Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

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Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Preface

In the interests of anonymity, the pseudonym ‘Any School’ has been used to refer to my current school in the references for this paper. In addition, any visible email addresses containing the name of my current school have been altered according to this pseudonym.

Where a document or item of correspondence has been signed by a colleague, this has been reduced to an abbreviation of their initials in the interests of anonymity. Where the user name of an internet forum poster is visible, this has only been altered if it contains a traceable name of an individual.

With regard to the original email messages and internet form posts presented in the Appendix to this paper, these have been unaltered in regards to format and any spelling or grammatical errors have been left unchanged. This action has been taken in order to preserve the integrity of the raw data.

I acknowledge that there are ethical considerations to be considered when undertaking any form of research and confirm that I have endeavoured to be mindful of these by respecting the anonymity of institutions and people involved in my research.
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**Introduction**

‘There are no absolutely non-creative or perfectly creative teachers (Ambrose 2005),’

(Bramwell, et al., 2011, p. 228).

It has long been thought that the optimum environment in which to teach Early Years and Year 1 is a large, open-plan classroom with access to outdoor space. The accepted theory that young children require a large amount of indoor and outdoor space to learn effectively through creative teaching and child-initiated creative experiences has been explained by Trisha Maynard (cited in Evans, 2010); ‘Children need space if they are going to have a curriculum that embraces child-led learning. They need the space to be able to select resources and materials and to move around, to problem-solve, collaborate and play. There has to be room to create a stimulating environment - it has to be space-rich if it is going to be effective...classrooms might become too small and restricted.’ (Evans, 2010).

The aim of my report is to question views such as this through research and thus advance understanding of how the available physical teaching space impacts on creativity in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 classroom.

My overall research focus comprises 4 subsidiary objectives:

1. To identify the barriers to creativity caused by a restrictive physical space.

2. To evaluate critically the current literature concerning creative teaching and how this translates to those teaching in a restrictive space.
3. Explore methods of creatively teaching the EYFS and Key Stage 1 curriculum in a restrictive physical space through a combination of action research focusing on my own practice and sample-based questionnaires.

4. Formulate recommendations for fully utilising a restrictive physical space in order to teach creatively and enhance children’s learning.

I have chosen to focus on teaching within a restrictive space as I began to research this issue in my portfolio Creativity constrained? The challenge of teaching Year 1 in a restrictive space, assessed as part of the PBM 4000 module Investigating Practice. Whilst researching this topic it became apparent to me that there was a lack of research into the challenges of teaching creatively in a restrictive physical space and the impact of these challenges on children’s learning. Within the word limit of the aforementioned portfolio, it was not possible to investigate this issue in depth and it is therefore my intention to now build upon my previous work and extend my study further.

Having moved year groups from Year 1 to Reception, I have now gained further insight and experience into the challenges of teaching creatively within a restrictive space since I wrote the aforementioned portfolio. The issue of restricted space is a historic issue at my current school and one that continues to become more pressing. This is due to rising pupil numbers and the needs for specialist classrooms such as an art room. Additionally, the issue of restricted space is compounded by the fact that classrooms are converted residential rooms and therefore not of uniform shape.

With regard to many small independent schools, such as Any School, it has been the case for decades that classrooms are often located within converted residential homes.
and not purpose-built schools. In this environment, the reality of the classroom space available is far from this ideal. This situation appears to be particularly common in London preparatory and pre-preparatory schools. With the added issue of rising pupil rolls in independent schools located in London and the South East (Independent Schools Council, 2012), Early Years and Key Stage 1 teachers in the independent sector can face the perfect storm of a rising class roll in a physically restrictive environment.

In the past decade Patel has described how these theories of the manner in which young children learn have been consulted, as purpose-built schools have been constructed or renovated; ‘The Department (The Department for Education and Skills) is looking at ways of designing inspirational, flexible buildings that can adapt to technological and educational changes… This will not happen if spaces in schools do not facilitate various patterns of individual and group working (Patel, 2005, p. 1). This view is supported by the work of Denise Whitehouse who discusses the need for a ‘collaborative design process between designers and educators involving a shared vision of child development and creative inquiry that drives…the production of appropriate learning spaces’ (Whitehouse, 2009, p. 95).

It has to be noted here, however, that the present Coalition Government discontinued the Building Schools for the Future programme in 2010 (Curtis, 2010). In 2011, a new Priority Schools Building programme (PSBP) was created by the current government in its stead (Department for Education, 2013). In the wake of the continued cautious economic outlook, however, it would seem that the Department for Education has chosen to focus on the remodelling of the National Curriculum rather than on the actual fabric of the nation’s schools.
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This is certainly the argument put forward by *The Guardian* in a recent article, in which it is stated ‘The Coalition’s Priority Schools Building programme is not delivering results…some pupils are still being taught in buildings that were declared inadequate 10 years ago’ (Millar, 2013). Millar quotes Karine Jasper, headteacher of an academy awaiting funding promised to her under the PSBP, ‘my worry is that it will become impossible to recruit heads, staff or children who are aspirational to come to learn and work in schools whose conditions are well below par. They will gravitate, like moths, towards the light of the new buildings’ (Millar, 2013).

Through this discussion of my local situation and the wider national situation, it is clear that the buildings that house schools and whether or not their size and/or condition impacts negatively on creative teaching and learning is currently a hot topic. Ultimately through my research I hope to question the notion that a restrictive physical space always impacts negatively on creative teaching and identify ways of utilising classroom space effectively to enhance children’s learning.
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Literature Review

‘Education, and the part creativity can play within it, does not stop at the walls of the school…’ (Smith, 1998, p. 146)

Upon first commencing this literature review, I was immediately struck by the scarcity of research into the specific challenges relating to teaching creatively in a physically constrained environment. There is a wealth of material available which addresses creative teaching but there appears to be little which specifically discusses the challenge of trying to incorporate this method of pedagogy in a less than ideal physical environment.

In the course of this report I will be discussing whether the space available to a teacher has the power to restrict one creatively as well as physically. Within this discussion, I will be focusing on what barriers to creative teaching exist, if any, in the physically restrictive teaching environment. To this end, in the following literature review of works concerning creativity and creative teaching, the above sub-focus will be specifically drawn out and discussed critically.

For the purposes of this work, creativity will be defined principally as ‘the use of imagination or original ideas to create something; inventiveness’ (Oxford English Dictionary, 2012). This definition will be considered, with the added caveat suggested by Sir Ken Robinson, that these ideas should have value (Robinson, 2006). Conversely I will be considering whether the physical constraints of the learning environment cause creative teaching to flourish out of necessity. I will be drawing largely on my own experience of teaching in a classroom located within a converted residential property to consider these questions in conjunction with research
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conducted in order to gain perspectives from teaching professionals working in a range of environments.

As a post-qualification teacher of 2 years, at the start of my professional career, with all the educational theory learnt and discussed during my Post-Graduate Certificate in Education still fresh in my mind, this particular challenge facing teachers has become an interest of mine. It has been argued by Pat Broadhead (cited in Evans, 2010) that 'If we stop children moving, we are stopping them thinking’ (Evans, 2010). It could be suggested from Broadhead’s statement that a potential barrier to creative teaching would be a lack of physical space in the learning environment for children to move around in. The argument put forward by Sparkes could be seen as supporting Broadhead’s view; ‘young children experiment with their bodies and express themselves through their bodies’ (cited in Jeffrey & Woods, 2003) (Sparkes, 1999, p. 102).

In the physically constrained environment, the challenge for the teacher is to try and follow accepted educational theory, such as that espoused by Broadhead, as far as possible but to additionally work with the space given to create new learning opportunities. If approached in this way, a restricted physical space could be seen as a challenge and not a barrier to creative teaching.

In the most recent Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) Report my school received, the following comment was made in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage; ‘Although the free-flow of activities is limited, as classrooms have no direct outdoor access, this is ameliorated by creative planning’ (Independent Schools Inspectorate,
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2010, p. 11). This comment illustrates that space constraints can produce effective teaching out of necessity.

It has been argued that ‘even the most difficult of existing space configurations can still offer possibilities for the determined educator’ (Warner & Myers, 2010, p. 32). This contradicts the statements made by Voulalas and Sharpe, who state that physical barriers such as ‘lack of adequate appropriate spaces for meetings, library purposes, housing new technologies, staff facilities and…assemblies’ were considerably detrimental to a school becoming a successful, creative ‘learning community’ (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005, p. 7).

I, however, would agree with the argument made by Warner and Myers having experienced teaching in a challenging space configuration. Conversely however, I would argue that due to the difficult space configuration I have had to use creative teaching methods to bring learning to life. This view agrees with the argument put forward by Mathilda Joubert that teaching constantly brings new challenges and that ‘creative teachers manage them…constantly re-invent and adapt their styles and strategies to different situations as required’ (Marie Joubet, 2007, p. 22).

In keeping with this view, for the course of the two academic years, I have attempted to plan lessons which incorporate opportunities for pupils to use their creativity and require the teacher to deliver the lesson using active learning principles i.e. moving away from pupils as passive listeners toward the opportunity to engage in visual, aural and kinaesthetic activities (Stephen, et al., 2010, p. 317). As it has been stated, ‘play and active learning have been acknowledged as crucial to the cognitive and other developmental processes of children’ (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003, p. 100). Play and active
learning need not require a large amount of physical space. One can plan in opportunities for play and active learning into the everyday fabric of lessons. In the case of practitioners operating in a restrictive physical space, this simply requires creative use of the space.

When we continue to consider the idea of what constitutes creative teaching and how we can incorporate this pedagogical approach into our everyday classroom teaching, I believe it is vital to look to the notion of ‘possibility thinking’ championed by Craft as the basis of her ‘Little C Creativity…the resourcefulness and agency of ordinary people’ (Craft, 2002, p. 56). I am of this opinion because it does not require a large space to plan activities which engage children in active learning and require them to use their imagination to discuss possibilities with their partner. Therefore this imagining of creative teaching it could be argued is achievable by all practitioners irrelevant of classroom size and unhindered by the perceived barrier of a lack of space.

Craft’s theory of ‘possibility thinking’ as a foundation for creativity in the classroom is further endorsed by Kleiman, who states that asking children to consider ‘what might be the answer?’ opens up questioning and encourages creativity (Kleiman, 2007). It could be argued that the only barrier to the above mentioned possibility of creative teaching is closed-questioning by the teacher and/or a lack of training in best-practice questioning techniques.

In addition to this idea of ‘Little C Creativity’, it is worth considering Willis’ argument that ‘Creative activity, reflection and expression are all in young people’s lives all of the time – only they have different names’. (Willis, 1990, p. 43) If children’s lives are already rich in creativity we as teachers need to plan lessons and activities which draw

It could be suggested from Willis’ and Nicholson’s arguments, therefore, that planning activities that involve investigative learning in groups, such as a Mathematics challenge, would constitute creative teaching. Such challenges need not require large amounts of physical space and could be argued as lighting the spark of curiosity (Robinson, 2013). Robinson goes on to state that ‘curiosity is the engine of achievement’ in education. (Robinson, 2013)

A literacy activity featuring a rhyming game such as bingo, in which images have to be matched to rhyming words or drawn in response to rhyming words, does not require a large amount of physical space yet fits clearly with the first two of Starbuck’s requirements for ‘creative activities’, namely ‘anything that taps into imagination, imagery, rhythm and rhyme’ (Starbuck, 2006, p. 5). It would appear that the only barrier to this type of activity would be a lack of resources; one which can usually be overcome easily via the high quality materials available online, often for no charge.

Horng et al discuss creative teaching thus; ‘effective teaching strategies…are: student-centred activities, a connection between teaching contents and real life, management of skills in class, open-ended questions, an encouragement of creative thinking and use of technology and multimedia’ (Horng, et al., 2005, p. 352). It could be argued from this statement that information Communication Technology (ICT) is a useful way to introduce creativity into a lesson that is taught in a constrained physical space, as these resources can be assessed from a table-top or carpet-based session.
Non-availability of funds may constitute a barrier with regard to some schools providing appropriate ICT resources. It could be argued, however, that most modern schools in the United Kingdom now enjoy the use of computers, interactive whiteboards and are all connected to the internet.

The argument espoused by Craft relating to ‘everyday Little C Creativity’ is further endorsed in the educational environment context by Rejskind (2000) and Richards (2007) (cited by Bramwell et al; 2007); ‘Teachers engage in everyday creativity when they plan and improvise lessons to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of specific students while conforming to the formal curriculum and available resources (Bramwell, et al., 2011, p. 228). I believe that this is particularly true of teachers who are forced to engage in everyday creativity to overcome their situation of a physically restrictive classroom. As Ken Robinson states, ‘teaching is a creative profession…and human life is inherently creative’ (Robinson, 2013).

This type of thinking is congruent with the view of Charmain Sutherland, who argues in terms of the use of physical activities in constrained spaces that ‘the lack of a normal, or ideal, situation at first forces you, and later invites you, to become more creative’ (Sutherland, 2006, p. 3). Further to this idea, it has been argued; ‘all space a school occupies is of potential educational significance’ (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003, p. 2). This view should particularly inspire those practitioners working within a restrictive physical space to use the entire space available to them and not restrict themselves to the walls of their classrooms. Additionally, the above arguments from Sutherland, Jeffery and Woods again dispel the notion that a lack of physical space is a barrier to creative teaching.
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Having critically discussed the literature that surrounds the subject of creativity and creative teaching, it is clear that there is little in existence which directly relates to teaching creatively in a restrictive physical space. In terms of barriers to creativity, it has been discussed that physical space and a lack of resources could constitute barriers to creativity teaching. I, however, disagree that either of these situations constitute barriers to creative teaching. I am more inclined to agree with the argument put forward by Julie Burstein amongst others, that creativity grows out of everyday experiences…we need to embrace challenges and limitations as these are key contributors to creativity (Burstein, 2012). I would argue that this is never truer than when one is teaching in a physically restrictive space.
Methods and Methodology

‘If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it’?

(Einstein, n.d.)

In my research proposal regarding this paper, I stated my intention to conduct my research through a variety of case study methodologies; namely observation of colleagues’ lessons, my own lesson plans and evaluations, my teaching journal and questionnaires concerning teaching in a restrictive physical space (to be completed by interested colleagues on a voluntary basis). With so much variety in terms of approach, it is clear why the opinion ‘case study is more a strategy than a method’ (Punch, 2009, p. 119) exists.

The arguments for the use of the case study as a research tool are persuasive. As Wilson states; ‘you (the teacher researcher) are likely to be engaged in a small-scale, short-term, classroom-based project, so using either a case study or action research approach is likely to be the most appropriate method’ (Wilson, 2013, p. 85). There is no doubt that through the use of the case study as a research method, one can study a particular area of enquiry in depth.

Critics of the case study as a research tool state, however, that ‘its dependence on a single case limits its generalizability’ (Demetrion, 2013, p. 259). I decided that I would counteract this drawback of the case study as a research tool by examining my research focus through the use of one primary case study and several complimentary micro case studies. This research strategy is referred to by Stake as being (a focus
within and across cases) called multiple or comparative case study’ Stake (1994) cited in (Punch, 2009).

The primary case study was comprised of the research I undertook surrounding my current workplace. As aforementioned in this paper, this is a small, independent co-educational London day school catering for pupils aged 3-11. The micro case studies were comprised of the responses I received from participants on the internet. The latter participants were and remain unknown to me as were the workplaces they discussed. I feel that these micro case studies have complimented the reliability of the findings derived from the primary case study due to this distinction and added weight to their generalizability. As has been stated, ‘the findings from a case study can be put forward as being potentially applicable to other cases’ (Punch, 2009, p. 121).

In addition, I stated in my research proposal that it was my intention to use focus group discussions and/or semi-structured interviews depending on interest from colleagues, to comprise the methods used within my primary case study strategy. In practice, I was able to gather the data I intended largely as described above but with certain changes. I was unable to arrange focus groups or semi-structured interviews with colleagues at my school and ex-colleagues due to a lack of interested parties. This was most likely due to the inevitable time pressures felt by teachers and student teachers during term time and was perhaps a barrier to research I should have considered before writing my proposal.

In addition I felt that on discussing my data gathering intentions with my colleagues and ex-colleagues, a questionnaire would not have been received with enthusiasm. The feedback I received from colleagues suggested this would have been too formal
and would have seemed like extra work. I considered the guidelines offered by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) in relation to this which stated; ‘Researchers must recognize concerns relating to the ‘bureaucratic burden’ of much research, especially survey research, and must seek to minimize the impact of their research on the normal working and workloads of participants (BERA - British Educational Research Association, 2011, p. 7).’

Having considered these guidelines, I opted instead to allow interested colleagues to respond to my research question in an open-ended fashion by email. I found this method to be somewhat effective and I received five detailed responses from interested colleagues. These contributions will help to add more perspectives to the case study aspect of my research.

With regard to my personal intended data collection, i.e. my teaching journal, lesson plans/evaluations and peer observations of colleagues, in practice I had various degrees of success. Due to changing year group and moving to Reception during my second year of teaching (I previously had no experience of the Early Years Foundation Stage, even as a student teacher) I found that the day-day challenges of learning how to teach a curriculum new to me meant I was unable to keep an effective teaching journal. I was, however, able to write lesson plans, complete evaluations and conduct peer observations successfully to contribute to the case study of my school.

My research proposal also stated my intention to use the internet as a tool in order to publicise my questionnaire to a wider potential pool of respondents. I intended the questionnaire to be aimed at those teachers working in the maintained and independent sectors who would be interested in offering their opinions on teaching in
a restrictive physical space. The websites I would most likely use to publicise the questionnaire would be the Times Educational Supplement and other specific websites relating to specific age ranges e.g. the Early Years Forum.

The reason behind my decision to employ a variety of data harvesting methods and strategies was in the interest of ensuring triangulation was present in my research and thus the validity and generalizability of my findings would be enhanced. As has been stated; ‘Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection’ (Cohen, et al., 2011, p. 195).

Through my decision to invite open responses to the question, ‘to what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching?’, from both my colleagues (the aforementioned primary case study) and from the internet users discussed above (the micro case studies) could be seem as using the same method on different occasions or in different spheres. This is known as methodical triangulation (Cohen, et al., 2011, p. 196).

When I proposed using the internet as a tool in conducting research, I was very aware that BERA states in its guidelines that ‘Social networking and other on-line activities…present challenges for consideration of consent issues and the participants must be clearly informed that their participation and interactions are being monitored and analysed for research.’ (BERA - British Educational Research Association, 2011, p. 5).

Thus I intended to make clear, and did so, that involvement in my research both on and offline would be voluntary. In addition to this, it was made clear to all potential participants that their anonymity would be guaranteed throughout the research and
subsequent publication of this report through the use of a clear preliminary statement. This practice clearly follows the guidelines set by BERA; ‘Researchers must recognise the participants’ entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity’ (BERA - British Educational Research Association, 2011, p. 7).

Additionally I wished to make clear, and did so, that the completed research paper would be available on request to any respondents who contributed to my research. It was also my intention to make clear to participants, including those recruited via the internet, that this option was available. These actions are in keeping with BERA’s guidelines which state; ‘The Association considers it to be good practice for researchers to debrief participants at the conclusion of research and to provide them with copies of any reports…arising from their participation (BERA - British Educational Research Association, 2011, p. 8)’

In practice I was able to use the internet as a tool to collect opinions from a wider pool of respondents and this has without doubt enhanced the data available to me for analysis. Having been a user of the Times Educational Supplement (TES) internet forums for a period of two years before commencing this report, I had often seen users request responses to questionnaires whereby a link had to be clicked on which led to the survey. The surveys then required completion, usually through the method of closed question options e.g. how much do you agree with this statement? – strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree. I observed that the response from forum users to this style of questionnaires was usually negative – users did not wish to complete surveys or click through to another site.
Having observed the usually underwhelming response from TES forum users to survey/questionnaire completion requests, I decided not to employ my intended research tool of questionnaires and instead began a topic in the forum based on my research focus question: ‘Do small/less than ideal classrooms constrain or inspire creative teaching’? I invited forum users to respond with their thoughts on this question and found that this encouraged twenty forum users to post their opinions.

It would have been useful to have obtained more responses to analyse from both my colleagues and via the internet forums. However, you cannot as a researcher force people to provide their opinion. You can ask politely and remind your target audience of your request but you cannot be more forceful - you must be mindful of research ethics and that participation in your research must remain voluntary. This will not be the case if undue pressure is placed on people to respond to your research requests. As BERA states; ‘The Association takes voluntary informed consent to be the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway’ (BERA - British Educational Research Association, 2011, p. 5).

To examine the issue of sampling concerning the case studies used in my research, it has been stated that; ‘sampling must be representative of the total population’ (Cohen, et al., 2011, p. 143). With regard to my primary case study, my current workplace, I was careful to ensure that I targeted potential respondents from different career stages, educational backgrounds and age groups. It was impossible to achieve an exact gender balance of responders, however, due to their being only three male members of staff at the school.
My workplace being a small school with only 16 full-time teaching staff, I was aiming for a response rate of approximately a third. I felt that this response rate would provide a reasonable cross-section of opinions within this case study. In order to attempt to achieve this response rate, I was aware I would have to invite all the staff to respond if interested to allow for non-response and/or spoiled responses. By the conclusion of the data collection period of my research, I had received four responses. This was one response less than I had hoped for (a third of 16 is 5.3). As has been noted; ‘the researcher may have to rely on volunteers e.g. friends and interested people.’ (Cohen, et al., 2011, p. 160). The potential issues surrounding research amongst one’s friends and colleagues will be discussed in the next chapter.

It became clear to me through the difficulties I faced trying to obtain responses to my research in this primary case study, why triangulation of data collection is important as can be the strategy of using more than one case study, in order to give a research study credibility. With regard to the micro case studies, comprised of the responses from internet forum users, I realised that it was impossible to envision a sample size as the potential internet responses and forum users were infinite. I resolved that I would have to be satisfied with whatever level of response I received.

In order to analyse the qualitative question response data collected with regard to both the primary case study and the micro case studies, I intended to and eventually did utilise the ‘process of ‘induction’ – of identifying emergent categories that seem to represent the main patterns in the data once it is collected’ (Taber, 2007, p. 163).
Having identified the main emergent categories in the data, I then began to categorise each question response on a statement by statement basis. This is in keeping with Evans’ advice to; ‘develop codes as you go through data’ (Evans, 2013, p. 166).

The categories which emerged from the particular set of data I identified as 1. An expressed opinion that creativity is constrained by a small/less than ideal classroom space; 2. An expressed opinion that creativity is not constrained by a small/less than ideal classroom space and 3. No clear opinion expressed on whether creativity is constrained by a small/less than ideal classroom space.

I also intended and eventually chose to analyse my findings using the discursive analysis method, identifying the key themes that become apparent as the data was studied. The findings resulting from this data analysis will be discussed in the next chapter. In addition to this, I decided to present this data as a pie chart so that the distribution of opinions across the three described categories could be seen clearly. This is in keeping with the advice given by Wilson and Fox; ‘present your findings in ways that capture the key ideas so that it is easier to see at a glance’ (Wilson & Fox, 2013, p. 141).

In order to analyse the remaining qualitative data, such as lesson observations and lesson evaluations, I have again opted to utilise the discursive analysis method, identifying the key themes that become apparent as the data was studied. As will be made clear in my further discussion next chapter, the analysis and collection of the data used in this report was not without difficulty and adaptions to my original proposed methodology became necessary. However as has been stated; ‘school-based
research tends not to adopt…a polarized stance to methodology and is more likely to take a pragmatic approach and use multiple methods’ (Wilson, 2013, p. 82).

Finally to make clear what naturally occurring evidence has been obtained during the researching and writing of this project, within my Appendix of Supporting Evidence there can be found my original notes written when drafting my question put to potential respondents of my primary and micro case studies (including informed consent)\(^1\), the raw responses to the question\(^2\) and the ethics form completed and signed by the then Head of my current school\(^3\).

\(^1\) Document B, Appendix of Supporting Evidence.
\(^2\) Documents C and D, Appendix of Supporting Evidence.
\(^3\) Document A, Appendix of Supporting Evidence.
Findings, Analysis and Discussion

‘There is nothing like looking, if you want to find something. You certainly usually find something, if you look, but it is not always quite the something you were after.’
(Tolkien, 1937)

Introduction

Research Aim

In the interests of clarification for the reader, the aim of my report is to question the view that the optimum environment in which to teach Early Years and Year 1 is a large, open-plan classroom with access to outdoor space. The current accepted theory being that young children require a large amount of indoor and outdoor space to learn effectively through creative teaching and child-initiated creative experiences.

I planned to challenge such views through research and thus advance understanding of how the available physical teaching space impacts on creativity in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 classroom.

My overall research focus comprised 4 subsidiary objectives:

1. To identify the barriers to creativity caused by a restrictive physical space.

2. To evaluate critically the current literature concerning creative teaching and how this translates to those teaching in a restrictive space.

3. Explore methods of creatively teaching the EYFS and Key Stage 1 curriculum in a restrictive physical space through a combination of action research focusing on my own practice and sample-based questionnaires.

4. Formulate recommendations for fully utilising a restrictive physical space in order to teach creatively and enhance children’s learning.
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Data Collection

In my research proposal regarding this paper, I stated my intention to conduct my research through a triangulation of case study methodologies; namely observation of colleagues’ lessons, my own lesson plans and evaluations, my teaching journal and questionnaires concerning teaching in a restrictive physical space (to be completed by interested colleagues on a voluntary basis).

I decided against using a survey format that required respondents to click through to a survey site and choose from prescribed options. I had observed whilst browsing the Times Educational Supplement website forums that researchers attempting to gain respondents via these method were not overly successful. I therefore decided to ask people for their views in a more open-ended fashion. The original notes I made when drafting my question can be found in the Appendix of Supporting Evidence. The final format of the question I put forward to potential respondents in both the primary and micro case studies can be found in the Appendix of Supporting Evidence.

I decided that I would strengthen the decision to use case study as a research tool by examining my research focus through the use of one primary case study and several complimentary micro case studies. The responses I received in both the primary and micro case studies, presented in the Appendix of Supporting Evidence, are unaltered except when anonymity has demanded the alteration of names.

Data Analysis

4 Document B, Appendix of Supporting Evidence.  
5 Documents C and D, Appendix of Supporting Evidence.
The data analysis was conducted through a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The raw data collected via questionnaires in the primary and micro case studies was subjected to a coding system. In order to evaluate how effectively the responses fulfilled the research aim I utilised the 'process of 'induction’ – of identifying emergent categories that seem to represent the main patterns in the data once it is collected' (Taber, 2007, p. 163).

In order to carry this out effectively, each questionnaire response submitted by an individual was split into statements. Having identified the main emergent categories in the data, I then began to categorise each question response on a statement by statement basis. This is in keeping with Evans’ advice to; ‘develop codes as you go through data’ (Evans, 2013, p. 166).

The statements were then coded according to whether they clearly expressed an opinion that creativity was constrained, that creativity was not constrained or no clear opinion expressed on whether creativity was constrained. Following the coding the data was converted into pie charts in order to show clearly the proportion of statements which addressed the research aim and will be presented as such in ‘Findings and Discussion – Section A’.

The remainder of the raw data collected from observation of colleagues’ lessons, my own lesson plans and evaluations will be presented in a discursive fashion in ‘Findings and Discussion – Section B’, identifying the key themes that become apparent as the data was studied and with direct reference to the raw evidence available in the Appendix of Supporting Evidence.

**Findings and Discussion**
Section A

For clarification purposes, I will again explain how the raw data gleaned from the questionnaires was grouped into either the primary case study or micro case studies. The primary case study mainly consisted of the responses of current/former colleagues in relation to a particular educational setting we were all familiar with i.e. my current school. The micro case studies largely consisted of responses from educational professionals unknown to the researcher and obtained through the Times Educational Supplement website. The one exception to this rule was a response from a former colleague which contained the forwarded response of a then education student unknown to the researcher and with regard to an unfamiliar setting. It was decided that this response should therefore be grouped with the micro case studies.

For raw questionnaire data⁶ and initial coding analysis⁷, please see the Appendix of Supporting Evidence.

When analysing the questionnaire data I found that responders wanted to share their experiences and often discussed advantages and disadvantages of a small/less than ideal physical teaching space. They did not, on the whole, use much of their response to directly address whether in their opinion these issues constrain or inspire creative teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 classroom. This can be seen clearly below in the tables and pie charts displayed in Figure 1 overleaf.

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⁶ Document C, Appendix of Supporting Evidence.
⁷ Document D and E, Appendix of Supporting Evidence.
As can be seen in both the Primary Case Study and the Micro Case Studies pie charts, the proportion of statements expressed as a direct opinion on whether creativity was constrained or not constrained are almost exactly balanced. The largest proportion of statements in both sets of case study fell into the category of no clear opinion expressed on whether creativity is constrained or not in a less than ideal physical teaching space.
These findings do not directly challenge the views held by Maynard as cited by (Evans, 2010), Broadhead as cited by (Evans, 2010), Sparkes as cited by (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003) and Voulalas and Sharpe (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005) and discussed in detail in the Background Reading section, that creativity is constrained by a less than ideal physical space. The strength in these arguments is that fact that there will always be certain activities that cannot be performed in a restricted physical space and thus a certain amount of creativity is lost.

However, the almost completely equal proportion of statements showing a clear opinion on whether creativity was constrained or not; in both the primary and micro case studies, does show that on balance respondents to the questionnaire do not support the aforementioned views either. The opinions expressed fall directly down the middle of the argument. Whilst I did not expect quite such a balance of opinions in the findings, they do suggest that the debate on whether creativity is constrained by a less than ideal physical teaching space is alive and well and certainly not polarised.

The weakness in the aforementioned arguments of Maynard as cited by (Evans, 2010), Broadhead as cited by (Evans, 2010), Sparkes as cited by (Jeffrey & Woods, 2003) and Voulalas and Sharpe (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005) is that they make no allowance for the fact that teaching is an inherently creative profession in which the progressive practitioner inherently makes the best use of the space available to them. As Craft has stated through her ‘Little C’ creativity argument (Craft, 2002) and Sutherland specifically, ‘the lack of a normal, or ideal, situation at first forces you, and later invites you, to become more creative’ (Sutherland, 2006, p. 3).
Findings and Discussion

Section B

Having discussed the findings and themes shown by the primary and micro case studies responses, it is now appropriate to consider the themes that have become apparent through the study of my own lesson evaluations\(^8\). In my current school it is expected that staff write a brief evaluation of all lessons taught each day. I am fortunate that this has provided me with a wealth of naturally-occurring evidence to consider for this report. However the amount of evidence is so great that it would be impossible to analyse it all for a paper of this length.

When considering what sample size to use, I decided to use the format of the academic year as my guiding principle. I decided to use a sample size of 6 weeks of lesson evaluations, thus this would equate approximately to one week evaluation per half term. As within any small school, the structure of the school day despite being timetabled is often prone to change. Flexibility is essential as space communally used by the school may be required for events and lessons may have to be adapted to allow for rehearsals for assemblies and productions.

When selecting the lesson evaluations that would comprise my sample, I aimed to include a selection which would reflect this reality. The sample evaluations have not been altered for the purposes of this paper to maintain the integrity of the evidence, except for the alteration of names for anonymity reasons. Thus they are not always written in complete sentences and contain abbreviations.

\(^8\) See Document F in Appendix of Supporting Evidence.
When analysing my lesson evaluations it became apparent to me that the overarching theme which presents itself throughout is my desire to include more movement in my lessons and to implement a more cross-curricular approach to my teaching. My words, often written in haste at the end of a long working day, seem to suggest at times that the lack of space available in my classroom is affecting the amount of creativity in my teaching; ‘The children could remember the story of Elmer well and could explain why he was different. The remaining children to draw Elmer completed the task and wrote ‘I am Elmer’. F had a good go at writing part of this sentence independently. It would be great to combine some role play with this story when teaching next year. Will have to factor in moving back tables and chairs to accommodate marching around like elephants’.

Another example of a lack of space perhaps affecting the level of creativity in my teaching is my comment, ‘Would have like to have a painting activity running alongside this but due to space this would have been too tricky to manage. Instead decided to have a table completing firework drawings using wax crayons on black paper.’

My wish to include more movement within my lessons does not mean I always found space constraints prohibitive to my teaching creatively. When analysing my lesson evaluations, I found there were numerous occasions I had been able to incorporate creative teaching and movement into my lessons, ‘Children enjoyed singing the head, shoulders, knees and toes song alongside this lesson, allowing for the inclusion of music/singing and listening and attention. This is a workable solution for the small...

9 Document F Appendix of Supporting Evidence, Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 3: 24.09.12, Monday, CLL.
10 Document F Appendix of Supporting Evidence, Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 8: 05.11.12, Monday CLL.
space available as it does not involve moving around the classroom, rather on the spot.\textsuperscript{11}

A further example of my being able to implement creative teaching through movement is shown through my comment, ‘Dedicated part of the afternoon session to the firework movement activity. Played the children a clip of fireworks exploding and asked the class to focus on the shapes made by the fireworks and the sounds of them exploding…Modelled some movements such as raising up arms into a circle and crouching down to jump up to imitative firework movements. Children then listened to firework sounds and devised their own movements. Activity went well but have a feeling it would be much more successful if it could be conducted in the hall.\textsuperscript{12}’

In my teaching I try to combine all the resources I have at my disposal in order to teach as creatively as possible. An example of where I was able to achieve this despite limited space is shown in my comment, ‘Introduced children to the concept of ordering by size. We practised on the IWB using a TESiboard activity ordering animals. Children enjoyed this. We then played a game where we ordered the children in size order by height. Children were really engaged by this game and could just about get it to work despite space constraints’\textsuperscript{13}. In this lesson I had been able to include interactive technology appealing to visual and audial learners, with a movement activity to engage kinaesthetic learners.
I have found analysing my lesson evaluations as part of this project extremely helpful in reminding me of the ideas I had for improving my practice this current academic year. Comments such as ‘Next year it would be nice to record video adverts as an alternative to the tried and tested design a poster format’\textsuperscript{14}, I believe really show that creative teaching can be achieved despite having access to a limited physical space. This is in direct support of the argument discussed earlier in this paper that ‘even the most difficult of existing space configurations can still offer possibilities for the determined educator’ (Warner & Myers, 2010, p. 32).

These findings are in direct contrast to the argument put forward by Voulalas and Sharpe that ‘lack of adequate appropriate spaces for meetings, library purposes, housing new technologies, staff facilities and…assemblies’ were considerably detrimental to a school becoming a successful, creative ‘learning community’. (Voulalas & Sharpe, 2005, p. 7).

Following on from this discussion of my lesson evaluation data, it is now appropriate to discuss the final element of the data I collected; lesson observation data. This data can be found in the Appendix of Supporting Evidence\textsuperscript{15}. This data was anonymised from the outset so remains unchanged, complete with abbreviations. The full-time class teaching staff at my current school number twelve. Thus to further discuss sample size, I desired to obtain a representative number of observations across the key stages. I settled on obtaining four observations, thus reflecting the experience of a third of the class teaching staff. The observations range in age-range from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Key Stage 2.

\textsuperscript{14} Document F Appendix of Supporting Evidence, Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 8: 10.06.13, Thursday CLL
\textsuperscript{15} Document G Appendix of Supporting Evidence
It is clear throughout the evidence collected via lesson observations that lack of space had a certain negative effect on the ability of all the teachers observed to teach creative lessons, ‘Due to space constraints, children were squashed trying to sit on available floor space to view Interactive Whiteboard’\(^{16}\).

Despite these space constraints, however, almost all the teachers observed used all the resources at their disposal to teach creatively as possible, ‘For the purposes of this lesson, two classes were taught together and the doors opened up to allow maximum use of the space. Space was used to the best of teacher’s ability – during activity children moved round to play bingo game at different tables…it was clear that the teacher had to manage space carefully.’\(^{17}\) This is further supported by the comment, ‘Space was used to the best of teacher’s ability – during activity children moved round to sit in groups with others’\(^{18}\).

I did feel that that there was one lesson observation which illustrated that one must have the foresight to use the space as creatively as possible when faced with limits to physical teaching space. In this particular instance, I felt that the space available could have been utilised better, ‘space was used mainly to the best of teacher’s ability – children could have managed to move around to sit with others for a group activity. Space is limited in this classroom and this does have an impact on what activities can be carried out’\(^{19}\).

\(^{16}\) Document G Appendix of Supporting Evidence, Peer Observation Form, Date: 15.10.2012
\(^{17}\) Document G Appendix of Supporting Evidence, Peer Observation Form, Date: 02.07.2013
\(^{18}\) Document G Appendix of Supporting Evidence, Peer Observation Form, Date: 11.03.2013
\(^{19}\) Document G Appendix of Supporting Evidence, Peer Observation Form, Date: 10.09.2013
As was the case with the analysis of the data resulting from the primary and micro case study question responses, the themes arising from the data resulting from the lesson evaluation and observation evidence do not directly challenge the current thinking at a national level. However, the themes that have arisen do illustrate that there is as much evidence that space constraints do not limit creative teaching as there is evidence that would suggest the opposite.
Conclusion

‘In literature and in life we ultimately pursue, not conclusions, but beginnings.’

(Tanenhaus, 1986)

The writing of this project has been both a professional and personal journey for me. I had a particular interest in researching the issue of whether physically restrictive teaching space also had the power to constrain creative teaching as that type of environment had been the one I had experienced since qualifying as a teacher in 2011. This was in stark contrast to the purpose-built schools, one of which was very new, where I spent my teaching practice whilst studying for my Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

This project began life as the portfolio submitted for module PBM 4000 Investigating Practice. Through my study of that module it became apparent to me that whilst there was a wealth of research surrounding the topic of creativity and creative teaching, very little actually touched on whether creativity was constrained by the physical teaching space available. The literature that did touch on the subject did so briefly and without in-depth study.

I decided I wished to examine the area in more detail by way of the research project. My aim was to question the view that physical space does constrain creative teaching and to advance understanding of how the available physical teaching space impacts on creativity in the Early Years and Key Stage 1 classroom. I will now discuss the four subsidiary objectives which comprised the research focus and how effectively I have been able to meet them.
The first subsidiary objective was to identify the barriers to creativity caused by a restrictive physical space. Through the use of action research techniques such as lesson observation of others and my own lesson evaluations, I was able to identify that a restrictive physical space hampered the children’s ability to move around the classroom effectively and in certain cases made viewing the interactive whiteboard problematic.

This created a barrier to creativity as teachers, including myself, found it difficult to plan in activities which involved movement such as working in groups, rotational activities or physical movement such as dancing. This did not mean such activities were impossible, however, I would argue that the inclusion of movement activities simply required more thought and forward planning in a physical restrictive environment than a more spacious one. The result of this discovery has impacted personally on my own practice and that of my colleagues as I have been able to share my findings with them.

As a result we have become more reflective practitioners and have made it a school aim to look for more creative ways in which to teach lessons across the curriculum. It is hoped that this will translate into raised pupil engagement and attainment. As a school we are always looking to maximise the space at our disposal and personally, I have identified that I would like to receive further training in teaching the EYFS (it was my first experience teaching this year group when I began this project) and in teaching dance and drama.

My second subsidiary objective was to evaluate critically the current literature concerning creative teaching and how this translates to those teaching in a restrictive space. I discussed the current literature concerning creativity and creative teaching...
and how it translates or does not translate to those teaching in a restrictive space in my previous chapters entitled ‘Background Literature’ and ‘Findings, Analysis and Discussion’.

As a result of this examination of the literature and the realisation that my project contains only one main case study, I feel that there is scope for a larger scale study across the United Kingdom investigating teaching in a restrictive or less than ideal physical space and subsequent impact on creativity, teaching and learning. There has never been a more appropriate time for such a study to be conducted as pressure on places for primary-aged children continues to force local authorities to make use of temporary classrooms and less than ideal buildings in desperation. Steve Reed, who speaks for the organisation on children and young people, stated; ‘We know from recent experience that when we invest in good-quality buildings, children do better, and if we don’t bring the money in for this generation of young children, then they're not going to perform as well as they should be’. (BBC, 2010)

My third subsidiary objective was to explore methods of creatively teaching the EYFS and Key Stage 1 curriculum in a restrictive physical space and my fourth subsidiary objective was to formulate recommendations for fully utilising a restrictive physical space in order to teach creatively and enhance children’s learning. It was discussed in my previous chapter ‘Findings, Analysis and Discussion’ that creative teaching methods were employed by teachers in a restricted physical space such as group work, role-play and drama, movement sessions and the use of technology such as interactive whiteboards.

It also became apparent, however, that there was a need to fully consider all the opportunities the teaching space could offer in order for creative teaching to truly
flourish. Could the furniture be stacked or pushed back to allow for different activities? Could extra time to allow for this adjustment be planned in? Could there be areas of multiple use which children could be trained to manage? Have the possibilities of information technology been fully explored e.g. iPads and the use of video recording? I feel practitioners need to consider and reflect on all these questions, myself included, in order to evaluate whether more creativity could be achieved within their teaching spaces.

Having discussed the answers to my research aim, on overall reflection with regard to the research methodology I employed in this project, if I were to use questionnaires in a future piece of research I would ensure that at least some of the response had to contain a direct opinion with regard to the research aim in question. The format of the questionnaire would require careful consideration as to ensure participants would still respond, however I feel an alteration here could have prevented the considerable amount of respondents replies I had to code as ‘no direct opinion given’.

This project has given me the opportunity of researching a topic of interest to me and enabled me to grow as a professional. I see the fact that my findings show there is as much evidence that space constraints do not limit creative teaching as there is evidence that suggest they do as proof that there are no conclusive answers in this debate. I feel it is the responsibility of every practitioner to use the space available to them to teach as creatively as possible; to see a limited or less than ideal teaching space as a challenge and not an excuse.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

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Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?


Appendix of Supporting Evidence
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

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Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Annika Cooper
Module PBM 4029

CONSENT FORM

Project title: Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Name of Researcher: Annika Charlotte Cooper
Name of Institution: Edge Hill University
Student Number: 21880239

Please tick box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 01.09.12 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that the participation of the school and its staff is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my approval at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any information given by staff may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher.

4. I understand that my name, the name of the school, any staff member or pupil will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.

5. I agree to the school and any interested staff taking part in the above study.

Mrs A B Harris 30.10.12
Name of Headteacher Date Signature

Miss A C Cooper 30.10.12
Researcher Date Signature
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Annika Cooper

I am currently a teacher at a small independent prep school. I am conducting a research project concerning teaching in a constrained physical space. I am interested in teachers’ opinions as to whether a small classroom restricts the creativity of lessons taught or inspires the teacher to think more creatively when planning? In the interest of ethics, any replies posted will be anonymised and a printed copy of the research will be available on request to those who choose to participate.

I am interested in all responses but especially those which form teachers with experience of teaching in a small classroom/less than ideal space. It would be helpful when responding if you could outline briefly your reasons/point behind your opinion.

I am posting this in the independent section and opinion section in order to get a wider view of discussion.

Facebook Message: 1 to teachers I know 1 to EYFS staff.

Hello my lovely teacher colleagues,

I hope you are enjoying your well-earned Easter break! I’m currently completing my research project for my M.Ed and would be grateful for your views on the following:

To you feel that teaching in a small classroom/physical space inspires or constrains creative teaching? It would be really helpful if when replying you could state a couple of reasons behind your view. If you have in a small classroom/physical space yourself, I would really appreciate your take on this issue and any further comments you have.

In the interest of ethics, I will anonymise all responses and a copy of the printed report will be available to anyone who requests it.

By small, I mean has insufficient space for a football carpet area and boxes drone’s are but not large enough to be accommodate more than this i.e. role play areas, display tables etc. Such a classroom is likely to be a non-purpose built school or temporary building.
Hi my lovely teacher friends, hope you are enjoying your well earned rest! I am currently conducting a MA research project and am interested in your views on whether teaching in a small or less than ideal classroom inspires creative teaching or constrains it. All views are gratefully received and I am especially interested in hearing from teachers who have experience of/ are currently teaching in a small or less than ideal physical space. It would be really helpful if you could provide a couple of reasons behind your view if you respond. In the interests of ethics, all responses will be anonymised and a copy of the final research report will be made available to those who request it. I am happy to buy a drink for any BHS staff who respond by the way! Thanks to all of you xx
Annika, please find response to your Facebook message from a fellow PGCE student:

My classroom was a large room with very poor lighting. I was in a year one class with several children who had behaviour issues. We had a number of children who were very disruptive and one with potential undiagnosed Aspergers.

The school worked with a creative curriculum which involved a lot of displays with the classroom being themed around the topic. We were doing the jungle so there were vines hanging from the ceiling and two areas that had sort of army netting hung over them with things the children had made hanging down from them. All in all it was a very hectic and full classroom. During all of my observations from my tutors they commented on how busy the classroom and distracting. They thought that if you stripped the classroom back a number of the children with behaviour issues would actually clam down. It was far to stimulating for most of them to cope with and it fed their behaviour. One boy, the one with potential Aspergers, worked much better when he was at a table all by himself facing a blank wall where there was nothing to over excite him. He himself said he preferred working there as it helped him concentrate. I think a lot of our children would have benefitted from this.

KM

PGCE STUDENT
Dear Annika-

Please find my brief reflections below. Feel like I am sermonising rather near the end but hope helpful nonetheless!

Hope this finds you well,

D

I think a small classroom can be a stimulus for creativity - it depends somewhat on the number of children in such a space. A small class size in a small classroom can enable the creation of a cosy, friendly environment for learning. If the classroom is overcrowded, it constricts creative teaching methods as expediency demands that children be seated and learn from the board rather than moving between groups, stations, etc.

The effectiveness of creative teaching in a small space I think depends more on the resourcefulness and imagination of the teacher. I do not think lack of space need necessarily limit creativity - albeit that a small space may present particular challenges with regard to creating different workspaces, grouping by ability, etc - more important in this regard, to my mind, would be the availability of creative resources and the willingness of the teacher dig deep into his or her imagination to make efficient and stimulating use of the available space, both in terms of teaching and displays.
In my opinion, the size of a classroom definitely has an impact on children's learning and personal development. Humans pursue freedom from an early age and this is directly linked to space. The bigger the space is, the greater the feeling of freedom becomes.

Our animal instinct is also territorial and we are all keen to mark our space, to show everyone that a portion of the whole is ours. Younger children will have a tendency to do this by finding their favourite corner, but this becomes harder is the space is limited.

On the other hand, for those children that are shy or a little introverted, a small classroom environment can help them feeling more confident, safe and secure.

As children grow older, they also become less active, playtime is shorter and academic demands are greater. Therefore, the size of the classroom becomes less important since mobility is less needed in the learning experience,

EYFS and KS1 classrooms need a greater amount of practical resources and colourful and interactive displays. If the classroom is small, it can become overcrowded causing frustration in pupils when they bump into equipment and cannot find what they need. This would undoubtedly have a negative impact in their learning experience, since they are likely to sit and wait for the teacher to provide necessary resources instead of developing an investigative and inquisitive attitude.

Small spaces can also be a cause for stress in both teachers and pupils. Spacious, bright and well-ventilated classrooms environments help all members of the class community feel happier and more relaxed allowing effective teaching and leaning to happen.

In a country like Britain, weather and poor lighting car often have an impact on mood and general well-being. Space and natural light in a classroom become essential factors for a healthier and more positive attitude towards education.

M - P.S. I hope this helps. If you need more please let me know. Xx
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

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From: H H <hh@AnySchool.org.uk>

Subject: Small classrooms

Date: 16 April 2013 15:39:56 GMT+01:00

To: Annika Cooper <annika.cooper@AnySchool.org.uk>

Annika, Not sure if this will help or if it is on the right lines. Let me know if you want something else and sorry for being so out-spoken but I feel fairly strongly about it!

I think that working in a small classroom severely hampers both the teachers and pupils opportunities to be creative.

The areas which are inevitably lost when a classroom has a lack of space are the home corner and the reading corner which are both elements that are crucial to a child's creative development.

The reading corner in the EYFS and KS1 often incorporates opportunities for dressing up and re-telling stories through acting and puppets which help to nurture children's creative thinking and exploration of their imaginations.

The home corner helps children to explore a topic in a creative way often through role-play.

As an Art specialist at the moment the lack of space that I am provided with severely limits the amount of 3-dimensional and collaborative work that I am able to do as there is no room to store larger projects that require drying or for children to undertake collaborative work in groups.

Teachers however are essentially creative creatures (particularly in Primary teaching) and will often find solutions to problems with classroom layouts or space but no amount of problem solving can compensate for a child being un-able to dig for treasure in the sand tray or discover how to make things float and sink in the water tray.
Creativity at its best requires space almost as much as it requires good teachers and to have to avoid certain projects with your class due to over-crowding of a small space is putting teachers at a severe disadvantage and forcing them to adopt a much more formulaic and rigid way of teaching.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

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From: R O <r.o@AnySchool.org.uk>

Subject: Info about small classroom

Date: 16 April 2013 15:48:20 GMT+01:00

To: "annika.cooper@AnySchool.org.uk" <annika.cooper@AnySchool.org.uk>

I teach twenty infants in a very small low ceilinged basement room. There is very little space for any physical movements or any role play areas at all. Working in a small class room gives teachers no choice but to be creative. I have worked in a very large classroom with 32 year sixes in which I sometimes used a microphone to communicate with everyone since the room was almost a hall.

I am much more creative in a small environment. This is because I am not focusing on getting my voice heard and there are less opportunities for the children to misbehave because all children are very much visible to me. Therefore everyone is involved and children cannot 'opt out', switch off and talk to each other- the teacher has more control. There is a greater sense of unity and therefore we can act as a creative team much more because I can trust the children more.

This sort of creativity would however mostly be more table-based but can also include circle time and drama activities if I push the tables back. The ideal classroom for creative output would have two distinct areas- one for table based learning and another space for physical movement.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

TES Opinion Forum: ‘Do small/ less than ideal classrooms constrain or inspire creative teaching’?

•

annikacooper
Member since 30-8-2010

• Hi All, I am a primary teacher currently conducting a MA research project. I am interested in teachers' views on whether teaching in a small or less than ideal classroom inspires creative teaching or constrains it. I had previously posted this thread in the 'Primary' forum but am reposting here in the hope of receiving a few more responses. All views are gratefully received and I am especially interested in hearing from teachers who have experience of/ are currently teaching in a small or less than ideal physical space. It would be really helpful if you could provide a couple of reasons behind your view if you respond. In the interests of ethics, all responses will be anonymised and a copy of the final research report will be made available to those responders who request it. For the purposes of this discussion, I would define 'small' as a classroom which just about has sufficient space for tables/chairs and a small carpeted area. There would be no space for role play areas, display tables etc. Such a classroom is likely to exist in a non-purpose built school e.g a converted residential building or perhaps a temporary building. Please feel free to PM a response if you prefer. Many thanks for reading :)

• Posted 13-4-2013 12:59

airy
Member since 18-11-2009

• I've never taught in a classroom with a small carpeted area. I bet loads of teachers have experience of teaching in cramped portakabins.

• Posted 13-4-2013 17:05

ninasimone
Member since 11-10-2004

• I am secondary so cannot present you with too many ideas about how primary classes are set up in terms of physical space. However, I have always found that delivering role play activities or indeed any activities which involve student movement around the classroom is masses easier the bigger the space available. Also, light, airy rooms generally makes the teaching atmosphere and environment a great deal more pleasant to teach in. I also find that students in ICT rooms, particularly, are cramped for space, due to the inevitable space taken up by hardware. Most ICT
rooms I have taught in have been converted from traditional classrooms so don't always lend themselves to ideal tech-based lessons. However, newer, fit for purpose suites I have used are far easier to teach in and students feel less constrained and therefore, one would hope, more productive.

- I cannot imagine that teaching, as I have done in the past, in smaller sized rooms is easy task, mainly due to the difficulty of teacher/student movements, especially when one wishes to examine class based work. There is also the issue of the inevitable moving of low level disruptive students away from others, which in a small room can be a minefield. Older classrooms can be made better if, budgets permitting, they were given a lick of paint now and again, or olde furniture moved or replaced with modern desks.

- Hope this helps. Albeit my reply is secondary based, I sometimes go into some schools and find the logistics of some rooms a detriment to teaching and learning. Newer BSF schools have got the balance right more often than not, except to say that the newer rooms aren't always as sturdy or hardwearing as older school rooms. I mean what do you expect when you may have hundreds of kids using rooms on a weekly basis!

- *Posted* 13-4-2013 17:52

secretsiren

*Member since 3-2-2012*

- Again, secondary so not entirely the same. But I once taught in a very small classroom but managed to get the desks arranged individually so I could get round to help everyone in the room; when I was ill, the powers that be changed the layout of the room (entirely without consultation) to face the interactive whiteboard rather than the normal whiteboard as this would be "better for Ofsted". This meant I had to have rows - very very difficult to get into the middle of them (as there was no room) to help out the kids in the middle of the rows. All display work and the oh-so-important level ladders were behind the students so were completely pointless. I was then forced to put everything onto Powerpoint (and have the projector light in my eyes all day) because there was no whiteboard for writing on.

- It was completely detrimental to the way I taught. I found myself over-using Powerpoints (which the children found tedious and I found uninspiring); I got migraines from having the projector light in my eyes all day; the displays were totally pointless; I couldn't help half the children in the class because I couldn't get to them - they had to pass their book to the end of the row and I would then have to speak to them in front of everyone (or have them come to my desk, which apparently is a crime punishable by death in most schools nowadays); there was far less room than there was before and it was actually quite claustrophobic. Unpleasant to say the least.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

- Posted 13-4-2013 18:58

FolkFan

Member since 6-7-2009

- Given the prevalence of use (in secondary schools anyway) of IWBs or digital projectors, adequate blackout is vital, IMHO...
- Posted 13-4-2013 18:59

jamezium

Member since 12-3-2009

- I have nearly always taught in small/ less than ideal classrooms.
- My immediate response to your question would be no. The classroom does not constrain creative teaching. If I need more space in the room, I frequently take the children outside or move the chairs to the corridor. Desks can be pushed to the back and tables placed in large groups. It doesn't inspire creative teaching either. Creative teaching is inspired by other teachers, things I have read and the children themselves, not by the four walls that surround me.
- Posted 13-4-2013 19:34

Theredtree

Member since 22-2-2013

- Like secretsiren I have also taught in a room where it was impossible to get to all of the students. It certainly doesn't inspire creative teaching and can constrain it in some instances. It helps to have an outside space for students to work, but some buildings do actively work against creativity.
- Posted 13-4-2013 22:29

FolkFan

Member since 6-7-2009

- Over 30+ years I've taught (History & other humanities subjects occasionally) in a number of unsuitable classrooms - one year in a textiles room; another year in a food room (smells etc. & dishwashers chugging away!)- but the worst was teaching 31
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

large boys in a room with only 30 desks (& those crammed in), with no blackout or even curtains (& it was sunny every lesson) and where any TV/Video had to be wheeled in, but there was no plug at the front, so everyone had to turn around to look at it in a back corner...Not good!

- *Posted 14-4-2013 8:02*

Lilyofthefield
*Member since 19-9-2001*

- Ditto. My Food Tech room was designed for 16 1950s pupils but the HT increased the set size to 25. Struggled on with much larger 21st century kids trying to reach over open gas flames to get to the pans at the back, queues for the sinks, late finishes because of opening and shutting the oven doors so often, until I had a H&S report done by the union and it was pronounced unsafe. HT's response? Don't do practicals.

- He installed a IWB but put it on the wall facing the two south-facing full width window walls, then refused to cough up for blinds, so I never used it. Then I left.

- *Posted 14-4-2013 9:16*

annikacooper
*Member since 30-8-2010*

- Thank you for all your responses and for taking the time to explain your circumstances and views in such detail. Not only will it provide rich data for me to analyse, it is heartening to hear so many stories from others doing they best they can to teach in physically challenging environments!

- *Posted 21-4-2013 17:53*

TES Primary Forum: ‘Small classrooms: constrain or inspire creative teaching’?

- 

annikacooper
*Member since 30-8-2010*

- Hi All, I am a primary teacher currently conducting a MA research project. I am interested in teachers’ views on whether teaching in a small or less than ideal classroom inspires creative teaching or constrains it. All views are gratefully received and I am especially interested in hearing from teachers who have experience of/ are
Currently teaching in a small or less than ideal physical space. It would be really helpful if you could provide a couple of reasons behind your view if you respond. In the interests of ethics, all responses will be anonymised and a copy of the final research report will be made available to those respondees who request it. Many thanks :) 

- *Posted 4-4-2013 14:22*

- 

[harsh-but-fair](#)  
*Member since 24-3-2006*

- Perhaps you'd better define 'small'?
- *Posted 4-4-2013 14:33*

- 

[annikacooper](#)  
*Member since 30-8-2010*

- Hi, thanks for your response. I would define 'small' as a classroom which just about has sufficient space for tables/chairs and a small carpeted area. There would be no space for role play areas, display tables etc. Such a classroom is likely to exist in a non-purpose built school e.g a converted residential building or perhaps a temporary building.
- *Posted 4-4-2013 16:09*

- 

[Lara mfl 05](#)  
*Member since 11-4-2008*

- When I first started teaching in a 'being built school' we had to have some classes in the classrooms. We had 'dining bays' which had tables for 8 children and we taught across 4 bays. The tables were 'fold-down tables' with a leg support, which the children rapidly learnt to 'kick' so making the tables collapse! The dining bays were also just outside the Hall, so lots of noise when PE was happening.

- As a colleague said, "You have to learn to be creative when teaching in such conditions". The outside space was used as much as possible and we had a really *creative curriculum* and colleagues and pupils have many happy memories of those days - as we learnt recently at a reunion.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

- We did 'turn & turn about with the classroom space', so practical subjects like Art, DT, Science were less of a problem and we had a wonderful huge outside area. Several small courtyards with tables for 'outside learning' and a large playing field. We also had a superb purpose built octagonal Music room, much envied by teachers at other schools.

  - Posted 4-4-2013 16:22

frustum

Member since 25-5-2003

- I am reminded of my last year in junior school, when the tables/chairs filled the entire classroom bar a narrow aisle along one side and the back. There were four long tables, and we sat down the sides of them: those in the middle were back to back, where getting in was a scramble, and they couldn't stand up properly when a visitor came in. The smallest pupils were in those seats, and the 8 largest got to sit at the ends. I was along the aisle side, with my back to one of the blackboards.

  - Posted 4-4-2013 23:11

Lara mfl 05

Member since 11-4-2008

- Lara mfl 05

  - When I first started teaching in a 'being built school' we had to have some classes in the classrooms.

  - Should actually have read classes in the corridors! (Funny how the brain 'reads what we expect', not necessarily what we've written!)

  - Posted 4-4-2013 23:43

annikacooper

Member since 30-8-2010

- Thank you for your response Lara, it's really interesting to read of other people's experiences and views of the issue of small classrooms or teaching in corridors as you describe!

  - Posted 5-4-2013 8:51
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

- Thanks for responding frustum, can't believe you were taught in such a tiny room!! I suppose once you were seated you pretty much stayed in that seat for a long time right?!
  
*Posted 5-4-2013 8:54*

- *bump* I am bumping this in the hope of receiving a few more responses, I really appreciate everyone who has taken the time to respond so far. If you prefer, please feel free to PM me your response and I will reply. Might post this on the 'Opinion' forum also so apologies for double posting to those of you who have already read this thread etc.
  
*Posted 13-4-2013 12:53*

- Hi
  My classroom is small anyway, and coupled with a large class I find it really difficult. Main difficulties are:
  1. moving around to ensure every child can access adult support
  2. no carpet space, which some children need as they struggle to sit still or not fiddle
  3. keeping the space tidy - I am super organised and now have to encourage my children to be, as they can't leave anything a mess or it makes the room even smaller.
  
*Posted 13-4-2013 13:05*
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

bobbycatrules
Member since 27-12-2008

- My school is in a former hotel. My classroom is a former bedroom. I only have 4 children because they have sebd. My teaching is not particularly creative. I follow the NC, QCA schemes and the Renewed Frameworks. I regularly teach with worksheets- which is said to hamper creativity- but OFSTED didnt mind because they graded me Outstanding last year. I dont think the space is as influential on teaching style as the personality of the teacher.

- Posted 13-4-2013 13:58

tafkam
Member since 7-8-2005

- I teach some of my lessons in a tiny classroom this year which has enough room for everyone to sit down in turn and then breathe.. that's about it. It certainly doesn't aid any creativity, but perhaps more significantly it makes it substantially more difficult for me to access certain students and groups during the lesson. I have to plan seating arrangements accordingly and just hope that those who normally cope well continue to do sol! It's horrendous.

- Posted 13-4-2013 14:15

choca_holic
Member since 3-4-2011

- My classroom is very small. I don't think it affects my creativity, but only because I have access to ample space just outside my classroom. Without it I think it would limit my creativity significantly, as there simply would not be space for role-play, decent group work etc. Opposite my classroom is a largish empty room used as the cloakroom, so I use this a lot. Also the classroom next to mine of often empty (part-time colleague and class which moves around for different subjects) so I use that a lot too.

- Disadvantages of a small classroom are:

  - Difficult to change seating plans around much due to fitting all the desks in
  - Difficult to physically access certain children for support through the lesson (as others have mentioned)
  - Gets very stuffy and can feel a bit claustrophobic when full
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

- Lack or storage space for books etc

- Advantages of a small classroom are:
  - Less display space to manage!

- *Posted* 13-4-2013 14:26

SchrodingersVet
*Member since* 18-12-2010

- I'm in a small classroom, lined with windows so it's lovely and light, but limits room for displays/working walls etc. Because of fire regulations, I have 3 doors in my class with only one corner ‘free’ for the book corner.

- Due to the size (and age) of the room, I have spent a lot of time rearranging furniture to suit the lesson/topic/school incentive etc which would not be such an issue in some of the larger, more modern classrooms that I have seen.

- I'm fortunate to have a small class size this year; although I can just about fit in 24 children with room for them on the carpet, anything more than this and it would start to get very crowded.

- However in 2 years the class coming up currently has 34 children in (based on appeals) and there just won't be the room- not for tables, chairs, carpet spaces, trays, lunch boxes, coat-pegs etc.

- Right now the small room isn't so much of an issue, but it is border-line cramped. My main concern is that in 2 years, if the children have to be taught in this class, then behaviour and attainment could suffer due to the extreme close-quarters.

- Current issues:
  - difficult to navigate around the tables as they are so close to the walls/windows/other tables (it would not be possible for larger framed individuals)
  - lack of room for storage- books, art supplies, wet art-work, existing resources, folders, stationery etc.

- Basically, I'm echoing what chocha_holic, and others, have already typed!
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

* [edited by: SchrodingersVet at 16:34 (GMT 0) on 13-4-2013]

* Posted 13-4-2013 16:33

* jubilada
  * Member since 21-8-2008

I am retired now, but in my role as a visiting music specialist I rarely had a my own allocated classroom and found myself teaching in many different work areas. Small dining kitchens, staff rooms, HT office, corridors, a public library down the road, and the playground immediately spring to mind. Yes they did require creative teaching on my part, mainly on how to manage a practical lesson with the given numbers of children. Sometimes I had to adapt a planned lesson because of a change of teaching space, which might happen when the photographer came in, or it was book week... It sometimes meant I got to work with a handful of children at a time, as in when I regularly had to use a small office space, which although still difficult in terms of space, was a good opportunity to get to know and see the abilities of the children. At one school I had to teach in a library corner of a large teaching area where other lessons were going on, not easy for the other group when I am teaching music which is not a quiet subject, but it is equally difficult trying to get children to listen carefully to quiet sounds, or the mood of music, if another group is doing some noisy drama or even just listening to a story. When the weather was good it was great to do singing games outside, but not fun when it was cold. However I would rather use my time being creative with lesson content without the constraint of space, and I would say the classes that always had restricted space did miss out. Some classes never got to play tuned percussion instruments because of inappropriate space. In the dining kitchen school, my first lessons were spent on how to safely set out the instruments on the floor and put away again, and practising leaving the room in an emergency without tripping over the instruments on the floor which really was a HS issue. A small space meant we couldn't do singing games, or other movement so important in early years music learning. Often overlooked by management is the problem of noise created in even a normal size classroom when you have 30 children all working on compositions in groups. It requires solid behaviour management, but also noise management to limit the danger to hearing. Hope I haven't gone on too much but wanted to give you specific examples.

* Posted 13-4-2013 16:38

*
Hi, this year I am unlikely enough to be in what was a spare classroom because of its size, and it is a nightmare! When all the children are in their seats it is impossible to move around- I have to get children to stand up in order to move around the room! Additionally, they are not a quiet class and being in this small space makes the squabbles and noise worse! I would say it does not affect what I teach- we just get on with it in the cramped conditions! Personally I find the main thing that hampers creativity is lack of resources rather than space! However in a bigger room it would be great to set up role play, interactive displays etc.

Posted 13-4-2013 17:00

My situation is similar to Schrodinger's class. I have a tiny room, but luckily a comparatively small class of 25. They are not the easiest of classes, though...so it's a bit of a challenge deciding on seating plans. Next year's class are a rather different matter.

I'd prefer to have table groups of 4, but that just doesn't work. Well, it does work, but then I can't get to anyone. I can't really have any other group table sizes...rows are an impossibility and most other "normal" seating arrangements just don't fit, due to the layout of the room. I don't really have space for a carpet area, either. My classroom has three exit doors, so my compulsory reading corner is in the only available corner...it's absolutely tiny, though and fits about two children.

For the moment, the arrangement that gives us most space and a carpet area, is slightly unusual. I have one big group table for eight children on one side, a group table of four attached to a row of four in the middle, and five tables around the outside at the wall (which means children are sitting facing the wall when they are working independently or with their partners). I usually make these children sit on the carpet during the input or when I need them to see the board. Since we work with small groups throughout the lesson, it does mean that I can pull certain children out and work with them on the carpet, while still being able to see the rest of my class.

I find it limits what I can do to some degree, but I've never had a big classroom and started out with a class of 33, so I'm not missing anything. I try to use our playground (weather permitting) or the hall, whenever possible. My class are so much easier to control and their behaviour is so much better when I'm able to physically get some space between them. I'd love to have a bigger room,...and a sink. Alternatively, I'd settle for my current room and a class of 15.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

- Posted 13-4-2013 20:15

- Thank you to everyone for your responses and for taking the time to explain your situations in detail. It is really helpful to have such a diverse range of experiences to analyse etc. It is also heartening to hear there are so many of us doing the best we can in classrooms which are physically challenging!

- Posted 21-4-2013 17:47

- I taught class 1 Reception/ half year 1 for many years in a small classroom where class 2 half yr 1/ yr 2 walked through (diagonal) to their classroom! We became very creative in managing the class so they did not disturb each other too much eg but it was annoying in having to layout tables and display boards so class 2 / class 1 were not looking in each others classrooms as there was no connecting door. We also timetabled singing or louder activities when the other class was doing PE or ICT so we did not disturb each other. I found myself popping into Class 2 on a few occasions to see if we were too loud or the interactive whiteboard / DVD was too loud.

- my class went first to assembly followed by class 2 my class also went first to lunch

- Class 2 took their coats or PE kit with them to assembly so they did not have to walk back through my room

- In summer class 2 walked round the outside of building to hall or ICT room

- Once class 2 were out (PE or ICT) I or my TA would take a group of children in to class 2. I would also use the cloak room for a group read.

- Submitted 21-4-2013 18:05

- I've moved from a HUGE classroom to a small one this year, teaching year 1 in both.
I do struggle sometimes because there isn't the space I would like to facilitate learning through play. For example, in my last classroom, I had so many different areas (roleplay, creative, science, maths, writing, reading, construction, ICT, DT, handwriting, small world etc.) as well as a large carpet area and space for plenty of tables.

In my new classroom, I have a tiny book corner, a single table for a writing area and just enough table space for the children to sit down. I find it very hard to give children "choosing time" which is a real shame when they're so young.

I also find that the noise level is higher in a small classroom - probably because they're less spread out. The atmosphere in general feels more cramped and hectic.

Posted 21-4-2013 18:31
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Primary case study and micro case studies

creativity is constrained
creativity is not constrained.

classroom key.

detail not directly relevant.

Decided to highlight as to whether a statement by a respondent fitted with one of the above categories.

Primary case study tally:  
IHT IHT 8

IHT IHT 11 27

micro case studies tally:

IHT IHT IHT IHT IHT IHT 7

IHT IHT IHT 6

overall direct opinion =
balanced. Many allusions but not made clear.

When analysing data I found that respondents want to share their experiences and often discuss advantages and disadvantages of a small/less than ideal physical space. They do not on the whole spend much of their response directly addressing whether in their opinion these issues constrain or inspire creative teaching.

One response was from a former colleague but was forwarded response of a stranger and not linked to primary case study so grouped with other case studies.

Several times I changed my mind when looking at categorising themes.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Annika Cooper
Module PBM 4029

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Begin forwarded message:

**From: H H <hh@AnySchool.org.uk>**
**Subject: Small classrooms**
**Date: 16 April 2013 15:39:56 GMT+01:00**
**To: Annika Cooper <annika.cooper@AnySchool.org.uk>**

Annika,
Not sure if this will help or if it is on the right lines. Let me know if you want something else and sorry for being so out-spoken but I feel fairly strongly about it!

I think that working in a small classroom severely hampers both the teachers and pupils opportunities to be creative. The areas which are inevitably lost when a classroom has a lack of space are the home corner and the reading corner which are both elements that are crucial to a child's creative development. The reading corner in the EYFS and KS1 often incorporates opportunities for dressing up and re-telling stories through acting and puppets which help to nurture children's creative thinking and exploration of their imaginations. The home corner helps children to explore a topic in a creative way often through role-play.

As an Art specialist at the moment the lack of space that I am provided with severely limits the amount of 3-dimensional and collaborative work that I am able to do as there is no room to store larger projects that require drying or for children to undertake collaborative work in groups. Teachers however are essentially creative creatures (particularly in Primary teaching) and will often find solutions to problems with classroom layouts or space but no amount of problem solving can compensate for a child being un-able to dig for treasure in the sand tray or discover how to make things float and sink in the water tray.
Creativity at its best requires space almost as much as it requires good teachers and to have to avoid certain projects with your class due to over-crowding of a small space is putting teachers at a severe disadvantage and forcing them to adopt a much more formulaic and rigid way of teaching.
Subject: Small rooms and creativity
From: D W (dww@gmail.com)
To: annikacooper@yahoo.co.uk
Date: Wednesday, 10 April 2013, 12:02

Dear Annika-

Please find my brief reflections below. Feel like I am sermonising rather near the end but hope helpful nonetheless!

Hope this finds you well,

D

I think a small classroom can be a stimulus for creativity - it depends somewhat on the number of children in such a space. A small class size in a small classroom can enable the creation of a cosy, friendly environment for learning. If the classroom is overcrowded, it constrains creative teaching methods as expediency demands that children be seated and learn from the board rather than moving between groups, stations, etc.

The effectiveness of creative teaching in a small space I think depends more on the resourcefulness and imagination of the teacher. I do not think lack of space need necessarily limit creativity - albeit that a small space may present particular challenges with regard to creating different workspaces, grouping by ability, etc - more important in this regard, to my mind, would be the availability of creative resources and the willingness of the teacher dig deep into his or her imagination to make efficient and stimulating use of the available space, both in terms of teaching and displays.

- Balanced but slightly more creativity not constrained
I teach twenty infants in a very small low ceilinged basement room. There is very little space for any physical movements or any role play areas at all. Working in a small class room gives teachers no choice but to be creative. I have worked in a very large classroom with 32 year sixes in which I sometimes used a microphone to communicate with everyone since the room was almost a hall. I am much more creative in a small environment. This is because I am not focusing on getting my voice heard and there are less opportunities for the children to misbehave because all children are very much visible to me. Therefore everyone is involved and children cannot 'opt out', switch off and talk to each other- the teacher has more control. There is a greater sense of unity and therefore we can act as a creative team much more because I can trust the children more.

This sort of creativity would however mostly be more table-based but can also include circle time and drama activities if I push the tables back. The ideal classroom for creative output would have two distinct areas- one for table-based learning and another space for physical movement.

Sent from my iPhone

Largely creativity not constrained.
mood and general well-being. Space and natural light in a classroom become essential factors for a healthier and more positive attitude towards education.

M

P.S. I hope this helps. If you need more please let me know. Xx

Sent from my iPad

Largely irrelevant detail
In my opinion, the size of a classroom definitely has an impact on children's learning and personal development. Humans pursue freedom from an early age and this is directly linked to space. The bigger the space is, the greater the feeling of freedom becomes.

Our animal instinct is also territorial and we are all keen to mark our space, to show everyone that a portion of the whole is ours. Younger children will have a tendency to do this by finding their favourite corner, but this becomes harder is the space is limited.

On the other hand, for those children that are shy or a little introverted, a small classroom environment can help them feeling more confident, safe and secure.

As children grow older, they also become less active, playtime is shorter and academic demands are greater. Therefore, the size of the classroom becomes less important since mobility is less needed in the learning experience.

EYFS and KS1 classrooms need a greater amount of practical resources and colourful and interactive displays. If the classroom is small, it can become overcrowded causing frustration in pupils when they bump into equipment and cannot find what they need. This would undoubtedly have a negative impact in their learning experience, since they are likely to sit and wait for the teacher to provide necessary resources instead of developing an investigative and inquisitive attitude.

Small spaces can also be a cause for stress in both teachers and pupils. Spacious, bright and well-ventilated classrooms environments help all members of the class community feel happier and more relaxed allowing effective teaching and leaning to happen.

In a country like Britain, weather and poor lighting car often have an impact on
mood and general well-being. Space and natural light in a classroom become essential factors for a healthier and more positive attitude towards education.

M

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Sent from my iPad

Largely irrelevant detail
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

TES Primary Forum: ‘Small classrooms: constrain or inspire creative teaching’?

- **annikacooper**
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frustum
Member since 25-5-2003

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Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Annika Cooper

Module PBM 4029
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

My classroom is very small. I don’t think it affects my creativity, but only because I have access to ample space just outside my classroom. Without it I think it would limit my creativity significantly, as there simply would not be space for role-play, decent group work etc. Opposite my classroom is a largish empty room used as the cloakroom, so I use this a lot. Also the classroom next to mine is often empty (part-time colleague and class which moves around for different subjects) so I use that a lot too.

Disadvantages of a small classroom are:

- Difficult to change seating plans around much due to fitting all the desks in
- Difficult to physically access certain children for support through the lesson (as others have mentioned)
- Gets very stuffy and can feel a bit claustrophobic when full
- Lack of storage space for books etc.
- Advantages of a small classroom are:
- Less display space to manage

Posted 13-4-2013 14:26

SchrodingerVet
Member since 18-12-2010

I’m in a small classroom, lined with windows so it’s lovely and light, but limited room for displays working walls etc. Because of fire regulations, I have 3 doors in my class with only one corner ‘free’ for the book corner.

- Due to the size (and age) of the room, I have spent a lot of time rearranging furniture to suit the lesson/topic/school initiative etc. which would not be such an issue in some of the larger, more modern classrooms that I have seen.
- I’m fortunate to have a small class size this year, although I can just about fit in 24 children with room for them on the carpet, anything more than this and it would start to get very crowded.

However in 2 years the class coming up currently has 34 children in (based on appeals) and there just won’t be the room - not for tables, chairs, carpet spaces, trays, lunch boxes, coat-peg etc.

Right now the small room isn’t so much of an issue, but it is border-line crazy!!! My main concern is that in 2 years, if the children have to be taught in this class, then behaviour and attainment could suffer due to the extreme close-quarters.

Current issues:
- Difficult to navigate around the tables as they are so close to the walls/windows/other tables (it would not be possible for larger framed individuals)
- Lack of room for storage: books, art supplies, wet art-work, existing resources, folders, stationery etc.

Basically, I’m echoing what ehoca_holic, and others, have already typed!

[edited by: SchrodingerVet at 16:34 (GMT 0) on 13-4-2013]

Posted 13-4-2013 16:33
I am retired now, but in my role as a visiting music specialist I rarely had my own allocated classroom and found myself teaching in many different work areas. Small dining kitchens, staff rooms, HT office, corridors, a public library down the road, and the playground immediately spring to mind. Yes they did require creative teaching on my part, mainly on how to manage a practical lesson with the given numbers of children. Sometimes I had to adapt a planned lesson because of a change of teaching space, which might happen when the photographer came in, or it was book week... It sometimes meant I got to work with a handful of children at a time, as in when I regularly had to use a small office space, which although still difficult in terms of space, was a good opportunity to get to know and see the abilities of the children. At one school I had to teach in a library corner of a large teaching area where other lessons were going on, not easy for the other group when I am teaching music which is not a quiet subject, but it is equally difficult trying to get children to listen carefully to quiet sounds, or the mood of music, if another group is doing some noisy drama or even just listening to a story. When the weather was good it was great to do singing games outside, but not fun when it was cold. However I would rather use my time being creative with lesson content without the constraint of space, and I would say the classes that always had restricted space did miss out. Some classes never got to play tuned percussion instruments because of inappropriate space. In the dining kitchen, one of the first lessons was spent on how to safely set out the instruments on the floor and put away again, and practising leaving the room in an emergency without tripping or over the instruments on the floor which really was a HS issue. A small space meant we couldn't do singing games, or other movement so important in early years music learning. Often overlooked by management is the problem of noise created in even a normal size classroom when you have 30 children all working on compositions in groups. It requires solid behaviour management, but also noise management to limit the danger to hearing. Hope I haven't gone on too much but wanted to give you examples.

Posted 13-4-2013 16:38

Hi, this year I am unlikely enough to be in what was a spare classroom because of its size, and it is a nightmare! When all the children are in their seats it is impossible to move around, I have to get children to stand up in order to move around the room! Additionally, they are not a quiet class and being in this small space makes the squabbles and noise worse! I would say it does not affect what I teach - we just get on with it in the cramped conditions! Personally I find the main thing that hampers creativity is lack of resources rather than space! However in a bigger room it would be great to set up role play, interactive displays etc.

Posted 13-4-2013 17:00

Dejana Member since 6-4-2004
- My situation is similar to Schrodinger's class. I have a tiny room, but luckily a comparatively small class of 25. They are not the easiest of classes, though... so it's a bit of a challenge deciding on seating plans. Next year's class is a rather different matter.
- I'd prefer to have table groups of 4, but that just doesn't work. Well, it does work, but then I can't get to anyone. I can't really have any other group table sizes, rows are an impossibility and most other "normal" seating arrangements just don't fit due to the layout of the room. I don't really have space for a carpet area, either. My classroom has three exit doors, so my compulsory reading corner is in the only available corner... it's absolutely tiny, though and fits about two children.
- For the moment, the arrangement that gives us most space and a carpet area, is slightly unusual. I have one big group table for eight children on one side, a group table of four attached to a row of four in the middle, and five tables around the outside at the wall (which means children are sitting facing the wall when they are working independently or with their partners). I usually make these children sit on the carpet during the input or when I need them to see the board. Since we work with small groups throughout the lesson, it does mean that I can pull certain children out and work with them on the carpet, while still being able to see the rest of my class.
- I find it limits what I can do to some degree, but I've never had a big classroom and started out with a class of 33, so I'm not missing anything. I try to use our playground (weather permitting) or the hall, whenever possible. My class are so much easier to control and their behaviour is so much better when I'm able to physically get some space between them. I'd love to have a bigger room... and a sink. Alternatively, I'd settle for my current room and a class of 15.

Posted 13-4-2013 20:15

annikacooper
Member since 30-4-2010

Thank you to everyone for your responses and for taking the time to explain your situations in detail. It is really helpful to have such a diverse range of experiences to analyse etc. It is also heartening to hear there are so many of us doing the best we can in classrooms which are physically challenging!

Posted 21-4-2013 17:47

fulloffun
Member since 21-3-2007

I taught class 1 Reception/ half year1 for many years in a small classroom where class 2 half yr1/yr2 walked through (diagonally) to their classroom so became very creative in managing the class so they did not disturb each other too much eg but it was annoying in having to layout tables and display boards so class 2/class1 were not looking in each others classrooms as there was no connecting door. We also timetabled singing or louder activities when the other class was doing PE or ICT so we did not disturb each other. I found myself popping into Class2 on a few occasions to see if we were too loud or the interactive whiteboard/DVD was too loud.
- my class went first to assembly followed by class 2 my class also went first to lunch
- Class2 took their coats or pe kit with them to assembly so they did not have to walk back through my room
- In summer class2 walked round the outside of building to hall or ICT room.
- Once class 2 were out (pe or ICT) I or my TA would take a group of children in to class 2. I would also use the cloak room for a group read.

Posted 21-4-2013 18:05
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

I've moved from a HUGE classroom to a small one this year, teaching year 1 in both. I do struggle sometimes because there isn't the space I would like to facilitate learning through play. For example, in my last classroom, I had so many different areas (roleplay, creative, science, maths, writing, reading, construction, ICT, DT, handwriting, small world etc.) as well as a large carpet area and space for plenty of tables. In my new classroom, I have a tiny book corner, a single table for a writing area and just enough table space for the children to sit down. I find it very hard to give children "choosing time" which is a real shame when they're so young. I also find that the noise level is higher in a small classroom - probably because they're less spread out. The atmosphere in general feels more cramped and hectic.

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Subject: See you Sunday!
From: A L (a1@gmail.com)
To: annikacooper@yahoo.co.uk
Date: Friday, 5 April 2013, 10:34

Annika, please find response to your Facebook message from a fellow PGCE student:

My classroom was a large room with very poor lighting. I was in a year one class with several children who had behaviour issues. We had a number of children who were very disruptive and one with potential undiagnosed Aspergers.

The school worked with a creative curriculum which involved a lot of displays with the classroom being themed around the topic. We were doing the jungle so there were vines hanging from the ceiling and two areas that had sort of army netting hung over them with things the children had made hanging down from them. All in all it was a very hectic and full classroom. During all of my observations from my tutors they commented on how busy the classroom and distracting. They thought that if you stripped the classroom back a number of the children with behaviour issues would actually clam down. It was far to stimulating for most of them to cope with and it fed their behaviour.

One boy, the one with potential Aspergers, worked much better when he was at a table all by himself facing a blank wall where there was nothing to over excite him. He himself said he preferred working there as it helped him concentrate. I think a lot of our children would have benefitted from this.

KM
PGCE STUDENT
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Annika Cooper
Module PBM 4029

TES Opinion Forum: ‘Do small/ less than ideal classrooms constrain or inspire creative teaching’?

* amikascooper
Member since 30-8-2010

Hi All, I am a primary teacher currently conducting a MA research project. I am interested in teachers’ views on whether teaching in a small or less than ideal classroom inspires creative teaching or constrains it. I had previously posted this thread in the ‘Primary’ forum but am reposting here in the hope of receiving a few more responses. All views are gratefully received and I am especially interested in hearing from teachers who have experience of teaching in small or less than ideal physical space. It would be really helpful if you could provide a couple of reasons behind your view if you respond. In the interests of ethics, all responses will be anonymised and a copy of the final research report will be made available to those responders who request it. For the purposes of this discussion, I would define ‘small’ as a classroom which just about has sufficient space for tables/chairs and a small carpeted area. There would be no space for role play areas, display tables etc. Such a classroom is likely to exist in a non-purpose built school e.g a converted residential building or perhaps a temporary building. Please feel free to PM a response if you prefer. Many thanks for reading :)  

Posted 13-4-2013 12:59

* airy
Member since 18-1-2009

I’ve never taught in a classroom with a small carpeted area. I bet loads of teachers have experience of teaching in cramped portakabins:  

Posted 13-4-2013 17:05

* ninasmone
Member since 11-10-2004

I am secondary so cannot present you with too many ideas about how primary classes are set up in terms of physical space. However, I have always found that delivering role play activities or indeed any activities which involve student movement around the classroom is massed easier the bigger the space available. Also, light; airy rooms generally makes the teaching atmosphere and environment a great deal more pleasant to teach in. I also find that students in ICT rooms; particularly, are cramped for space, due to the inevitable space taken up by hardware. Most ICT rooms I have taught in have been converted from traditional classrooms so dont always lend themselves to ideal tech-based lessons. However, newer, fit for purpose suites I have used are far easier to teach in and students feel less constrained and therefore, one would hope, more productive.  

I cannot imagine teaching, as I have done in the past, in smaller sized rooms is a easy task, mainly due to the difficulty of teacher/student movements, especially when one wishes to examine class based work. There is also the issue of the inevitable moving of low level disruptive students away from others, which in a small room can be a minefield. Older classrooms can be made better if, budgets permitting, they were given a lick of paint now and again, or old furniture moved or replaced with modern desks.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Hope this helps. Albeit my reply is secondary based, I sometimes go into some schools and find the logistics of some rooms a detriment to teaching and learning. Newer BSF schools have got the balance right more often than not, except to say that the newer rooms aren't always as sturdy or hardwearing as older school rooms. I mean what do you expect when you may have hundreds of kids using rooms on a weekly basis!

Posted 13-4-2013 17:52

Again, secondary so not entirely the same. But I once taught in a very small classroom but managed to get the desks arranged individually so I could get round to help everyone in the room; when I was ill, the powers that be changed the layout of the room (entirely without consultation) to face the interactive whiteboard rather than the normal whiteboard as this would be "better for Ofsted". This meant I had to have rows very very difficult to get into the middle of them (as there was no room) to help out the kids in the middle of the rows. All display work and the oh-so-important level ladders were behind the students so were completely pointless. I was then forced to put everything onto Powerpoint (and have the projector light in my eyes all day) because there was no whiteboard for writing on.

It was completely detrimental to the way I taught. I found myself over-using Powerpoints (which the children found tedious and I found uninspiring). I got migraines from having the projector light in my eyes all day, the displays were totally pointless; I couldn't help half the children in the class because I couldn't get to them - they had to pass their book to the end of the row and I would then have to speak to them in front of everyone (or have them come to my desk, which apparently is a crime punishable by death in most schools nowadays); there was far less room than there was before and it was actually quite claustrophobic. Unpleasant to say the least.

Posted 13-4-2013 18:58

Given the prevalence of use (in secondary schools anyway) of IWBs or digital projectors, adequate blackout is vital, IMHO...

Posted 13-4-2013 18:59

Annika Cooper
Module PBM 4029
I have nearly always taught in small/less than ideal classrooms. My immediate response to your question would be no. The classroom does not constrain creative teaching. If I need more space in the room, I frequently take the children outside or move the chairs to the corridor. Desks can be pushed to the back and tables placed in large groups. It doesn't inspire creative teaching either. Creative teaching is inspired by other teachers, things I have read and the children themselves, not by the four walls that surround me.
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Annika Cooper
Module PBM 4029
Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 3: 24.09.12

Monday

CLL: Managed to read the story with the children. Children enjoyed the story and could discuss the characters. J managed to tell me that Elmer was the main character. B knew that the herd of elephants were the other characters.

Phonics: Taught the sound ‘r’. Children still love Education City and enjoy rainbow writing. Ruby was not on task this lesson, sadly. From tomorrow will introduce ability groups.

Tuesday

CLL: Children remembered the story well and we revised it on the IWB using a PPT. We made a list of the colours we could see on Elmer and discussed that this was called a patchwork. Beatrix knew the purpose of a list. We also used the list to count to ten forwards and back, and discussed ordinal numbers i.e. which colour did we list first. Most children confident up to 5th. Two groups drew their picture and wrote a sentence. D was very reluctant to draw his picture but completed his writing.

Phonics: Taught in the late afternoon so children tired but still enthusiastic. Differentiated groups works well, Lucy was quite lazy today however. J completed his phonics well with 1:1 support on a separate table.

Maths: Reading Mr Gumpy’s Outing caused some confusion as picture shows more than 3 animals but only 3 mentioned. Children were able to tell me the number of animals mentioned and suggest options for 1st, 2nd, 3rd etc. Modelled sequencing numbers to 10 activity, and two groups completed. F, A and F could order up to 20 independently. R can only recognise some numbers up to 10.

Wednesday

Maths: Recapped ordinal numbers using NgFL website story which the children loved! Using the animal race games, children were able to tell me who came first, second, third. J was very eager to offer answers that were mostly correct. Other children completed numbers to 10 sequencing. B was very slow with her cutting and sticking.

Phonics: Taught the letter ‘m’ and sang the alphabet song from Education City software programme. Children loved song and were good with IWB activities. Independent work went well today with all children except Z on task.

Thursday

CLL: The children could remember the story of Elmer well and could explain why he was different. The remaining children to draw Elmer completed the task and wrote ‘I am Elmer’. F
had a good go at writing part of this sentence independently. It would be great to combine some role play with this story when teaching next year. Will have to factor in moving back tables and chairs to accommodate marching around like elephants.

**Phonics:** Taught the sound ‘d’. Children enjoyed watching the Education City software program and joined in enthusiastically. R is starting to connect letters to sounds now as he suggested a correct answer today during the input.

**UW and CD:** Children really loved the Bones dance clip/sesame street clip. We spoke about the different kinds of bones and why we need bones. Modelled how to paint a skeleton and all children completed. J knew the names ‘rib cage’ and ‘skull’. Children enjoyed singing the head, shoulders, knees and toes song alongside this lesson, allowing for the inclusion of music/singing and listening and attention, . This is a workable solution for the small space available as it does not involve moving around the classroom, rather on the spot.

**Friday**

**Maths:** Had a review lesson concerning pattern. Most children are starting to grasp the concept of repeating patterns now and could suggest answers to successfully complete them. R is still struggling with this concept a little. A composed his own repeating pattern using 3 shapes independently which was encouraging. Would like to combine revision of pattern using small beads to create patterns next lesson.

**Phonics:** Children enjoyed learning about the letter ‘g’. A and F wrote the letter ‘g’ beautifully and could remember where to start. D was brave and volunteered to come and have a go writing the letter ‘g’ on the whiteboard in front of the class.

**UW and CD:** The children were very tired at the end of the week and the family tree worksheet was too advanced for independent completion. Will not use this next time and instead will use a mental/oral discussion of family instead. Many children found it challenging to write names down but the speaking and listening section of the lesson revealed a good class knowledge of family-related vocabulary e.g. cousin, aunt etc.
Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 8: 05.11.12

Monday

**CLL:** Children began fireworks poem activity. Two groups completed the activity. I thought of the word ‘whoosh’ during whole class input. Would have like to have a painting activity running alongside this but due to space this would have been too tricky to manage. Instead decided to have a table completing firework drawings using wax crayons on black paper.

**Phonics:** Taught as part of fireworks poem literacy. Discussed the different sounds that can be heard in firework sound words. Many children now beginning to suggest plausible beginning and end sounds when attempting to spell unknown words.

**UW and EAD:** Taught as part of fireworks poem activity. Children learned about who Guy Fawkes was and why we celebrate bonfire night. A had impressive knowledge of the history behind the event and B suggested ‘Big Ben’ when shown a picture of the Houses of Parliament. Am considering teaching a movement lesson concerning liking ideas of physical representations to the noises and appearance of fireworks. Need to consider how to make the most of the pace, push tables back and get rid of chairs etc.

Tuesday

**CLL:** Children remembered the story of Guy Fawkes well and could relate key facts. M could almost recall the whole story except for mistaking the Houses of Parliament for a castle. F remembered the gunpowder and A remembered that it was hidden in the cellar. Other children began to complete the group firework poem activity.

**Maths:** Introduced addition to children. Some children grasped the concept well e.g. F, B and N, others less so e.g. I, R. LA group completed a 1:1 recognition exercise. R still not confident with this. AF’s cutting skills still weak. HA group completed addition sheet without physical resources using mental skills except D who required numberline etc.

**UW and EAD:** Review of Guy Fawkes topic during literacy lesson.

**Phonics:** Taught ‘ch’. E remembered that two sounds together are called a friendship sound. J was impressive in the changing sound game on education city. R is still unclear that the focus of each day’s lesson is a different sound and confuses similar sounds, e.g. suggested ‘t’ as a ‘ch’ word.

Wednesday

**CLL** – no lesson today.

**Maths** – Completed adding activity with two middle ability groups. This went well with physical resources provided to aid thinking.

**Phonics** – Sh. Children loved watching the education city clip and could come up with many good sh words including shipwreck.
**UW and EAD** – Dedicated part of the afternoon session to the firework movement activity. Played the children a clip of fireworks exploding and asked the class to focus on the shapes made by the fireworks and the sounds of them exploding. Managed to create as much space as possible by pushing back the tables and stacking chairs. Modeled some movements such as raising up arms into a circle and crouching down to jump up to imitative firework movements. Children then listened to firework sounds and devised their own movements. Activity went well but have a feeling it would be much more successful if it could be conducted in the hall.

**Thursday**

**CLL:** Introduced Diwali. N explained to the class that it was the festival of light. Children loved watching the story of Rama and Sita on Cbeebies and could recall the main characters and the story. Two groups drew Rama and Sita in Diwali books. E lacked a little confidence in trying to spell the words for herself.

**Phonics:** Revised ‘I’, ‘the’, ‘up’ and ‘we’. Used TESiboard HFW game which children loved and then wrote words in books. I was impressed with M’s writing today. Z is completing his work more quickly now.

**Maths:** Revised adding two groups with the children during a circle activity. Quite a few can now add two groups together without having physically move the objects being added – e.g. F, N, B, A, Z, L. When completing the firework adding activity, L had to be reminded to not copy answers from other people.

**UW and EAD** – Children began their firework paintings today with glitter glue and black paper. The glitter glue proved tricky for the children to use as it was nearing the end of its life! Next paintings with glue and glitter shaken over designs will be more effective I think.

**Friday**

**CLL:** We practised our Christmas production and had a show and tell session. D impressed me by speaking in a loud clear voice in front of the class. I was impressed with all the children’s ability to repeat their lines in the production practice.

**Maths:** We reviewed the concept of adding two numbers and groups. B was able to tell me that it does not matter which way round we add 2 numbers, the answer will be the same. Remaining children completed fireworks adding activity. I really struggled with the concept of adding and will have to focus on 1:1 recognition for now.

**Phonics:** We listened to the abc song using 2 different versions today. The children loved singing along and several children including R, wrote words independently during Child Initiated sessions which followed.

**UW and EAD:** The children liked creating masks of the characters from the Diwali story and finishing off their fireworks pictures. It would be nice to have an opportunity to act out the Diwali story at some point – will need to consider space, whether to try this in groups etc. Would be better if it could be 1 adult per group – will need to think on this.
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Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 12: 03.12.12

Monday

**CLL:** No time for lesson, phonics covered as below.

**Phonics:** Taught long ‘oo’ sound today. Children enjoyed thinking of different words containing this sound and taking part in the Education City game on IWB.

**Maths:** Following input had to use remainder as activity time to ensure readers were completed. Timetable for next year must be considered as the current timetable does not allow for sufficient teaching in the afternoon.

**UW and EAD:** No timetabled session.

Tuesday

**CLL:** We reviewed the Christmas Story and completed the first two pages of our Christmas Story book. I was impressed with the dedication shown by H despite finding writing challenging. AF needed much yellow writing and support to complete his pages. R also needed extensive support. N, A, F and Z were able to complete the task quickly and accurately. BW is reversing many of her letters when not concentrating. It has definitely helped teaching this activity after practising and performing the Christmas production.

**Maths:** Introduced children to the concept of ordering by size. We practised on the IWB using a TESiboard activity ordering animals. Children enjoyed this. We then played a game where we ordered the children in size order by height. Children were really engaged by this game and could just about get it to work despite space constraints. Activity involved making a snowman by ordering shapes by size. Children really liked this activity and this would be good to consider again for next year, possibly extending this by thinking about other pictures that could be made via size ordering e.g. Christmas tree.

**UW and EAD:** CD taught cross-curricular in Maths via size order pictures.

**Phonics:** After quite an intensive morning’s lessons, the children needed some Child Initiated time and we were required to complete our readers. Will teach phonics lesson later in the week.

Wednesday

**CLL:** Children completed Christmas Story book apart from D who was ill the previous day. He will complete tomorrow. I completed his work but did need a lot of support. His letter formation is very weak and will require more work. H is still mixing capital letters with lower-case and needs much support to finish his work. AF needs reminders to concentrate but formation is good. Many children found it hard work to complete the writing and the colouring, it was quite a lot to complete and will need to be considered as to how we tackle this activity next year – perhaps splitting the writing and colouring sessions so that colouring could be completed in the last week of term.
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**Phonics:** Due to the Den Christmas Assembly over-running we did not have time to teach this lesson as planned, will teach tomorrow.

**UW and EAD:** Taught cross-curricular with CLL – Christmas Story.

**Thursday**

**CLL:** Did not teach today due to extended phonics lesson to compensate for time missed earlier this week.

**Maths:** Children completed work in books sticking reindeer and carrots into size order, from large to small. AF still needs a great deal of support using scissors. Most children were able to complete this task independently which was heartening to see.

**Phonics:** Reviewed sounds ‘ai’, ‘oi’ and ‘oa’. Most children required reminding. I was impressed that J knew immediately that train had the ‘ai’ sound and had committed that to memory. Will consider combining phonics with some music sessions to encourage rhythm and memory. This would be achievable in the space we have, children could make a circle on the floor for the session.

**UW and EAD:** Introduced the children to the festival of Hanukkah using the sesame street clip. Children loved it and several children, including A and F, were able to tell me about the miracle of the oil afterwards. Will reinforce tomorrow and begin cross-curricular work in CLL.

**Friday**

**CLL:** We recapped what we had learnt about Hanukkah from yesterday’s clip. F, E and E could remember quite a few Details. We then watched the Festivals DVD, Hanukkah section. This was really enjoyed by the children and they completed their Menorah worksheet. Most children had a good go at writing ‘candles’ by themselves. I was impressed that M wanted to write ‘Hanukkah’ by himself also. AF had a good go at writing today which was pleasing. Most children still need encouragement to colour their pictures neatly and to finish their work off fully. I want to consider revising this activity next year, perhaps constructing a ‘menorah’ using 2D shapes to create a cross-curricular lesson combining maths, expressive arts and design and understanding of the world.

**Maths:** Listened and acted out 5 little speckled frogs rhyme and sang along. Surprised that not all children know this rhyme. Children liked acting out the rhyme despite having to be careful of bumping one another due to the space constraints etc. Action rhymes are useful I have noted for getting the children moving despite the small space in the classroom.

**Phonics:** Taught CLL instead today due to extended phonics session yesterday. See above.

**UW and EAD:** Children completed stocking patterns yesterday and today. Children began Christmas tree cards using triangles today. AF needed much encouragement to finish decorating his tree. UW taught cross-curricular with CLL as above.
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**Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 2: 14.01.13**

**Monday**

**CLL:** Read ‘Dear Zoo’ using book and powerpoint. Many children familiar with story and enjoyed guessing which animal was coming next. Children completed worksheet drawing their own 1 or 2 animals to add to the story. Children also completed sentence about what was wrong with that animal. Will complete flaps to go with worksheet later in the week.

**Maths:** Did not teach this lesson as children needed more time to complete literacy work.

**UW:** Children completed their window paintings by adding strips to painting to make them look like a window view. They look lovely and will go up on display.

**Tuesday**

**CLL:** Used this lesson to introduce our new class assembly. Read ‘We’re Going on a Bear Hunt’ and children loved joining in the repeated refrains and using actions e.g. we can’t go over it, we can’t go under it, we’ll have to go through it. Many children were familiar with the story. After this we had our first assembly practice, which went quite well. R seemed more capable of getting his line out clearly this time as did A.

**Maths:** Revised the concept of addition using the connecting cars. Was hoping the sight of physically connecting cars would help LA grasp the idea of adding two groups to make one large group. These children R, H, A and I are still just counting each group and not counting on however to solve addition sums. Tomorrow will try an input involving children where we physically put them together from 2 groups to see if this works instead.

HA had a go at solving addition missing number questions. N was really good at this and quickly grasped the method using multilink. She could answer missing number bonds to 20. Z and L had a good go at completing the questions using the multilink but needed constant support. F and a few others went steaming in and made mistakes.

**UW and CD:** No timetabled session today.

**Phonics:** Today we revised the sounds ‘g’, ‘d’ and ‘m’. Many children are grasping letter formation now – R was really good at this and listening for the sounds in words today. A corrected himself and remembered to write sitting on the line.

**Wednesday**

**CLL:** ASSEMBLY PRACTICE.

**Maths:** Did not teach today due to PSHCE issues arising that needed dealing with by means of a circle time.

**Phonics:** ASSEMBLY PRACTICE.

**UW and CD:** Children started their igloo paintings and will complete these on Friday. Next year will have to rethink this as the activity is a bit too unstructured for children this young I think.
Thursday

**CLL: ASSEMBLY PRACTICE.**

**Maths:** Focused on number formation today using IWB and whiteboards. Some children writing numbers very neatly now e.g. N, E, F etc.

**Phonics:** Today we learnt the friendship sound ‘ow’. We used Education City software and discussed the different sounds ‘ow’ can make. I was really impressed that E came up with the word ‘scarecrow’ and explained that it had an ‘o’ sound at the end. The children produced some really good work today in their books, writing is becoming neater and smaller and starting to consistently sit on the line. I was especially impressed with A’s writing today and I’s – there has been much improvement here.

**UW and CD:** Did not have time to teach this lesson today, will teach this tomorrow.

Friday

**Phonics:** Taught the friendship sound ‘ar’ today. Children are now consistently producing good written work and I was especially impressed with R’s renewed commitment to her writing. Z is now completing more work independently now also.

**Maths:** Taught this lesson through a movement session today in the hall – played Huggy Bear which involved the children having to sort themselves into groups of 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 etc. F very quickly realised when he had to join other groups, adding the numbers in his head.

**UW and CD:** Have begun UW matching old and new household objects. Did not manage to finish as children needed some movement time in the hall due to Eurhythmics being cancelled. 2 Groups have begun sticking their new objects down and other groups will begin this next week. Will take another lesson to complete matching activity. The activities take much time but are great for developing fine motor skills and scissor skills. Children were quite knowledgeable about objects from the past. E was able to tell us about her grandparents’ house and the fact they boil kettles over the fire there. 2 groups will stick their objects on Monday. Matching can take place on Tuesday.

**Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 10: 18.03.13**

Monday

**CLL:** Did not teach as children required child-initiated time and they had been out in very inclement weather travelling to and back from the Westway for P.E and were not receptive to any formal teaching.

**Phonics:** Taught the sound ‘ff’ and ‘zz’. Children were keen to suggest words for these tricky sounds and F noticed ‘suffix’ written on the IWB which he pronounced correctly. Some good writing today, especially from F who’s handwriting has improved markedly. Z started writing
in the middle lines again and needs direction. L needs to view her work more positively and make more of an effort.

**Tuesday**

**CLL/UW:** Introduced the life cycle of a frog. Children were really keen to hear about the different stages of the life cycle and could comment well about these. Rudi knew that fish had gills and that they breathed through them. He could describe them and understood what I meant by tadpoles breathing through gills also. Most children were able to follow the instructions and carry out the task with a good degree of independence but R was very slow and L struggles to work independently. She has a tendency to copy others work given half a chance.

**Maths:** Introduced the concept of subtraction today. This part of the lesson went successfully however the beginning highlighted the fact that the children struggle to count backwards. N is able, E had a good go but almost all others struggled. They were able to count back from 10 when I explained it was like a rocket blast off count down. Used a movement session pretending people were getting on and off the bus. This seemed to help children understand taking away 1. Will build up to counting back from 20. Not many children knew the subtraction symbol at the start of the lesson but I feel many did by the end. Children were very good a practising their subtraction number sentences especially R and E who showed very good understanding.

**Phonics:** We used our phonics sounds knowledge to independently add labels to our frog life cycles.

**Wednesday**

**CLL:** Did not teach in favour of a longer phonics session.

**Phonics:** Focussed on tricky words ‘me he she we’ today. Many children could read these words and point out why they were tricky i.e. they are pronounced differently from how they are spelt. Children practised the words and writing them in a sentence of their devising. I was especially impressed with D today who wrote two sentences pretty much independently. R still requires an incredible amount of support to even write one word. I think most children responded really well to the challenge of using these tricky words. Reviewed the two different ‘oo’ sounds today also through a phonics rhythm session. H and J respond especially well to this type of teaching whereby a friendship sound if split into it’s 2 different sounds and then put back together.

**Maths:** Revised subtraction through the use of whole class number stories. Many children could remember what we needed to record in the number sentence. We completed a page in the Collins new primary maths workbooks but this was too easy so we wrote the entire number sentence instead of just the answer. I was impressed with many children’s ability to complete this work and R in particular has showed herself to be very capable at maths. As an extension activity we wrote and drew our own subtraction number sentences.

**UW and CD:** Taught lesson keeping warm in the past and present. Children enjoyed the input discussing different ways of keeping warm etc. The children found it harder to record
this on the worksheet and in the future this will need to be more a cut and stick activity rather than using circling as a tool. Some children were able to use this method of recording but it was too ambitious for most.

**Thursday**

**CLL:** Children wrote sentences describing the life cycle of a frog. I was really impressed with the excellent independent work produced by E, F, N, B, A and Z. Many other children tried really hard to describe the life cycle.

**Maths:** Practised one more and one less using Education City software and number fans to show individual answers. A, H, B and I are completely unable to follow and come up with either random answers or copy others. J had a good go at participating. Children completed one more and one less work in New Primary Maths booklet. B really struggled with this and needed a lot of assistance. Conversely many children needed extending so were provided with a Year 1 level worksheet to complete. F, N, B had little/no problem with this.

**Phonics:** Did not teach due to long CLL session.

**Friday**

**Phonics:** Taught a review session with children using speaking and listening skills. Children had to come up with as many words they could think of starting with the sound. D was very lazy this lesson and did not contribute much at all. B was surprisingly unable to come up with many words even for easy sound such as ‘j’. In the afternoon played a game on IWB looking at phase 3 tricky words. Many children, H included, can identify and read these words. It is the spelling of them that requires more work. In the morning E, A and H completed their Life cycle of a frog work. H’s concentration was poor in this part of the lesson.

**UW:** Taught a speaking and listening lesson based on town vs. country. Children came up with some very valid responses as to why a photo was from the town or country. J was very engaged in this lesson and suggested good arguments such as there is a car park and many cars etc. He also pointed out that there were many signs in the city. At the end of the lesson, children were able to help me sort characteristics into town vs. country. I was impressed with how mature the majority of this class are. Next year will combine this lesson with the story of ‘The Town and Country Mouse’.

**CLL:** Taught phonics and completed remainder of frog life cycle work today.

**Maths:** Reviewed counting forwards and backwards to 20. Children have improved in counting backwards but still find this challenging above 10. L had a real attitude problem today in this lesson. Children completed work in New Primary Maths book and most people were able to do this independently.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Lower 1C EVALUATIONS week 8: 10.06.13

Monday

UW: Today we finished off the work on fingerprints we started on Friday. Only a few children could articulate why fingerprints are used to trace people. This will have to be given more thought when taught next year. We recapped that fingerprints are all unique and wrote sentences to explain this. I was impressed with the work of the children considering it was the afternoon and they were asked to work largely independently. Will perhaps consider combining this with a police station role play next year.

R is still not writing sounds to accompany the words he says he has written. Requires reinforcement work on listening and identifying sounds in words. H is now starting to represent sounds he can hear in words which is very positive progress but is still inverting his letters.

Tuesday

Maths: Recapped the subject of mental subtraction to 5 and 10 using finger method if children unable to do mentally. Used activities on TES Iboard to reinforce this concept and engage children.

Most children are becoming quicker at mental subtraction but H, R and I still seem to have very limited understanding. J seems to be grasping the concept slowly. This group require reinforcement using physical resources of subtraction from a starting amount of 5.

Some children still becoming mixed up between adding and subtracting. This will require reinforcement during next input. Subtraction number sentences in books look promising from most children.

CLL: Looked at the book using a YouTube clip of ‘The Great Pet Sale’ being read. The children loved the funny accents used and counting the animals listed. The children came up with some very interesting animals for sale to put in their poster including a tarantula and bird eating spider! Would like to try out next lesson an interactive circle time in which children need to act the animals they wish to sell.

I was really impressed with the work D produced today and he is becoming much faster and more independent.

UW/PSED: Looked at a YouTube clip of the ‘Rainbow Fish’. Discussed as a class why it is better to be kind and share than selfish and alone. Children drew some beautiful drawings of their own rainbow fish and will finish these on Thursday. J was very reluctant to draw his at first claiming he was tired but he did so in the end and produced a good drawing.

Wednesday Trip to Hounslow Urban Farm

Thursday

CLL: Recapped the story of Great Pet Sale. Children could recall some of the animals and remembered the rat as the main character. Children came up with really interesting animals
to describe in their posters. I was really impressed with B’s work today. It was much neater and more considered.

The higher ability children are remembering to use full stops at the end of their sentences, especially L. There were some really interesting animals written about including the African sand spiders and red backed spiders! Next year it would be nice to record video adverts as an alternative to the tried and tested design a poster format.

Maths: Recapped subtraction number stories with the children using TES iboard. We looked at subtraction using a number line and I was impressed with the number of children who were able to subtract mentally from 10. J was very lazy in the lesson today and did not put in much effort.

Friday

UW: Today we began our under the sea collages. The children were really enthusiastic and enjoyed making them. They were able to describe their collages well and we scribed the descriptions. We listened to soothing sea music and this really enabled the children to remain calm this afternoon. Would be nice to combine the sea music with a movement session on how sea creatures move. Will definitely try to incorporate this next year by pushing tables back.

Phonics: Today we recapped our high frequency words through the use of two TES iboard games. The children are becoming very adept at playing the reading and matching game involving the aeroplane. Some children still find the spelling game tricky as it involves un-jumbling the letters. I was really pleased with how mature Z was when he made a couple of mistakes which lost his team the point.
**Peer Observation Form**

**Teacher:** AW  **Observer:** AC  **Date:** 15.10.2012  **Year:** Reception

**Lesson:** Maths – shape and space: 2D shape

### Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student progress</strong></td>
<td>• Lesson objective clearly showed expectation of learning by end of lesson. Explained in an age appropriate fashion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students from a range of abilities were catered for via differentiated activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clear expectations made of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students making value added progress during lesson in their knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour &amp; enjoyment</strong></td>
<td>• Minor disruption and calling out dealt with in a timely fashion by teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A range of behaviour management strategies used. This could be further extended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Most children gave their full attention to the lesson and showed some enjoyment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use of 2D shape bingo engaged children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge in learning</strong></td>
<td>• Expectations of work and behaviour met by most children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High ability learners could have been challenged further by bingo groups being adjusted according to ability in a second rotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting individual learning needs</strong></td>
<td>• Bingo game was mixed ability allowing for peer support of lower ability children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assessment for learning could be used to identify areas of weakness to be addressed in the following lessons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effective differentiation so that all learners can engage in the work set</th>
<th>Assessment for learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment for learning feedback was oral due to the age group and was largely appropriate.</td>
<td>Written assessment shows learners how to improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher gave children some positive feedback and explained ways to improve during input and activity.</td>
<td>In class assessment supports progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent learning</th>
<th>Independent learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity for independent learning present in the use of other activities during the rotation e.g. using 2D shapes to create a picture.</td>
<td>Student’s learning is extended through opportunities for independent learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure of lesson</td>
<td>Learning objective clearly explained at the beginning of the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of key words, learning objectives, plenary</td>
<td>Key words reinforced throughout input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parts to the lesson</td>
<td>Lesson divided into traditional 3 parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of activities</td>
<td>Lesson had activities on rotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of strategies</td>
<td>All learning styles covered through use of auditory explanation, visual PowerPoint input and a kinaesthetic bingo game involving used of other learning styles and team work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinaesthetic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject knowledge</td>
<td>Teacher showed some enthusiasm and had good knowledge of this area Maths.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

| Level of interest and enthusiasm from teacher |  |
| Knowledge, confidence & precision |  |
| **Use of resources** |  |
| Quality and use of resources |  |
| Pace & timing |  |
| Stimulation PowerPoint used for input. |  |
| Bingo game was well prepared. |  |
| Timing and pace in generally sound. |  |
| **Teaching assistants / support staff** |  |
| Well directed & working effectively with students to support learning & reinforce teaching |  |
| Teaching assistants able to assist in the smooth running of the rotation. |  |
| Teaching assistant could have been better prepared for bingo activity – examples of questions to ask in order to move learning forward should have been given. |  |

Other comments:

- The teaching space is a very small, square classroom divided from the neighbouring classroom by partition doors.
- Due to space constraints, children were squashed trying to sit on available floor space to view IWB.
- Space was used to the best of teacher’s ability – during activity children moved round to play bingo game at different tables.
- Space is extremely limited in this classroom and this seems to have a real impact on what activities can be carried out safely with this age group.
- It was clear that the number of children in the classroom was problematic in terms of the available space – teacher had to manage space carefully.
Peer Observation Form

**Teacher:** CC  **Observer:** AC  **Date:** 02.07.2013  **Year:** 2

**Lesson:** Phonics - Letters and Sounds Stage 6: Antonyms

### Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student progress</strong></td>
<td>- Lesson objective clearly showed expectation of learning by end of lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear expectations made of learning</td>
<td>- Students from a range of abilities could offer correct suggestions of antonyms during the plenary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students making value added progress during lesson in their knowledge and skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour &amp; enjoyment</strong></td>
<td>- Minor disruption and calling out handled well by teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>- A range of successful behaviour management strategies used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>- Most children gave their full attention to the lesson and showed enjoyment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to learn more</td>
<td>- Use of bingo game to encourage application of knowledge met with enthusiasm by children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm/enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge in learning</strong></td>
<td>- Clear expectations of work and behaviour met by most children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations in work and behaviour</td>
<td>- High ability learners could have been challenged further by bingo groups being adjusted according to ability in a second rotation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is challenging every learner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Meeting individual learning needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use of data in planning</th>
<th>Effective differentiation so that all learners can engage in the work set</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Bingo game was mixed ability allowing for peer support of lower ability children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Assessment data had been used to identify more work needed to be completed on this area of grammar.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Assessment for learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Written assessment shows learners how to improve</th>
<th>In class assessment supports progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Assessment for learning feedback was oral due to lesson being a short phonics session based on speaking and listening.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher gave children positive feedback and explained ways to improve during input and activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Independent learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student's learning is extended through opportunities for independent learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Opportunity for independent learning present in plenary – children asked to think of their own antonyms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure of lesson</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Key words reinforced throughout input.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lesson clearly divided into traditional 3 parts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Short phonics lesson had one main activity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

Range of activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of strategies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kinaesthetic</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- All learning styles covered through use of auditory explanation, visual PowerPoint input and a kinaesthetic bingo game involving used of other learning styles and team work.

Subject knowledge

| Level of interest and enthusiasm from teacher |  |
| Knowledge, confidence & precision |  |

- Teacher clearly enthusiastic and had excellent knowledge of this area of grammar.

Use of resources

| Quality and use of resources |  |
| Pace & timing               |  |

- Stimulating PowerPoint used for input.
- Bingo game was well prepared.
- Timing and pace in general sound – organisation of children into teams could have been slightly slicker.

Teaching assistants / support staff

| Well directed & working effectively with students to support learning & reinforce teaching |  |

- Teaching assistant was able to assist well with the operation of the PowerPoint as Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) interactive nature was currently not operational.
- Teaching assistant could have engaged more with children whilst they were playing the bingo activity.

Other comments:

- The teaching space is a long, narrow rectangular shape, divided into two classrooms by partition doors.
- For the purposes of this lesson, two classes were taught together and the doors opened up to allow maximum use of the space.
- Due to space constraints, children were squashed trying to sit on available floor space to view IWB.
Space was used to the best of teacher’s ability – during activity children moved round to play bingo game at different tables.

It was clear that the number of children in the classroom was problematic in terms of the available space – teacher had to manage space carefully.

Peer Observation Form

Teacher: DW Observer: AC Date: 11.03.2013 Year: Year 6

Lesson: Maths – problem solving: café investigation

### Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student progress</strong></td>
<td>• Lesson objective clearly showed expectation of learning by end of lesson. Displayed on IWB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear expectations made of learning</td>
<td>• Students from a range of abilities were catered for via mixed ability groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students making value added progress during lesson in their knowledge and skills</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour &amp; enjoyment</strong></td>
<td>• Minor disruption dealt with in an appropriate fashion by teacher.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>• A range of effective behaviour management strategies used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>• Most children gave their full attention to the lesson and showed real engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to learn more</td>
<td>• Use of the café problem solving investigation inspired children to try to find the solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm/enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge in learning</strong></td>
<td>• Expectations of work and behaviour met by most children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations in work and behaviour</td>
<td>• High ability learners could have been challenged further by being asked to devise their own café investigation as a challenge for classmates to solve at the end of the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is challenging every learner</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Meeting individual learning needs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of data in planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective differentiation so that all learners can engage in the work set</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Investigation was mixed ability allowing for peer support of lower ability children.
- Assessment for learning was used during the investigation – interesting to find that children who are low ability in some areas of maths are not necessarily so in problem solving tasks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment for learning</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written assessment shows learners how to improve</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class assessment supports progress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Assessment for learning feedback was oral due to the investigative nature of the task.
- Teacher gave children positive feedback and explained ways to improve during the investigative activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent learning</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student's learning is extended through opportunities for independent learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Opportunity for independent learning could have been extended.
- There was the opportunity for children to experiment with different ways of recording their attempts at solving the investigation despite working as part of a group.

### Teaching

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TEACHING</th>
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<tr>
<td>Structure of lesson</td>
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<td>Use of key words, learning objectives, plenary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parts to the lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Learning objective clearly explained at the beginning of the lesson.
- Appropriate systematic methods to solve investigation discussed and explained during input.
- Lesson divided into traditional 3 parts.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of activities</th>
<th>• Lesson had one main investigative activity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Range of strategies</strong></td>
<td>• All learning styles covered through use of auditory explanation, visual PowerPoint input and a kinaesthetic investigation involving used of other learning styles and team work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinaesthetic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject knowledge</strong></td>
<td>• Teacher showed a high degree of enthusiasm and had good knowledge of this area of Maths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of interest and enthusiasm from teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge, confidence &amp; precision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of resources</strong></td>
<td>• Stimulating PowerPoint used for input.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and use of resources</td>
<td>• Investigation was well prepared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace &amp; timing</td>
<td>• Timing and pace in general sound.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching assistants / support staff</strong></td>
<td>• Lack of a teaching assistant in this year group meant children had to wait for assistance. This did create problems for children who had become stuck on how to proceed next but often members of their team assisted them peer:peer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well directed &amp; working effectively with students to support learning &amp; reinforce teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other comments:

- The teaching space is a small, square classroom divided from the neighbouring classroom by partition doors.
- Due to space constraints, children are seated at desks which just fit into the classroom space.
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

- Space was used to the best of teacher’s ability – during activity children moved round to sit in groups with others.

- Space is limited in this classroom and this does have an impact on what investigations can be carried out.

Peer Observation Form

**Teacher:** JB  **Observer:** AC  **Date:** 10.09.2013  **Year:** Year 4

**Lesson:** History/Geography – Egyptians introduction to new topic

Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student progress</strong></td>
<td>• Lesson objective clearly showed expectation of learning by end of lesson. Displayed on IWB.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear expectations made of learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students making value added progress during lesson in their knowledge and skills</td>
<td>• Students from a range of abilities were catered for via mixed ability groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One student has specialist LSA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviour &amp; enjoyment</strong></td>
<td>• Minor disruption dealt with in an appropriate fashion by teacher and LSA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>• A range of effective behaviour management strategies used.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>• Most children gave their full attention to the lesson and showed real engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to learn more</td>
<td>• Use of the ‘What do we already know? What would we like to know? How are we going to find out?’ technique engaged children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiasm/enjoyment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenge in learning</strong></td>
<td>• Expectations of work and behaviour met by most children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations in work and behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work is challenging every learner</td>
<td>• High ability learners could have been challenged further by being asked to teach the class some facts/their favourite fact they already knew about the Egyptians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Meeting individual learning needs**

- Lesson was pitched as mixed ability allowing for peer support of lower ability children.
- Assessment for learning was used during the lesson – interesting to find that children who are low ability in core subjects can have a real talent for humanities.

**Assessment for learning**

- Assessment for learning feedback was oral due to the discursive nature of the lesson.
- Teacher gave children positive feedback and encouraged them to think of ways in which they could learn what they wished to about the Egyptians.

**Independent learning**

- Opportunity for independent learning could have been extended through the opportunity to begin looking at non-fiction books about the Egyptians.

## Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structure of lesson</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of key words, learning objectives, plenary</td>
<td>• Learning objective clearly explained at the beginning of the lesson.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Lesson divided broadly into 3 parts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Creativity Constrained? To what extent does teaching in a restrictive physical space inspire creative teaching in the EYFS and Key Stage 1?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parts to the lesson</th>
<th>Range of activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesson had one main discursive activity and children created mind maps of what they knew, wanted to know and how they were going to get there.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of strategies</th>
<th>Kinaesthetic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Auditory explanation and visual PowerPoint input.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Range of strategies</th>
<th>Auditory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Could have included a kinaesthetic activity to appeal to such learners e.g. complete a hieroglyphic puzzle on tables etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject knowledge</th>
<th>Knowledge, confidence &amp; precision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher showed a high degree of enthusiasm and had good knowledge of this area of humanities.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Lack of a general teaching assistant in this year group meant children had to wait for assistance.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Teaching assistants / support staff</th>
<th>Could solve this by encouraging children to ask a friend for help before raising their hand.</th>
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</table>

Other comments:

- The teaching space is a small, square classroom divided from the neighbouring classroom by partition doors.
- Due to space constraints, children are seated at desks which just fit into the classroom space.
• Space was used mainly to the best of teacher’s ability – children could have managed to move around to sit with others for a group activity.

• Space is limited in this classroom and this does have an impact on what activities can be carried out.