

Top tips for working with primary schools



Whether you've never engaged with Primary Schools before, or you just want a refresher for your team, you might find this document useful for activity and resource planning.

Delivering to primary school children

There are lots of different and effective ways to work with Primary School children. Here are our top five tips to get you started.

1. Gain attention

At the beginning of every interaction, introduce pupils to who you are, what you do and the way you will attract their attention. Get them to practice it with you a few times too.

For example: raise your hand and expect all pupils to do the same to show they are listening. Remember, don't try and talk until all children have followed your rule.

2. Adapt communication

Younger children are naturally curious and need to be active. Generally, they can only focus for one minute per year of age! So, keep this in mind.

For example: simplify your message and give very explicit step-by-step directions on how to complete tasks. Use body language and hand signals to support your explanation and don't give too much information at once. At the same time, don't be afraid to introduce new vocabulary to children – just be clear in your explanation and give them time to absorb it.

3. Be flexible

You're unlikely to know a group of children as well as their teacher, and no one expects you to. However, it's helpful to acknowledge that some pupils will finish tasks quicker than others and that a child's ability to engage can vary day-to-day due to things out of your control.

For example: be creative and always have extra or alternative activities up your sleeve. You could also ask the teacher for class context before your visit.

4. Be enthusiastic

The wonderful thing about working with Primary School children is that they are full of life and energy and are generally eager to learn. Try to mirror this enthusiasm.

For example: Keep things real and show that you are excited about working with the children and the activities you've asked them to complete. Be careful not to be too silly though or underestimate their maturity level; the children might follow your example or find you patronising.

5. Give them 'choice'

Primary aged children can often like to feel that the adults in the room view them as grown-up. They also like to feel that they are in control. This is a particularly good feeling to conjure in pupils with Special Educational Needs, as surprises or the feeling of being forced into something can cause distress.

For example: offer choices where both outcomes are acceptable to you and let the children pick between 'this and this'.



Help the teachers out by...

- Ensuring your programme and resources support a curriculum area.
- Making resources available in a downloadable pack.
- Providing short online video content.
- Offering resources or photographs that support classroom displays or parental engagement.
- Providing enough explanation of the purpose of each activity so that anyone can deliver it.

Some important things to remember when working at Primary Schools

Sometimes, you can make the perfect resource, design an awesome activity and have brilliant plans to engage the children; but you don't manage to get a school to say 'yes' to your offer, or, when you arrive, things don't go to plan.



To help with this, try to remember **CAREER.**

Curriculum is planned well in advance so it's important to establish dates as early as possible and be upfront about required time commitments. When linking your offer to the curriculum, don't just focus on Maths and Literacy as the primary curriculum is much broader than this.

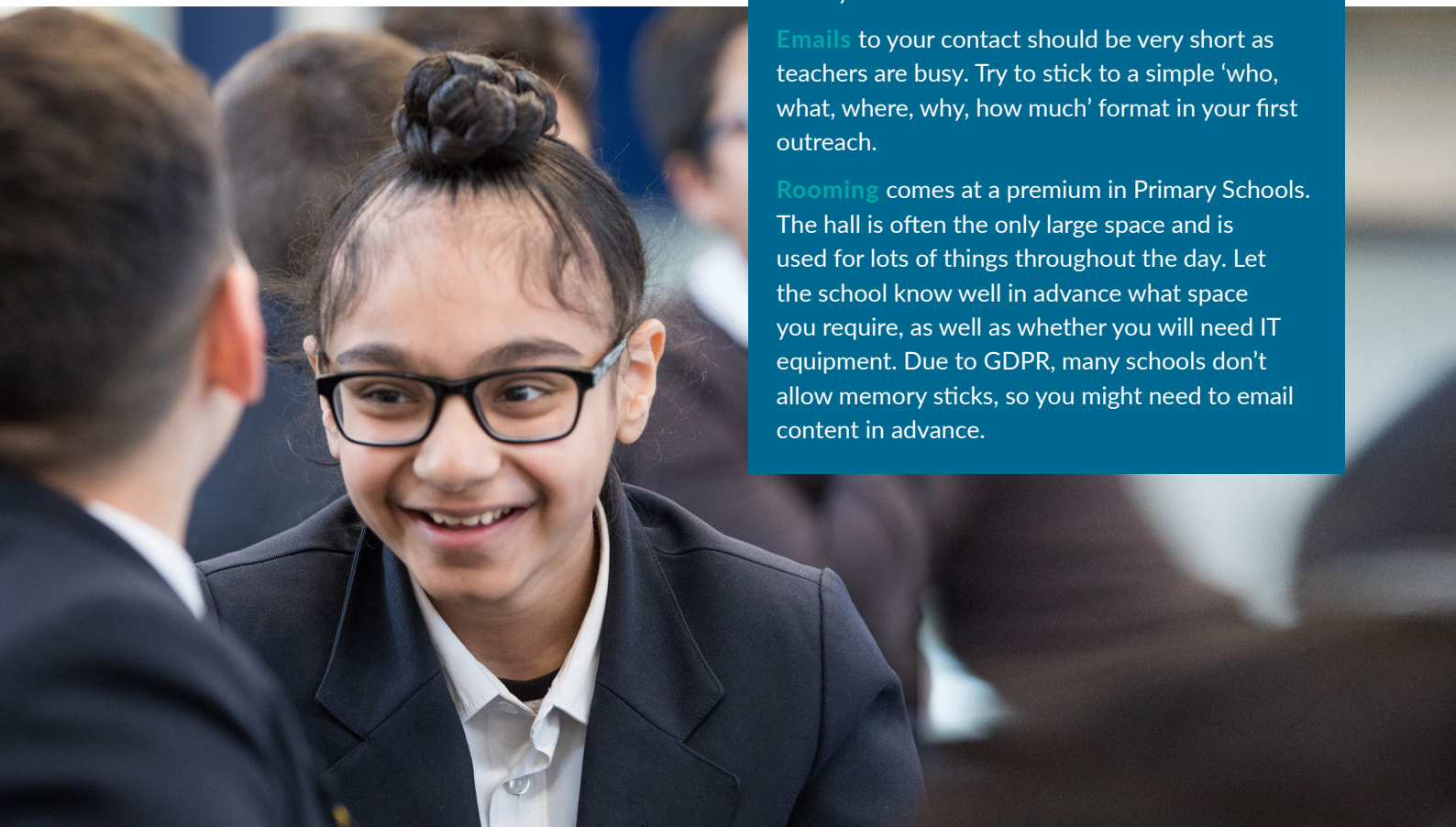
Arrive prepared to show your photo ID and DBS and with understanding that you might have to wait to be greeted; your contact could be teaching or speaking with a parent.

Responsibility for career-related learning is not always obvious in Primary Schools as it is a non-statutory subject. However, calling a school to identify who is responsible for transition, teaching and learning, curriculum development or extra-curricular activities is a good place to start.

Educational needs vary and Primary Schools generally do not stream or set pupils, so the cohort you work with will be mixed ability. Take on board any advice staff offer about the children or ask if you're unsure.

Emails to your contact should be very short as teachers are busy. Try to stick to a simple 'who, what, where, why, how much' format in your first outreach.

Rooming comes at a premium in Primary Schools. The hall is often the only large space and is used for lots of things throughout the day. Let the school know well in advance what space you require, as well as whether you will need IT equipment. Due to GDPR, many schools don't allow memory sticks, so you might need to email content in advance.



What makes a good resource or activity for Primary School children?



You may wish to use the following checklist to assess the primary aged readiness of your resources and activities.

1. Have you used images to help illustrate meaning or to model the learning outcome?
2. Have you kept things bright and appealing whilst not overpowering? Too much, and learners might find it hard to access, too little and they might switch off.
3. Have you used simple font, mirroring the style in early reading books, particularly for younger pupils?
4. Have you provided clear, step by step instructions for short introductory activities?
5. Have you differentiated tasks to suit a variety of abilities and used language that is applicable to the world of a child? Try to avoid internal business language, particularly without an explanation.
6. Have you designed short, practical, interactive and creative sessions particularly for EYFS-Y3 (ages 0-8)?
7. Have you made overt and specific references to the skills pupils are developing? There is a difference between gaining knowledge about the world of work and developing skills for the world of work; ensure this is obvious, for example by linking what the children are learning to their world.
8. Are your resources and activities editable or already available in different font sizes and on different coloured backgrounds to meet individual special needs?
9. Have you provided suggestions for adaptations for different age ranges or group sizes to enable the resource to be used flexibly by a teacher?
10. Have you included the opportunity for pupil self-reflection and evaluation, and do you have plans to follow this up to ensure it is meaningful?

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To find out more information or share the work that you're doing around careers-related learning, contact: primaryeducation@careersandenterprise.co.uk

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To access and provide feedback on our Primary Toolkit, and to read our report 'What Works? Career-related learning in primary schools', [click here](#)