

We've explored...

driving

What happened when a driving instructor visited a setting. By **Annette Rawstrone**



Inspired by some of the children's budding interest in cars, staff at Brougham Street Nursery School in Skipton, North Yorkshire, invited a local driving instructor to visit their setting and bring in his dual-control car for the afternoon.

'The children like looking at cars when we go on walks, talking about their colour and saying if they are like mummy or daddy's car,' says class teacher Beccy Robinson. 'We recently went on a whole-class walk and one child was naming every model of car as he passed by them. He knew the make of every car and van, even if it didn't have a badge.'

The visit from Craig Sanderson, whose son attends the nursery, captivated the children as he shared his expertise and they explored his new red car.



what they did

'To prepare for the visit we told the children that something very exciting was coming into the playground,' says Beccy. 'We described it as something you could sit in, go to different places in and had wheels. They had to guess what it could be. After they had guessed that it was a car, we then told them that it would be different to their family car and they had to look to find out how it was different.'

Craig began by explaining his job – teaching people how to drive from when they turn 17 years old. 'Some of the children recognised it was a learners' car because of the red letter on it,' recalls Beccy. 'They wanted to know how far it had driven and how many times a week it gets cleaned.' Some of the children even wanted to know if Craig could teach them how to drive a car. Beccy adds that the children were fascinated that Craig is a teacher, just like the grown-ups at nursery but that he teaches older people. It demonstrated to them that people continue to learn throughout their lives.

Craig showed the children how his car is different because it is specially equipped with two sets of pedals, allowing him to control the car's speed and put on the breaks when he is not sat behind the steering wheel himself. He explained how he needs to do this to keep the learner driver and other people using the road safe. 'This detail fascinated the children, as it introduced them to the concept of dual control and how it aids in the learning process,' says head teacher Dr Alison Stewart. 'The children eagerly took turns sitting in the driver and passenger seats, eyes

wide with excitement as they explored the array of controls and gadgets in the car.'

They talked about what the seats were made of, held the steering wheel and pretended to drive to different places, and enjoyed putting the car's seatbelts on for themselves, rather than being buckled in by a parent.

The children learned about various important features of the car, including:

- **Airbags:** Craig demonstrated where the airbags are located and explained their role in keeping passengers safe during emergencies. The children were amazed by the idea of something hidden inside the car that is designed to protect them.
- **Camera and satellite navigation:** 'The integrated technology in Craig's car was another highlight,' says Alison. 'He showed them the camera that records the route driven and the satnav – a digital map that guides drivers. This sparked a lively discussion among the children about maps and navigation, linking to their own experiences of going places with their families.' Children liked that the satnav could display the route from nursery to their own homes.
- **Buttons and levers:** Craig pointed out the numerous buttons that control the car's lights, music, temperature and the horn. 'The children were particularly excited about the horn, each eagerly taking a turn to give it a beep,' she recalls. 'The levers for speed control and the brake were also intriguing, leading to imaginative play where they pretended to embark on thrilling journeys.'

their ethos

The staff team at the local-authority-maintained community nursery school take pride in their child-led approach. They enjoy following the interests of the children and extending their learning through their individual fascinations. It is believed that tailoring learning to each child is effective in ensuring that every child can achieve their best.

'Inviting local community members like Craig into our nursery provides invaluable learning opportunities and supports parental engagement,' explains Alison. 'It also strengthens our ties with businesses, fostering a sense of community and support. By bringing real-world experiences into the classroom, we are able to create a rich, dynamic learning environment that extends beyond traditional teaching methods.'

'We encourage other practitioners to explore similar opportunities. Whether it's inviting a local vet to show us how to treat an injured animal, a fisherman to

show their equipment, or a musician to introduce children to different instruments, these experiences can be profoundly enriching. They not only make learning fun but also help children understand the world around them.'

She adds, 'This visit was not just about cars; it was about igniting curiosity and linking learning to the real world.'



extension activities

- The children engaged in a lot of pretend play after the driving instructor's visit, which demonstrated to staff how much they had absorbed during the session. They imagined themselves on lots of different journeys, incorporating what they had learned into their stories and games.
- Beccy says, 'When we were out on a walk last week, the children noticed the registration plates on a car and we talked about the letters we could see on it.'
- Since Craig's visit, they have learned a new song about a car with great onomatopoeia – 'Honk, honk, rattle, rattle, toot, crash, beep, beep!'
- Staff plan to take the children on a walk to look at different makes and models of cars and the letters that they can see on them. They are also going to follow Google Maps on a mobile phone along a particular route to give the children a greater understanding of how the satnav worked in the car.

what they gained

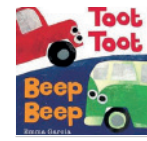
Along with learning more about cars, the children at the setting also experienced talking to a member of their local community about his work and learned about a different job role.

The visit from the driving instructor also inspired them to learn more about maps and navigation and helped them to continue to foster a deeper connection with the nursery school's local community.

'Craig's visit was much more than just an ordinary show-and-tell,' says Alison. 'It was an interactive adventure that provided the children with a hands-on learning experience.'

→ **Further reading: 'All about... maps' by Meredith Jones Russell (Nursery World, January 2023)**

PHOTOS BROUGHAM STREET NURSERY SCHOOL AND ADOBESTOCK



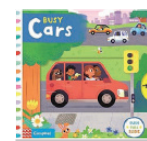
Toot Toot Beep Beep by Emma Garcia

Watch the colourful cars zoom across the page, each one making its own special noise.



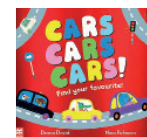
Rosa Loves Cars by Jessica Spanyol

Find out which toys Rosa and her friends are playing with today in this series of books that celebrates inclusivity.



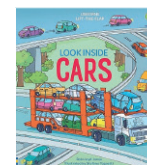
Busy Cars by Mel Matthews

Push, pull and slide the tabs to zoom about town.



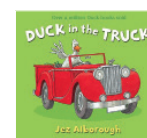
Cars Cars Cars! by Donna David and Nina Pirhonen

This rhyming picturebook has plenty to see, discuss and count on each page.



Look Inside Cars by Rob Lloyd Jones and Stefano Tognetti

Young car enthusiasts can find out how cars work, see them being made and watch them roar around racetracks in this lift-the-flap book.



Duck in the Truck by Jez Alborough

This is the tale of a duck in a truck – a truck that was stuck in some yucky brown muck. Sheep and Frog come to his aid, but it's only when Goat arrives that a solution is found in this fun, rhyming story.



Martha Maps it Out by Leigh Hodgkinson

Martha loves drawing maps. She creates maps of everything, from outer space to her little bedroom. Let Martha be your guide as she explores all the people and places that make her world special, and dreams of a future where anything is possible.