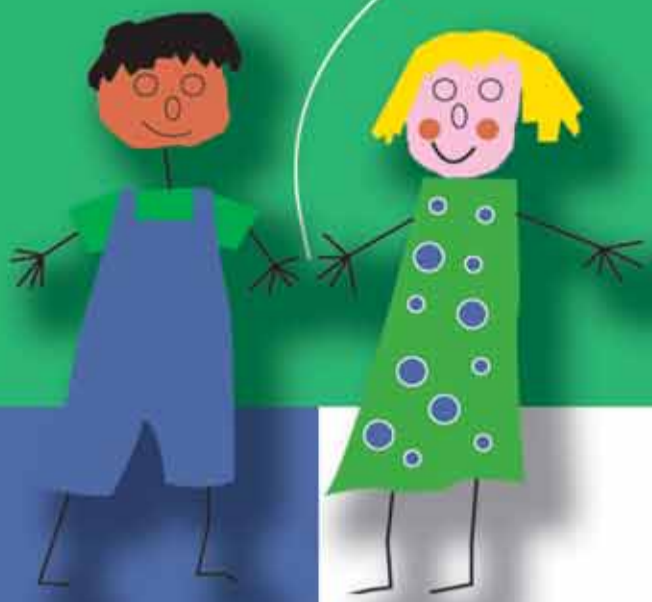


# Peptalk



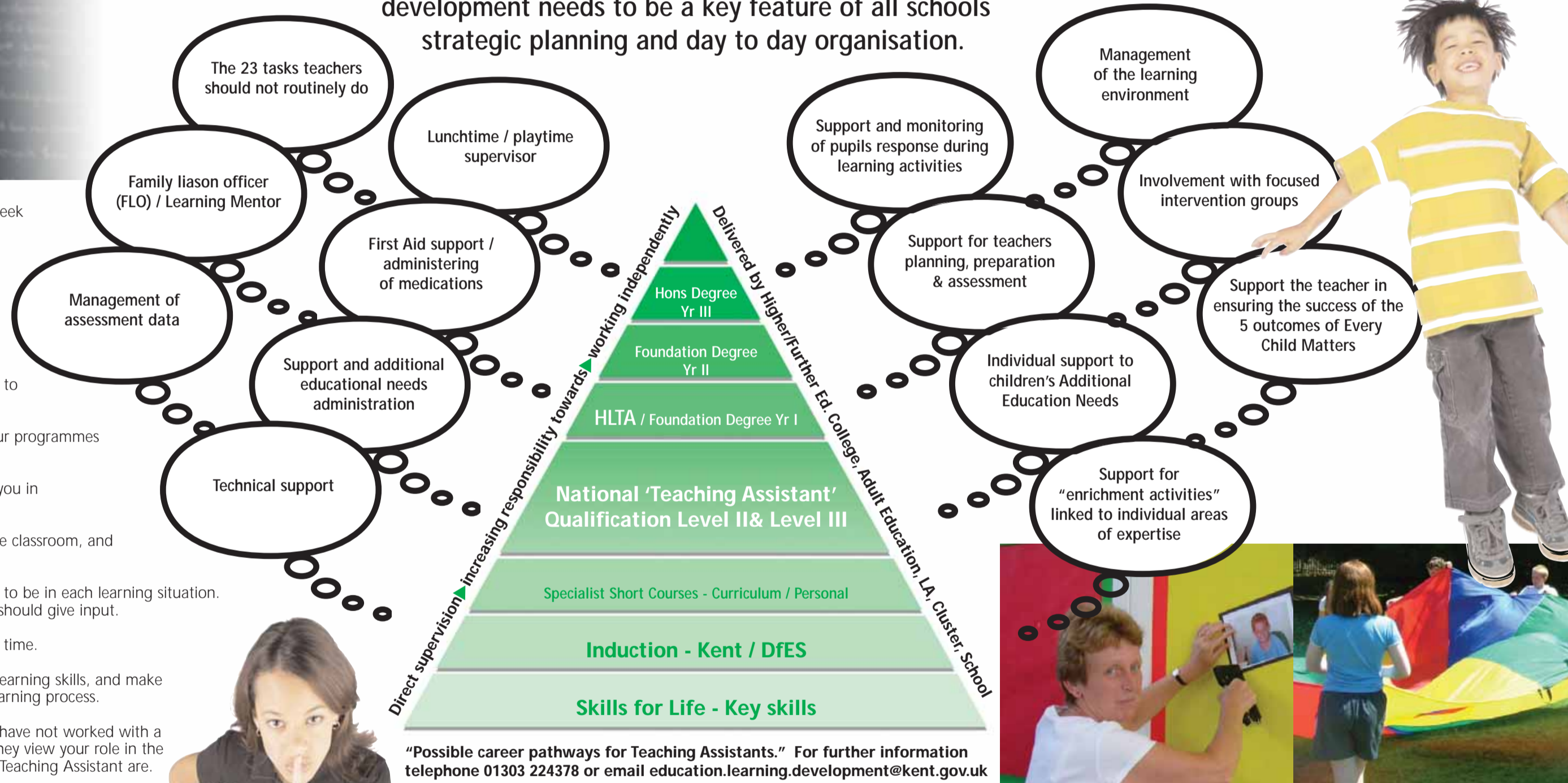
## Top Tips for working with teachers



- Ask your teacher to set aside a time each week when you can discuss pupils and planning.
- Make sure you know where to find copies of Individual Education Plans and lesson plans if relevant.
- Find out what rattles your teachers cage – and avoid it!
- Ask how and when your teacher wants you to feed back on pupil progress and behaviour.
- Be aware of any pupils who are on behaviour programmes and make sure you follow the guidelines.
- Establish your role and what is expected of you in different situations.
- Know where you can keep your things in the classroom, and where your space has to be.
- Talk to your teacher about what your role is to be in each learning situation. How much help you are to give, when you should give input.
- Ask if you are unsure about anything at any time.
- Allow the children to develop independent learning skills, and make mistakes. This is an important part of the learning process.
- Remember that we are all different – if you have not worked with a teacher before, you need to find out how they view your role in the classroom and what their expectations of a Teaching Assistant are.
- Remember that you are there to support learning. If you are unhappy about what you are being asked to do, you need to be up-front and talk to the teacher about your concerns.
- If you are still worried about how you are being used in the classroom, please discuss this with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator/Line manager. Hopefully, most matters can be sorted out quickly, before the situation gets out of control!
- Be a "flexible friend". You may be asked to change what you had planned to do, or to be sent elsewhere from time to time.
- Be ready with tea, sympathy, advice whenever and however needed. Do not expect to be thanked for this or to be right!

## The changing role of Teaching Assistants

The role of all Teaching Assistants has greatly changed since the early days and the contribution they now make to childrens learning is increasingly significant. Therefore professional development needs to be a key feature of all schools strategic planning and day to day organisation.

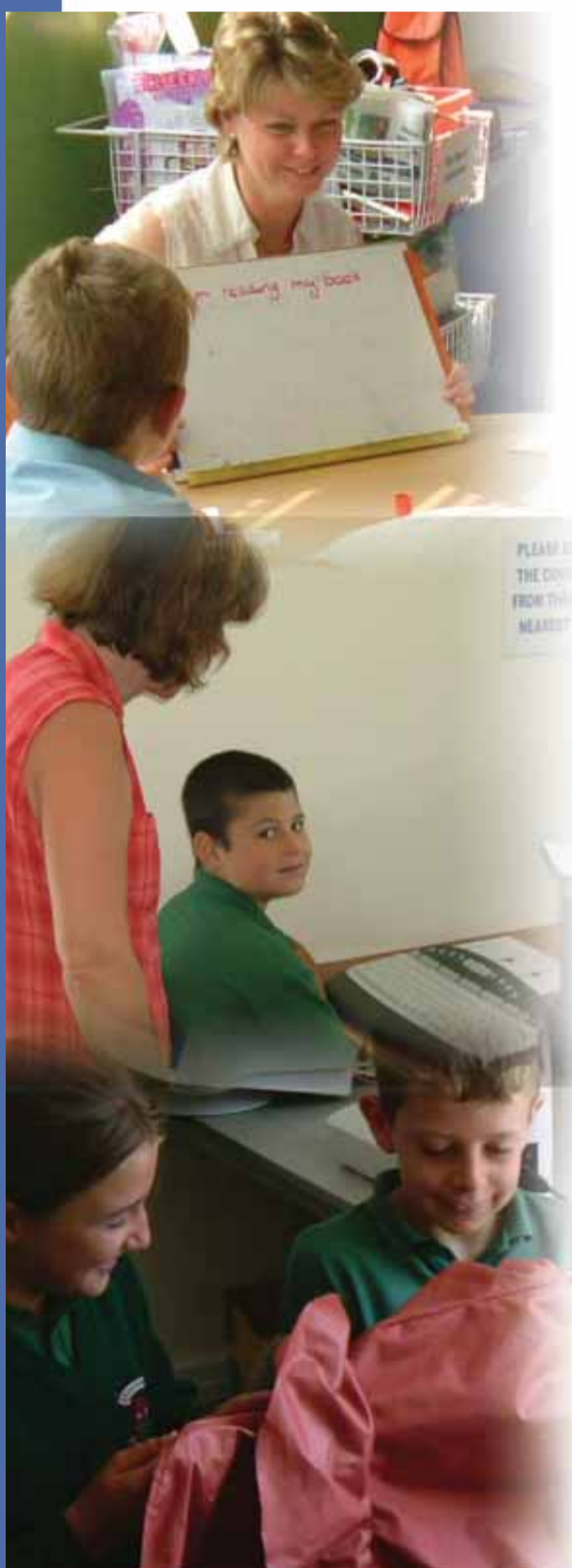


"Possible career pathways for Teaching Assistants." For further information telephone 01303 224378 or email [education.learning.development@kent.gov.uk](mailto:education.learning.development@kent.gov.uk)

### Some handy hints on how to make the best of your Teaching Assistant!

- Make time to sit down with your Teaching Assistant at least once to review the week.
- Make sure your Teaching Assistant knows what is expected in each lesson.
- Share your planning with your Teaching Assistant and clarify the learning objectives.
- Ensure your Teaching Assistants have access to relevant Individual Education Plans and pupil targets.
- Make sure your Teaching Assistant knows about any pupils on behaviour programmes, and what their role is to be.
- Allow time for feedback and discussion at the end of the lesson, or at least at the end of a series of lessons.
- Listen to concerns about pupil progress raised by the Teaching Assistant and act accordingly.
- Make sure your Teaching Assistant understands your routines and expectations – we are all different, and if the Teaching Assistant has not worked with you before they won't know what you are expecting from them!
- Use your Teaching Assistant effectively at the start of each lesson, if they miss out on teacher input they may not be able to achieve in the way you expect when working with children.
- Allow the Teaching Assistant to allow the children to make mistakes. They are not there to ensure that every piece of work is perfect!
- Only use your Teaching Assistant for photocopying and administration if it is absolutely essential.
- If you are not happy about the way the Teaching Assistant is working, in the first instance you need to discuss your concerns with them. It may be that they have misunderstood your instructions. Listen to their point of view, it may be valid!
- If you are still unhappy about the Teaching Assistant role in your class, then please discuss this with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator/Line manager. It may be possible to sort matters out quickly before personality clashes get out of control!
- Some problems may be avoided all together if you establish the ground rules at the start of the term, so please begin with the basics – where the Teaching Assistant can put their stuff, whether they can talk to children during teacher input, dress code etc.
- Remember to thank your Teaching Assistant from time to time – we all appreciate being appreciated!
- Be ready with tissues, tea, sympathy, advice whenever and however needed. Do not expect to be thanked for this or to be right!

Primary Excellence



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T.01622 749974 F.01622 746660 Would you like to share any information with the whole of Kent?  
If you know of any useful websites, events, great speakers please tell your PEP Head.



# There's no right answer Think Better, Learn better to solve real life problems

## "Doing Maths like this is fun, Miss"

Nine schools in Thanet 2 Cluster have joined together to form a Primary Strategy Learning Network. The aim of the network is "to design problem solving activities in realistic, meaningful contexts to develop and create excited learners and boost achievement in mathematics"



Some examples of activities at the beach

- Survey of why people visited the beach
- Representing results in graph form in the sand
- Create sundial, including fractions and direction
- How to create the tallest sandcastle including quickest time. To discuss best designs of buckets
- Tide timetable. Use TASC wheel to decide best time and date to visit the beach.
- Investigate how many beach huts fit into school hall. Draw outline on beach
- Investigate removing hedge and how much fence would be needed instead
- Ratio and proportion of blue and yellow beach huts

Our focus is based on the following statement:

**We know that we need to improve engagement and strengthen childrens language and thinking skills. We will design problem solving activities in realistic meaningful contexts to develop and create excited learners and boost achievement in Mathematics"**

Through the network teachers from more than one school have visited venues together and planned visits for their classes with a focus on mathematical problem solving activities. The project was supported by the Education Business Partnership who contacted venues and arranged initial visits.

In the Spring terms children visited Revolution skate park, Theatre Royal, Margate, Wilkinsons (Ramsgate) and Ramsgate leisure centre. In the summer term the children involved visited local beaches, churches, Ramsgate station and undertook a boat trip in Sandwich to investigate mathematical learning opportunities.

Following the visit to the Skate Park a teacher commented:

"The maths day was a complete success. All the children learned and consolidated knowledge of measures, shapes and angles. Even the disaffected children achieved a more thorough understanding. This was a great idea but with lots of preparation needed by myself and the year 3 teacher"

The TASC wheel approach was used by teachers to plan the activities for the children and very appropriate problem solving situations have meant that the children have found the maths enjoyable and non-threatening. One child who has demonstrated very challenging behaviour was enthralled in the activities and said to his teacher

"Doing maths like this is fun isn't it?"



Questionnaires were completed by the children to analyse their attitudes towards maths before the project started and at the end of the project to see whether the attitudes and abilities in maths of the focus groups of disaffected children have improved through this project. The results showed that:

- In 5 out of 6 schools, children enjoyed maths more
- In 5 out of 6 schools, children enjoyed problem solving in maths more
- In 4 out of 6 schools, children thought they were better at problem solving

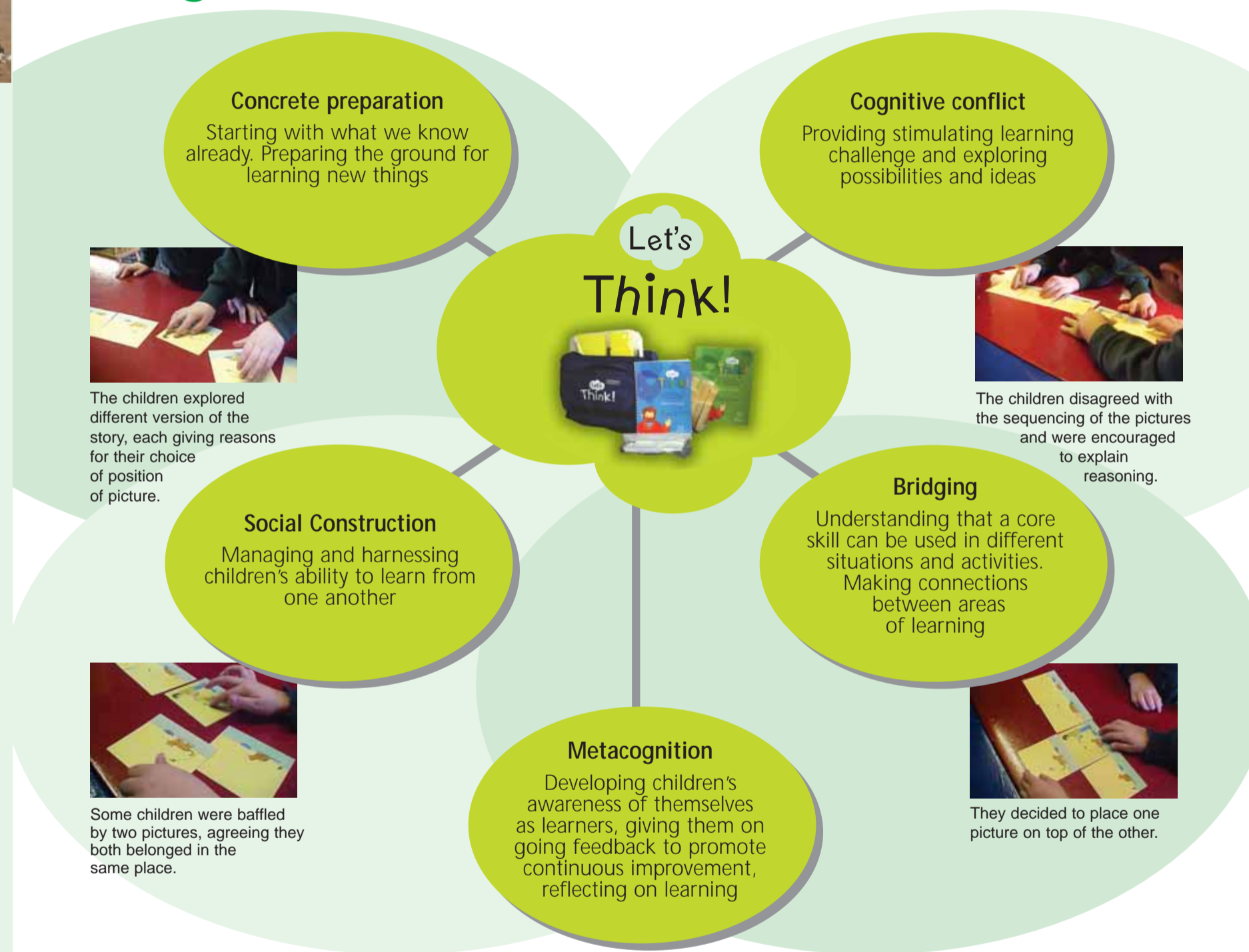
Quotes from some of the children following the beach trip showed the impact that problem solving in a real life situation has had:

- "It felt a bit strange measuring with my body - I don't usually get sand on me in maths"
- "I'm going to do some maths with my sister next time I come to the beach"
- "I got a bit fed up, trying to stop people treading on my axis"
- "I liked doing a great big graph with my toes"

The planning materials and resources will be published into a booklet and CD Rom for all schools in Thanet. We hope this will help teachers in the Thanet area to plan visits to local amenities.

This project, as well as providing problem solving opportunities for maths, through the use of venues in the community has also contributed to the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.

## Promoting Thinking Abilities and Making Meaning Using the Let's Think Resources in Schools



The children explored different version of the story, each giving reasons for their choice of position of picture.



The children disagreed with the sequencing of the pictures and were encouraged to explain reasoning.



Some children were baffled by two pictures, agreeing they both belonged in the same place.



They decided to place one picture on top of the other.

### King's College research indicates that:

The Let's Think programme accelerates cognitive development and that it genuinely improves children's thinking skills.

The use of materials is based on the rationale that we must maximise every child's chance of becoming a good thinker to meet the challenges of living and thriving in a fast-changing world.

Last Spring, Y1 teachers from ten East Kent schools, attended an ASK day's course to explore the resources. They then trialled them back at school, coming together for a second day to share their findings and thoughts in the processes. The photographs above show the children of St Crispin's Infant School engrossed in one of the many activities that they took part in.

**Theory and experience indicate that gains in cognitive development lead to gains in academic achievement. Children who think better, learn better. They are able to derive meaning for the mainstream curriculum in all subject areas.**

## Gloucester Old Spot meets The Danish Waddler

Seven small rural primary schools in Ashford Rural Cluster have been working collaboratively as a Primary Strategy Learning Network on developing problem solving skills. One of their activities to support this involved two team building days with all their Year 5 pupils at the Rare Breeds Centre in Woodchurch Kent. Andrew Macey Headteacher at Bethersden School describes the "real life" learning that took place.

In addition to completing these tasks perhaps the greatest challenge for all of the groups will be to work collaboratively with 5 total strangers supported by an adult whom most of the children would not have met before. In such circumstances could they possibly prepare a presentation of their work by the end of the second day?

### Oh well, at least it wasn't snowing!

Groups of children were busy all over the centre. It was clear as they played that the children were developing close bonds within their groups. All too soon the end of Day 1 had arrived, as the children prepared to return to their own schools their was frantic planning of work to be carried out before day 2 and a sharing of e-mail addresses so that they could keep in touch.

Surely not even the member schools of the Ashford Rural Cluster (ARC) Rural Action Zone (RAZ) would consider putting 120 Year 5 children from 7 small rural schools together for 2 days of problem solving on a farm in the middle of winter.

The threat of snow from Day 1 was replaced by blue skies and a hint of sunshine for Day 2. Encouraged by the warm weather groups were soon back outside, everybody was busy and clearly aware of the need to be ready to present their work to the other groups that afternoon.



By 1.30 pm everybody had returned to the main conference room and the presentations began. We had been impressed by the effort the children had put into their work over the 2 days, their ability to work collaboratively, their enthusiasm for everything they were asked to do and the variety of ideas they generated amongst themselves, but we were still not prepared for the quality of the presentations they gave that afternoon.

In the conference room we were shown fantastic woodland art, watched slick Powerpoint presentation, admired imaginative designs for ponds and activity trails and listened to woodland stories. Everybody then set off for the woods where we were shown a fantastic bird-hide which had been constructed by one of the groups. It was wonderful to see that they were clearly very proud of what they had achieved.

Picture the scene, January 27th 2006, early morning and snow is forecast for the day. Small groups of people, children and adults huddled against the cold are beginning to assemble at the Rare Breeds Centre (RBC) on the outskirts of Woodchurch.

The children are immediately divided into groups of 6 and join the adult who will support them. Some are laughing about the amusing names of their groups which have been named after the rare breeds of animals that are to be found at the centre, others, particularly the adults, are looking anxious about the challenges of the day ahead.

The two days had provided many magical moments for children and adults, new friendships were made and many groups repeatedly surprised themselves as they discovered how much they could achieve by working together. Particularly interesting was the impact of working with total strangers. Rather than being inhibited it became increasingly obvious that a number of children who were regarded as quiet and shy by their own schools were more than willing to take a lead within their groups. This was apparent during the presentations as previously reluctant speakers stepped forward with confidence and enthusiasm to share the work of their group.

The day starts with a Treasure Hunt which helps break the ice and familiarise the children with the layout of the RBC and then they are straight into their group exercises.

### Using a TASC based approach the problem based activities included;

- creating a woodland story,
- designing an activity trail,
- producing a promotional leaflet,
- designing a pond,
- constructing a bird-hide,
- producing a piece of woodland art
- planning a play area,

These were presented to the groups with minimal detail so as to encourage creative thinking, thinking that will not be restricted by teacher expectations.

