

OutoftheBox

Links to the National Curriculum, Ofsted and SIAMS Inspection Frameworks

Introduction

This paper introduces OutoftheBox and explains how its use in schools will help deliver the National Curriculum and provide evidence sought through both Ofsted and SIAMS inspections.

About OutoftheBox

OutoftheBox provides a multi-sensory approach to storytelling. It creates space for and encourages children's curiosity to wonder about their own story and the stories of the communities in which they belong. Each basket contains all the beautiful materials needed to share 49 stories exploring seven themes of Care, Creativity, Choice, Contentment, Courage, Community and Conflict. Children are free to be curious using their primary languages of story and play to find their inner wisdom and the wisdom of their class.



“Beautiful. very tactile and visually pleasing.”

“They are beautifully made and the sensory aspect of them is very appealing to the children who couldn't stop playing with them.”

“This had much more impact on the children... to help them to remember the story than me reading it, or using a PowerPoint.”

The Value of OutoftheBox for Schools

OutoftheBox has a positive impact on both individual pupils' development and wellbeing and on the whole school community:

- supporting children to develop holistically, increase their self-awareness and ability to express themselves and find a sense of meaning in life; and
- creating a safe space for children to express themselves and listen to the thoughts of others, to help to build empathy, understanding and relationships within the class and the wider school community.

In doing so, OutoftheBox supports delivery of the National Curriculum and provides evidence sought via inspections.

- OutoftheBox will support schools to deliver many aspects of the curriculum, particularly within Personal, Social, Health, and Economic (PSHE) Education. It can be used within classroom worship and with some aspects of the RE curriculum. There are also many strong cross-curricular links which mean OutoftheBox can be used as a springboard to other areas of the wider curriculum. See Annex A for more details on the links with KS1 and KS2. The links to the KS3 curriculum will be written up shortly.
- Using the OutoftheBox will create evidence for Ofsted inspectors reporting on the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural and personal development of pupils and the promotion of British Values; and also evidence against all seven strands of SIAMS Inspections. See Annexes B and C for more details.

For more information, or to purchase an OutoftheBox Story Basket together with the training to use it in the classroom, please visit www.outoftheboxstories.org

Annex A: Links with the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Curriculum

PSHE

OutoftheBox Stories relate closely to the core PSHE themes of Health and Wellbeing, Relationships and Living in the Wider World. The stories are categorised around seven themes to enable children to develop holistically, exploring care, creativity, choice, contentment, courage, community and conflict. Through discussion and response to the stories, pupils will grow in these and other areas such as connection, collaboration, and co-operation. The stories will also enable children to identify and express feelings, in some cases providing the languages in which to do this. Exploring choices will help pupils to recognise what is kind and unkind, right and wrong, fair and unfair as they actively wonder playfully about the story told. This exploration enables pupils to contribute to the life of the classroom, school, the local community and the world. OutoftheBox will help pupils appreciate diversity and be aware of including those who are different to themselves. This will develop their empathy and nurture strong skills in listening and communication. In turn, this will promote and encourage a shared interrelatedness with other people and the world we live in.

“A child linked the story to the school’s values on compassion and respect. One teacher thought the story linked into literacy well. Another teacher to PSHE.”

“I think the level of freedom and control given to the children gave them confidence and focus I do not always see - one boy in particular is generally very anxious about any kind of failure. There was no way to fail at this activity and he seemed to thrive when given the opportunity to tell a story.”

“It provoked some very interesting discussions and was brilliant for discussing emotions and how we deal with them”

References

- *Guidance Personal, social, health and economic (PHSE) education 2013*
- *Programme of Study for PSHE education, PSHE Association 2017)*

Religious Education

OutoftheBox deepens pupils' understanding of different worldviews and religious faiths. The stories originate in legends and folklore and children’s storybooks as well as in Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Judaism. They create opportunities for children to hear stories from a wide variety of world and faith traditions in a way that enables awareness and understanding to be nurtured. Pupils are invited to imagine themselves into the story, enabling greater connection with the story and facilitating deeper understanding of the characters, their behaviours and the values they portray. This enables pupils to make meaning within the story, experience what it is to be curious and wonder, and to glimpse and experience moments of awe which impact spiritual formation. Exploring the seven different themes fosters greater understanding of the elements of the communities around them. Pupils also have opportunities to respond creatively to the stories, which helps them think further about the big questions they raise and to explore and express their ideas and opinions in response.

“Wondering about the story is a good way of encouraging children to express their thoughts and ideas: some quite shy children responded (who don't usually say anything in response to questions in Collective Worship with me, for instance)”

“The children wondered out loud about what the pieces might mean right from the start”

References

- *Religious Education in English Schools: Non-Statutory Guidance 2010*
- *A Curriculum Framework for Religious Education in England, The Religious Education Council of England and Wales 2013*

Citizenship

OutoftheBox stories link closely to many aspects of the non-statutory Citizenship curriculum. They create a meaningful opportunity for pupils to reflect on and respond to the values presented in the stories. This impacts pupils' development and inspires them to embody appropriate values in their classrooms, home, and local communities, helping them to play an active role as people. The way in which the stories are told and pupils are invited to respond contributes to the children's wellbeing as they become aware of their interrelatedness to those around them. The safe and creative space created provides an opportunity for children to explore and respect differences between people.

“During the wondering you could see the children listening to each other's perspectives and sometimes affirming each other or adding to what the others had said.”

“Children realised that the monster wasn't as big when the people were kind to it. They said the story showed that you should listen to others and care for others even if they are different to you.”

English

The 49 OutoftheBox stories provide pupils with opportunities to engage with stories in a kinaesthetic way. The stories originate from various different cultures and worldviews. The words are few and full of meaning, encouraging children to pay close attention to the way they feel moved by the story, like poetry. OutoftheBox gives children an opportunity to engage in purposeful and reflective discussion with others. The stories can spark an interest in reading, develop and increase vocabulary and stimulate the imagination. Pupils are encouraged to play with the story, and to respond in lots of different ways, including by creating and composing their own stories with the materials.

“I noticed that a child who often 'opts out' started to add things to the beach and say what they were. They enjoyed the fact that they could be in the story and change the story. When I emphasised this, it promoted more exploration of the materials.”

“One boy whose mother is in hospital having major surgery told a story. He spent some time carefully and slowly laying out the pieces. He created two homes, and tree with an acorn and some birds and a well with the bucket. He filled the bucket with blue dots. He said ‘One upon a time there was a family living their life in a happy village until one day there was an earthquake (he builds the emotion in his voice and tips the rugs so everything falls in a pile). They managed to rebuild it (he rebuilds). Then there was another earthquake and everything was destroyed (This time the rug is shaken vigorously). The End’.”

"I picked up the tray and the energy in the circle rose as they all added new ideas (becoming metaphors) to the scene".
"One of the teachers was going to follow this up the next day in class during their reflection time to write their thoughts about the story."

Art

OutoftheBox provides opportunities for pupils to respond creatively to their learning, using any available medium or art materials. This response is not directed by the storyteller allowing each pupil to respond in their own way as they continue to make meaning from the story, further supporting their understanding and wellbeing. Artwork that is produced by the children is valuable for the thinking and internal processing that happens as it is being created, more than for the end product itself.

"The children loved being able to wonder about the story. They also loved the chance to explore the pieces afterwards and be creative with them, making their own stories and pictures."

Maths

The OutoftheBox materials can be used as enrichment for Maths for exploring concepts such as shape, size, number, sorting, tessellating, symmetry. The associations of playfulness and curiosity that children will have developed towards the shapes through the OutoftheBox stories will remain with them when they are used for Maths activities, thereby ensuring a creative and explorative and playful atmosphere in Maths lessons.

"Tom wanted to help put everything away, which he did very carefully."
"I love the materials: pleasing to work with, they make intriguing sounds as stories are told and they look lovely. Being natural somehow engenders a feeling of calm."
"The felt pieces could be folded easily so I used them to teach symmetry. The children also enjoyed making pictograms with the colourful shapes."

Science and Geography

OutoftheBox can be used as a springboard for Science and Geography lessons, e.g. the exploration of cause and effect, enquiry into different habitats, life cycles, the growth of a seed and the characteristics of living things.

"Very thought provoking. Great to use in many different scenarios that can happen within a school."

"The children felt free to comment as the story unfolded, it was like they were discovering it for themselves. For example, when the roots and leaves were first put

down they started to talk about the roots being like water soaking up into the tree to help it grow. It wasn't in any way distracting from the story and added to it."

"[The children responded by saying] 'I love nature and the story was about nature' 'I felt surprised. The tree grows and gives life and gives people oxygen' 'It gave a home for the birds'"

"Children linked the story to lifecycles, fairytales, forest school work on growing, nature."

"Children made links between the story and the environment and the need to plant more trees."

History

The stories can facilitate discussion about factual versus mythical approaches to recounting history. The open-ended nature of the materials, as well as the creative and playful approach of OutoftheBox, means that the materials can also be used by both adults and pupils to make up their own stories about the period of history they are studying.

"The children enjoyed making up their own OutoftheBox stories about the period of history they have been studying recently."

Annex B: Links to the Ofsted KS1 and KS2 Inspection Framework

Spiritual - The OutoftheBox approach to storytelling provides a safe space where pupils can reflect on the story in a safe classroom space. This can be an individual reflection or a class group reflection. This space invites, encourages, and supports children to learn how to listen and connect with one another and the story. The method used in the story telling invites and builds a community of trust with the pupils where the story can be playfully shared together. Through reflection, the story impacts pupils as each one discovers and develops their individual inner wisdom nurturing a sense of meaning in life, which enhances a sense of wellbeing. The approach creates time for listening and respect where children can discover a deep sense of acceptance through the contributions made. The 49 wisdom stories and additional stories from faith traditions provide pupils with the opportunity to think about their own place in the world, and their place with others. The approach of OutoftheBox allows for playful, curious, creative and imaginative responses to the story, supporting and nurturing the spirituality of the pupil.

“It’s so nice for the children to have an opportunity to create what they want for a change.”

“The class did seem quite calm afterwards. Many children with additional needs, low-income homes, experience of trauma (other than Covid). It felt like a respectful, unthreatening, undemanding moment for them in a busy day.”

Moral - These stories offer an approach where different ideas about values can be explored, for example what is the right choice/good choice/wrong choice within the story. The effects of words and actions can be played out through the storytelling and responses. This impacts pupils as they find the courage to do this beyond the story, springboarding new understanding within the school community and beyond. The stories encourage pupils to discover ways in which we all can play a part in the world, where differing voices can contribute to a better world as well as individual wellbeing. The stories provide space to explore equality, diversity, inclusion and injustice. Through open questions that invite discussion (what are called the Wondering questions) pupils discover how together they can make a difference in relationships impacting relational wellbeing. This happens as the pupil can individually and collaboratively respond to the larger issues encountered in everyday lives within the world through the story.

“Children were calm and focussed, engrossed, intrigued in the story and were reflecting on each character and their actions. They were very calm after the story had been put away which is unusual for my lively class of 20 boys and 9 girls! Children continued to discuss so I gave them some reflection time for a drink and to continue their conversations.”

“Children were keen that all the starfish should be helped so used the felt pieces to build a go-kart to carry all the starfish into the sea. They felt uncomfortable that some were left behind.”

“The children were great at discussing why it is good to be kind to people. They all tried to make up an ending as they wanted it to finish.”

Social - Connection is a key aspect of this approach. Pupils learn to listen to the story and one another. In ‘wondering’ together pupils learn to articulate differences of opinion, to respect individual approaches and to work together collaboratively with an idea. In the Wondering time and the creative response time, children learn to cooperate with each other, sharing ideas,

completing tasks, and taking on different roles in doing this. Pupils from different cultural, religious, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds are invited to come together with a sense of curiosity, and encouragement, learning to care for one another within the group. This nurtures the social and emotional wellbeing of children. Curiosity and imagination are stimulated enabling and promoting empathy, which in turn supports pupil wellbeing.

“We spent a lot of time talking through how the starfish felt and how the little boy felt and, after the activities, how they felt.”

“There were several times throughout the session that the children showed quite a high level of caring for each other.”

Cultural - The 49 different stories are wisdom stories and come from different traditions and cultures. These enable pupils to become curious about different values and world-views. The stories are an invitation to be curious about difference, to celebrate diversity and to cooperate with others from backgrounds different from their own. As pupils’ cultural awareness and understanding increases, fears and prejudices are reduced, and a greater sense of harmony and contentment within a diverse society is enabled. Listening skills are developed and empathy is fostered.

“I used the resources to tell the story of Hanukkah.”

“They said the story was showing that you should listen to others and care for others even if they are different to you”

British Values - OutoftheBox stories provide material for the discussion of democracy, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of others. They also provide the opportunity for pupils to express their views and opinions and to listen to and respect others’ opinions. OutoftheBox allows pupils to discover their inner wisdom and the wisdom of the group and to contribute positively with others.

“It gave them a safe place to say what they really thought and felt i.e. non-judgemental environment with freedom to interpret the story for themselves”

Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare - OutoftheBox Story Baskets support pupils’ holistic development, building healthy character and the courage to make the right choices in life. Engaging with the stories enables pupils to grow in their ability to connect with others, care respectfully for one another and be curious about life. They also encourage children to contribute to the wider community and notice and relate well to difference. OutoftheBox brings comfort to children through the building of relational trust in the storytelling approach, enabling personal growth to occur. Children work playfully together, experiencing the fruits of collaboration as they learn more about taking care of themselves and others.’

“The staff made a point of saying they were particularly pleased that certain children had joined in so well, as they don't usually engage well with activities or stay focussed.”

“The staff were particularly pleased with how one child was working with others to share the parts and to take turns as this was something this child usually really struggled with.”

Annex C: Links to the SIAMS Primary Inspection Framework

Strand 1. Vision and Leadership of the School

At the heart of the Church of England's vision for education is that Jesus came to give life in all its fullness. OutoftheBox Stories support pupils to flourish and have a greater sense of wellbeing.

Church of England schools seek to develop and embed distinctive Christian values such as wisdom, hope, justice, compassion, service, humility. OutoftheBox stories enable pupils to explore and reflect on values to be able to apply them to their lives. Reflecting on stories through conversation and creative play can be transformational, sparking new ideas and thinking about values in action.

As outlined in the SIAMS Self Evaluation Form (SEF) there are three key questions for schools to consider as they articulate their distinctive Christian Vision: Who we are as a school? Why are we here? and How do we live? Out of the Box stories support schools to express and apply their distinctive Christian vision and associated Christian values to help pupils flourish.

"I think it was empowering for these girls to be allowed to play with the materials and make their own story, bound only by the materials: to have a moment of free choice (not often in Y6)."

Strand 2. Wisdom, Skill and Knowledge

The OutoftheBox approach to storytelling is creative and engages pupils' imagination. This supports the Church of England's vision to develop wisdom, knowledge and skills within education to the healthy flourishing of individuals within society. Through the stories and the way they are told and a response is invited, pupils reflect upon their place in the world as unique individuals and make meaning of how they might live as individuals. Through this process of enabling curiosity and creativity within a safe space, pupils grow in confidence, and emotional/social intelligence to share with others. Discussions enable pupils to be curious about the world and themselves, enabling meaningful discussion.

Many of the OutoftheBox stories support spiritual formation through reflection on spiritual, and ethical issues including diversity, prejudice, injustice, isolation, decision making, and respect. The OutoftheBox Story Basket can be used to tell Christian stories from the Bible, enabling this to happen from a Christian perspective. This enhances critical thinking and creativity, as deeper questions are explored and meaningful ways of living life are well discussed.

"The storytelling gave them a chance to process big feelings and make emotional connections with their friends"

"Detailed responses at the end of the story and in-depth thinking"

Stand 3. Character Development: Hope, Aspiration and Courageous Advocacy

OutoftheBox aims to help pupils discover their character and their ability to bring hope to others within their home, school, and communities. The process encourages pupils to self-reflect and see how they can make a difference in the world.

Stories enable pupils to explore how they may be courageous advocates for change exploring individually and collectively how to be persevering, resilient and patient when facing difficult

situations, or making difficult choices. The story telling fosters emotional and social learning and growth contributing to a pupils wellbeing.

“Children responded thoughtfully and respectfully. Most of the children placed themselves in the role of the child saving the starfish. They believed that they could make a difference.”

“I was pleased a boy who had been bereaved answered, as he lacks confidence, is quite quiet in class and has some learning needs. I see great potential in this resource for our Family Liaison/ Wellbeing/ Safeguarding officer.”

Strand 4. Community and Living Well Together

OutoftheBox Story Baskets use a carefully developed approach to storytelling that enables pupils to develop a wide range of social skills including communication, conflict resolution, co-operation, creativity, play, collaboration, and negotiation. These skills will transfer to being used in the classroom and wider community. Greater social intelligence creates a greater sense of wellbeing.

Stories from different religious, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds enable pupils to develop empathy and understanding with others. Some of the stories also explicitly explore themes such as forgiveness, reconciliation, respect and good listening. The purpose of OutoftheBox is to model a healthy and accepting way of being that actively builds pupils’ sense of wellbeing as they learn to live well with others.

“One or two children had to be reminded to listen to the others at the start of wonderings but they all showed a lot of acceptance and respect for each other’s ideas, which is another thing that this story method encourages, as well as prompting your own thoughts by listening to others.”

“There are two children with quite significant SEN. The TA said she had rarely seen them as quiet / focused. One of them made a contribution during the questions. Children were calm and engaged.”

Strand 5. Dignity and Respect

OutoftheBox Story Baskets include stories from a wide variety of faith and non-faith backgrounds, and reflective wondering reveals meaning in them all. The stories celebrate difference and give pupils an opportunity to engage with curiosity and interest with unfamiliar worldviews. The use of ‘I wonder’ questions encourages pupils to share their thoughts and beliefs in a safe, respectful space where we listen to others. The acceptance and curiosity with which pupils’ reflections are received helps pupils learn to respect those who see things differently and to reflect on others’ points of view.

The use of the OutoftheBox materials makes these stories accessible to pupils of all abilities, including visual and kinesthetic learners as well as auditory. The simplicity of the words and the attractiveness of the materials makes the sessions appealing to and inclusive of those with learning difficulties, while at the same time the open response time gives an opportunity for pupils of higher abilities to challenge their own assumptions and have their thinking stretched. The storyteller positions themselves as equals to the pupils as a fellow explorer, the open Wondering questions empower pupils to think for themselves and be aware of each person’s dignity and personhood.

"I think this story is lovely in the sense that it is often well known - so therefore familiar and there is something safe in that. It also allows a sense of this is for everyone - not just for the storyteller. I love the way even if you have heard this story many times before or read it many times before, the OutoftheBox version takes it to a whole other level."

"Children were engrossed including SEN/EAL. Lots of excitement and anticipation of what was in the box. Superb conversations between themselves of what might be happening in the story."

Strand 6. The Impact of Collective Worship

OutoftheBox Story Baskets are a valuable resource for classroom Collective Worship. An OutoftheBox session gives children an opportunity to reflect and be attentive to the movement of the spirit within them, to sit together in expectant and comfortable silence, and to experience Collective Worship through the medium of stories and reflection.

"The children went on to be very attentive and involved in the Collective Worship"

"The slow and simple telling of a story with so much room for personal and shared reflection was appreciated"

"One child said that they liked that they felt so calm during the story."

Strand 7. The Effectiveness of Religious Education

OutoftheBox Story Baskets support the RE curriculum by presenting stories from Christianity and from other faiths in a way that children can easily engage emotionally and personally. The stories are living stories that encourage the children to be attentive to their feelings and to wonder about the meaning that might be revealed in the story. OutoftheBox Story Baskets are effective in helping children consider the impact that religious stories have on individuals' lives, attitudes and choices, and therefore the influence of religion on wider society.

The space to wonder that follows an OutoftheBox story allows pupils to listen to each other's responses and to reflect critically on their own reactions and feelings and convictions. A safe atmosphere of acceptance and curiosity gives pupils an opportunity to express their reactions in an authentic way. OutoftheBox is a safe space to question assumptions, to discuss ideas and to explore meaning and purpose of life and belief and what it means for them.

"I think it gives them an opportunity to focus on themes of wellness, but also gives them a time just for them - a time just to be themselves."

"The story was a way of the children expressing themselves through the story and bringing the story into today and today's problems."

"The children responded thoughtfully, including one boy whom I had worked with last year, following the death of his father. He said he didn't like that one person had an easy path, while another had to go up mountains and down valleys: it wasn't fair."