

Successes – ‘E’

‘E’, from our SPACE acronym, stands for Environment, and I cannot impress upon you enough how important your environment is.

I’m not talking about tidyness and boxes and labels, I’m talking about learning environment. I’m talking about how the space is making children feel comfortable, safe, interested, and more than that, how it is pushing their learning on.

Are we walking into the rainforest, are we surrounded by high-frequency words hanging from leaves of the rainforest? Do we have monkeys all around us who can get us excited and lead us into specific types of writing?

More than that, I’ve worked very closely with schools – recently with a school that turned a dead space into a lost property office. Children would go into the office, there was a counter at the front and then an object of intrigue left behind, with a very delicious message on it – who had left it? Who had lost it? Who did it belong to?

These open-ended spaces that can help children get excited about writing – this is what learners need. Learners need space. And actually, have we thought about the tools and the implements – have they got sparkly pens? Have they got pencils, felts, big bits of paper, small bits, like intriguing, detective-style notebooks? Have we really thought about how we’re inspiring writing in all sorts of ways?

Are they lying on their tummy on the floor... have we got enormous laminated whiteboards that we can gather twelve children around, are we writing on blackboards on the wall?

Are we thinking about what is switching children on as writers? How we can then mobilise all of their energy into capturing whole pieces of writing that can have value?

Really think about your environment. Look at some of these examples here.