

Habitats and ecology

In the run up to spring it seems apposite to bring articles about habitats and life to you. The evenings are stretching and we are no longer going to work in the dark in the morning and returning in the dark in the evening. I guess that most of us would agree that the lighter, longer days lift our mood. I wonder to what extent the children in our classes notice this and whether they feel more cheerful in the spring months than the preceding winter ones?

It is lovely to see the spring flowers blooming and the buds appearing on the trees. In my household these prompt lots of questions and discussion with my children and this can be carried into the classroom. Most schools have a wonderful resource to engage with right on their doorstep: the immediate outdoor environment. There is a great opportunity to use this as a means for supporting learning, rather than just taking learning into the outdoors. We can encourage children to *really* look at what is going on around them, seeing new growth and changes, and wondering what and why.

I have been thinking about growth recently; my two children are obsessed with how much taller they are now than they were a few weeks ago. They almost always have a new plant shooting up, given to them on their last visit to their grandparents – the excitement when the green shoot first pops through the soil! They look after them carefully and are fascinated to watch how they develop. In another aspect of growing, my children are also focused on growing new teeth as theirs have just started falling out. 'Wobble' checks take place almost daily, and careful examination to see what the new tooth is doing.

Children's growth of course involves so much more.



As teachers, we watch children move up through the school, and their growth as individuals is incredible. I am not suggesting that they all have a straightforward journey; we all know that for many there are challenges throughout their schooling. Supporting them through these helps set them up to deal with challenges they are likely to face as adults. When children learn to do things for the first time, master a skill that they have been taught – those 'penny drop' moments when they achieve something – the growth is so much more

than them just being able to do that one thing. It builds them up a little more as an individual, helps their confidence increase as they realise that with effort and hard work it will all come together and they will be able to do what they couldn't do before.

It is such a shame that there is no measure for this. Instead, teachers who are 'growing' children in the most holistic and meaningful of ways are held accountable by numbers measuring progress at set points. As this

quote (often attributed to Albert Einstein) says, *'Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts'*. Children, as we are all well aware, are individuals, but they have their seasons of growth and some of those are more spring-like than others. As good teachers, I think we recognise this and work with it in the best way that the system allows. Notwithstanding the demands of the classroom, what are you going to do this year to help your children grow? Or maybe more importantly, how do you help them recognise their growth? Use spring as the stimulus for new ideas and embrace the brighter moods to think of other ways to support those in your classroom to develop and flourish when it is their time.

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