

Thameside Primary School

Foundation Stage Learning Characters

1) Concentrate, Kuba, caterpillar

Once upon a time there were a family of caterpillars – Mummy caterpillar, Daddy caterpillar and their son, Kuba the caterpillar. One day, Mummy caterpillar asked Kuba to go out and collect some leaves for dinner. As he set off he met his friend Tom, who wanted to go and play football. But Kuba said “No, I need to collect my leaves”. A bit later, he met his cousin Kacper, who asked him to go to his house for lemonade, but again, Kuba said “No, I have to collect leaves. I need to concentrate on what Mummy asked me to do”. When he had finished collecting leaves, he went home and told his Mummy what his friends had said. “Well done Kuba for concentrating on what I asked you to do, now you have finished, you can go and play!”

2) Don't give up, Deema, duck

One sunny morning, Deema the duck was happily swimming along the river where she lived. The river was flowing very fast and her legs had to paddle very quickly under the water so she didn't get washed down the river! That morning, some children went with their teacher down to throw some bread to feed the ducks. All the other ducks were swimming nearer to the edge than Deema, and quickly gobbled up most of the bread before swimming away. Deema could see the children throwing bread but the river was too fast for her to swim over. She tried to swim over three times, but each time she nearly got washed underneath the water! After that, she saw a rock nearby. She used all her energy to swim to the rock, then jumped over the fast flowing water to where the children were, and because they had seen how Deema hadn't given up they threw her some extra bread!

3) Be co-operative, Tim and Tina, tortoises

It was a stormy night, when Tim the tortoise went to visit his friend Tina. She was huddled up inside her shell on the seashore, shaking in the cold and rain. Tim was very upset when he saw his friend so sad. “Why don't we build a hut before the thunder comes and we can shelter there together?” Tim said to Tina. “I've already tried, and I can't manage” Tina cried. But Tim ignored her and started to gather together some sticks. “Please come and hold these together while I tie them” asked Tim because he couldn't do it by himself so Tina crawled over. Together they worked hard to build the hut and stayed there together in the warm while the thunderstorm went through the sky above them.

4) Be curious, Colin, camel

Colin the camel was walking across the desert, when he saw some huge things made out of stone. He had never seen any before and didn't know what they were. He asked his friend Mary, but Mary didn't know what they were either. Colin then asked his friend James but he didn't know what the huge stone things were either! He kept asking all his friends, but none of them knew what the stone things were called. He almost gave up, but decided to ask one more person. Colin went over and saw another camel he hadn't spoken to before. “Excuse me, but do you know what those big stone things are called?” he asked politely. “They are called pyramids” the camel answered, and Colin was glad he had kept asking his question until he had an answer.

5) Have a go, Hamed, hedgehog

One lunchtime, Hamed the hedgehog was talking to his friends who all played musical instruments. Hamed felt very sad because he wanted to play an instrument too. He borrowed a violin, but it only sounded squeaky when he tried to play, making Hamed feel very sad. He tried playing a flute, but no sounds came out at all! This made Hamed feel even more sad. He decided to try playing a piano, but it didn't sound like when his friends played at all. Hamed was very upset and went to sit in the

corner. His friends saw this and didn't like to see him so sad. They decided to give him one more instrument to try – a drum kit. They carried it over to him, but Hamed was so sad he didn't even want to try. His friends told him to just "have a go". Slowly, he picked up the drumsticks and started to play. He was amazing at playing the drums and if he hadn't had a go, he would never have known!

6) Use your imagination, Isabel, iguana

Isabel was a lovely colourful iguana. She loved being a lizard and especially enjoyed playing with her friends. Sometimes though, she would feel sad when she would go to visit them because they had lots and lots of toys to play with. At her house, Isabel didn't have very many toys, but she often collected boxes and other things to play with. One day, Isabel and her friends were all playing together with some cars and they wanted a garage to fix some broken cars. All her friends were upset because they couldn't carry on their game, but Isabel showed her friends how to use a cardboard box to make and pretend to have a garage. All her friends agreed that they were glad Isabel had a good imagination so they could play their game together.

7) Keep improving, Ishan, insect

One summer's day, Ishan the insect was busy sucking nectar from flowers near his house. His Mum had been teaching him how to fly, and he wanted to practice so he crawled to the edge of the plants leaf and jumped into the air. Unfortunately, he had forgotten everything he had been taught and he fell straight to the ground! But Ishan the insect didn't stop, he decided to try again (just like Deema the duck) and climbed back up the plant to the edge of the leaf. This time, he remembered to flap his wings as he jumped and he went a little bit further before he fell to the ground. Ishan was happy that he had gone further so he kept climbing up the plants and improved his flying every time. Finally, he jumped into the air and managed to fly all the way home. When he got home, his Mum was very proud of him, but he was also very proud of himself for practising and improving every time.

8) Enjoy learning, Edward, elephant

One winter day, Edward the elephant was at school. Edward had been very excited about PE that morning, but halfway through the morning it started to rain outside. Edward's teacher said that they wouldn't be able to do PE anymore and that they could do some writing instead. Even though Edward was sad, he decided to try hard at writing. Other elephants in his class were sad and didn't want to try at their writing and they stayed sad all morning, but Edward tried his best. Because he tried hard and wasn't too sad, he enjoyed what he was learning and learnt lots more! (And he was allowed to do PE in the afternoon!)

Learning Culture and Growth Mindset

At Thameside Primary School we have been thinking about how we can introduce the growth mindset across the whole school. I have been fortunate enough to try this in Key Stage 1 and Foundation Stage, while my colleague Iain has tried this in Key Stage 2.

Foundation Stage:

In Foundation Stage I developed 8 characters which represent each of the different elements of being a successful learner. Each of these characters is introduced to the children through a simple story, designed to fit in with things relevant to the children (for example, a story about Deema the duck as we are very close to the river Thames). I was also careful to give these characters multicultural names as we have a range of children from different cultures and countries at school (the little Polish girl in my class really lit up when she realised one had a Polish name!).

The children then had opportunities to learn about these animals through the week and colour in / draw their own pictures of the characters. We would discuss with the children different ways they could use the character to help them in school, for example how they could have a go around the setting. The children would then be praised for the focus aspect of the week all week by all adults in the classroom and encouraged to use the words with each other. Once the children had learnt all 8 elements of being a successful learner, for each lesson taking place, the adults and children would choose the characters they would particularly need to use in that lesson to help them learn. These characters would then be stuck to the board underneath the learning objective and success criteria to remind the children.

The children have really taken to these characters, with the children being very concerned when I borrowed 2 for a day! Comments from Foundation Stage pupils include:

- 'Kuba helps us to learn nicely' (Joshua, age 4)
- 'When Kuba's friends say does he want to play he says no because he's busy. He's concentrating' (Eva, age 5)
- 'The caterpillar works hard. He's ignoring the children playing' (Henry, age 4)

Key Stage 1

In Key Stage 1, I created an octopus with the children, and as we introduced each aspect on a Monday morning it would be written up onto one of the legs. In a similar way to Foundation Stage the children would be encouraged to think of ways they could demonstrate this characteristic in school. Again these characteristics of effective learning would be emphasised over the course of a week, with every child being given praise at hometime for a time in the day when they had demonstrated it successfully.

Once all 8 aspects had been covered the children then thought which aspects would be most useful to them in individual lessons and they were written on the board along with the learning objective and success criteria. At the end of each day the children were all given praise for something they had done well that day, and this would always be linked to the aspect of effective learning. For example 'Well done Isabella, you didn't give up in maths today, you are becoming a good learner'. The praise always told the children what they had done well, made the children feel valued and at the same time reinforced that they need to continue doing these things.

Some comments from Key Stage 1 children include:

- 'If we don't have a go, how will we achieve things?' (Orlando, age 7)
- 'It's the growth mindset octopus. You mustn't give up! If you give up you won't learn' (Mohammed, age 7)
- 'If you try something and get it wrong, you've still learnt something. You know what to do next time. Every class should have an octopus because it helps you know how to learn' (Eloise, age 7)

Key Stage 2

In Key Stage 2 the children first did a quiz to find out whether they had a fixed or growth mindset. The children then watched the video on YouTube about taxi drivers growing their brains and had a detailed explanation of fixed and growth mindset. The 8 characteristics of effective learning were then introduced one each week through a PowerPoint presentation, and the children were encouraged to link these to learning in lessons, as children did lower down in the school.

Comments from Key Stage 2 children include:

- 'Growth mindset helps you carry on and push yourself to your limits. You don't want to have a fixed mindset' (Toby, age 8)

- 'If you use your imagination you can make elephants orange or trees purple. Anything can happen' (Sophie, age 9)

Whole School

At Thameside, as a SLT, staff and school we have been currently re-writing our school values and vision. We came up with a new motto of 'Use your brain' where b=belonging, r=resilience, a=assurance, i=independence and integrity and n=no limits, following discussions about the skills we wanted children to leave Thameside with. Staff, parents, children and governors then thought about associated behaviours linked to these. Alongside Iain Gunn and the Headteacher Helen Wallace we then linked each of the 8 aspects of effective learning into this vision, producing the attached document, and we are now introducing a cohesive vision and learning culture at school.

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