



CASE STUDY REPORT

Improving writing attainment in Year 6

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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 attainment in writing in schools identified by LEA as having a gap in levels of attainment between reading and writing, by setting targets, conducting guided writing group work, and improving independent writing skills.

Aims: The main aim was to raise attainment in writing to bring it in line with reading, by setting targets, conducting guided writing group work, and improving independent writing skills.

Methods: The participants included a leading Year 6 teacher, Local Authority Literacy Consultants, Headteachers, Middle Leaders, National Strategies Consultants, Senior Leadership Teams, Subject Leaders, and Teachers. Methods used included focus teaching, target setting, modelling of guided writing, impact on whole class, use of success criteria, and peer learning with close support of lead teachers.

Findings: The main findings are that the programme was successful in raising attainment in writing, with 16 out of 18 children achieving NC Level 4. Teachers were more confident in using guided writing and APP grids, and the teaching of writing was embedded as good practice across staff.

Implications: The findings suggest that targeted focus teaching, setting clear targets, modelling guided writing, and making children aware of their progress can have a positive impact on pupil learning. This can be achieved through CPD sessions, resources, and collaboration between teachers.

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

Keywords: Cheshire education; English - writing

Introduction

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

My role as a leading Year 6 teacher was to support other Year 6 teachers in schools identified by LEA as having a significant gap in levels of attainment between reading and writing. The programme was intended to raise attainment in writing, bringing it more in line with reading. Each lead teacher was allocated three schools including their own school. A focus group of children was selected from each school. The criteria used to select children was border line NC level 3 / 4, were children had been predicted to achieve level 4 but were not on track.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- Subject leader
- 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?

- Setting targets to improve writing skills to be shared with children so they knew what needed to be done to improve
- Involve children in guided writing group work
- Improve independent writing skills
- Build confidence of class teachers to set targets, assess work and carry out guided writing sessions

What were your success criteria?

- Teacher assessments show significant improvement in independent writing skills (comparing examples of work before and after programme)
- Children achieve NC level 4 in writing by the end of the Summer term. (Judgements to be made through teacher assessment and end of KS2 NC tests).

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

- Learning walks / study visits
- Logs or interviews
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupil consultation data
- Pupils' work
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

Leading teacher CPD:

- Regular INSET where lead teachers were supported by advisers
- Regular cluster meetings held where lead teacher and supported teachers met to evaluate programme to date and discuss pupil progress/new materials available

CPD approaches in supported school:

- I identified the focus group alongside supported teaching using Mapping Attainment Grids (MAGs)
- We interviewed children to establish their own perceptions of writing.
- We identified areas of weakness using APP grids, and set targets
- We planned collaboratively using: Talk for Writing, Support for Writing, Grammar for Writing and the teacher's own resources and experience.

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

Primary National strategy writing exemplar materials & APP grids

Who provided you with support?

- External agency
- Middle leader
- Subject leader

How were you supported?

Supported by Local Authority Literacy Consultants through CPD days, where materials and expertise were provided.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

- Pupils have increased in confidence in their own writing ability
- Pupils have a more independent approach to learning, using self help strategies where necessary
- Pupils more confident to be adventurous with both attempts at sentence structures and vocabulary choices
- Pupils more familiar with writing a wider range of genres
- Pupils more confident to discuss features within texts both with adults and also amongst themselves

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

- Leading Y6 teacher and supported teachers have worked together to raise the quality of guided writing sessions and to maintain a consistent approach to learning for focus groups of children in all schools
- Leading Y6 teacher has observed guided writing sessions in Y5 and worked with Y5 teacher to raise writing standards prior to Y6 entry
- Y6 teacher has reported back good practice to whole school at staff meetings
- School keen to further raise standards by putting forward Y2 teacher on similar programme to have impact on earlier years
- Evaluative decisions have taken place throughout the process both within own school and also

between leading Y6 teacher and supported teachers

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Quotes from children in focus groups:

- " I like it when you write with us and we come up with some ideas the same"
- "I get now what I need to put in so that someone else will like to read my writing."
- "I don't usually enjoy writing but this was fun!"
- "I think I'm really good at writing now."

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- CVA data
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

- 16 out of the sample group of 18 children achieved NC L4 in Writing
- The two children who started the year on level 2A made a full level progress by the end of the year showing considerable progress both through teacher assessment and end of KS2 National Tests

What has been the impact on teaching?

- Teachers are more able to use APP material/grids to make judgements and to identify clear next steps that can be achieved to increase writing standards
- Supported teachers feel confident to use guided writing in a more effective personalised way to small groups of targeted children
- The teaching of writing has had its profile raised within leading Y6 teacher's school across all year groups through sharing of good practice.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

- Increased confidence of teachers
- Observations evidence show increased level of good or above lessons
- Data shows increased levels of attainment

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

- Leading Y6 teacher and Y5 teacher within school not on SMT so experienced effective teaching of writing has been embedded as good practice across staff.
- Leading Y6 teacher to participate in programme again next year in order to receive further training/ access to new material available for use within both own school and supported schools.

- Planning of renewed frame work reviewed to ensure that guided writing is built into plans effectively

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

- Evidence from SIP visits - positive outcomes
- Data and tracking
- APP being used more confidently across all schools concerned as a method of AfL

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

- Focus teaching
- Target setting
- Modelling of guided writing
- Impact on whole class
- Use of success criteria (marking ladders)
- Peer learning - close support of lead teachers

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

- APP grids
- Talk for Writing

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

- Introduction to what works well site.
- Talk for writing.
- Strategies for Immediate Impact on Writing Standards, Ros Wilson.
- Writing Exciting sentences, Alan Peat.
- Literacy Progress Unit Writing Organisation.
- APP grids.

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

Clear assessment using APP grids, familiarisation of skills needed to attain each of the NC levels, focused target setting, guided group sessions, children aware of targets and tracking their progress against these.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

Continue to work with cluster to develop teaching of writing. Year 6 teacher in the cluster schools to work with year 5 teachers in their school and disseminate good practice. Lead teachers to deliver INSET to other year 6 teachers in their area in next academic year.

Supplementary Materials

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

- Improving your writing (presentation)
- Writing Class grid blank
- Y6 sentence level features
- Models of effective classroom-focused collaborative CPD

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About 'What Works Well'

This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. Most were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use. This report was awaiting final approval when the National Strategies site was archived.

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