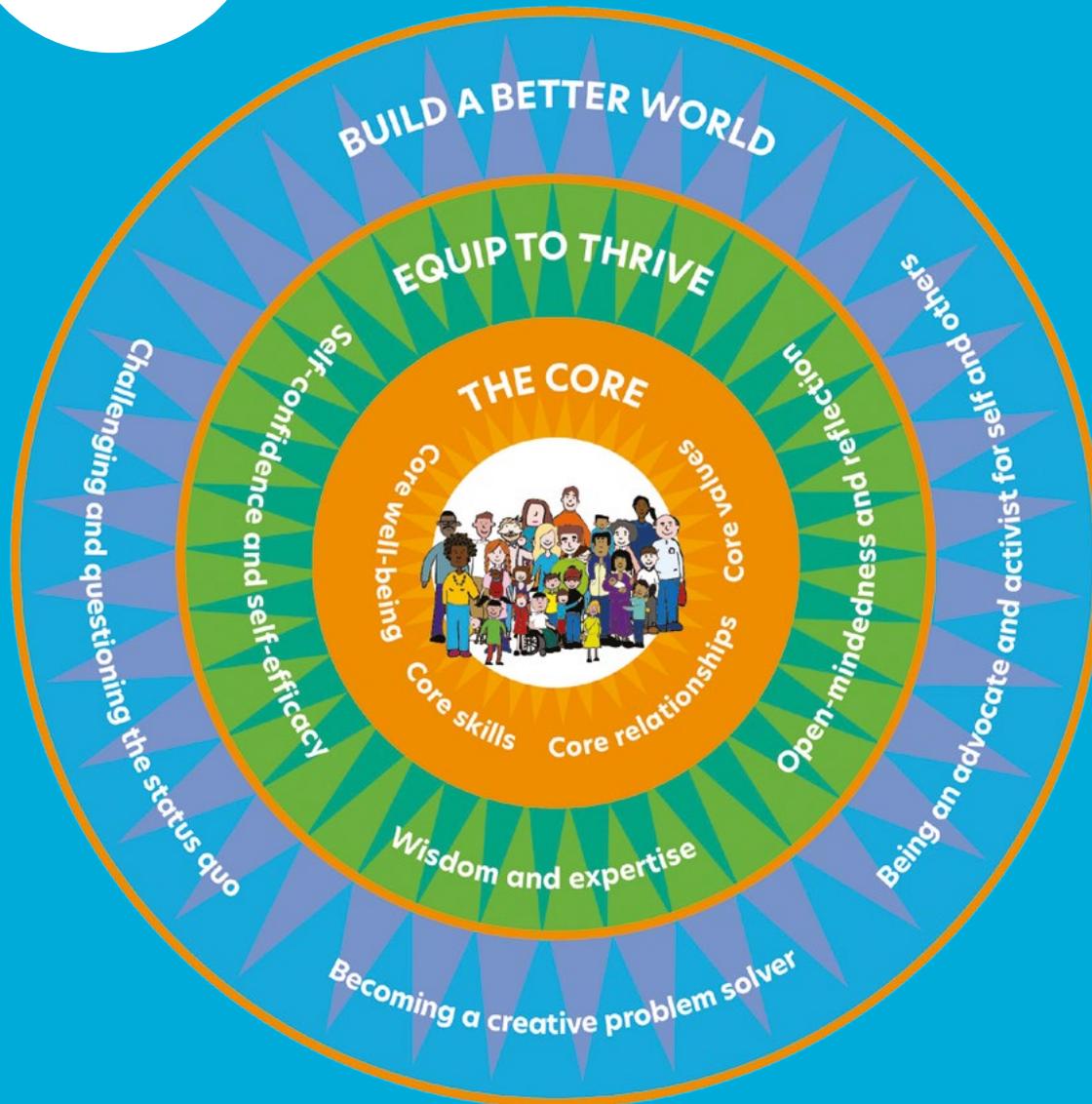SURREY SQUARE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Signature Practices Toolkit
Turning our ethos into daily action

Surrey Square Primary: **More than a school**

Ethos Wheel labels (outer to inner):

BUILD A BETTER WORLD

EQUIP TO THRIVE

THE CORE

- Challenging and questioning the status quo
- Self-confidence and self-efficacy
- Open-mindedness and reflection
- Being an advocate and activist for self and others
- Wisdom and expertise
- Becoming a creative problem solver

Core well-being · Core values · Core skills · Core relationships

At Surrey Square Primary School, everything begins with our **ethos** – a shared belief that everyone can flourish when they feel known, valued, and empowered to make a difference.

We work together from the core, equipping our community to thrive and build a better world for themselves and for others. Our **Ethos Wheel** captures this vision, showing how our four core elements – **Core Skills, Relationships, Wellbeing, and Values** – work together to ensure that every child and adult is *Equipped to Thrive*. Our six **Core Values – Respect, Responsibility, Enjoyment, Community, Compassion, and Perseverance** – guide every decision and interaction, shaping who we are and how we live and learn together.

Our Signature Practices: Turning our ethos into daily action

The order of the Signature Practices reflects our ethos in action – moving from who we are and how we care for one another, to how we learn, lead, and create change in the world.

This toolkit brings our **Signature Practices** to life – the everyday ways we make our ethos real. Each card captures one of the defining practices that shape our culture and experience at Surrey Square. They show how our values, systems, and relationships come together to create a consistent, compassionate environment where everyone feels a sense of belonging and purpose.

Designed like "recipe cards," they serve as practical guides for staff, pupils, families, and partners – helping us stay intentional about what matters most, celebrate what we do well, and welcome others into the Surrey Square way.

These Signature Practices have been shaped collaboratively by staff across Surrey Square. They reflect our shared beliefs, lived experience, and collective commitment to building a community where everyone feels known, valued and empowered. Thank you to all colleagues who contributed their thinking, language and reflection to the development of this toolkit.

surreysquareprimary.co.uk

Contents

Wellbeing for All: Building emotional intelligence for learning and for life

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

We understand that a child's emotional state profoundly impacts their ability to learn and thrive. The purpose of our wellbeing curriculum is to equip every child with the skills needed to manage their internal world, fostering the calm and focus required for learning to happen.

Children learn that it's okay to experience the full spectrum of emotions and how to self-regulate when they feel distressed. This universal approach benefits all pupils — not only those showing challenging behaviour or who have experienced trauma — by helping them understand their own emotional landscape and develop a strong sense of self.

The wellbeing curriculum is essential to ensuring a child's development and academic success because it teaches resilience and healthy coping mechanisms. This develops self-acceptance and an understanding that wellbeing looks different for everyone. Adults also benefit, gaining consistent approaches to supporting children in distress. Beyond managing difficulties, the curriculum encourages gratitude and appreciation of life's positives, cultivating a balanced, optimistic mindset.

> "We cannot selectively numb emotions, when we numb the painful emotions, we also numb the positive emotions."
> *Brené Brown*

How is it done?

1. Universal Offers

Our wellbeing curriculum is designed to support all children, helping them understand and manage their emotions, develop empathy, and build resilience.

- **Magic Breakfast: Ensuring every child starts the day ready to learn**
  We run a free Breakfast Club from 8 a.m., supported by Magic Breakfast, ensuring every child starts the day nourished and ready to learn. Bagels are also available in classrooms for anyone who needs them. This daily routine strengthens attendance, focus and emotional readiness.

- **Journaling: Reflecting and Practising Gratitude**
  Twice a week, children write in journals about their feelings and what they're grateful for. Linked to weekly wellbeing lessons, this gives every child a safe space to reflect and helps adults spot where support may be needed. Children can choose to share what they write with an adult, ensuring it remains supportive and safe. Journals are valued as much as any subject, helping children to build self-awareness and resilience. Different versions are used across key stages so all children can access the practice.

- **Zones of Regulation: Recognising and Managing Emotional State**
  Used consistently across the school, the Zones framework develops emotional literacy through four colour categories. Children check in each morning and afternoon, adjusting their zone as needed. Adults monitor patterns, prompt reflection and guide children to choose strategies that return them to the Green Zone for learning.

- **ImpactEd: Using Data to Support Emotional Health**
  Three times a year, children complete ImpactED wellbeing surveys (younger pupils do this one-to-one with a trusted adult, supported by observations). Data is reviewed alongside academic information to spot trends, highlight emerging needs and plan timely support.

- **Mental Health Awareness Week: Promoting Positive Mental Health For All**
  We nurture a culture of positive mental health for both students and staff, integrating Mental Health Awareness Week (MHAW) with our thrice-yearly Golden Week. Golden Week prioritises staff wellbeing with no meetings, social events, and dedicated provisions like staff breakfast, affirming that staff health is key to a supportive school environment. During MHAW, we collaborate with Place2Be, launching the annual theme in a whole-school assembly. Every class then engages in a practical activity related to the theme, ensuring mental health awareness is actively embedded into our school culture for everyone.

- **CuesEd: Learning to notice, name and navigate emotions**
  This NHS-developed, CBT-based programme teaches children to notice, name and navigate emotions. Delivered explicitly in Year 4 and revisited across the curriculum, it provides a shared emotional vocabulary and practical regulation strategies.

2. Targeted interventions

Our Pastoral Team meets weekly to identify children and families needing additional support, coordinating targeted responses beyond the universal offer.

- **Place2Be:** on-site counselling and mental health support for pupils, families and staff.

- **Mentivity and Future Men:** mentoring programmes supporting boys' confidence, identity and responsibility.

- **Teddy the School Dog:** supports regulation, attendance and confidence through planned "Teddy time" sessions.

Indicators for Use

- **When emotions impact learning:** Use the Wellbeing Curriculum to help children recognise and regulate emotions that interrupt focus or relationships.

- **When a child is often dysregulated:** Engage the Pastoral Team to coordinate targeted support while reinforcing daily regulation strategies.

- **When children appear withdrawn or low in confidence:** Use wellbeing tools and reflection time to build self-esteem and a sense of belonging.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Only using the self-managing strategies when a child is in crisis:** This means the child may associate the tool with negative feelings, punishment, or failure, making them resistant to using the tool when they need it most.

- **Only referring to more 'negative' emotions:** Conversing about all emotions builds a holistic foundation for emotional intelligence and prevents them from associating emotional talk solely with problems or correction.

- **Forgetting to return to the wellbeing strategies:** When a child is in a highly stressed or dysregulated state, their emotional brain takes over, and they won't be able to recall or consciously execute a strategy they only heard once.

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently approach wellbeing in your area?

- How might this process change the way you think about behaviour management?

- In what ways could you adapt this approach to fit your own needs or context?

Anecdote from staff

I was working with a child who found classroom dynamics hard, so often became dysregulated and would get further upset because it was in front of everyone. Before using Zones of Regulation and a reflection book with the same visuals, I felt it was difficult to help the child regulate and not repeat behaviour. I learned then that the child didn't know what emotions they were feeling and also didn't know what emotions were "allowed". After time, they began to be able to name their emotions and be more specific e.g. saying that they were frustrated rather than just angry. After this work, they were better able to control their emotions and not be so impulsive. They could also talk things through with an adult. I even see them now on the playground using the breathing techniques we'd practiced without needing the help of an adult. They are much happier being in school and it was much better for me to know what to do to help them.

— Michael (Learning Facilitator)
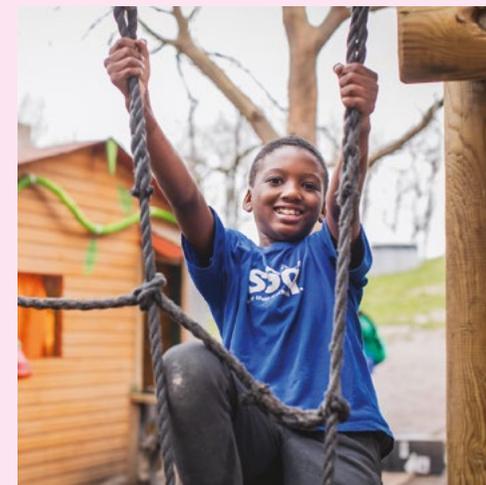
Overview (What is it and why do it?)

What values guide us through life, now and into the future? This question was key to the formation of our Core Values. Today we ask the school community: Is it **respectful**? Is it **compassionate**? Is it **responsible**? Does it show **community**? Can we dig deep to **persevere**? How can we build in and value **enjoyment**? Does it drive us forward towards **excellence**? Moving away from traditional rules, setting out appropriate or inappropriate behaviours, our school community is led by our Core Values. They create a set of aspirational guidelines to navigate the complexities of experiences our staff and children encounter.

Core Values give a framework for explaining what we do as a school community, a framework for understanding and giving meaning to our actions. When difficulties occur, they allow us to reflect and move forward in a positive direction. The aim is to create an intrinsic motivation for ethical decision making - creating leaders and decision makers rather than followers.

The success of this approach lies in the way our Core Values are woven into every aspect of school life, equally valuing the Personal Excellence Curriculum alongside the academic. Staff serve as role models, while assemblies, behaviour systems, and curriculum design all reinforce the values. Embedded in learning, they help children explore challenge, celebrate mistakes, and analyse the values demonstrated by historical, fictional, and real-life figures.

> "It's not hard to make decisions when you know what your values are."
> *Roy Disney (1893 - 1971) Walt Disney's Elder Brother and the Financier of his Efforts*

How is it done?

1. Core Values Characters: Introducing values through symbols and stories

From the vibrant artwork to the catchy school song, children are introduced to our Core Value Characters from the moment they join SSQ. Each character embodies a specific value, helping children understand what it looks like in action and why it matters.

2. Personal Excellence (PEx) Curriculum: Building a framework for our beliefs and actions

Our PEx Curriculum is also taught discreetly, focusing on our six core values to help children develop a framework that provides students with a strong values system, building their authentic selves and the confidence and resilience needed for life. The emphasis on oracy gives children a chance to discuss and debate what each value means, how it might be applied and in this process learning how to make sound judgements and gain concrete examples of what the values might look like. Through this purposeful approach, our students are asked to think beyond themselves, challenging the status quo and becoming advocates for their communities. Therefore, they not only know and do more, but they will be more.

3. Behaviour Policy: Using values to to reflect and grow

Our Positive Behaviour Policy is rooted in the Core Values, guiding how staff respond to behaviour and how children learn to manage theirs. We emphasise building strong relationships with students and publicly recognising positive behaviour through specific praise, Core Value Certificates, core value postcards, and core value stickers. When a student's behaviour doesn't reflect the values, they complete a Core Value Reflection Form. When ready to reflect, they identify which values they need to work on and what they will do differently in the future. Upon returning to class, they have a restorative conversation with a member of staff to ensure a clear understanding of the situation.

4. Joy Time: Learning and practising our values through play

At SSQ, Joy Enjoyment embodies the value we put on play in school. Every child has a weekly lesson called Joy Time, where they learn a range of essential social skills through games and activities. With access to a wide range of play they may not get at home, children have the opportunity to build friendships beyond their usual social circles. Supported by teachers, they learn to navigate social situations from managing winning and losing to resolving conflicts constructively. Joy Time helps foster many life skills such as logic, leadership, fairness, and effective problem-solving.

5. Assemblies: Celebrating and sharing our Core Values

Assemblies are carefully planned to reflect the PEx teaching of the week, they are also a chance to celebrate the Personal Excellence certificates and postcards the children have received that week.

Indicators for Use

- **When there is a lack of a shared identity:** Core values can provide a shared sense of purpose and a common language that unifies everyone, in school and in the wider community.

- **When behaviour is challenging:** Shared understanding of the Core Values allows both staff and students to discuss behaviour, addressing the root cause and strengthening relationships instead of causing a breakdown.

- **When there is rapid growth or change:** Establishing Core Values can help maintain stability and a sense of continuity. This helps to ensure that the school's fundamental beliefs remain intact despite changes.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Generic praise without values:** When staff don't use Core Values in recognition and dialogue, children don't understand how they've shown them or why it matters.

- **Not valuing Core Values in the curriculum:** When Core Values are treated as less important than academic subjects, children don't see them as central to learning and life.

- **Naming values without meaning:** When the Core Values are displayed and repeated, but not connected to real behaviours or learning.

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently approach discussions around values and behaviour in your school community?

- How might Core Values be helpful in framing discussions about the goals and ethos of your school?

- Which Core Values would be the most useful for your school community?

Anecdote from staff

Before the Core Values, the school felt like the focus was purely academic with rules to be followed. Over the years, the Core Values have transformed school life in every aspect at SSQ and are referred to daily, whether it is giving it a go in maths or remembering their packed lunch. The whole school community lives by modelling these to each other and this helps the children realise that these are life skills rather than school just being about academic progress. It makes me feel proud to work somewhere that values the whole child's personality and growth of character. These values will remain with them throughout their lives as they learn to respect and care for others, enjoy the world around them and understand that it is rewarding to persevere and grow through trials. I believe the importance of teaching these values is paramount to their personal growth and wellbeing.

— Phillipa (Year 4 Teacher)
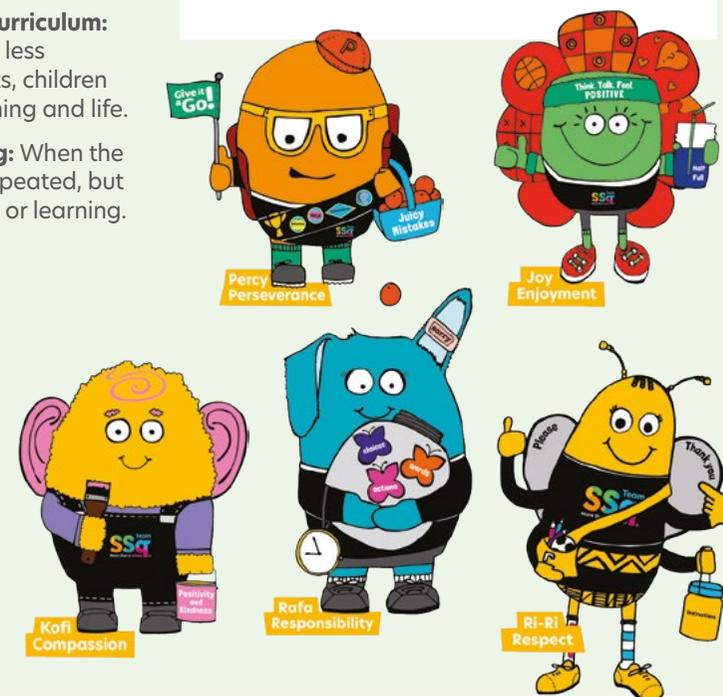
Overview (What is it and why do it?)

1. Ethos and foundation: Relationships are at the core of everything we do, as we understand that without them, effective learning and meaningful collaboration simply can't happen. Relationships serve as the starting point for every interaction and initiative within the school community. This commitment is formally integrated into our identity, featuring as a core element on our ethos wheel and directly connecting to our fundamental values of Respect, Compassion, and Community.

2. Relationships at SSQ: At Surrey Square, relationships are intentionally built and nurtured through a variety of structured and spontaneous opportunities embedded across the school week. We use dedicated time like Joy Time to promote positive social interaction and skill development. When challenges occur, our Core Value Reflections facilitate restorative conversations, helping to repair trust and understanding. Furthermore, our curriculum is designed to create opportunities for shared experiences and collaboration, ensuring that the development of strong, supportive connections is a continuous and deliberate focus for all.

3. Impact of relationships: Prioritising relationships creates the essential conditions for success across the entire school environment. The immediate outcomes are a pervasive sense of safety, trust, and belonging for every child and adult. This strong foundation encourages students to become risk-takers in their learning, knowing they are supported. It directly enhances qualities like perseverance and resilience, enabling children to thrive academically and personally. Fundamentally, fostering these relationships ensures a genuine family partnership, ultimately creating the holistic environment necessary for every member of our community to be successful and feel connected.

> "Botheredness needs to be a deliberate daily act that is built into the teaching routine. It is relationship-building done properly, in slow motion. Gentle, kind and caring."
> *Paul Dix*

How is it done?

Each practice builds connection across our community - adult-child, child-child, and adult-adult - embedding belonging in daily school life. Strong, trusting relationships enable meaningful work and action.

1. Professional Learning: Building relational capacity

(Strengthens: adult-adult, adult-child)

Relational practice is a core strand of our annual CPD. Staff regularly explore the research, principles and habits that underpin positive relationships with children and families, ensuring a consistent, values-led approach across the school.

2. Knowing Every Child: Building understanding through connection

(Strengthens: adult-child)

Staff intentionally invest time in understanding each child's interests, motivations and lived experiences. Dedicated moments such as Joy Time create space for meaningful conversations, helping children feel seen, known and valued.

3. Joy Time: Shared play to strengthen relationships

(Strengthens: adult-child, child-child)

Joy Time is a weekly lesson focused on teaching social skills through enjoyment. Children take part in shared activities such as games and crafts, learning turn-taking, graceful winning and losing, and conflict resolution. All adults participate, sharing responsibility for connection, guidance and modelling positive relationships.

4. Relationships Teaching: A values-led curriculum to empower children for successful collaboration and emotional well-being.

(Strengthens: child-child, adult-child)

Relationship education is embedded through values, HRE and the Identity curriculum. Explicit teaching and diverse stories help children learn to build healthy, respectful relationships, with our community's diversity visibly reflected across the school.

5. Core Value Reflection Forms: A tool to build self-awareness and relational understanding

(Strengthens: adult-child, child-child)

When behaviour conflicts with a core value, children complete a Core Value Reflection. This supports them to identify what happened, name feelings using the Zones of Regulation, understand the impact on others and explore better choices through a restorative conversation with an adult.

6. Big 8 Tools: Connecting and contracting for collaboration

(Strengthens: adult-adult)

Staff use the Big Education Big 8 tools when forming new teams. "Connecting" builds trust through appropriate self-disclosure, while "Contracting" establishes clear expectations, supporting collaborative, values-aligned working.

7. Parents as Partners: Strengthening the home-school community

(Strengthens: adult-adult, adult-child)

We recognise parents as experts in their children and community and work in close partnership with them. Families are invited to engage through open mornings, events, coffee mornings, volunteering and whole-school celebrations, strengthening connection to school life.

8. Everyday Visibility: Staff modelling openness and approachability

(Strengthens: adult-adult, adult-child)

Staff are present in the playground at the start and end of each day, creating regular opportunities for informal conversation with families. We also use first names for all staff - an intentional choice reflecting our belief that respect is built through relationships, not titles.

Indicators for Use

- **When staff are forming relationships with new classes, teams or organisations:** New relationships are vital, and all stakeholders should feel like they are going to be valued and have their voices heard.

- **When the goal is to enhance learning and well-being:** Prioritising relationships creates the conditions for success, building safety, trust, and belonging for every child and adult.

- **When relationships are challenging:** Strong foundations help repair tension and rebuild trust.

Juicy Mistakes

- **'There's not enough time':** If prioritising time for proactive relationship building is neglected, then that time will instead be consumed by reactive responses to issues like behaviour problems or conflicts.

- **Not revisiting contracts:** Agreements lose their power if they aren't reinforced, making it harder to prevent or resolve conflict.

- **Believing only one adult is responsible:** Individual classroom adults may see it as solely their responsibility to develop a relationship with specific children.

Reflection Questions

- How much do staff in your school value the relationships with those they work with?

- How intentional are you with your relationship building at the start of each year or project?

- How can you create time in your timetable to prioritise connection and relationship building?

Anecdote from Staff

At Surrey Square, we believe that relationships are the foundation for meaningful learning; when children feel safe and happy, they are far more capable of succeeding academically. As we all know, school life is incredibly busy and 'Joy Time' is a vital tool that allows us to slow down and show children they are truly valued, just as we like to feel as adults. For me, these connections start the moment a child walks through the gate; it is about those small, deliberate moments of 'botheredness' and showing you care, particularly when a relationship takes extra work to nurture. That investment doesn't stop at the kids; it's about the families, too. We try to build a proper foundation with parents through honest, decent communication. If you've got that trust and a real 'family partnership' sorted, then when you have to have those difficult conversations (and they do happen) you can face them together as equals.

— Matt Dean (Class Teacher)

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

At Surrey Square, it all starts with the Core – Core Skills, Wellbeing, Relationships, and Values – with each element valued equally. Provision Mapping is a critical process that reflects this balance, ensuring that every child is seen as a whole learner: academically, socially, and emotionally. By looking beyond academics to the full picture of a child's development, we can recognise progress, identify needs, and plan the right support.

Once a term, each year group steps out of class for a dedicated session to review the personal and academic development of every child. Using data and professional insight, the team identifies strengths, gaps, and needs, then maps the right provision to support growth. The process is holistic, covering attendance, wellbeing, pastoral care, behaviour, and medical needs alongside academic progress.

Provision Mapping turns data into action. It celebrates success, creates shared accountability, and ensures timely interventions. Most importantly, it brings the whole team together to truly see every child – combining professional expertise, relational knowledge, and reflective discussion to make sure support is purposeful, responsive, and rooted in the school's ethos of care and equity.

> "The student is infinitely more important than the subject matter."
> *Nell Noddings*

How is it done?

1. Whole-team focus: Everyone around the table

At the start of each term, the whole year group team – teachers, learning facilitators, the SENDCO and a member of the leadership team - step out of class for a dedicated day of Provision Mapping. Every voice is heard, and responsibility for progress is shared.

2. Holistic review: Starting with the personal

The morning follows a clear agenda. Discussions begin with personal data (wellbeing, relationships, attendance, behaviour, and values in action) before moving to academic progress in core skills. This models our ethos of seeing and supporting the whole child, always starting with the personal.

3. Action planning: Matching needs with provisions

The team evaluates what is working, identifies gaps, and assigns provisions that best meet children's needs. This ensures capacity is used effectively and that no child slips through the net.

4. Facilitated discussion: Coaching to deepen thinking

A facilitator guides the process using coaching-style questions to help the team unpick issues, challenge assumptions, and agree on next steps with clarity and purpose.

5. Planning time: Turning decisions into action

The afternoon is practical planning time. Time is built in for staff to translate agreements into practical classroom organisation and timetables, so provisions are not just planned but ready to be implemented.

Indicators for Use

- **When you want to ensure no child slips through the net:** Provision Mapping provides a structured review of every pupil.

- **When staff need a shared understanding of needs:** The process brings the whole team together around one plan.

- **When you want to strengthen the link between personal and academic progress:** The structure ensures wellbeing, relationships, and values are prioritised alongside core skills.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Focusing only on academics:** Starting with attainment data risks overlooking wellbeing, behaviour, and relationships - and misses the crucial understanding that these factors directly influence academic progress.

- **Treating it as a SEND-only process:** Provision Mapping is for every child, not just those with identified needs.

- **Not protecting the full day:** Rushing or skipping the afternoon planning session means timetables, resources, and interventions aren't ready, and decisions fail to translate into action.

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently track and review provisions for all children?

- What difference could a holistic, team-based review make to the way you support children's growth?

- In what ways could this process help you use capacity more effectively?

Anecdote from Staff

What I love most about Provision Mapping is the way it brings everyone together with one shared purpose: understanding each child as fully as possible. As a Learning Facilitator, I often notice the small things – changes in confidence, tiny struggles, quiet victories –- that can easily be missed. Provision Mapping gives those observations a voice. It matters to me because it ensures every child is seen, not just for their academic progress but for their wellbeing, their behaviour patterns, their attendance, and their emotional needs. It feels like genuine teamwork, and knowing our conversations can change a child's experience in school is incredibly meaningful. It also reminds me how powerful collaboration can be – how each person's insight adds another piece to the puzzle. Every meeting reinforces that together, we can shape better outcomes for our children.

— Keighley Anderson (Learning Facilitator/HLTA)

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

The Hive was developed in response to the growing number of children with complex SEND within our school. Many of these children find it difficult to access the mainstream classroom and curriculum. It is essential that all children feel they belong and are included in order to thrive. Most children in The Hive have an EHCP and a diagnosis of Autism, and many are pre-verbal and need support to communicate their needs.

The Hive is a specialist provision within the school. Typically, children spend their mornings in The Hive and return to their mainstream classroom in the afternoon, while a smaller group stay all day. All children use the main playground or EYFS outdoor area at playtimes and lunchtimes, and most eat lunch with their peers. They are also encouraged to join mainstream activities whenever appropriate - for example, swimming, ukulele, and educational visits.

Children in The Hive feel safe, regulated, and included. The provision is fluid and tailored to meet each child's needs. Families feel supported, and children know they belong and matter.

> "When a flower doesn't bloom, you fix the environment in which it grows, not the flower."
> *Alexander Den Heijer*

How is it done?

1. Small-group rooms: Creating calm, focused spaces:

There are six rooms in The Hive, with children grouped vertically according to their academic levels as well as their communication and language needs. Each room has a room lead who, alongside the SENDCo, plans and assesses learning.

Smaller rooms with a maximum of five children enable greater focus, emotional regulation, and progress. One room also functions as a sensory space, supporting children to meet their sensory needs and reach a regulated state for learning.

2. Collaborative planning: Shared responsibility for progress

Room leads plan learning alongside the SENDCo and subject leads, ensuring curriculum access and consistency across the school.

Weekly team meetings allow staff to reflect, adapt provision, and share expertise, which builds confidence and capacity. This joined-up approach means children make stronger progress, and no child is left dependent on one adult or isolated system of support.

The Hive staff are involved in termly provision mapping meetings where the whole year group team meets to plan for provisions and support that children need (both in mainstream and in the Hive).

3. Partnership with families: Working together for every child

Parent/carer meetings are led jointly by the class teacher and Hive lead. This shared ownership builds trust and ensures families see both mainstream and Hive staff working together for their child.

Indicators for Use

- **When there is a growing number of children with complex SEND needs:** A dedicated provision like The Hive enables the school to maintain inclusion and ensure every child can thrive.

- **When mainstream environments are overwhelming and overstimulating:** A provision such as The Hive can provide reduced-stimulation rooms that support wellbeing and readiness for learning.

- **When the mainstream classroom environment is not accessible:** The Hive provides a tailored setting, with specifically trained adults who help children communicate their needs and access the curriculum.

Juicy Mistakes

- **The Hive lead being solely responsible:** Without joint ownership with the class teacher, children's progress stalls and inclusion is weakened.

- **Children in The Hive, staying in the Hive:** Without constant reviewing and fluidity of movement between rooms and the mainstream classroom children's progress is limited and mindsets become fixed.

- **The Hive lead and room leads not having enough time to plan, assess, resource, attend meetings and go into classes:** Without dedicated time for this, children's needs are not able to be met and communication between staff and parents is hindered.

Reflection Questions

- Which provisions are in place to support children with high complex SEND and what is the impact v cost and progress?

- What is the highest level of SEND in your school? Could grouping children with the highest needs together provide more tailored support?

- In what ways could elements of The Hive approach be adapted for your school context?

Anecdote from parent

The best thing about the Hive is my daughter is more focussed, more eager and ready to come to school. She finds the Hive as a safe space and a safe environment. I have seen a lot of improvement with her education as well as how she responds to other people. The school is doing something that caters to her and her needs. I really hope that The Hive is to stay so that it can go on to help many other children too!

Anecdote from The Hive lead

The best thing about The Hive is that it provides a calm, fun learning environment where we are able to adapt to individual children's needs. We have an amazing group of inspirational children who are supported by a great team.

Night At The Museum: Showcasing history through critique and craftsmanship

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

Part of the SSQ ethos is for our children to be Equipped To Thrive. One strand of this is to have *Wisdom and Expertise*. We want to develop lifelong learners who are curious about the world they live in, make connections between the past and present, and extend their horizons and aspirations through the knowledge they acquire. Ultimately, we aim for children to navigate their own informed path through the world.

Night at the Museum is an opportunity for children to take part in a REAL project linked to their history topic. A REAL project is Rigorous, Engaging, shared with an Authentic audience, and offers opportunities to Learn throughout the process. This historical enquiry leads to a high-quality end product, with children taught explicit skills to critique their own and others' work. The final showcase is a whole-school event, where the school is transformed into a museum for one night – celebrating learning, creativity, and the high standards of presentation that underpin the project.

> "Anytime you make the work public, set the bar high, and are transparent about the steps to make a high-quality product, kids will deliver."
> *Ron Berger, Leaders of Their Own Learning: Transforming Schools Through Student-Engaged Assessment*

How is it done?

Each year group studies a broad history topic, with flexibility to focus on specific areas. Teachers create an Essential Question to guide pupils' enquiry. Pupils then demonstrate their historical knowledge by producing a product for the school-wide museum event. The project has four main components:

1. Teacher passion and product making

- When deciding on the outcome of a project, the teachers look to what their passions and skills are as this will help to ensure that children experience high quality teaching and creativity. Examples include painting, needlecraft, pottery, papercraft, cooking, film making, computing.

- It is very important that the teacher makes an example product first so that they can experience what it will be like for the children, identify possible problems and hurdles and be able to demonstrate to the children what a high quality final product will look like.

2. Project tuning and planning

- Prior to the project starting, the teachers will carry out a tuning session where they can get input, feedback and support from other teachers. They will present their product to the other teachers who will have the opportunity to ask probing questions about the proposed project, say what they like about the ideas and make suggestions to develop the project further.

- The class teachers will then have a planning session with curriculum leads to talk through their thoughts from the tuning session and plan carefully by mapping out the project and ordering resources.

- Links are identified with other subjects that combine teaching eg non-fiction writing, guided reading, oracy.

- Flexibility with the daily timetable is encouraged to ensure the class keeps on top of the project.

3. Critiquing and redrafting

- During the project the children are **taught** how to critique theirs and others' work, respond to feedback and make multiple drafts. As the children move through the school, the expectations and strategies for critiquing and redrafting develop.

- These skills need to be explicitly taught and should build on previous experiences.

- They then respond to this feedback by making multiple drafts of their product. This sets high standards, encourages perseverance and pride in their work.

- Redrafting can be improving a product or applying common skills to another product. It should always be to a higher standard, based on previous feedback.

4. Exhibiting to an authentic audience

- To finish the REAL project, the children will create a museum experience that is attended by all members of the school community. It is a chance for the pupils to showcase what they have learnt in their history topic and the answer to their essential question.

- Teachers are encouraged to think creatively about the spaces they use around the school and make use of lighting and sound to create an authentic, atmospheric experience.

Indicators for Use

- **When you want children to value their work:** Having an authentic audience stops the work from being a 'paper exercise'.

- **When you want children to persevere to achieve a high quality outcome:** Critiquing gives a clear purpose for making multiple drafts.

- **When you want the children to be inspired:** Teacher passion and creativity will make the lessons more engaging and memorable.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Inappropriate product:** Without making the product themselves, teachers can't anticipate problems or model high-quality outcomes.

- **Running out of time:** By not planning the project carefully work may get rushed, important steps missed and sufficient time not given to the presentation.

- **Work overload:** Without finding links between subjects, teachers and pupils can come under stress to fit everything in, strong links between subjects can be missed and time to study in depth can be lost.

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently approach making the children's work REAL in your area?

- How might critiquing and redrafting change the way you think about setting high expectations for children's work?

- How do you currently give children exposure to an authentic audience for their work?

Anecdote from staff

Before NATM, I felt children's work wasn't always valued or purposeful. The work was often a paper exercise or displayed on a wall. Now children show their families around their own exhibition and explain the thought, effort, design and history learning that has led them to their high-quality product.

One of my favourite ever exhibitions was a Year 6 World War Two themed version of The Great British Bake Off. We chose this as a topic because linking history learning to popular culture made the learning exciting and purposeful for them. It exposed the children to history in a different way that inspired them and made it relevant. There was a live Bake Off which was an immersive experience and allowed children to work with their families and show what they had learnt across many different subjects.

As a class teacher I see the impact of NATM as being transformational. It has made history really high profile and the curriculum is fresh because teachers strive to try something new. It makes the teaching and learning inspirational.

Chris Anderson (Class Teacher)

Whose Story do We Tell?
Example Project in Practice: Night At The Museum
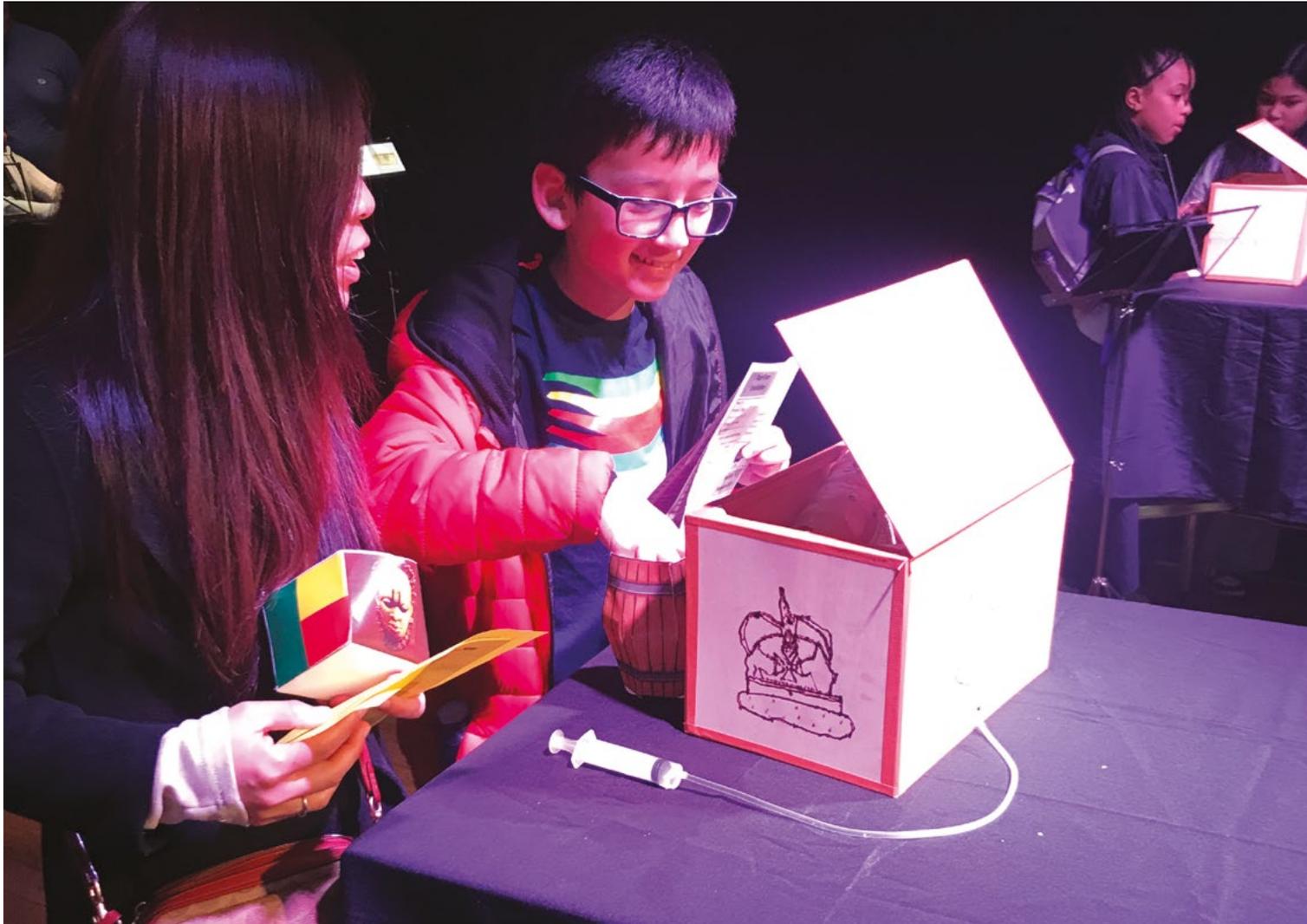
Project summary

Children demonstrate their understanding of the experiences of different people affected by the British Empire by making objects that tell their stories. They will make a wooden box, decorated with scrimshaw pictures, which opens using hydraulics.
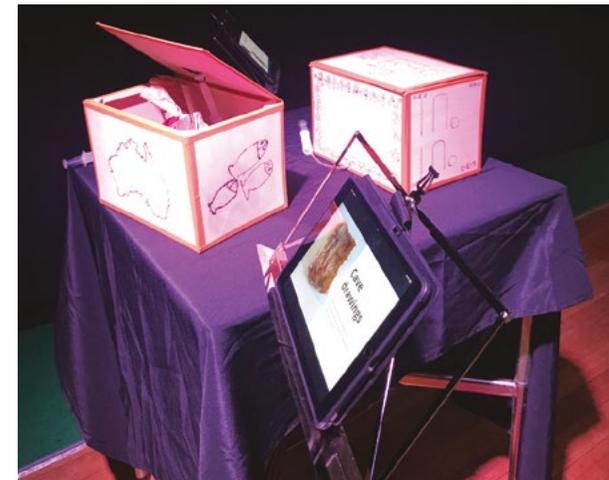
"Anytime you make the work public, set the bar high, and are transparent about the steps to make a high-quality product, kids will deliver."
Ron Berger, Leaders of Their Own Learning: Transforming Schools Through Student-Engaged Assessment

Teacher passion and product making

The Year 5 team is made up of the DT, Computing and Science leads who like to give children experiences within these topics. The children had already been shown how to make wooden structures when they attended Reed's School for the Car Launch Challenge and so the idea of a hydraulic opening wooden box provided a great opportunity to support the children's answer to the question: "Whose story do we tell?" The idea for the project was that after learning about the effect of British colonisation around the world, the children would create a story box to tell the experiences of different people. Inspiration for decorating the boxes came from the idea of Victorian sailors creating scrimshaw art.

Project Tuning
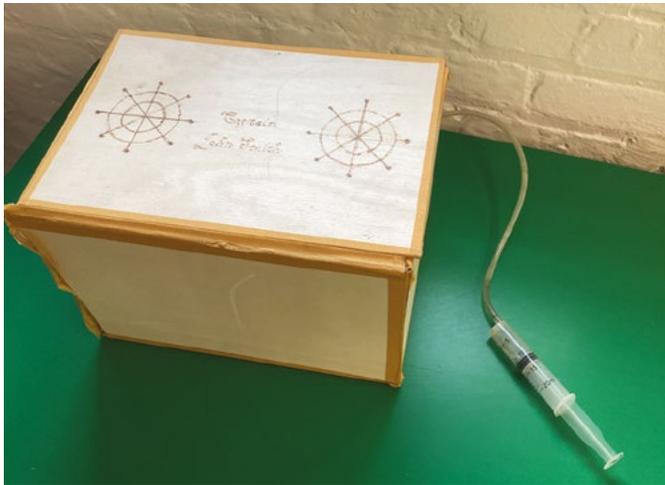
During the project tuning, a teacher-made box was demonstrated. The teacher who made the box experimented with the best size to make, how the box would be assembled, how the hydraulics would work and how easy it would be to imitate scrimshaw. Problems encountered and overcome included dealing with inaccurate cutting, the order of assembling the box, how to draft a design and trace it onto the box and whether it would be possible for children to use a soldering iron.

Feedback from the tuning session from other members of staff included getting suggestions of experts to critique the artwork, ideas for ways to display the boxes and help with sourcing resources.

Critique and Redrafting

One part of the project was chosen as the focus for critiquing and redrafting. It was decided that each child would have a side of their group's box to decorate. They had opportunities to research scrimshaw designs and pictures to represent their chosen person. The children then drew a first draft on paper. An artist associated with the school came in and discussed the drawings with all the children and gave them feedback. The children then created a second draft drawing that responded to the feedback they were given. When the groups were happy with their final designs, they traced them onto the box and burnt over the pencil with a soldering iron to create a pyrographic design.

Exhibiting to an authentic audience

The teachers visited a local museum to see how they display artefacts. The key points that were picked up were large display boards of explanations to give context to the exhibits, space around the objects to allow easy movement and digital signage to provide detailed information.

In school, this became exhibiting boxes in pairs on stands, spotlights above each box, large posters of the children's balanced arguments and ipads showing a slide show of the contents with information about them.

STEAM: Designing to Build a Better World

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

From our Core Values model, we want the children to *Build A Better World.* One strand of this is *"becoming a creative problem solver".* We teach the children to learn to work collaboratively to solve complex, interdisciplinary problems. We teach them how to think like a designer; practising and refining the skills needed to create solutions to these problems. We do this through a STEAM project.

This is an opportunity for children to find a solution to a real-life problem by applying their knowledge of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Maths. It is a way to deepen children's engagement with their education by flipping the teaching and learning experience. The project is child-led, following the cohort's interests, and the children find their own individual solutions, working collaboratively throughout. Teamwork skills are explicitly taught and practised as part of the process.

> "The role of the teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge."
>
> *Seymour Papert*

How is it done?

The project will allow children to work in small groups to find a STEAM solution to a real world problem. Its main components are:

1. Real problem

- Class teachers identify STEAM topics their children are interested in and find a real world problem that has multiple possible solutions. The problem could be class/ school specific or a world wide situation. The problem may already have solutions, but the children would need to discover them themselves.

2. Student led enquiry

- To encourage engagement and let the children lead the learning, the class teacher needs to gather their questions about the problem and find out what they want to learn. From these questions, the teacher plans 3 lessons that the children want to do that will give them the STEAM knowledge to find a solution to the problem.

- The teacher is the facilitator in these lessons, helping the children to discover the answers.

3. Research

- Give the children the opportunity to do their own research into possible solutions. Guide and support them by giving them photos, objects, websites and search terms that they can look at. Encourage the children to talk in their groups about what they would keep and what they would change in the ideas they have found. The children need to consider what resources and materials they would use.

- Allow lots of opportunities for research. Suggest Google search terms, recommend websites, deconstruct existing inventions, create wish lists of desirable outcomes.

4. Prototypes, testing and improving

- Set the children criteria and limitations for their solution and give them free access to any materials and tools they require. The children then make a prototype that can be tested to see if it works. After testing, the children make improvements until they have found a solution to the initial problem.

- It is very important that the teacher doesn't give solutions but encourages the children to run with their own ideas.

- Use the Teamwork Curriculum to identify the stage the class is at and the next steps they need. Specifically teach skills and strategies at the start of the lesson and review with the children how they did at the end. Use the lesson success criteria language when dealing with problems within groups.

5. Presenting

- To make the project REAL it should be presented to parents and carers in a class assembly. This will allow the children to have an authentic audience and use their oracy skills to explain their project's success.

Indicators for Use

- **When you want to engage the children in their own learning:** Asking the children what they want to know and learn about gives them a sense of autonomy and ownership.

- **When you want children to discover solutions:** Allowing the children to try things their way makes them question why something did or didn't work.

- **When you want children to feel empowered:** Giving children real world problems and the opportunity to solve them themselves allows them to feel they have the ability to create change.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Children lack ideas:** Without time to explore and research, children will struggle to generate solutions.

- **Children don't have individual solutions:** Children won't have ownership of the project or have the opportunity to try out their own ideas

- **Children find it difficult to work in groups:** Without explicit teaching of teamwork skills, collaboration can break down and limit learning

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently approach problem-solving in your area?

- How might you introduce more child-led inquiry into your curriculum?

- In what ways could you adapt this approach to fit your own needs or context?

Anecdote from Staff

During a STEAM project where the children were tasked with creating reflective safety clothing, I felt I didn't have the knowledge of how to encourage and enable the children to find individual solutions. After speaking with the DT Coordinator I realised that the initial research activity was very important as it allowed children to see that there were lots of possibilities for them to try. The children needed to see and experience things that they may not have done previously. To help ensure the children's ideas were still manageable but individual, I set a success criteria and limitations about how much material they could use. Working within the STEAM project structure has given me the confidence to support the children's ability to be creative and individual. I also now feel that I am able to support colleagues to be able to deliver a STEAM project. It has definitely had an impact on how I teach and support children's individuality and I look forward to doing more STEAM projects.

Mel Irvine (Class Teacher)

STEAM: Designing to Build a Better World
Example Project in Practice: Extreme Weather

Real Problem

How can we adapt buildings to cope with extreme weather?

Student led enquiry

After completing a series of workshops about climate change, the children asked a range of questions they had about the problem they were hoping to solve. They wanted to know:

- Where in the world extreme weather occurs and what causes them?
- How can we create electricity without burning fossil fuels?
- How can we test a building for coping with an earthquake?

The children then took part in 3 lessons that allowed them to watch videos about extreme weathers and locate where they occur on maps, use solar panels to power electric circuits and build a Lego earthquake machine that they could code to vibrate at different strengths and use to test different types of structure.

> "The role of the teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge."
> *Seymour Papert*

Research

In groups, the children then brainstormed possible solutions and then used computers to research how they might be able to build these structures. They found photos of existing solutions and future proposals, tutorials to make models and explanations of how things worked.

Prototypes, testing and improving

Using a range of online tutorials, photos and their own ideas, they then created a prototype. Some children used Lego robotic kits, clay, wooden structures and cardboard models to demonstrate a before/after scenario. Tests were carried out to see if the new buildings worked. Models were then improved until they worked. Adaptations included: slowing down motor speeds, creating larger holes, finding different ways to create a clay dome that didn't crack, trying different materials to aid buoyancy and finding the best type of propeller to generate wind power.

Presenting

A parent assembly was held which allowed the children to present their experiments. Children used a leaf blower to show hurricane resistant buildings, a rising/lowering house to protect it from tornadoes using Lego, floating houses and sensor controlled dams to protect from flooding, an earthquake table they made to test different types of buildings and wind turbines to create electricity.

I AM A STORY TOLD IN MANY WAYS

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

At the heart of our curriculum is each child's understanding of self. It begins with personal reflection and self-discovery, then broadens to explore their roles within families, communities, and the wider world as global citizens. Our Identity Curriculum develops insight, empathy, and critical thinking. It helps children understand in order to explain, gain perspective in order to discuss, and learn from prejudice in order to challenge it. Through this, children develop a deep awareness of who they are, how they connect with others, and how they can contribute to a fairer, more inclusive world.

Teaching identity equips children to navigate a complex and diverse society with confidence, empathy, and resilience. When children value themselves, they build self-esteem, take pride in their uniqueness, and engage positively with others. Exploring identity also fosters respect for diversity. By recognising similarities and differences across cultures, communities, and perspectives, children develop fairness, open-mindedness, and empathy. This supports strong relationships and a sense of belonging within our school and beyond.

Identity learning strengthens emotional wellbeing and encourages critical thought. Children learn to question stereotypes, challenge injustice, and celebrate individuality. Embedding identity throughout the curriculum ensures every child feels seen, heard, and valued. This foundation supports academic success while shaping compassionate, confident young people ready to thrive in an ever-changing world.

Our Identity work is celebrated through P Factor, a vibrant culmination of children's learning. Each class performs a poem inspired by their Identity learning - something they enjoyed exploring and wish to share. Poems may be created by the class or adapted externally, giving children a creative platform to express meaningful messages about themselves, their communities, or the world.

> "When I discover who I am, I'll be free."
> *Ralph Ellison*

How is it done? (an Identity Lesson example)

The first and most important step is choosing a high-quality text that allows you to explore themes such as identity, belonging, bias, fairness and marginalisation. *The Proudest Blue* by Ibtihaj Muhammad works well because it sensitively introduces unconscious bias and microaggressions through the story of two sisters and the reactions to one wearing her hijab for the first time.

1. Lesson Introduction: Game/Entry Task (5-10 minutes)

Begin with an entry task using simple images (e.g. a person in a suit, a child in a wheelchair). In groups, children discuss what assumptions they make and why. Introduce and define the key terms for the lesson, ensuring children understand them.

2. Introducing the Theme (5-10 minutes)

Explain the learning objective clearly (e.g. exploring how bias, fairness and stereotypes affect people). Read *The Proudest Blue* or show a video version, pausing at key moments. In small groups, children identify examples from the story linked to the key terms and discuss guided questions such as: What feels unfair? Where do we see marginalisation or microaggressions? What might privilege look like here?

3. Main Activity/Task Linked to Learning Objective (20-25 minutes)

Children become "Bias Detectives," investigating fairness in a range of short scenarios. In groups, they:

- **Spot** what is happening and who is affected
- **Label** it using the correct vocabulary
- **Reflect** on how people might feel

They then create a simple "Fairness Solution" (e.g. a skit, comic strip or poster).

4. Closing Activity: Review and Reflect (5-10 minutes)

Children record brief responses such as: One action I can take to make things fairer is... End by sharing a few examples and reinforcing the correct use of vocabulary.

Indicators for Use

- **When you have a diverse student population:** An identity curriculum promotes respect, understanding, and belonging across differences.
- **When there are gaps in belonging and inclusion:** An identity curriculum explicitly teaches self-awareness, empathy, and respect, helping all children feel recognised, valued and part of a supportive community.
- **When your children have limited critical thinking about society:** An identity curriculum encourages pupils to analyse social structures, question assumptions and reflect on fairness and justice, developing their critical thinking and informed perspectives.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Overgeneralising or Stereotyping:** this gives children a limited, inaccurate view of people, reinforces biases and undermines empathy and understanding.
- **Avoiding difficult topics:** The mistake here is skipping discussions about bias, prejudice or discrimination because they feel uncomfortable.
- **Focusing solely on awareness, not action:** Here, the mistake often made is teaching about diversity and identity without encouraging children to reflect, question, or act.

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently approach the teaching of identity in your area?
- How might this process change the way you think about supporting children to explore their own and others' identities?
- In what ways could you adapt this approach to fit your own needs or context?

Anecdote from Staff

During Identity lessons, I watch the children light up as they share something that makes them unique - a story, a word from home, a small drawing that says "this is me." One afternoon, a quiet child proudly explained that her name Aminata meant trustworthy and faithful and the room shifted. Usually a reserved child, at that moment, her confidence grew, and the other children leaned in, curious and kind with their questions and comments. Moments like that remind me why this practice matters. It gives children permission to be seen and celebrated, and it reminds us - staff and families alike - that belonging starts with being known.

— Marcia Patterson (Class Teacher)

Flipped Quality Assurance: Empowering teachers to be the drivers of their own professional learning

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

Flipped Quality Assurance (QA) is an innovative approach that shifts the responsibility for self-assessment and reflection from leaders to teachers themselves. This model promotes a culture of trust, autonomy, and accountability by allowing teachers to take ownership of their professional development. Instead of traditional top-down monitoring, where leaders make judgments about teachers' practices, Flipped QA empowers teachers to evaluate their own work, articulate their strengths, and identify areas for improvement.

Flipped QA aligns with Daniel Pink's principles of motivation. Autonomy is built into the process by giving teachers control over their self-assessment, allowing them to reflect on their practice and identify areas for growth. Mastery comes from engaging teachers in a cycle of continuous improvement, where they actively reflect, receive feedback, and refine their skills. Lastly, purpose is integrated by ensuring teachers see their professional growth as meaningful and connected to their teaching journey.

Through this approach, teachers become the experts of their own practice. By reflecting on their teaching and bringing evidence to meetings with leaders, they engage in meaningful discussions about their growth and development. This process not only builds trust and respect between teachers and leaders but also reduces workload, streamlines feedback, and ensures that professional development is directly relevant and actionable. Flipped QA enhances teacher morale, encourages a collaborative learning environment, and ultimately leads to a more effective and self-reflective school culture.

> "Autonomy, mastery, and purpose are the three elements of motivation that drive people to do their best work."
> *Malala Yousafzai*

How is it done?

Flipped Quality Assurance (QA) involves a shift from traditional, leader-driven monitoring to a more collaborative and teacher-led process. The key components of this approach include:

1. Self-Assessment

Before meeting with a leader, teachers reflect on their own practice. They assess themselves against a set criteria, outlined in a tool called the Professional Development Record (a name designed to focus on growth rather than monitoring). This tool, developed by the subject leader, helps teachers reflect on various aspects of their teaching. Teachers gather evidence of their practice – such as lesson plans, student work, or videos of lessons - to support their self-reflection. This encourages deep thinking and helps teachers take ownership of their professional development.

2. Individual Meetings

Teachers meet with leaders (e.g. subject leaders, year group leaders, or senior leaders) for a focused, 1:1 conversation. During the meeting, teachers present their self-assessment (Professional Development Record), discuss their strengths, and highlight areas where they are seeking improvement. Leaders listen attentively, ask coaching questions, and offer guidance based on the teacher's self-reflection. This collaborative discussion helps ensure that teachers' voices are central to the process, building trust and respect.

3. Feedback

Feedback is immediate and actionable. During the meeting, leaders provide specific, constructive feedback based on the teacher's self-assessment and evidence, typing this onto the professional learning record with the teacher. This feedback is not judgmental but aims to be helpful and supportive. It focuses on the teacher's reflection and progress, encouraging a growth mindset and reinforcing the idea that feedback is part of continuous improvement.

4. Follow-Up

The process does not end with the meeting. Agreed-upon next steps are noted during the meeting and both the teacher and leader commit to following through on these actions. The teacher may implement new strategies, try different approaches, or seek additional resources. Leaders follow up with feedback on how those actions have impacted practice at a specified time agreed in the meeting, creating an ongoing cycle of reflection, feedback, and development.

Indicators for Use

- **When Teachers Feel Over-Scrutinised:** Shift from top-down assessments to a self-assessment model where teachers feel more in control.
- **When The Process Needs to be More Efficient:** The streamlined process of combining QA and feedback into one meeting saves time and reduces workload.
- **When Accurate, Live Data is Needed:** Leaders need current, detailed information about teaching practices across the school for more informed decisions.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Leader Acting as the "Expert":** When leaders tell teachers what is wrong without using coaching questions or engaging in a collaborative discussion. This undermines the self-assessment process and limits teacher ownership of their development.
- **Over-Reliance on Generic Feedback:** Feedback should be specific to each teacher's practice and context, not one-size-fits-all.
- **Failure to Follow Up:** If feedback isn't acted on promptly, the process loses its effectiveness.

Reflection Questions

- How do staff in your school feel about quality assurance exercises?
- How might this process change the way you currently think about feedback and quality assurance?
- In what ways could this approach be integrated into your current systems?

Anecdote from Staff

Quality assurance is a procedure I have not experienced in a school before working at Surrey Square. Previously it has always been a top-down experience and one which I have left feeling judged, but after experiencing it here for the past few years I have enjoyed the power and impact it has from the view of both the quality assurer and the person being quality assured. I have found it an opportunity to showcase what is going well in a professional conversation, as well as an opportunity to ask for support or offer guidance and reflect on practice. Support I have asked for has always been offered, such as the valuable chance to see others teach and model. I have also, after leading a QA, co-planned a sequence of lessons, which was an extremely valuable experience for sharing ideas and addressing misconceptions. I find it a safe space to reflect on and improve my practice, and the practice of others. It is always exciting to see what other members of staff are doing in their classrooms, and I often take away or share new ideas.

— *Helen (Year 2 Teacher and Literacy lead)*

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

At Surrey Square Primary School, campaigning is a core practice designed to empower the school community to take action on issues they care about and to foster active citizenship. It is the natural progression from meaningful community and family work, where practical support, advice and advocacy is prioritised. It provides a structured approach for children and their families to identify issues they care about, research solutions, and advocate for change within their school and wider community. Campaigning exemplifies our school mission, to "Build a Better World" by "Being an advocate and activist for self and others" and "Challenging and questioning the status quo".

The aim for all our pupils by the time they leave SSq is that they will learn to use their voice through activism. Aligning this with the needs of the school community makes it relevant and current. Such opportunities give both children and parents/carers the chance to demonstrate that their opinions and actions can lead to tangible change, fostering a sense of agency and self-efficacy.

What is campaigning?:

Campaigning is working in an organised and active way towards a particular goal, such as addressing an identified social need. Campaigning equips pupils and parents/carers with the tools to identify and address issues, leading to improvements within the school environment and beyond. It brings people together in an act of solidarity and collaboration, and by working in partnership towards shared goals, relationships are strengthened.

Why does it matter?

Campaigning gives people the hope that challenging situations, both local and national, can effect positive change, resulting in pride and a sense of accomplishment. It reinforces the democratic process and the freedom we have in the UK to voice opinions and challenge the status quo. Engaging in campaigning cultivates the skills and mindset necessary for responsible and engaged citizens, teaching the school community how to participate effectively in democratic processes. Students and adults have the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills as they analyse problems, evaluate information, and formulate persuasive arguments.

> "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."
> *Margaret Mead*

How is it done?

The Family Wellbeing Lead and the wider Pastoral Support Team regularly hear from parents across the school, who share the issues and challenges they are facing. The programme operates on a "more than a school" philosophy, focusing on social justice and community-led action.

1. Identify the issue, including research and understanding

The school's campaign model is based on genuine "listening" exercises. This is done through various methods, such as one-to-one conversations, group discussions, and community forums, coffee mornings and staff being available to speak to parents and carers on the school gate. The school also actively collaborates with organisations like Citizens UK and the Old Kent Road Family Zone, which focus on grassroots community organising. This process helps the school and its students understand the difficult issues families are facing, which include housing conditions, immigration challenges and financial hardship.

2. Strategy development followed by action

The school collaborates with partners to decide the nature of the campaign. For example, highlighting an issue on Social Media, creating an action ourselves for children and families to be involved with, jointly planning an action with a partner organisation, joining in with an already-planned action, adding our name to a petition, engaging stakeholders and decision-makers such as local councillors, MPs etc. This requires careful consideration of who should be involved in the action, for example, parents/carers alone, a group of children such as JLT, parents/carers plus children, just staff members, ex-pupils.

3. Reflect and evaluate

Ensure that everyone who took part in the campaign has the opportunity to reflect on both the methodology and the practice. How effective was the campaign? What were the real outcomes? How did the participants feel about taking part in the action? How could the campaign have been improved? Who else should have been involved? Use the Citizens UK evaluation technique where appropriate - one word to describe your feelings after the action.

Indicators for Use

- **When a significant proportion of the school community is affected by a particular issue:** Campaigning gives a collective voice to concerns that matter most.
- **When we haven't yet made our voices heard :** We find a different way to re-engage decision-makers and communicate our "ask".
- **When families and children want to influence wider change:** We involve them in attending campaigning opportunities in a broader context, e.g. with other aligned organisations.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Staff choosing a campaigning issue without consulting the school community:** this risks the campaign not reflecting what matters most to children and families, reducing engagement and impact.
- **Focusing on an issue that doesn't have a clear winnable "ask":** this leads to disappointment and disengagement, as having a realistic outcome is key to leading a successful campaign.
- **Attempting to run a campaign without utilising existing or new partnerships:** this reduces the efficacy of a campaign, and risks limiting future collaboration.

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently approach campaigning in your school?
- When a social issue becomes relevant to a significant group of people in your community, can you look for ways to amplify the voices of those affected?
- How might you find ways to extend campaigning beyond the borders of the school?

Anecdote from stakeholder

"Before taking part in campaigning, I felt that there wasn't really anything I could do to change things for myself, my community or others across the country. After getting involved with several campaigns, including child citizenship and housing, I realised that it is possible to work alongside people to challenge policies and processes that are unjust. It made me feel empowered and that I have a voice that matters to others, and now I see it as a crucial part of finding our power and making positive change.

— *Kafilat Oduneye (Parent)*

An example campaign - CITIZENSHIP

In 2017 we realised that many of our families were being pushed further into poverty due to applying for child citizenship. At the time, we had 11 out of 60 pupils in Year 6 who were doing these applications, at huge cost to the families. We started to talk to other organisations about shared experiences and joined a class action taking the Home Office to court over the fees in 2019. We then joined the "Children Into Citizens" campaign run by Citizens UK in 2020, leading to a change in the law. See **https://www.citizensuk.org/campaigns/migrant-communities-a-pathway-to-citizenship/children-into-citizens/**

Changemaker Projects: Equipping children to take action on issues that matter

> "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."
> *Malala Yousafzai*

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

At Surrey Square, our ethos of *Equipped to Thrive* means preparing children not just for academic success, but for life as active citizens. Changemaker Projects give children the opportunity to notice issues that matter to them, understand their causes, and take meaningful action to "Build a Better World." At the heart of this is being an advocate and activist for self and others – learning to challenge the status quo, speak up for what is right, and believe in their own power to create change. By building self-efficacy, we show children that their voices and actions can lead to real, positive impact.

Each year, every class runs a Changemaker Project, rooted in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and linked to our curriculum. Children identify a local, national, or global issue, research its impact, and plan collective action. The projects are designed to be winnable, visible, and impactful, culminating in an event where outcomes are shared with families and the wider community.

Changemaker Projects give children agency, voice, and responsibility. They develop confidence and self-efficacy to see themselves as people who can influence change, both in their immediate community and beyond. They learn that it is possible to challenge injustice and question the status quo in constructive ways, while also practising collaboration, critical thinking, and persuasive communication. By taking meaningful action and seeing tangible results, children build pride, resilience, and a lasting belief that their contributions matter.

"90% of SSQ Year 6 pupils feel empowered to change issues they care about (vs. 66% nationally, Children's Commissioner, 2024)."

How is it done?

1. Problem-spotting: Identifying issues that matter

Children begin by exploring problems within school and the local community that they notice and care about. If there isn't an immediate or obvious issue raised by the class, teachers introduce wider global challenges using resources such as Superkind, which frames issues through the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This helps children learn about problems they may not yet be aware of. Classes then discuss and democratically vote for the issue they most want to take action on. This process builds ownership and ensures projects begin with genuine pupil voice and choice.

2. Planning & Research: Developing ideas into a plan

Classes research possible solutions and focus on identifying a winnable action - something achievable, specific, and likely to make a visible difference. Teachers then bring these ideas to a facilitated planning session, where they are refined into a clear, purposeful project plan. Literacy cycles such as persuasive writing and non-fiction texts are linked in, ensuring that curriculum learning both drives and supports the project.

3. Action: Making change happen

Children take creative action - from campaigns, speeches, and letters to art installations, fundraising, or lobbying. The guiding principle is simple: action that gets a reaction and shows pupils that their voices and efforts can make a real difference.

4. Tuning & Refining: Strengthening ideas before launch

At the midpoint of the project, staff take part in an inset tuning session where they present their plans to colleagues. Through questioning, feedback, and peer support, projects are refined and strengthened. This process ensures that actions are realistic, purposeful, and designed to have the greatest impact.

5. Celebration & Legacy: Sharing impact and looking ahead

Outcomes are showcased at an in-school event where families and the wider community see the projects come to life. Successes are celebrated and impact is evaluated, while legacy planning ensures that the work leaves lasting change beyond the event itself.

Example Project: Year 3 - The Rat Campaign

Year 3's Rat Campaign began when children identified a real issue affecting their lives: pests in their homes that weren't being addressed despite families raising it with the council. Linking their project to SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), they researched what action they could realistically take and decided their "winnable action" was to make the council pay attention. They created persuasive letters on rat-shaped cards and sent them in a box designed to spill dramatically across a council desk. The stunt worked: the council responded, visited the school, and listened to the children and their families directly. The project not only achieved change but also strengthened pupils' sense of agency, pride, and belief that their collective voice can influence the world around them.

Indicators for Use

- **When children need to see their voices matter:** Projects provide opportunities to speak up, be heard, and influence change.

- **When learning needs authentic purpose:** Linking curriculum to real issues creates motivation and ownership.

- **When community partnerships can be strengthened:** Projects bring families, staff, and external allies together around shared causes.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Issues too broad:** If projects don't zoom in on a specific, winnable "ask", children can feel frustrated by lack of impact.

- **Adult-led campaigns**: When staff drive the agenda, pupil ownership and agency are lost.

- **No legacy planning:** Without considering sustainability, projects risk being a one-off event rather than creating lasting change.

Reflection Questions

- How do you currently provide opportunities for pupil voice and action?

- How might Changemaker Projects shift your view of what counts as "curriculum"?

- In what ways could you adapt this model to fit your school and community context?

Anecdote from Staff

The change maker project has been inspiring, positive and productive; I am impressed with what the children have achieved. Young children are expected to live in our world but not participate in it. I have seen that giving them the opportunity to discuss the problems they witness and face, share their experiences and find ways to improve things in their local community has given the children in my class the confidence to speak up about problems, and a strong belief in their ability to create positive change and have a real impact. Children have felt listened to, and this project has shown that even the youngest members of our communities have not only an opinion on local issues but also really great ideas on how to improve them.

— Ella Franklinos (Year 1 class teacher)

e-Portfolios: empowering children to take ownership of their learning and growth

> "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."
> *Xun Kuang, Xunzi*

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

E-Portfolios are a modern, creative teaching practice that puts the learner in the driver's seat of their own progress reports. They combine elements from across Surrey Square's ethos wheel – using the *core skill* of oracy; reflecting, to ensure children *thrive*; and advocating for one's self to *build a better world*. Furthermore, this approach shifts the traditional dynamic of a teacher-authored report to a student-authored one, empowering children to reflect on their own journey through primary school. Instead of simply receiving feedback from their teacher, children are given the time and space to consider their academic strengths, personal values, extra-curricular interests, and future aspirations. Through this process, they learn to clearly articulate their strengths and areas for development across a wide range of subjects, interests, and dispositions, building confidence in talking about themselves as learners.

The core goal of this practice is to cultivate self-awareness, agency, and confidence in young learners. By showcasing progress and achievements that encompass far more than just grades, the portfolio reinforces the message that every child is successful and is a multi-faceted individual with unique skills. This inclusive approach ensures children leave primary school feeling positive and empowered, regardless of SATs results, because they understand how they learn and grow, turning abstract learning goals into a purposeful plan for personal development.

This practice benefits the entire school community. It nurtures crucial life skills for children – such as speaking confidently and reflecting on their progress - preparing them for future interviews and their transition to secondary school. Children leave primary school with a strong sense of confidence, knowing who they are and where they are heading. For families, the portfolio turns reporting into an active, purposeful conversation, deepening the home-school connection and building trust and respect. For staff, it provides a meaningful way to celebrate progress, understand each child's journey more deeply, and strengthen relationships across the community.

How is it done?

1. Reflecting

The journey of building an E-Portfolio begins in Year 6 Summer Term when E-Portfolio lessons are added to the children's timetable. The sessions start with a dedicated period of reflection of the children's time at primary school. Children are given the time and a safe space to think deeply about their primary school experience. They are encouraged to identify their favourite memories and learning milestones, in their school subjects, in projects, and in extra-curricular activities. The focus is on encouraging discussion and oracy, allowing them to verbalise their thoughts and feelings about their learning and personal growth. This crucial first step lays the groundwork for the entire portfolio.

2. Writing

After reflecting, children move to the writing stage. Using familiar literacy lesson tools and resources, such as word banks and sentence stems, they draft their initial thoughts. This is where teachers provide targeted feedback on their writing and offer support to help develop the children's self-reflections. Prompt questions are provided to encourage deeper thinking and help them articulate their strengths and their areas for development in a clear and concise way, ensuring the goals they set are meaningful and actionable.

3. Publishing

Once the writing is complete, the children "publish" their work online by building a website on Google Sites. They are given a skeleton structure to support the creation of the site. In addition to writing up their reflections on each page (Home - about me, Core Subjects, Wider Curriculum, Interests, Aspirations), children take ownership of the final product by choosing and inserting photos that represent their time at school. These images, which can be sent in from home or chosen from a bank of class and school photos, are key visual elements that personalise the E-portfolio and turn it into a true record of their journey. Teachers also add to the report page, giving families access to the teacher's thoughts and their official end-of-year results.

4. Presenting

The final, most purposeful step is presenting the portfolio to families. This event "flips" the conventional parents' evening by having children take the lead. Logistically, children are split into small groups with their friends. Each group is given a dedicated time slot, and all invited families sit together. This ensures that children share their achievements with a wider audience and that families provide feedback to their child's peers, not just their own child. Families are encouraged to ask questions and offer specific, positive feedback about what they liked. This shared process is where you see the children literally "grow" in confidence and pride as they master spontaneous oracy in a supportive, affirming environment.

Indicators for Use

- **When children don't see themselves beyond academics:** e-Portfolios celebrate wider achievements, interests, and personal growth.
- **When children's voices are not heard:** e-Portfolios ensure children's voices become an active and central part of the feedback and reporting process.
- **When report feedback has little impact:** The child-led process ensures goals are created and shared by the child directly with their family, guaranteeing follow-through and impact.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Becoming a teacher-led project:** This adds workload and takes ownership away from the child, weakening reflection and impact.
- **Generic e-Portfolios:** If children copy and paste or are too heavily scaffolded, it makes the self-reflection process meaningless.
- **Lack of family attendance:** Low family engagement undermines the presentation's purpose and the child's motivation, so communication with families is key.

Reflection Questions

- What information is currently included in reports and what might be missing in order to showcase the whole child?
- How might you use E-Portfolios to change the way you think about sharing information with families?
- In what ways could you adapt this approach to fit your own needs or context?

Anecdote from a Parent

When I received the invitation to attend my daughter's Year 6 e-portfolio presentation, I didn't quite know what to expect. On the day, I joined a group of other parents who had also been invited, and we were directed into a prepared presentation room. The atmosphere was filled with excitement and a touch of nervous energy. The children were waiting eagerly for their turn to share what they had achieved. My daughter was the first to present. As she stood in front of us, with her presentation displayed behind her showing photos and highlights from her time at Surrey Square Primary School, I could see that she was nervous. But as everyone began to clap, she smiled, took a deep breath, and began speaking with such confidence. She introduced herself and talked about her favourite memories from school, even making a little joke about her school trip that made everyone smile. She spoke about her favourite core value, her experiences across the wider curriculum, and her personal interests, finishing by thanking everyone and asking if they had any questions. I was watching her stand there and speaking so clearly, answering questions thoughtfully, and showing such maturity it filled me with pride and emotions. It was one of those moments where I could truly see how much she has grown up. Since presenting her e-portfolio, I've noticed how much more confident she has become when speaking in front of others. The whole event was wonderfully organised, and it was clear how much effort both the children and staff had put into making it special. I left feeling incredibly proud, not just of my daughter, but of all the pupils who presented so beautifully. I would recommend that other primary schools introduce something similar, it's a meaningful and empowering way to celebrate the end of Year 6, both for the children and their families.

— *Huma Martin (Parent)*

The Year 6 Show: Where talent shines beyond the classroom – leaving a lasting legacy for others to follow.

Overview (What is it and why do it?)

We actively encourage our children to 'build a better world' and take this with them into secondary school and beyond. One way that we do this is through the year 6 show. The highlight of the summer term, the year 6 show is different at Surrey Square for one main reason; it is written entirely from scratch for the children of Year 6, by the children of Year 6. It is their legacy for the community they leave behind as they enter secondary school.

Each year, the year 6 classes come together to tell a story of their own choice, highlighting a theme, injustice or message that they want to convey on stage. At SSq we channel these ideas and this creativity, creating a small-scale theatre company to do so. The Year 6 show is inclusive; it enables all children to shine, often allowing hitherto hidden talents to prosper or unknown interests to flourish. Be it, scriptwriting, propmaking, costume designing or song composing, the year 6 show really offers the opportunity for many children to come out of their comfort zone, grow in confidence all the while surrounded by a supportive community.

The Year 6 Show provides children with a communal voice, leaving the audience with a message to take away whilst also leaving a legacy for the younger children in the school to follow. The one thing children of SSq always remember when they return to visit is the name of their Year 6 show.

> "I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being."
> *Brené Brown*

How it works: a 2024 case study - *Rumours*

1. The hook: sparking ideas

A visit to a West End show (usually *Wicked*) sparks imagination and introduces theatrical conventions. Children review previous Year 6 shows and gather "elements" they want in their own production (lighting, dance, effects, original music). These stay visible throughout the process as a shared success-criteria wall.

2. The story: choosing what we want to tell

A theme emerges from the cohort, often linked to current events or issues meaningful to the year group. In 2024, concerns about online misinformation inspired the theme *Rumours*. Children developed story threads around a family fleeing conflict, settling in London, and facing false accusations.

Working in groups, pupils create storyboards, share, critique and redraft them. A final storyboard is agreed democratically with teacher facilitation.

3. The script: build it together

Children are divided into small groups and given a small part of the storyboard to look at. Scripts are written, shared and acted out. Critique and feedback is given at the end of the session. The best ideas are voted for before taken away by the lead practitioner. A draft script, bringing all the ideas together is shared with the year group in small groups for an informal readthrough and critique session. Once agreed a final script is written and shared with the year group. It is now time to decide roles.

4. The company: everyone has a role

Children research theatre roles and apply for performing, technical or backstage positions. Everyone auditions using a short script extract - an approach that often reveals hidden talent. Roles are assigned and a three-week rehearsal period begins. During this time, pupils co-write the show's signature song, ensuring a memorable hook and thematic message.

5. The process: rehearse, refine, promote

Pupils workshop scenes to younger classes, gathering critique to refine staging and script. To understand theatre as an ecosystem, the cohort also develops the show's branding: logos, posters, and tickets. A pupil-run box office sells tickets in the playground.

6. The show: dress rehearsal to performance

Younger year groups attend the technical and dress rehearsals, offering final feedback. After edits, the show is performed to families and community guests. In 2024, *Rumours* sold out twice and powerfully conveyed the message: don't believe everything you hear – seek evidence before forming conclusions.

Indicators for Use

- **When an issue is prevalent in the year group:** Year 6 shows can be a powerful teaching and learning tool. Often it is a chance for a hot topic to be addressed and discussed through drama and theatre.

- **When 'off the shelf' scripts just don't cut it:** The power of an original script that comes from the children, with language, dialect and ideas relating to the year group or community as a whole can never be underestimated.

- **When a Year 6 cohort need a unifying cause:** This is a great opportunity to mix and match different children in different groups for different roles.

Juicy Mistakes

- **Imposing adult-led themes:** Sometimes adults choose the theme for the Year 6 show because it feels more manageable, polished or meaningful to them. However, this can limit children's ownership and reduce their investment in the story.

- **Not giving it the time and space in the normal timetable:** The Year 6 show is all encompassing and needs a majority of the weekly timetable devoted to it. Other 'core subjects' can easily be incorporated into the show.

- **Imitating a previous show or theme:** The children want to leave a mark on their time at SSq and where possible it's advisable to make it as relevant for the current cohort.

Reflection Questions

- How could you use drama, storytelling or performance to explore real-world issues that matter to your pupils?

- What opportunities do your children have to lead something creative and meaningful that leaves a legacy behind?

- Do your children have the opportunity to build confidence and oracy skills either on or backstage?

Anecdote from former pupil

At first, the idea of being on stage was really scary - however when we started writing the script it became clear what role I wanted to be and I couldn't wait to play my part in our final show at SSq. The script writing allowed us to include our own jokes and humour. It was great to share the rehearsals with our school community as most of us had never performed a show before. Our confidence grew over time and by the final performance we were as professional as we could be! I will never forget my character throwing a book into the audience - oh and the original song we helped create is still in my head now. Throughout the show, we learned many things about putting on a performance and it is something I will never forget - it was certainly inspiring and has led me to new heights in my acting life that I have now since I left SSq.

— Anna Jakovleva (SSQ Pupil)

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