



YCAT SPRING NEWSLETTER

Issue 12 🐰 March 2024

CEO Update

Jo Robinson



Dear Colleagues,

Despite this being a very short term it has been so pleasing to see the collaborative learning continuing at network groups, subject leaders' sessions, Raising Attainment with Wellbeing, and writing moderation.

I'm looking forward to seeing all our teachers and teaching assistants together for our joint training day on Monday 8 April at the Rendezvous Hotel in Skipton. Our guest speaker is Lesley Sullivan, HMI and national lead for literacy and English, who will provide an online session about "Telling the Story" plus the English report she's written for Ofsted. A summary of the report's findings is provided in the research section of this newsletter.

I am very pleased to inform you that Threshfield Primary School's academy conversion is nearing completion, and the school is due to join YCAT'S family of schools from the start of May. We are looking forward to working together with the children, staff and governors very soon.

This has been a very busy period for headteachers, school staff and the central team implementing a new catering service in our schools, and I'm so impressed by all the work that has gone to get YCATering up and running. I have received very positive feedback about the improved quality and quantity of food, which was a key priority for us all. As expected, there have been a couple of 'teething problems' but these have been resolved quickly and I'm very grateful to all our catering staff for their resilience at this time of change.

My monitoring visits this term have been extremely positive, and I am very appreciative of everyone's efforts. Wishing everyone a wonderful Easter and a well-deserved break.

Best wishes
Jo

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Chair of Trustees' Update

Jenny Baynes

Dear Governors, headteachers, schools' staff and the central team

I would like to say a big thank you for all your hard work again this term.

Budgets in education continue to be tight and YCAT Board of Trustees appreciate how challenging it is for strategic planning going forward. We also appreciate the challenges that delayed decisions on school funding from central government have and how difficult this makes it for Sarah Johnson and the finance team to be able to provide accurate budget information.

At the start of the spring term schools had very tight timelines for implementing the new catering services in our schools, and your extra work is appreciated by the trustees in enabling this to happen.

I wish you all an enjoyable Easter break.

Best wishes
Jenny

“Thank you for all your hard work again this term, it is appreciated by Trustees”

Central Team

This term has seen two new colleagues join the YCAT central team. Ian Moore joined the team in January; he will be a familiar face to some of you already because Ian has served as a Governor at Bilton Grange and Trustee for YCAT for several years. A trained architect, Ian will be supporting schools with every aspect of the estate, including Health & Safety, buildings maintenance issues, procurement and grant bids.

Vivian Cheung also joined YCAT in January after a period of working for the local authority. Vivian will be supporting Sarah and Suzanne in the finance team; managing invoices and very often being the first point of contact for enquiries to the central team office.



**Ian Moore –
Estates Manager**



**Vivian Cheung –
Finance
Administrator**

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YCAT Professional development



YCAT Staff Training Day Monday 8 April 2024

WE ARE DELIGHTED TO BE BRINGING TOGETHER OUR SCHOOLS FOR A FACE-TO-FACE EVENT AT

HOTEL RENDEZVOUS , SKIPTON, BD23 2TA.

PLEASE ARRIVE FROM 9:00AM FOR A 9:15 START LUNCH AND REFRESHMENTS WILL BE PROVIDED.

DURING THE DAY WE WILL BE JOINED BY:

- LESLEY SULLIVAN, HMI & OFSTED'S NATIONAL ENGLISH LEAD
- CLAIRE ASHTON OUR TRUST SEND ADVISER WHO WILL PROVIDE A TRAINING SESSION ON ADHD.

WE WILL ALSO BE HEARING ABOUT THE TRUST'S RAISING ATTAINMENT THROUGH WELL-BEING PROJECT.

THE DAY WILL CONCLUDE NO LATER THAN 3:15PM.

Dates for the diary

Maths Network (Maths leaders/senior leaders)	Monday 15 April	3.45 to 4.30pm
HART 'Leading Curriculum in Small Schools' session 2	Monday 22 April	3:45 to 4:45pm
Early Reading and Writing Network (EYFS/KS1 teachers/English leaders)	Monday 29 April	3.45 to 4.30pm
Safeguarding Network	Tuesday 30 April	3.45 to 4.30pm
EYFS Network	Wednesday 8 May	3.45 to 4.30pm
SENCO Network	Wednesday 15 May	3.45 to 4.30pm
KS2 Writing/Spelling Network (KS2 teachers/English leaders)	Monday 20 May	3.45 to 4.30pm
HART meeting	Tuesday 21 May	9.30 to 11.00am
HART 'Leading Curriculum in Small Schools' session 3	Tuesday 21 May	3:45 to 4:45pm
Personal Development Network (PSHE leaders)	Tuesday 4 June	3.45 to 4.30pm
Deputy Head and Senior Leader's Group	Monday 10 June	3.45 to 4.30pm
HART 'Leading Curriculum in Small Schools' session 4	Thursday 20 June	3:45 to 4:45pm

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Telling the story: Ofsted subject report for English

Published 5 March 2024

By Lesley Sullivan



Research and analysis

Telling the story: the English education subject report

Published 5 March 2024

Summary of the conclusion and main findings:

1. The teaching of reading has improved markedly

- Reading has been prioritised and schools have invested in synthetic systematic phonics programmes that are supported by precise training for teachers and teaching assistants.
- Once pupils are able to read accurately, schools are less clear about how to build fluency and comprehension.

Key considerations:

- Fluency needs pupils to practice. *What will this practice be like in your school? How do you plan opportunities for pupils to practice and be read to?* When this is effective pupils learn how to control pace and intonation.
- Some schools are not as responsive at quickly identifying and addressing children who have weakness in reception and year 1.
- Comprehension needs greater understanding of the structure of language and improving pupils' background knowledge. *What does teaching comprehension look like in your school?*
- Choosing texts that support reading in foundation subjects are not the best texts that will advance pupils' reading.

2. The curriculum for writing and spoken language is less effective than other areas of English

- Schools (often) do not consider spoken language well in their English curriculum, although they understand that spoken language underpins pupils' reading and writing development.
- The writing curriculum often introduces complex tasks too early before many pupils are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills that underpin these.
- Primary pupils are not given sufficient teaching and practice to become fluent with transcription (spelling and handwriting) early enough.

Key considerations:

- *Are schools ensuring spoken language is the building block throughout the English curriculum?*
- *Are schools moving on too quickly in their writing curriculum before the knowledge and skills have been embedded and become automatic?*

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Research update

- *Does our intended curriculum for transcription (spelling and handwriting) provide enough teaching and practice time?*
- *Are we trying to add transcription onto an existing writing curriculum that is already creating complexity?*

3. Schools are sometimes confused about the purpose of English

- This is because English is not always valued as a subject in its own right. It is seen as a medium for teaching and serving other subjects. However, sometimes schools only focus on its supporting role, and this results in a weaker and less coherent English curriculum.

Key consideration:

- *Are you ensuring your intended curriculum for English is planned first in its own right before looking at the ways it will support other subjects?*

4. External assessment unhelpfully shapes the curriculum

- Schools expect pupils to repeatedly attempt complex tasks that replicate national curriculum tests. This is at the expense of first making sure that pupils are taught, and securely know, the underlying knowledge they need.
- Some pupils are given considerable help to access these complex tasks, wasting precious time and resources on activities that do not result in them making progress.

Key considerations:

- There is a conflict between the teaching of writing and the national assessment of primary schools' writing. The requirements for national assessment move the pupils on too quickly to the complex aspects of writing e.g. lots of genres etc.
- *How do we prevent the writing curriculum from overly concentrating on the complex elements of writing throughout the school year, preventing enough time for pupils to secure strong foundational knowledge?*
- Schools teach grammar, sentence structure and punctuation explicitly. However, pupils do not always get enough practice to secure this knowledge. For example, oral composition is rarely used to practice grammar. Also, pupils' books often show persistent fundamental errors over time. These areas would benefit from a full review of existing practice.
- Importantly, most schools do not give pupils enough teaching and practice time to gain high degrees of fluency in spelling and handwriting. Teachers rarely use dictation as a tool to help pupils practice spelling and handwriting.

5. In many schools, pupils are expected to carry out extended writing tasks before they have the required knowledge and skills

Key considerations

- *How do we change this culture? Is it that schools' planned curriculum has not changed or are teachers spending the right amount of time on different parts of the intended curriculum?*

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Research update

6. Few schools design or follow a curriculum to develop pupils' spoken language. As a result, the teaching of spoken language is often not explicit

- Schools are not clear how to teach it and teachers often think a weakness in this area is lack of confidence rather than they need to be taught this.

Key considerations:

- This is a huge change for schools. *How can HART help schools with this significant change?*

7. How well is the whole school culture of reading working?

- For example, story time is a regular part of reception and KS1.
- However, even when class reading is timetabled in KS2 it does not often happen.

Key considerations:

- *Why are there gaps in the timed sessions.*
- *How should this be addressed?*
- We need to review the purpose and importance of reading sessions.

8. Although vocabulary is taught through a range of approaches it is not necessarily embedded through repeated practice in different contexts. Often, pupils do not remember to use the vocabulary in writing

Key considerations:

- Review schools' approach to vocabulary and evaluate the opportunities provided for embedding.
- Reading more complex books to improve background knowledge to support pupils' comprehension is important.
- However, some schools focus more on practicing national comprehension tests which is a limited method for improving fluency and comprehension.

9. Schools allocate significant time to the subject.

- However, in some schools, time is not used productively and most commonly this happens in KS1. For example, pupils carry out time filling in activities that lack purpose.

10. Leaders arrange additional teaching for pupils who are not yet reading fluently. Too often this teaching does not directly address the gaps or is frequent enough

- Formative assessment is not used consistently and effectively to identify what pupils know and remember to check pupils' prior learning before moving on to new learning.

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Research and reading

Cognitive science quiz



This week our new HART CPD programme 'Leading Curriculum in a Small Primary School' began and included a QI-style quiz

Which of the following statements are true and which are false?

1. Humans are good thinkers.
2. Too many activities in lessons overload children's working memory and prevent effective learning.
3. Humans think they know things before they actually do.
4. Children learn best when they use the learning style that suits them most.
5. Children learn best in small learning steps that are systematic and provide lots of practice.
6. Children learn best in early reading when they experience a wide range of quality books.
7. Teachers must make sure pupils mistakes only happen rarely.
8. Pupils learning suffers if they move on too quickly.
9. The way all children learn, including SEND pupils, is more similar than different.
10. Children learn best when new learning builds on previous learning.
11. Skills are more important than knowledge in children's learning.
12. Pupils who remember more have greater working memory to help them learn new work.

World Book Day

Pupils (and staff) in YCAT schools had much fun this term celebrating their love of reading



Book Trust

Please remember <https://www.booktrust.org.uk>, a fantastic resource that will support your selection of books for pupils' reading and foundation subjects.

Their website provides the facility to search for themes such as Anglo Saxons, Vikings and much more. You are also able to seek book recommendations, for example: dyslexic pupils, which will provide a list of books with an age-appropriate interest level and a lower reading age.

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News

New schools to join YCAT

Following the success of our Trust partnership work, Osmotherley Primary School have consulted with Governors, parents and staff and are now entering into the academy conversion process to join YCAT. We are delighted to welcome them into our family of schools. We will keep you updated on conversion progress in our next newsletter.

As mentioned in the autumn newsletter, Threshfield School is already making great progress with their conversion, and are currently on track to join YCAT in May.



YCATering is launched!

It has been an incredibly busy term for schools managing the launch of our in-house catering provision, YCATering! This has meant bringing 11 catering staff fully into our family of schools as YCAT employees and

creating a new uniform for them with our YCATering logo proudly on the front. The kitchen teams have been working hard this term to deliver healthy, tasty and balanced meals for our children, and making sure there is something on the menu for everyone. Our thanks to them for everything they do.



Mental Health and Wellbeing

This term, our children have been learning about mental health and wellbeing and taking part in lots of enriching activities to boost their mental and physical welfare



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Bilton Grange Primary



“Mutual respect and co-operation within a nurturing, secure and stimulating environment”

Bradleys Both Primary



“LIFE - Learn, Inspire, Flourish, Engage”

Darley Primary



“Keep me safe, make me happy, help me learn”

Hawes Primary



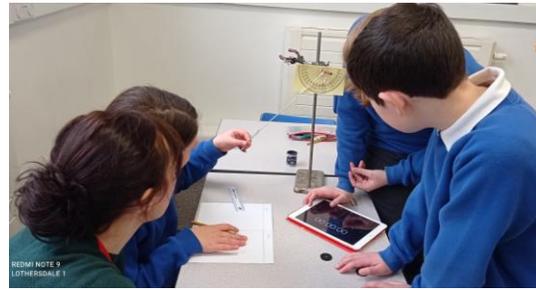
“Not just a school; taking learning to other places”

Leyburn Primary



“Inspired to be the best that we can be!”

Lothersdale Primary



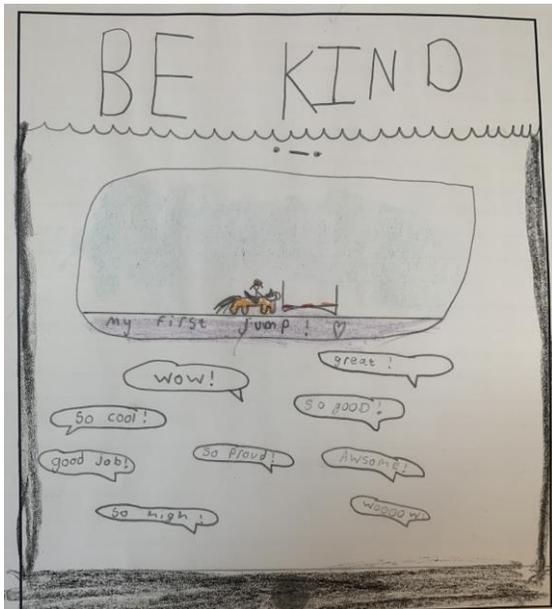
“Fluent learners broadening their horizons”

Osmotherley Primary



“We endeavour to encourage independent learning through a varied and vast creative curriculum”

Summerbridge Primary



BEING MY SELF!

What I am good at:

- Being kind
- Art
- Making people smile
- Doing my hair
- Maths



“Keep me safe, make me happy, help me learn”