

Why We Should Ask Toby

The educational basis

Many areas of the primary curriculum involve ideas that are not immediately obvious. Children are often asked to think about things they cannot see directly, such as how sound travels, how materials change, how living things work, or why people live in different places. When these ideas are not made clear at the start, pupils may remember facts or words without feeling confident about what they really mean.

Toby podcasts are designed to help children build understanding by talking ideas through carefully and clearly.

Why Toby uses everyday examples

Children understand new ideas best when they can link them to something they already know. Toby uses familiar situations, such as classrooms, people moving, building blocks, water, or everyday experiences, to explain ideas from science, geography, and other subjects.

These examples help children form clear pictures in their minds. Once pupils can imagine what is happening, they are better able to talk about it, question it, and connect it to new learning.

Why Toby avoids difficult words at first

Special subject words are important, but they work best when children already understand the idea behind them. Introducing too many new words too early can make learning feel harder than it needs to be.

Toby focuses first on meaning, using clear and simple language. This helps pupils understand what is going on. The correct subject vocabulary can then be introduced later, when pupils are ready and confident.

Why this is not “dumbing down”

Simple explanations are not weak explanations. They are often the most powerful ones. A child who truly understands an idea in simple terms is better prepared to use subject vocabulary accurately later on.

Toby explanations are carefully structured so that ideas are correct and thoughtful, just presented in a way that makes sense to children.

How this fits the curriculum

Toby podcasts are designed to support the curriculum across subjects. They focus on key ideas that pupils are expected to understand, such as change,

movement, materials, sound, living things, and how people interact with places.

By helping pupils understand the underlying ideas, Toby makes classroom discussions, practical activities, and written work more meaningful. When children understand the “big idea”, they are more confident learners and better able to explain their thinking.

Toby can be used to introduce a topic, to pause and clarify during a lesson, or to revisit ideas that need strengthening.

How teachers can use Toby

Asking “Shall we ask Toby?” is a positive teaching choice. It shows pupils that learning is about understanding, not rushing. Toby acts as a friendly thinking partner who helps ideas make sense step by step.

Using Toby supports all learners, including those who need more time to grasp concepts, while still deepening understanding for more confident pupils.

A one-sentence rationale for parents

Toby helps children understand important ideas by explaining them clearly and using everyday examples, so learning feels confident and meaningful rather than confusing.