

Teaching Science to Children - Ideas for Teachers

Key Stage 1

When children make the move to primary school and classes take on more of a structure, they can quickly lose interest for the subject that was previously all about play.

Tip #1 – Make It Real

Information and experiences that children bring to school can be used to bring the science to life, and let them see how science can answer those burning questions that they have when they look around them.

As their education moves into the classroom it's a good idea to help children keep the connection between their science lessons and the natural world by using real materials like leaves, flowers and water. This will help to reinforce and extend on lessons they have learnt about the world through interaction with their environment since birth.

Tip #2 – Give Them The Words

As their scientific education progresses it is important to provide the vocabulary needed to be able to express themselves in their learning. Using word cards scattered on desks during activities is a great way of encouraging children to use the right terms, while getting used to seeing its written form.

Relationships with other children are incredibly important to students at this age, so getting them to communicate is easier than it might be at later stages. Try to arrange more structured activities in pairs so that children have someone to talk to during experiments. Swapping pairs after an activity to discuss what they did and what happened is really useful for reinforcement and revision, helping to incorporate this new vocabulary into their everyday language.

Tip #3 – Make a Science Centre

Having a dedicated section in your classroom that has interesting and diverse materials and resources to look at will help to maintain children's enthusiasm for the subject. Include some simple tools that will extend their observations, such as hand lenses, measuring tools and a balance.

Encourage your classes to bring in weird and wonderful things they've found at home and outside to share with the class. Set off discussions led by questions of 'what do you think it is?', 'where did it come from?' and 'what can it be used for?'. Starting in pairs will get everyone talking and thinking.

Tip #4 – Guide Them

Despite some thought to the contrary, science is a very hands-on, practical subject, and one of the easiest ways to help motivate students is to let them get their hands dirty. You are there to help and facilitate and students should be encouraged to keep their sense of play during more structured science lessons.

Leading questions like, 'where should the cross go on the graph?' or 'what should we do next?' can help them to feel like they are making their own decisions while being guided towards more systematic and focused investigation and observation

Tip #5 – Don't Forget Story-Time

Stories are incredibly important to children and are a key element of primary education. However they are often forgotten about as great introduction to science-based lessons. Children are naturally motivated to extend the themes of stories into other areas, so they give a good idea of purpose for a scientific investigation rather than streams of facts that they will find difficult to digest.

Top Tip for Parents

Try not to dismiss difficult questions that are the result of your child's natural curiosity. Answer questions like 'Where does the sun go?' and 'Do cows sleep standing up?' with questions of your own that will encourage their thinking process – like 'What do you think?' and 'Why do you think that?'.