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CASE STUDY REPORT

A whole school approach to guided writing

Claire Warner

This study was originally published in 2009 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 improve the writing skills of small groups of children in school through a personalised approach, CPD, and evaluation of results.

Aims: The main aim of this development work was to improve children's writing skills through a personalised approach, guided writing training, and support from the LA.

Methods: Participants included teachers, middle leaders, subject leaders, support staff, and LA consultants, all of whom worked together to improve writing for small groups of children. Methods used included CPD sessions, guided writing training, time to trial guided writing, evaluation/discussion of benefits and barriers, support from LA, whole-school approach, and systems to help children work independently.

Findings: The main findings of this case study are that introducing a renewed framework, guided writing training, and support from the LA have resulted in improved writing results, increased confidence in pupils, and improved teaching and school organisation.

Implications: The findings suggest that introducing a renewed framework, guided writing training, and giving teachers time to trial guided writing can have a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership.

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?

Small groups of children throughout school were not making as much progress as expected in writing.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Support staff
- Middle leader
- 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?

Through:

- A personalised approach to learning
- Ensure that all children are making good progress or better in writing
- To improve children's knowledge, understanding and application of text structure and sentence structure
- Children to be challenged appropriately.

What were your success criteria?

- End of year results
- Teacher assessment
- Have children's writing improved? (comparison of written work before and after with focus on sentence structure and text cohesion)

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

- All teachers in school had CPD around guided writing and the suggested teaching sequence
- See the attached document for a timeline of CPD events
- Consultant used this work as part of an NPQH project
- This work supported other projects and developments in school such as introduction to Renewed Framework and the Lead Learners project (looking at raising teaching to outstanding)

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

Who provided you with support?

- Other

How were you supported?

- LA Consultant delivered CPD on guided writing
- All teachers attended the LA's centre based renewed framework training
- LA consultant worked with the school throughout the implementation of guided writing

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

- Children have developed in confidence
- Children have a more independent approach to learning, using self help strategies where necessary
- Children are more confident when taking 'risks' in writing such as attempting tricky words or more advanced forms of sentence structures
- Children are familiar with a wider range of texts
- Children feel more confident when discussing writing with peers and with adults

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

- The school worked together and maintained a consistent approach
- Headteacher worked with LA consultant to monitor guided writing sessions
- Evaluative discussions took place throughout the process

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

OFSTED 2008 "An outstanding aspect of some writing lessons is the involvement of pupils in assessing their own progress to a very clear set of criteria. The pupils response demonstrates that this makes a very strong contribution to their understanding of how to write in a range of different styles."

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- CVA data
- Data comparison of cohorts
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Logs or interviews
- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

- 2008 writing results had improved by 11.2% at L4 and 11.2% at L5 (in comparison to the 2007 National Curriculum test results)
- Progress in other year groups has also shown improvement, with significant progress in years 2,5 and 6
- Half termly tracking sheets show 80% of children making at least 2 sub-levels over the year

- As part of network of similar schools, several staff have been involved with learning walks in other schools. Two teachers are also involved in planning a learning walk in the school, looking at the use of success criteria in Literacy (as part of the leading from the middle programme)

What has been the impact on teaching?

- Teachers are making teaching and learning more personalised to individuals or small groups
- Teachers are using more AFL strategies to support planning and teaching

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

"I can now look at my writing and how it can be improved." Y2 pupil

"I am interested in how a clever author's imagination helps their writing." Y6 pupil

These quotes were collected when a LA consultant interviewed some children in school.

Evidence of impact on teaching

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

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Teachers now feel much more secure in their delivery of guided writing, lesson observations have shown teachers are confidently applying the strategies in their planning and teaching. OFSTED judged the majority of teaching to be good and outstanding.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

There has been a dramatic improvement in school organisation most notably in the emergence of two very strong middle leaders. There has been a whole school approach to the improvement of writing which has included TAs being asked to attend training sessions alongside teachers. The Literacy leader has been given a TLR and has been involved in the lead learners programme run by the LA.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

- Lead Learners (LA programme) – middle leaders now have greater role
- Y5 teacher now modelling good practice to other schools/teachers – (regional adviser visited school)
- Pupil voice informally as part of AFL and individual target setting
- The school has been implementing AFL for two years and it is still evolving. Currently we are focusing on AFL in Numeracy as part of our school development in school.
- Renewed Framework – gave us the opportunity to review planning and to look closely and consider changing some of our practices (e.g the use of guided writing)

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

- Intro of the renewed framework
- Guided writing training
- Time to 'have a go'

- Feedback from observations
- Support from LA
- All teachers on board

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

- Training from Consultant
- Discussions around models to support teacher delivering group work
- Renewed framework training
- e-framework

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

- Look at benefits of guided writing
- Use CPD materials from the National Strategy to see quality guided writing lessons
- Let teachers have time to trial guided writing
- Evaluate/discuss the benefits and barriers of guided writing
- Support each other
- Look at planning documents/support/templates for guided writing
- Could use LA/AST support if available
- Have a whole-school approach
- Make sure systems are in place to help children to work independently e.g., displays, journals, peer supporters, post-it note questions
- Celebrate success

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

Using Support for Writing materials from the National Strategy to help with steps to success and targets for children in writing

Supplementary Materials

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

- Timeline of CPD events

About Camtree

Camtree: the Cambridge Teacher Research Exchange is a global platform for close-to-practice research in education. Based at Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, Camtree draws on high-quality research from around the world to support educators to reflect on their practice and carry out inquiries to improve learning in their own classrooms and organisations. You can find out more about Camtree and its digital library at www.camtree.org.

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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