

# Have you caught the visual bug?

**ROBERT BULLARD** describes how LogoVisual Thinking brings creativity into learning in Stoke

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"We use the 'LVT' boards all the time," says Louise Mallett, the Science Department's Curriculum Leader, at Holden Lane High School, Stoke.

Her Deputy Head, she tells me, has long been an enthusiastic fan of mind maps, which are now used fairly widely across the school. But it was Louise who got the bug for LogoVisual Thinking (LVT), and the wide opportunities of its attractive magnetic boards and two-coloured hexagons, after she attended a conference on Gifted and Talented Education, for which she disseminates ideas to a cluster of six Stoke schools.

The advantages of the boards come flying at me from all sides when I pose the question to Louise and her colleagues over lunch in their departmental staff room.

"The kids get really creative and come up with lots of ideas."  
"They are good for looking into ideas more deeply; so that they see beyond just the facts, to the connections between things and the bigger picture." "They like the materials and treat them with respect." And boys like them – "it involves them doing something physical."



So Louise and her colleagues had no difficulty deciding how to use some extra money in last year's budget. Another set of LVT boards - what else.

The department run a two-week timetable, with three lessons on each of the three sciences. That leaves one 'floating lesson', which they use for showing the children exam techniques and other ways of how to learn. The LVT boards are only one method of visual learning, but evidently a clear favourite.

"Why is Carbon so important?" is the question posed by Chemistry teacher Louise Richards, to her classroom of Year 11's.

The children are working in groups of four. First, they write down their own ideas on the hexagons; then they cluster any similar suggestions together, putting them on the magnetic boards and trying to link them using words and arrows. Everyone has been allocated a specific task. There is a resource manager, who looks after the materials, a recorder, who takes the notes of the group's discussion, a timekeeper, and a reporter, who feeds back what they have done to the rest of the class.

"You can build in securities within the group," Louise tells me, as the group begin to bounce around their ideas.

“You can show them you are aware of their weaknesses, and you can pull out their strengths.”

After half an hour the boys in the corner have come up with some impressive looking work, clustering their ideas into Carbon’s various formations (such as oil and other hydrocarbons), its physical uses (photosynthesis) and human ones (plastics) – as well as reminding me of my old Chemistry classes, and the different Carbon atoms (isotopes).



“What I liked about that was the links that the boys made between *and within* the clusters. Well done, I have never seen that before,” Louise applauds them.

After the other groups have also shared their ideas Louise neatly returns the whole class to her original question, which the groups must answer in just 20

words. “Carbon is the basis for most major processes,” comes the boys’ succinct reply - and their final work for the day, as they grab their bags and run off to catch their bus home.

The LVT boards and hexagons come with a neat little book from their suppliers, the Centre for Management Creativity. In it there is a long list of ideas on how you can use them – which includes analysis of issues, note taking, revision and decision-making – and detailed notes on, for example, the pros and cons of different activities, and which thinking skills are used.

“We use them more for linking and discussing ideas than revising,” admits Louise Mallett and her colleagues, back in the staff room. “Lower and middle sets get

more out of them,” she continues, “and we use them in particular among children with Special Educational Needs. But not really in the top sets, who have got the skills already.”

Down the corridor Laura Timms has asked her biology class to use the boards and hexagons to

generate games to aid their GCSE revision.

“Our strength was the digestive system,” one group explains to me, who are enjoying prepare a game of ‘Matching up’, in which players will have to attach names (and hexagons) of human organs to a range of possible descriptive functions.

Before the hour is up all the groups can play the games that the others have come up with, that also include Snakes and Ladders and a variation on TV’s *Blockbusters*, testing their knowledge on different subjects within the biology curriculum. So, will LVT have increased their learning? Revision can get boring, we agree, and with the children having a good time and their interest secured it will help maintain their momentum towards the imminent exams.

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## catch the bug

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