

# A conversation

## with Margaret Barnfield

Margaret reflects on her role as co-ordinator of a Tide~ teachers' working group that resulted in **Why on Earth? - an approach to science with a global dimension at key stage 2.**

This was published in 1991 at a time when many teachers were looking for support in developing the primary school science curriculum.

### What do you recall about the Project?

I remember that we had access to lots of teachers and influence too because the group consisted of those in roles such as in-school co-ordinators or in-service providers, as well as classroom teachers. So the project had access to many more teachers than simply the group.

At that time many teachers weren't confident in teaching science, but others were very experienced and very confident, but they still wanted to make their practice more inclusive. The group could call upon this wide range of experiences, examples, and strategies.

A big bonus was that in a time when resources weren't that easy to find, we could use Tide~ as a resource bank to introduce a Global Dimension (GD). I found the writing up of the project and the publication process very different to my previous experiences, working with Tide~ staff was a tremendous help.

I must admit that the most satisfying aspect of the project for me was working with different teachers and seeing the response, the interest shown by the children. After all, I'm a teacher and that was the 'fun bit'.



Margaret Barnfield is a Tide~ Trustee and has served as the Chair.

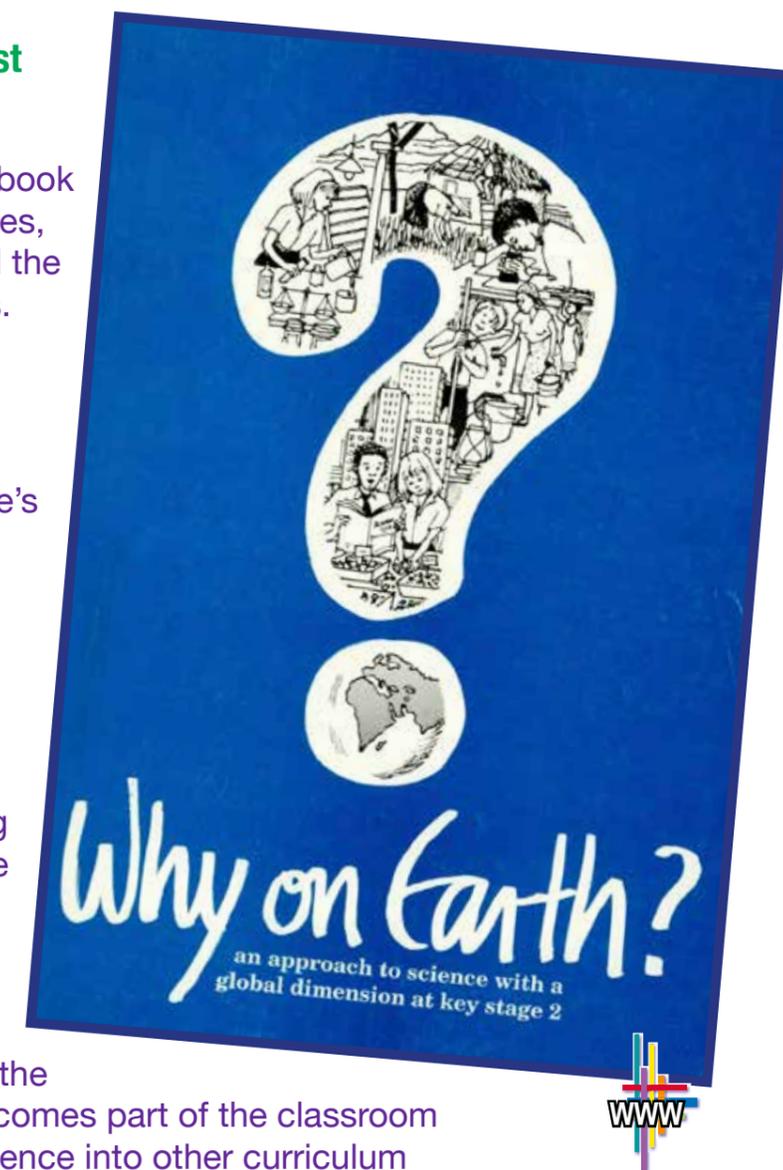
She worked for Birmingham Education Authority for many years in a range of roles in Primary schools across the city, latterly as a Headteacher.

### What do you think is the strongest section of 'Why on Earth?'

I am amazed at how relevant the book is today, both in terms of its themes, shelter, food, soil and energy, and the classroom strategies it advocates.

In my limited time in school at present, I see the frequent use of many of the strategies and group work as a way of valuing everyone's input, not just when pupils learn about science, but across the whole curriculum. That wasn't always the case.

**Why on Earth?** provides a good introduction to teaching scientific skills. This, I feel, avoids breaking down science into small, separate components and losing creativity for both teacher and pupil. It also builds in a global dimension, it becomes almost automatic in the same way one can build in the development of pupil skills. It becomes part of the classroom atmosphere and goes beyond science into other curriculum areas.



**Why on Earth?** shows how children's scientific investigations can be rooted in what is going on in the world around them. It provides a framework for planning which builds on children's knowledge and interests. It illustrates how children's investigations can help them to explore issues. Why on earth? suggests how science can help to challenge attitudes and assumptions about lifestyles different from the children's own.

**Why on Earth?** offers strategies for developing an open-ended active learning approach which starts from the children's experience. It emphasises the development of skills and the exploration of attitudes as well as building children's knowledge.

**Why on Earth?** suggests practical ideas through four themes; Shelter, Food preservation, Soil and Energy. Each contains activities, investigations and resources to support a global dimension.





Photo: from A world of investigations

**What aspects of ‘Why on Earth?’ are the most relevant?**

Besides a clear guide to planning and classroom strategies, the book uses a wide range of stimulus activities for making science relevant to primary aged pupils. For example, it illustrates how pupils can engage with the Sustainable Development Goals and climate change through the use of a wide range of examples to show pupils the relevance of what they’re doing in class to their everyday life.

**What lessons does the Project have for Tide~’s future work with teachers?**

As I said, the make-up of the group was key to the project’s success. Group members were able to engage with colleagues in ways that made them appreciate and value their day to day work in the classroom. It provided to the group, and those they worked with, insights into the purposefulness of teaching science and enabling pupils to explore the world around them. ‘Why on Earth?’ celebrated some outstanding work, the result of supporting classroom teachers by providing the space for them to explore not only scientific ‘facts’ or skills, but also effective strategies for planning effective learning about those facts in a wider perspective than otherwise in a results-driven environment.



Photo: from Water Issues: local and global

**Science: a vital aspect of sustainability**

Two photo pack resources from the Tide~ website to support such an approach.

