

Focus on... Looking closer at our living world

It seems quite apt that, as spring emerges and we leave the dark days of winter behind, this issue should focus on 'Looking closer at our living world'. We dive straight into our theme with Verity Jones and Amanda Webber interviewing the author M. G. Leonard about her popular book *Beetle Boy*. Like me, I think readers will be fascinated by this inspiring tale of how the author's interest grew into a passion for protecting insect life – and encouraging such an eco-awareness in others.

The context of the living world continues in a similar vein with Emily Montenero's work on how schools and schoolchildren can make a difference to the decline in bee populations across the UK. This is a truly informative take on supporting key insect pollinators and is a worthy inclusion for the eco-credibility advice it offers alone. In a related vein, the article from Verity Jones and Ross Cundy then discusses the ethics of children studying live animals and offers convenient and very helpful checklists and advice for teachers and their classes – as well as a cornucopia of online resources.

Environmentalism is never far away within the pages of *PS* as you know and so this issue sees Andy Markwick, Kerri Hutchines and Loren Kirby contribute advice on an interdisciplinary approach to introducing paper recycling, which encompasses history, art, literature, culture and science. This is followed by a report from head teacher Rachael Shaw, on how her school worked in partnership with the James Dyson Foundation. Here Rachael recounts the many benefits of farming-related activities – including growing potatoes – for teaching children about the world of work, the environment and our impact on it. A link for online resources and further information for readers inspired by her story is included.

This spring issue also lends itself to exposition of new enhancements. We are delighted to have

Professor Becky Francis taking us through the key points of the recent Education Endowment Foundation *Improving primary science* report. Cognisant of this EEF report, as well as that of Ofsted (2023), Tina Whittaker and Professor Lynne Bianchi then discuss key points from their joint University of Manchester and Ogden Trust project 'Being Focussed', giving the experiences of science subject leaders as they strive to enact recent enhancements to practice. These articles are a must for teachers wishing to gain insight at the cutting edge of primary science education.

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We then turn to the burning subject of the use of AI in primary science with Michael Allen and James English, whose article may well inspire a future *PS* theme in itself. The final instalment in this issue sees some truly practical – even DIY – advice on creating fun investigations into friction from Georgios Stylos and his team from the University of Ioannina, Greece.

With the welcome addition of two new Editorial Board members, Kalpa Ghelani and Melissa Arrowsmith, as well as containing an offer of a schools' artwork competition (page 31), ahead of publication of *It's not fair* (2024), this was an eminently enjoyable and engaging issue to curate for you, our readers – so many thanks to all our authors for contributing!

I hope you enjoy reading issue 181.

Robert Collins