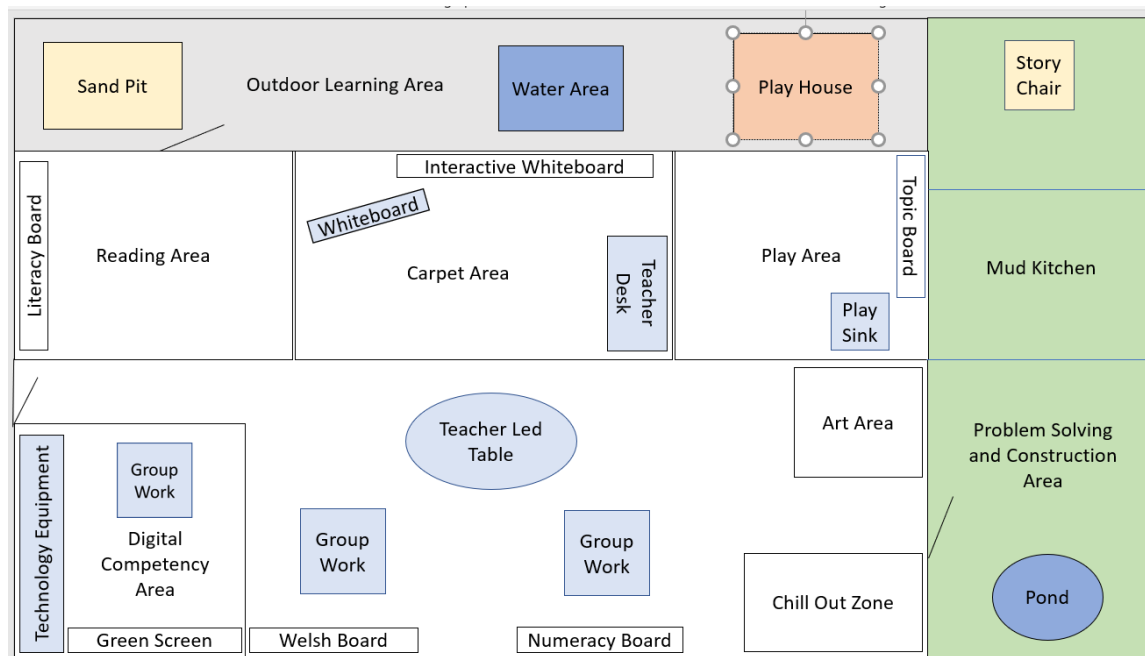


LEVEL 6 ASSESSMENT SPECIFICATION

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                      |             |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Student name:                   | Gareth Price                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Student ID number:                                   | 1400991     |
| Programme:                      | Primary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                      |             |
| Module:                         | Principles of Pedagogy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                      |             |
| Module code:                    | M6X01438/C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Contribution to Overall Module Assessment (%):       | 100%        |
| Lecturer:                       | Siân Brooks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Internal Verifier:                                   | Siân Brooks |
| Assignment Title:               | 'Describe a learning event which has happened during your recent school experience. Reflect upon what took place, connecting events to theories of learning and teaching. Make recommendations about how you could improve your own practice in the light of this. Produce a poster to illustrate how you would develop the elements of an effective learning environment.'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Word count (or equivalent):                          | 4,936       |
| Submission deadline:            | 17/10/18 (23.59)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Return date of provisional marks & written feedback: | 14/11/18    |
| Submission method:              | <p>All written assessments, where practical and possible, must be submitted via Turnitin unless otherwise instructed by the Lecturer. (Please DO NOT put this assessment specification into Turnitin or it will match many similarities with other students' submissions.)</p> <p><b>Alternative submission method (if applicable):</b></p> <p><b>Late submission of the assessment will result in a late penalty mark.</b> Penalties for late submission: Up to one week late, maximum mark of 40%. Over one week late, 0%. Only the Extenuating Circumstances Panel may approve a change to submission dates.</p> |                                                      |             |
| Academic honesty / referencing: | Academic honesty is required. In the main body of your submission you must give credit to authors on whose research and ideas your work is based. Append to your submission a reference list that indicates the books, articles, etc. that you have used, cited or quoted in order to complete this assessment.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                      |             |

***‘Describe a learning event which has happened during your classroom observation. Reflect upon what took place, connecting events to theories of learning and teaching. Make recommendations about how you could improve your own practice in the light of this and produce a digital poster to illustrate how you would use all of this information to develop the elements of an effective learning environment.’***



## **Introduction**

This assignment will be focussed on the different effects questioning has within the classroom and the various strategies available to teachers. To gain a greater understanding of the strategies surrounding questioning in the primary school classroom, I witnessed first-hand several strategies implemented into both Foundation Phase (FP) and Key Stage 2 (KS2) classrooms. This was achieved by visiting a local primary school and observing the different types of effective questioning currently being applied in the classroom. The observations taken place highlight both positives and negatives to the use of different questioning strategies and written record observations. Throughout this assignment both the school and pupils' names will remain anonymous due to ethical agreements.

Vast amounts of research have already been undertaken on the use of questioning strategies in the primary school, which highlights both positive and negative uses. Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978) are both key authors on communication within the classroom and both believe that questioning is a tool that has many positives for a teacher to draw upon. Both authors also stress the importance of continuous assessment of children. Not only do questions allow the teacher to develop and challenge the learner, but they also give the teacher an idea of where their class is in terms of understanding of a task or skill. There are various ways that questions can be asked, which allows the teacher to tailor or create new strategies to fit the needs of the class. This either depends on the age of the child or their stage of development (Wood, 1998). Throughout this essay these strategies will be explored in depth to gain a greater understanding of what is good practice.

## **Section One - Observation**

The learning event that I witnessed took place in a lower ability year six mathematics lesson and focussed solely on how teachers use questioning strategies to check for and develop understanding in the classroom. Throughout previous weeks the class had been working on their seven and eight times tables. However, after discussing this topic with the teacher it was clear that the children's level of understanding wasn't at the level required at that current time. The teacher also thought that some children in the class had become disengaged with the activities set. To ensure that this was not the case in the lesson I observed, the teacher used a simple strategy that helped the children to practice key skills surrounding multiplication, also to check their understanding of previous work completed in the classroom. This was achieved by implementing a questioning strategy called 'The Secret Squirrel'. The teacher directed multiplication questions to the class, with each child having their own whiteboard and pen to use to answer the questions. However, the answers that the teacher obtained were closed, due to only the answers being written on the whiteboard and not methods that were being used. The teacher then acknowledged this and started to question the children further to explain the answers they had written. By using open questions, it was then clear where the children had made an error and the teacher acted accordingly. Both open and closed questions were frequently asked during the lesson, mostly during the class input and activities.

Teacher: What was your answer for  $6 \times 7$ ?

Pupil 1 – 42.

Teacher – (Pause) Okay. Can you explain how you got that answer?

Pupil 1 – I added 6, 7 times.

Teacher – Are there any other ways to work it out?

Pupil 1 - (Pause) I can add 7, 6 times using my fingers.

Figure 1 – Teacher questioning during class discussion.

This example shows first-hand how the teacher used questioning to both challenge and understand the knowledge of the learner. Similar conversations occurred throughout teacher-based tasks and were used on a wide variety of abilities within the class. The teacher asked children of lower abilities to explain their answers in small groups or one-to-one. After this conversation had occurred the teacher began to include other children of varied abilities in the conversation to discuss other methods of how to complete the calculation. In some cases, the lower ability children were not fully understanding of the seven times tables and confused multiplication with addition. This acted as a trigger for the teacher to include other children's methods of solving multiplication calculations, in turn offering alternative methods that could be implemented into their learning.

In a turn-taking activity, the children answered questions at different times to each other, the teacher remained impartial to revealing the correct answer. This assisted the teachers to identify the children that had fully understood the work and others who

needed extra assistance. This technique is called 'Poker Face.' I believe this to be an important technique used within the classroom setting, as it promotes independent work instead of copying the work of children who answered the questions correctly. It could also suggest to the teacher where the child has made mistakes which then makes it easier to overcome this in future lessons.

Children were allowed time to reflect by the teacher so that answers were not rushed and they had time to think about previous work. Allowing the children time to think is a key aspect to the questioning process, as it allows the teacher to get answers in full detail and gives a true reflection of their knowledge on a certain topic. Once the children had completed the sum, they held their boards up with their individual answers on, which the teacher then checked. This gave the class teacher a good understanding of what needed to be worked on as a class and what some individual children needed to work on or found more difficult than others. To finish this activity the teacher asked the children to write on a post it note what they found easy about multiplication tables and what they felt needed to be improved for them to develop their skills further. The class teacher then took this information and tailored the lesson that was planned to the individual's needs.

For example, as some of the class were clearly struggling with the seven times tables, the teacher reverted to previously used work on the topic and used it again as a recap before moving on. This ensured that the children fully understood and cemented what they had learnt in previous lessons, as the knowledge obtained was an important step for the next piece of work. As the children were leaving the room they used a consensogram, otherwise known as a mood board, to assist the teacher in assessing how the children were feeling about the lesson they had just participated within. The mood board was made up of three cups with different emoji's on them. The children

then placed their lollipop stick into the cup depending on how they were feeling at the time. Not only did this help the teacher gauge their understanding, it also allowed the teacher to understand the emotions they had towards the topic.

Written observations were used in this lesson as I felt this type of observation was open and allowed me to make in depth notes on the different types of questioning used throughout the lesson. It also made clear links to the reaction of the children and the impact it had on their learning. I considered other observation techniques prior to my visit to the school, for example voice records and video recording. This point is reiterated further by Christensen and James (2000), who state that there is no single correct way to observe a child in the classroom, as each technique has its own positives depending on how and when you use them. However, as I was unfamiliar to the children in the class it was clear that by taking written notes the children in the class would feel more comfortable in answering the teacher's questions and sharing ideas with their peers. My notes were taken during whole class activities, group work and teacher input, to observe the variety of questioning strategies implemented by the teacher and the effect they had on the children.

As questioning in the classroom is a very diverse topic and changes depending on how the lesson is being taught, I believed it was important to use written records as it would allow me to keep up to date with the adjustments to questioning and strategies that the teacher was using. It was helpful to use this as it was a running record of events in the classroom and made it easier to take note on how the children reacted to the different questions being asked. Despite recognising that videos were difficult to use in this situation, if I was to observe in a class that was familiar with me as a teacher, then the use of video or voice recording would have been helpful. It would have allowed me the opportunity to revisit some of the things I perhaps didn't notice

or missed throughout the observation. This point is supported by Brouwer et al., (2017) who suggest that use of video and voice recording has many educational benefits in the classroom but suggest that children need to be familiar with the equipment being used to be fully relaxed and engage in the session as normal. From current literature it is suggested that for the situation I was in, the use of written observations was the most appropriate way to record notes as it was ethically sound.

I have chosen to use questioning as a tool to understand and develop child knowledge because it's an important aspect to consider for teachers in a variety of ways. Assessment for Learning (AfL) is an important part of teaching and is a method that every teacher needs to practice. By using a variety of questions to challenge the learners in the class, it offers a chance for the teacher to understand areas that need to be worked on in the future. It was clear that the teacher was keen to find out what the lower ability children had learnt and what they needed to improve on. If the children didn't know the answer they could 'phone a friend,' which meant that they could ask another child in that class. This allowed the children to discuss how they got their answers and encouraged the use of sharing knowledge.

## **Section Two:**

Questions in everyday life are often asked to gain new knowledge, this is however different within a primary school setting. The use of questioning within the classroom has many known benefits for both teacher and pupil. Ausubel (1978) suggests that for teachers, questions are beneficial to tracking pupil knowledge and the levels they are working towards. Having this understanding allows the teacher to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the taught skill and to also plan further activities for areas that need focus (Mikeroova et al., 2018). Questioning also helps the child develop their

social skills, imagination, curiosity, and encourages the use of problem solving skills (Wragg and Brown, 2001). The DfES (2003) states that questioning also allows children to make links to make cross-curricular links, which will be a key skill required for the new curriculum being introduced in 2022 (Donaldson, 2015).

| The purpose of the new curriculum is to support our children and young people to be: |                                                                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1).                                                                                  | Ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives.                          |
| 2).                                                                                  | Enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work.             |
| 3).                                                                                  | Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world.                                           |
| 4).                                                                                  | Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society. |

Figure 2 – The four key purposes of the new curriculum (Donaldson, 2015).

It is evident that there is a clear link between the four key purposes of the new curriculum and the skills that are improved through effective questioning in the classroom. For children to be able to achieve this, it is essential that they must first develop their imagination and creativity skills, as well as being able to think deeper and develop their cognitive thinking skills (Johnston et al., 2007). This could suggest that the use of questioning is vital in the classroom and will become even more important when the curriculum changes.

Another key element of '*Successful Futures*' is assessment for learning (AfL). Questioning falls under the bracket of informal assessment as it allows children to be relaxed when answering questions, which doesn't occur regularly during formal assessments like exams or class tests as they can be intimidating to the learner and reduce student comfort levels (Eaude, 2011). Eaude (2011) also highlights the

importance of knowing each child individually in the class, as it will make it easier for the teacher to observe behaviour. An example of this was observed during my school placement. The class teacher understood the child's previous learning and reflected on elements of learning they struggled with in previous lessons.

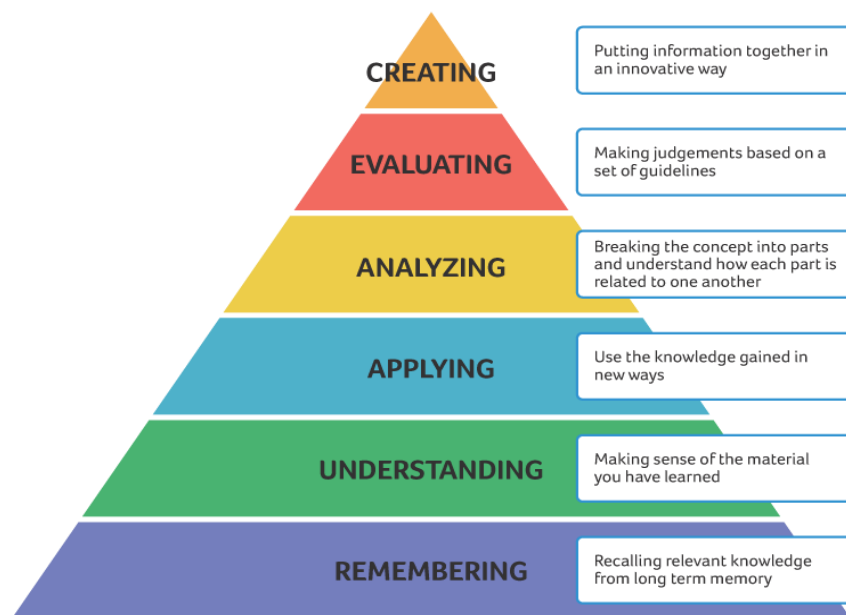


Figure 3 – Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, 1956).

The above diagram shows Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives (Bloom, 1956). The Welsh Assembly Government (2010) state that questions need to remain as open to the learner as possible as good questioning leads to high quality talk between pupils. They also suggest that it is important to frame the questions in a way that will be understood to the level being taught at and that all abilities can access each section abilities but within different contexts that they understand. The pyramid also suggests that questions can be tailored to the needs of the classrooms cognitive demand (Bloom, 1956; Seker and Kömür, 2008). Bloom's taxonomy (1956) shows us that at the lowest cognitive level, the use of recall questions is helpful to embed information that has been previously learnt and revisited. The top of the pyramid

presents the children with questions that require deeper thinking, often using evaluative questioning strategies.

Questioning within the primary school classroom has been a widely researched topic over recent years. Two of the main authors on the topic were Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1986), who both strongly believe that thoughts connect information together in the human mind and helps to establish relationships between different topics. Lantolf and Thorne (2006) reiterate this statement, suggesting that oral communication is not just an outcome of thinking, but is something that can guide our thinking. This point is important for a teacher to consider as it allows to not to only challenge each learner to progress for all abilities, but also to gain a greater understanding of their academic level by observing the responses of the children.

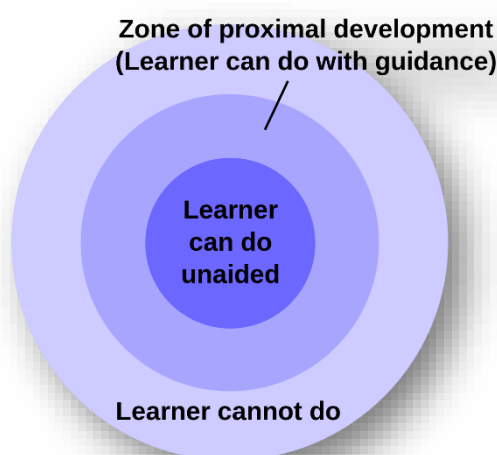


Figure 3 – The Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1987).

The above image shows Vygotsky's (1987) zone of proximal development (ZPD). Ginsburg (1997) explains this using both Piaget's and Vygotsky's beliefs and underpinnings to improve the use of teacher questioning in the classroom. He creates a heavy link between the work of Piaget and the lower sections of the ZPD, which is where children show less understanding or knowledge of a subject. By using simple

questions that require yes or no answers, helps the teacher to understand the level of the children's knowledge, but it is then important how this information is used moving forward. Ginsburg (1997) states that by following Vygotsky's work closely and incorporating scaffolding into the individuals work, it enables the learner to reach their ZPD and work to their full potential independently. The term scaffolding was developed due to the work of Vygotsky on the ZPD. Scaffolding in construction has a similar approach to scaffolding in the classroom as it helps access areas that are harder to reach than others. Welsh (2017) explains that the teachers role in supporting the individual within the scaffolding process is crucial. Welsh (2017) explains that it is important for the teacher to rotate through different groups of children and guide classroom talk and activity through the constant use of direct questioning. This collaborative learning has been proven to keep children engaged on the task in hand and develop thinking skills. Adler (1983) stresses the importance the role of the teacher has on this process, suggesting that the learning in the classroom becomes less teacher-centred. This point is supported by Dillon (1984) who also suggests that the more knowledgeable others (MKO) role requires dramatic change to work effectively in the classroom, as teachers need to remain open to the different areas questioning may lead to.

To explore these areas the type of question asked needs to be varied, depending on the situation. Wood (1998) states that open questions should be encouraged as they allow the teacher to focus in on specific areas of learning by giving justifications for answers given. Nystrand et al., (1997) believes that open-ended questions should highlight the diverse opinions of each learner in the class, as open-ended questions have more than one given answer. These questions allow the teacher to open conversation between other children in the class. This was highlighted in my

observation, as the teacher asked open questions to understand how the children worked out the multiplication calculation. Molinari and Mameli (2015) believe that these questions demand cognitive development, to allow children to learn from mistakes made and is inclusive to all (Sedova et al., 2016; Myhill and Warren, 2005). The openness allows all children to be involved in the discussion at all times and with every opinion or idea added, it helps build a bigger picture in the mind of the learner (Nystrand et al., 1997). Despite recent literature stressing the use of open ended questions in the classroom, it should also be noted that there is also a time where closed questions are required. Myhill (2006) believes that closed questions provide an insight into what a child understands. These questions are often asked in the lower stages of 'Blooms Taxonomy of Educational Objectives' and are questions that help children remember what they already know (Bloom, 1956). Unlike open questions, closed questions often lack detail and are one or two-word answers. In some cases, this is helpful to a teacher as it demonstrates if a child understands a piece of work from one question and response (Shaversbro, 2014).

Throughout this section, the importance of using questions to understand child knowledge has been stressed by many authors. Black and William (1998) highlights the worldwide focus on the need for teachers to improve assessment for learning practice, as this coincides with academic achievement. The teacher uses a formative assessment process to distinguish and respond to the learner, resulting in the development of learning as it is occurring (Cowie and Bell, 1999). Formative assessment is a continuous and systematic process, often used to facilitate learning within the classroom (Moss and Brookhart, 2009). Brookhart (2008) suggests that in order to focus on goal setting and achieving such goals, it is important for both teacher and learner to co-operate in order to focus on the task, evaluate work consistently and

take actions to move closer to that goal. This often occurs through strategies such as clarifying aims and learning objectives, allowing wait time for pupil responses, encouraging discussion throughout the class, and providing the children with feedback through peer and self-assessment (Black and William, 2009). This was highlighted during my observation; the teacher frequently allowed children wait time to respond to questions. This allowed the children to properly think through their answers, rather than the teacher receiving answers of a lower quality due to a lack of thinking time. The teacher also needs to plan to evoke and to act upon information regarding the learner's progress (Cowie and Bell, 1999). However, a central part of the assessment for learning process is the quality of the feedback given to the learner, as this is a crucial part in accessing the quality of the set activity. Shute (2006) states that effective feedback is supportive of the learners needs and provides the learner with information on how to change their thinking process in a positive way or their attitude towards learning.

### **Section Three:**

It is vital to create the correct learning environment for children to learn within for valuable learning to take place. The learning environment should be accessible to all, whilst providing a safe space for children to develop and experience positive learning (Jonassen and Land, 2012). Therefore, in this section I will discuss the different aspects of my own ideal learning environment that provide the children with a comfortable and safe place to learn.

The outdoor learning environment is a key aspect of my plan. By creating an open and playful environment for children to learn in, it allows the development of social, cognitive and physical skills, all often achieved by introducing playful, creative and

hands-on activities (Kangas and Ruokamo, 2017). A huge part of outdoor learning is allowing the children to access meaningful and engaging activities. This is reiterated by Kangas (2010) and (Resnick, 2006), who both suggest that such activities often produce a joy of learning for the child. It is important for all children to remain motivated to learn. In an observation made by Chang and Chang (2012), it was evident that there is a strong link between student motivation and engagement levels and the outdoor learning environment created. I believed it was important to allow the children to experience this in many ways within my classroom, by using various resources such as a water area, sand pit and a play house for role play. These areas allowed the children to develop cross-curricular skills like numeracy, creativity and literacy. However, despite the learning being child centred, the role of the teacher within this style of learning is crucial, as they also need to be engaged with the learning that is taking place around them (Adler, 1983).

I have also involved a nature area which will allow the children more opportunities to develop key skills in different settings. One of the main approaches used in this area is called 'Forest Schools' and is being used in various primary schools throughout Wales. This approach to learning offers all aged children hands-on learning activities that promote confidence and self-esteem (Forest Schools Wales, 2017).



Figure 4 – Woven figures in an outdoor learning environment.

Within the forest there will be many woven figures. Sedgwick (2012) witnessed the positive effect this has on the children's willingness to learn, as it allowed the children to experience an activity outside their usual learning environment. One child in the observation said, "I like being here because its real." This could suggest that for children these experiences are new which offers various benefits to the learner. Not only does this help create a relaxed environment for children to develop social skills and engage with learning, but the natural surrounding help children develop creative skills Kangas and Ruakama (2012). I have also included an outdoor reading chair in the nature area. This feature has a link to the figures in the forest, as children can listen to stories as a group around the chair. Using directed tasks throughout the reading helps children remain focussed on the book, but more importantly creates links to activities involving the learner's surroundings. The directed tasks could include using the resources within the forest, for example, the woven figures. This will help the children think more creatively as they are actually experiencing it for themselves, rather than being restricted to the classroom.

The area that I have created allows the children to be at one with their surroundings. For this to work the teacher needs to be proactive, as it is the teacher's responsibility to change the resources within the areas to keep the children focussed and engaged. This point is supported by Mieg (2009), who suggests that outdoor learning has many rewards and allows the teacher to develop but can also challenge the teacher's practice. This stresses the importance of observing the learning taking place and understand when to change or alter outdoor activities. Ludvigsen et al., (2010) states that it important to adopt new teaching strategies and approaches, which can only be achieved through teacher engagement and pedagogical thinking. In my ideal learning environment, I believe that each station would be benefited by a teaching assistant or member of staff. I believe this because the teacher is less able to see or hear the children outside the classroom. By having an additional member of staff supervising outside the classroom, it allows an opportunity to understand and challenge the learner through promoting and observing children at play.

Within the learning environment that I have created, AfL will be a prominent aspect. Researchers believe that formative assessment is not currently a strong feature of work within the classroom (Black et al., 2007). However, there are ample amounts of research available that highlights the positive uses of formative assessment. Black et al., (2007) identified that teachers will often be able to highlight the strengths and areas for improvements from the initial marking of the learner's work. Despite this, it was highlighted that teachers found it difficult to give feedback because of the way they had framed the work that had been set. In other words, in my learning environment, it is important for the teacher to plan for all aspects of AfL. This will be achieved through planning activities that are open to discussion, where feedback is easier to implement.

As previously mentioned, the driving factor for AfL is setting and working towards targets. Teaching assistants will also have a key role to play during this learning process, as they support the teacher in challenging and progressing the learner through in-depth discussion and questioning (Wragg, 2016). These discussions are driven by the understanding of children and the goals previously set, which allows both teacher and teaching assistants to assess what requires further attention and what the learner fully understands and can move on from. AfL also promotes individual learning and progression, as well as the social aspect, that develops through the natural discussions that take place in the classroom. According to Marshall and Drummond (2006), at the core of AfL is the independence the children gain from the process. This is important for the teacher to consider. If this aspect of AfL is ignored, then the purpose of the strategies implemented lose efficiency (Lee and William, 2005; Sadler, 1989). Independent work is a key aspect to my classroom and the AfL strategy implemented. It is important to allow the children to explore and gain knowledge independently. For effective AfL to occur it is important for the staff members to find the right balance in intervening in set activities. This will assist in keeping children focussed and let them explore and allow learning to take place naturally. However, if activities become unfocussed it is important that the MKO addresses this through questioning and high-quality classroom talk (Dillon, 1984).

Digital competency is set to become a cross-curricular responsibility when the new curriculum takes full effect from 2022 (Donaldson, 2015). One of the many aims of the new curriculum is to prepare children for the working world by making them 'creative contributors' to society. Anderson (2008) believes it is the teachers responsibility to use ICT effectively for the children to develop twenty-first century skills. As my learning environment is student centred, I believe that the use of an ICT area would help the

children become more independent. This point is reiterated by Hannfin and Land (1997), who believes that the use of ICT resources in the classroom is vital in creating an environment where children can flourish independently. Despite the positives gained from using ICT in the classroom, teachers can often find it difficult to integrate it into their lessons (Vanderlinde et al., 2009). There is a fine balance between good use of ICT resources and overuse of ICT resources. It is important that the learner doesn't become dependent on these resources as they should be used to enhance learning. Estyn (2014) reports found that schools often provided tablets rather than laptops or computers. They also suggest that schools should take a mixed approach when it comes to providing ICT equipment, which is why I have made available the use of both laptops and tablets to the children. It is believed that this approach is useful as both have strengths and weaknesses different to one another.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, from experiencing first-hand questioning strategies being implemented into the classroom, it is evident that is an important tool to understand and develop the knowledge of the child. As the teacher frequently asked questions throughout the mathematics lesson, it was clear that the teacher was asking questions to gauge what the children already knew, and in-turn, what needed further work. Prestigious authors like Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1987) both believed that communication was a tool to both understanding and developing knowledge and identifying what others already knew. Reflecting on the learning event that took place and from the understanding I have gained on the numerous strategies to questioning, is it now important for me to use this to improve future practice through using positive questioning strategies and observation of the responses both verbal and non-verbal. This will allow me to understand the development of the children in my class.

I have also gained a greater understanding in the importance of creating the right learning environment for children to work in. After engaging with vast amounts of literature on the ideal learning environment, it was clear that outdoor learning, AfL and ICT were all key aspects and needed to be included in my classroom. I believe that by creating my own learning environment it allowed me to think creatively on what I would want my classroom to look like. This in turn would help me gain a greater understanding of what is good practice.

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