MAPE Newsletter

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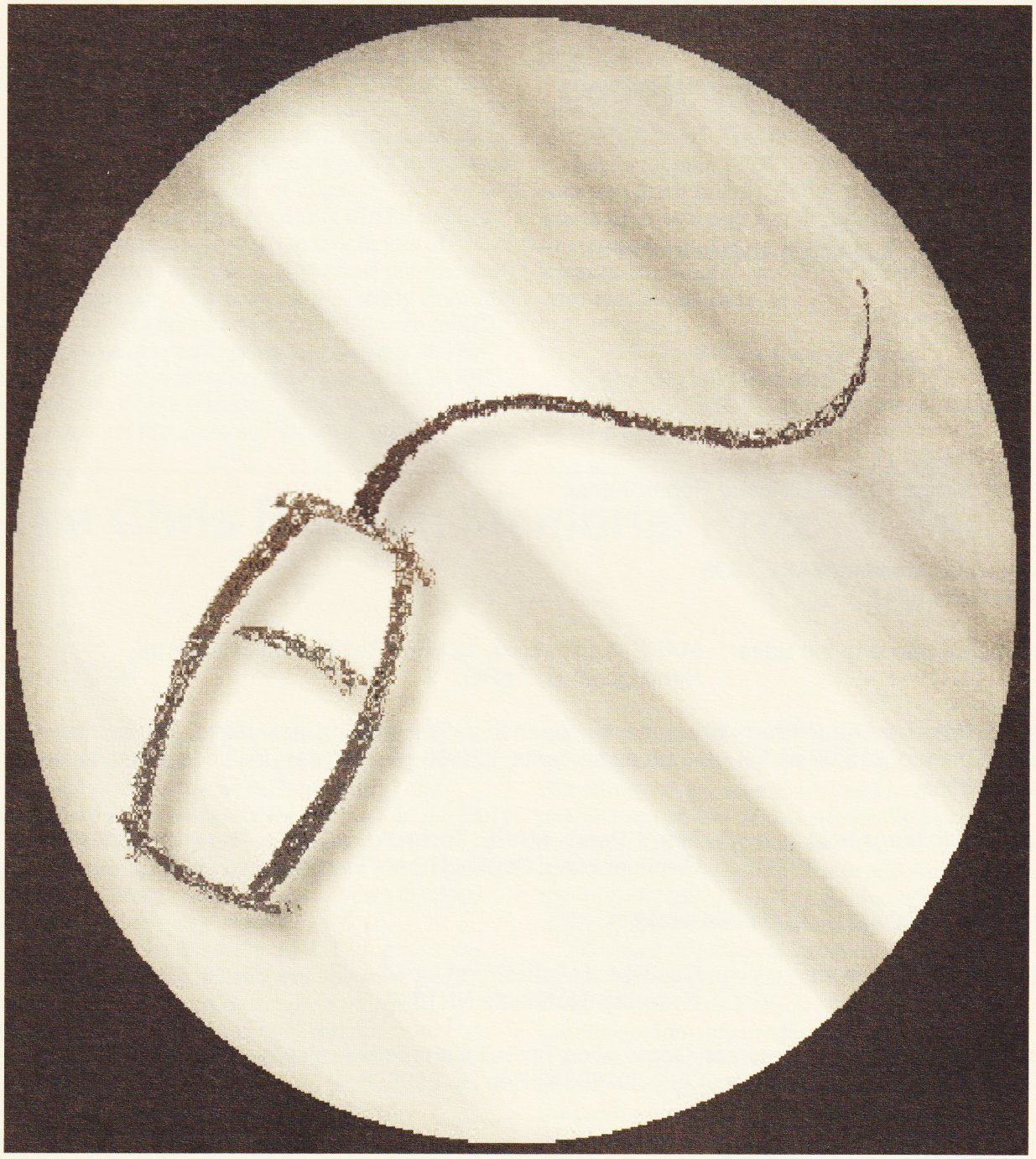

Autumn Term 1998

Newman College with MAPE

Contents

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Editorial

Rhona Dick

As I write this it hardly seems possible that Summer has come and almost gone. By the time you read this we will all be getting to grips with new classes, new courses and new challenges. Not least of these challenges in the classroom will be the implementation of Literacy Hour in most schools. MAPE *Focus on Literacy*, which accompanies this Newsletter, does not promise to provide all the answers, but it should give some fresh ideas on the ways in which ICT can support and enhance the many different aspects of literacy.

One of the great joys of editing MAPE publications is the opportunity I get to talk to lots of people in lots of different posts. Some put forward ideas for articles. One such came recently from Jill Ferrier who suggested a series of articles on INSET. So if you have been involved in planning and delivering, or just participating in really good INSET please pass on the ideas to others. MAPE is about helping other members and their colleagues to provide first class ICT education for primary pupils.

Cambridgeshire Software House will be launching a new piece of software in the not too distant future. More information about that and a special offer to MAPE members will appear in next term's publication.

Plans for the MAPE *Focus on Communications*, due to be published early in the New Year are well in hand. This promises to be just as full and wide ranging as its predecessors, so make sure you don't miss it. Future plans include a Focus on Maths and Numeracy. If you would like to contribute to this, or indeed to the MAPE magazine or termly Newsletter please get in touch with me, Rhona Dick, at

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The Chris Robson Memorial Prize

Rhona Dick

This year the panel of judges found it impossible to choose an outright winner, and so the award for 1996–97 is shared between Pam Larkins and Rosemary Boys. Both articles appeared in the Early Years Special published in the Summer of 1997, perhaps appropriately so as the Early Years Special had been Chris's brainchild; early years children had always been very close to her heart.

Pam described the different ICT programs she used with her Reception Class to enhance her pupils' learning about Baricho – a village in Kenya. Pam and her class only had access to one RM PC 186; this article underlines the fact that good ICT can take place without necessarily having state-of-the-art machines to hand.

In contrast Rosemary Boys describes how she encouraged the development of oracy and literacy skills in her young pupils using fax machines. This project had the added advantage of involving a wider network of people, families and the local community, many of whom would have been unable to come into school personally because of the pressure of work. Both of these articles show how ICT can be used effectively and with imagination to develop children's skills, knowledge and understanding of the wider world.

The panel of judges is currently considering entries for this year's award. For those of you new to MAPE the Chris Robson Memorial Prize, commemorating my predecessor as MAPE Editor, is awarded annually for an article published in any of the MAPE publications which, in the opinion of the panel of judges, best reflects good classroom practice using ICT. There is no need to 'enter' your contribution; all published articles are eligible for consideration.

Poetry writing through the eMate Project at Marlborough Primary School, Isleworth

Hilary Messeter
IT Co-ordinator

The school

Marlborough School is a large primary school with a population of over 500 and growing. For some years I have worked hard to achieve our current computer provision of 30 Acorns of various denominations but, like any large school, provision of sufficient hands-on time is always difficult. It was for this reason that I was keen to bid for participation in our LEA's eMate project.

The hardware and software

The eMate is a very durable, portable computer, light in weight and appealing to the eye. Its useful carrying handle allows it to be transported anywhere. Any corner of the classroom or corridor is a suitable workplace. Additionally, it has expansion and connectivity capabilities.

The eMate comes with a range of applications including quite sophisticated word processor, spreadsheet and drawing facilities. The Full Newton Mode includes diary, personal organiser, and fax capability; the Classroom Mode allows the teacher to customise access. For the project the eMates were set up in Classroom Mode allowing the children access only to the software required.

Discussions with the head left me in a position to bid for the eight eMates that would be provided for 50% of the cost. The requirements were to provide an initial presentation to an IT co-ordinators' meeting and an end-of-project report and presentation on their use in the primary school.

The project focus

For the project to be of use to our school I felt it needed a fairly tight focus so that testing against other methods was easier to measure.

Looking at the machine, itself, the main focus of attention would be

- The portability and durability of the machine;
- The ease and variety of data-input methods;
- The ease of data-transfer between machines;
- The range of software included with the basic eMate package, particularly the word-processing, graphics and data-handling capabilities.

As we produce an annual Year 6 anthology of poetry, which is always word-processed, this seemed an ideal choice for the outcome of the project. We would have a direct comparison between dealing with large numbers of children requiring access to a computer on a regular basis and the need for safe storage and speedy printing of completed work. This would give an opportunity to gain experience of the word-processing and graphics capabilities of the eMate and to examine its usefulness for children of differing abilities. It would also allow an examination of the unique feature of the eMate, the use of the stylus for inputting words and drawings.

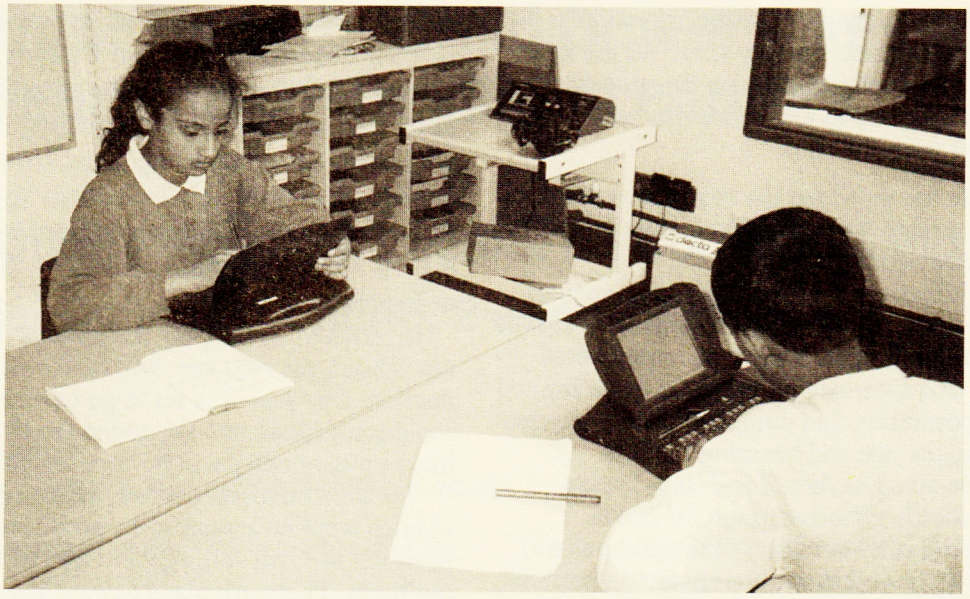
Would giving children greater access to computers improve and enhance their poetry writing? Would the data transfer facility of the eMate allow for greater collaboration between pupils, thus enhancing and extending the learning process?

After some weeks we were delighted to hear that our bid had been successful and we took up the opportunity to be the school in the authority responsible for organising, monitoring and evaluating the use of these appealing portable computers.

My Christmas holiday was spent investigating the impressive range of facilities on offer from the eMate and deciding on a modus operandi for the project.

Starting out

Embarking on this project was by no means as daunting as it would have been without the support of our Year 6 classroom assistant – Gordon Jones – a retired Science lecturer and IT enthusiast! He was as keen as I to investigate the possibilities and took on a leading role in the development of the project. As Gordon works mainly by supporting groups of children it seemed an obvious step for him to work with groups of eight, firstly to introduce the new computers to the children and then to supervise their poetry writing sessions. Initially there was a period of investigation



Getting to grips with our eMates.

followed by a period of instruction followed by a period of free poetry writing before work began on using poetry writing form, techniques and strategies.

It was not long before I also got our EAL teacher – Mrs. Dee Loftus – interested in using the eMates during her literacy sessions with her small group of children. It would be an added dimension to observe the outcomes of the work she would carry out with children for whom English is a second language. She has been instrumental in using a variety of poetry-writing formats and strategies which has been a source of inspiration for all our Year 6 poets!*

Initial reactions

The initial response by the children was overwhelming. The interest and enthusiasm shown for our new acquisitions was so great that within the week we had to start lunchtime supervision to cater for the desire for hands-on experience.

At this point I gave all children the opportunity to express their reactions – positive or negative – to the eMates. The vast majority of children preferred them to desktop machines and the following comments given by children show some of the reasons why.

'I think the eMate is a good computer for children like us to use. For one it is mobile so you can carry it along with you like your pet.'

'. . . it is light weight, you can beam your work across.'

'. . . if you are in a rush you don't have to save your work, all you have to do is shut it down and it saves automatically.'

'. . . the eMate has a light so if you are travelling in the dark you could just turn it on and write.'

Further findings

After the initial honeymoon period, work began in earnest . Gordon kept a record of his initial considerations after having introduced the computer to the 70 children currently in Year 6. These were his findings:

The main difficulties for our task in hand soon became clear:–

- The location of pieces of work on one of eight computers.
- The printing of work using the plug-in, plug-out method of linking to our existing printers.

The first problem was overcome by the allocation of a workspace for each child on a numbered computer. For example James would always use computer 3 and have his own file with his own password.

The second problem was addressed by purchasing an infrared printer. With the facility to beam files straight to the waiting printer this seemed an obvious next step. Unfortunately this has not

*For a report on Dee Loftus' involvement in this project see MAPE Focus on Literacy (Autumn 1998).

overcome our queuing problem as currently the infrared printer is unacceptably slow. We are now investigating ways of speeding up the process.

The main advantages for our task in hand were obvious right from the start:

- The eMate has provided the most motivating force for written work that I have ever introduced into my classroom
- The cost effectiveness of the machines ensures access to three children for the equivalent cost of one desktop machine. It must be remembered however that applications are much more limited.
- Design, portability and durability are all impressive as are the pen and beaming features.
- The ample-sized keyboard and long-lasting battery provide effective usage for adults.
- The drawing software allows the children to illustrate their work immediately and incorporate it into their master copy ready for reproduction into a class booklet.

The future

The use of eMates as everyday working tools has already started to spread from our focus year group. Teachers and children in Year 5, inspired by their observations of Year 6 pupils, have already started to 'borrow' the eMates, and our other EAL teacher is now beginning literacy work with her group using them. How much better to introduce new technology to school through the enthusiasm engendered by its use than as a result of pontifications by the IT co-ordinator.

In terms of developing the eMates' usage within our school, the next step will be for e-mail introduction. Our school is set to go on-line in the not too distant future and the added facility of eight more units of entry will be very welcome.

We were concerned when we heard that eMates were no longer to be produced. Xemplar however are still selling them and fully supporting them. There are plans to produce a new machine, similar to the eMate but with a Macintosh operating system. This will possibly offer more flexibility of operation and a wider choice of software. We would welcome such a future refinement to the eMate principle. For the present we have no hesitation in ordering a further set of machines to take us closer to our goal of having one machine per pupil.

Seymour Papert: 'Child power – key to the new learning of the digital century'

Colin Cherry Memorial Lecture on Communication, Imperial College, London, 2 June 1998

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The views expressed in this article are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect beliefs or opinions held by MAPE.

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On Monday, I took a day off from marking, office work, and organising emergency recruitment advertising. I was a Primary classroom assistant for the day participating in the SATs and the implementation of Literacy Hour. For the SATs, I supported an ESL pupil and in the Literacy Hour, the computer group.

One observation was paramount: in spite of all the structures and the formal processes that have been created to try to ensure that teachers teach using State-preferred methods, children's learning has not changed. They still need the kind of interactive support and diagnostic intervention that I was trained to provide at the tail-end of the 'Plowden era'. It's not that I'd forgotten this fact about the classroom, only that with all the concerns of teacher training it can easily fade into the background. On Tuesday I travelled to London to hear Seymour Papert present the Colin Cherry Memorial Lecture at Imperial College. It was at once uplifting and disappointing.

Papert is brilliant on the emotional qualities of the intellect. Every teacher should know about this, and teacher trainers should try to make sure their trainees experience it first hand. As the vote of thanks at the end of the lecture expressed it:

> 'Seymour is the only person I know who can talk about love and fun in the same sentence as mathematics and physics.'

In this way, Papert is as much an experience as an academic or a scholar. So yes, I am heartened by what he has to say and I love to hear him say it.

He reminds us how powerful is the computer at transcending curriculum boundaries and divisions. This is a vital point at a time when the Teacher Training Agency requires us to deliver ICT through subjects. He is hinting that educators everywhere who are concerned about this should use ICT to challenge such constructions as 'subjects'.

We agree with him when he tells us that educational policy is too preoccupied with standards, with target-setting, with the prescription of methods and content. He's mostly right when he says that schools are out of step with the social context in which they operate.

He's mischievously right too when he tells us that current education policies represent a state of denial about all the great achievements there have been with computer-based learning. Governments want computers in schools, but they want them to improve practice without changing it.

But what does Papert really offer us? The early work on LOGO, leading up to the publication of *Mindstorms,* is a significant legacy that has been added to the repertoire of computer-centred methods in education. The LOGO tradition has continued to flourish at MIT although it remains marginalised in schools. Papert however, is not talking to us about this very much anymore.

In this lecture, as in his book 'The Connected Family', he tells us that the dominant, determining site of education and learning in the 21st Century will be the home and the family. Computers will permeate the home and family to the point where all knowledge, all resources for learning will be available to anyone who wants to join in.

This 'mega-change' in education will take place whether we, the educators and the schoolers, want it or not. The irresistible force that is to bring this great change is composed of the new generations of children who even now are learning to learn in front of their VDUs. This subversive force is child-power.

I'd like to believe this because it makes me feel good (in an early Seventies kind of way) and in the broad sense he is no doubt right. Computers are

part of a social transformation of the means of expression and communication and it is obviously true that education cannot survive unchanged. Today's grandchildren are tomorrow's education policy-makers. Just as the educational establishment of today wants us to teach in the style of the 1950s, so the establishment of 2040 will want children taught in the style of MUDs and MOOs.

However, I need to be given a lead on how we move from where we are to where we desire to be. To realise his vision Papert can only offer us the free-market of ideas. This notion may have been a rational concept in the 1760s but today we are (I hope) more sceptical because we have seen how quickly this can translate into a licence for powerful corporate interests to seduce the minds of the young, the vulnerable, the intelligent and, of course, academics.

The free-market of ideas rests on two assumptions:

(a) that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate, and
(b) that the market-place is, like science, 'self-righting', i.e. that only true and good ideas survive.

Again, as educators I hope we are sceptical about these assumptions because to be otherwise would probably be irresponsible. The World Wide Web is a haven for lunacy as well as enlightenment, oppression as well as freedom.

Take the ESL child I worked with on Monday. She is part of a relatively poor family, with five brothers and a sister. She lives in a home where little English is spoken, where there are few books and certainly no computer. The family also retains strong bonds with a cultural milieu where girls are by tradition not necessarily expected to get an education. What are her chances in the free-market of the connected family?

Surviving Ofsted

Chris Taylor
University of Exeter

So your school is about to be inspected. Should you immediately go off sick long term, seek early retirement or find an easier job as a traffic warden, lion tamer or deep sea diver? Despite all the myths and horror stories you might have heard it is possible to survive an inspection and even come out the other side a better teacher.

One thing that is needed is a sea change in the attitude of teachers to the process of inspection and to inspectors. This process cannot be avoided and has no hidden agenda – it is there purely to see if the school is providing well for its pupils. The inspectors are all experienced education professionals (apart from the lay inspectors) and are mainly either head teachers, LEA Advisors, Teacher Education Lecturers or from the Senior Management team of a secondary school. The Lead Inspector will have had intimate experience of all the different aspects of education – teaching and management. It is essential to see the process of inspection as one of peer group appraisal – there is no one out to get either you or the school.

As a kind of poacher turned gamekeeper (i.e. a teacher trainer who moonlights for Ofsted) I have the dubious pleasure of experiencing both sides of Ofsted (the School of Education has just been inspected again). You cannot escape the process but you can make it such that it will benefit your teaching. The purpose of this brief article is to help you to become better prepared so you can do yourself justice. There are a few basic principles to remember:

- The worst bit of an inspection is waiting for it to happen.
- Ofsted inspectors have a strong tendency to be human; most of them are intimately acquainted with the workings of schools.
- The inspection is as much about looking at the management of the school as it is about looking at teaching.
- The inspection only provides a snapshot of teaching episodes, but it also collects evidence to provide a broader base of information to support judgements.
- Most teachers do a satisfactory or better job most of the time unless they are ill or overstressed.
- If teachers are ill or overstressed the soldiering on philosophy is not always in their or the schools' best interest.

Most schools have some areas of excellence, but also have areas where practice can be much improved. For example, as an IT specialist, I am still looking forward to inspecting a school where

the overall IT provision is good. Even though individual lessons I have observed were satisfactory and there were sufficient computers in the schools, many computers remained unused. Such problems are as much to do with senior management and their choice of priorities as to what individual teachers do in classrooms. The teachers in these schools also failed to realise that other electronic devices such as cassette recorders or photocopiers were IT and could be planned into their IT curriculum.

I don't think anyone will deny that undergoing an inspection is a stressful experience; the key is to keeping that stress at a manageable level. You may not agree with this but according to medical people, a small amount of stress can be good for us and can help us work better!

To help you review your practice pre-Ofsted, and hence minimise your stress level, I suggest you review the following aspects of your job as a teacher:

Planning

All teachers plan work for their pupils; what differs is how they write it down, the amount of detail included and whether it reflects what actually happens in the classroom. The inspection team will look for written plans covering all the subjects to be taught. If some subjects are of low priority at the time of the inspection, it will be necessary to produce evidence of what has been/will be taught in other terms. I suggest you produce plans at three levels:–

- Long-term plans covering a term or more (possibly including flow charts/topic webs).
- Medium-term plans covering between a week and a month. These will show topics to be covered within subjects.
- Short-term plans for each day for the inspection. These will give the inspectors a clear picture of what the teacher intends to happen in the class, and should also include details of differentiation for the whole ability range in the class.
- At some stage in your planing you will need to include details of National Curriculum Attainment Targets you are fulfilling and what forms of assessment you are going to use.

Place a folder with your planning where it is easily visible when they enter the room. It will also help the inspectors if you write on the board how many children are in the class when they are all there and how many are present for that session.

Teaching/classroom activity

Unless you are a non-teaching Head or Deputy, you can't escape undertaking some teaching when you are being inspected. This teaching will be observed and noted, and a grade given for different aspects of the lesson (Teaching, Response, Attainment and Progress). The inspector will usually only stay for a part of a lesson, perhaps half an hour. They may give you some feedback afterwards; if they do then you should see this in a positive light as they don't have to give feedback, so it shows they are trying to help! Most teachers will stick with well tried and tested activities; the more adventurous may try something a little more experimental. If you are being experimental, make sure you have some alternative activities to hand in case the children react in an unexpected way.

The inspectors will note the levels of behaviour/discipline in the class. What is important is not whether the class sits in absolute silence for 40 minutes but how you manage the overall classroom action to ensure most of the children are on task most of the time and how professionally you deal with those difficult situations that crop up from time to time.

If you have a very difficult class or some very difficult pupils, this will be taken into account, but think about how you deal with problems. Do you use positive behaviour management or is your control by repression and criticism? Think in terms of what is recognised good practice. Can you demonstrate that you understand what it is about?

Most well organised lessons will have some form of introduction by the teacher, followed by activities as a class, in groups or individually.

- Get your timing right (no overlong introductions).
- Make sure the lesson relates to previous activities.
- Interesting activities are less likely to create behaviour problems than boring ones.
- Avoid the time fillers – colouring in pictures etc.
- Have activities ready for children who finish early.
- Leave time for a summing up/de-briefing at the end of the lesson – positive interaction and discussion will be well received.
- Question the children about what they have learned.
- Make sure they clear up and go out at the end of a session in an orderly manner.

Differentiation

Providing evidence of differentiation in your planning is essential, but it must also be obvious in the classroom action. It means you must take into

account both the more able and the low ability pupils in your classroom organisation. This may involve providing a range of activities related to children's abilities; it may mean providing one activity which can be undertaken at different levels. If you have some form of classroom support (a welfare assistant, student teacher) then make sure they are well briefed. They need to know who they are going to work with, what activities will be undertaken, what is expected in terms of outcomes and what level of support they are going to offer.

Recording/assessment

You need to provide clear evidence that you are assessing pupils' work in all subjects. Books will be inspected near the beginning of the inspection, and the inspectors will look for formative use of this assessment and practical examples of encouragement/positive criticism in your comments, not just a mark out of ten at the end. School records/profiles and records of achievement will be inspected. If you have a mark book, make sure it is available, and make sure it is suitable for public scrutiny! The purpose of assessment is that it should inform the next stage of the child's education, and also that it should inform others (parents, future schools) of that child's achievements. The school should have a policy for assessment, recording and reporting information. Do your records comply with that policy? For those subjects where there is no paper-based outcome, can you use a photograph, a printout or other evidence to show what the children have achieved?

NQTs

NQTs will be inspected and graded as experienced teachers, but the inspection will also look at how well they are being supported and inducted. If a teacher is showing signs of stress from the inspection, they will generally be dealt with sensitively, unless they are so bad as to be a hazard to their pupils. The inspection will report on the institution the NQT came from.

How the inspection works

The team of inspectors works under the co-ordination of the Registered Inspector who leads the inspection and writes the final report. However, all judgements have to be corporate (i.e. the whole team agrees them) and have to be based on evidence. The evidence base used includes information from parents, the headteachers form, sociological data (from the census), SATs results, teacher assessments, reviews of work, interviews with teachers and other interested parties, as well as lesson observations. The inspectors will also look at aspects of the school such as the staffing, accommodation and learning resources of the school, cleaning and caretaking, health and safety and any other obvious evidence. They weigh up this evidence and make professional judgements based on their experience and knowledge of the situation. The judgements made are not averages of grades, but professional judgements based on aggregates of results. Where information is factually incorrect, the school may correct the facts, but it cannot challenge judgements.

The inspectors are not allowed to give a school advice directly, but through the interviews they are allowed to have 'professional discussions' with the staff of the school, which might offer some insights into how to deal with a particular problem.

What might be surprising is that the inspectors can usually gain a reasonably sound picture of the school from the short time they spend there, although the process is not perfect. They are also usually able to empathise well with the teachers and their situation. The lay inspector will be deployed carefully to look at those areas about which they have the most knowledge, and although they may observe lessons, they will not be used primarily to inspect teaching. Typically, they might focus on areas such as financial management, health and safety, buildings and accommodation.

Reporting very good or very poor teaching

Inspectors are required to report very good or very bad teaching. If a teacher comes in to one of these two categories, then a special form has to be completed and an audit will be kept of the grades across the inspection. If a teacher proves to be either very good or very poor against the criteria used in over half the lessons inspected, they will be reported formally to the Head teacher. Fortunately, I have only been involved in reporting very good teaching. Even this has led to some upset on behalf of the teacher and can cause friction in staff rooms.

Inspection is by no means a perfect process, in the same way that teaching is not perfect. No one likes being externally judged and the process of making good judgements is as much an art as is good teaching. However, the framework used and the training and supervision provided ensure that there is a reasonable level of consistency across inspections. One of the biggest bugbears is that the

reporting process is often bland and reductionist. It might reduce the area the school thinks it is best at to one line saying something like 'Provision of IT in the school is good.'

Whatever we feel about inspection we cannot get away from the fact that it is a process we will all have to undergo. Look at it as a positive learning experience, and use it to stimulate you to give your best teaching and you will not go far wrong!

EOS in Romania – March 1998

Rhona Dick

It was 4 a.m., very dark and very cold. My husband had kindly offered to drive Peter Crumpler and me to Birmingham airport where we and Tricia Neal were booked on the 6.30 a.m. flight to Amsterdam. Now what were three sane MAPE members of a certain age doing in Amsterdam? Meeting up with Fiona Sanderson, a quartet of intrepid travellers intent on renewing our acquaintance with Romania. It was going to be a long day, travelling via Amsterdam to Budapest in Hungary, where, God willing, Mike Hall would be waiting with a minibus to take us to Timisoara.

I never realised Schiphol was such a large airport. If you ever have to change planes there leave yourself plenty of time; I am sure we walked miles! On arriving in Budapest we were disappointed not to have our passports stamped, and even more disappointed when we discovered that our route to Timisoara took us away from the city.

The sun was shining and it was warm travelling, even though it was mid March. The scenery was unspectacular, although we did spot some storks' nests, a good omen, we hoped. Some 5 hours later we arrived in Timisoara. It was dark so we saw little of the city that night. Lesley Andrews, the director of the project, had told us that we were staying at the Hotel Centrum. This was only my second stay in Romania; the first had not been in a hotel, so I wasn't sure what to expect. My room was on the first floor. It took some time to get there, as we eventually realised the lift only stops on the second and higher floors! Peter and I went up and down between the ground and second floor, becoming more and more hysterical until we eventually decided that using the stairs was necessary. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that the room had en-suite facilities, and a television, even though all programmes were in Romanian!

The magnificent architecture.

Nine of us were in Timisoara to deliver courses covering maths and ICT, Language and ICT, Science and ICT as well as use of the Internet and email. The objectives of the course, broadly speaking, were to facilitate the development of an open society in Romania by enabling teachers, and subsequently young pupils, to use ICT in the primary teacher training programme of the pedagogical high schools.

That evening we went to look at the three schools where the course was to be held. 120 Romanian teachers were booked on the course. This was a major venture for us as we had only ever had small groups before. However we were in buoyant mood, we all had beds, the networks all functioned, and Timisoara looked good even in the dark.

Breakfast over, we set off for the start of the course. The introduction was in a magnificent hall, and following that Roger Keeling and I set off for our school where we were going to run a maths and ICT course for 40 teachers from pedagogical high schools all over Romania. The education system in Romania is very different from ours. Primary teacher training and secondary education run side by side in pedagogical high schools; hence the teachers who were coming on the course not only needed to know how to use ICT in teacher training, but they also wanted to be able to integrate ICT into their secondary Maths subject teaching.

When we got to the school we were greeted by

blank monitors – the network had crashed. Our course had been beautifully planned down to the last detail. Do you know that sinking feeling you get in the pit of your stomach when your classroom is about to be invaded by 40 eager pupils and you have nothing for them to do? Plan B came into operation. We hastily rearranged the timetable and did LOGO on the blackboard. That was the worst moment of the course. Everything else went to plan – more or less.

Otto, the school's very competent network manager, worked feverishly to get the networks going again, so by lunchtime things were back to normal. Otto is a man of many talents. His computer rooms are in the school's basement, approached through an unwelcoming metal door, but inside Otto has transformed the space into a comfortable and attractive working environment with wood panelling covering the bare concrete walls.

Using Omnigraph.

During the week we developed a good working relationship with the teachers. Some of them spoke no English at all, and in fact one lady had Hungarian as her first language. Communication was a problem from time to time, but we were fortunate to have the skills, both mathematical and linguistic, of Cosette Crisan for some days. Cosette, a Romanian, is studying in London for a doctorate in Maths. Her input to the course was invaluable, and she was great company too!

There was a cocktail party one evening kindly sponsored by Rank Xerox. This took place at the International Hotel, just across the road from one of the schools we had been using. This hotel had been the guest house of the Ceaucescus, and was magnificently appointed. They certainly knew how to look after themselves!

The timetables were very full, and we seemed to have little time to ourselves to look around. We got very competent at using the trams, which were cheap and plentiful, as well as the taxis. Timisoara is a beautiful city, very unlike Bucharest, and one where I felt quite at ease. Even the weather was kind to us. The mornings were clear and crisp, we had little rain, but snow one evening. It wasn't particularly cold. A lot of time was spent checking on exchange rates which fluctuated daily. The Romanian Lei is a weak currency. When I was first in Romania some 18 months earlier I got about 5000 lei to the £. This time is was about 13,000! It doesn't take many pounds to turn one into a Romanian millionaire. To my shame even though I claim to be a mathematician of sorts I find it difficult dealing with all these zeros! Everything was very cheap, in our western eyes at least. Fourteen of us ate out one night, and with beer and wine the bill came to about £56.

Roger Keeling enjoying the canapés at the cocktail party.

We were all sorry when the course was over. We had made good friends, and learnt a lot from them. The course itself would not have been possible without the help, support and organisational skills of so many people, among them Lesley Andrews and Mike Hall in this country Donard Britten and especially Gabi Szanda in Timisoara.

It was 4 a.m.,very dark and very cold. A minibus came to take us to Budapest airport. . . .

The last day.

When the Romania Trust decided to change its name to reflect the charity's increasing role in developing an open society the name EOS was chosen. EOS, Educating for an Open Society, was also the name of the Greek goddess of the dawn.

For further information about EOS please contact: Lesley Andrews, Brook Cottage, Sydenham, Nr Chinnor, Oxon,OX9 4LY. Tel: 01844 351153; e-mail eos@dial.pipex.com

Reviews

Connecting Schools, Networking People
ICT Planning, Purchasing and Good Practice for the National grid for Learning
BECTa

If your school is planning to 'connect to the learning society' in the near future and needs some unbiased advice then this may be the book for you.

There are three main sections to the book: planning for ICT, purchasing, and good practice in the management and teaching of ICT.

The first section looks in some detail at the processes involved in planning, from working with local authority plans to school planning, and includes a useful checklist for devising and monitoring a school ICT development plan. There is advice on choosing the right technology, and the pros and cons of stand alone, local area networks or wide area networks. All these terms are very clearly explained, and there is also an extensive glossary. Highlighted boxes and bullet pointing some of the most important points from the text break up the pages. In the absence of an index these boxes make finding what you want quite straightforward. The millennium bug rates a mention too.

Part two looks at purchasing, and once again includes a checklist which covers some of the financial commitments that don't always spring automatically to mind, research and staff development, operating and support costs, and salvage costs at the end of the system's life.. A table of sample costs for hardware, software, maintenance and insurance, as well as other cost considerations is included. The problem with trying to price ICT equipment is that by the time the cost is in print it is already outdated. The cost comparison between stand alones and networks is useful, nonetheless. If I know anything about budgeting considerations, heads and governors will be particularly interested in suggestions for financing.

The final part of the book looks at examples of good practice in schools. There are heaps of these, which should give plenty of ideas for improving classroom use of ICT, as well as more checklists on effective use of email, web authoring and dealing with undesirable material on the internet. Issues of staff development cover such topics as extending the use of ICT in management and administration, teaching and learning. An extensive bibliography and resource list for those who are ready to move on completes the book.

In view of the targets set by the government for connecting to the NGfL (all schools, colleges, universities and libraries by 2002) I would suggest this book is a real must for schools not already connected.

Connecting Schools, Networking People is available free of charge from the DfEE Stationery Office, tel: 0845 602 2260.

It is also available on-line at the Virtual Teacher Centre (http://vtc.ngfl.gov.uk) part of the National Grid for Learning (http://www.ngfl.gov.uk)

Rhona Dick

Education in the Digital Age
Dorothy Walker, sponsored by ICL
Bowerdean Publishing Company Ltd. 1998
ISBN 0-906097-89-4

This book, one of the Work in the Digital Age series, takes a broad look at some of the ways in which modern technology, and particularly access to the Internet, has impacted upon education.

Education is certainly taken here to mean life-long learning. Ms Walker looks at learning from almost every perspective although there seem to be few references to the 'ordinary' primary school where most of us teach. She gives us interesting glimpses into the lives and learning of some who have long since passed the school leaving age, including a 70-year-old grandmother who is now helping her granddaughter master the mysteries of ICT! Several fascinating case studies are included, the Docklands Accelerated Learning Project and distance learning in the Western Isles to name but two. There is also a whole informative chapter devoted to the ways in which ICT can enhance the lives of people with various difficulties or disabilities.

It is the breadth of scope in this book which is perhaps its major weakness; very little is dealt with in any great depth. Tantalising stuff all of it, I want to know more about the virtual archaeology which took place in a New York school. Having said all that, however, the remedy is probably in my own hands, as Ms Walker has provided the URLs for most of the very wide ranging organisations and projects mentioned, although I couldn't seem to find a way of contacting Port Charlotte School in Islay.

By its very nature a book dealing with technology is going to be out of date almost as soon as it reaches the bookshelves. Ms Walker has attempted to future proof this by taking a look at what might be in store for education in the digital age. It will be interesting to re-read this in five years time and see how things have moved on.

This is certainly an interesting and very readable book, although how much real relevance it has for most primary classroom teachers is not certain. At £13.99 for 143 pages of text I think I might borrow it from a library rather than buy it, but it is worth the read.

Rhona Dick

MATHS MANIA
Activities and Puzzles for Mathematics
Topologika Software, Islington Wharf, Penryn, Cornwall TR10 8AT. Tel: 01326 377771; Fax 01326 376755; e-mail: sales@topolgka.demon.co.uk; website: topolgka.demon.co.uk
Price: £30 + vat (single user); £60 + vat (site licence)

Children in a Year 3 class used *Maths Mania* and loved it. So much so that they were still talking about it when they went home each evening and the school was inundated with parents' requests for information as to how they might purchase the software. These same children have access to some of the most sophisticated and evolved all-singing-and-dancing CD-Rom software, but somehow, they don't necessarily go home raving about it.

So what caused this enthusiasm? The program is ostensibly dull. It involves some crude graphics, even cruder sound, and some basic tools to move a character through a maze. Furthermore, the maze is strewn with basic maths problems to solve (the four rules, measure, shape and space, time and angles).

In order to progress through the maze(s) children have to solve the computational puzzles. If, after completing all the maze sums, the child succeeds in escaping from the maze, their reward is . . . er . . . a mathematical puzzle to solve.

There is a basic 'performance indicator' which tracks children's progress through the problems, controls to increase the difficulty of the problems, and a high score table. The nice people at Topologika have even provided copies of the mazes for teachers to use in the classroom.

Gianni (aged 7) commented: 'It's exciting and fun. When you get the key it means you have done loads of questions. When you get to the exit and get 20 points you feel really happy at what you have achieved. It's good for kids and can help with your maths.'

Well, far be it for me to question the logic in playing this mathematics game; children are willing to trade their tuck to use it. The combination of simple controls, simple challenges, immediate rewards, simple movement (four directions) and loud basic sounds that remind you of water hitting hot fat, appear to provide a compelling environment for learning some basic mathematics. Come the numeracy hour, perhaps all lessons will be like this.

Geoff Turrell

News from BECTa

Janice Staines

New appointments

Niel McLean has been appointed as the new Director of Schools and he will join us in the Autumn Term.

Two new appointments have been made to the Curriculum and Instituitional Development Team. One will look after Primary Literacy and the other will focus on cross-phase Science.

Literacy

The Curriculum and Institutional Development (CID) team is running a major project to support Literacy with three elements:

- Support for Literacy consultants;
- Key Stage 1 low-cost word-processor project;
- The Literacy Time site on the VTC – look out for the next update in September.

We are also currently rationalising the primary sections on the BECTa web site and the VTC. We hope to make the access to these pages more user friendly and easier to navigate through.

BECTa home page is: http://www.becta.org.uk/index.html

MAPE Website

Robert Kensit
piggies@easynet.co.uk

By the time you read this, the new MAPE Website will almost certainly be online. I would say that it definitely will be, but that is tempting fate. The new MAPE Website is to be an integral part of the services that MAPE offers; it is particularly designed for people who are still unfamiliar with using the World Wide Web and we hope that it will be a useful starting point for further Web browsing.

There are three sections.

The first is a beginners' guide to the World Wide Web, using it and how it works. Having read this, you should know enough to go on to the rest of the MAPE site and beyond.

The second is an index of links to other Web sites, which are in three categories:–

- the most important government and commercial educational sites,
- useful sites containing information and resources on specific curriculum areas, and
- a list of school Web sites.

The third part of the MAPE site contains information about the organisation itself – who to contact, an on-line application form, news of forthcoming events, a selection of articles from recent Focus Packs and other publications. There will also be a few additional items that you may find useful, such as a list of telephone numbers and Web sites for the technical support departments of all of the major suppliers of computers, printers and network servers. We also hope to have a discussion forum, where you can send questions or comments.

At the moment, some of these sections are rather sparse, but the site will be added to and updated frequently. Please do not just look at the MAPE Website once and then forget about it; it will be an active site, and will be worth regular re-visiting. Above all this is your Web site, so if there is anything that you would like to see included, changed or removed, do let us know.

There are certain areas of the Web site that we would appreciate your help with.

We would like to include links to the Web sites of all schools who are MAPE members, so please notify us of your URL, and don't forget to include a link to the MAPE site on your own!

We would also appreciate help with updating and expanding the links to educational resources. In particular, we would like people who have an interest in a specific curriculum area who are prepared to spend some time searching for interesting Web sites related to that area which can be added to the links page. If you would be interested in doing this, or have any comments please contact me.

You can find the new MAPE website at **www.MAPE.org.uk/**. At the time of writing there are still a few teething problems so please have patience and keep trying.

CYBER CAFÉ MORNING

West Midlands MAPE invites you to drop in and have FREE access to the Internet and MORE!

PLUS

meet the WM MAPE Committee to discuss YOUR ICT training/support needs.

On Saturday, 14 November from 9.30 a.m. till 12.30 p.m.
at Newman College Technology Centre.

To make sure we have enough coffee and biscuits it would be helpful if you could telephone Yvonne Peers on 0121 476 1181 extension 271 or email wmmape@newman.ac.uk to let us know that you are coming.

Guidelines for submitting articles to MAPE

We are always pleased to receive articles for consideration, especially from teachers describing the use of ICT in their classrooms.

Text

- There is no specific rule about the length of articles, although most are between two and four pages long. As a guide this will probably be between 1500 and 3000 words, less if you include illustrations.
- Typewritten or word-processed articles are preferred although handwritten articles will be considered. Articles should be printed out using Times Roman, Arial or a similar font which is suitable for scanning, on one side of the paper only. If an article is written on Nimbus, Mac or Archimedes, a disc copy would be appreciated.

Illustrations

- Illustrations add greatly to the overall appearance of the page. Photographs, which will be printed in black and white, are welcome (and will be returned). Please ensure that permission is obtained from parents before submitting photos in which children are identifiable. As we aim to include suitable articles on our web site you must also seek their permission for this. Please confirm that permission has been granted when submitting photographs.
- Original illustrations of children's work should be sent (and will be returned on request). Please do not send photocopies as they do not reproduce well enough. Pencil and crayon drawings and/or writing are also unsatisfactory. Please go over pencil work with a fine black felt tip.
- If the illustration is a print-out, please print it out with a very black ribbon. In addition disc copies are appreciated.
- If the article is accompanied by illustrations please number the illustrations and indicate in the text where each illustration should be placed. Your own captions would be useful.

References

- If the article makes reference to a piece of software or hardware please include the following details in a footnote: who makes/publishes it, their full address, the cost, platform.
- If the article makes reference to a book or article please include the page number, the author, the publisher's name and address, the year of publication.
- If your article includes a program listing please send a disc with the program on, and indicate the file name.

Affiliation

- Please include the author's name, some indication of their current post, and details about where they work. We would like to include contributors' email addresses if applicable.
- The editor also needs a full postal address and a phone number, (term time and holidays if you are a student), so that s/he can contact them. Addresses and phone numbers will not be published.

General Information

- If the item is a mass of material rather than one article, please do not send it with a note to the effect that 'there's an article here'; please sort out the material into a coherent whole and then send it.
- Please do not submit the article to another publication at the same time as it is submitted to MAPE although we do not pay for contributions, we still like to have exclusive rights! If you have submitted it elsewhere please tell us.
- Any and all of these conditions can always be ignored and the article will still be considered. It just involves more hassle for the editor(s) and the author.