

PLAY PEOPLE

JOY PLAY CHILDHOOD MAGIC NATURE



ISSUE 2



Welcome to Play People, an occasional mini-magazine introducing inspirational people for you to meet in your adventure into play.

Each issue will feature a thinker, educator or parent who has given time to piece together their pedagogy and ideas for play and childhood. I hope we'll cover plenty of ground in the coming issues.

If what you read inspires you or presents questions then please get in touch, especially if you'd like to contribute to an issue!!

There are many great educators out there and you are one of them, when you turn the page you will meet another one.

Childhood needs all the advocates it can get its hands on.

It's time for play, it's time for Play People...



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Meet Amy!

Amy is a Year One teacher in Gloucestershire, England. I stumbled across her Instagram account not too long ago and I loved what I saw - a commitment to taking play into KS1 and a passion for ensuring that her children have a rich day based on principled pedagogy. Often we make the assumption that play ends in Year 1 and 2, but it's encouraging to see the greenshoots of continuous provision and play emerging in schools. It all starts with advocating play in Nurseries - we link hands as Play People after all...

Greg



Hello! I'm Amy and it's great to meet you and have the opportunity to share my adventure into play with you.

I have been teaching for 11 years and I am passionate about play and children's learning. When moving to year one 3 years ago – I knew I wanted to implement a play approach. My fondest memories of school involved playing: swinging on trees, using grass cuttings to write out the school's name in giant letters with friends (the newspaper came and did an article), singing, school performances and making shadow puppet shows.

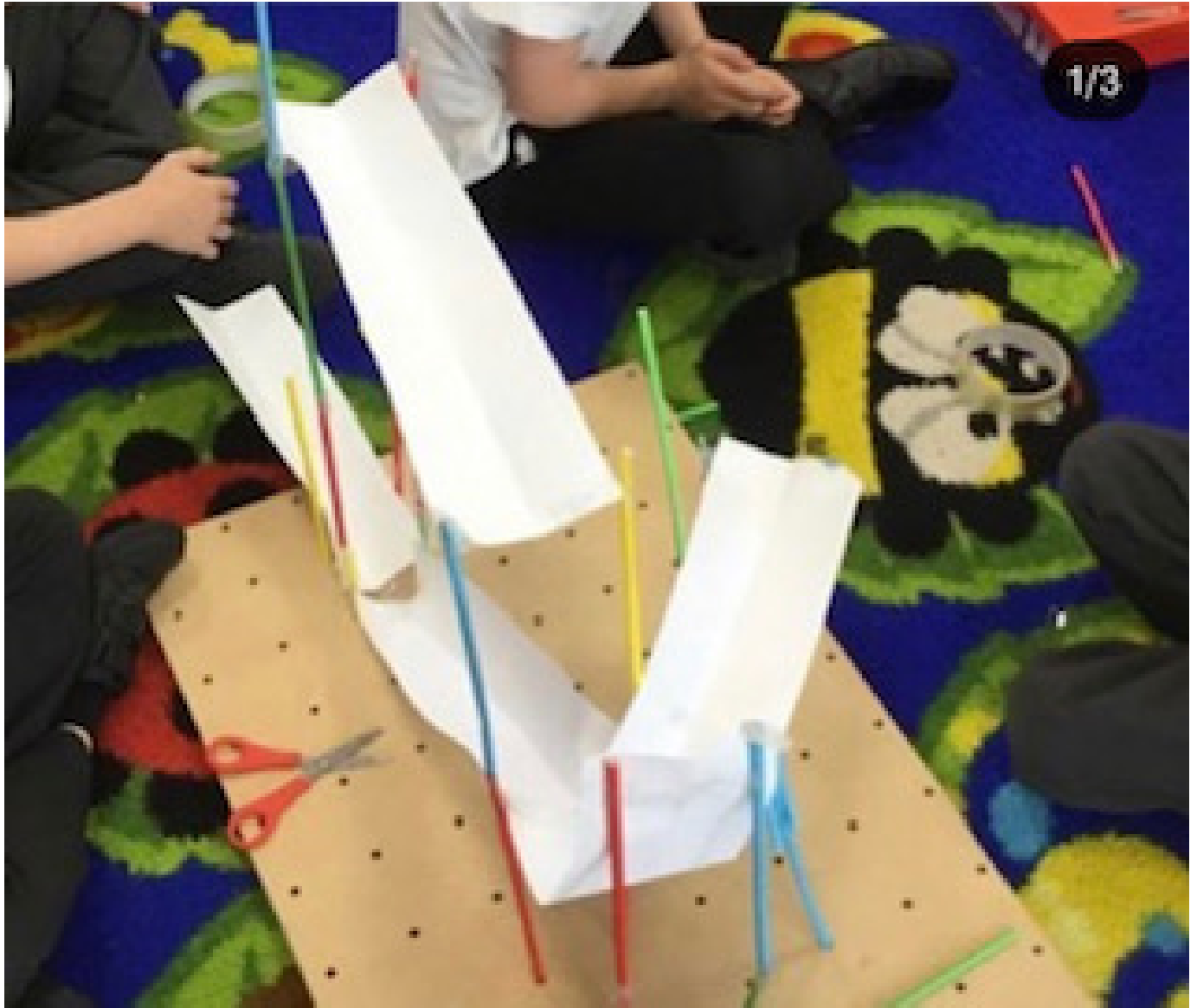
These memories were triggered a few years ago during one playtime. Some year 6 pupils were sitting in a quiet area drawing some ice-creams. You should make an ice cream shop- the KS1 teacher in me said- not expecting a response. I didn't expect the excitement that would come the next day. A child came to get me, at home they had all given each other jobs to do and they had bought in signs, menus, price lists, note books, ice cream, handmade money for the shop. The excitement lasted a week and new things were added daily. Some of them who usually hated writing and Maths getting stuck in, enjoying it and loving just playing, reminding me of how young they really are- Year 6- we can sometimes forget.

It triggered the memories of school above and made me realise, I needed more play in my teaching. I did lots of reading and research into play and provision beyond EYFS (not just fun/ a circle of activities) and bringing the characteristics of learning alive in KS1. I wanted the children in my class to have that feeling of loving learning and playing whilst building key skills (emotionally, socially and academically) all the time.

Greg says exactly what I thought in his new book "Let's investigate how we can give the Adult world what it wants and all the while continue to be the advocates of childhood". After research, I started by changing the layout of the classroom making it less formal and more immersive.



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I scanned Freecycle and skips to get lots of things like tyres, pallets and equipment for play for free. I looked at provision resources carefully to ensure there were items that would challenge and encourage play and open ended thinking. We have de-constructed role play inside and outside, a trainee climbing tree, STEM resources, rich reading environment and many more different areas to spark thinking.

I was lucky to get the opportunity to visit some schools in Finland to see their approach to teaching and learning in the early years (early years runs up to the age of 6) and I could write an entire other piece of what I learnt from this experience. But the main thing I took away was less is more, play comes from the children, you don't need to worry about expensive resources and pages of planning.



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After the visit, I realised things needed to be taken a step further. We created our own Early Curriculum for our school. The curriculum runs from Nursery to Year one and dips into year 2. Our Deep Curriculum starts after Christmas in year 2 for the rest of the school. This curriculum ensured that we covered the objectives but also covered our play based approach, why we did it, how it worked and the benefits to the children beyond learning academic skills.

We've had many adventures over the last few years in class: climbing trees, inventing our own stories and plays, sailing across the Atlantic in our boats, making slime, celebrating festivals, learning about interests and questions the children pose- the children love it as do we! When I asked current pupils in year one and past pupils they said: We love being able to go inside and outside all the time. We like working where we work best (they can work at standing tables, normal tables, lying down with a clipboard).

They loved the freedom of playing and following their own interests. They loved all of this whilst secretly learning all the skills and objectives they needed (independent writing happens all the time, in all areas by boys and girls without complaint- Greg's message centre idea has worked miracles with this as well as helicopter stories by Trish Lee). The children also love the opportunities we provide to learn about new projects or subject areas and are eager to try these enhancements we put in place.

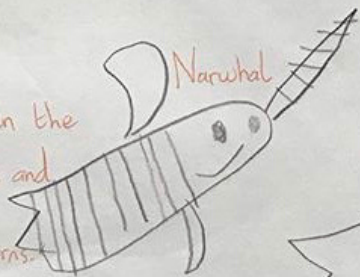


After learning about whales, he
drew pictures and told me
facts.



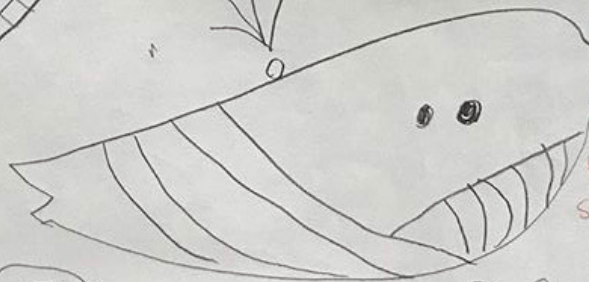
Blue whales
are the
largest animal
in the world.

They live in the
coldest places and
break ice
with their horns.

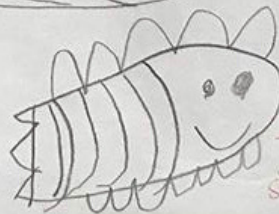


Narwhal

Humpback
whales don't
have teeth,
they have
stringy bones
instead.



Killer
whale



Sun whale
They are really
shy.



We work very closely with the EYFS staff to ensure transitions are smooth. All children work on their next steps and are stretched and challenged. Nobody becomes “unseen” and bored following learning they have no interest in.

Yes, we as the “adult world” need to work hard to ensure behind the scenes progress, skills, objectives/ WALTs are achieved but through play, the fun, the inquisitiveness and love of learning can still happen. For those of you out there thinking about a more play based approach to year one, go for it! It’s not the easiest journey but it’s the best thing I’ve done for the children, my teaching and I have to say it- the progress of the children in my class. It’s worked so well that we have started to trial adapting our year one approach and moving it into year 2 as well this year and it has been going well. Take the leap and play- you won’t look back!



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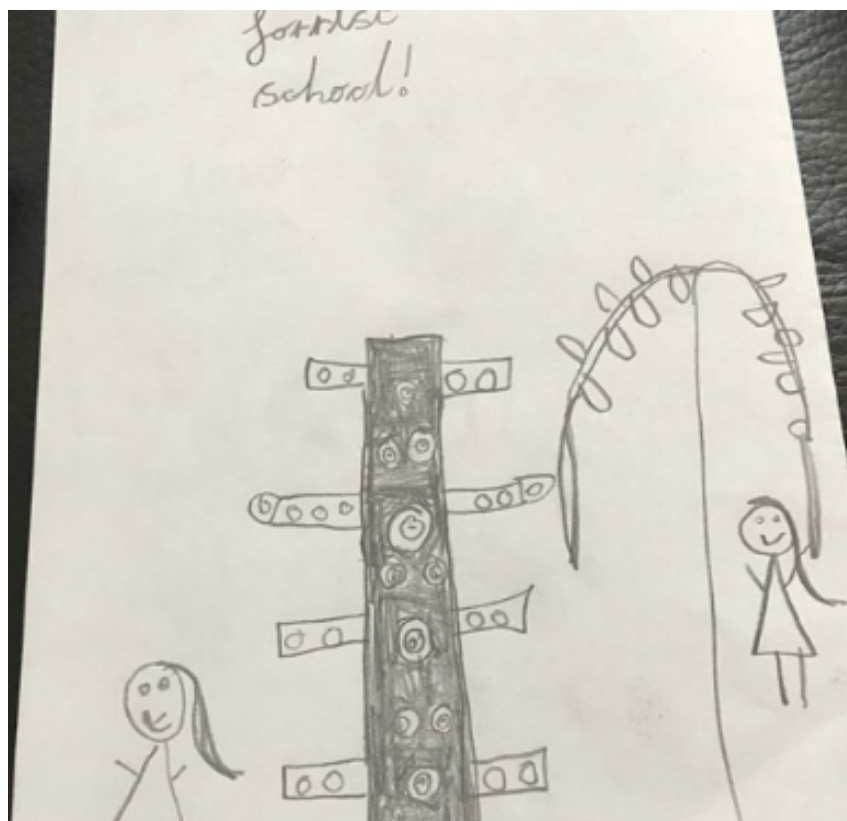
Extra note:

When I first started this way of teaching I had to do a lot of reading to find the research backing this approach beyond EYFS, made mistakes and am still changing/ adapting the approach and how we make it work. It isn't easy and every school is different. Rome wasn't built in a day.

You can find me at @year_1missh on Instagram and @TheSparklyDuck on twitter, though I am more active on my Instagram account.

Feel free to say hello and let's share this passion for play together.

Amy



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