



HOW TO BE AN

OUTSTANDING

**PRIMARY
SCHOOL
TEACHER**

David Dunn

How to be an Outstanding Primary School Teacher

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How to be an
Outstanding
Primary School
Teacher

*Outstanding
Teaching series*

DAVID DUNN

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To my wife Sarah: thank you for all your help in making this possible.

Introduction

Want to produce outstanding lessons on a regular basis? Want the children in your class to become fantastic learners, ready for anything that can be thrown at them? Want to have an absolute plethora of gold-standard, nailed-on, guaranteed-to-work-on-a-day-to-day-basis, easy-to-implement strategies to take your teaching (and your children's learning) to the next level? Well, they're all here! Let's face it, we all would like the mantle of 'Outstanding'; be that from the Head, our children, or, because you know you can't escape from them no matter how far you run, those dreaded OFSTED inspectors. This book won't give you all the answers, as teaching is a very complex practice, with no two lessons, or teachers, being the same. However, what you will find in this book is a multitude of ideas and strategies that have worked for me time and again, dispelling, along the way, the myths around:

- ◆ planning (no need to write down every word you're going to say)
- ◆ personalized learning (you will *not* have to plan for every individual child)
- ◆ Assessment for Learning (don't worry, we won't be looking at endless folders of statements)
- ◆ differentiation (yes, it is possible with very little extra work)
- ◆ questioning strategies (yes, *I know* you've probably done endless training on how to question – Bloom's Taxonomy anyone? But this is different); and a whole range of other tricks and tips across the entire gamut of teaching in the classroom strategies, guaranteed, if you invest the (relatively small) amount of time needed, to crash through the barrier of SATISFACTORY, beyond the (perfectly acceptable but oh-so-close-but-not-quite-there) category of GOOD, and fly, kicking and screaming, into where we all want to live – OUTSTANDING.

So how (I hear you ask) are we going to get there, and are we doing this just for the monster that is the lesson observation? In answer to the second question, a resounding *no!* And in answer to the first, *relatively easily!* Everything included in this book is proven classroom practice – it all works! However, please don't think this book will automatically make you an outstanding teacher; it won't, not without a little work on your part. There is a philosophy which underpins every strategy which you need to follow; it won't 'happen' just because you've read this book! However fantastic the ideas are in here, they will not work properly if you just try to 'do' them. However, follow the strategies and ideas alongside the correct philosophy and anything is possible!

Please be aware, though, this does come with a warning attached: you will become an outstanding teacher ... ALL THE TIME! (well, most of the time, anyway). This is *not* a do-this-and-you-may-get-an-outstanding-in-an-observation book; you will, of course, but these strategies will be so embedded, so the everyday norm will be that you will find yourself delivering outstanding lessons day after day. And when those dreaded observations are announced, you won't have to spend hours the night before stressing and re-writing your lesson plans; what you do from day to day will be what you do in your observation ... and the plaudits from those who have the power (in their world anyway) will follow swiftly behind.

There are many reasons why you might have bought this book, from worries about OFSTED to looming observations by your Senior Leadership Team. Or maybe you've bought this book because you just want to be better at certain aspects of your teaching – for example, Assessment for Learning or differentiation. Whatever the reason, this book will work for you in whatever way you wish to use it. Want to read it from cover to cover and get the whole 'Outstanding' experience? No problem. Want to dip in and out of particular areas of interest? Works great too. This book is designed to work with how *you* work; whatever works best for you works best! Even the most innovative, creative, fantastic of us need a little inspiration from time to time. And this book, however you decide to use it, will provide that. Or that's the plan.

So, on with the show.

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The Outstanding Teacher ... Released!



Each of you has the potential to be an outstanding teacher. Fact. The fact you've bought this book indicates that you *want* to improve your practice, so you're well on the road to getting there! So, what is outstanding teaching? This question can be, and will be debated on and on. One thing we can say though (and this is agreed by everyone): for a lesson to be outstanding, there must be excellent outcomes. In other words, all the children need to have made significant progress. That's a tall order in itself, but not one that is insurmountable. So, are we talking about the outstanding *teacher*, or outstanding *teaching*? I think it is better to focus on how we can ensure that there is outstanding learning going on, which will mean that the teaching has been outstanding and, by default, the teacher is outstanding too. After all, it's the learning that really matters. When being observed, the observer will be looking for how much the children are learning: how much progress they have made, how they have been involved, whether they have been attentive and enjoyed it! If they've moved forward by the end of the lesson from where they started, then that's what we're looking for.

To get to this point, careful preparation and planning needs to have taken place behind the scenes. It doesn't happen very often that you can just roll up to school in the morning and deliver an outstanding lesson without some sort of prior planning! This is because you need to have a clear idea in your mind of what you want the children to have learned by the end of the lesson, and this is what you want them to reflect upon.

What this book will do is give you the tools you need to release the outstanding teacher lurking inside you. It won't necessarily be an easy ride (although it certainly won't be that difficult!), it definitely won't happen overnight and it certainly won't happen if you just pick a few activities from a couple of the chapters and use them in your classroom. This is an important point. Although the strategies

in this book are *guaranteed* to work in the primary classroom, and although these strategies constitute outstanding practice, you can't just pluck them out of the book and use them and ... 'Hey presto; I'm outstanding!' Not quite!

The outstanding philosophy

This, for me, is the essence of this book. You, as a practitioner, need to think as an outstanding teacher. You will need to think of every part of your lesson and think about how it can be made outstanding. You need, perhaps, to throw away some of the ways you've been doing things, maybe reintroduce something you've tried before in a different way, because there are certain things you have to do to make a lesson outstanding. And they may require a shift in your perception. Let's think about it another way. If you're already outstanding, fantastic! Very well done you! This book will help you to develop that practice, and give you some new ideas and ways of doing things. However, if you're not outstanding yet, there is a reason for that. And that is something you will have to face if you want to move on and improve. And that can be a tough thing to do. But it most certainly is possible! A few years ago I went on some FA football coaching courses to get my coaching qualifications. One thing that was said to us by an instructor was that you have to make change happen; you have to *want* to make it happen, before it will. He used the phrase: 'If you always do what you've always done, then you'll always get what you've always got.' How true is that statement? It works so well for us teachers too. If you aren't willing to look at and change your practice, then you'll never improve. And that's what this book is about. Each of the chapters in the book looks at a different aspect of the outstanding lesson and gives some strategies and ideas to help you reach that goal. Each of them has been tried and tested in the classroom and I can guarantee they all work! However – and here I go again on my soap box – they will only work effectively if the philosophy behind them is the correct one. 'I am trying this approach because by doing it the children in my class will be able to do _____ better and therefore their ability to learn will improve.' Not, 'This is a nice activity for a Friday afternoon, and it's from that Outstanding book so it must make my lesson better.'

You can read the whole book from cover to cover and try to get an overview of the whole 'outstanding' experience, or you can identify which areas you feel you would like to tackle first and jump straight

into that chapter. Both approaches work equally well. Remember, though, the key to outstanding teaching and learning is in you, as the teacher, knowing where your children are (and no, 'In the classroom' isn't what we mean here) and where they need to go next. Just as important, they need to know it too. So spend some time on Chapters 5 (Assessment for Learning) and 4 (Personalized learning). Chapter 5 will give you plenty of advice and strategies to improve this oh-so-important area of outstanding classroom practice.

At the beginning of each chapter you will see this icon:



This will give you the background: the low-down on the chapter. What's it all about? Where's it come from? That kind of thing. It's important to read this section, as it will give you the context of the activities that follow. Talking of which...

Many of the chapters, after 'What's it all about?', are split into a number of sections:

By this time tomorrow



By this time next month



By this time next term



Each of these sections aims to give you an idea of how long it might take to introduce individual activities. This doesn't mean, however, that it will take you that long to get it working. Not at all. Something might be in the 'By this time next term' section for a number of reasons, as outlined below.

There may be some preparation of resources involved, so it gives you a bit longer to get them organized.

There may be a need for you to 'get your head round it' a bit more before introducing it.

It relies on you having done some preparatory work beforehand, maybe a different activity of a different type.

It may mean that it requires establishing in your classroom over a longer period of time before it makes an impact.

It may mean that children or TAs need additional time to get used to a new concept.

Please don't be put off by this, though; none of the activities in any section are difficult, nor overly time consuming. They are all designed to be used within the classroom to make a positive impact and I know, from bitter experience, that if something is too difficult, or too time-intensive, then it gets dumped right in the rubbish bin!

This book's aim is to make you an outstanding teacher – not occasionally, not just when you're being observed, but most, if not all, of the time. I say 'most' because we all have our off days, when it just won't happen no matter how hard we try! By developing some of these ideas though (and sticking with them), and by following the philosophy of trying to improve your practice, you will become a much better teacher. And that's what we're trying to do. If you're a better teacher, then your children will have a better learning experience and their progress will be better. It's a win-win situation really!

So, off you go. Choose your method of delving in and go for it! Use this book to help you become a better teacher – it's been written to be used again and again and not just read once and dumped on a shelf!

The journey begins here. Now go and become outstanding.