

Book corner



The Jolly Postman
by Janet and Allan Ahlberg
The Jolly

Postman delivers cards and letters to various fairytale characters, including Goldilocks' apology to the three bears and Jack's postcard to the giant.



Click, Clack, Moo Cows That Type
by Doreen Cronin
A humorous tale

about cows typing letters to the farmer, containing demands such as a request for electric blankets.

Dear Bear

by Joanne Harrison

Katie writes a letter to the bear under the stairs – and he writes back to say he is on holiday.



Dear Juno
by Soyung Pak
Juno's grandmother

writes in Korean and Juno writes in drawings, but that doesn't mean they can't exchange letters.

Dear Tooth Fairy

by Alan Durant

When Holly's tooth falls out, she doesn't want to give it up to the Tooth Fairy, so she enters into a correspondence with her.



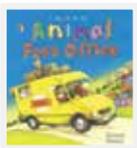
Meerkat Mail
by Emily Gravett
Sunny the meerkat leaves

his enormous family in the Kalahari desert and sends postcards from his travels.

A Day at the Animal Post Office

by Sharon Rentta

The amazing journey that Jack's letter takes as it travels in vans, trucks and planes all the way round the world to Polly's igloo at the North Pole.



We've explored... writing letters

At the moment, Father Christmas will be topping children's list of people to write to, but earlier in the year it was Arsenal Football Club and the Duchess of Cambridge for some, finds *Annette Rawstrone*

Through 'planning in the moment', the children and early years practitioners at Thorley Hill Primary School in Bishop's Stortford, Essex have gone on many unexpected adventures. Last school year, a strong fascination with football led to some incredibly powerful learning as they wrote letters and received replies from their heroes.

'Attending a course by Anna Ephgrave was very inspiring and resulted in my job share, Stacey Hynd, and I completely changing the way we work so that it is more child-led,' explains former early years leader Suzie Strutt. 'This has resulted in a high level of engagement in what children do and the atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Instead of pre-planning activities, we meet our objectives naturally in an enabling environment.'

She continues, 'Last year, many of the children, especially the boys, were interested in playing football, so we used this as the basis for exploring a lot of areas including putting them into teams to explore personal, social and emotional development and peer relationships.'

'We introduced an element of numeracy by having a whiteboard in the outdoor area where they could keep score. This led to lots of addition and keeping a tally on the board. We also held football training sessions with children doing exercises such as dribbling balls around cones.'



After some time, Ms Strutt and Ms Hynd noticed that the children were repeating the same activities, so they decided to try to engage them in different ways. Ms Strutt overheard some boys chatting about football teams that they and their parents support and their favourite players.

'I suggested that they write a letter to their favourite team and ask for a photo,' she says. 'They literally ran inside to get started.' We supported the children by looking at the traditional format of a letter and then asked them who they would like to write to, with Arsenal, Liverpool and West Ham football teams being the favourites.'

PRINCESSES AND FOOTBALLERS

'The letter-writing created a buzz because they were so excited and other children asked to be involved,' Ms Strutt says.

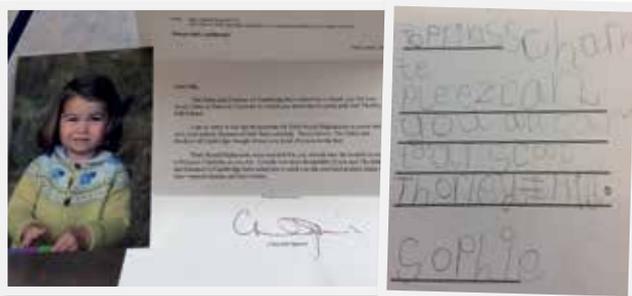
Not all the children wanted to write to footballers. Some chose other sports stars – such as the All Blacks rugby team in New Zealand – while others wanted to write to members of their own family and to princesses. The Disney princesses Cinderella and Belle were popular, but after a discussion about what a princess is and the Royal family, some children also chose to write to the Duchess of Cambridge and Princess Charlotte.

'Writing that comes from "in the

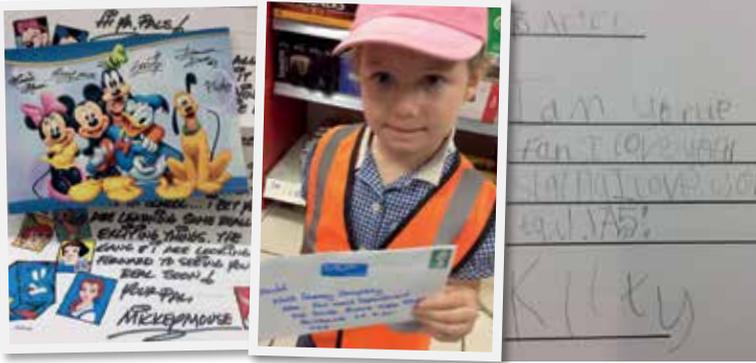


MORE INFORMATION

- *Planning in the Moment with Young Children: A practical guide for early years practitioners and parents* by Anna Ephgrave (David Fulton)



One of the letters to Princess Charlotte, and the reply



The reply from Mickey Mouse; posting a letter; and a message to Ariel

moment planning” feels so different from making the children sit down and write something. This writing allowed the children to be individuals, we valued what they wanted to say and no letter was the same,’ says Ms Strutt. ‘Adults helped them to form their letters and address each child’s next developmental steps as they did so in a purposeful activity.’

Children’s letters ranged from those asking for football cards and autographs, to commenting that they love Disney princess Ariel’s singing and tail and saying they love their mother because of her cuddles.

Ms Strutt noted how the children were interested to speak to each other about whom they had written to and why – such as Arsenal being their favourite football team or liking princess Belle’s yellow dress.

‘There was a lot of listening to each other and respect for each other’s ideas,’ she adds.

POSTING THE LETTERS

The letter-writing proved so popular that they arranged a trip to the local Post Office so that the children could post their letters.

‘We rang ahead to arrange the visit and sorted the 30 children into groups so that they could all post a variety of letters, with some going locally and others abroad. They were able to experience weighing the letters that were being sent abroad, and we talked about using money to buy the stamps and why some of the letters were different prices. They saw that the most expensive one was the letter going to New Zealand,’ explains Ms Strutt.

‘When we returned to school we looked at a map and put pins in to show where all the different letters were being sent to, such as Walt Disney in California. We discussed how they would get there, by an aeroplane, train or van.’

They watched a video clip on YouTube which showed how letters are sorted and delivered. The investigations also led to the children discussing different job roles such as working for the Post Office or being a professional footballer.

AMAZING REPLIES

Excitingly, just a couple of weeks later the children started to get amazing replies from many of their heroes. Arsenal sent the children a package containing a football postcard and photographs of the players, Liverpool Football Club sent a laminated A4 card containing team autographs, children who wrote to the Disney princesses received a postcard, and there was even a letter from Mickey Mouse thanking them for writing.

The children who wrote to the Duchess of Cambridge and Princess Charlotte received personalised replies which even responded to questions, but sadly they were unable to take the children up on their request for a Royal visit.

Even the boy who wrote to Flash – a superhero that he invented – received a response, courtesy of another staff member posing as the character. Unfortunately, the All Blacks rugby team were the only ones not to respond, but Ms Strutt says that this was also a learning point for the children – that they are not always going to get a reply.

‘The responses came back in dribs and drabs and all the children got involved in everyone’s letters. They made everyone feel special and they shared them with their families and the head teacher,’ says Ms Strutt. ‘The children saw how important writing is for communication and learnt the purpose of letter-writing, which they found exciting. For the rest of the school year, many children continued to write letters and ask staff or parents to post them.’ ■

THE BEST OF CHRISTMAS BOOKS

The latest releases celebrate every aspect of the festive period, but don’t forget the classics when sharing the important messages of Christmas

‘Twas the Evening of Christmas by Nellist Glenys and Elena Selivanova Glenys adapts Clement C Moore’s famous poem to focus not on Santa, but rather the baby Jesus.

A Christmas for Bear by Bonnie Becker and Kady MacDonald Dentor Curmudgeonly bear and mischievous mouse spend Christmas together. But where are the presents?



The Story Orchestra: The Nutcracker by Jessica Courtney-Tickle A musical version of the traditional tale.

Let it Glow: A Winter’s Walk by Owen Gildersleeve A snowy journey home, with real twinkling lights.

The Twelve Dogs of Christmas by Alison Ritchie and Marisa Marea Featuring one little puppy, three drooling Dalmatians, six sausage-snaffling Scotties...

One Christmas Wish by Katherine Rundell and Emily Sutton Theo sees an odd-looking star and wishes for friends. Then the tree decorations start to move.



Busy Nativity by Emily Bolam Push, pull and turn the tabs to join Mary and Joseph on their long journey to Bethlehem,

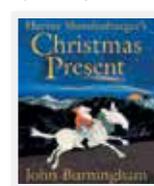
Christmas classics



The Nativity For simplicity, there is Dick Bruna’s *Christmas*; for beauty, there are Brian Wildsmith’s *A Christmas Story*, Jan Pienkowski’s *The First Christmas* and Helen Ward’s *The Animals’ Christmas Carol*; and for fun and accessibility for young children, *Jesus’ Christmas Party* by Nicholas Allan.

Get ready Join Judith Kerr’s cat on the roof as she escapes the festive preparations in *Mog’s Christmas*, or get in the spirit of the season with *Olivia Helps with Christmas* by Ian Falconer.

A time of giving Robin gives all his warm vests to friends in *Little Robin Red Vest* by Jan Fearnley, while in Delia Huddy and Emily Sutton’s *The Christmas Eve Tree*, a homeless boy cheers up everyone with a tree.



Santa Claus Lift the flaps to unwrap a present on every page of Rod Campbell’s *Dear Santa*; it’s Santa to the rescue in *The Tooth Fairy’s Christmas* by Peter Bently and Garry Parsons; and there is one present left in Santa’s sack in *Harvey Slumfenburger’s Christmas Present* by

John Burningham.

The Twelve Days of Christmas Look out for versions by Robert Sabuda, Jan Brett and Jane Ray.

For more details and many more suggestions, see ‘Christmas classics’ at www.nurseryworld.co.uk

