

Let the learning COME TO YOU

Bringing high quality educational workshops into school is a fantastic alternative to organising a day away, say **Sam Bryan** and **Joseph Parsonage**...

At some stage in everybody's teaching career the terrifying realisation that you have to organise a school trip dawns on you at three o'clock in the morning. But what if there was a way to take the stress out of introducing pupils to new and inspiring experiences?

There's no denying that great trips can be truly memorable for children. Ask any of your peers, or even the children you teach, about their school best bits, and they won't pick out a fabulous SPaG lesson on fronted adverbials; instead, it will be the time they went to the zoo and saw a monkey picking its nose and flicking it at its monkey friends (other school trips are available!). For children, these opportunities to leave the classroom behind for a day or several can lead to fabulous learning opportunities and yield long-term benefits.

However, to think you have to head out and about to access memorable and educationally beneficial experiences is false; they can also come to you...

Why a workshop?

Booking an in-school workshop makes sense on many levels. As we touched upon, there's no getting away from the fact that taking children off-site can be stressful. There are the thorough risk assessments to complete, and getting the children on the bus safe and sound, after waiting 20 minutes for it to arrive, only to discover that half the seatbelts don't work, is enough to put anybody in an early grave. By the end you may

catch yourself counting the children for the 50th time in 20 minutes and dreading the journey back, because you know Billy will be sick and John will need the toilet five minutes after you have reminded everybody to go...

It goes without saying that by bringing the experience to you, you can immediately eliminate many of these stresses and anxieties. But it's not just about making your life easier. Children can gain a huge amount from in-school workshops – and so can you.

Learning experiences

The good news is there are numerous high quality teaching workshops that you can bring into your school. The educational benefits are obvious: watching a child's face light up when, for example, a

rocket is blasted into the air, or a dinosaur/dragon visits the classroom is priceless and provides pupils with an experience that will ignite their imaginations whilst creating a superb learning platform. Busy teachers aren't always able to set up these kinds of opportunities – sourcing different props, artefacts or other materials takes time – so arranging a workshop can add something unique to children's learning.

Not only that, but being able to watch and learn from external visitors, some of whom are teachers themselves, and adapt your teaching as a result, is a brilliant way to improve your, and your colleagues', approach when revisiting a topic in the future. We're all on a journey to become the best educators we possibly can, and watching an experienced

workshop provider delivering a lesson in your school gives you a great opportunity to observe, an essential part of continuing professional development.

Do your research

Booking a workshop isn't an entirely stress-free experience: you need to find the right option for your children, and then trust that it will go well on the day. Our top tip is to always do your research. Looking for workshops that are led by teachers or experienced educational facilitators is a great way to start, as they know how to talk to children and deliver relevant and progressive learning opportunities that will coincide with the curriculum. You can find teachers working all over the country delivering workshops in schools. The best workshops out there get the best reviews. Take your time and read these reviews, and find out who they are by. A review written by a parent is valuable; however, finding a teacher's perspective is priceless and will give you a clear indication of the quality you will receive.

Finally, whatever you're planning for your class, stay calm, stay happy – and if it's three a.m., lie down and go back to sleep.

Sam Bryan and Joseph Parsonage are the founders of workshop provider Teach Rex. Visit teachrex.co.uk

