A Policy For Teaching and Learning.

Eastover Community Primary School.

Summer 2011
Teaching and Learning at Eastover Primary School

This policy is based upon our understanding of the pupils in our school, their needs and their interests, and what makes for the best learning.

The pupils need a diet rich in literacy, with a strong emphasis, from the start, on phonics, speaking and listening. They require a firm grounding in the basic skills in numeracy too, with a focus on their mental ability and agility.

The pupils enjoy performing. They also enjoy themes and topics, which help bring their learning to life for them.

Pupils need to feel safe and well cared for, in an environment where they can be supportively challenged to achieve their very best.

*The first section outlines our five key beliefs, followed by the strategies we will use to achieve them, and how we will ascertain / evaluate our success. The final section will look at what constitutes ‘the best learning’ in our school.*

The five key beliefs at Eastover Community Primary School:

1. We believe that being a reader and writer are key skills for all children, because it enables children to be good communicators, opens lots of doors, and helps children’s social skills. It also enables them to access all aspects of the curriculum, and builds the confidence and self-esteem required to live a fulfilled independent life.

2. We believe that being numerate is a key skill for all children, because we need to use numeracy skills in our everyday lives, eg financial awareness, measuring, cooking etc. It is therefore a life skill which promotes independence. Numbers are fun too!

3. We believe that children enjoy their learning, through a creative and hands-on curriculum delivered by excellent teachers and supported by an effective and committed team, which means they are more willing to take risks and rise to the challenge.

4. We believe that children should celebrate their achievements, because they feel proud and know that their contributions are valued by everyone. This will help to develop their self-esteem and confidence so they will develop into valuable members of the community. As they achieve in school they will be positive about what they can achieve in the future.

5. We believe that children should learn in the best environment, because all children deserve to learn in a safe and challenging environment which allows them to make mistakes and learn through discovery. They should have a safe and nurturing environment to help them grow socially and emotionally.
1. Being a reader and writer…. We believe that being a reader and writer are key skills for all children, because it enables children to be good communicators, opens lots of doors, and helps children’s social skills. It also enables them to access all aspects of the curriculum, and builds their confidence and self-esteem required to live a fulfilled independent life.

We will achieve this by:
Regular and timetabled guided reading sessions;
Daily readers, or focussed readers group;
Use of Guided Reading and reading strategies;
Use of Letters and Sounds for phonics (timetabled);
Use of Talk for Writing strategies;
Use of Communicate in Print to support pupils;
Use of VCOP;
Opportunities throughout the day / week / term for speaking and listening, reading, writing, spelling;
Setting across the classes when the context and learning objectives show this will enable more effective teaching and learning;
Use of topics and themes to provide stimulus for the development of these key skills;
Use of visits, visitors and performances to develop their literacy skills;
Weekly literacy planning will take into account children’s progress from Assessment for Learning, their interests and needs, will be differentiated and flexible from lesson to lesson, will be consistent across parallel classes (or justified if not the case), and will show their next steps;
TAs will have access to all relevant planning, and will have read it;
If homework is issued, it will reinforce and, if possible, extend learning. It will always include reading at home on a daily basis;
Effective questioning / Blooms;
Literacy learning objectives will be shared with pupils, using appropriate language, at the start of each session, and referred to at the end (progress);
Interventions will be focussed appropriately to the identified needs of the pupils, academic, social and emotional;
Use of a range of ICT resources, appropriate to age group and ability;
Ensure regular CPD for all, which is then put into practice;
Ensuring literacy remains a key focus in the School Development Plan.

How will we know we have been successful?
Fundamentally everyone will expect pupils to achieve their very best, and avoid excuses as a reason for low achievement. It is vital that pupils make good progress and that, where practically possible, there is ‘hard’ evidence to demonstrate this.

We aim to ensure that 90% of all pupils will be making or exceeding expected progress (based on prior attainment) in reading and writing.
Lesson observations will show that pupils are engaged in their learning, have work which meets their needs (support and challenge), and shows the progression of understanding in reading and writing. In OFSTED speak:
“… pupils acquire knowledge, develop understanding and learn and practise skills exceptionally well.”

We are expecting the teaching of literacy to be at least good, and we are aiming for continual improvement to outstanding teaching.
2. Being a mathematician....

We believe that being numerate is a key skill for all children, because we need to use numeracy skills in our everyday lives, e.g., financial awareness, measuring, cooking etc. It is therefore a life skill which promotes independence. Numbers are fun too!

We will achieve this by:
Regular and often focus on developing mental maths skills;
Use of, and adherence to, the progression for the four operations;
Focus on the key objectives for the year group;
The sequenced development of the key objectives, matched to the needs of the pupils;
Where possible, use of topics and themes to provide the stimulus for the development of these key skills;
Setting across the classes when the context and learning objectives show this will enable more effective teaching and learning;
Effective questioning / Blooms;
Weekly numeracy planning will take into account children’s progress, Assessment for Learning, their interests and needs, will be differentiated and flexible from lesson to lesson, will be consistent across parallel classes (or justified if not the case), and will show their next steps. TAs will have access to all relevant planning, and will have read it;
If homework is issued, it will reinforce and, if possible, extend learning. It will always include reading at home on a daily basis;
Numeracy learning objectives will be shared with pupils, using appropriate language, at the start of each session, and referred to at the end (progress);
Interventions will be focussed appropriately to the identified needs of the pupils, academic, social and emotional;
Use of a range of ICT resources, appropriate to age group and ability;
Ensure CPD is provided, which is then put into practice;
Ensuring it is a regular feature in School Development Plans.

How will we know we have been successful?
Fundamentally everyone will expect pupils to achieve their very best, and avoid excuses as a reason for low achievement. It is vital that pupils make good progress and that, where practically possible, there is ‘hard’ evidence to demonstrate this.

We aim to ensure that 90% of all pupils will be making or exceeding expected progress (based on prior attainment) in maths.

Lesson observations will show that pupils are engaged in their learning, have work which meets their needs (support and challenge), and shows the progression of understanding in maths. In OFSTED speak:
“... pupils acquire knowledge, develop understanding and learn and practise skills exceptionally well.”

We are expecting the teaching of numeracy to be at least good, and we are aiming for continual improvement to outstanding teaching.
3. Enjoying learning....

We believe that children enjoy their learning, through a creative and hands-on curriculum delivered by excellent teachers and supported by an effective and committed team, which means they are more willing to take risks and rise to the challenge.

We will achieve this by:
- Planning topics and themes which interest and stimulate pupils;
- Using the local environment as a stimulus for school work;
- Where possible, use of topics and themes to provide the stimulus for the development of the key basic literacy and numeracy skills;
- Providing a wealth of visits and visitors, shows and performances to light their interest and broaden their experiences (plus the obvious focus on literacy development);
- Using first-hand experiences wherever possible and applicable to the learning objectives;
- Use a cross-curricular approach to planning, whilst ensuring we have a broad and balanced curriculum model;
- Effective questioning / Blooms;
- Develop research skills using a range of resources including ICT
- Provide a termly curriculum letter for parents, so that children and parents / carers may continue the learning at home;
- What have we learnt? To be discussed daily with pupils;
- Use a range of creative teaching strategies to enthuse and stimulate pupils interest;
- Teachers and support staff continuing to develop their craft of teaching, taking on board new strategies to improve their teaching.

How will we know we have been successful?
- Fundamentally everyone will expect pupils to achieve their very best, and avoid excuses as a reason for low achievement. It is vital that pupils make good progress and that, where practically possible, there is ‘hard’ evidence to demonstrate this.

- Planning will show a creative approach to cross-curricular links, taking into account the interests of the pupils, and the local environment;
- Lesson observations will show that the pupils, through the theme stimulus, show interest in their learning, are able to sustain concentration and to think and to learn for themselves;
- Feedback from Professional Development Meetings will show teachers and support staff using newly-learned teaching strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
4. Celebrate achievements…

We believe that children should celebrate their achievements, because they feel proud and know that their contributions are valued by everyone. This will help to develop their self-esteem and confidence so they will develop into valuable members of the community. As they achieve in school they will be positive about what they can achieve in the future.

We will achieve this by:
Marking will be positive in its tone, and should show how the child has met the learning objectives, and how he/she may further improve. This will be undertaken in line with the school marking policy;
Weekly certificate assemblies will take place in each Key Stage. This will include lunchtime certificates;
Stickers will be used by all, to celebrate success;
Star of the Day certificates will be given out by class teachers;
School Council elections will be held, and meetings take place on a regular basis;
House Captains and Vice-Captains will be elected on an annual basis;
Half-termly tea parties will be held, to celebrate one pupil from each class who has made outstanding progress;
Pupils will be given ‘jobs’ or special helper status, to undertake tasks around the school;
Pupils may be sent to other classes or to the head/deputy head to show their work;
Parent exhibitions will be held, for parents/carers to view their child’s work;
Parent meetings will take place in the Autumn and Spring term, with a report in the summer term. Information given at these will include the successes of each pupil, and their next steps in learning;
Use of display to show pupils’ work;
Children are encouraged to talk about their interests and successes out of school;
Eastover’s Got Talent will be used to showcase the talents of the pupils.

How will we know we have been successful?
Fundamentally everyone will expect pupils to achieve their very best, and avoid excuses as a reason for low achievement.
It is vital that pupils make good progress and that, where practically possible, there is ‘hard’ evidence to demonstrate this.

Feedback from parents and pupils shows that children feel their successes are celebrated;
Lesson observations and discussions with pupils show pupils are confident about their ability/ies, feel they are valuable members of the class or school;
Tracking information shows that the pupils are making at least good progress in their learning in reading, writing and numeracy.
5. The best environment...

We believe that children should learn in the best environment, because all children deserve to learn in a safe and challenging environment which allows them to make mistakes and learn through discovery. They should have a safe and nurturing environment to help them grow socially and emotionally.

We will achieve this by:
All staff and pupils fostering positive and mutually respectful relationships with each other;
Using displays to provide a rich and stimulating atmosphere for pupils and staff;
Using first-hand experiences wherever possible and applicable to the learning objectives;
Use a range of creative teaching strategies to enthuse and stimulate pupils interest;
Effective questioning / Blooms;
Implementing a school decoration plan, over a three year period;
Termly site visits will take place, to ensure maintenance is up to date, and health, safety and security are maintained;
All staff will be CRB checked prior to taking up post, unless in exceptional circumstances;
All permanent and fixed-term posts will involve an application and interview process, unless in exceptional circumstances;
All staff will adhere to the school behaviour policy in dealing with pupil behaviour;
All staff, parents and children will work together as set out in the Home-School Agreement;
Our school website will keep up-to-date information about the work in school;
We will all adhere to the safeguarding guidelines in our work with children.

How will we know we have been successful?
Fundamentally everyone will expect pupils to achieve their very best, and avoid excuses as a reason for low achievement.
It is vital that pupils make good progress and that, where practically possible, there is ‘hard’ evidence to demonstrate this.

From observations, it will be clear when entering a room, what the topic or theme is;
Planning and lesson observations will show creative use of teaching strategies, which, as a result, ensure pupils enjoy their lessons and make progress in their learning;
Displays will serve a learning or celebratory purpose, and rooms will be uncluttered (too busy can be a distraction);
All areas of the school will be tidy, with resources put back where they belong;
Observations across the school will show very positive relationships between all staff and all children;
The vast majority of pupils will always be in the green traffic light;
Observations will show the behaviour policy and code are consistently applied;
Site visits show that the school is managing it’s maintenance well.
The Best Learning – what does it look like?

Working together, as a team, is an essential strategy in the successful improvement of our school. Being consistent, in respect of good practice in our classrooms, and across the school, is a crucial element of this ‘teamwork’. There is no expectation that each individual teacher will perform in exactly the same way at all times: we are not clones! However, there are certain strategies and techniques which all teachers may adopt, reserving the right to a degree of flexibility relating to the pupils’ ages, abilities and the nature of the subject being taught.

Planning:

We wish to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad, balanced and vibrant curriculum, that meets their needs and interests. (see above – Key Beliefs)

Planning will be adapted to make sure it meets the needs of all the pupils in the class.
- It will take into account previous learning, and the next steps.
- It will clearly link to the curriculum overview, and key objectives.
- It will show differentiation and flexibility from lesson to lesson, and consistency across the two classes (with justification if not the case).
- Weekly plans should be adhered to. If changes are made (with a clear rationale) the other class must be involved and agree.
- PPA time should be used for shared weekly planning.
- Joint PPA time at the end of each term will be provided. It is expected this will include an evaluation of the learning outcomes, the progress made by pupils as a consequence, and the key areas of focus for the following term.
- TAs need access to relevant planning, and need to have read the planning.
- Teachers and TAs need to communicate effectively regarding the progress of learners. This may take the form of: a time to meet together; use of liaison/observation book/annotated planning; as appropriate.
- Teachers will ensure their assessments (in line with the Assessment Calendar) are used to complete the Progress Profiles, and thus affect planning.

School management – being ready for teaching

Good class, school and personal management is fundamental to establishing and maintaining an orderly and productive learning environment.

- All staff will be ready on time to collect pupils from the playground at the start of the day and at the end of each break.
- Teaching Assistants will be ready to start work in the class in good time, and be prompt at the end of each break.
- Registers will be taken at the start of morning and afternoon sessions.
- Teachers, TAs and MTAs should foster positive relationships between themselves and their pupils at all times. Staff should be appropriately dressed for work. Jeans are unacceptable work wear.
- Pupil movements around the school site should be kept to a minimum; pupils and staff should move around quietly and calmly, to avoid disrupting other classes.
- All areas of the school to be kept tidy at all times.
- Staff on playground duty must be on duty promptly.
- Playtimes, lunchtimes and assemblies must start and end promptly.
• All staff will make themselves aware of the events and activities taking place, using the Diary Events List, the termly calendar, and the staff notices in the staffroom. Parent and staff newsletters will also include useful information.
• All events will be arranged well in advance of the date, to avoid last-minute disruption.

In the classroom – where it matters most!

This is predominantly where our key beliefs can be seen ‘in action’.

The best learning will make the difference for pupils because:
• They will acquire new knowledge and skills, develop ideas and increase their understanding.
• They will apply intellectual, physical or creative effort in their work.
• They will be productive and work at a ‘good pace’.
• They will show interest in their learning, are able to sustain concentrate and to think and to learn for themselves.
• They will understand what they are doing, why they are doing it, know how well they have done and how they can improve.

This translates into the following criteria for the quality of teaching (OFSTED 2011) which will be used to evaluate the quality of teaching, and the areas for improvement. (on next page)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No clear learning objective and aims</th>
<th>LO visible, but not explained to children or put into context</th>
<th>LO visible throughout lesson, explained and contextualised to the class</th>
<th>LO is contextualised and reference is made to previous and future learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities fail to match the teaching LO.</td>
<td>Activities show some reference to objective</td>
<td>Activities match the LO and fully engage children</td>
<td>Activities match objective and are stimulating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bland teaching with no use of interactive strategies. Little pupil contribution. No variation in voice, tone or audibility</td>
<td>Some use of interactive teaching strategies &amp; children generally attentive &amp; participating in lessons. Some limited use of voice tone and audibility.</td>
<td>Teaching is stimulating &amp; children are engaged &amp; enthusiastic. A range of interactive strategies are used. Voice used effectively.</td>
<td>Teaching is exciting &amp; children are fully involved responding enthusiastically to the teaching. A wide range of interactive &amp; imaginative teaching and learning strategies are used. Voice used effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use of independent materials or resources used to support children’s learning</td>
<td>Some use of independent supporting materials &amp; resources are used to support children’s learning</td>
<td>All groups have scaffolding materials and resources to support their independent learning</td>
<td>A variety of differentiated scaffolding &amp; supporting materials &amp; resources are used to meet the needs of all pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher has no teaching focus during independent tasks</td>
<td>Teacher has a teaching focus</td>
<td>Teacher extends groups’ learning through focused &amp; stimulating teaching during the independent time</td>
<td>The same high level of teaching continues within independent group activities &amp; the teacher is also able to make quick, accurate assessments of class progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No differentiation evident</td>
<td>Little differentiation evident</td>
<td>Adequate differentiation evident for some groups</td>
<td>High expectation and appropriate differentiation for all groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of pace</td>
<td>Pace is limited</td>
<td>Good pace</td>
<td>Teaching is sharp and pacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No use of ICT or IWB</td>
<td>ICT &amp; IWB used</td>
<td>ICT &amp; IWB used effectively to support learning</td>
<td>Appropriate and challenging ICT used. IWB used to enthuse, engage and enrich learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject knowledge is patchy and challenge is insufficient</td>
<td>Teaching is accurate and based on secure subject &amp; pedagogical knowledge &amp; is challenging</td>
<td>Challenge is realistic &amp; pupils are productive. Teacher has wide and secure knowledge</td>
<td>Achievement is very good. Teaching consistently challenging &amp; interesting stemming from excellent subject knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No provision for EAL, G&amp;T, SEN pupils</td>
<td>Some provision for EAL, G&amp;T, SEN pupils</td>
<td>EAL, SEN, G&amp;T provision shows a good understanding of the children’s learning needs and current development</td>
<td>Teaching and learning activities show the teachers ability to give all chn access to the lesson as well as extending current stage of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional adults not used effectively</td>
<td>Planned involvement of additional adults but lacks direction</td>
<td>Additional adults actively involved in lesson with clearly defined tasks.</td>
<td>Additional adults used to maximum effect during each stage of lesson. Teacher has planned stimulating activities/resources for adult to use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little use made of open or differentiated questioning</td>
<td>Differentiated questioning, some open ended</td>
<td>Teacher encourages full responses, getting children to justify their thoughts</td>
<td>Range of differentiated questions. Understanding checked in range of ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher unaware if chn have met targets. Targets too easy or too general. Teacher does not question pupils.</td>
<td>Teacher makes rough assessment of learning but does not address in lesson. Teachers lets chn know how well they are doing and uses information to agree next targets that chn understand.</td>
<td>Teacher makes accurate assessments &amp; addresses issues by observing and questioning. Chn assess own work throughout the lesson. They may know how they have done and what they need to do to improve</td>
<td>Teacher has enabled chn to assess their own learning as well as tracking each groups attainment during the lesson. Pupils help to judge success of lesson and set future targets. All know how well they have done and how to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson ends abruptly with no plenary, or plenary used solely for feedback</td>
<td>Minimal plenary. Plenary is used as distinct teaching session with no reference to future learning.</td>
<td>Full plenary is used to recap &amp; extend objectives or address misconceptions. Teacher makes links to future learning</td>
<td>Plenary is used effectively for chn to assess own learning. Teacher sums up by making explicit links to next lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marking general &amp; infrequent</td>
<td>Marking regular and developmental</td>
<td>Marking aids improvement in standards</td>
<td>Marking focused, diagnostic and aids improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children unaware of what they have to do or what they are learning</td>
<td>Children understand the task and are generally focused</td>
<td>Children fully understand the task and are enthusiastic to complete it</td>
<td>Children work on tasks enthusiastically &amp; and understand the link to LO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are not focused on task/poor behaviour management</td>
<td>Behaviour management strategies evident &amp; used to create a calm working environment but key chn not focused in all of the lesson</td>
<td>Consistent, effective use of praise, criticism &amp; behaviour management strategies. A calm working environment.</td>
<td>Excellent use of praise, criticism and behaviour management strategies. High quality, stimulating teaching engages all pupils. Calm purposeful working environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work presented to poor standard</td>
<td>Work presented to reasonable standard</td>
<td>Work presented to good standard</td>
<td>Excellent standard of work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment**
Assessment serves two key purposes:
1. To provide information on the child’s current level of attainment;
2. To provide information on the next steps for each child.

We will ensure we use a range of assessments to inform our judgement of a pupil’s attainment. This will be primarily formative assessment, to include (but not exclusively) observations, mental/oral, questioning, traffic lights, marking etc. We use the jigsaw of assessment to form a complete view of attainment, progress and next steps.

Assessments include:
All assessments as per the assessment calendar.
Writing assessments in pink books. Marked using the Ros Wilson criteria;
Writing targets using the targeteers;
Reading assessments using the APP assessment sheet;
Numeracy targets using the targeteers;
Numeracy assessment using the revised APP sheet;

Foundation Stage will continue to use the Eye Profile.
Assessments will be planned in the calendar to match the dates for completion of tracking sheets and PPMs.

Work Presentation

Date – short for maths and science, long for all other subjects.
Crossing out work should be done with a pencil. Rubbing out should be kept to a minimum.
Use of exercise books. Avoid wasteful use. Ensure the use of books is consistent across the year group and key stage.
With unacceptable presentation, this should be repeated, as appropriate.

Homework
Homework will focus predominantly on reading, and primarily on enjoying it. Other homework should extend or reinforce learning. It should be in moderation, and appropriate to the age and abilities of pupils.

Marking
Marking will be as per the marking policy.

This Teaching and Learning Policy has been developed with all staff, Governor and parent reps., and will be reviewed again by July 2013.

This policy was adopted by the Governing Body at its meeting held on

________________________________________________________
Signature of Chairperson of Governing Body
And finally – some further thoughts on what makes for great learning……

**Short-Term to Long-Term Memory**

Voices of the learners are in italics.

**Personal significance…** What is my motivation for learning this? What will it help me to do? *I need to establish the payoff. I’ll be able to ski/speak German/ answer a question on.* ..NB Beware of very generalised motivation (To pass my exams). The more specific the significance the better (There’s a good chance there’ll be a question on the Great Lakes in my Geography exam, so it’s a good investment to spend 10 minutes learning the names in order of size.)

**Repetition…** Recycling… Going over it again next day… Doing the same thing in a different way. As teachers I think we often get two things wrong. One is to underestimate the brain’s ability to work out the meaning of what it wants to know. The other is to underestimate the number of ‘meetings’ with new information which are necessary before it is ‘learned’ (transferred to long-term memory). The trend is always for pressure on the timetable to increase. More and more information. Higher and higher standards. The danger is that we’ll find ourselves throwing increasing quantities of mud at the wall in the hope that some of it will stick. It’s likely that, as learners, we have to encounter information about four times before it ‘sticks’.

**Using pictures…** linking words/ ideas to pictures.. Visualising situations in my mind. Most of us have powerful visual memories – actual pictures and pictures in the mind’s eye, the product of imagination. Pictures often precede words in recall from memory. See the exercise on page 49.

... and using colour. Each time we use a coloured felt tip/ highlighter it sends a ‘notice this’ signal to the brain as well as making a deliberate connection between the learner and the page. The page becomes more interesting to look at and develops its own character for when the time comes to revise. As an example of the systematic use of colour for clarification see Paula the Painter (page 92).

**Imitation…** I learn best by watching someone else and then copying what they do! Peer group teaching is powerful.

**Sorting…** Getting my notes in order… Putting things on cards and playing ‘Memory’.. Using a learning card box and moving the cards to a different compartment as I learn them. There is, for most people, an innate, if unfulfilled, desire to categorise things, to put like with like, to know where to find things. Time spent checking that students know how to keep notes in a filing system that actually works for them (on disk, in a folder, a card system or whatever) is well spent. Likewise activities which involve sorting, matching and ordering are ‘BRAIN-friendly’.

**Drama/ movement…** I act things out… I can’t sit still and learn, I have to walk around. We can hear the voice of the kinaesthetic learner.

**Music/ relaxation…** Rock music cuts out all interference. I don’t notice it when I’m working…I do some breathing and yoga exercises to get myself ready for learning... When I’m listening to classical music I’m calmer, I don’t get frustrated, I concentrate longer.
There’s more on the classroom application of music on page 115.

**Linking…** I put things into stories because it’s easy to remember a story. We connect what is new to what we already know. If there’s a link of information missing it’s much easier to find it if we remember what goes either side of it in a story. There is a demonstration of this on page 49.

**Mnemonics…** another form of linking… Richard of York gave battle in vain (colours of the rainbow- red orange yellow green blue indigo violet) What others do you know? The planets? Musical notation?

**Concentration spans…** I make sure I take regular breaks to keep my concentration. I have a drink of water and maybe a biscuit or banana every half hour. Concentration begins to flag after a certain time particularly if we’re sitting over a desk, or there are distractions. Rather than fight it we need a short break (a Mr Wriggle – page 121) and refreshment. I used to advocate water and fruit – but having read two research articles recently claiming that chewing gum is good for the brain (and coffee is good for the heart) maybe one can’t be too proscriptive!

**Humour…** laughter is a reflex apparently involving the simultaneous involuntary contraction of fifteen facial muscles. Healthy laughter is a sharing moment, but additionally, things which strike us as funny because they are bizarre, force together unexpected images and because of their incongruity ‘stick’ in the memory. The odder, more comical, more personal, and quite often it seems, the ruder the associations, the more likely they are to be encoded.

**Review before sleep…** As we fall asleep our brain wave patterns change. Reading through key notes before sleep we are physically and mentally relaxed. The brain is open to the signal ‘I’m reading this because it’s important. Please do some work on it while I’m asleep’.

The brain is very used to this – it naturally shuffles and sorts the stimuli of the day (the rapid eye movement of a sleeping child). If you don’t already use this technique, try it and test yourself at breakfast!

*From ‘Teaching for Success’, by Mark Fletcher*