



## CASE STUDY REPORT

# Taking risks - making a difference: Working as a specialist teacher with Every Child a Writer

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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 teachers' awareness of how to plan a three tier model using a more creative approach to writing, with the aim of securing Level 3b in writing at the end of Year 4.

**Aims:** The main aim was to raise teachers' awareness of how to plan a three tier model using a more creative approach to writing, in order to secure Level 3b in writing at the end of Year 4.

**Methods:** The participants in this case study are teachers, administrative and support staff, carers, headteachers, middle leaders, parents, pupils, senior leadership teams, school improvement partners, and subject leaders. Methods used included in-class coaching and support, cluster meetings, teacher assessment, test results, observation outcomes, pupil work, and CPD materials and research. The aim was to improve writing skills and secure Level 3 in writing at the end of Year 4.

**Findings:** The main findings of this case study are that a more creative approach to writing through the primary framework can help accelerate the rates of progress in writing, and that CPD approaches such as guided writing and talk for writing can help pupils become more engaged and confident in their writing.

**Implications:** The findings suggest that a cross-curricular approach to planning and teaching, using the Primary Framework, can help to engage pupils and accelerate their progress in writing. It also highlights the importance of allowing time for pupils to talk and develop their ideas, and of providing quality resources.

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

**Keywords:** Primary education; English - reading; English - speaking and listening; English - writing

## Introduction

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

As a specialist teacher working within the Every Child a Writer (ECaW) programme, I wanted to raise teachers' awareness of how to plan a three tier model using a more creative approach to writing through:

- Improving quality first teaching for the whole class
- Improving guided writing to meet group needs
- Providing 1:1 teaching for those children that need it most

My main role as a specialist teacher with ECaW was to develop effective practice and accelerate the rates of progress in Years 3 and 4, in order to secure L3b in writing at the end of Year 4.

As my own school was developing a skills based curriculum, I was keen to explore a more creative approach to using the primary framework with the intention of developing this approach in my supported schools.

### Who might find this case study useful?

- Administrative and support staff
- Carer
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- Parent
- Pupil
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Subject leader
- Teacher

## Description

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

- English - reading
- English - speaking and listening
- English - writing

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

Ensure faster progress in writing at the beginning of Key Stage 2 by

- Developing teachers' ability to make effective use of the support for writing materials
- Ensuring pupils write thoughtful and imaginative texts

Establishing shared and guided writing as part of general classroom practice

- Making effective use of APP to inform guided writing groups

### What were your success criteria?

- Securing Level 3 in writing at the end of year 4
- Making two levels of progress in writing across the key stage
- Fully engaging pupils to write imaginative, thoughtful text
- Teachers taking risks to engage and motivate children to write

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

- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupils' work
- Test results

## Describe the CPD approaches you used

As a Leading Teacher involved with ECaW I worked in collaboration with colleagues to develop key skills in the effective teaching of writing. In each of my supported schools I worked alongside a teacher from Year 3 and one teacher from Year 4.

In the Autumn term:

- I visited each school for 3 half day visits
- I reviewed current planning and assessment procedures, helped to identify pupils' writing targets (from the Support for Writing materials) and Success Criteria
- Visited a literacy lesson with a particular focus on the teaching of writing, for example modelled writing
- Reviewed planning and progress and the next steps in learning
- Helped to identify pupils for 1:1 tuition and monitored ITPs
- Led a cluster meeting with all three schools. Guided writing was identified by the teachers as the CPD focus for the meeting.

In the Spring term:

- I visited each school for 2x1 day of in class coaching and support in an area we had considered suitable for further development. Although the CPD focus of the visits varied from school to school depending on the areas identified, one of my overall aims was to build trust and ensure we all enjoyed the learning journey.
- Led a cluster meeting with all three schools. Guided writing was identified by the teachers as the CPD focus for the meeting.

In the Summer term:

- I visited each school for 1 day of in-class coaching and support. Once again the focus varied depending on the needs of the children and the teacher.
- Final session of the summer term reviewed the process of support with the headteacher, subject leader and class teacher.
- A final cluster meeting was held to talk about and reflect on classroom practice and consider the children's progress and learning.

## Who provided you with support?

- Local authority staff
- Middle leader
- Senior management
- Subject leader

## How were you supported?

- Senior management in my own school encouraged a cross curricular approach to learning following a skills based curriculum
- My ECaW consultant was keen to develop a 'taking risks in the classroom' approach and to see it cascade out to my supported schools
- Teachers in the same year group worked collaboratively planning and advising to support each other
- Budget provided in my own school to enable specialist to attend for a whole day

## Impact

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

- Pupils are more aware of their writing targets and what they need to improve.
- Guided Writing has helped pupils to write in an environment which encourages a sharing of ideas and opinions.
- Pupils are using talk to rehearse ideas, practise composition and refine and evaluate their learning progress which in turn leads to a clearer outcome of written work.
- By negotiating their own success criteria pupils are aware of the learning intention and expected outcome.

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

- If a cross curricular approach is developed for the whole topic, the children develop skills and vocabulary that will scaffold their writing.
- Pupils need to feel 'comfortable' about their writing. Shared, guided and small group is all less threatening to reluctant writers. When they share the responsibility, it encourages a lot of talk and discussion about writing. Children are more likely to have a go: it promotes confidence and enjoyment.
- Pupils are keen to write for a purpose and particularly enjoy praise from their parents and families.
- Sharing good practice with other teachers promotes a healthy climate that 'gives permission' to try out different ideas and resources.
- Planning through the phases allows teachers a more holistic approach to writing which relies on quality rather than quantity.
- Pupils need to be aware of their targets and why they are working towards them.
- Pupils need to be encouraged to negotiate their own success criteria; by doing so it will enable all groups to achieve success.

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

"What are you doing to him, he wants to write stories all the time" - Year 3 parent

"I know how to write now, shall I show you?" - Year 3 pupil (boy)

"I think I'm just like a real author now" - Year 3 pupil (girl)

"I just want to write another chapter in my book, is that OK?" - Year 3 pupil (boy)

"I've never seen him so interested in anything, it's been fantastic" - parent

"Thank you so much, I'm going to use some of those ideas in my classroom" - class teacher from another school

## Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

## Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

## Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Quality of pupils' writing
- Observations
- Pupil progress data - Please see attached upload

## What has been the impact on teaching?

- Teachers now approach planning in a more 'relaxed fashion' and give time for 'preparation activities' before writing
- Children are more in charge of their learning and with the children shaping their learning teachers enjoy refreshing and often unexpected lessons
- Using previous lessons' activities as resources, the classroom becomes a positive learning environment
- Teachers are more willing to share ideas and resources.
- Professional dialogue is ongoing and leads to continuous development
- Teachers in supported schools now use the Support for Writing materials to align areas of weakness identified in APP assessments towards key curricular targets and objectives
- The materials will help teachers to close the gap for pupils by focusing on the critical areas of writing (strands 9,10 and 11)

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

"I didn't really understand what guided writing was but now I do it makes such a difference" Year 4 teacher

"I like the way the children guide the writing, now they tell me what to write" Year 3 teacher

"I've learned not to interfere too much - after all it's their writing" Year 3 teacher

## Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Teacher perceptions

## Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

- Teachers in supported schools now have greater confidence in children's ability to work independently
- Children who have taken an active part in the learning process have a much clearer idea of the intended outcome
- Teachers now provide interesting, carefully planned activities which ensure all children are enthusiastic about their learning

- Teachers in supported schools now regularly assess and review pupil progress and discuss the next steps in learning
- The use of 'Talk for Writing' has brought about an increased engagement in writing by pupils who were formally reluctant writers
- Developing AFL has allowed children to further engage with success criteria and improve work

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

- Staff now have a greater awareness of using APP
- Teachers now have a greater awareness of the Primary Framework and are developing the ability to plan units linked to the Skills Based Curriculum
- Closer monitoring and tracking of writing across the school
- Training and focus on guided writing has impacted on more inexperienced teachers becoming aware of the needs of pupils
- Upskilled TAs by INSET training

### Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

- There has been demonstrable accelerated progress in writing
- ECaW Leading teacher now working alongside the Literacy Co-ordinator
- Home school 'rolling out' ECaW for a second year
- There is a growing culture of sharing practice and developing guided writing into Literacy planning

## Summary

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

Being a specialist teacher with ECaW.

Being part of the project has provided me with many opportunities to develop my own skills and knowledge which I have been able to explore and apply in my own classroom. Through training and guidance I have developed the confidence and skills to support teachers in my own and other schools and demonstrate effective practice. I was invited to Kent's Subject Leaders ISP conference in July 2010 as the theme for the day was "Taking risks - making a difference." As this had been something that I had been exploring with teachers in the ECaW programme I was asked to provide a presentation of my experience and learning journey. I received very positive evaluative feedback from those present, with many favourable comments such as:

"Writing through risk taking session contained many excellent ideas"

"ECaW is a great way forward and has inspired me to make changes in teaching and learning of writing"

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

- A cross curricular approach to planning and teaching
- Plan within your year group or phase using the resources on the Primary Framework
- Begin with finding out what the children want to learn about the topic in that way they will be more interested and ready to learn
- Allow time for the children to talk and develop their ideas through drama and role play
- Understand that there might not be as much writing in pupils' books, but to focus on the end result - it is quality rather than quantity
- Invite the parents in at the end of the unit to share the children's success as writers

- Make sure you have quality and suitable resources. Include film, books, other adults, specialists and other children

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

I am moving to KS1 and am keen to develop Talk for Writing with Year 1 and its subsequent impact on emerging writers.

## Supplementary Materials

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

- Presentation-space edited 1.pdf
- pupil progress for case study.doc

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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. They 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.

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