupils and colleagues. Removal from the register is rare, other than in extreme circumstances. Teachers who are de-registered may ask for reinstatement after an appropriate length of time, though this request is not necessarily acceded to.

The establishment of a professional code of conduct not only takes into account factors such as level of expertise, knowledge and **skills** and minimum qualifications, but also behaviour. The need for an acceptable standard of behaviour is necessary because, in addition to their academic expertise, primary teachers act as models or examples to their pupils and local communities. In this regard, a teacher's attitude and demeanour is an important contributor; welcome attributes include being positive about life in general, avoiding the temptation to moan and giving due consideration to other people's ideas. Practical considerations for teachers necessitate arriving in good time for school, relating well to other members of staff, using their time productively during the day and earning a reputation as an effective practitioner. Codifying acceptable behaviour for members of the teaching profession involves transparent monitoring and appraisal by an external body such as the local authority to ensure consistency of practice and interpretation of legislation amongst its members.

To safeguard and enhance their professional knowledge, all practitioners are expected to take responsibility for their own **professional development,** keep up to date with significant education research and innovations in teaching, and understand their role in relation to agreed school policies and practices, including pastoral responsibilities, personal safety matters and bullying.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The quality of teaching impacts upon the lives and welfare of thousands of pupils. As they gain experience, teachers are expected to enhance their professional knowledge, improve their classroom practice, learn new skills and increasingly contribute to the school's academic performance. One of the greatest challenges for teachers is that there is no universally agreed definition of a progressive pedagogy (science of the art of teaching) on which to base professional development, other than one that refers to pupil test scores.

The belief that it is possible to 'spot' a good teacher is deeply engrained in the profession; heads, **induction** tutors and governors quickly conclude whether a new teacher has a promising future. The influence of subjective opinions (as opposed to using set criteria) to assess a teacher's potential is relevant from the beginning of the training process. Thus, in determining whether candidates are suitable to begin training, interviewers have to make an initial assessment of their suitability as to whether the candidates have the academic and personal qualities to succeed. In particular, careful note is taken of whether the candidates will relate well to children and have the tenacity and temperament to cope with classroom life.

Teachers not only persevere to improve their competence through self-evaluation at the end of a **lesson** or series of lessons (**reflection** *on* action) but are constantly evaluating their practice during their teaching (reflection *in* action). Newly qualified teachers tend to use the **teaching approach** that they developed during training or modelled on an experienced teacher whom they admired. However, primary teachers change in many ways during the process of their careers as they gain promotion and encounter a range of pedagogic challenges. They become more experienced in the sense of having taught for a longer time, learning new **skills** and improving old ones. Teachers extend the reaches of their intellect, change the focus of their energies and learn how to survive the demands of school routines. Most teachers become more caring, wise and sanguine, though a few become discouraged and exhausted. Many take advantage of the internal promotion opportunities. A small number become head teachers. A feature of the UK in the early twenty-first century is that the number of teachers remaining in the classroom until retirement age has fallen and with it their accumulated wisdom and experience.

The concept of an evidence-based profession has become rooted in educational vocabulary and policy. The need for teachers to provide verifiable evidence that children have benefited directly from their teaching has been integral to advancement, so teachers have to be able to point to measurable aspects of pupil learning. The implementation of a pay 'threshold' scheme for internal promotion to advanced skills' teacher, intended to keep excellent practitioners in the classroom, has had mixed results. The vast majority of teachers applying for enhancement have been successful, casting doubt on the principle of advancement on the basis of excellence. There is considerable disagreement among practitioners as to whether going through the threshold makes any appreciable impact on the quality of their teaching. With the increased emphasis upon certification in society, many teachers undertake further study to acquire advanced diplomas and academic qualifications. The establishment of a National College for School Leadership (NCSL) for preparing and training aspiring subject leaders, deputy head teachers and head teachers is another indication that professional advancement is increasingly dependent on external verification.

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PUNISHMENT

Despite every effort to ensure that pupils learn in a stable, supportive environment, situations inevitably arise from time to time when deliberate and wilful wrongdoing invites punishment through the use of a recognised sanction, such as withdrawing privileges. Some educators are uneasy with the use of the word punishment and many teachers feel that the need to punish a child says as much about their own failure to maintain order or motivate pupils as it does about the child's behaviour. Teachers normally give children a number of warnings before punitive action is taken (akin to receiving yellow cards in a sporting event before being sent from the field if the poor conduct continues), so pupils have opportunity to exercise selfconstraint and redirect their efforts.

The use of a punishment assumes a teacher's correct interpretation of the circumstances under which the misdemeanour took place. Whereas a case of (say) direct rudeness or wilful disobedience is clearly the responsibility of the individual pupil, many

conflict situations that involve several young children lead to claims, counter-claims, accusations and defensiveness when an adult intervenes. Consequently, the allocation of punishments has to take account of the **context** as well as the bare facts of the case. Adults in school have to be certain of where the responsibility for blame lies, as strong emotions are stirred in children when they are wrongly accused; yet they may not feel able or have the confidence to argue the case. Some children cry or protest vehemently at perceived injustice, but many of them suppress their feelings for fear of creating further problems or incurring the adult's wrath. For instance, it is understandable if children feel a sense of injustice if the teacher keeps in the whole class at playtime because of the naughty behaviour of a small number of children. Teachers have to be perceptive to the impact that their decisions have on pupils, allow for children to explain and to ask questions for clarification. All teachers are faced with the challenge of balancing sensitivity about children's feelings with decisiveness in curbing inappropriate behaviour.

The intentional use of force as a form of punishment was abolished in all maintained schools in 1986 and corporal punishment was terminated in independent schools in 1996 to be replaced by the Schools Standards Framework Act 1998 (operational from September 1999). No member of a school staff is entitled to administer a physical punishment, even if parents have said they are happy for it to happen. Any teacher who did so would be in breach not only of contract but of the Human Rights Act 1998. Corporal punishment includes not only the use of the cane, strap or slipper, but also slapping, rough handling, shaking, pinching, prodding, pulling children's hair, pushing, tying pupils up, taping their mouths and throwing missiles at or towards them. Although the use of force is sometimes required to deal with aggressive behaviour or protect a child from harm, it must be done with due regard to the circumstances. Teachers have to maintain a sense of proportion as to the amount of force to be used (if any) in situations where the safety of a pupil is deemed to be in jeopardy and use the minimum amount required such that the desired result is achieved.

Any teacher using physical force unreasonably against pupils may be liable to a civil action for assault and could also face disciplinary action from the employing authority and/or the school governors. The case would almost certainly be referred to the General Teaching Council (GTC). The types of force that might be justified and those that are not advisable to use are described in Circular 10/98 (DfEE 1998d). However, there is no legal definition of 'reasonable force', so it is difficult for adults to be sure where the boundaries of reasonableness lie and the degree of force that is legally acceptable, especially when the pupil's age, mental condition, disability and gender are taken into consideration. Teachers are not permitted to use threatening language at any time, regardless of the provocation.

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PUPIL LEARNING

Human learning is highly complex and not fully understood. Learning comes in a variety of forms, sometimes involving the intellect, sometimes the emotions, and sometimes both. Far from being a smooth and continuous process, it is a difficult concept to define; nevertheless, there is general agreement that the process benefits from well-informed and capable teaching. One explanation about learning that receives support from medical evidence is that different types of learning are associated with the right and left parts of the brain. The left part deals principally with language acquisition, sequences, analysis and number; it works to process information and responds best to structured and sequenced learning. The right part of the brain interprets images, looks for patterns, creates metaphors and strives to synthesise and consolidate information. Interplay between the two parts of the brain appears to be necessary for the development of deep understanding, creative expression and problem solving.

The education psychologist Jerome Bruner proposed three ways in which children learn: namely, through enactive, iconic and symbolic stages. The enactive stage is characterised by an active engagement in doing things. The iconic stage is characterised by children's use of images and pictures. The symbolic stage is one in which children can reason and think abstractly. Even in a single lesson it is sometimes necessary for children to pass through the enactive stage to explore a phenomenon before they can cope with the iconic or enactive stages. For instance, a class of 8-year-olds may require an opportunity to explore randomly the relationship between a series of numbers prior to being taught the mathematical rule that applies. Similarly, 10- and 11-year-olds may benefit from being given time to create sounds using a variety of musical instruments before receiving specific **instruction.** Active engagement assists children in their search for meaning, especially in understanding the meanings behind the symbols they later employ in their work, such as map symbols, mathematical nomenclature and figures of speech. Teachers have to decide how long to allow pupils to employ enactive (exploratory) and iconic (visual representations) strategies before expecting them to engage with an abstract task (without the support of learning aids).

Pupil learning that consists of **memory** without understanding has limited value. For example, children might be systematically taught to read words correctly, recite multiplication tables or chant a religious creed, but unless they grasp their meaning and significance the depth of learning remains shallow. Learning that is purely functional, such as knowing how to subtract two numbers, has limited usefulness unless it can be employed in a genuine life situation (such as shopping).

Learning can also be experiential, such as exploring a woodland copse and absorbing its sights, scents and sounds. Some forms of pupil learning relate to the acquisition of practical **skills,** such as the correct use of equipment, utilising technology or accessing resource books. Other types of learning involve understanding procedures and require

practice in following a sequence, such as manipulating computer software. Yet other forms of learning relate to problem solving, such as in design and technology, that requires time for ideas to be explored and practically put to use.

Children learn best when they are given opportunity to use a range of tactile senses, visual stimuli, careful listening, **enquiry**-based activities, conversation and paper and pencil exercises, supported by teacher explanation and reinforced through individual or group activities. Innovative and imaginative learners learn particularly effectively when they have the opportunity to use the full range of their senses and ask questions about why things happen. Learners that are more analytical tend to process information by studying a range of possibilities closely, thinking deeply and reflecting on the issues involved, before developing their own ideas and comparing them with what they observe happening. Pragmatic learners first speculate and make suggestions before finding out if their ideas work in practice, then adjust their ideas accordingly. Dynamic learners learn best when they have a chance to experiment with ways in which they can use their present level of information and surmise about other possibilities. Teachers have to take account of these different learning preferences when they plan **lessons,** such that there is sufficient freedom to satisfy the innovative pupil, sufficient intellectual challenge to satisfy the analytical pupil, sufficient opportunity for practice to satisfy the pragmatic pupil and sufficient investigation to satisfy the inquisitive pupil. Teachers also have to take account of the needs of children with **special educational needs** (SEN) and those for whom English is not the primary tongue.

Whatever **teaching approach** is employed by teachers, the most productive learning consists of absorbing facts, understanding principles and being able to use knowledge in a practical **context.** All children need to be given the opportunity to transfer what they have learned to new situations; this is often the acid test for whether or not deep learning has been achieved. Even if all the group or class appear to have grasped the principles and ideas, some children will retain what they have learned; others will require regular reminding and updating. However, the more that children can see the relevance and usefulness of their learning, the more likely it is that they will engage enthusiastically with the lesson content and retain what they need to know.

An important element of a teacher's role is to ascertain the extent and thoroughness of children's learning. The influential Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) maintained that a child follows the adult's example and, after initially receiving a lot of help, advice and support, gradually develops an ability to do the task or activity without help or assistance (e.g. Vygotsky 1978). His most famous work, *Thought and Language*, published shortly after his death, developed for the first time a theory of language development that described the development of language and logical thinking in young children in the course of their interactions with adults and the world around them; one of his tenets is that thought and language is inextricably linked. Vygotsky famously referred to the difference between what children can achieve with help from a more knowledgeable teacher (adult or child) and what they can do without guidance as the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD). The active intervention and support of adults in children's learning as they try to narrow the ZPD is equivalent to scaffolding placed around a house as it is constructed. As a child grasps the concept and gains the necessary understanding, the amount of scaffolding can be reduced. Once the child is in a position to progress independently the scaffolding is removed completely. Consequently, it is vital

that teachers are aware of children's existing knowledge and understanding and able to identify their limitations. Teachers gain this information when they get alongside children, converse with them, ask questions, allow them to respond, offer advice and explanation, and discuss the next steps in the learning process.

Pupils learn more productively when teachers adopt a positive attitude towards them and acknowledge that in searching for creative solutions there will be setbacks and need to be times of consolidation through repeated practice. All children benefit from being given an opportunity to discuss what they are doing and where it fits into their present understanding, as regardless of how carefully presented and interesting teachers make the lesson material, little learning of note takes place unless pupils engage mentally with the subject matter and make sense of things for themselves. Pupils will often complete their work simply because they are given it to do by a teacher; but the mere completion of tasks to occupy the space of a lesson does not ensure thorough learning has occurred.

Effective learning is also influenced by motivation and self-image. Some children are capable of finishing work and gaining personal satisfaction from it, regardless of the tick or comment at the bottom of the page; the majority, however, are strongly influenced by adult approval and thrive on praise. Learning is enhanced when children work cooperatively and show a willingness to persevere and concentrate. The prevailing norms and expectations of the school and classroom are significant in promoting or inhibiting effective learning.

Not all learning leads to academic outcomes. Social learning is essential if children are to understand the significance and application of empathy, sympathy and the courage of their convictions. Both as part of the formal **citizenship curriculum** and informally through regular interaction, teachers encourage pupil **collaboration** and help children to learn a variety of strategies that can be applied to interpersonal relationships and other social situations.

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PUPIL MOTIVATION

Children are not born with a particular view of themselves or their level of self-worth; it is something that they develop over the years, shaped through their relationships with family and friends and their wider social experiences. Although teachers cannot alter the way that children in their class have been or are treated by adults outside school, they make a significant contribution to their well-being by concentrating their efforts in six areas. First, finding out what children already know and understand. This process necessitates talking to the children, listening to what they say checking previous school records, and observing how they approach tasks and use their existing **knowledge** and understanding. Second, modelling a positive attitude towards learning by celebrating success, commiserating with failure, being enthusiastic about discovering new facts, specifying alternatives, and offering help and guidance whenever possible. Third, giving close personal attention to children who are struggling, restless or bored, remembering that most disaffection is caused by the perceived irrelevance of the work or fear of failure. Fourth, involving children in learning by discussing the lesson purpose, establishing manageable learning targets and inviting them to comment on the quality of their work and effort. Fifth, acknowledging pupils' points of view and feelings. Finally, emphasising that success is attainable and worth cherishing.

Although primary-aged children generally respond well to the enticement of external **rewards** (extrinsic motivation) teachers have to maintain a balance between these incentives and a child's inner desire to do well (intrinsic motivation). It is commonly the case that pupils make an instinctive assessment early in the lesson about whether the content is interesting and respond accordingly. Although most children comply with the teacher's instructions without offering outward dissent, the prevalence of mundane tasks and activities limits their desire to strive for success. Effective teachers do not merely pass on information to their pupils, however skilfully, but try to instil a thirst for learning in them by making the lesson content appealing.

Studies suggest that the extent of children's satisfaction with their education experience decreases with age and drops considerably when they reach secondary school. Thus, a large majority of primary pupils think that school is a positive experience; this contrasts with about one-quarter in secondary schools who feel similarly enthusiastic. When measuring pupils' views about the relevance of what they learn and retain while in school, the motivation gap between the primary and secondary phases is even more pronounced. As pupils who retain a sense of curiosity and are at ease about their lives in school are more likely to be strongly motivated, teachers and assistants have a significant responsibility to create a dynamic learning environment in which children can prosper and enjoy what they are doing. In top-performing primary schools there is a serious effort to achieve academic success without sacrificing an investigative spirit and spontaneity.

A number of pupils need to be given a stronger sense of their own worth, as some children view themselves as powerless and gradually adopt an attitude of helplessness. Adults in school help such children to gain a stronger sense of self-worth and empowerment by giving them opportunities to assume positions of trust and responsibility. Motivation is not only important for academic work but also in preparing children to cope with the demands of life when they move on from primary school.

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QUESTIONING

The use of questioning in teaching as a means of enhancing children's learning is widely used by teachers in whole-class and large group situations. Questioning serves five broad purposes. First, it offers teachers an opportunity to engage directly with pupils and establish a positive rapport with them. Second, it stimulates pupils to think hard by posing a variety of questions that elicit considered responses from them. Third, on the basis of their answers it gives teachers the opportunity to assess the depth of understanding possessed by pupils. Fourth, it helps children to learn from others as they listen to what is said and adjust or evaluate their own understanding accordingly. Fifth, it allows teachers to identify areas of pupil misunderstanding for clarification or remedial action. Questioning also has the potential to serve wider purposes. The effective use of questions encourages children to ponder and reflect on issues and problems as a means of aiding their conceptual development, opening up fresh areas of the topic for consideration and thereby stimulating pupil initiative, **creativity** and innovation.

Questions can be of low cognitive level designed to funnel pupils' responses towards the desired answer rather than promoting higher levels of **interaction** and cognitive engagement. Teachers sometimes 'shoot' a question from pupil to pupil until a child answers correctly, but many children need to consider their answers and time has to be allowed for the mental processing to take place, which in practice necessitates short pauses. The wait time increases as pupils grapple with 'higher-order' questions that make children think more deeply and consider carefully what they say.

Questions that are principally intended to involve children in thelesson rather than extend learning are likely to be ones that every child can answer and have only one correct answer (a 'closed' question), sometimes asked orally and sometimes carried out through formal written means (a 'test'). Questions that encourage children to think deeply tend to be open ended (i.e. inviting a variety of possible responses) and invite speculation, with supplementary questions to extend understanding. Questions to open fresh insights tend to be of the 'just imagine if' or 'suppose that' type, incorporating the use of allegory stories and notable events to fascinate the children. Questions to stimulate initiative invite pupils to solve problems in mathematics, and to design, construct and investigate in craft, science or design technology.

A **learning climate** of which questioning is an integral part allows children time to grapple with complex issues and to make genuine errors while they do so. To promote this kind of climate, the best teachers share their curiosities with pupils and reveal their doubts when they are unsure of an answer. They stimulate pupil interest by bringing into school unusual items and fascinating books that foster a sense of mystery and wonder, and encourage children to do the same. As a way to promote higher self-esteem and recognition, some teachers urge older primary children with knowledge about a hobby or pastime to act as experts among their peers by being in the 'hot-seat': talking to the class about their interest and handling questions that are put to them.

When dealing with a wide **ability** range, teachers find that it is preferable to start with more straightforward questions as a means of involving all pupils, rather than beginning with conceptually challenging ones that limit the number of children that can participate. However, questions that are too simple may be perceived by the children as babyish, create a lacklustre atmosphere and even invite ridicule. The excessive uses of factual (right or wrong) questions that end abruptly and have no connection with the work that follows are educationally limiting. Teachers of young children have to be cautious about using too many rhetorical questions, especially when dealing with young children, who tend to offer verbal responses when the teacher is merely thinking out loud.

As with all verbal exchanges, the use of inappropriate vocabulary—whether too advanced, too vague or too specialised—confuses and puzzles children. A common failing among inexperienced teachers is to express questions poorly; include subsidiary questions within the main question; and the use of double negatives. More experienced teachers avoid framing questions in a way that alarms pupils; instead, they employ a bright tone of voice and open **body language** to reassure the children.

Inexperienced teachers sometimes use a question-and-answer approach as a substitute for direct teaching when it would be better to *tell* the children rather than spend time asking large numbers of undemanding questions to tease out the answers. Telling children facts rather than asking questions is enlivened by the use of pictures, short poems, rhymes, spontaneous role play and employment of computer technology to illustrate and clarify points. In making decisions about the balance between 'ask them' and 'tell them', teachers have to take account of the fact that although questions are an important teaching tool, they are more akin to grains of pepper on a meal than lashings of gravy, so fewer and better questions are preferable to perfunctory ones.

For children to answer questions successfully, they need rapid access to what they already know and the confidence to risk being incorrect. However, a child who appears unable to answer may have stored the **knowledge** away and, in the pressure of the moment, been unable to draw it out from **memory** or may be weighing up other options rather than offering a predictable response. Teachers have to be alert to the fact that a pupil who is always enthusiastic about answering questions is not necessarily more able or intelligent than a timid child who is reticent about offering a response.

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READING

Reading is a multifaceted process involving word recognition, comprehension and fluency, as well as personal motivation. It is the foundational skill for all school-based learning. About 5% of pupils learn to read effortlessly and one-quarter learns to read without any great difficulty when they are given formal **instruction.** There are four main approaches to reading. (1) The 'look and say' method, where children learn to recognise whole words or sentences rather than individual letter sounds. (2) **Phonics,** which relies on children learning the names of the letters of the alphabet and the sounds they make, then blending two letters together to make simple words, followed by three letters, four letters, and so on. (3) An 'experiential' approach using the child's own words to help him or her read. The child provides a word or sentence for the adult to write down and in due course writes the words independently and reads them aloud. (4) The 'context' method that involves using books selected by children in the belief that they will be more enthusiastic about reading a relevant text that interests them. Some books are specially written to support this method of learning, consisting of a longer sentence on one side of the page for the adult and one or more words on the opposite page for the child.

Although there is no single reading programme that meets all the learning needs of pupils, the most effective ones focus on the mastery of word recognition but also on comprehension, the former without the latter resulting in what is described as 'barking at print'. Teachers in school regularly share books with children, including so-called Big Books (physically big, with large print so that a group of pupils can see to read in unison), introduce and explain reading strategies, refer to letters of the alphabet and sounds by name and generally establish a **literacy**-rich environment. Teachers also promote pupil interest by reading their favourite stories, using language games and play activities, and encouraging children to see links between writing and reading.

Despite the fact that reading and writing abilities continue to develop throughout life, the most important period for literacy development is during the early **childhood** years from birth to 8 years, with regular exposure to books and stories being a crucial factor in learning to read. Parents can prepare their children to read by spending time with them, talking to them about interesting things in the world, telling and reading stories to them, and asking and answering their questions. As a result, by the time most children start the reception year at age 5 years they will have learned a lot about spoken and written forms of language; played, explored and made discoveries at home and in other settings; and watched, listened to and interacted with adults and other children.

Initial reading instruction involves helping children to understand meanings from print and giving them frequent opportunities to read simple words and be exposed to spelling-sound relationships. Children also need to learn about the structure of the alphabetic writing system and understand the structure of spoken words. Progress depends on children having a working understanding of how sounds are represented alphabetically and sufficient practice in reading a range of texts. They need gradually to extend their vocabulary, selfcheck their comprehension of a passage and possess strategies to correct mistakes, as well as a desire to read for a variety of purposes (information, pleasure, instructions).

The ability to read is acquired without undue difficulty by children who have normal or above-average language **skills** and have had experiences in early childhood that fostered their motivation and provided exposure to a variety of forms of literature. However, over one-half of children face more considerable challenges in learning to read; for a minority of pupils reading is one of the most difficult tasks they will have to master throughout their schooling. Many pupils who are poor readers when they first attend primary school are likely to be struggling three or four years later; most of these pupils will find advanced reading skills difficult and therefore be disadvantaged when they move into the top of the primary school. The majority of poor readers are capable of increasing their reading skills to average levels through intervention programmes that combine knowledge of phonics, fluency development and reading comprehension strategies.

Further reading

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RECORDING

Formal records of pupil progress in the form of marks, grades and indications of curriculum coverage and attainment are maintained by teachers to aid **lesson planning** and assist them in transmitting information to parents, the next teacher and providing data for secondary school colleagues. Assessments of progress are carried out in one or more of six ways. (1) Asking specific questions and noting the children's responses to them. (2) Monitoring the way that children undertake their regular work. (3) Talking individually to children about their work (conferencing). (4) Giving groups of children problems or investigations to solve collaboratively. (5) Marking/grading work completed in class. (6) Setting specific tests/tasks under formal conditions. However, it tends to be data from the last two categories that are recorded and teachers are faced with decisions about precisely what should be written down and in what detail. Managing elaborate recording systems and storing large amounts of material is time consuming and teachers have to be careful that the effort they expend is not at the expense of lesson preparation and other responsibilities.

Records about children are confidential and disclosure of information to anyone other than a colleague or the parent/guardian is not permitted. Generally, if the information is factual (e.g. spelling test scores), there is less need for privacy than if a teacher writes a subjective view of a child's personality or behaviour. A written record of these more intimate details is usually only necessary when a child is being formally monitored because of concerns about his or her conduct or progress. Storage and security of sensitive records is handled through the school's central administrative system.

Parents are interested in their children's social as well as academic progress. This balance of interests is particularly well expressed through the Foundation Curriculum, for children aged 4 to 5 years, that attends to the emotional well-being of children, their attitude and disposition to learning, socialising, concentration and persistence, as well as the more obviously academic **achievements.** Parents and teachers value qualities such as team spirit, perseverance, kindness and patience, viewing them as essential attributes if children are to attain to their full potential and eventually become thoughtful, responsible adults. However, these personal characteristics are much more difficult to record than measurable attainment and teachers have to ensure that their disposition towards individual pupils (favourable or otherwise) does not cause them to be biased in the way they express their views.

Further reading

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REFLECTION

It is generally acknowledged that the concept of reflection originated with Dewey (1933), when he studied the actions involved in learning new **skills.** Dewey concluded that there are two basic sorts of actions, the first type being routine action, governed by routine, habit or **expectations;** the second type being reflective action, involving flexibility and self-appraisal, influenced by the social conditions. Dewey's original publication in 1910, *How We think*, made a unique impact on education. He wrote this book for teachers and the first edition became the 'Bible' of progressively minded educators. In recent years in the UK, Andrew Pollard and Sarah Tann (1987) popularised the concept of teacher reflection through their much acclaimed publication *The reflective practitioner*, suggesting that there are four characteristics of reflective teaching. The first characteristic implies an active concern with the aims and consequences of an action, as well as with means and technical efficiency. The second characteristic combines implementation skills

with attitudes of open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness. The third characteristic is a cyclical or spiralling process, in which teachers continually monitor, evaluate and revise their own practice on the basis of what they perceive to be its strengths and shortcomings. The final characteristic of reflective teaching is based on teacher judgement, partly by self-reflection and partly by insights extracted from other areas of education. Despite the fact that 'reflection' is normally used as a noun (the reflection) it can also be viewed in the form of an adverbial clause (i.e. behaving reflectively). That is, an intelligent consideration of existing practice should be a continuous process (reflecting *during* practice) as well as a later event (reflecting *on* practice). Schon (1983) famously referred to this distinction as reflection *in* action and reflection *on* action.

The principal benefit attached to reflecting during and on practice is that it is a contributing factor towards teaching effectiveness. It is also an antidote to an instrumental (clinical/technicist) view of improvement that is characterised by the systematic enhancement of individual teaching skills, an approach well represented in the pages of competence checklists currently used in schools and teacher-training institutions. The process of reflection acknowledges that it is important for teachers to think hard about their work and exercise professional judgement about classroom practice, rather than meekly complying with externally promoted priorities.

The debate about **effectiveness** of teaching is sometimes represented as a choice between pragmatism and reflective practice. Thus, pragmatists argue that the only serious consideration is what works in the classroom when measured against formal criteria (such as those used during school **inspections),** while exponents of reflective practice argue that teachers need to engage thoughtfully with issues. However, this dichotomy is unhelpful, as the most effective practitioners are able to employ an itemised list of separate skills and competencies to evaluate practice, yet still maintain a reflectively critical and robust approach to their work. Teachers may improve in implementing a national strategy or new initiative but be hindered in reaching their potential if they are not given opportunity to think, comment, challenge, negotiate and exercise professional autonomy.

The situation for trainee teachers is particularly challenging in that in each school placement situation they need to identify and implement strategies, routines and ways of doing things that are acceptable in the specific school, rather than make their own unfettered decisions about priorities. Trainees are suspicious of vague ideas about 'being reflective', which, though useful as a guide for discussion about the job of teaching, do not help them to find ways of surviving and prospering in the classroom. Furthermore, inexperienced teachers do not always have the confidence to analyse teaching situations critically, in the belief that more experienced and qualified colleagues on the staff know what is best. While it is important for trainee teachers to replicate the good practice that they observe in other teachers, an unthinking acceptance of what they observe and subsequent attempt to reproduce the method or technique in their own teaching do not encourage them to adapt the method for a different teaching purpose.

Pupils also need time to reflect. Opportunities to pause for the purpose of inculcating a sense of wonder in children and addressing challenging issues have, in some schools, been superseded by routine and repetition, often in the form of tedious worksheets. Primary teachers can also be tempted to tell the children what they ought to know instead

of allowing them opportunities to enquire, **play** and investigate; or to prescribe learning so closely that curiosity, the urge to ask questions and scrutinise evidence are diminished. The end result of a regulated **curriculum** and objectives-driven **lessons,** policed through national **testing,** may be a generation of children that feel disengaged from learning and fail to see its relevance for their lives.

Further reading

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REPORTING

Reporting pupil progress in written or verbal form is a key issue for primary educators. It is often mistakenly believed that reporting is principally for the benefit of parents when, in fact, the main recipients are the pupils, who require **feedback** from teachers about their progress so that they can feel involved in developing strategies to build upon their strengths and combat their weaknesses. Reporting to pupils is therefore an essential element of the formative side of **assessment,** providing them with information that gives an indication of the work quality and ways to improve it. Reporting to pupils about their achievements is best carried out immediately, with the child present. Younger children are not always able to grasp the implications of adult comments, so some teachers use visual aids, such as stickers or stars to reinforce approval.

All teachers are required to provide a report on pupils' progress on at least one occasion per year. The process of reporting is principally by means of a written set of comments sent directly to the parents or guardians and through an organised face-to-face meeting with them to discuss the children's attainment. With the advent of national tests and levels of pupil attainment in English and mathematics, parental interest in scores and grades has been heightened. Whereas at one time it was adequate to inform parents about progress in general terms (excellent/good/satisfactory etc.), quantifiable measures are now of considerable significance, accentuating differences in attainment between children. Nevertheless, parents are also interested in the child's social development, **friendship** patterns and attitude towards learning. The best reporting systems provide up-to-date and accurate information so as to give conscientious parents a clear idea about the assistance that their children might benefit from at home. Primary school teachers have to

strike a balance between providing sufficient information to satisfy the curiosity and 'need to know' of parents and overloading them with detail.

Accurate **recording** and reporting pupil progress is also important for the teacher who will next teach the class and who will be interested in receiving information about the children's academic achievements so that the teacher can plan and prepare appropriate work for them. However, some teachers pay limited attention to the reports that they receive from the previous teacher, preferring to carry out their own informal assessments on which to make judgements as the new school year unfolds. On transfer to secondary education, the reporting procedures must be sufficiently rigorous to assist the receiving teachers in allocating pupils to the most appropriate group or ability set.

Further reading

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REWARDS

The concept of rewards is deeply embedded in pupils and adults working in primary schools and its use is rooted in a belief that behaviour can be altered through the use of external stimuli. Thus, the adult requests a response from pupils by asking a question or requesting the completion of a piece of work, children respond to the adult's satisfaction (by giving a correct answer or completing the task) and the adult then rewards the child by offering praise, a tick on a page, a star on a chart, etc. The teacher may decide to reward successful and hardworking pupils by permitting them to do something more pleasurable (such as choosing a game to play, selecting a book, being first in the queue). Consequently, pupils become dependent on pleasing an adult in order to gain favour and satisfaction, and the cycle of events continues. The potential limitation to this approach is that over time children view success largely in terms of pleasing the teacher rather than satisfying themselves.

In an important study, two education psychologists, Harrop and Williams (1992) carried out a study into reward and **punishment** in the primary school and found that primary pupils' views about suitable rewards were different from those of teachers. Out of ten options, teachers selected 'being praised in front of other pupils' (which the children placed seventh), giving merit or house points (which the children placed ninth) and mentioned in **assembly** (which the children placed fifth) as the top three incentives. By contrast, pupils' top three options were 'parents being informed about good behaviour' (which teachers placed eighth), good written comments on work (which teachers placed fourth) and good marks (which teachers placed ninth). Harrop and

Williams' study showed that whereas teachers tend to believe that adult approval *within* school, such as public praise and merit points, constitutes the most powerful reward, children tend to see the greatest rewards in terms of adult approval *outside* school (notably, parental satisfaction). A similar pattern emerged when teachers' and pupils' views about the most effective punishments were compared. Whereas pupils ranked parents being informed, being prevented from going on a school trip and being sent to see the head teacher as the three most powerful sanctions, teachers selected being told off publicly, informing parents and being told off in private as the top three. The most significant contrast between teachers' and pupils' views about punishment concerned the significance of school trips, which pupils ranked second and teachers placed ninth.

Incentives and rewards place pupils into a relatively passive role. Too much incentive reduces the internal drive to achieve self-satisfaction; too little incentive creates a staid **learning climate.** The most effective teachers first encourage children to be proud of their achievements and then affirm the quality of their success through the use of external rewards. A common practice is for the teacher's approval for an individual piece of work to contribute towards a whole-group or whole-class reward.

The rewards that teachers and assistants most value are firmly rooted in successful classroom practice and the knowledge that they have contributed towards the academic and social development of pupils. The sight of happy and contented children enjoying their school work and getting on well with their peers provides the most powerful incentive for everyone associated with primary education.

Further reading

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RITE OF PASSAGE

The rite of passage model is posited on the principle that the possession of satisfactory teaching ability is not sufficient to guarantee new teachers an acceptance into the social fabric of school life. They also need to respond appropriately to the expectations of personal behaviour demanded by existing cultural norms, such that all new personnel are required to demonstrate a willingness to learn about the procedures and priorities that characterise the school and be ready to contribute to the shared practices. The attitude and behaviour of trainees and new teachers after their arrival is noted and evaluated by the indigenous staff, especially in primary schools, which are intimate working environments and where agreed conduct and staff relationships are essential to maintain harmony.

Trainee teachers have to face many of the challenges encountered by qualified staff, but have less influence upon determining priorities for classroom practice than newly

appointed qualified teachers. Trainees also have to grapple with the emotionally exhausting task of being encultured into new school settings, in which they learn to behave as a staff member and deal acceptably with children in the classroom. Successful negotiation of this rite of passage relies both on the trainee's own attitude and on the decisions that are made by tutors and host teachers, which will vary with circumstances. Consequently, the ease with which trainee teachers are able to negotiate their rite of passage depends partly on the way they recognise and respond to the school's priorities and partly on the host teachers' capacity and willingness to assist them in the process. Some trainee teachers unintentionally upset their hosts by making ill-advised comments or damaging someone's feelings or being insensitive to the school's prevailing ethos. Every new teacher has to persevere, stay positive and accept that colleagues have enough concerns of their own than to spend all their time supporting novices.

In a landmark study about the rite of passage, Eisenhart *et al.* (1991) argue that to be accepted by the existing staff, new teachers have to pass through at least three stages, referred to as separation, transition and incorporation. Trainee teachers and new members of staff have to lose their grip on previous cultural norms, grapple with the requirements of the new situation during a transitional 'adjusting' period and finally become assimilated into the new culture. There are a number of contextual factors that affect the process of being encultured. First, the effect of existing practices that are taken for granted by the existing staff but are largely unknown by newcomers. Second, the different personal factors reflected in the images that new teachers have of themselves and their beliefs about teaching. Third, the methods and strategies used in teaching. Fourth, the quality of mentoring transmitted through coaching, discussion and the provision of emotional support. With so many diverse factors to negotiate, it is not surprising that trainee teachers on placement require a length of time to acclimatise to the prevailing school climate before they can make significant headway in their teaching.

Training providers (such as university faculties of education) make a significant contribution in preparing trainee teachers to demonstrate their enthusiasm, courtesy and dependability, and sharpening their instructional competence; however, it is the host teachers that offer the most informed advice about how trainees can best adjust to the new school setting. As a result, negotiating their rite of passage depends on how well the trainee teachers grasp what is important to the existing staff and respond accordingly. Trainee teachers may settle with ease into one school placement yet struggle in another, depending on their willingness and capacity to accommodate the way things are done there and respond in a way that is seen as appropriate.

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are allocated an **induction** tutor from among the staff to provide guidance and advice during the crucial first year of teaching. Experienced teachers that transfer from another primary school after a successful job interview are faced with a similar time of adjustment as they gradually absorb the school's priorities and settle into the school community. However, they have already been thoroughly inculcated into familiar primary school practices and as a result the rite of passage is considerably eased.

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RULES

Every primary educator wants to work in an orderly environment that provides for the welfare and safety of all pupils. Although there is a consensus that a teacher's main goal is to educate and not to punish, when the **behaviour** of a child comes into conflict with the rights of other pupils, corrective action is necessary for the benefit of the individuals concerned. Accordingly, pupils are governed by the policies and regulations set out in a school's code of conduct and discipline procedures. Parents are also encouraged to become familiar with the school system, to be supportive of its aims and reflect them in their daily **communication** with their children and others in the community.

Rules are statements that translate principles about appropriate conduct and behaviour into practice. Good rules can be understood by pupils and adults and provide a shared understanding of what is permissible and what is proscribed. Most schools develop a set of rules that apply to all pupils, regardless of where they are on the premises. Individual teachers establish additional rules that are specific to the classroom in which the children spend the majority of their time, often drawn up after discussion with them. Additional rules cover conduct on educational visits and other trips outside the school grounds, with particular reference to **health and safety** issues. Rules can be expressed in terms of what children are not allowed to do; however, the most influential ones are expressed in terms of what *should* be done and the type of behaviour and conduct that is expected. For instance, a rule that states 'walk along the corridor' is considered more effective than one that states 'do not run along the corridor'.

The problem with strictly applied rules and accompanying sanctions is that they fail to take account of specific circumstances. Thus, a normally placid child who throws a tantrum and bursts into tears requires a different response from the miscreant who tries to manipulate a situation by contrived fits of temper and exaggerated crying. Experienced teachers regularly discuss and clarify with children the importance and implications of self-control and do not allow themselves to be emotionally blackmailed by defiant or devious pupils.

The renowned primary educator Ted Wragg notes that school life without any rules would be chaotic and dangerous. He draws attention to the breadth of rules that commonly govern school life and categorises them under nine headings: movement, talking, work-related, presentation, safety, space, materials, social behaviour, clothing/

appearance. Wragg also argues that rules should not be viewed separately from *relationships* because the question of rules is closely bound up with, but also distinct from, that of interpersonal issues. He also argues that the relationship between two or more people is to some extent affected by the rule conventions under which it is operating.

Many schools use a system to reward positive behaviour, by which well-behaved children are allowed a period of free-choice activities during Friday (sometimes referred to as 'golden time'). Unacceptable behaviour that does not improve after an initial warning by an adult may result in the pupil staying inside during the break. In more severe cases children may lose golden time and spend the time discussing with an adult what they did wrong and setting themselves targets for improving their behaviour. A continued infraction of the rules may mean that the child's parents are contacted and asked to come into school to discuss the situation with the class teacher or head teacher and initiate an agreed plan of action to remedy the situation.

Further reading

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SELF-ESTEEM

Self-esteem is a state of mind controlled by what a person believes about the way that others view that person. The associated terms, 'self-belief' and 'self-concept' and 'self-efficacy', indicate a state of mind controlled by how a person views him- or herself and are considered by some educationists to be more useful terms than selfesteem as they can be linked to verifiable achievement rather than opinion. Nevertheless, high self-esteem contributes to a state of what is referred to as 'relaxed alertness' in learning, which in turn allows pupils to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and increases the likelihood that learning will be deep rather than superficial.

Adults play an important role in influencing children's self-esteem. For example, two teachers monitor children's work and offer suggestions for improvement: the first teacher depresses the pupil by focusing solely on errors; the second brings about the desired change by the use of carefully chosen words, precise guidance and suitable **target setting** for achievement. It is obvious which of the two approaches is more likely to bring about enhanced learning.

Pupils with low self-esteem are less willing to take risks in learning and may spend their time and energy completing straightforward tasks that lead most directly to the reward of adult praise and a tangible record of success (such as a tick, a positive written comment, a house point). Although this strategy brings about a temporary boost in self-esteem, it can also lead to a situation where children avoid difficult tasks and rely heavily on external stimuli to boost their sense of well-being. Virtually all primary-aged children are optimistic about being in a school situation or learning environment that caters for their needs, spends time and effort in helping them to learn and gives them opportunities to do exciting things. However, less confident children require careful **nurturing** if they are to break free from doing and saying only those things that they believe will elicit support and approval from others.

The renowned American educationist Lilian Katz suggests that parents and teachers can strengthen and support a healthy sense of self-esteem in children in at least seven ways: (1) Help them to build healthy relationships with peers. (2) Clarify their own **values** and those of others that may differ. (3) Offer them reassurance that support is unconditional. (4) Appreciate rather than merely praise their interests; avoid flattery. (5) Offer them opportunities to face challenges as well as to have fun. (6) Treat them respectfully take their views seriously and offer meaningful **feedback.** (7) Help them to cope with setbacks and use the information and awareness they gain to future advantage.

Self-esteem is also significant for teachers, as confidence is an important factor in effective teaching. When teachers feel secure in their ability to do the job effectively, this assurance is translated into a belief that pupils will respond appropriately; as a result pupils sense the teacher's authority and are more likely to be compliant. Primary teachers tend to judge their own worth as persons in terms of their success at work; perceived inadequacies affect every aspect of their lives, both outside as well as inside school.

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SKILLS

The development of skills in teaching and learning is a vitally important component of primary education. A skill can be described as the capacity to do something well and perform certain tasks competently, normally acquired through training and experience. Skill acquisition involves the mastery of a variety of specific abilities that combine to create the key skill that is being mastered. Thus, the skill of accessing information through the Internet requires that pupils have first gained the **ability** to use a computer mouse, select from menus, and so on. Skills may also relate to a natural ability that is refined through study practice and expert tuition; for example, a child may improve a natural ability in drawing or running or number work through coaching and adult guidance. **Thinking** skills can also be developed in pupils by promoting discretion, judgement, understanding and sensitivity to **context** through the use of individual and group activities designed for the purpose.

One of the key decisions for teachers is whether mastery of basic skills should take place prior to the main task; or that competence in the skills should emerge as a result of doing the task and mastering each skill as it is needed. For example, pupils may be taught how to access a dictionary, but only regular use to discover the meaning of words allows a child the opportunity to come to grips with the complexities of the procedures. At the other extreme, a skill with a potential safety risk must be securely mastered before exploiting it; for example, it would be reckless to allow a young child to discover how to use a saw purely by experimenting with it! Teachers are constantly making decisions about the extent to which they monitor each step of the pupils' experiences and how much they step back and permit children to negotiate their own pathway through the work.

Teachers have to be clear about the appropriate teaching skills to employ for each occasion, though these intentions have to be tempered by a willingness to modify them in the light of what takes place during the session. Direct transmission teaching (DTT) involves imparting **knowledge** and understanding to pupils. The success by which this transmission is achieved depends upon teachers presenting the information in an orderly manner, using appropriate vocabulary, engaging the children by using varied tones of voice and speed of delivery and employing visual aids where appropriate. A second

teaching skill is interactive transmission teaching (ITT) that is also based on direct transmission but includes interludes for questions and answers. ITT is a more difficult teaching skill than DTT because the teacher has to switch between imparting information and handling pupils' answers as they respond to the questions that arise. Good teachers make sure that children can distinguish between genuine questions and rhetorical (think aloud) questions that do not require a response from them. Without such safeguards teachers have to handle a large number of unsolicited answers, especially from younger pupils. The third teaching skill that teachers employ is participative teaching (PT) where they encourage active pupil participation, not only in the form of answers to questions but also in providing insights, suggestions and examples. PT requires a considerable amount of teaching skill because it provides the most opportunities for disorder, as pupils may not possess the experience or self-discipline to wait for their turn, listen to the ideas of classmates and maintain a suitable noise level. Teachers have to work hard to clarify the **rules** about when and how the pupils can make contributions and how they should respond courteously to the views of others.

Regardless of the skills involved, teachers have to take account of pupils' abilities, experience and speed of working, offering them the opportunities to employ familiar skills in different learning contexts or to grapple with relevant and challenging new ones. If pupils are asked to investigate or solve problems, the range of skills has to be identified beforehand by the teacher to ensure that pupils can make an earnest attempt to tackle the challenge without being hampered by ignorance of the skills needed to succeed. For example, if pupils were asked to produce designs for a proposed school garden, they would need to be equipped with skills that enabled them to plan, draw and measure and the thinking skills necessary to envisage possibilities, in addition to knowledge of plants and soil conditions.

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SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Pupils are considered to have special educational needs (SEN) if they display a learning difficulty or possess a disability that either prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities that are normally provided in schools for children of their age. It is estimated that around 20% of all pupils suffer from a special educational need at some time in their school careers. The need may be temporary and have minimal impact on the child's education, or more serious and chronic. Children having special educational needs require educational provision that helps them to develop their potential, achieve the

greatest independence and eventually be able to exercise a full role in the community. While the education of pupils with SEN, whether in special or in ordinary schools, is broadly similar to that which is provided for other children, they are more likely to require access to specialist provision, teaching techniques and facilities. If pupils' needs necessitate formalised intervention, the **Code of Practice** for SEN is activated.

The education of children with SEN has assumed an increasingly high profile in primary education and had an impact on the work of every practitioner. At the same time it is unfortunate that the acronym SEN has become a label for children, rather than a means of focusing on their specific needs; consequently, unsatisfactory expressions such as 'SEN children' have found their way into the lexicon. If children's learning needs have been formally identified, involving the parents, head teacher, educational psychologist and local education authority, and are deemed to require specialist help within mainstream schooling, a formal statement is issued by the local authority. The statement describes the nature and parameters of the support, which frequently means receiving help from a teaching assistant (also referred to as a Learning Support Assistant, LSA). Owing to the additional cost incurred, the statementing process is often protracted.

Pupils for whom a statement of special needs has been drawn up have attracted the label of 'statemented children', though the statement referred to concerns the nature of the educational provision and is not intended to be a description of the child. Ideally, if there is a pupil who has been formally identified as having special needs, a teaching assistant will become available to support the pupil for part or all of the day, depending on the nature and severity of the need. However, the concept of one adult remaining in very close proximity to a single needy child throughout the day has become outmoded, unless the child's needs are so extreme (e.g. blindness) that such a continued adult presence is necessary.

Even if pupils benefit from specialised or individual **instruction** from an LSA in a particular subject area in which they struggle (notably literacy) it does not necessarily involve their removal from regular class activities and segregation from social activities, as there are stigmas attached to being seen as 'different'. The strategy of removing children from mainstream activities can also reinforce pupils' perceptions of their low status and may damage their **selfesteem** and confidence, though some pupils enjoy the exclusive attention. The move towards more integrative and inclusive practices that keep all children physically together as far as possible has become more evident in some schools, with appropriate **differentiation** of the work content. Nevertheless, being taken out of the classroom for specific teaching on a one-to-one basis or in very small groups is still commonplace for younger primary-age children who need extra support, especially in reading.

Some pupils struggle with regular work to such an extent that they are not even able to reach the first level of the National Curriculum, in which case there exist a set of indicators known as the P scales to record their **achievement.** The P scales are divided into eight levels from P1 (the lowest) to P8 (the highest), though the first three levels (P1, P2 and P3) are not subject specific. In extreme cases, children may only have a tentative grasp of people, events and objects and rely heavily on tactile senses (e.g. through touching) to elicit a response, whereby P1 would be an appropriate level.

The presence of pupils with SEN in mainstream classes often benefits the overall learning climate owing to the sense of caring and cooperation that it engenders. The

exception to this trend concerns children who suffer from emotional and behavioural problems, in which case the disruption and additional demands placed on the teacher and the adverse impact on pupil learning are seen to act against the best interests of the majority and have led to calls for a reevaluation of the **inclusion** policy.

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STEINER-WALDORF SCHOOLS

Although the majority of state-funded schools are concerned principally with enhancing academic standards, two specific types of school are also closely associated with promoting a spiritual dimension in education. First, in the UK, schools within the Church of England or Roman Catholic traditions that provided an elementary education for underprivileged people during the nineteenth century; these 'foundation' schools retain close control over the teaching of religious education. (In recent years other denominations and world faiths have established schools that reflect their own spiritual and moral priorities.) The second type is schools associated with the person of Rudolph Steiner, known as Steiner or Waldorf–Steiner or Steiner-Waldorf schools. In 1913 Steiner built a 'school of spiritual science' in Switzerland, which was the forerunner of the present-day schools. The name Waldorf is derived from the school that Steiner was asked to open in 1919 for the children of workers at the Waldorf-Astoria cigarette factory in Stuttgart, Germany. The first US Waldorf school opened in New York in 1928 and there are now more than 600 Waldorf schools in over thirty-two countries with approximately 120,000 pupils of primary and secondary age.

Steiner designed the **curriculum** of his schools to emphasise the relation of human beings to nature and natural rhythms, including an emphasis on festivals, myths, ancient cultures and various celebrations. He was driven by a conviction that practical **skills,** such as playing a musical instrument, weaving, wood carving, knitting and painting, were an essential part of a child's education. He believed that each human being is composed of body, spirit and soul, and that children pass through three seven-year stages from birth to the age of 21, so that the education provided at each stage should be appropriate to the 'spirit for each stage'. As Steiner believed that it is the spirit that comprehends

knowledge and the spirit is the same in all people, regardless of mental or physical differences, he was a pioneer in educating the mentally and physically handicapped (as people were then described), which today is referred to as a policy of **inclusion.** One of the more unusual parts of the course of study involves something Steiner called 'eurythmy', an art of movement that tries to make visible what he believed were the inner forms and gestures of language and music.

Advocates of Steiner-Waldorf education claim that as children grow up, they gain the characteristics that make them human because seeds of experience are sown that germinate, grow strongly through **nurturing** and later come to fruition. Education is therefore concerned with the whole person and not merely the growth of the intellect.

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TALK

To ensure that talk is effective and useful for learning, pupils have to be taught how to speak meaningfully to one another, listen carefully to what others have to say, respond constructively and express their own views succinctly. Throughout this complex social and intellectual process, children gradually come to acknowledge that views other than their own exist and understand that their own opinions and judgement are open to scrutiny and, perhaps, criticism. The extent of teacher involvement depends upon the nature of the talk. If the teacher intervenes too much, talking becomes fragmented; if intervention is minimal, the talk may stray too far from the intended topic or dissolve into a series of trivial comments.

If learning through talk is to be educationally valuable for primary-aged children, a number of factors must be in place. First, a positive **learning climate** must have been developed such that children are supported and encouraged to share ideas. Second, children must be inculcated into **thinking** hard about what they learn. By posing interesting and speculative questions, encouraging children to think aloud and offer alternative explanations for events and phenomena, teachers gradually foster a more inquisitive attitude and thirst to discover more. Third, children must understand the rules for taking turns and offering their opinions, and learn strategies for expressing ideas openly.

Three opportunities for talk are commonly used in primary schools: discussion, debate and dialogue. *Discussion* is a form of group **interaction** in which pupils talk between one another about an issue or a relevant topic that raises questions. In a discussion the talk consists of advancing and considering closely a variety of perspectives on the given issue. Discussion therefore requires that the children know enough about the subject to offer an opinion, suggest alternatives or summarise a position. In a classroom setting it is essential that issues under discussion lie within children's direct experience or the scope of their **imagination.**

Debate follows more closely prescribed **rules** than discussion and is more carefully structured. It needs to be formally organised and is most suitable for older primary pupils. Prior to the debate, children need time to acquire information about the topic, talk informally to one another and record some of their findings in a form that can be later shared. The search for information can also be extended into **homework** tasks. During the debate, children who have volunteered to speak are given a period of time (say three minutes) in which to share their ideas without interruption. The rest of the class have to sit patiently until the contribution has been concluded before being given time to think of a question to ask or a comment to make. Once the questions and comments are exhausted, another speaker is allowed the same amount of time to present information and ideas from a different perspective. The teacher has to monitor the time, note key comments, draw together the different threads of the debate, thank the main participants and summarise learning points.

Dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons in which both make a necessary verbal contribution to maintain the exchanges. In addition to social dialogue ('small talk') two forms of dialogue are promoted in primary education. The first form is 'critical dialogue', when issues are interrogated. The second is 'creative dialogue', when solutions to problems are being sought. Adult-pupil dialogue forms an essential element of learning, though in the majority of classrooms most talk is initiated by and sustained through the adult, with pupils responding to what the teacher says rather than being an equal participant in the exchanges. In pupil-pupil dialogue, some pupils are naturally garrulous and may dominate conversations to the detriment of more thoughtful children. Other pupils find it difficult to express themselves and yet others prefer to remain silent rather than to expose their inadequate grasp of the subject matter. Teachers take all these factors into account when planning their strategies for encouraging talk for learning.

There are numerous practical methods for promoting talk in class, some of which are more manageable than others. It is common for children to be invited by the teacher to recount an experience, comment on an issue, express an interest or concern, offer advice, provide facts, explain how something can be done or suggest alternatives. It is less common for teachers to encourage children to argue forcibly or counter a prevailing view or tell jokes. On occasions, pupils spontaneously wonder out loud, make ribald comments, call out answers or make humorous remarks that are considered to be outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour and thereby invite discipline measures to be taken. However, within a collaborative problem-solving session or investigation, all such forms of speaking may be accommodated within the group discussion; even the occasional frivolous comment can provide a useful diversion from the intensity of the formal exchanges and 'oil the wheels' of the talk.

Pupils can only talk about a topic if there is something worthwhile that warrants being addressed, such as the merits of a cause, the correctness of a decision or the ethics of a controversial issue. Younger children may be encouraged to talk about ways to share toys or whether it is right to speak to strangers in the street. Older pupils may talk about issues of fairness, equality and the employment of classroom sanctions. Children of all ages can contribute to a discussion about local issues (such as a proposed road scheme), national issues (such as how to care for the elderly) and world issues (such as conservation).

An active dialogue (whether critical or creative) is also important within a school staff as a means of enhancing team spirit, generating ideas, clarifying decisions, explaining procedures, transmitting messages, supporting learning and sharing joys and disappointments. Head teachers of successful schools invariably encourage open dialogue to raise morale and foster a vibrant and inclusive learning community.

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TARGET SETTING

There are three sorts of targets commonly used in primary education. The first type is *quantitative*, relying on numerical data from test scores, both internal and external to the school. For instance, a target might be set for a certain percentage of children in the school to reach a certain score in English or mathematics; or for all children in the same class to be capable of spelling a particular list of words. The second type of target is *qualitative*, based principally on a teacher's subjective evaluation of pupils' work, but incorporating factors such as behaviour and the general ambience of school life. For example, the target might be for pupils to use computer software or to walk quietly inside the building. The third type of target is based on *pupils' evaluations* of their own progress and ways to improve it. These targets are internal to the classroom, negotiated between the teacher and pupil, sometimes recorded formally by the teacher except in the case of older children, who maintain their own records. Targets must be realistic, manageable and challenging, based on evidence of previous attainment and informed by regular assessment of attainment and gaps in **knowledge.**

Although, in theory, targets are regularly reviewed by the teacher and then modified in the light of new learning and progress, the process of bespoke target setting for each child, adjusting teaching to assist pupils to meet their individual targets and subsequent assessment that their learning is secure in that area of study, is difficult in practice. Teachers simply do not have sufficient time to keep accurate track of the progress of thirty or more pupils. There are also three other factors associated with effective target setting of which teachers have to take account. First, targets that are too general are difficult to monitor because it is hard to know when they have been achieved; second, targets that are too specific tend to narrow children's perspectives and lead to rote learning; third, some targets are more to do with improvement than with mastery. The third point is significant because the concept of lifelong learning implies that although there may be identifiable stages in the process, there is no end to the extent of improvement. Many aspects of learning for primary-age children involve 'getting better' rather than 'concluding the learning'. For example, all pupils need to persevere constantly to improve their spelling and presentation, so a target expressed as 'get better at spelling' is unsatisfactorily vague; a more helpful target would be to identify a specific set of words that have to be mastered by a given date.

Adults in primary education also employ targets as a means of monitoring their own progress. For example, trainee teachers identify and then strive to gain competence in their weaker or less welldeveloped areas of teaching to achieve qualified status. Judgements about a teacher's competence are directly aligned to pupil achievements in formal tests and indirectly to how effectively a particular member of staff contributes to the team endeavour. Targets for both pupils and adults tend to consist of *immediate ones*

associated with success in classroom practice and *end-product ones* in demonstrating long-term outcomes.

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TEACHER ROLE

The teacher's role has many facets but is dominated by functional aspects, including **curriculum** implementation, planning lessons, assessing pupil progress and compiling reports. Motivating factors such as altruism, compassion, a love for children and the fulfilment of working in a school environment sometimes have to be subordinated to these pragmatic concerns. Only a little more than a half of a primary teacher's time is spent actively teaching; the remainder of the time is occupied by attending meetings, administration and other school duties (such as supervising pupils in the playground). In the past, teachers could isolate themselves by staying in their classrooms, the extent of contact with colleagues depending on personal inclination. Today, teachers must be willing and able to work as team members, in the belief that multiple contributions allow for a deeper engagement with issues and appropriate solutions than working singly does. There is much for teachers to learn by observing a colleague at work but they have to be cautious about trying to replicate his or her actions without ascertaining the educational **values** that underpin them.

All teachers exercise the role of guardian, setting and maintaining a rule framework, making their **expectations** about behaviour clear to pupils and encouraging them to accept responsibility for their own actions. This social dimension of the teacher's role is crucial to success in developing a positive attitude by convincing children that they have more to gain than to lose by behaving well. The guardian role means dealing with infringements in a way that reflects their level of seriousness, anticipating disruption and taking pre-emptive action and using sanctions according to agreed procedures. Effective teachers lead like a shepherd rather than drive like a cattle rancher.

A teacher has to be influential beyond the classroom door in areas of personal relationships with support staff, contact with parents and visitors, demonstrating initiative with respect to **health and safety** issues and being a positive presence around the school. Teacher as guardian also involves protecting weaker and more vulnerable children from harm (such as bullying) and helping them to develop strategies to become more self-sufficient and confident. For trainee teachers the demands of this wider role can be a little overwhelming, their priority being rooted in effective classroom practice; however, the

standards required for successful completion of their training depend on being sensitive to the other dimensions of the role.

Despite the many other calls on teachers' time, classroom teaching lies at the heart of their work. Teachers learn to gain children's attention, both by insisting that they listen and concentrate, and by making the work interesting and appealing. They convey their enthusiasm during the teaching episode, offer clear and precise explanations, ask relevant questions and invite pupils to think for themselves. Many teachers describe the thrill they experience when a child becomes excited about an aspect of learning, as they grasp the point and glimpse its implications.

Monitoring progress is an essential aspect of the teacher role. Every teacher has to become expert in diagnosing the extent of children's understanding, the areas where they lack comprehension and the best methods for remedying the situation. All monitoring depends on close observation of children, careful listening to what they say and skilful **questioning** to gain insight into their beliefs and ideas. The best teachers do not merely discover where children's problems lie, but investigate why they have occurred and how to remedy them.

Six key influences have the potential to influence the effectiveness of a primary teacher's work. First, the intense pace of life in school, lack of opportunity for thoughtful **reflection** and the need constantly to prioritise tasks due to heavy workloads. Second, having to cope immediately with daily occurrences such as resolving disputes between pupils, responding to parental concerns, caring for injured children and carrying out running repairs on equipment. Third, offering support to colleagues in an effort to maintain staff harmony and promote **collegiality.** Fourth, the shortage of time to achieve all that needs to be accomplished, regardless of how long and hard they work. Fifth, owing to the busyness of school life, the disconnection and reduced opportunities for liaison with other adults that sometimes occurs. Sixth, the organisational demands that result from the combined impact of meetings with colleagues, contacts with parents, harnessing and managing resources, planning the teaching programme, sorting out visits and special events, and liaising with teachers in other schools. The network of responsibilities that comprise the teacher role mean that the successful management of the multiplicity of demands requires teachers to be vigilant in evaluating and adjusting each day's differing priorities, while maintaining the regular timetable of teaching and associated duties.

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TEACHING APPROACH

A teaching approach consists of the methods and strategies that teachers employ to help pupils learn effectively and reflects the beliefs that they hold about the nature of learning. Thus, one teacher may believe that pupils learn best when they are motivated by opportunities to explore ideas as a group, while another teacher may be convinced that they learn best when working alone with tasks closely targeted to their individual needs. Again, one teacher may employ a considerable amount of direct teaching, utilising question and answer supported by repetition of facts, while another teacher employs a problem-solving method in which children are encouraged to raise their own questions and seek their own solutions. One teacher's style may be informal and strongly interactive, using **humour** and repartee, while another teacher might adopt a more detached approach, eschewing familiarity.

Primary educators are in a position to create, support and maintain challenging learning environments for all pupils and apply their professional expertise to promote learning by their knowledge of the **curriculum** and employment of a range of pupil **assessment** strategies to identify and address individual needs and differences. Every teaching approach is based upon an understanding of human development and also a grasp of learning theory and its practical implementation. The best teaching approaches provide for the flexibility to change a lesson's direction if it becomes apparent that this is necessary, accommodate the needs of faster and slower workers and draw the lesson or session to a satisfactory conclusion.

One of the most marked ways in which teaching approaches differ is in the use of discipline. One teacher will adhere strictly to the agreed behaviour code and employ sanctions systematically, with minimal regard for the particular circumstances, while another teacher will avoid the use of sanctions wherever possible, relying on verbal persuasion and warnings. Whatever approach is adopted, the best teachers speak naturally to children and not at them; take a sincere interest in what the children say; respond strongly when necessary but do not shout or humiliate a child; place explanation ahead of sanctions; and publicly acknowledge good behaviour. An effective approach also refuses to be ruffled by events and focuses on positive actions. The very best teachers allow children space to grow and develop and encourage them to express doubts, uncertainties and reservations. They use questions skilfully to help their pupils explore issues. They offer advice and suggestions and promote a learning ethos in which children are convinced that nothing is beyond their reach if they try hard enough. In this regard, an experienced and highly successful former primary head teacher in England, Sir David Winkley, compares a successful teaching approach to good jazz, claiming that good teaching is both structured and improvised, making use of the finest instruments and themes available, but deploying them in personal, original ways.

The decisions associated with determining the kind of approach that practitioners adopt is influenced by a variety of factors, including their personality, training, natural talents, disposition and school policies. However, the recommended teaching approaches relating to the National **Literacy** Strategy (NLS) and National **Numeracy** Strategy (NNS) have colonised other areas of teaching such that lessons follow a similar pattern: a

teacher-led introduction to the whole class, followed by specific teaching; guided and independent tasks for groups of children; a summary of key lesson points.

Most primary teachers place considerable emphasis on their relationship with pupils as a way to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, but do so on the understanding that the ultimate arbiter is the adult, not the child. The majority of teachers embrace the principle that although pupils should make *some* decisions, adults, with the ultimate responsibility for academic standards and social behaviour, have the final say. The nature of the relationship depends to a large extent on how much teachers want their pupils to be actively involved in their learning and think about the work rather than merely complying with an insistence to do it. Although primary teachers are commonly heard to say that they want their pupils to be responsive and offer their own opinions, the pressure to cover the curriculum and achieve good test results (especially for older pupils) can thwart such aspirations.

Adopting a teaching approach also involves fundamental questions about classroom organisation and class management. At one level teachers find that it pays to teach the whole class together as much as possible, as it saves time and avoids the need to repeat the same set of instructions and explanations to different groups of children. On the other hand, the wide ability range and maturity level within a class mean that teachers need constantly to be sensitive to the differences that exist in pupils' concentration span, grasp of concepts, vocabulary and previous learning experiences. Consequently, teachers normally use a mixture of whole-class, group work and individual work according to circumstances and what they are seeking to achieve. Ultimately, all teachers have to respond to the individual needs of children, but for organisational purposes they tend to group pupils in ways that facilitate ease of working. In English and mathematics the grouping is normally on the basis of pupil attainment; in other subjects it is on a social or practical basis (such as access to resources).

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TESTING

A regime of testing has emerged in recent years where pupils' grasp of specific pieces of **knowledge** and information has been scrutinised to its limits. As a consequence, teachers' efficiency has been measured in terms of examination outcomes, with the result that primary education has become more narrowly focused in a bid to raise attainment

scores in mathematics and English. There is ample evidence to show that this emphasis has been at the expense of more creative and innovative approaches.

Nearly all primary-aged pupils in mainstream schools in the UK are required to undertake national tests during year 6 (aged 10–11 years). The tests are popularly referred to as SATs, based on the concept of a standard assessment task when national testing was first introduced in the early 1990s. However, they are more correctly referred to as National Curriculum Tests, NCTs, though the acronym is rarely used. A few children are exempt from the requirement to take SATs because of their exceptional learning difficulties. In England children were also formally tested at the end of Key Stage 1 (KS1) in year 2 when they were approximately 7 years of age. However, since 2005, teachers' own judgements of how pupils are progressing forms the principal source of evidence. The decision to modify the testing regime followed a successful pilot scheme in schools which revealed that teacher assessment, in conjunction with a more flexible test, reflected pupil **achievement** and potential more accurately than raw test results. Children still sit the Key Stage 1 National **Curriculum** Tests in English and maths, but not at a fixed time and with an emphasis on work that is carried out throughout the year. Key Stage 1 national tests in English and maths are marked within each school and each school's results are then made available locally. Key Stage 2 (KS2) national tests in English, maths and science are marked externally and the school's results are published nationally. In a few areas, tests of various types for those seeking grammar school places are marked externally but the results are kept confidential. In Wales, Key Stage 2 national tests in English and Welsh, maths and science became optional from 2005. New **skills** tests in **numeracy, literacy** and problem solving are likely to be mandatory from 2008. In Northern Ireland, transfer tests in English or Irish, maths and science and technology for those seeking grammar school places are marked externally and the results kept private; however, these tests are due to end in 2008. In Scotland, national tests in English and maths are given, corresponding roughly to Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. Pupils are not tested at a specific age or stage, but at the discretion of teachers when they consider the children ready to do so. The tests are marked internally and the results are not made known publicly.

The results of the KS2 tests in England contribute to national league tables of school performance; however, many head teachers bitterly oppose the significance attached to them. The tables are widely published and form the focus of considerable attention from parents and the community, as well as local and national government agencies. Although parents undoubtedly take a great interest in the position in the table of local schools, numerous surveys suggest that many parents feel that their children are under too much stress because of the excessive numbers of tests, the accompanying expansion of **homework** and the impact of school work on family life. Testing and retesting for the purpose of **reporting** pupil performance, the pressure on teachers to 'teach to the test' and the imposition of a rigidly prescribed subject content are viewed by many educators as an unsatisfactory way to help children gain all the necessary life skills they need to achieve their full potential in a rapidly changing world.

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THINKING

Over the past ten or fifteen years there has been a surge of interest about the use of thinking **skills** as a means of improving the quality of learning in classrooms. The direct teaching of strategies to aid thinking helps to develop pupils' abilities in problem solving, investigations and forms of **enquiry** that can be applied across all areas of learning and are relevant to the needs of every child, including preschoolers and new entrants. Thinking skills and strategies open new avenues for intellectual growth that allow academically capable children to be acknowledged for developing ideas and ways of working that are complex, original and insightful.

Thinking for learning presents challenges for primary teachers who work within a predetermined timetable and school-wide agreement about **learning objectives.** Teachers may want to promote children's capability as creative thinkers but feel constrained by the limitations imposed by a need to conform to the timetable requirements. A teacher may be anxious to offer pupils more opportunities to grapple with ideas, think hard about their implications and produce innovative solutions, but hesitate to do so for fear of falling behind in covering the **curriculum** and distorting the plans agreed jointly with colleagues or detracting from preparing pupils for formal **testing.**

An important dimension of primary education is for children to move beyond the point where the sole aim is to complete the given task, and become evaluators of their own and others' ideas and opinions as well. In doing so, primary-age children have to understand the difference between constructive arguing and quarrelling. Victor Quinn, a specialist in critical thinking, suggests that there are four central kinds of arguments that teachers and parents need to promote in children: (1) *Empirical* arguments about matters of fact. (2) *Conceptual* arguments about what words mean and how ideas relate. (3) *Evaluative* arguments about attitudes and judgements and moral concerns with the needs and interests of others. (4) *Logical* arguments about making connections and disciplined thought. Steve Higgins and Jennifer Miller from the University of Newcastle (DfES 2005) classify thinking skills' programmes and approaches into three broad categories. The first they refer to as a *philosophical* approach, where there is an emphasis on questioning and reasoning, particularly when this is undertaken by a group of children or the whole class. Thus, an issue or question is identified by the teacher and/or pupils that might be solved or elucidated through discussion. The teacher takes the role of facilitator and supports or challenges the discussion and pupil reasoning. The leading example of

thinking in this category is 'philosophy for children', an approach to learning developed in the United States by Matthew Lipman in the 1960s. The second approach to thinking is through *brain-based learning,* drawing on research into how the human brain works and its implications for teachers and schools. Two of the more famous names associated with this approach are Edward de Bono and Eric Jensen, both of whom claim that teaching approaches in schools have not sufficiently utilised information about the brain's functioning. Ideas about accelerated learning and multiple intelligences (see under **Emotion)** draw on brain research to inspire techniques or activities that can be used in the classroom. The third approach is *cognitive intervention,* where teaching strategies to promote pupils' thinking are based on activities and techniques for the purpose that the teacher devises.

Most educators agree that the approaches and techniques associated with thinking skills need to be integrated or 'infused' into lessons rather than taught as separate skills or through lessons that are solely for the purpose. However, **circle time,** an approach by which children have an opportunity to express considered views openly and without censure, is one occasion when thinking skills can be specifically developed within a non-threatening and familiar setting.

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TIME MANAGEMENT

Successful time management for school staff is essential to facilitate the arranging of teaching and learning. Every teacher finds that unless priorities are established and acted on decisively, the hours slip past and essential things remain untouched while trivial issues that emerge unexpectedly take precedence. Well-ordered routines contribute to higher standards in learning and help to reduce stress levels; consequently, making optimum use of the time available benefits both children and adults. One characteristic of successful primary teachers is being able to organise and manage their time effectively and efficiently. The best teachers are skilful in making the best use of the available opportunities; they seem to achieve more than their colleagues and produce work of a higher standard despite being busier.

Teachers learn to think ahead by deciding what is essential to do, what is necessary and what is non-essential. It is then possible for them to determine what is urgent and what can wait for attention. To avoid being overwhelmed, teachers tend to categorise tasks mentally under a series of headings, such as not urgent and minor, urgent but minor, urgent and significant, not urgent but significant. It is not worthwhile for teachers to spend time on doing things that are neither urgent nor significant, even if they are interesting; on the other hand, urgent tasks that are relatively unimportant still have to be dealt with as quickly as possible. If tasks are urgent and significant they assume the highest priority; the numerous other things to do simply have to wait and cannot serve as an excuse for inaction. If too many tasks are pressing and significant, it acts as a warning that too little time has been left before the deadline; use of a planning schedule with interim targets helps to avoid last-minute panics. Effective time management means that the majority of essential tasks are non-urgent because sufficient time has been left for them to be dealt with. In the hurry and scurry of school life there are occasions when unexpected events conspire to upset the most carefully laid plans, but practitioners have to be diligent to avoid being caught out too often. Regardless of the backlog of tasks, health and safety issues always receive precedence.

Teachers often find that the completion of forms, lists and other mundane tasks is more time consuming than expected. Senior teachers and the head teacher in particular have to be careful that they do not get submerged in paperwork tasks at the expense of being active around the school. The availability of teaching **assistants** allows teachers to delegate some of the time-consuming tasks that would otherwise detract from responsibilities for planning, preparation, teaching, **assessment** of pupils' work and curriculum **leadership.**

Each evening teachers mentally compile a list of things that need to be done before school begins, during the lunch break and after school. For example, a telephone call about arrangements for an educational visit can only be made out of lesson times. Information may be needed from pupils at the start of the day about numbers who wish to participate in a particular event, or the teacher may have to tell pupils about changes in the timetable. If a parent has requested a brief informal discussion with a member of the staffafter school, it has to be made a priority over other jobs. The balance of each day is different and unexpected events can disrupt the best-laid plans; nevertheless, thinking and planning ahead is crucial to teaching success. Hard work and enthusiasm cannot compensate for poor time management.

Further reading

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TOPIC WORK

The **curriculum** in primary schools requires teachers to provide pupils with a breadth and depth of learning, giving adequate time and attention to the teaching of core subjects (English, mathematics and science) while still providing sufficient attention to a worthwhile study of other subjects and religious education. Some schools choose to organise the teaching of history, geography, art, design and (sometimes) physical education within 'topics' or subject-related themes that incorporate **knowledge** from a cross-section of subjects. Unlike the regular teaching of core subjects, a topic approach is based on the principle that learning is not formulaic and does not need to be confined within subject boundaries but is more eclectic and arbitrary. The ultimate form of child-directed learning is found in free **play.**

Examples of topics include road safety, homes, exploring the school grounds, mini-beasts (small creatures) and colours. Thus, a topic on road safety with 8-year-olds might involve aspects of geography (road layouts, planning routes), mathematics (speed and direction), ICT (maps), drama (acting out road-crossing scenes) and art/design (designing warning posters). A topic based on a colour (green, say) with reception-age children might incorporate science (natural and artificial objects), art (painting an imaginary scene based on shades of green), literacy (talking about scary green monsters), geography (the shape of hills) and science (wildlife in fields). Some topics are more *thematic* in nature and have a heavy emphasis on a particular subject, notably history, geography or RE. Pupils explore the theme using art, design, dance, drama and IT as tools to create links across the subjects. Thus, 11-year-olds might explore a history theme using ICT to reproduce a historical event; dance to examine the cultural factors that impinged on the event; and discussions about issues associated with conflict through religious education and **citizenship.**

Topic work is closely associated with the concept of an integrated day where the conventional timetable is set aside in favour of a more flexible way of organising learning. Unlike formal teaching situations that are dominated by systematic **instruction** and where teachers make the vast majority of decisions about lesson content, tasks and learning outcomes, an integrated day permits pupils more choice about what they learn and how they learn it. Instead of the closely monitored **lessons** with a prescribed internal lesson structure and specified **learning objectives,** an integrated day allows pupils to follow a variety of lines of **enquiry.** The teacher establishes the broad parameters of study in advance, but children's spontaneous interests and 'need to know' are accommodated and encouraged. The advantages associated with the integrated day include the chance to give pupils sufficient time to explore issues, work at their own pace and pursue more directly what interests them about the topic. Because teachers do not lead through the lesson step by step, they are free to monitor progress, offer advice to the children and concentrate on individual needs. The disadvantages associated with an integrated topic day include ensuring that resources are available to meet every contingency, the need to maintain detailed records to keep track of pupil progress and checking that during the day (or days) a child is experiencing a wide range of learning opportunities. Topic work frequently involves group work and the production of displays

and performances as means of presenting findings. Children are almost invariably motivated by the freedom to explore and be creative that topic work offers.

Further reading

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VALUES

Values are fundamental beliefs or principles that determine attitudes towards human behaviour. They guide judgements about what is right or wrong and focus attention on what is important. In schools, values are fundamental expressions of what practitioners think and believe, and reflect the personal concerns and preferences that help to frame their relationships with pupils and adults. There are five key values in which education is grounded: spiritual, cultural, environmental, aesthetic and political. These values are expressed in terms of personal values with relation to self, moral values with respect to others and social values with regard to the impact on the community.

A generation ago, a leading education writer (Jeffreys 1971) claimed that the history of human thought indicates that people will always recognise the need for values that are timeless because they provide standards by which changes of manners, customs and beliefs can be judged and in the light of which the future can be planned. The same author also underlines the point that teachers must combine personal morality with impartial justice, as freedom of thought does not mean the right to hold any sort of random viewpoint. Consequently, the values that teachers bring to the classroom should not be casual beliefs but the result of careful consideration and informed **thinking.**

As the prime satisfaction for primary teachers is the joy of interacting with children and the ways they can affect their young lives, rather than a desire for monetary rewards or status, their value position is rooted in a need to love and care, to serve, to empower and to benefit their pupils. Consequently, primary teachers are constantly evaluating their work through interrogating the fundamental purpose of what they are doing as educators. **Emotion** plays a crucial part in defining teachers' value positions and, therefore, their relationship and engagement with children and their learning.

Primary educators are in a unique position to nurture the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of each pupil by respecting the worth of each child and offering academic and practical support and encouragement. Owing to the position of trust they hold in the community they are serving, it is generally true that almost every primary educator strives to embody honesty, diplomacy, tact and fairness in their dealings with others and professional conduct in their jobs. Teachers endeavour to establish and maintain clear standards of behaviour, conscious of the fact that they are role models for children and for less experienced colleagues. They help pupils to reflect on their own learning and connect it to their life experiences, engage children in activities that encourage diverse approaches and solutions to problems, while providing a range of ways for them to demonstrate their abilities. In effect, teachers view the classroom as a microcosm of what wider society should become, where pupils develop the capability to analyse, synthesise, evaluate, communicate effectively and demonstrate compassion towards others.

Further reading

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Jeffreys, M.V. C. (1971) Education: Its nature and purpose, London: Allen & Unwin.

WEB SITES

The official site of the Department for Education and Skills in England is found at http://www.dfee.gov.uk/. This site gives general information about the education system; National Curriculum support materials and guidelines; resources for teachers and students; legislation and regulations; policy documents; on-line publications and circulars; research reports summaries and recent news. The Welsh Office web site at http://www.wales.gov.uk/ deals with most government issues in Wales and gives access to information provided by the Education Department (in English and Welsh). General information about education in Scotland, links to related sites and news is at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/. Information about the Department for Education in Northern Ireland contains plans and strategies; statistics; circulars; on-line documents; inspection reports; information for parents and students; assessment results. Access to the Northern Ireland Network for Education is at http://www.deni.gov.uk/.

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