

Nursery and Mantle of the Expert

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ABSTRACT

This article describes an academic year in a nursery class teaching Mantle of the Expert to children who are 2 years 10 months to 4 years old. The purpose of the article is to demonstrate how Mantle of the Expert and the approaches used by older children can be simplified and re framed in a way that allows younger children to access the same approach but at a level that meets their need developmentally.

The article describes how we develop and encourage imaginative play in the learning landscape that the children have access to and how more formal approaches of Mantle are taught during whole class carpet time. The article simplifies the first nursery classes Mantle by breaking this down into 4 weeks. Nursery focus on context, client, commission and problem solving.

This article demonstrates how a reflective, experimental approach to Mantle of the Expert in nursery can work by meeting the needs and requirements of the cohort of children as well as taking into consideration their development and learning needs.

Early Years and Mantle of the Expert. Many hear those words and wonder how the complexities of Mantle of the Expert can be taught to such young children. An approach to teaching and learning that is embedded in inquiry, tension, tasks and knowledge. This article will look at a year of Mantle of the Expert in a nursery class and how elements of Mantle develop over the course of the academic year. It will demonstrate how the English Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Department for Education, 2025; Department for Education, 2023) and supporting document Development Matters is at the heart of planning and the curriculum and how Mantle of the Expert works within this.

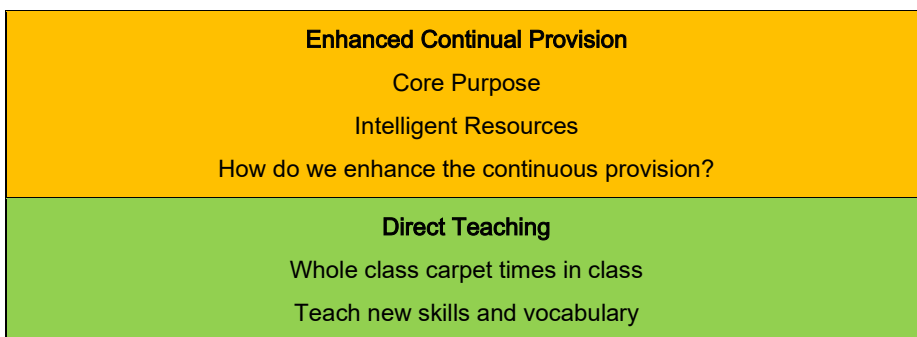
I have been teaching Mantle of the Expert for 12 years at Woodrow First School and have followed and learnt about the approach to teaching founded by Dorothy Heathcote. (Mantle of the Expert, n.d.). Training, team teaching and opportunities to study Mantle have developed my approach, allowing me to become more reflective and experimental. I have been fortunate enough to explore Mantle through a variety of year groups and learnt early on that adaptation to Mantle approaches is necessary for me to meet the needs of the children in relation to their age and cognitive skills. One approach does not fit all and over time I have developed a more open mindedness to Mantle. A confidence to try new approaches in class and hand over more control and leadership to the children.

Mantle of the Expert is a fictional context where the children take on the responsibilities of an expert team. They are commissioned by a client to work on a series of tasks that will cover areas of the curriculum. Throughout Mantle in a nursery class the learning landscape will consist of three areas:

Continuous Provision

Creates stability and security

Specific areas-outdoors, indoors-creative table, writing table, playdough, role playhouse, construction, small world, water play, sand play, reading area and quiet area.



The layout of the nursery room, outdoor area and the continuous provision which is available every day gives the children stability and familiarity in their learning environment. The children can be secure in the knowledge that these areas will always be available throughout the academic year in nursery.

The continuous provision will be developed by the planning of the enhanced continual provision which gives core purpose and learning linked to the curriculum. We enhance these areas by developing them linked to the children's ideas, interests and Mantle.

Finally direct teaching on the carpet allows for the teaching of new skills, vocabulary and develops listening, concentration and the skills of Mantle in a more whole class approach.

AUTUMN 1: DEVELOPING AND INTRODUCING IMAGINATION

The children have just begun the academic year in nursery. The characteristics of learning, active learning and playing and exploring are the focus alongside the prime areas of learning. The prime areas are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication and Language
- Physical

As a nursery that is based in a socially deprived area some of the children that start their nursery journey have limited personal, social and emotional development.¹ We work closely with our families

¹ An example to demonstrate the deprivation within our local community can be found on [Local Deprivation Explorer](#) in England. Using a post code that many of our families live within the deprivation explorer states that the neighbourhood is more deprived than

throughout the academic year and encourage our families to engage in family learning sessions and daily communication with staff to support areas that they require support with. Sharing, turn taking and playing will be a focus alongside toilet training and self-care. Some children may not speak in full sentences and will require lots of modelled language through play.

As the children begin the academic year I think of the nursery class as a team already, a whole group of individuals who come together as one each day. Each one of those children will have their own identity, needs, skills and knowledge. There will be times when they are working alone, in a small group or as a whole class.

As they begin their nursery journey the children actively choose independently within the learning landscape. They begin to work in smaller groups in areas that are of interest to them. Friendships and relationships with others begin to develop and within the learning environment teams begin to form. My view of teams is simply groups of children working in different areas of the learning landscape.

For example, making choices and preparing for tasks are already apparent. This is a key skill in Mantle when the team receives a commission, and they prepare for a task. This unconsciously is happening already with our new children. Think of the continual provision in class which provides the children with stability and familiarity. Each area allows the children to develop skills, language and decision making. An example is the painting table. Preparation for the task is choosing paper, making marks with a pencil for their name, putting on an apron, making decisions about colors of paint and how to use the paintbrush. Directions the brush will take and talking about their work. Finally, placing their work on the drying rack before washing hands and tidying away their apron. A task which involves a variety of skills and decision making.

It is during this free flow independent work time that the role of the adult is crucial in beginning the first steps into Mantle. Scaffolding is key here and will support the children slowly into the more formal way of teaching Mantle which will come later in the term during direct teaching. (Department for Education, 2023, p. 6).

Development Matters which is the non-statutory curriculum guidance for Early Years states:

most neighbourhoods in England. There are 89% of neighbourhoods that are less deprived.

Children need opportunities to develop their own play and independent exploration. They need adults to scaffold their learning by giving them just enough help to achieve something they could not do independently. Helping children to think, discuss and plan is important.

In a Mantle lesson the children will be doing the same but within the imaginative context that has been developed. My view as the nursery class as a team is transferable from the real world of nursery to the imaginative world of Mantle. In the imaginative world the children will take on specific roles and will learn new skills.

As the children independently work our interactions and development of Mantle vocabulary begin to develop through the children's free play. A deeper awareness of the language we use and an action to match this vocabulary support the children in their awareness and meaning behind this. For example, during the nursery session time adults begin to use the word "imagine" when talking and exploring play ideas together. "Let's imagine we are a family" might be spoken in the role play area. A simple statement but with complexities for the children to hear and understand. Imagine and family are the key words here. As we play families the children may say "I am daddy, you be baby." An adult may ask, "Daddy what are you doing today?" The child in role as Daddy will respond with "cook dinner." This is beginning a role within play just like the children will experience when they take on roles in Mantle.

As adults we need to show children what imagine looks like so the scaffolding of how we do this supports the children in a slower process to the Mantle skills. Action linked to vocabulary is important and placing the words of a skill next to this will help. The adult modelling alongside a group of children will show how imagine can look and what imagine can sound like. Adding tension in play also allows the children to experience another element of the Mantle process.

Tension adds purpose and drives the Mantle forward on different journeys. The children will respond in different ways to a variety of tensions. These can range from stressful situations involving people to challenging environments (Taylor, 2020). The table below gives examples of this:

Imagine we are:	Words/Action	Tension
Family Role play area	Make a cup of tea	The tea is too hot! How can we make it cooler?
Animals Small world	Eating grass	The grass has gone! What shall we do now?
Firefighters Outdoor play	Putting out the fire	Quick! The fire is spreading!
Bakers Playdough Table	Making currant buns	The buns are burning in the oven!

The basics of Mantle begin in the sense of imagining a team but within the continual provision. The examples given above are all areas within nursery where the basics of Mantle can be explored through free play, interaction and modelling. This then creates a simple play version of all the areas we develop with Mantle but in a free play scenario. The following images show examples of teams:



Image 1: Imagine a family of bears



Image 2: Imagine a team of builders



Image 3: Hedgehogs in the woods



Image 4: Imagine the family making dinner

During interactions and observations of the children you will begin to hear and make links with Mantle through their own independent play, imaginations and communication and language development. The following examples were observed during play in areas of the nursery class. These types of observations will be observed at different points throughout the year from different children. Not every child will use the language but some children do and this shows how they have observed and listened to the adults modelling of Mantle and begin to use this independently themselves.

Role play	Sand play: Child places rings around wooden figures	Outdoor play: The children have used wooden bricks to create a car
Adult: Let's make a story. Child: Yes. We can use our imaginations.	Child: The crocodiles are coming! Let's hide! (Tension in play)	Child: The park is a long way we don't want to run out of petrol. (Planning in play) Adult: What are we going to do? We have a problem! Child: Lets go to the petrol station. (problem solving)

As the children settle into nursery and they become familiar with areas in the class they will begin to show more confidence in where and how they play. The children will begin to name and talk about their learning environments and stories begin to develop through play. The children will bring their own ideas to play based learning and alongside the adult or other children narratives will begin to develop.

We are now ready to develop the areas of client, team and commission in a more formal approach as we move into Autumn 2.

AUTUMN TERM 2: TEACHING AND DEVELOPING A MINI-MANTLE

The children have now been in nursery for one half term. They have built relationships with staff, become familiar with the learning landscape and the routines of nursery. Planning a Mantle begins with the curriculum. What do we want the children to learn? The prime areas and characteristics of learning are still our focus and when planning a Mantle, we observe the interests and requirements of the cohort. Each year can be different depending on the children.

A good starting point when planning Mantle in the Autumn term is seasons and people that help us. The Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum linked to understanding the world will allow the children to make sense of the physical world and their community. I have learnt that nursery age children require time and consistency in relation to new learning. For this reason, we break Mantle down into a mini-Mantle based over 4 weeks.

Week 1: Context

This is an important part of the Mantle process as week one visits and creates the place we will be visiting in our imagination. Many of our children may never have experienced these places so the way we introduce the context is important. We begin our direct teaching during carpet time sessions.

Nursery experience their first Mantle lesson with the words, “Let’s make a story together.” The children will be told that when we make stories together it is called Mantle. They will hear this word throughout their time at Woodrow First School, and this will support their understanding and links with the Mantle story as it develops.

I begin the introduction to the context by saying, “Let’s use our imaginations to visit a place.” This is where you will see the work from Autumn 1 based on using imaginations at carpet time and in class through play take place. The children have become familiar with this vocabulary and action so they will respond in the way they have seen imagination modelled to them.

In Nursery we use photographs, animation, books and stories linked to the context of the place. This is where the vocabulary and knowledge begin. For example, the woods. The children will look at a book or a photograph of this place. They will have the opportunity to talk about what they can see. They may link their own experiences to the image.

We do not overcomplicate this part of the process, and the teaching of vocabulary is essential here. The children will require vocabulary in the future when communicating with the client or completing tasks. Vocabulary may include trees, bark, branch, leaves, red, yellow, orange and Autumn. We will talk about what we wear in the Autumn woods and then using our imaginations we will prepare for the visit to this place. What do we wear when it starts to get colder? The children being guided by the adult will stand as a whole class and the adult guides this imaginative preparation for the woods. Placing on a coat, doing up buttons, boots, scarf and gloves.



Image 5: Whole class Mantle drama session

My experience at this early stage has taught me that the children can all respond differently at this stage. Some children will observe what is happening around them whereby others become enthusiastic and will follow the adult's lead, copying what they do and sharing ideas:

“I’ve got a red coat.”

“My scarf is long.”

“I can’t do buttons.”

The children already are developing the skill of action and imagination in Mantle. “I can’t do buttons.” is a statement that shows someone has a problem. It will also link to the real world that the children live in. They respond with real information about themselves and will bring this into the Mantle story. Their own experiences are to be valued and celebrated on this journey of story making together.

As the adult we would respond with “Who can help with buttons?” This again further develops problem solving and imagination which the children will develop more as Mantle develops.

Once prepared we begin a short drama by saying, "Let's imagine we are in the woods. Be careful as you walk around." The whole class begins to move. I begin to use the vocabulary from earlier within the imaginative drama as a way of re-enforcing the vocabulary. "Look at those tall trees, the leaves are falling try to catch them! I've got 2 red ones how many do you have? Careful here there is a low branch!"

This first Mantle session depending on the cohort of children can last from 1 minute up to 10 minutes. Each new year is different depending on the children. We know from our carpet sessions during Autumn 1 how long the children can concentrate, sit and stay on task for during whole class teaching. This needs to be taken into consideration when starting a Mantle and when planning the delivery of the teaching. However, the children will have a continuation of what has been taught during carpet time during free flow play. The enhanced continual provision in the room will develop the Mantle further when the children are independently choosing.

When the drama comes to an end, I usually say it's time to go back to nursery. I complete a count slowly and quietly from 1 to 3 and this helps the transition back. After 3 I will say, "We are back in nursery now." This helps the children to understand the difference between the imaginative world and the real world.

The next important step is creating this context in class and having areas of continuous provision enhanced with activities linked to the context of the Mantle. This enables a point of reference and a place to refer to throughout the Mantle as the children play.

To complete this we begin to look at the specific areas of our curriculum:

- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Understanding the World
- Expressive Arts and design

The children will begin to engage with activities in class linked to this drama session. The creation of the context supports their imagination and creativity further. It is important to create the image of the place in class as a place that can be stepped into during the drama sessions as well as a visual reminder of our Mantle story.

Equally important is linking the Mantle to parts of the enhanced

continual provision which will encourage and allow the children to further develop their experience, skills, vocabulary and knowledge through play. The following photographs show examples of the development of the woodland context through the creation of drama spaces and enhanced continual provision:



Image 6: Painting Autumn Trees



Image 7: Hedgehog painting



Image 8: Woodland drama space

Direct teaching can be broken down into simple tasks when introducing a context in Mantle. This is a format that was devised by Dorothy Heathcote (Mantle of the Expert, n.d., Worksheet 7). The following example is a short description of the steps to a context within a Mantle. The task, purpose and demand allow me to think in a deeper way about what I have planned and why.

Task	Activity	Purpose	Demands	Device	Resources	Outcomes
Listen to an adult	To understand and respond	To introduce Mantle Story	To concentrate, and respond to the words	Visual good looking cards to support	Adult	Children are ready to begin Mantle and develop Mantle
Watch a short animation (a girl in a park)	To observe	For children to notice details from the animation	To use observational skills to observe emotions and change	Animation	Interactive white board and literacy shed	Children begin to connect with the girl who will be part of Mantle
Talk	Expand on what they could hear and see	To make further connection with the girl and the environment	Speak in sentences	Opportunities to share information	Class adults	Ideas generated about where the girl is and what is happening
Use imagination	Walk to the girl	Make links between imagination and the stimulus	Use imagination linked to animation	Speak the words “Let’s go to the girl”	Adult/children	The children are now in the park with the girl
Sit in a circle	Listen to a story (about the present situation of the girl)	To develop ideas based on the park animation to extend the children’s thinking with inquiry questions	To link memories of past work/own experiences to the story as the narrative develops	Adult in role (as the girl) tells a story	Paper, pens	Map of the park created. Context to our Mantle (where we have the girl) This will lead us to the woods.

Week 2: Client

The children have already started to learn about a place in the world, a context. Visuals or display work will be around the class as links with this learning. Before introducing the client, I always explain to the children at carpet time we are going back to our Mantle story. There will be the image of the context in class to refer to and again I will count quietly to number 3 and then we are there. We now introduce the client to the children.

In my experience the client at this early stage of Mantle needs to be a familiar person or name that the children will understand and relate to in the real world. If we consider the children's families or animals that they are familiar with, the children will have a better understanding from their own experiences of what this word means to them. However, before introducing the client, I develop a narrative that will lead us to this. Usually this a short statement such as "When I was in the woods I saw someone. Would you like to see who?"

I begin the introduction of the client by using one of two dramatic conventions drawn from Mantle of the Expert. Dramatic conventions are structured approaches developed by Dorothy Heathcote (Heathcote, 2007). Examples of introducing the client include:

1. Adult in role (AIR)

AIR allows the children to observe as an adult becomes someone different. Ideally two adults will be used for this approach. I will teach and begin to introduce another adult as someone within our Mantle story however I have also completed this on my own when we do not have another member of staff. To do this I step in and out of the Mantle. This means I talk to the children and then step and move to become the imaginative person in the drama.

The children enjoy watching the adult transform and at this stage resources can be added to build the client and to support the children's understanding of who they are in the imaginative world. I begin with convention 3 the adult as an effigy. They can be talked about, walked around and sculpted. It is important to complete this first as the children are encouraged to view their familiar adult as someone different.

Visually creating the client allows the children to see the

transformation and a simple introduction follows. We all say hello to the client and wave. This is our first interaction. We do not say the teacher's actual name that the children are used to calling them. However, we then move onto convention 1 and the AIR becomes present, naturalistic, gives and accepts responses. I will model and ask the question, "Who are you?" and the children will be encouraged to ask the question too. The AIR then responds.

At this stage we need a simple process and not an over-complicated approach with too many words or information.

For Nursery children the client shows an emotion and shares a problem. This is communicated to the children through the AIR and refers to an approach that Dorothy Heathcote called "signing." (Mantle Network, 2023). She stated:

... of course the main source for authentic SIGNing comes from the teacher. With the position of an actor the teacher adopts appropriate body attitude, gesture, tone of voice, style of delivery, distance, pitch, choice of vocabulary, deliberate uncertainty or confidence, deliberate vagueness or precision.

This approach works well with the children especially as they observe adults reacting in an authentic way within a piece of drama that uses elements of the signing approach as described by Dorothy Heathcote.

2. Photographs and Pictorial Images

Images and photographs drawn or shared with the children give them a visual representation to observe and talk about. I have completed this using two conventions.

Convention 8: A role depicted in picture, removed from actual life, a painting, photograph or drawing. This includes those being made by the class and drawing and creating large pictorial images of them.

Convention 9: The children see a drawing in the making of someone important to the action. For this I will sit in a circle with a

large sheet of paper in the middle. I will quietly speak the words, “This is who I have seen in the woods.” Slowly I begin to draw but will pause at different times and stop the pen from moving. Children may begin to call out ideas as I draw and I begin to add details. I will model ‘talk’ to the pictorial client to allow the children to hear my interactions with them.



Images 9-11: Park Keepers

Once the children have been introduced to the client it is important to keep the contact with the client throughout the week. We may wave and say hello to the visual display work as the children play in nursery or photographs of the AIR will be placed around the room for the children to observe and talk to. Adults will model this throughout the nursery session.

Introducing Tension:

The children have created the context and met the client. In our next Mantle lesson in week 2 we will return to the client. We repeat the process of saying hello. However, this is where there is a change in our client. I link this to emotion. I will say, “There is a problem, something is happening, watch.” To create tension here I may lower my voice almost to a whisper and slow my movements down to create suspense and anticipation.

The conventions I used to introduce the client will now be developed further with emotion and tension.

1. Adult in role (AIR)

There is a change to the face and body positioning of the AIR. The

children may notice but there have been times when they have not. I am still guiding at this stage of the Mantle and will ask the children to look closely at the changes. I may interact with the AIR as a way of modelling how we interact. Convention 2 may be needed here; the person framed as a film. People have permission to stare but the AIR can be stopped, re-started and re-run. The children may need to see the changes in the AIR again as I talk as the changes happen. This focuses their attention on changes that may not be apparent to them. For example. "The mummy started to move her mouth; she looked sad and started to.....cry" The drama would be stopped here.

2. Photographs and pictorial images

If I have introduced the client through a pictorial image or creation (convention 8 and 9) then I interact with that pictorial image. I have changed facial expressions before on pictorial images or added tears to the client's face.

This is important in the process of a more formal Mantle approach. Being a role model in Mantle allows the children to see how action and words are used. They hear my interactions and will repeat words alongside me. As a whole class we may ask are you ok? Why are you sad? But I will model first, and the children will copy. This is important as for some of our children communication and language can be a challenge. Speaking words and placing these words together to formulate a sentence will not be something that all the children can do independently. Modelling this first enables them to see and hear before they attempt themselves.

There is now an opportunity for inquiry to develop and a simple "I wonder what's wrong?" can begin to generate ideas that come from the children. This interaction with the AIR and emotion leads us easily into a reaction from the client. A simple statement spoken but with wording that is understood by the children and has an impact is way for the commission to be introduced.

"I am sad, I have lost my little girl"

"I am scared; I saw something in the forest"



Image 10: Sad Mummy by the mountain



Image 13: Park keeper in the woods

The children require time to explore the inquiry through the provision in class and activities. Play will have been enhanced to develop skills linked to the curriculum and the continuation of the Mantle story. The children are still working on the prime areas of learning within class each day and other skills as the year develops can have links with art, literacy, math's and knowledge and understanding of the world. For example:

Literacy



Images 14-15: Writing to the client

Maths



Image 16: 3D shape Giants Castle building



Image 17: Buying tickets for the Zoo

Week 3: Team

The context, client and commission have been learnt. We now know who, where and what happened. The next step is what we are going to do? The simple approach in nursery is to ask, “Who can help?” and immediately someone will say “me.” At this early stage it is as simple as that. The children very quickly begin to view themselves as an individual who can help.

The scaffolding to the actual team is important here as we need to now develop the children’s real knowledge of the team in the real world and the skills required. It is important we have standalone carpet sessions teaching the children new vocabulary and talking and learning about skills required within the real world in relation to the team they are in the Mantle. Reading nonfiction books, watching real action of teams in a video, stories and photographs related to this profession will support the children when they return to the drama in Mantle. Examples of teams:

Team	Skill	Knowledge
Firefighters	Teamwork-listening to each other. Working in an emergency. Remain calm and make decisions. Use equipment safely.	Fire How to put out a fire. Safety clothing and why it is important.
Rescue Team	To talk to each other and communicate effectively. To make a plan of action. To make decisions as situations change.	Different climates will affect the rescue. Knowledge of weather conditions. Transport and their purposes.

The continual provision and the enhancements are important to allow children to use the skills and language learnt at carpet times through play. Focus work with an adult also enables children to be supported in an area of play that they may not have thought of choosing before. There will be an expectation for all children to work with an adult on a focus task.

By encouraging and exploring new skills together you are opening

the minds of these small people to new possibilities and challenges. This can support their confidence in new situations and with the use of new equipment. The children are all different in their abilities and concentration levels. We are encouraging, supportive and mindful of the different approaches we require with different children.



Image 18: Fire in the woods



Image 19: Mountain Rescue team drawings



Image 20: Helicopter Rescue

The preparation has been completed. The client is ready, and the team has the skills and knowledge. It is time to begin the commission. I completed this as a whole class during carpet time. I will remind the children of our Mantle story so far by looking at the client, speaking aloud about the problem and what the commission is.

Then I will say “welcome team” and I always add the name of the team so the children can identify with who they are within the imaginative world. The children require an identity within the drama, and it is important to use the teams name to re-enforce this identity.

Using drama, the team will begin to prepare for the commission by using action and words alongside myself to prepare their clothing and equipment. For example, as a team of firefighters:

“Get your helmets on Firefighter team”

“Don’t forget the jackets”

“Help with buttons and zips”

“Team, where did you put the boots?”

“I hope there is petrol in the fire engine...whose job was that?”

“Great job team!”

The dialogue above begins with me completing an action as I speak the words, however you will see that towards the end I am placing more accountability on the team. Who was responsible for certain tasks and typically in nursery everyone will respond with “me.” This small step shows how the children are beginning to become invested in their own roles in the team and are taking a form of responsibility within that team. Mantle requires many responsibilities for the team and over time these will become more challenging. This simple start as a whole class drama in nursery allows the children to begin their first steps into an imaginary world.

The children will then begin to move around with myself as a lead and a role model. I have moved around the carpet space before or I have walked the children to another carpet space in the class as if we were searching for something or looking for something. The action and words together will form the beginning of the commission. As the team moves, I find that for nursery it is important in our first Mantle to have tension quite quickly within the Commission. This tension is what focuses on the team’s responsibilities and action and will keep the children gripped within the drama.

Tensions can come in a variety of forms and be used in a variety of ways. However, for the nursery children I begin with a powerful tension that creates impact. For example, finding the lost child on the mountain or a forest on fire. It is how we create the tension that impacts the children, and I find creating atmosphere and action are required in this approach to make a full impact on the team.

Week 4: Problem solving and the Commission

Problem solving while working on the commission can be very quick in nursery to begin with. After witnessing the tension, the children begin to respond with ideas of how to solve the problem. This could be putting out a forest fire and I would simply talk to the children about who puts out a fire and how? This would lead to discussions about firefighters and their role and responsibilities. The knowledge the children have learnt during carpet times and their free exploration will support this next Mantle step.

I find in the first Mantle in the Autumn term the children require a response immediately and after seeing the tension of the forest fire, we

have picked up our hoses and immediately started to solve the fire by instantly becoming the firefighters to do this.

I am always mindful that our children are in the early stages of their Mantle journeys and an immediate response to problem solving is required especially when the investment from the children is so apparent and they require immediate results. They have learnt the knowledge and skills and their voices are making it known that they need to act now! This investment needs to be celebrated as the children are taking on the team's responsibilities. Timing and observation from the adult teaching is crucial here and the flexibility within the Mantle session to meet the needs and voices of the children is required.

CONCLUSION

After we have completed our first mini-Mantle in Autumn 2 we then proceed with further Mantles throughout the academic year. The approach is the same and we continue to complete Mantle over 4 weeks. We challenge our children by exploring deeper into the Mantle stories and creating more tasks and tensions along the way. The complexity of the Mantle stories increases, and we make links with different countries in the world, and more complex teams and narratives.

As I come to the end of this article and think about the academic Mantle year in nursery, I have a sense of pride in our children and the team of staff in which I work with. By the end of the year as I look back and reflect on our cohort of children, we can see the progress they have made within Mantle and the curriculum.

Mantle of the Expert is a journey for all staff that are involved in this approach to teaching. I have learnt that to be openminded and experimental enables me to learn more about the complexities of Mantle of the Expert as an approach to teaching the curriculum.

We celebrate the journey that each child has been on individually as the year has progressed, we hope that we have given our children a foundation, a flavour of Mantle that will guide them through the rest of their years at Woodrow First School.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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Helen Bailey is employed at a Mantle of the Expert training school in Redditch England. She has worked at Woodrow First School for 27 years and for the past 12 years and has used an approach to teaching called Mantle of the Expert with children ranging from 2 years 10 months to 9 years old. Bailey began her career at Woodrow First School as the Nursery Nurse in the nursery and then became a Higher-Level Teaching Assistant. Early Years teaching was an area she felt passionate and motivated about and she went onto gain a degree based in Early Years Education. The training and learning Bailey has engaged in both within Mantle and her degree has allowed her to develop a reflective approach to teaching.