

# My Favourite... Literacy Lesson

Find out what goes on in Angela Palin's school, Teaching Award winner 2009...



## A bit about Angela...

### WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING THE EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER OF TWO RURAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS?

**Angela Palin:** I think school federation is a good way of helping smaller, more rural schools to survive. It's also beneficial for the children. We've been involved in a Creative Partnership project with the school up the road; it's enabled pupils to work with more children their own age; and teachers at the two schools have been able to share their expertise.

### WHEN YOU FIRST JOINED THE SCHOOL IT HAD SERIOUS WEAKNESSES. NOW IT'S OUTSTANDING. WHAT CONTRIBUTED TO THIS?

**AP:** We used the previous Ofsted report as a baseline and the Local Authority provided the script. It was about recognising all that was good in the school, which was a lot. There were good teachers, well motivated children and supportive families. We also had the support of the governors and the diocese, and the recognition we were going to move forward.

### What's good?

Just a few weeks ago one of my teachers was stuck abroad because of the volcanic ash cloud. I taught KS1 for the day and had an absolutely lovely time. It made me realise just why I do all the paperwork.

### What's tough?

All my life I've worked with other people and there have been set pathways to follow. But as a school involved with federation we're defining a new pathway. That's exciting, but also challenging. For someone who likes to be told whether they're doing things right, to actually be deciding for yourself can be quite daunting.

## The lesson

### TP: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE LITERACY LESSON?

**AP:** I've always made an effort to make sure that what children are reading and writing is relevant to other areas of the curriculum. So when we embarked upon a whole school project about sustainability and improving the school grounds, this prompted a lesson on non-fiction writing in which the children made their own brochures promoting the school's 'green' credentials.

### TP: HOW DOES THE LESSON START?

**AP:** Because we live in Cornwall, there are all sorts of places that children can visit, which means it's easy to get hold of brochures describing different leisure attractions. We brought in a selection to show the class. At first the children thought we were going on a school trip; so they were a little disappointed when they realised this wasn't the case! However, they quickly forgot this and became enthused about their task. We began by choosing one leaflet to use as the basis for our own brochure, before going on to discuss non-fiction texts and the persuasive techniques we might use to engage people in the school's activities.

### TP: WHAT SKILLS DID THE CHILDREN DEVELOP?

**AP:** We divided up the class and sent each group to take photos of a particular area of the school grounds. They took pictures of the outdoor classroom, the water butt we use to water the bog garden, our trim trail and the recycling area. Compiling all the photos for the leaflet meant that children had to work together to decide what would be included, and use their ICT skills to incorporate the images into the brochure. As the leaflet would be seen by parents and members of the local community, pupils thought hard about to present the school's best features in the text and captions.

### TP: DID THE PROJECT CHANGE THE WAY CHILDREN VIEW THE SCHOOL?

**AP:** We have a box on the wall into which children put suggestions they'd like to be discussed at the next school council meeting. In our new extension we have a flat roof with sun pipes in it. The children noticed how we didn't need the lights on so often because of this, so they thought it would be a good idea if we could get more sun pipes installed throughout the school. That idea went from the school council onto the governors and it's now part of the development plan. The children are also very het up about the fact the school uses storage heaters, rather than a more economic and environmentally friendly system. They told the Ofsted inspector and it's in our report!

