



## CASE STUDY REPORT

# Leading teacher programme: Supporting a Year 6 class teacher to improve standards in writing

Jennifer Hutchinson

*This study was originally published in 2010 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.*

## Abstract

**Background:** The purpose of the study was to raise the attainment of a group of children on the Level 3/4 border in writing by introducing strategies to enable them to learn and improve.

**Aims:** The main aim of the development work was to raise the attainment of a group of children on the Level 3/4 border in writing, by providing support and guidance to the Year 6 teacher.

**Methods:** The participants in this case study were a Literacy Coordinator, a Year 6 teacher, a Year 5 teacher, and members of the Nottinghamshire Literacy Team. Methods used included reviewing APP assessments, discussing advantages and disadvantages of a topic-based approach, modeling guided writing sessions, using whiteboards, and using WAGOLL to stimulate children and raise expectations.

**Findings:** The main findings of this case study are that the use of guided writing sessions and other strategies to support children in the improvement of their writing can lead to improved attainment of Level 4 in writing, as evidenced by test results. The key to success is empathy between the leading and partner teachers.

**Implications:** The findings suggest that guided writing sessions, when used regularly, can help to improve writing skills and raise standards. Empathy between the leading and partner teachers is essential for successful replication of the work.

*This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.*

**Keywords:** Primary education; English - writing

## Introduction

### What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

As Literacy Coordinator, I have been instrumental in raising standards in writing in my own school over a number of years. We began as a school needing extra support from Literacy Consultants as an 'Intensive' school within Nottinghamshire. Since that point in time, our results have climbed steadily and we are now achieving results which are above the national average in writing.

When I was invited by the Nottinghamshire Literacy Team to join the Leading Teacher programme to support a Year 6 teacher with the aim of raising the attainment of a group of children on the Level 3/4 border, I felt that I would like to share my ideas and experiences, hopefully to good effect.

### Who might find this case study useful?

- Teacher

## Description

### What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- English - writing

### How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

Teacher expertise:

- development of strategies to enable children to learn and improve, hence to raise standards.

Pupil Learning:

- attainment of Level 4 in writing in the targeted group
- improved ability of children to check their own work with a view to improvement.

### What were your success criteria?

Teacher:

- confident use of strategies to support children in the improvement of their writing

Pupils:

- to develop and use a personal scaffold to achieve writing at Level 4
- visible use of checking and redrafting to raise the standard of their own writing

### What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- CVA data
- Observation outcomes
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupils' work
- Test results

### Describe the CPD approaches you used

As part of the national Year 6 Leading Teacher Project, I supported the teacher in my partner school in assessing and then improving the standards of writing of a target group of children who were on the Level 3/4 border.

We began by reviewing the APP assessments for the target children, with particular reference to assessment focuses 3,4, 5 and 6. The partner teacher then explained how the school organised its curriculum - in this case it was a topic based approach with a great emphasis on cross-curricular links. We discussed the advantages and disadvantages of this approach, in particular for children in Year 6 in the run up to their NC tests.

Common problem areas within the children's writing were highlighted and we discussed how these areas may be improved, in particular with the use of guided writing. Details from a Powerpoint on guided writing which I had delivered to staff in my own school was used to illustrate how guided writing should be incorporated into Literacy teaching on a regular basis. It was highlighted that the group receiving the guided writing session need not always be the same - it will vary depending upon individual need.

One of the development areas was chosen and it was agreed that I should model a guided writing session which was incorporated into the week's lesson planning. In this lesson, emphasis was placed on paired discussion between the children. The children practised what they were to write (Talk for Writing) and then recorded on whiteboards. The use of whiteboards, when work can quickly and easily be altered is very empowering for children of all abilities. The session had a very positive feedback from the class teacher who, although a mathematician, realised that much of her own regular classroom practice was in fact of a high quality and that the principles of guided writing were transferable to and from other subject areas.

We continued over a number of weeks to outline how the areas of weakness in the children's writing could be redressed, and the Year 6 teacher undertook her own guided writing session which I then observed. It was important that as a leading teacher I understood fully the teaching methods employed in that school and how I might support the development of writing within those parameters, with a teacher who was experienced herself.

One useful tip for the teacher was to use the children's own weaknesses to inform the teacher - as in Assessment for Learning - but to give the children ownership and hints so that they are able to remember what must be included in a piece of independent writing. This might be the use of diagrams, abbreviations or mnemonics.

We shared ways of recording the child's individual targets in a meaningful and developmental way, one which they would use as a matter of course in their writing. The ideas ranged from tabletop tips and stickers to level related writing target sheets in the rear of their Literacy books, through to the use of WAGOLL (What a good one looks like) to stimulate the children and to raise their own expectations.

Once the Year 6 teacher was confident, the programme moved to the next step, which was the inclusion of the Year 5 teacher. This began by a scrutiny and moderation of the work of a target group of year 5 children. It was planned that the Year 6 teacher would go through a similar programme that which we had undertaken ourselves, this time the Year 6 teacher mentoring her colleague.

### What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

The powerpoint begins with an explanation of the whole writing process, from reading as a writer and capturing of ideas, through to teacher demonstration and independent writing. It then continues with a detailed look at how guided writing relates to both shared and independent writing, and how a guided writing group should be formed.

### Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff

## How were you supported?

The programme in Nottinghamshire was coordinated by the Primary Strategy Literacy team who provided a format for the sessions. Prior to the commencement of the programme, leading teachers met together and were trained in the qualities needed to successfully carry out the role of leading teacher and the empathy needed if the partner teacher was not to feel belittled or patronised. This included role play sessions undertaken as both the leading teacher and the teacher receiving feedback. Guidelines were also issued to the leading teachers.

Once the programme was underway members of the Literacy team were available for advice if needed.

The partner schools were combined with leading teachers. These were then organised into clusters. At regular intervals throughout the programme the members of the clusters met together to share ideas and good practice, and to evaluate what had already taken place. I think that it is true to say that both partner and leading teachers benefitted from this sharing of ideas and techniques.

## Impact

### What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

As a direct result of the programme the Year 6 children were gaining more expertise in understanding the features needed to produce a Level 4 piece of writing, and were developing the skills to amend and improve their own work.

On the part of the teacher, the importance of guided writing as an integral part of the teaching of writing had been highlighted, and she had gained confidence in its use. This will be used in future planning and should, therefore, have an advantageous effect on writing standards.

### Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

A more long term impact on the school will be the transference of these techniques to all teachers throughout the school as teaching methods and hence enhanced learning are cascaded down from the Year 6 to Year 5 and onwards. One important feature, I feel, is that of teacher expectation which should be as high as possible.

### Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

A quote from the Year 6 teacher, 'Positives include understanding how to get better value by really focusing on the skills that will make a difference, to later learning and to SAT results.'

### Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Test results

### Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

### Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Children enjoyed their guided writing sessions and were eager to comment on their own and others' work, supporting each other to improve.

When writing independently, there was evidence that children were beginning to use their 'memory' techniques to support the inclusion of elements within their own work.

Of the 6 targeted children, all achieved a Level 4 in their Key Stage 2 English tests, with 5 out of the 6 being awarded a Level 4 for writing. These were very pleasing results.

### What has been the impact on teaching?

The Year 6 teacher widened her teaching strategies to better support children with the development of writing, particularly at the level 3/4 cusp.

The Year 6 teacher claims that as a result of the programme her own teaching has improved. She welcomed the 'opportunity to clarify the use of guided work - and to witness the obvious successes.' In addition, she has since had the opportunity to cascade knowledge and ideas about guided work to the other staff in the school.

### Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

Partner teacher having observed a guided writing session with the target group: "Oh, so you mean it's just teaching them!"

### Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from planning
- Teacher perceptions

### Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Partner teacher understanding the value of guided writing used regularly and hence its inclusion in planning of units of work in the future.

### What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

In my role as leading teacher supporting a partner Year 6 teacher, I was instrumental in developing practices to support the learning of children, with particular reference to writing. It was part of the programme that Year 5 teachers would benefit from this input by the cascading of ideas internally within the school. It is then hoped that this process will continue throughout the school.

### Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

As a result of internal training by the Year 6 teacher, all staff are now confident in the use of guided sessions in writing as a way of improving the skills of a particular group of children in a targeted area.

## Summary

### What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The crucial feature in the success of any such programme is the development of empathy between the leading and the partner teachers, both having respect for each other's professionalism and skills. It is vital that any teacher visiting a school suggests strategies which they feel will be useful in that particular context, bearing in mind that the partner school may very well work in a different way to their own.

### What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

Key resources for the actual improvement in writing have already been mentioned. However, another school may need support tailored in an entirely different way. The use of APP to assess children's needs - or an alternative type of writing analysis is important to highlight areas for development.

### What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

The training and advice that I received from the Nottinghamshire Literacy team were very helpful. In the area of resources, those outlined in earlier sections would be useful. These can all be found either online, or in materials previously published by the DSCF (now DfE)

### If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

I believe that an important quality for any teacher undertaking the role of leading teacher in another school would be ability to empathise with staff in the partner school. In my view it is essential to remember that these colleagues are themselves undoubtedly very skilled - perhaps in another curricular area. I know that I certainly learned from my partner teacher.

In addition, it is an advantage if the leading teacher has the ability and experience to understand where support and advice are necessary and to understand that you have not been placed in the partner school to 'change the world'.

## Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- Scaffold for writing

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