



Robert Arkenstall Primary School

# Memorable Experiences Research Analysis

*pursue possibilities; love learning*

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## Responses on most memorable experiences

The research into memorable experiences followed the introduction to pupils of our motto, *pursue possibilities; love learning*. The motto reflected the development of our Vision by staff and Governors to include drivers which challenge the school in the appreciation of cultural diversity and ambition. The purpose of the research was to inform the way we present our vision and communicate to all stakeholders in light of the revised vision. It is essential that we incorporate children's views of the school to ensure our communication is authentic.

The revised vision states:

**It is the aim of Robert Arkenstall Primary School to provide a broad curriculum and education of the highest quality within a happy, safe, secure and stimulating environment, which enables each child to experience success and equips them with skills for citizens eager to explore the possibilities of their world.**

We were particularly interested to review our visual identity, logo and website to ensure they reflect our vision for the experience of learning here. The research is qualitative in character and for the younger pupils, drawings formed part of their response.

The children were simply asked to picture their most memorable experience of being in Robert Arkenstall, they were told it could be anything to do with being part of the school community, but to say where they were, what they were doing and how they felt. The results showed a broad range of good memories but with common themes emerging.

Allowing for rounding, the following highlights that pupils count many aspects of school life memorable.

## Broad themes

	indoors	outdoor	learning	social
all pupils	34%	66%	66%	34%
boys	33%	48%	34%	52%
girls	66%	52%	66%	48%

From those who identified Learning as most memorable, Curriculum experiences are described as follows:

	regular curriculum	Extra curricula enrichment		sports lessons	Non-sports lessons		Active/Practical lessons	Desk based lessons
All responses which show learning	43%	57%	Regular curriculum responses	28%	72%	Active versus desk based learning	85%	15%
boys	33%	34%	boys	42%	57%	boys	52%	50%
girls	67%	66%	girls	58%	43%	girls	48%	50%

It is clear that children love to be active and outdoors (65% outdoors, of curriculum learning 85% practical), both boys and girls. It is excellent that specific learning activities (66%) form such a strong body of memories for our children when they try to envisage *pursue possibilities; love learning* from their own experience.

Social aspects of school are, however, clearly very important to children's experience of our community (34%). In terms of an appreciation of learning, the social aspect of school represents a significant part of the learning which goes on within a school community, despite not being academic in nature.

PE, with all the active learning and personal challenge that the subject represents, forms a significant number of curriculum focussed responses (28% for one subject amongst fourteen timetabled subjects), but many other subjects get mentioned. It appears that the more practical the subject the more responses they got for memorability e.g Science 26%, ICT 11%, Art 11%, History 11%, Maths 11%, DT 9% and Literacy 7%, RE 2%. However, it should be noted that a snapshot like this relying on children's memory contains a high proportion of recent events and so it cannot be assumed that other subjects do not offer practical opportunities, just that they were not recalled first on this occasion. Sport also accounts for a relatively high proportion of extra curricula responses based on competitions and events.

Extra-Curricular learning is of course expected to be memorable, active, likely to be off site and it is clear that children at Robert Arkenstall have a wealth of experiences to draw on since 57% of learning-oriented experiences are in this category.

Our strong focus on SMSC is clearly evidenced in a range of replies about how children feel and some of the circumstances they describe include special day, being new to school within KS2, buddies, forming friendships, personal achievements. Boys reflect more focus on the social side of life (52% of social focus is boys) but this should be read in close conjunction with sports at playtimes rather than personal relationships.

The data is not robust enough to draw correlations between themes. However, the overall picture is of memorable active learning and socializing, with a firm suggestion that outdoor experiences are more memorable.

### The following collates a small sample of the replies to demonstrate the breadth of answers.

*I am at the meadow, I am pond dipping, happy*

*In year six classroom. Getting my handwriting licence, very proud of myself*

*(In the woods). I was going down the hill. Happy.*

*In the hall at the Christmas disco. Dancing with friends. Wonderful.*

*In the theatre. Watching people talk about Saxons. Excited because of what is going to happen next.*

*At School. Putting marshmallow and sweet bombs in the microwave. Excited.*

*Sitting at my desk in literacy. I felt really embarrassed. It was hilarious.*

*I'm on the school field, running around in the sun. Having time with my buddy the first time we met. We were chasing after each other. On top of the world, elated, happy, ecstatic.*

*It's a Tuesday afternoon and I'm in RE sitting at a table with three of my best friends. We're learning and having fun at the same time. I'm feeling very happy because I am in a place where I feel safe and I'm enjoying the lesson.*

*In the hall, doing my favourite lesson which is PE. I was the last one standing on my team. I was feeling very ecstatic when we won. I felt very approved (of) after PE. Everyone congratulated me.*

*I'm at Soham running for the school. And I have my friends with me cheering me on and yelling positive things which helped. I felt tired, in pain but happy and excited I had crossed the finish line.*

*I was in the school hall. I was running up to the spring-board and jumping onto the horse during gymnastics. I was feeling slightly nervous and excited but once I did it, it was really exciting and I could have done it for the rest of the day.*

*(In the hall). Eating my dinner. Happy.*

*(In the woods). We are picking blackberries. Happy.*

*(In class.) I am doing history. Excited and happy and interested.*

*We were on a school football pitch about to play another school but I was really nervous but proud to play for our own school. Really nervous and excited, really proud and happy.*

*I'm reading a book with my friend in the book corner. I felt happy.*

*On the field at lunchtime. Playing with Premier Sport football. Very happy because I scored for the first time ever.*

*In a classroom. Standing behind my chair. Waiting to see who is star of the day. Intense.*

*In the hall, singing in the school production. Happy, excited and enjoying myself.*

*In class on the computer doing Scratch. Helping people and making games. Super fun. Pleased, like I can do anything.*

*In the quiet garden. Playing Harry Potter. Really happy.*

*At the gates of my new school about to make new friends. Meeting new friends (names four children). Nervous of starting a new school.*

*On the field. Looking at a space ship. Wondrous.*

*In the hall watching a panto. Very shocked and pleased.*

*In Mercury class, having a Roman feast. Very happy.*

*At Fairchild's Meadow. Catching a butterfly in a net. Amazing.*

*In Comet class, on Victorian day. Everyone's singing Happy Birthday to me. Exciting and really happy.*

*In the classroom having a hard maths lesson. Excited, amazed, happy.*

*Church Farm. Playing in the hay bales. Happy.*

*In the resources room. Doing maths with Mrs Groom. Excited.*

*At Church Farm. Looking at animals and playing in a pretend tractor. Excited.*

*In the staff room. Talking (special day). Happy.*

*In the classroom making a teddy bear. Enjoying myself. Safe, happy and excited.*

‘Wordle’ has been used to form a pictorial response to the questions about where the children pictured themselves and how they felt, based on the most frequent occurrence of words in responses.







## Conclusions

It is evident that pupils here have the opportunity to take great pleasure in their learning and have many memorable experiences to draw on. In reflecting their happiest experiences, our communications should draw on their love of outdoor adventurous learning and lively, active social life within school.

It is interesting to note that some pupils used the word *safe* both physically and emotionally to describe their learning and many children use *exciting*. This is not to say learning is without challenge. The use of word *nervous* has been applied to both performances and physical challenges but is coupled with achievement, demonstrating that pupils have overcome comfort zone barriers, and enjoyed the nervous tension of achievement. Several sporting achievements have used the word *proud* showing a loyalty and respect for the school they represent.

Many examples from children drew on focussed, calm activities which were practical but about which they were eager and highly engaged. The overwhelming sense of best experiences is *happiness*.

There are clearly many places associated with great memories, with a broad range of outdoor locations mentioned many of which are available to the children at no cost and minimal effort for the teaching staff. Identifying this in visual and written communication is a clear reflection of children's experience at Robert Arkenstall and of teaching staff's values in providing a rich and real experience of learning for the children.

Any development of the visual identity within communications should draw on the physical freedom they describe, the friendly enjoyment they experience but also the vital courageous approach they know they can safely risk as they pursue possibilities and love learning.