



The Cambridge Primary Review and its implications for science

In mid-October the Cambridge review of primary education in England, headed by Robin Alexander, was published to much publicity. The media gave much attention to the proposal not to start formal teaching before the age of 6, so in this, as well as previous issues of *Primary Science*, we have emphasised the importance of play as a way to promote enquiry.

Other recommendations that could benefit science teaching are the introduction of specialist teaching into primary schools, the ending of differential funding, the extension of initial postgraduate training to two years, and the encouragement of professional partnerships. The report also wants the implementation of the earlier Rose review to be put on hold, and clearly hopes to reverse the 'tide of centralisation', all of which is likely to please teachers and trainers. But in an election year, is the Government likely to take notice?

Children, their world, their education (The Cambridge Primary Review) is published by Routledge. A summary can be found at www.primaryreview.org.uk

Editors' note: If you have any comments you would like to add on the primary curriculum, either the Cambridge review or the Rose review, then we would be glad to hear from you.

Getting Practical – Improving Practical Work in Science programme



Research shows that many teachers of science in primary schools lack confidence in practical work and find time and resource constraints lead to ineffective learning experiences for some pupils. The consortium-run 'Getting Practical' programme, led by the ASE, is a new course of professional development addressing this issue by offering training in the pedagogy behind teaching practical science.

During training, teachers will consider their own practical science practice and its effectiveness. They will discuss the 'staging' of a practical, including a rehearsal of the activity, to

ensure that as many eventualities as possible have been allowed for, and evaluate its effectiveness. There will also be opportunities to discuss and share practical science ideas, investigations and experiments, but this is not the main focus of the training.

The courses, which are free and available locally, will be delivered by 100 trainers based around England. The course consists of six hours of training, which might be one six-hour session or two or three twilight

New Board members

The *Primary Science* Editorial Board is delighted to welcome two new members. **Claire Tocher** recently wrote for us in issue 109 and has a background in television, working for the BBC on science documentaries. She is our first one-year NQT board member, now teaching at Woolacombe School in Devon. **Kate Blacklock** is an independent primary science consultant who also works as a primary science development leader at the SLC North West. She is co-author of the *Discovery Dog* resources and, while based in the North West, says 'I can be found all over the country!'

PRIMARY TEACHERS NEEDED FOR Primary upd8 WRITING TEAM

Primary upd8 activities are downloadable whiteboard presentations (with teacher notes for guidance), which use topical events to create uniquely engaging science lessons. See:

www.primaryupd8.org.uk

If you are interested in joining the team contact: Cally Oldershaw, curriculum development manager:

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sessions. Where there are multiple sessions, there will be opportunity to implement ideas and concepts, and feed back the success at the next session. The courses will become available from January 2010. To register your interest, contact Kirstie Hampson:

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tel: 01707 283000.

See

www.gettingpractical.org.uk for more information including a resources section highlighting high-quality practical work. Suggestions for resources to include are welcome (see the 'Your Thoughts' page of the website).

This programme has the potential to inspire, enthuse and support primary level teachers of science, reaching out to as many teachers as possible over the two-year programme. The Getting Practical – Improving Practical Work in Science programme is funded by the DCSF with coordinating partners the ASE, CLEAPSS and the national network of SLCs.

Kid K'NEX life cycles



Barbara Higginbotham reports how Kid K'NEX life cycles can support learning

Early years teachers have reviewed this resource positively, but I wanted to explore further and establish whether Kid K'NEX Life Cycles would foster an interest in science amongst the very young.

To find out, I joined a group of eight children in the reception class of a London school, allowing them to just 'dive in' and play with the resource. I noticed that they began building straight away but did not look at any of the coloured cards that would help them to construct an animal. I decided to bring these cards to their attention and began with the photograph of a frog, asking if they knew what this was. I was met with blank looks, until one boy answered quietly, 'rivet rivet'. I moved on to a picture of a caterpillar, and this they all recognised. I turned to the card showing the life cycle of a caterpillar and asked if they knew what a caterpillar would grow into? They obviously knew the story of *The very hungry caterpillar* and were able to give a long explanation of how, if the caterpillar ate everything up, it would become a butterfly. They then all wanted to build one.

Involving the children in ideas about life cycles, alongside providing the construction sets as something they could 'play' with and make into a 'real' animal, helped focus the discussion.

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