

WATCH THIS SPACE

Parsons Green Prep School, London

For a leading STEM school, Tim Peake's mission into space was the perfect vehicle for firing our children's imaginations, says headteacher **Helen Stavert**

Tim Peake is now a household name in Britain after his five-month Principia mission to the International Space Station (ISS), named after Isaac Newton's great work, the Principia Mathematica.

Not only has he made a lasting impression on our nation, but he has also had a major impact on education. And this has created a new and very exciting chapter in our STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) programme at Parsons Green Prep.

When we heard the news about Tim's upcoming mission, as a school we decided that this would be the perfect event to complement our STEM activities.

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STEM is an integral part of our curriculum from Reception to Year Six and by focussing on these STEM subjects at a primary level, it ensures that the children are prepared and equipped for an ever-changing technological world.

Careers are now more focussed on STEM subjects and, by having a passion in these topics early on in life, our pupils are more prepared and can take this enjoyment well beyond just education.



Right, Tim Peake's mission got the children's brains working overtime

Tim echoed this sentiment precisely during a live link-up with schoolchildren in February, signing off with, "remember to do what you really enjoy doing".

A palpable excitement started to build around the school as the days ticked down to the launch. The children worked in mixed age groups to make a rocket using effervescent tablets, water and camera-film cases. By creating a chemical reaction the rockets went off in the playground with a bang and travelled surprisingly high.

The children also designed and made a porthole of what they might see if they were Tim in space. Imaginations ran wild as aliens with three heads appeared alongside planets which looked suitably out of this world. By working in these mixed age groups there was a real sense of teamwork as the older children supported the younger ones, which is at the core of what STEM is all about.

The younger children thought about questions to ask Tim. They wanted to know how it felt inside a rocket and what kind of food astronauts eat. From this, they designed their ideal space-themed menu. Some of the older children thought about what qualities are needed to become an astronaut and wrote their own job application forms to see if they could land the role (Tim was up against 8,000 other hopefuls for the Principia mission).



Seeds grown by pupils as part of an experiment

They would be excellent candidates for Britain's next space mission as they gave examples of using their technological, science and maths skills, alongside that all-important teamwork. Every child from Year Three to Six has an individual tablet – and they used these to do further research on Tim.

With this new-found knowledge behind them, the children were ready to watch the live launch on 15th December 2015. They made good-luck banners and Union Jack flags to wish Tim luck on his journey.

The whole school gathered in the hall to watch Tim and his Russian and American colleagues on a huge screen, joining in with the countdown and cheering as the Russian Soyuz TMA-19M blasted off.

The live launch was far from the end of our Tim Peake STEM programme. Just as Tim himself began a whole series of experiments aboard the ISS, the school followed him on social media and the children completed space diaries, recording what Tim had been up to aboard the ISS.

They loved watching him play space ping-pong with water and hydrophobic bats – and admired his night-time photography of Britain.

Watching Tim do his first spacewalk was just as special as watching the live launch, and this was beamed around every classroom for the children to see.



> The children made good-luck banners and Union Jack flags to show their support and wish Tim Peake luck on his groundbreaking journey



Top, experiments form part of the STEM curriculum, above, Tim Peake working out in space