

Foundation to key stage 1: Using ICT with reception children

Permission to reproduce the following information was given by both the [Training and Development Agency for Schools](#) and the author. Further details are given on page 85 of Best Practice in Raising Achievement (2002).

The research task: to track the learning of geographical concepts by four year olds through an academic year.

The strategy: to use children's assessments of place information gathered from postcards and email communication. 'Semi-structured interviews, using concrete materials such as photographs and emails as a focus alongside practical tasks were found to be efficient and effective ways to gather information while continuing to teach'. It was possible to align the tasks with objectives from the Literacy hour and the work was developed within QCA exemplar schemes.

The work was entitled 'Children's comparative assessments of place through email communication and postcards' and was undertaken by Colin Storey (Sherington CE First School, Buckinghamshire).

Protocol for use of email

A number of email correspondents were prepared from various sources (see Table 1) and the children 'primed' to construct a questionnaire as part of a literacy lesson on questioning.

The questionnaires were sent as email attachments and the responses received in a similar way. This study was run in parallel with the collection of postcards 'sent' by a classroom collection of soft toys as the children (and other associates of the school) took the toys on holiday.

A variety of places were thus accumulated over the two years of the children's time in my class (see Table 2). Postcards were also sent by the email correspondents to supplement their questionnaire responses.

With respect to the emails, children were assigned to a particular correspondent for the study, but were given a free choice of which postcards to look at from the collection sent by the travelling toys. Postcard messages were read to all the children, since some could read them anyway, as were the email answers to the original guided and class-planned questionnaire.

Questioning in both instances took no more than ten minutes and was carried out in two phases: an initial open question 'What can you tell me about this place?', and a more structured checklist of questions to cover the geographical requirements of the Year 1 programme of the national curriculum.

All children were spoken with individually during the period 1 to 19 May 2000.

Table 1. Email correspondents

Name and Place	Contact	Supplementary materials	Children assigned
Sally (Thomas), Lawrenny, South Wales	ex-colleague	postcards	Angela, Amy
Jane Foster, Goodrich, Ross-on-Wye	ex-colleague	postcards	Lloyd, James
Paul Giller, Cork, Ireland	ex-colleague	none	Steven, Anna
David Godfrey, Barnet, London	'portables' project	none	Shanice, Todd
Vickie Storey, Brookville, Pennsylvania USA	'ICQ' name search	postcards	Freddie, Emma
Paul Inker, Fujisawa, Japan	open e-mail request	photographs	Rebecca

Table 2. List of places represented by the postcards

Place	Features shown	Chosen by
Australia	Koala bears	Freddie
Zimbabwe	Victoria Falls	Todd
Devon	map of Dartmoor	Steven
Chicago	night townscape	Shanice
Ottawa	frozen canal-skating	Lloyd
Cornwall	St Mawes' beach	Amy
Dover	Castle	Rebecca
France	Dordogne	Anna
Oxford	spires in landscape	Angela
Canada	Medicine Lake, Alberta	James