



# BRING LEARNING TO LIFE

## 5 Ways to Build Kinaesthetic Learning into Your Lessons

# About the Co-Authors



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### Artistic Director

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As Artistic Director of C&T Prospero, Paul leads the company's artistic and educational programmes, researching and developing new applications within the UK and internationally.

Paul has over 25 years experience in education and applied theatre. He has worked as an Actor/Teacher in Theatre-in-Education, stage director, facilitator, and as a drama teacher. He has extensive experience teaching undergraduate and postgraduate students and has worked with the BBC, British Film Institute, Arts Council England and many other theatres and arts organisations.



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### Headteacher

Manorfield Primary School

Having been a Primary School Head Teacher for twelve-and-a-half years, Paul's headship experience has seen him improve school performance in some of the most deprived parts of the country, with one school becoming the seventh most improved school in the UK. He is a strong advocate of creative approaches to teaching, learning, and school leadership. He accredits his success in school leadership to the culture of creativity he relentlessly promotes.



**Manorfield**  
Primary School

## About this report

Pulling together their real-world skills and know-how, the two Pauls have created this guide to walk you through the five easiest, most effective gateways to kinaesthetic learning in the classroom. Read their tried-and-tested strategies, and see your curriculum and school atmosphere come to life.

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## Strategy #1


# Music, Dance, and Drama in the curriculum

Music is a National Curriculum subject in Key Stage 1, 2, and 3. Dance and Drama are sadly not. Dance gets a brief mention in the PE National Curriculum, but brief is almost an overstatement.

Here, though, I am not advocating the teaching of Music, Dance, and Drama to learn music, dance, and drama skills. I am promoting these three areas as tools to deliver other areas of learning.

25 years ago, if you undertook a walk around a school, music was evident in so many places; nursery rhymes and counting songs in earlier year groups, choirs, daily singing in assemblies, and listening to recordings from the radio or on cassettes.

This culture of music has sadly disappeared in many schools. Yet, if we think of some of the childhood songs that so many of us know, we remember them so well – the songs which taught us to count to five: “Once I caught a fish alive.”, the songs which taught us to count in even numbers: “2, 4, 6, 8, who do we appreciate?”, the songs which taught us the alphabet: “A, B, C, D, E, F, G...”. We can all recall them, many, many years on, and when our memories of many other areas have faded, these songs will remain and hopefully will be the songs that we sing to our grandchildren and future generations.



**“It’s a tool for exploring  
characters, settings,  
vocabulary, feelings,  
and so much more.”**

- Paul Jackson

So, with all this in mind, how do we apply this to today's classroom activities? Firstly, let us ensure that we are doing what we knew worked above. Then, let us make the classrooms come to life with music – using it to create a great atmosphere, and a great climate for learning. When writing an adventure story, play dramatic adventure music in the background. When designing a new fairground ride in D&T, play carnival music. When researching which animals live in rainforests, play some tropical forest background music. It's simple but effective, and a real hook for pupils.

Now to step out of many of our comfort zones and to get the pupils composing and singing – musical expertise not required! Take the topic being learnt, choose a popular well-known song or tune, and ask the pupils to create words that fit into the song.

For the Tudors, take the nursery rhyme, “Three little fishes”. Replace the words with “Henry the Eighth was a terrible man – he had six wives and then off he ran...” or “Catherine of Aragon was wife number one, Henry took over the church so his marriage could be undone”. I can pretty much guarantee that the pupils being taught will remember that Henry had six wives forever!

Of course, the same techniques can be used for older students in Secondary School, too. Simply swap the nursery rhymes for pop songs or the music from trending online videos, and they'll quickly retain and recall key information in the same way - perfect for revising tricky subjects!

For the handful of pupils who might not take it all in, combining dance with the song could not only be great fun, but also an opportunity to solidify the knowledge retention.

Dance has many benefits in its own right. Developing pupils' fine and gross motor skills, balance, a sense of space and self, and general fitness and wellbeing are just some of the advantages.

Using dance as a medium to teach the curriculum is also incredibly powerful and, with a little thought, can be applied to many different subject areas. Using dance to teach angles, rotation, and shape in Maths is a particular memory I have of teaching an upper KS2 class who found shape and space concepts particularly challenging.



Dance, when taught well, is an incredibly powerful medium for expressing ourselves, and I think is also a great way for pupils to explore a whole range of subject areas. The flow and formation of rivers or the eruption of volcanoes in Geography, iconic battle scenes in History, or creating 'atmosphere' prior to creative writing tasks are just a handful of examples.

Drama gets a lot of bad press, mainly because only a small percentage of our teacher workforce have been exposed to good teaching of Drama when they were at school themselves, and good training during their own initial teacher education was limited. Drama can often be seen as an easy way out for teachers – no need to plan, no need to mark. But failing to plan effectively means planning to fail dramatically!

When used well, Drama is another area with tremendous capacity for young people to get actively involved in their learning. It's a tool for exploring characters, settings, vocabulary, feelings, and so much more. Drama techniques such as conscience alley, freeze frames, flash-backs and flash-forwards, and hot seating enable students to prepare exceptionally well for creative writing, for example. This is powerful for every student, but reluctant writers engaged with quality drama techniques will find their writing and the ideas they struggle to articulate when faced with a blank sheet of paper coming to life and being celebrated by others. Watch the writing that flows afterwards – and see them enjoying reading - or performing - it to others.



### **Dr Paul Sutton from Prospero says...**

Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s, when an unknown printer took a galley of type and scrambled it to make a type specimen book. It has survived not only five centuries. Lorem Ipsum is simply dummy text of the printing and typesetting industry. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since the 1500s. Lorem Ipsum has been the industry's standard dummy text ever since.

## Strategy #2

# Art in the curriculum

Art is another important area within the National Curriculum. It is a statutory subject at Key Stages 1, 2, and 3 in the National Curriculum – and schools should have a clear progression of art skills for young people throughout their school years.

Art is an area that is too frequently not given enough time within a school's timetable. Using art as a tool to teach other areas of the curriculum is an ideal solution to this timetabling issue.

The following ideas are all from the last academic year in my own school – for which I can take no credit; our two-day per week artist-in-residence has developed them all.

### At my school this year, amongst other projects, I have seen:

- ⚡ A Victorians History project come to life with silhouettes of the pupils in character as Victorians from different classes and professions
- ⚡ The scientific language and knowledge of fossils develop during a Stone Age project with pupils making model-day fossils with everyday objects and mod-roc/papier-mâché
- ⚡ A project on life in an African village enriched with pupils sketching and designing their own designs based on fabrics from colorful traditional African robes
- ⚡ A deep understanding of Ancient Roman culture developing during a project creating tile mosaics

One key thing, post-production, is to ensure that the artwork produced is valued and displayed well, and becomes a stimulus to learning beyond the classroom in which it was created.

One student's artwork can be used to develop others' vocabulary, sense of curiosity, creative thinking skills and aesthetic appreciation, using the artwork to create learning at every opportunity during their day. Why not display stimulating art pieces created by students in the dining hall, corridors, library, and even in the toilets?



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## Strategy #3

# Cooking in the curriculum

Tradition tells us that every generation should be developing cooking skills at home, learning from their parents or grandparents, in a never-ending flow of knowledge from generation to generation. In some cultures, I am sure this is still the case. Sadly, in today's busy world, with work and time pressures, it is not the norm for most families. Beyond the learning of cooking skills, pupils love the sense of turning a handful of ingredients into something magical, tasty, and to really enjoy.

Too few young people are experiencing this nowadays. Many schools shy away from cooking too, spotting the barriers and not willing to find solutions to overcome them. Timetables (again), space, equipment, purchasing of resources are all obstacles that are easy to remove.


What is the sense in teaching pupils what Anglo-Saxons ate without them experiencing the actual food for themselves?

### Consider the process pupils can undertake:

1. Research what was grown by Anglo Saxons
2. Research what Anglo Saxons did with what they grew
3. Purchase (or ideally grow and harvest) the ingredients
4. Measure the ingredients out
5. Learning about kitchen hygiene and safety
6. Develop the skills of following instructions when reading the recipe
7. Potentially problem solve if a particular ingredient isn't available
8. Collaborate if working in pairs or small groups
9. Develop vocabulary firstly to describe the textures and smells when mixing ingredients, and also the historical vocabulary from the techniques and tools that the Saxons used
10. Develop knowledge of what happens when different ingredients are combined and cooked
11. Experience the joy of eating what has been produced and actually being able to become an 'Anglo Saxon' and experience what was experienced hundreds of years ago.

Now, apply this to other curriculum areas  
and watch the pupils become fully engaged in some otherwise less-exciting lessons:

- ⚡ A Victorians History project come to life with silhouettes of the pupils in character as Victorians from different classes and professions
- ⚡ The scientific language and knowledge of fossils develop during a Stone Age project with pupils making model-day fossils with everyday objects and mod-roc/papier-mâché
- ⚡ A project on life in an African village enriched with pupils sketching and designing their own designs based on fabrics from colorful traditional African robes
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## Strategy #4

# Gardening in the curriculum

Like cooking, gardening is a traditional pastime that, in many communities, is dying out. This is a particular issue in inner-city communities where many homes do not have gardens themselves, and often no balconies or communal green spaces for pupils to dig, explore, and plant.

It is pleasing to see more and more schools introducing gardening areas within their school grounds, but sadly, these are often 'extra-curricular' spaces. Used for gardening clubs, or for a small group of pupils in nurture-style activities.

I would passionately advocate offering gardening experiences to all pupils regardless of age or ability, and it's another approach which strongly encourages the development of a rich-vocabulary, problem-solving skills, a sense of community, resilience, and how to work alongside others.

We take for granted that pupils know some basic concepts. How many pupils have actually touched the type of bean referred to in Jack and the Beanstalk? How more hooked would they be on the story if each child planted their own bean to see who's could grow the tallest. Will one grow into the sky, or was Jack's bean truly a one-off magical bean?

Gardening really should be a pre-requisite to classroom cooking. To grow, harvest, and then cook with fruit and vegetables teaches pupils so much and to see the 'life-cycle' of fruit and vegetable is something we owe to the pupils we teach and to the environment that surrounds us. Young people are learning more and more about the effects of climate change and becoming more environmentally responsible. Personally experiencing what can and cannot grow in each season, as temperatures change and what can be taken from farm to fork without the need for plastics, is far more powerful than reading about it or watching a documentary.

Timetabling issues do arise – but if a Science lesson is taking place in the school grounds, it does not need additional time to the weekly science lesson. Neither does a lesson planting vegetables that the Ancient Greeks grew.

Space can be an issue. Some schools have outdoor space in abundance. Others have very limited space. Easy solutions might be to plant in pots, hanging baskets, and raised beds. Solutions that are more complex might be to seek out local abandoned allotments for schools to use. I believe that where there is a will, there is a way. Be creative – find a solution!

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## Strategy #5

### Educational visits

Learning should not be restricted to within the boundaries of the school fences. We must get students out of the environment they know and are familiar with.

Pupils cannot write effectively about a deep, dark wood if they haven't walked beneath the shade of trees, kicking fallen leaves on a woodland floor. Pupils cannot develop an understanding of the texts they read about staring at stars if they live in the inner city with light pollution and have never seen the stars. Students cannot aspire to be great artists, musicians, or actors if they haven't visited galleries and theatres, and been exposed to live performances.

An educational visit does not have to be extravagant and ridiculously expensive. A visit to the local park can be highly effective if balanced with other visits throughout the year. I would always challenge any Primary School to aim for at least one visit per half-term (six per academic year). In Secondary Schools, this can be more challenging – but with some joined-up thinking, I am sure can be made possible.

Schools will often create lists of experiences they wish their pupils to be exposed to during their school years, such as the DFE Activity Passport.

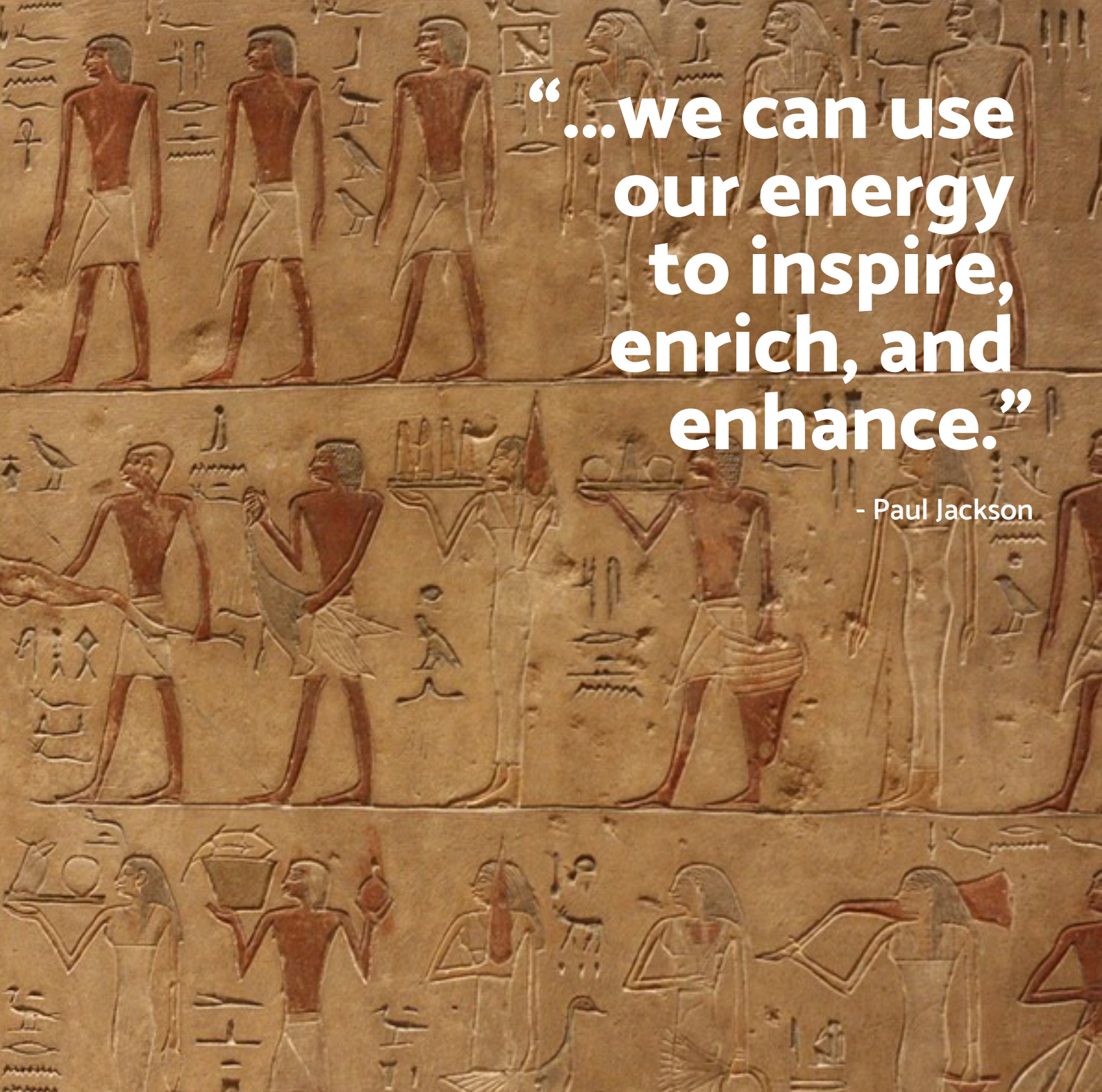
I believe it is important to ensure these do not just become tick-box exercises. It is important for pupils to repeat experiences over again. I believe this applies to educational visits and re-visiting an art gallery or museum several times during a young person's school life will enhance their learning and develop their cultural capital. It will also create life-long habits and a sense of belonging in spaces that they and their families might otherwise be unfamiliar with.

As teachers and schools, we are the 'corporate parent'. We have a moral obligation to develop young people's lives and experiences. We can use our energy on complaining that our pupils are not getting great experiences in their home lives; that 'it's not like it was when I was growing up' – or we can use our energy to inspire, enrich, and enhance.

The 19th Century Philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said:

**“The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions.”**

Go ahead, get stretching!



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# Conclusion

## A final thought from Dr Paul Sutton

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Paul and his team would be delighted to hear from you, and would love to demonstrate how Prospero can improve kineasthetic learning at your school.

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