



Explorify

Following the transfer of Explorify to the management of STEM Learning in partnership with the Primary Science Teaching Trust, we are delighted to welcome four new members of staff to the PSTT as Explorify Engagement Leaders.

PSTT Fellows Rebecca Ellis, Robin James, Jo Moore, and Stacey Reid will be responsible for developing new Explorify content, presenting Explorify workshops, and raising awareness of Explorify to teachers. Find out more about them here:

Rebecca Ellis



Rebecca Ellis has taught for 20 years in a 3 form entry junior school in Warwickshire and has two children. Prior to teaching, she gained a Biology degree from the University of Bristol and an Engineering doctorate from

the Water Sciences Institute, Cranfield University. Her motivation to teach comes from a desire to understand each individual child in her care so that she can creatively inspire them to love learning. During her 10 years leading science, highlights have included leading the school through PSQM and SSQM to achieve gold standard, organising family learning events and competitions (including supporting the organisation of the Warwick University Primary Science Fair) and being a student mentor and guest speaker for the University of Warwick. Rebecca was awarded the Primary Science Teacher of the Year in 2018 and since then has been part of the 'I bet you didn't know...' PSTT team who write articles and teacher guides about cutting-edge science for primary school children.

Rebecca believes that all teachers aspire to provide the best learning experiences so that their children show excellent progression in primary science. She is looking forward to using her experience to support her hard-working colleagues with easy to implement and purposeful ideas and strategies to develop and share Explorify more widely.

Robin James



Robin James became a primary teacher at 30 after working as a wine merchant, among several other things. He was drawn to the nurturing, creative, curious nature of the classroom and enjoys finding projects that make

learning that little bit more exciting. One of these, 'Racing Sand Yachts', was his second to be shortlisted for the Rolls-Royce Science Prize and led to him becoming a PSTT Fellow in 2013. Robin has since developed a technique called 'Stop! Watch!' that uses short, self-made films of children's practical work as an assessment tool and he was able to research the effectiveness of this for a Master's degree. A visit to CERN inspired another idea: the Hula-hoop Hundreds-and-thousands Hadron Collider (HHHC), which introduces young children to particle physics.

Robin is delighted to be joining the Explorify team. Explorify made a big splash in a short time because it's simple, dependable, and loaded with excellent resources: that's why teachers rate it so highly, Robin included, and he wants to innovate and develop it, yet keep its essential user-friendliness.

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Explorify is a completely free digital resource for teaching primary science

Jo Moore



Jo Moore is very excited to be joining the Explorify team after 18 years of primary teaching. For the last eight years, Jo has been lucky enough to be a specialist science and computing teacher at Vittoria Primary School in

Islington. During that time, she has taught science across the school and supported teachers to build their skills and confidence. Prior to that, Jo was an Advanced Skills Teacher in Science, supporting teachers and Science Leads in other schools. Jo has lots of experience of teaching the English primary science curriculum and is keen to support new and more experienced teachers across the country, as well as Science Leads.

Recently, Jo has been part of the Primary Science Capital Teaching Approach research project and is eager to bring some of those ideas to Explorify. Jo has used Explorify regularly in the classroom, to develop children's talk and higher order thinking skills, and is looking forward to contributing to such a great resource. Explorify has a great reach across primary schools, but this needs to be maintained and developed, and Jo looks forward to being part of this in the coming year.

Stacey Reid



Stacey Reid has been working in education for the past 15 years. In her previous role, Stacey was an Assistant Headteacher with the responsibility for curriculum, where she designed and created a bespoke curriculum. This

included creating cross-curricular science units of work and resources. Stacey is a PSTT Fellow and has trained science leaders and teachers on how to deliver best practice science within schools. She has also led a Science Cluster which helped to develop science across a number of schools and the local authority.

Stacey has a passion for science and delivering science that is practical, meaningful, and relevant to children, as well as ensuring that teachers feel confident and enthusiastic about science too. Stacey is very excited to take on the role of Explorify Engagement Leader and to work with this amazing team to develop Explorify further.



Explorify works! Here's why...

Robin James, Explorify Engagement Leader for the PSTT, explains:

You might already know what Explorify is, love it, and have tried it yourself with your children. But how do we know it works? What does the research tell us about the effectiveness of Explorify in classrooms since its launch in 2017?

Explorify engages all children, particularly at the start of lessons; it gets them talking and their minds 'ready to learn' with their discussions becoming more in-depth, coherent, and scientific as a result.¹ As there is usually no definite right answer, the fear of being wrong is reduced, hence a boost in pupil confidence and enjoyment of science learning has been reported¹ along with an increase in teacher confidence as well.²

Explorify is packed with 'engaging, creative science activities... designed to spark curiosity, discussion and debate'.² The design of the activities is underpinned by the findings and approaches from the **Thinking Doing Talking Science** project⁴ and its precursor, **Bright Ideas**. Both these projects recognised that children's natural curiosity about their world was being eroded through the primary school years, and as a result they developed strategies that promoted and encouraged higher order thinking through discussion.³

Almost all (98%) of teachers who have tried Explorify say they intend to continue using it.² For children and for teachers who might find science boring or scary, the Explorify approach has been shown to help.¹ The quality of the resources, accompanied by dependable, bitesize chunks of background science, has been greatly appreciated by busy teachers. Minimal or often no preparation is required and Explorify activities are found to be easy-to-find, plentiful and regularly refreshed, with most being possible to complete in under fifteen minutes.¹

Thinking Doing Talking Science and **Bright Ideas** were both original projects funded by the PSTT. The current strategic rollout of the Thinking Doing Talking Science CPD programme for teachers is supported by a grant from the PSTT to Science Oxford.

References and further reading

1. CFE Research (2020) *Evaluation of the Primary Science Campaign, a report for the Wellcome Trust*
2. CFE Research (2019) *Does Explorify support better primary science teaching? A report for the Wellcome Trust CFE*
3. Hanley, P., Wilson, H., Holligan, B. and Elliott, L. (2020) *Thinking, doing, talking science: the effect on attainment and attitudes of a professional development programme to provide cognitively challenging primary science lessons, International Journal of Science Education, 42:15, 2554-2573*
4. McGregor, D., Frodsham, S. and Wilson, H. (2020) *The nature of epistemological opportunities for doing, thinking and talking about science: Reflections on an effective intervention that promotes creativity, Research in Science & Technological Education doi/abs/10.1080/02635143.2020.1799778*