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The impact of Adaptive Teaching scaffolds and models in writing

Supporting progress in writing for SEND and EAL learners

School/Background Context

The school is a large, inner city primary school in the West Midlands. There are 571 children on roll. We have recently grown in pupil numbers which has changed the EAL profile of our school (50% are identified as EAL). In general, our learners enter school at a lower-than-average start point due to poor communication and language ability and our results at each Key Stage continue to be broadly in line with age related expectation or better so progress is good. 14% (82 children) of our school have special educational needs and 2% (11 children) have an EHCP.

The Challenge

We have recently joined a new writing scheme and embarked on a project alongside other schools in the region. As part of this, we were asked to bring along books from our schools which unfortunately did not compare in terms of standards. As the scheme was new to all year groups, identifying adaptive teaching strategies was key to supporting teaching and learning. When observing lessons in the early implementation of the scheme, it was clear that some learners were having too much support and were making little progress due to there not being enough challenge. Additionally, some learners were not having enough adaptive teaching and were overwhelmed in lessons without resources to support and draw from.

Lessons were not motivating for the poorer writers because they had tasks such as copying out pre-written sentences and using given pictures to structure their writing for them.

Data from the current cohort of Year 1 pupils was investigated and the percentage of children that met their Early Learning Goals for writing in Reception was not reflective in early Year 1 teaching and books examined. Additionally, a Year 1 teacher was on long term sick with a new teacher taking over and so this year group was chosen as there was a definite need for support.

What They Did

Initially, the action plan was based on teacher feedback of the lessons alongside observations of them. This was hard to do in the second Year 1 class as the teacher was new to role, so it was predominantly drawn from the class with the more experienced teacher and then rolled out across both classes.

The structure of the scheme allows for all pupils, in every lesson, to complete a DSA (Daily Sentence Accuracy) and here children write a sentence that is entirely accurate as the starter to their lesson. It does not have to be creative but accurate only and includes a grammar objective from the relevant year group planning.

What They Did (continued)

There were regular meetings (fortnightly) to look at planning, children's books and outcomes and to assess the individual children's progress and particular suitability for a strategy.

Writing leads and SENCO meeting was held to look at language patterns as a way to further support the grammar and understanding for both teachers and LSA's who support the children first hand as there were some misconceptions. It was here that the 'Sentence Circle' grammatical support was created and is now being used at a higher level to support the EAL children in Year 5 and 6 as they respond well to patterns and concrete visual methods.

Some members of staff in Year 1 required training to support them to use the grammatical support and this was modelled in several lessons where there were writing leads and myself within a lesson.

Large copies of the resources were used in the classroom and verbally modelled in lessons to create a sentence, then they were swapped in terms of order, and the sentence was modelled again.

During this time, teachers felt more confident with the strategies that they began to embed and clearer with the planning and direction for the SEN and EAL students. They began to get creative with ensuring that all children could verbally articulate their sentences and extend them. They used cubes to memorise words and build sentences up and the children's writing began to become more independently written and better. Daily phonics recaps helped to remind the children of their basic sounds, and these began to make more meaningful appearances within their writing.

A staff meeting was held to roll out the sentence circles and DSA adaptive teaching techniques using the Year 1 books as a model within the meeting. All teachers shared lessons and planning for when the circles could be used within their lessons and identified children that needed further support during the DSA part of lessons to enable them to be more independent, more accurate and confident. They were also becoming more motivated writers because they could see success in their own work and staff could see the growth in individual pupils.

Staff voice was taken from the Year 1 team at the end of the unit, and this clearly showed an impact for the DSA part of the lesson when the adaptive strategies were put in place consistently.

Outcomes and Anticipated Impact

Within the year group that we supported, the lower ability writers, SEN and EAL, all made clear progress in their writing ability. Some children made progress in phonics, some in spelling and some with letter formation but all made progress with orally rehearsing grammatically correct sentences and all made progress with their ability to write in some way or another.

Although a small, scaled study, because the focus was on one year group and the 16 children within it that were identified as EAL and SEN, the adaptive teaching strategies were clearly correct for that group of learners. It enabled the teaching and support staff to be more confident in their grammatical knowledge and not scaffold learners so heavily so that their independence was increased.

The next steps, which have already begun, is that Year 2 are observing some Year 1 sessions and looking at books together to roll out similar strategies in Year 2. The writing leads and I are meeting before February half term to identify the children that need different support i.e. more structure or less structure to enable them to become better writers. The grammatical patterns and sentence circles will be decided for the year group also, based on the writing outcomes for Year 2.



More inclusive high-quality teaching



More inclusive ethos/culture in the setting



Better outcomes for learners with SEND

Outcomes and Anticipated Impact (continued)

In terms of a plan for long term sustainability, we plan to have rolled the methods out to all year groups by the end of the academic year. This way when they transition to their new year group, their next steps in writing are set and they can continue to make good progress from the outset.

I found unexpected changes within the project that I definitely was not expecting to see- the idea of starting within a single year group and rolling the methods out to a wider scale following this was not something I would have done ordinarily but the meetings and the group encouraged me to zoom in and take a smaller focus for the purposes of seeing if the impact was made. Taking this small, but intense focus meant that I only needed to support within two classes and now the teaching staff within that Year group are modelling strategies to other teachers and the ripple effect is happening without me taking a driving seat which is excellent.

Additionally, I had not anticipated the staff growth in confidence as I thought they teachers would have known about the grammatical structures for each of their years, but in reality, they needed guidance and have learnt a lot due to this.

Further to the success in Year 1, I have begun to create an Adaptive Teaching toolkit for all year groups so that the ways in which writing can be supported is accessible for all teachers. This is because of our change in demographic to include a lot of newly arrived pupils who begin their English journey late but can race through the adaptive strategies more quickly than those with a special educational need. I am hoping to continue to add to it as we support learners further into the school so that teachers can use it as a point of reflection for where their learners started and the progress they have made, as well as tips to support teaching and structure work without guiding them too heavily.