

Science Bug

Reviewed by: **John Dabell**

Why Science Bug? Science Bug has been written specifically for the new primary curriculum, with an admirable philosophy that addresses all of the criticisms science teaching has faced. It believes that to instil scientific confidence in children, and to be able to inspire future generations of young scientists, we need to spark their imagination and fuel their curiosity with hands-on, experiential science. We also need enterprising teachers at the helm to bring it all to life.

Science has had a rough time over the last few years. A 2013 Ofsted report was highly critical of how the subject was being taught in schools, finding that many pupils were denied the opportunity to carry out practical experiments. More recently, astronomer royal Sir Martin Rees said that children were being failed by passionless science teachers.

Science Bug is packed with inspiring plans, activities and tools which are all online at activelearnprimary.co.uk – a rather special time-saving digital learning space for you and your pupils. Here you can search, plan, allocate and assess all in one place, and it's also where children go to engage with the work you set them.

So what's in Science Bug? Loads. The first time I used it I felt like a pirate inspecting a treasure chest. It has been organised into six units per year group, each lasting half a term. Simply click on a year group to see the national curriculum objectives covered, choose a unit and you're into a whole world of science.

Delving further into the first lesson it was obvious that pretty much everything had been done for me. The plans are excellent: not too detailed, and fully editable. They contain learning activities, differentiation pointers, what to look out for, information links and supporting resources.

The resources, which can be allocated at the touch of a button (or printed out if desired), have clearly been written by an expert team that knows and understands active assessment; they are thought provoking, discussion based, and they feed next steps in learning. A healthy range of tasks are included, from true-false statements to compare-and-contrast activities – all of which are intellectually challenging and intrinsically interesting. There is plenty here to spark curiosity to get children asking their own questions, especially in the Quest activities; active learning is at the heart of Science Bug.

Using Pearson's ActiveLearn Primary platform you can search for resources according to year group, national curriculum topic and type. You'll find materials for the interactive whiteboard, photocopiable sheets, pupil book pages, lesson plans and more. Generally speaking, the production values are tip-top throughout, with high-

quality images, videos and content. What's great is that the interactive resources are all iPad-friendly so they can be allocated to children for homework and revision. There are practical investigations galore too, and outdoor learning ideas to get children doing rather than just sitting.

The pupil book samples I reviewed were pitched just right, with plenty of interesting and quirky science facts, and great ideas for research and independent study. They contain excellent diagrams and photos and some purposeful, fun, hands-on activities, as well as challenging science skills questions. They are ideal for group discussions.

How much does it all cost? If you are a small school then you'd be looking at £834 for a first year's subscription for the whole school (this includes Professional Development and copies of the Pupil Books), then £150 per year thereafter. For an extra-large school then expect to pay £1,674 to start and then £600 a year beyond that. These big figures always sound intimidating, but I reckon if you looked at that on a per week basis and consider the volume of resources and support you are getting, this works out to be terrific value.

The verdict – Science Bug is a treat

There is guidance and support on key science concepts and even professional development to help you get to grips with the new curriculum. What more could you ask for? You'll buy this child-friendly and vibrant resource with your heart, your frontal lobe and a rather lot of your soul too. In the right hands, Science Bug could be a triumph.

Science Bug was reviewed by John Dabell for Teach Primary. Read the full article at www.teachprimary.com/tried_and_tested/view/pearson-science-bug

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