R: So this is basically just, like “how did it go?”, “what could we do better next year?” because this is the first time it’s ever been run

S: So they’re thinking it’s going to be a yearly thing is it?

R: Yeah we’re thinking so

S: That’ll be good then, yeah

R: Cause it’s super cool to work with the BBC right, to have that opportunity to-

S: It’s good to be consistent too, as well cause obviously if you teach one year with microbits-

R: Yeah

S: Cause it sounds like it used to be anyway, like, they had one off schemes and then they never continued.

R: Yeah cause hopefully, because it was a pilot scheme, they’re were trying to see how it might work out, so I’m talking to everybody. I’m talking to teachers, I’m talking to-

S: I’ve got emails I was totally meant to send to teachers! I’ll have to remember to do that

R: Oh you mean like your-

S: Yeah like materials and stuff, or are we putting in in a central…?

R: Well, I think if you email them to me- I’ll put an email out maybe and just say “hey everybody can you send the stuff to me” and I’ll put them somewhere like a Google drive or a- maybe not a google drive because it’s banned-

S: Really?

R: yeah, it’s banned apparently! But we’ll put them somewhere centrally, even if that’s just in a zip file or something.

S: Yeah

R: And then that’s quite cool cause everybody can see everything, everybody’s produced everything, so schools that maybe worked on one thing can see everything else and say “oh I like the sound of that.” But yeah, that’s kind of that… so this is kinda, how it went for you, what went well, what could we change next year to make things better…? But, we’ll start of with… can you tell me a little bit about how each of your lessons went?

S: Okay, yeah, if I remember [laughs]

R: [laughs] it was a little while ago now.

S:Yeah, right, so the first one was just like an intro to micro:bit… and what did we do? Yeah, we just messed around with the LEDs… oh yeah it was the tardis thing, so we uh tried to like get the tardis to dematerialise and rematerialize between the uh, microbits and that was alright. But I did find some of them had already used them in Year 7 I think? They were a bit ahead-

R: But not all of them?

S: I don’t know, there seemed to be a bit of a mix- I guess some people joined school late from other schools?

R: Ah yeah that’s true.

S: Uhm, but there seemed to be a bit- as soon as some students got them to compile straight away they kind of knew what they were doing..?

R: Hmm

S: But then obviously you have to target them for like- but they were like, really surprising- they like surprised me how great they were. For kids, they were pretty well behaved and they seemed pretty engaged. Well uhm, I mean, yeah-

R: Actually I was talking with the TEACHERF, I didn’t realise the issue with all the timetabling and stuff? Did you every meet TEACHERB?

S: Yeah I did, in the last lesson he was back from his leave.

R: Yeah because I had no idea was going on, it was just like…

S: I think it was really last minute for them, because I think- someone passed away in his family.

R: It’s an interesting thing to think about how that might happen, because it might… it might happen again.

S: Yeah, cover that sort of thing… like, in terms of organisation? I don’t know if it’s more on the school, like the reception don’t really know what’s going on, so you just ask for TEACHERF and he’s just waiting around… so I don’t know if it’s like… if it’s better to liaise with like their main admin team?

R: It’s a good point. Uhm, and making sure taxis are early enough, like 15 minutes early?

S: Taxis were alright in the end, it was just sort of… you don’t want to be too early and waiting around for ages… but it’s probably better safe than sorry I guess

R: Yeah cause I was thinking of, especially with the taxis- [laughs]

S: I was moaning a bit… probably too much to be fair, and I got there before the lessons every time. Like I got there before the lessons every time, there was one time that it was really last minute but I got there in the end.

R: I think… yeah it’s difficult especially because it was me booking them.

S: And you weren’t around to be fair

R: I was awake, when they needed sorting-

S: What was the time delay?

R: Five hours, so 8am here was like.. 3am there?

S: Oh god

R: It was an interesting week for me… but I think everybody got there in the end. Yeah, so that’s about taxis. I’m thinking for next year… did you find for paying for your own- being in control of your own taxis was, and knowing you were the person that booked them… do you think that works better?

S: It worked for me, as long as I know that I can claim them back, or if you literally just said- you can just get there however you want, or people might just drive or whatever I guess? And then we’ll just do- if it’s easy to reimburse for you then that might be the way to go. Cause I think, people might… people might cycle- maybe not with a massive tub of micro:bits-

R: Could take the taxi there the first time… Because I was like “Oh we’ll just put in a bunch of taxis” but then there were so many problems with the taxi company it was unreal-

R: Yeah, then people can have the choice then, because they can get an Uber or whatever-

S: Yeah, either we can say “oh there’s a budget here” so we can say to the admins-

R: Obviously not getting…. A limo

S: No, like, “You’ve got, say, 30-40 pounds across the thing to pay for taxis” and they might be ten pounds or something

R: and then if you went over-

S: and the be like “it’s this much to book your taxis” and get admin here to book them?

S: Only thing there is you’re putting more responsibility on the people… which shouldn’t be a problem, it’s only if you start having issues, then you blame a person and then what happens?

R: It’s an interesting one…

S: I guess at the moment if a school starts to complain you’d take responsibility for the-?

R: Yeah, yeah that’s the thing right?

S: Cause it’s all through the uni right?

R: If you… I’m trying to do it so you… because in the beginning I was like “Oh I’ll do the teaxis because it’ll be easier” and in the end it’ll be- it might have been a touch easier for some people but actually it being booked for me didn’t seem to be that easy, because some people weren’t sure how to do this, and maybe they didn’t feel like your taxis? Uhm

S: As long as people took responsibility and made sure they were there on time and did everything

R: So maybe the whole thing, is like, you get there however you want. Youc an either book through us or book your own then claim it back, then that works.

S: If you can do that, then you’d have to say “you have to be here at this time, otherwise people might do all sort of last minute-

R: Yeah

S: you say like “oh you have to be at the school fifteen minutes before”

R: Yeah, that’s a good idea… uhm… were there any other particular challenges that came up over the course of-?

S: What organisation-wise or just lessons?

R: Hmm I du-

S: Uhm

R: Well let’s just start on the proposals… uhm, so you wrote a two page proposal-

S: oh yeah of course-

R: I’m interested in how much of that proposal made it through to your final lessons?

S: The first one was basically identical to the proposal that lesson, that was the tardis stuff. The sonic screwdriver was uh… so… we got the microbit doing all the functions of the sonic screwdriver but… the original plan was to get like, this cut-out thing.. uhm-

R: That’s right, the paper thing-

S: In the end, that was dropped because of the amount of time it took.

R: Yup, absolutely yeah

S: I was thinking about doing the cut-outs at home, and uhm, bringing them in. But looking more into them, they had bits in the middle and you needed a craft knife really, because with scissors it would take forever really. But, given more time you could probably just do that… and it wasn’t essential, it was just for decoration really… and if they’d already built there thing and it was already inside the paper or whatever… and then it went wrong, you’d have to unpack it all.. and the last one we had to change because it was a Year 7 lesson in the end-

R: Yeah.

S: I kind of, used the program, the same program I’d made, but made the lesson simpler. The original lesson was they were going to have a maze, sort of thing, and they had to program it with a sort of loop, like “Forward four” and then like “right…” to guide them through it. For the Year 7s we just like, gave them a bit more free reign of what they wanted them to do.

R: Hmm, apparently they loved it. TeacherF was like-

S: Apparently they named one of them, I can’t remember what it was called.

R: That’s so cute.

S: Uhm, so TeacherF said there were five they had.

R: Yeah, they’ve got five.

S: I think there should have been six, because, were six ordered? Because I’ve got one spare?

R: There should have been, yeah. If you want to take that one along to-

S: And then, give it to them afterwards or?

R: Yeah if you want to take it along to the BBC, you can either leave it with me to take, or you- it might be easier- are you taking the train?

S: Yeah, taking the train.

R: Well I can take it with me on the bus, or- and then you don’t need to worry abut carrying it.

S: You did get the bus in the end?

[Irrelevant conversation]

R: So we’ve gone through challenges, we’ve gone through proposals, now we’ve got the lessons. How do you think the lessons went? Because obviously you’ve got like… a bit of preparation, a little bit of teacher training, not loads-

S: It was useful the technical side of micro:bits and stuff, and I guess the discipline stuff wasn’t necessary because they were pretty well behaved but if they did have to be quiet it was fairly straight forward, and if ti had got worse then I imagine the teacher would have taken over. But it was just a case of “look at the board. Be quiet” or whatever, they were pretty well behaved.

R: That’s good to hear! Yeah, the teachers are supposed to be there for that, because of course they do two years of training minimum to become a teacher, and you got… half a day [laughs]

S: Yeah, the first and last lesson I had TeacherF, but the middle lesson I had an English teacher, she was a bit less involved, she sort of just sat around. She tried to help out a bit, but yeah… the lessons, they went pretty well, they seemed excited about microbits and uhm-

R: That’s good!

S: -and a bit of programming stuff. And they’d done a bit of python, and it was a bit difficult to figure out what sort of stuff they’d covered before, because they’ve all done different things. I think they’d done basic loops and stuff.

R: So starting with a basic lesson was a good shout?

S: Yeah, fairly. I think they’d done basic loops and stuff like that, but uhm. I mean, yeah, it sort of had a Tardis element but that was basically just LEDs so- having, having yeah a sort of intro lesson, and making sure they understood the whole transferring of the files and stuff.

R: Yeah, transferring the files is probably the biggest part of the first lessons…

S: Yeah, well there was a couple of kids who weren’t in the first lessons… but I had these sheets so- it kind of helped them catch up a bit.

R: Hmm! One of the thing I’m interested in, is the skills you’ve learned doing this. Do you feel like you’ve gained anything? What do you feel you’ve gained?

S: Well, I’ve not really done any teaching before, so it’s like- a learning curve in terms of that… and uhm.. just sort of… I don’t know, it’s improved my presentation skills and how to convey an idea.

R: [laughs] yeah

S: I’m already a fairly patient person, so that- it wasn’t really tested that much though. And uh… well, obviously I was introduced to the whole microbit… and I hadn’t really touched the microbit before so that was good thing.

R: They’re good fun.

S: Yeah, yeah…

R: One of the thing I’m interested in-

S: Oh and like, making resources for like… teaching stuff- I’ve never done that before. It- that was really interesting.

S: I’m kinda interested in.. So computer science is… it’s quite technical. And then when you go into a job, you’re going to have to talk to people who aren’t so technical. The perfect example here is you have kids who’ve done a tiny bit of computer science, a little bit of computing in general. And then you have to go, and you’ve got all this knowledge about all this top level stuff, and how you think about how you talk about loops-

S: Translate it, yeah

R: Do you feel like that helped at all? If you were to go into your job now, instead of next year, and you had to pitch something to non-technical people-?

S: I did a bit of that on my placement, well, there was like a bit of customer support that we did where people had varying levels of understanding, they were different levels of understanding from different departments. Not to the degree of teaching kids… I think I was already decent at that, but it definitely made you think more about it.

R: That’s cool. So timeline-

S: Timelines?

R: because of the way it sat after the Easter holidays, because we needed to squish it in to the first three weeks back so then it wasn’t getting in the way of too much stuff. If we could run it again, and it could be run at any point during the year, and it doesn’t have to be contained to three weeks, it just happened to be how I squished it together. Is there, something, is there a better time you think it could be done?

S: It’s a good point, it’s a good point. I think for, for first years it was probably perfect, because I don’t know how much they have towards the end?

R: I think it was just deadlines and exams.

S: Yeah, it’s not to bad. I don’t think I would have had it… before Christmas because… for third year anyway they encourage you to load loads of modules.

R: yeah

S: and there were tons of deadlines. It was quite nice having Easter to prepare, although there was a dissertation, it gives you a bit more time to manage and sort of work out when you could do your- so I think in that way it was good, it’s just, obviously it’s not ideal in third year because of the dissertation, but being- having- because mine were pretty close together in one period I could have some time after… so I think it was pretty good where it was, but maybe- I guess you could just do it before Easter, so I probably wouldn’t change it too much, cause you’ve got January exams haven’t we as well when we get back as well.

R: Yeah

S: I suppose you could do it after January exams, I guess that’s a bit of a break period, like around February or something. But…

R: Yeah I was thinking- like if you do it too early in the first semester because people won’t know what’s going on, and you’re still settling in, then you’ve got end of semester exams and coursework and exams in January-

S: There’s always going to be something.

R: exactly, yeah. So it’s like, how can you fit that in?

S: Did you get as many people as you were expecting?

R: I didn’t know how many I was expecting to be honest, it was a bit all over the place really. Other universities were doing it, so I was just like “whoever joins up, good?” But because it was advertised during exam season to the rest of the- a lot of people didn’t see it, so I’m maybe thinking about doing something in the first semester, like lead-up stuff, some workshops and things

S: hmm

R: and then be like “you’ve seen the micro:bit, you’ve seen what it does, here’s this super cool opportunity you can do with the BBC” I think that’s kinda the way to do it.

S: Was it just shown to computer science people?

R: Computer science and engineering.

S: Okay

R: But I’m also thinking of doing an option for the career development module, for basically the same thing?

S: Oh that’s a good idea.

R: So instead of getting paid you get credit-

S: -get assessed-

R: -and then it will fit in your timetable.

S: That would be pretty good I think, it would be pretty popular.

R: I hope so. And then it wouldn’t just be just the going into schools and stuff, it would be doing research and stuff here. So it’s a bit of an insight into how a research lab works, so I’m hoping that would be fairly popular but… it depends how well I can push it.

S: yeah [laughs]

R: the option should be up on the website now. So uh, that’s pretty much it. There’s just a couple of- so support. Across the process is there more that could have been done by the BBC, from me, from the teachers?

S: Uhm, the only thing I’d say- well, you were great-

R: Yay!

S: If I ever had like, a question, then you were really quick to reply and everything. Uh, so like, as a port of call to get help that was great-

R: Was whatsapp easier than email?

S: Yes, definitely, like if you’re in a rush, or if you’re in the middle of a lesso- well not a lesson, but in the middle of trying to sort stuff out, it’s quicker. And, and having the group chat to talk about issues and stuff. The school stuff we’ve covered, like the organisation and stuff-

R: Yeah

S: Like, managing lots of different schools, I’m not sure how you’d improve that to be honest, guess it takes effort from them I suppose. BBC-wise, I guess the only thing is if they provide content that we could use, like clips and stuff that we can use-

R: I think that was the original plan, and that was why it was narrowed to Dr Who and Springwatch, because they were going to get stuff filmed. For it. For the lessons.

S: ah okay

R: and then they realised that that would be totally.

S: Yeah, it might be totally overboard. But even if they just gave us like, a repository, of just like, general themed things. Like things you could use for your design, or a few short clips or- cause I’m pretty sure they’ve done some Dr Who microbit centred things before.

R: they have, yeah

S: Got uh- obviously you can pull things off youtube but uh-

R: having access to those would be-

S: Yeah, if there were some kind of…

R: one of the things I was thinking of the schools say what they wanted, like the teachers saying “oh we want something to do with loops”-

S: Oh that would definitely-

R: and then the kids being like “oh we want to do spaceships”-

S: Yeah that’s the thing actually, the schools should communicate more- in my case anyway, exactly what the kids have been taught, because I tried to get it out of the teachers but there was obviously a bit of a mixup, and TEACHERF obviously wasn’t always teaching this class… it was weird.

R: I think something where the kids can go and say “hey we want this”

S: Yeah definitely

R: And then there’s like, five options that you can apply to… or you can apply to all five, but then schools and the BBC judge who goes through. And then I think, there’s a little bit of a closer link rather than “Micro:bits!”

S: Yeah rather than just being external, and then, uhm, being like yeah… and making sure you’re not just treading over ground they’ve already covered.

R: Yeah, yeah that’s really interesting. So , I think that’s pretty much it. I don’t know if there’s anything else you can think of off the top of your head?

S: Uhm, no not really.