

Can training pupils to be mediators create a more inclusive environment for pupils in the classroom and playground?

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What did you do?

In response to Moorfoot Primary school's improvement plan to promote the awareness of the UNCRC articles and their rights, and the data received from pupils' health and wellbeing webs, I conducted research in how to improve inclusion within the class and the playground. Firstly, gathering pupils' opinions and views on their feelings of being included in the playground, classroom and what more could be done as a school to ensure inclusion. In response to the data gathered, I planned active and stimulating activities over a 7-week period aimed at training pupils to become mediators in order to resolve disputes, which have had an impact on the feeling of inclusion.

Why did you do it?

Training pupils to be peer mediators enhances inclusion within the school setting through restorative approaches (Scottish Government, 2022). Furthermore, it was evident through the data received from the health and wellbeing webs, that a significant number of pupils in my class scored themselves low for inclusion. Further discussion with the class, identified that this was due to disputes within the playground which created a need for a more inclusive environment, both in and outside of the classroom. In response to this, an initial survey was designed to target the pupils most affected and to allow for pupil voice to help design the most effective activities to help support their needs. Additionally, "a peer mediation programme teaches children and young people alternative strategies to aggression and withdrawal that promote constructive ways of dealing with conflict as well as open and positive communication within the school. Therefore, a safe, inclusive and nurturing school environment is created. This includes physical, psychological and emotional safety of children and young people" (Scottish Mediation, 2015, P12).

What has happened as a result?

As a result of training pupils to be peer mediators, there were several positive developments that occurred. Firstly, pupils seemed more settled in the class, and less disputes were noted in the playground. Additionally, the data collected from the midway survey, showed an increase from 56% of pupils feeling included in the playground to 74%. Furthermore, the data showed an increase of 68% in the classroom to 82%. This evidence gave further credit to the intervention working. As a result, from this data and communication with pupils, areas within the planning were tweaked, to ensure there were further increase in pupil inclusion. Results of the final survey, showed an increase in pupils feeling included in the playground from 56% to 86% and an increase in the feeling of pupil inclusion in the classroom from 68% to 94%.

The Impact

- The enquiry has had a positive impact on both the pupils and myself as a practitioner:
- During this learning, many of the pupils started to acknowledge and appreciate their individual differences and uniqueness's, which set a good foundation for being able to empathise, thus creating a more inclusive environment.
- Many of the pupils at the beginning, indicated in the survey the lack of inclusion they felt within the playground and classroom. Notably by the final survey this had positively increased greatly.

What are the implications?

- Less confident pupils, weren't as comfortable in participating in the role play or taking on the role of peer-mediator.
- Time can be an issue, depending on class size.
- Other classes within the school having an understanding of the role of peer mediator in the playground.

References

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What is the impact of a feedback cycle on learner's development in writing across a genre?

Mhairi McPherson, Class Teacher, St Andrew's Primary School



What did you do?

As part of my enquiry, I was keen to develop an understanding and implement an effective feedback cycle in writing. I wanted to understand the most efficient means of feedback across a six-week block of learning on a specific genre of writing.

Upon observation it was clear the children in my class always tried to give their peers positive feedback although it was not related to the learning intention or success criteria. It was also evident that children were not using feedback provided by teacher or peer to improve their writing. Therefore, my aim was to make feedback more meaningful for the learners to enhance the writing ability across a block of learning on a genre. I introduced feedback to pupils in my class through a series of lessons in October to help their understanding of feedback and how this helps make improvements.

Week 1 – Personal CPD on feedback generally & different types of feedback used in primary setting. –What types of feedback is there? What is seen as the most effective type? How to involve learners in their own feedback.

Week 2 – Look at feedback prompts for different types of feedback for pupils e.g self, peer, teacher written and verbal. Create a class rotation for feedback using a three week cycle 10 pupil's self, 10 peer, 10 teacher

Week 3 to 5 – Introduce and monitor feedback cycle in pupils learning. Look at self, peer and teacher-feedback across these weeks focusing on 10 pupil's jotters & assess their ability to identify strengths and improvement areas in their writing progressing through with a genre.

Week 6 – Collect evidence of pupils writing and analyse the impact of feedback.

Why did you do it?

Through exploring and reviewing educational academic literature and policies, alongside discussions with both my mentor and head teacher within my school, it became apparent that pupils did not grasp an understanding of teacher, peer and self feedback and why it is a means of guiding and supporting improvement in learning outcomes. Therefore, I drew attention to pupil's understanding of feedback and it was evident early on in the year that pupils found it difficult to understand and give high quality feedback on their writing due to some external factors such as, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Context:
Reviewing the school's improvement plan writing and feedback were a recurring driver for the school in order to raise attainment. This is ongoing at Saint Andrew's Primary School as it is important for learners to be confident and successful in all areas of the curriculum. I wanted to developed learner's independence in their own ability to assess their work, as this allows learners to build upon the skill they have learned. Upon numerous observations it was clear pupils in my class found it extremely difficult to receive and give quality feedback the on success criteria as they did not display understanding of why feedback is provided. Therefore, I soon became aware that some form of intervention was required, to ensure the pupils in my class displayed they were successful learners.

Policy & Literature:

As a part of Saint Andrew's teaching staff, I made myself familiar with the school's own feedback policy in line with our local authority policy. As the majority of my class are working at second level for writing I referred to the schools colour coded feedback for what went well in completed work. I then used desired symbols for what could be improved in their writing (See picture 1). This is used as a means of providing feedback on tools for writing. I used the school marking code in conjunction with written feedback provided by both myself and peers in order for feedback to be clear in modelling kind, clear and specific feedback for pupils to implement (See picture 4&5).

Clarke (2014), highlights the use of formative feedback starts with clear learning intentions and success criteria incorporating three principles into feedback will help pupil's development.

Help learners to see their success.

By using vocabulary "stop and look back. See what you have done" allows learners to see their accomplishments and provides opportunities for instant verbal feedback.

Give clear specific guidance to help improve work.

Constantly link back to success criteria as prompts to help improve their work, provide examples of this to learners to build upon their understanding.

Give time to respond and act on feedback.

Set aside time in learning for pupils to acknowledge their given feedback and make a comment of their own as this allows time to act upon feedback in developed learning experiences.

What has happened as a result?

Overall, by implementing daily deliberate practice activities I have noticed a considerable improvement in my pupil's understanding and quality of feedback. This is evident in both their verbal and written feedback.

Children looked forward to the weekly rotation of feedback tables in writing as they get a variety of written and verbal feedback from self, peer or teacher within their tables. All pupil's motivation and engagement in their feedback is praiseworthy as they are fully immersed in all resources to aid quality feedback.

Addressing this gap in the pupils understanding has led to an increase in pupil engagement and attainment. My data collection of pupil voice below will demonstrate their feelings of accomplishment:

Pupil Voice:
"I feel I understand why I get and give feedback in writing. It allows me to see what I have done well, but also parts I could make better with suggestions".

Pupil Support Assistant Voice:

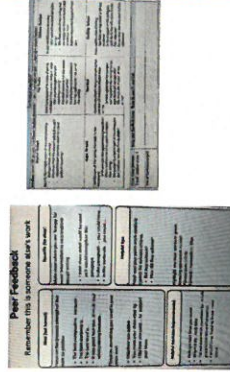
"When working with small groups children it shows in their writing that they take on feedback more as they discuss with peers first before making suggested changes in writing".

Feedback Prompts and Evidence:

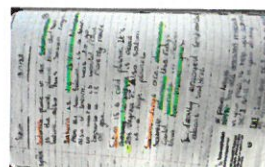
Picture 1 : Saint Andrew's Writing feedback code.

What needs to be improved?	How to improve it?
Spelling	1. Spelling book
Structure	2. Story arc
Characters	3. Character cards
Punctuation	4. Punctuation cards
Handwriting	5. Handwriting practice
Grammar	6. Grammar rules
Content	7. Story ideas
Editing	8. Peer review

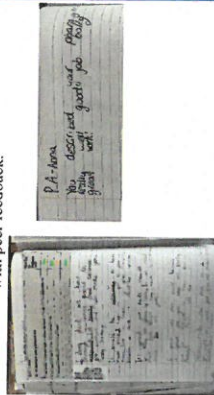
Picture 2 & 3: Feedback Prompts to support pupil's in providing feedback.



Picture 4: Pupils extended writing with teacher feedback.



Picture 5: Pupils extended writing with peer feedback.



What are the implications?

Whilst implementing feedback lessons, modelling and monitoring children's ability to provide feedback some implications highlighted during the six-week enquiry was poor attendance of learners in my class. Saint Andrew's is situated with approximately 76% of pupils living in SIMD 1 & 2 resulting in attendance being a concern. This highlighted a continuous cycle as catching specific learners up with feedback took away from learning in other aspects of the curriculum.

Furthermore, like the vast majority of classes, ability levels vary and therefore, while the majority of children can understand and given specific quality feedback a small number of children still lack the understanding of feedback in writing, and therefore, require support to translate this to peers. This meant that my expectations varied for the children and my feedback on their writing quality as I was aware of those requiring support and those requiring challenge.

I believe a few children do not challenge themselves due to a lack of understanding and self-confidence throughout their ability in providing written feedback. I am hoping to continue to work on developing growth-mindsets and develop further understanding to motivate and engage all learners further in the importance of feedback in developing writing.



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What impact does dialogic teaching have on the learning and teaching of inferential questions?

Sarah Clark, St. Patrick's Primary, gw22clarksarah@glow.sch.uk

What did you do?

My practitioner enquiry investigated the impact of a dialogic teaching intervention with a small group of Primary 3s. I began my enquiry by carrying out a baseline assessment using YARK (York Assessment of Reading for Comprehension). Once the baseline was established I completed an 8 week study using picture books as stimulus for inferential questioning. I used questioning stems to help create and encourage children to make their own questions. I ensured to model lessons using Alexander's (2008) Five Principles of Dialogic Teaching ensuring that all lessons were collective, reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful. I was able to record progress through weekly session observations and at the end of the block I completed a second YARK to assess any changes to comprehension.

Why did you do it?

Alexander (2008) discusses how dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend pupils thinking and advance their learning and understanding. I highlighted a group of primary 3 within my composite primary 3/4 who were reluctant to join in whole class discussions. I hoped a small group intervention using dialogic teaching would ensure pupils were given the skills and confidence necessary to join in classroom talk with their older peers. Dialogic teaching has been identified as critical in the process of scaffolding learning with others and to build children's autonomy and power in reasoning and thinking.

What happened as a result?

Throughout my weekly sessions I noted that all pupils gained confidence when discussing inferential questions and began to develop their own questioning skills when discussing picture books. Feedback from the children highlighted their enjoyment of the meaningful and purposeful activities carried out.

The post assessment shows a significant improvement from everyone in the group (as shown in the graph below). Within the breakdown of scores in the YARK improvement was most evident in the inferential questioning. This shows that the children were able to apply the inferential skills developed while using picture books and apply these skills to different contexts - showing a true understanding.

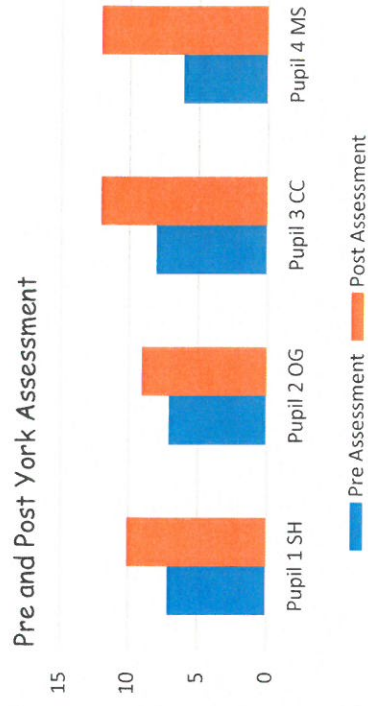
What are the implications?

I will continue to utilise dialogic teaching in whole class lessons as I strongly believe in the positive impact dialogic teaching can have to teaching and learning across the curriculum.

The results of this study may not be applicable in all contexts due to the small test numbers and level of teacher input. However, I will continue to evaluate my practice to ensure best possible outcomes are achieved, even with larger groups. A whole school approach to the principles of dialogic teaching would make the transition through the stages coherent and progressive.

References

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Can providing more writing experiences throughout a play-based classroom encourage children to write independently?



Lyndsey Sneddon ~ Lady Alice Primary School

What did you do?

~ The purpose of this enquiry was to observe a focused group of children who find writing in a play environment challenging. I identified the children for this enquiry through assessment information, observations and open and honest discussions.

~ The evidence that was gathered prior gave me the aim to create a more stimulating writing environment, focusing on a different methods each week.

~ Initially, I added resources throughout all areas of the class to give more opportunity for writing freely. I wanted to try this to begin with to see if it would naturally engage the children.

~ Other resources made available to the children were: recording devices to support children in remembering their ideas. This was identified as an area that could be improved. Hopefully, this would encourage them to become more independent when writing. Personal dictionaries were made available to support spelling rules and the use of common words. (Mata, 2011).

~ Added a writing wall with examples of different genres to encourage children to want to display their work.

Why did you do it?

~ At the beginning of my NQT year, taught writing was an area where I lacked confidence and felt this was having an impact on effective delivery of lessons. As this was a focus in the schools' School Improvement Plan (SIP) I felt it was paramount to engage in this area of the curriculum to support the children's attainment within literacy.

~ I appreciate the responsibility I have for children to develop and flourish within their learning experience and take pride in providing experiences to support their individual learning journeys.

~ As time progressed and I got to know my pupils I was able to identify their preferred way of learning and how to approach the writing expectations with them. It became apparent that my focus children needed supportive measures put in place to enable them with writing independently.

~ Through discussion, I discovered that for a number of children writing was not an enjoyable task which caused them to be reluctant writers. These children became the focus group for this study. Having open and honest conversations is an important part of developing children's confidence within writing Corbett (2011), talking children through their abilities and goals allows the children to express their own challenges and how we can help them.

~ You can see from the graph provided the progress the children have made from the beginning to the end of the enquiry.

What has happened as a result?

~ For the first week of applying the new and different resources there was very little extra engagement from the learners. The following week it was more apparent that two of the six children were starting to engage more. By week three the children that were already engaging with the resources and support were becoming more confident and it was apparent their writing progress was developing.

~ Pupils voice was a huge focus point. Tool (2021) stresses the importance of communication with learners and teachers to support anxieties within writing. This has a positive impact to overcome these anxieties along with building positive relationships. This was a crucial part behind gathering the data for the below graph.

~ Discussions with the focus group enabled me to understand that half of them were not confident and voiced they do not enjoy writing. As weeks passed and I collected more data, the children's attitudes had positively changed which left a sense of achievement and feeling proud. With this being said it could also depend on the topic area and the delivery of the lesson. I noticed that showing the children a clip from a movie was a great 'hook' and conversation starter.

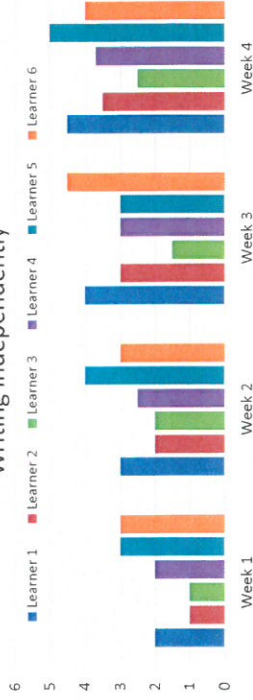
~ Once of my main goals I was hoping to achieve was to develop a more encouraging writing environment and to promote children writing more independently. Adding many different writing materials to all areas around the class engaged the children with wanting to write more during free time and not only during focused taught writing lessons. This was a great improvement for all children in the focus group.

~ Through observations it was noted that children were speaking more to each other about their plans and ideas for writing. The children were supporting each other with feedback on whether they thought these ideas were good and giving suggestions too. It was great to see the children work together and be happy to show their work to their friends and myself.

~ I believe that the new and adapted additions to our writing environment enabled learners to realise that the writing process is not all about the formalities of having a set criteria. It showed there is more than writing words in a jotter element, it helped the learners understand that writing is a creative process and an amazing way to show how great their imaginations are and can be..

~ The collection of data showed that there was an increase of independently written sentences with an increase of at least 2 independently written sentences within a four week period.

Writing independently



What are the implications?

~ Creating an environment which engages children to write with enthusiasm and motivation.

~ Ensuring resources are supportive enough with the child's voice being heard and giving them clear and reachable expectations.

~ Barriers can arise from the formal aspect of the learner's writing environment which have specific strategies, these are known as 'transcriptional strain' Kelly (2010) explains. Children can develop anxieties with the many aspects to writing: spelling, punctuations and presentation. It is important to understand these barriers and provide a nurturing writing environment to support these challenges and help break down the barriers.

~ It is paramount that practitioners provide supportive resources and look at other ways to encourage children to write other than only focusing on the criteria that is set.

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Do Daily Number Talks' Involving Different Strategies Improve Mental Math's Subtraction?

Caitlin Calder, St Joseph's Primary School

What did you do?

I completed an input of Number Talks to gauge and record the pupils within the Primary 4 (19 pupils) classes prior knowledge. For week 2, a subtraction test was given to pupils, relevant to their level, to complete with no input or discussion and these results were recorded. By researching different strategies that the pupils could use, I taught 2 new strategies through Daily Number talks allowing the opportunity to practice the new strategy as well as myself modelling them. These strategies were taught on consecutive weeks, and they were using a blank number line and partitioning, Parish, S.D. (2010).

After I taught the new strategies that they could potentially use, I carried out a 2nd subtraction assessment where pupils could use prior knowledge and strategies as well as the 2 new strategies to complete the questions. I then compared the results to identify if there had been an improvement in the results by introducing the new strategies and embedding them into their daily learning.

Why did you do it?

I discovered that mental maths subtraction was an area that the class struggled with and their lack of knowledge of different strategies to use was clear. The School Improvement Plan (SIP) focuses on 'Closing the Attainment Gap' and by analysing the ways in which the P4 pupils think/learn allowed me to identify the different needs within in the class and breakdown the mental maths strategies for each group of pupils.

I utilised the opportunity of A McClure (previous CMO) being in the school and had regular discussions, she modelled a Number Talk lesson to the class which allowed her to see the weaknesses and we worked collaboratively in order to get the best response from the class. By implementing the above strategies in the form of mental maths subtraction, the pupils can now use the same strategies but change them for different scenarios in Numeracy and use them to help them get the answer.

What has happened as a result?

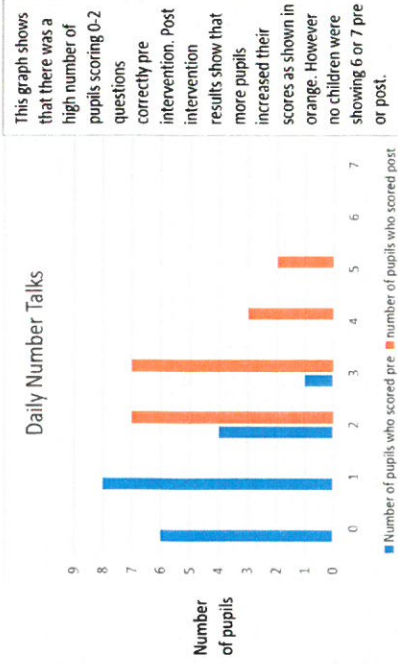
From a teaching perspective it is encouraging to see the confidence growing within the class when joining in class discussions and the competition to volunteer to answer questions.

"I find it easier to work out the answers when taking away bigger numbers" LG – P4.

The graph shows the results of the subtraction test carried out on week 2. The results of the test were poor, and this is when the intervention of daily number talks began. Identifying simpler thinking processes that my pupils could use was the main focus and the first one being blank number lines, progress in results then started to show. After both strategies were introduced and practiced, the 2nd test results showed more confidence and improvement in results as shown in below graph.

"I know I did ok on my test but I feel like I still need more practice with my subtraction" AO – P4.

Although 2 new strategies were introduced, pupils could still use the original strategies (Bridging and Friendly Tens) while completing the tests as the purpose was to provide the pupils with more options.



What are the implications?

The number of questions that pupils got correct in test number 2 did improve, although there is still room for improvement. The pupils were given a Numeracy Blueprint Board for them to lay out their working and use the blank number line and from observing my pupils, I was able to see that some pupils were still getting confused with the number line strategy.

Since the 6-week block, planned out for this enquiry, we have continued with regular number talks and focus on using a specific strategy each day. This allows the pupils to make mistakes and ask questions and allows me to identify the areas that need further work. By continuously assessing through daily number talks, this allows for differentiation in the form of strategies used and the different numbers (smaller/bigger).

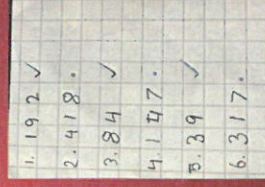


Photo shows test 1 result from pupil LG – L explained that she used Friendly numbers on her Blueprint board to show her working.

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How does learner confidence change with the use of digital technology?

Rachael McDaid, Ardgowan Primary School



What did you do?

I wanted to understand if confidence can be a barrier for pupils using digital technology to support their learning. I chose to explore this through observations, gathering data collected by digital programs and from three pupil voice sessions.

Over a 7-week period, I focused my enquiry through the lens of literacy and writing activities. I decided to do this as learners were already familiar with Nessy and Clicker 8 packages, creating consistency in class. I selected six pupils from my Primary 5 class to upskill using Typing Club, a web-based program to develop touch-typing fluency, speed and accuracy. I chose Typing Club as pupil-voice and in-class observations suggested children were struggling with keyboard navigation and accessibility.

A timetable was created for learners to access Typing Club daily, completing baseline assessments before completing adaptive lessons, presented through interactive games.

Time was allocated during the 7-week period to reflect on pupils' experiences and next steps for development.

Why did you do it?

The Scottish Government (2018) aims to allow educators, learners and parents to take advantage of digital technology to raise attainment and opportunities for all. Further, The Digital Literacy Framework (2023) was designed by local authorities and teachers to support the use of digital technologies to enhance delivery of education in Scottish schools. This supported me to identify that despite already using digital technology in my classroom, some learners may not have confidence in the necessary skills to use it fully.

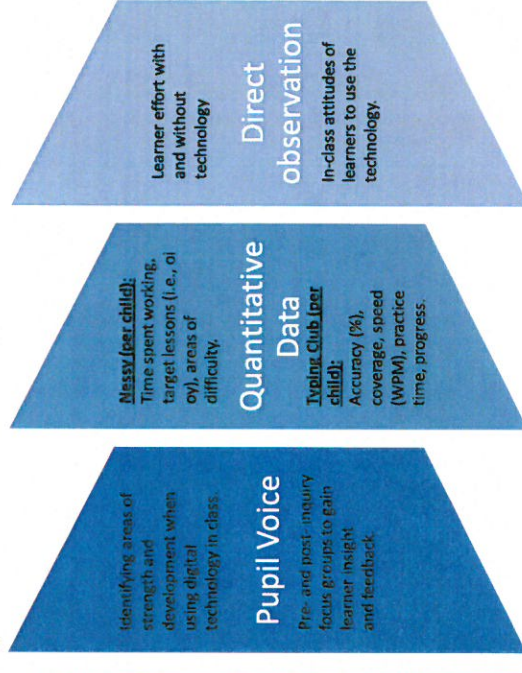
I then wanted to upskill learners after finding digital technology to increase learner confidence and independence irrespective of academic level (Angus Council, 2017). Further, Gabriel et al., 2022 and Haleem et al. (2022) cite digital technology as an integral support measure for those disengaged by traditional academic approaches or with additional learning needs including dyslexia.

Additionally, Ardgowan Primary's SIP plan (2022) identifies enabling learners to develop and strengthen key digital skills in Clicker 8 and Nessy programs as a key priority. This confirmed the relevance of targeting my enquiry in area.

What has happened as a result?

I collected three forms of data to enhance the credibility and validity of findings.

Figure 1: Data Collection Methods



Pre-enquiry

Pupils shared feelings of disinterest regarding digital technology, with some struggling to locate the correct keys, partly attributing their idea of technology in class as an arduous task.
L1: "It takes me ages to find the buttons, so I just give up."
L2: "I'm too slow at typing, I'm just rubbish at it."

During-enquiry

Learner attitudes began to change as those previously reluctant to participate actively asked for extra Typing Club time. It was also apparent that during writing activities, pupils required less adult support to type their work.
L3: "I can do this bit on my own, I don't want any help."

Post-enquiry

Typing fluency and speed increased for all compared to baseline assessments. Several pupils were also successful in typing most of their work unassisted. Findings were supported by pupil voice, revealing an increase in confidence enhanced pupils' motivation to use technology to help support their learning.
L4: "I can do work on my own. I don't need any help anymore".

What are the implications?

The change in my pupils' confidence and attitude to using digital technology in class is where I believe my enquiry has made the biggest impact.

For Learners

Learners now approach digital technology with increased and sustained engagement. Further, most pupils improved their ability to use digital technology independently. For some learners this meant being able to produce greater quantities of written work using Clicker 8, for others it meant using Nessy and Typing Club with a greater degree of self-assurance.

For Practice

I believe my enquiry has positively contributed to Ardgowan's SIP fulfillment.
Pupils continuing to use digital technology as they progress through the upper school will have continued access to Nessy, Clicker 8 and Typing Club to develop and sustain key digital skills.

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How can the use of picture books help improve reading attainment?

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What did you do?

My practitioner enquiry built on findings from my Masters dissertation (which explored ways to further embed Critical Literacy into CfE) and previous short-term interventions to improve reading attainment carried out during my probation year.

My dissertation found that picture books have "sophisticated imagery" and "symbolism" that have great potential for critical questioning (Sangster et al., 2013:627). Picture books, graphic novels and other 'non-traditional texts' include hidden metaphors and puns and take into account the relationship between visual images and written word (New London Group, 1966 cited in Chun, 2009:144).

In addition, they allow pupils greater access and autonomy as children do not need to be able to read to engage and respond since they do not rely on words. This is especially useful for pupils who "do not conform to dominant constructions [of what it means to be] literate". (Sangster et al., 2013).

I introduced picture books as a stimulus for reciprocal reading and comprehension activities with my P5 class and compared this to traditional reciprocal reading and comprehension (using large chunks of text). I took a dialogic and a critically literate approach as I asked pupils open-ended questions to encourage discussion of how ideas and messages are represented within texts. (Papen, 2020).

Why did you do it?

I have noticed that Covid-19 and online learning have had a negative impact on attainment - especially for literacy and numeracy. The attainment gap was already significant across Scotland, particularly in areas of high deprivation (such as Inverclyde) but the pandemic has been a contributing factor in widening the gap. In 2022, I spent 6 months as a Covid recovery teacher - focusing on improving literacy attainment. Raising literacy attainment is a key priority of St John's School Improvement Plan. They aim to boost "reading attainment for targeted learners who are behind expectation, increase by at least 5% on average across the school by June 2023".

I hoped that the use of picture books would remove the barrier that some pupils may face with more 'traditional' texts, encourage a higher level of engagement and allow pupils to demonstrate a deeper level of understanding.

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What has happened as a result? What are the implications?

- Around 50% of pupils stated that they dislike completing 'traditional' reciprocal reading activities and comprehension, at the start of this project.
- 33% of pupils preferred using picture books compared to long texts for comprehension/reciprocal reading.
- When picture books were used, pupil participation greatly increased - a high percentage of pupils were keen to share their ideas and answer questions (including those who would not normally volunteer to answer).
- Pupils recorded that they "loved" this series of lessons as they felt as if they "weren't actually doing comprehension".
- Baseline assessments demonstrated that pupils working behind expectation either did not attempt to answer inferential or evaluative questions or gave very basic answers.
- Generally when picture books were used as a stimulus, the quality of answers increased. Specifically, I saw an increase in their ability to summarise, predict and question (reciprocal reading strategies) and answer inferential and evaluative questions in more depth.
- Pupils reported that they felt like they had more choice over their learning and enjoyed the chance to be creative as they could "explain [their] own story and share [their] perspective based on what [they] were seeing".
- Overall, throughout the duration of my practitioner enquiry, reciprocal reading and comprehension skills improved which allowed for a deeper understanding of learning. In addition, pupil confidence increased and pupils have enjoyed applying these skills across the curriculum.
- It should be noted that picture books should be used in conjunction with written texts/traditional reading activities. Although they are effective in ensuring a strong foundation for comprehension/reciprocal reading skills, encourage creativity and increase engagement, the use of picture books on their own for reading activities may not allow pupils to make adequate progression.

In this picture, the frogs start to fall off their lily pads. Why do you think this happened?

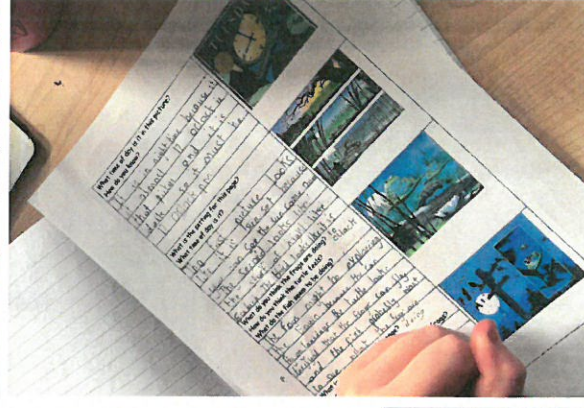
The frogs are falling off these lily pads because the sunlight is out and people they have to sleep and people will wake up and see them.

It was challenging but we had great infories and we had a blast

we leave the base

IT WAS GOOD

I loved it



"Miss F, are you making us do comprehension without us even noticing?"

References

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'Does cooperative learning enhance learning and wellbeing through engagement with peers'?

Lynne Black, Class Teacher, Moorfoot Primary School, Inverclyde Council

What did you do?

I was looking for strategies to improve class cohesion, wellbeing and relationships. When children had been working in groups, issues had arose from learners picking their own roles and dominating proceedings or not interacting at all. I wanted to create a community of learners that treated each other in a more respectful way where they are given a role to play and take responsibility for their learning. Children of different abilities can also benefit from learning from each other.

This was also of importance because of my class being a composite. I have had to implement strategies to improve relationships in class and the dynamics during group work. After reflecting on group work activities in class and discussions with me HT and Mentor I researched Cooperative learning and decided to implement a series of lessons using this pedagogy.

I began by familiarising my pupils with the key role titles in cooperative learning groups and focusing on ensured that they understood each role, the title, implications of undertaking such a role and rules for teamworking.

In order for pupils to progress with their learning through cooperative learning and improve their relationships with each other, when introducing cooperative learning we brainstormed aspects of being a good team player and what skills are required to work successfully in a group.

Why did you do it?

The class already regularly work in groups or pairs but I wanted to make this a more structured part of our daily routine to enable the children to obtain optimal benefit. HGIOS?4 states that 'children and young people require opportunities to develop attitudes and skills to support life-long learning'. Introducing cooperative learning also aligned my teaching with my school's improvement plan.

I am interested in children learning in groups. Mixed ability groups ensures that pupils can benefit from each other's strengths. It reduces the stigma of children being grouped together by ability and being conscious that they may be at a lower level than their peers in for example, spelling or maths. I am also passionate about encouraging children to be confident individuals, not passive learners but to use their own voice, be confident to share ideas, opinions, feedback and be able to work in group which is a lifelong skill to obtain.

Cooperative learning has been written about since the 1970s. Evidence shows that learners can absorb little when taught via didactic methods. The teacher's role has evolved to one where teachers are expected to engage with pupils in different ways and aim to support learning through collaborative approaches in class. Vygotsky argued that social interaction in learning is very important. Local authorities in Scotland have invested in training in cooperative learning but practise of the pedagogy has decreased over time.

Utilising such pedagogies ensures that teaching progresses and evolves 'imagine a Dr that goes to sleep for 100 years, ..wakes up and goes to work. Imagine his surprise at the latest technology....imagine a teacher who does the same, goes to the front of the class and starts writing on the board...would anyone notice that 100 years have elapsed since he last taught?' (Jolliffe, 2010).

What has happened as a result?

By implementing cooperative learning in lessons in class I found that learners took more time with activities in, for example, turn taking. 'Classroom voices' were used more frequently rather than loud voices with children trying to talk over each other. Groups were also more focused on tasks. The P4s in particular have more of an understanding of why we need to have roles and rules when working in teams.

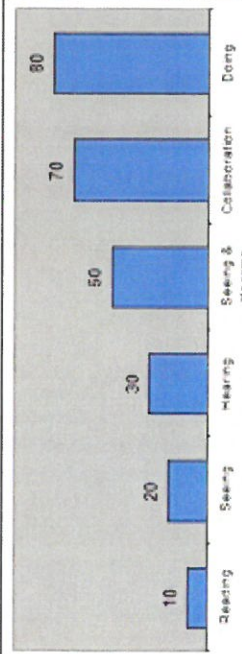
Pupil voice – formative feedback has been gathered through setting the learners questionnaires. Learners were able to give anonymous feedback at times. There were more positive results when working in a group rather than individually or even in pairs. The children are also less dubious about working in teams and more happy about working with children who are not their core group of friends.

Pupil voice:

- "I like that in group work people can help me if I'm stuck and how people will have ideas that you would not have thought of".
- "I like to do spelling in a group because it has made it a lot easier to spell words".
- "I like doing STEM like when we did the spaghetti towers"
- "I like how you can make new friends"
- "I feel calm and I feel like I learn easier"
- "It does get easier because you can ask people to explain something again if they forget".

Overall, whilst groups can still have disagreements, the children have a greater understanding that working in a team is a life skill and that learning how to handle such situations will help them in the future. I plan to include cooperative learning in my practice at every opportunity.

As stated by Glasser, this graph illustrates how well we learn in %:



Chi. M. T. H., Bassok, M., Lewis, M. W., Reimann, P., & Glaser, R. (1989). Self-explanations: How students study and use examples in learning to solve problems. *Cognitive Science*, 13, 145-182.

What are the implications?

Cooperative learning is now a permanent part of our class timetable and I adapt lessons and learning to be able to incorporate it as, based on formative and summative assessment that I have conducted, the benefits to my class in terms of their attainment and wellbeing are clear.

I have learned not to be as concerned about noise in the classroom and that the children can still be learning even if they are in larger groups and having a lot of conversations. I will implement cooperative learning in my future practice. My research into cooperative learning is also ongoing as something of particular interest for me and the wealth of literature is broad.

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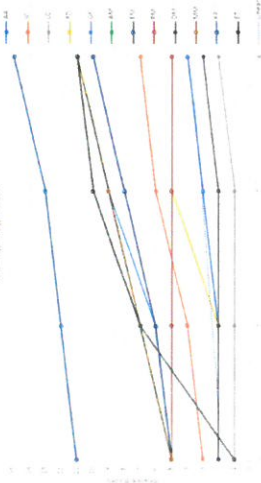
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happens when children use a buddy of higher ability during paired reading? Kirsty Brown, Newark Primary School



With those of a higher ability following steps: attainment and using BugClub

- Facilitated a whole-class floor book session to discuss our class library setup and book preferences.
- Updated the class library area according to the pupil's voice, making a cosy comfortable, library role play area.
- Allocated 10 minutes for paired reading to take place at least 3 days a week, with reading buddies comprised of a higher and lower reading ability student. Reading books had to be read on one of these days but pupils could choose any book on the other 2 days.
- Paired top and middle reading groups (Reading Rockets, n.d.).
- Provided opportunities for individuals to read aloud to assess confidence levels.
- Encouraged questioning and reciprocal reading strategies during paired reading sessions.
- Recorded fluency and progress using the class reading scale implemented when reading in groups.
- Tracked library usage using Leuven's Scale.
- Used BugClub assessments to track fluency and comprehension.
- Recorded engagement with class library books using reading diaries.
- Ensured equity by including the whole class in paired reading sessions but reporting results only for those not receiving recovery to ensure more accurate results.

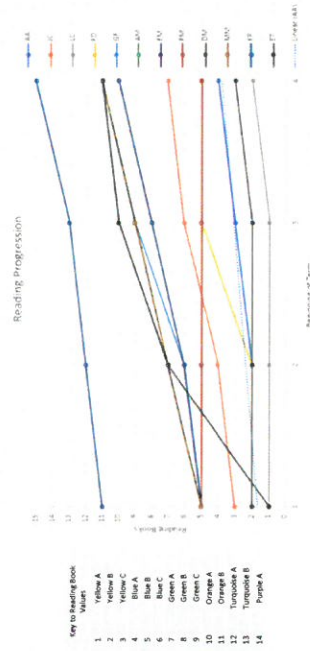
Why did you do it?

The reason for this enquiry of learning was to address the issue of poor reading attainment and lack of interest in reading among the children in the class and had arisen from the following observations:

- Many of the children had a fixed mindset towards reading and were not interested in it, resulting in little engagement with reading.
- There were 5 children in the class at an early level for reading, finding CVC words challenging, whilst some others were having difficulty with blending.
- The enquiry aligns with the school's SIP plan which targets reading and comprehension and aims to improve reading attainment.
- Paired reading has been shown to have multiple benefits such as improving concentration, literacy skills, vocabulary, communication, spelling, writing and cognitive development (Gove, 2011).
- Reading is a fundamental skill that can provide children with access to knowledge, allowing them to perform better academically and providing them with life skills.
- Although the library was set up as a comfy area, children rarely chose reading as an option during Freeplay and instead used the area for rough and tumble play.
- Reading books were regularly updated using BugClub, but, on average, very few children logged onto the website to complete this.
- I wondered if frequent paired reading with a peer could help to quickly raise reading levels and enjoyment, especially if supplied with a variety of different books.
- Through consultation, the children shared that group reading made them feel uncomfortable and anxious. Paired reading would enable teachers and PSAs to listen to reading more often without pressure on the children.
- Reciprocal learning would be encouraged with children asking each other questions, thereby increasing comprehension.
- The effectiveness of the paired reading approach could be recorded easily through a marking system, pupil feedback, observations and tracking movement through the BugClub assessments.

What has happened as a result?

- As a result of carrying out this enquiry, reading for enjoyment has increased for the majority of pupils within the class, with the following observations being made:
 - Children are more drawn to the library during Freeplay, with children often role playing being the librarian and borrowers, distributing books to others in the class.
 - Children were initially drawn to books of much higher ability of which they had an interest in. By week 6 this had changed, and children were choosing to interact with their reading books on free choice days.
 - Children were observed swapping their reading books in their pairs. This resulted in children with a lower ability choosing to read books of a higher ability and receiving help with blending and comprehension from their peers.
 - By working with a partner, the children had the opportunity to engage in discussions and share their interpretations of a text, clarifying understanding.
 - Children quickly got into the habit of paired reading. They appeared to enjoy this time, engaging more books and reminding me when it was 'Reading Buddy' time.
 - Children that initially had a fixed mindset and did not want to read at all were happy to read with a reading buddy and to share their books with them.
 - The majority of children made progression throughout the enquiry.
 - Children who made little or no progression are on ASN pathways or have high rates of absence.
 - Absence rates meant that children could not always be with the same 'Reading Buddy'. However, this did not hinder the enquiry, with children engaging in reading trios when necessary.
 - As the enquiry was drawing to a close, a few children started to ignore their assigned reading partners and formed pairs on their own. Nevertheless, they were still engaged in paired reading.
- By the last 4 weeks of the enquiry BugClub logins had increased by an average of 63%.
- The number of children using the library area increased from zero engagement to an average of 19% through teacher observation, with those children scoring a 5 on the Leuven scale (*What is the Leuven Scale and How to Use It*, n.d.).
- Although the overall results only included 48% of the class, due to recovery also taking place, it was evident that each student's engagement and enjoyment of reading had improved.



What are the implications?

- The results of this inquiry have several implications both for my teaching and for the school as a whole.
 - It shows that encouraging reading for enjoyment can have a significant impact on children's reading habits and their attitudes towards reading. Therefore, I will continue to prioritise this aspect of teaching going forwards.
 - It highlights the importance of creating a supportive reading environment in the classroom, such as having a library area and encouraging peer reading. These practices can help to promote reading engagement, improve reading skills, and foster a positive reading culture among students.
 - It suggests that differentiated instruction can be effective in supporting all learners, regardless of their ability levels. By encouraging paired reading and allowing children to choose their own books, you can create opportunities for children to support each other and develop their reading skills at their own pace.
 - The increase in BugClub logins and library engagement demonstrates the effectiveness of using technology and resources to support reading. I will consider incorporating more technology-based reading activities and resources into my teaching to further promote reading engagement and skill development.

Overall, the findings from this inquiry provide valuable insights into effective teaching practices for promoting reading engagement and skill development among primary school children.

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What did you do?

After reflecting on the conversations my pupils and I engaged in regarding racial inequality, racism and diversity and researching this further in my own time, I developed a six-week action plan to lead to anti-racist change within my classroom. Before I began to identify and implement anti-racist behaviours into my classroom, I was attending regular Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) training to improve and develop my understanding of racial literacy within my classroom and the wider school community. Through this training I challenged my own implicit bias and learned key terminology to use within my classroom when discussing racism and diversity.

I began the series of lessons by asking the children to fill in a questionnaire to try and accurately gauge their current understanding about racism and diversity. The results of the questionnaire showed that most children had little or no understanding about racism and diversity. This allowed me to plan and deliver a series of lessons focusing on anti-racist education to help support my learners in understanding racism and the harmful consequences of racism. I also encouraged them to actively challenge it when it occurs to help make a difference (Scottish Government, 2022). Also, as a class we looked at how our implicit bias towards people can influence our interactions, what we think about them and how we treat people. This allowed the children to engage in meaningful, racial conversations with each other and this broadened the opportunity to share their understanding and knowledge.

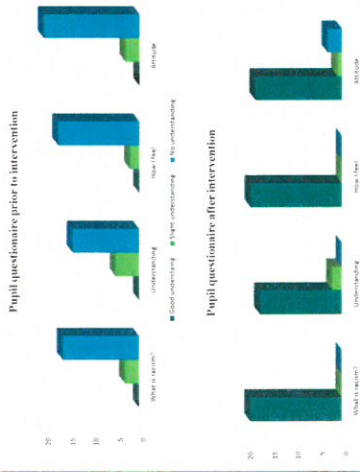
Why did you do it?

Inverkip Primary is a small village school within a small Scottish community. In Inverkip Primary School only 6 children out of 243 are from different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. Which means 97.5% of the children are white and many children in my class and in Inverkip Primary School may not have been exposed to different races or cultures when at school.

This became apparent throughout my probation year, as I noticed that many of my pupils did not have the confidence or knowledge to engage in racial conversations. Through engaging in conversations with my pupils regarding racial inequality or racism after watching Newsround or exploring events which happened in the past through our topic, I noticed that many of my pupils were unable to define the term 'racism'. Therefore, they did not understand the harmful consequences that racism can have on people's lives all over the world and this is what motivated me to focus on 'Racial Literacy' as part of my professional enquiry as this is becoming a local and national priority within Scottish education.

In addition, implementing anti-racist behaviours and processes in children's everyday classroom routines will support children in developing skills such as, confidence and resilience to engage in racial conversations (Education Scotland, 2022). Also, I believe that when children are educated about racism, diversity and equality it allows them to have more meaningful interactions with people around them and builds on their respect and empathy towards others and supports them in celebrating our differences as well as our similarities.

What has happened as a result?



Before my enquiry my graph shows that 80% of children did not have any previous knowledge or understanding about racism. Whereas now 90% of children understand the term 'Racism' and their attitudes and feelings towards this are positive.

There has been a significant improvement in the children's overall understanding, feelings and attitudes towards racism, diversity and equality. The children in my class have challenged their own implicit bias and now have the confidence and resilience to engage in meaningful, racial conversations with each other, as well as beginning to actively challenge racism or any unkind language they hear at or outwith school.

Before I started teaching my series of lessons, I asked my pupils - 'What does racism mean?' and their main responses were - 'It is when white people are mean/nasty to black people', which highlighted a real lack of understanding towards the issue of 'racism'. However, now when I ask my pupils - 'What does racism mean?', their responses are 'It is when people are nasty to somebody because they look different, speak differently or wear different clothes'. I noticed the children now understood that racism is not just specifically when people with white skin are nasty to people with black skin, but it is when a person is nasty to someone because of their skin colour, accent and clothing, especially traditional clothes such as burkas and turbans.

As a result of my enquiry, I have found that building racial literacy in my classroom has been crucial in improving my pupil's intercultural awareness and respect towards other races, countries, religions and languages. I have found that educating the children in my class about racism, diversity and equality has allowed them to have more meaningful interactions with children in the school from different ethnic backgrounds as they understand more about their culture, language and religion. In addition, through my pupils exploring and challenging their own implicit bias they understand how this can influence how we treat others. Through this, my pupils have started to embrace and celebrate all their differences as they understand this is what makes us who we are. Overall, building racial literacy in my class has made my pupils more confident, resilient, respectful and empathetic when interacting with people who have a different skin colour, accent, religion or culture from their own (Stevenson, 2014).

What are the implications?

For this to be successful teachers need to have a good understanding of how to identify and implement anti-racist behaviours in their own practice to ensure learners are supported in developing this knowledge, confidence and resilience. However, this can be very time consuming as teachers need to engage in academic research and articles, training and assessments to ensure they are fully equipped with the correct knowledge, terminology and skills to effectively implement racial literacy into the classroom.

For the 'Building Racial Literacy Programme' to be successful it needs to be implemented across the whole school, rather than just one singular class. All teachers within the school *must* be supported and empowered to identify and implement anti-racist behaviours and processes within their everyday practice to ensure the success of this programme.

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What did you do?

I completed a range of continuous professional development (CPD) to develop a wider awareness of racial literacy. This involved training with authority specialists in this field and attending a variety of different courses related to aspects of race. This included an introduction to racial literacy and sessions on anti-racism, white privilege, white fragility and implicit bias. As well as this I completed a CPD course on building braver safer spaces in the classroom.

After doing this training I was able to reflect on my own understanding through completing a variety of self-assessments. This involved examining my own experiences and considering how these might impact teaching and interactions with students. This CPD was vital in building my own competence when teaching within this area (Gay, 2018).

I then had enough knowledge that I could use this data to begin planning baseline assessments, end-of-unit assessments and sequences of lessons to cover contents directly related to gaps in my children's learning related to this topic.

Initially, I conducted a baseline assessment by asking my class key questions related to race. These questions related to their understanding of terminology such as racism, discrimination and equality, and nationality. As well as this, questions were asked about their personal experiences of race if any. These questions allowed me to identify gaps in knowledge and target my lessons towards these gaps.

After this baseline was carried out, I had a meeting with the educational psychologists and a racial literacy area specialist in order to establish a safe classroom atmosphere to deliver these lessons (Hughes et al., 2017). This was a vital part of my enquiry as it is essential that teachers model perspective-taking and openness to prepare students to advocate for equity, diversity and reconciliation in their own communities (Dimitrov and Deardorff, 2023). Building these safe spaces where ground rules are established is important. This is because children will feel more comfortable taking part in respectful and productive dialogue where discussions are dealt with, with sensitivity and care. This is why building a learning community prior to engaging in lessons was vital as children were aware that I was accessible to support them when dealing with race (Thurber et al., 2019). This included creating opportunities for children to discuss their thoughts related to the teaching block or I could provide support related to discussions that stemmed from lessons (Ladson-Billings, 2014).

Next, I used the data from the baseline assessment to plan a sequence of impactful lessons:

1. Race and Racism and Inclusion
2. Equality and Equity
3. Stereotypes and Discrimination
4. Nationalities
5. Race and experiences within the English Premier League
6. World Religions
7. Books and Films related to race
8. Guest Speaker (Experiences and Impact of Racism)

These lessons challenged and explored a variety of concepts with learners in my class and provoked meaningful classroom discussion.



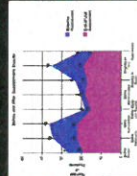
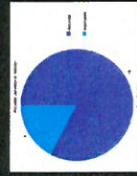
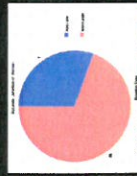
Racism and inclusion

Why did you do it?

To ensure my classroom is as inclusive as possible and the needs of all children are being met, I measured and developed children's understanding of racial literacy. Developing racial literacy in my class aided in distinguishing the barriers that are apparent while helping learners to understand and realise their own rights and the rights of others. Additionally, I have chosen an enquiry within this field as it supports greater social justice within my class and nurtures racial literacy for myself and my students. Additionally, this is

Within Inverclyde council, 3.7% of children are from ethnic minorities. Being racially literate means that educators have the knowledge, skills, awareness, and confidence to talk about race and racism in their setting. In schools all learners have a right to learn in an equitable environment where all cultures, identities and languages are recognised and valued and where the curriculum responds to the diverse needs of individual learners, reflecting the uniqueness of their communities. Without some racial literacy being taught to young people, they too are at a disadvantage in how they engage with people from different cultural backgrounds (Inverclyde Council, 2022). As well as this, racial literacy is an essential skill for work and everyday life. This is why I felt that it was so important to conduct this enquiry.

What has happened as a result?



Pupil Voice

"I have learned about racism and how it affects people"
"Don't make judgements before you meet someone"
"I can name lots of different nationalities now"
"I now know what to do if I hear someone being racist to me or others."

The results here show that there is a clear increase in pupils' understanding of race and topics related to this after a series of inputs. The line graph on the right shows that prior to any input most children within my class were not aware of terminology or any issues regarding race. It is clear from the evidence that pupils have developed their own racial literacy as there have been opportunities for them to self-reflect, share experiences and listen to the experiences of others. Additionally, children in my class are aware of the terminology regarding racism such as discrimination, prejudice, and diversity which has built on my classroom culture of creating a safe and welcoming environment for all students, regardless of their racial or cultural background.

Data from pupils' feedback has shown the benefits they feel in building their own racial literacy as children are now more confident in challenging stereotypes and prejudice. They also felt that they had a greater understanding of different racial identities and experiences, which ultimately leads them to challenge their own unconscious bias. As well as this, feedback has suggested that pupils feel confident navigating conversations around race and identity in a constructive way. Furthermore, the stories and experiences of people in past and the present has provoked emotion within my class which may further promote pupils to advocate for social justice and equality within the school and the wider society.

What are the implications?

There are several main implications which are apparent from my research. Firstly, the research has shown that the sequence of lessons has helped to address racial bias and discrimination within my classroom. This was shown through lesson 3 as it challenged learners' thoughts and encouraged them to confront their own biases and understand the impact that discrimination can have. This was done in a way that helped the children understand this concept easier through a cartoon in which a balloon had received discrimination.

Another implication is that children in my class are more confident discussing race and have a greater awareness of what to do if they hear of people being treated unfairly.

My next steps following on from this enquiry would be to begin working with pupils within my class to form an anti-racism charter. This would provide a shared understanding of what anti-racism means and how it can be put into practice. It would promote accountability and would encourage active participation. This would also provide a basis for reflection and improvement. This also developed in partnership with my class, which would further build on that sense of community where all students feel valued and included.

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What did you plan to do and why?

Reading for pleasure can be defined as "reading we do of our own free will, anticipating the satisfaction we will get from the act of reading" (National Literacy Trust UK, online). While this may characterise physical reading for pleasure as a solitary experience, it is important to recognise the profoundly social nature of reading that stems from the conversations that flow within a community of readers (Boysak et al, 2022). As research has shown that enjoyment of reading can boost educational achievement and attainment, as well as wellbeing (Education Scotland, 2015), I deemed it important to establish a reading culture within my classroom through reading for pleasure and chose to implement learning activities that would complement the social nature of reading.

Having already utilised ERIC time in class, I noticed that not all pupils showed enjoyment of reading and would frequently change their book, stating that they didn't know what they would enjoy reading and didn't enjoy the independent nature of silent reading. As part of my School Improvement Plan is to raise attainment in reading, and as there are already reading interventions in place from the SLT, I chose to focus on enjoyment of reading with the overall aim of creating a culture of reading, with the additional recognition that this should impact attainment in reading too.

What are the implications and next steps of your enquiry for:

You practice: This enquiry enabled me to expand my own knowledge of children's literature in order to be able to source and recommend books suited to the interests and needs of children in my class. This is something I will continue to develop after my enquiry as well as allocating time for my own reading for pleasure. In addition, I have become increasingly aware of the benefits of the social nature of reading and will continue to place a focus on this during ERIC time. My own next steps would also include involving parents and families to ensure that reading for pleasure transcends the classroom. I received feedback from a few parents at Parents Evening that their child has developed a more positive attitude to reading at home, therefore I would like to build on the connections between home and school to further develop reading for pleasure in the future.

Your learners: Overall, my learners have developed an increase in confidence of reading for pleasure and it is now something that is valued and respected within our classroom. Through the activities, pupils have increasingly taken ownership of their own reading and have been able to make more informed and independent choices, which has expanded to other areas of learning. For some pupils, extrinsic motivation was needed to encourage reading for pleasure, thus I will continue to acknowledge the achievements of these children in reading with the aim of moving away from incentives and building on the genres they enjoy. For other pupils who already enjoyed reading and knew what genres of books they enjoyed, I will continue to encourage them to try books that are out with their comfort zone to expand their reading skills. Furthermore, learners who need supported when reading still gained from the activities through encouragement of reading socially and through myself reading aloud. The next steps for these pupils should involve inclusion of, for example, audio books in order to ensure they still feel enjoyment when reading. However, I believe the impact of my enquiry could have been greater on pupils if I was in class full time (having been out one day each week due to NQT commitments) and had teacher strike days been avoided.

Your colleagues and/or more widely: I intend to share my findings with my colleagues, as sharing good practice is recommended, and intend to share the learning activities I used to build a reading culture. Additionally, the school as a whole has been impacted through pupils in my class encouraging communication about books through our displays, reviews, challenges and awards. Furthermore, my school is working towards the Bronze Reading Schools Award and the results of my enquiry should contribute to this achievement.

In what ways can I create a culture of reading in my classroom through encouraging reading for pleasure?

Contact: **Rebecca McDade, Class Teacher, All Saints Primary School**

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What has happened?

Through engaging in professional reading and attending CLPD courses, I established a number of learning activities that I could implement in my classroom to build a reading culture. I recognised the limitations of providing rewards for reading, as this can reduce children's desire to read over the long term as rewards can imply that reading is not something worth doing for its own sake (Such, 2021), therefore I tried to implement activities that would boost pupils' intrinsic motivation for reading as well as providing some extrinsic motivation for those who needed to begin at that stage.

I created a weekly plan of action and noted observations of my class during the activities implemented. Firstly, I gathered pupil opinions on reading for pleasure to confirm my observations and to compare with those at the end of the enquiry in order to establish if there has been change. Then, I introduced a Book Personality Quiz in which pupils answered questions to find what genre of books suited their personality. From here, I introduced different weekly learning activities, such as a special reading box, a book challenge, a co-created book review station, book awards and a book tastings, which all took into consideration the types of books that each pupil would enjoy as per the results of the Book Personality Quiz.

I found that all activities implemented had a positive impact on enjoyment of reading and contributed to establishing a culture of reading in the classroom. Beginning with a Book Personality Quiz enabled pupils to feel more comfortable when choosing books, similar to the book tastings which also enabled pupils to sample different genres of books. The special reading box allowed conversations to flourish between pupils and I about books that were common interests. The book challenge motivated pupils who needed some extrinsic motivation, who didn't find enjoyment in reading, and brought excitement to the classroom. This activity in particular showed the largest increase in enjoyment of reading as pupils who already were already reading books they enjoyed didn't need extrinsic motivation from the challenge, but the pupils I was targeting in regards to enjoyment of reading were motivated to read different genres of books and by different authors, receiving a certificate at the end. The Book Awards and book reviews enabled conversation and debate between pupils in my own class and also in other classes, complimenting the social nature of reading. I undertook a final opinions survey at the end of my enquiry and pupils who had low opinions of enjoyment of reading identified that their enjoyment had increased as they have been able to sample different books, they have found genres that they enjoy and they enjoy the conversations that books bring.

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What impact has this had on your professional identity?

Undertaking this enquiry has given me the confidence to embrace and try something new in hopes of becoming a better teacher and boosting enjoyment of reading. It has reinforced the value I place on enjoyment of reading and has encouraged me to continue to be curious and reflective in my practice. I found time to be the most challenging factor in my enquiry and as a result, I will continue to implement the activities utilised until the end of the year and further into my career, striving to continue my research on this area too.

Further questions

In what ways might the use of QR codes through technology boost reading for pleasure?

In what ways might the use of audiobooks boost the reading skills of pupils who need supported when reading?

What impact does participating in daily shared reading have on writing progress?



Nicole Brown ~ Lady Alice Primary School

What did you do?

- The main purpose of this enquiry was to target a small group of learners who required 1-1 support with reading and writing. This particular group struggled to engage with writing and required a lot of support and encouragement to complete tasks.
- My aim was to enhance their knowledge of words and language by allowing them to participate in daily shared reading and be exposed to various types of text.
- The evidence I gathered prior to the intervention was a short dictated paragraph in which the learners copied down as they listened. This allowed me to highlight any errors within individual pieces of writing and record error patterns across the group.
- Reading short passages whilst the learners followed was implemented in our daily class routine. There were various texts made available such as fiction, non-fiction and poetry.
- A short discussion around word choice, definitions and comprehension of each text was also implemented.
- Other resources that helped build a positive reading and writing culture were made available within the environment such as a welcoming class library and vocabulary wall. These implementations were to also help increase engagement in reading and writing.

Why did you do it?

- The group of learners that this enquiry was targeting found reading 'tricky' and 'boring' as they were still learning to decode words and use their phonics knowledge to help blend sounds together. I felt this was having an impact on their writing and I wanted to understand if introducing them to positive reading experiences would help improve attitudes and develop skills in writing.
- Improving reading and writing was a focus in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and for Primary 3 the attainment gap in literacy is expected to decrease from 11.8% to 5.8%. Therefore, I felt that engaging with this curricular area was important and suitable to the learner's needs.
- As a practitioner, it is paramount that we cover the benchmarks and experiences and outcomes within the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). However, it is also our responsibility to ensure learners are fully engaged with a variety of learning experiences to allow them to have a positive attitude to learning.
- Such (2021) states that the teaching of reading and writing are 'mutually supported' and how elements of taught writing can help learners' reading progression. Therefore, this enquiry was carried out to identify if poor reading skills had an affect on writing.
- I also wanted to give my learners the opportunity to want to read and write more and not feel like it was a chore. The next section highlights how this progressed throughout.

What has happened as a result?

- At the beginning of the intervention a baseline assessment was carried out, it was apparent that the group of learners struggled with the dictated passage and were looking for extra support with spelling, common words and sentence structure.
- Discussions with the focus group at the end of the baseline assessment highlighted that they were not confident in writing independently and wanted various resources to assist them. This allowed me to adjust the daily shared reading by holding discussions around what words do they hear and know, what do they recognise.
- Graham et al. (2017) highlight that when learners are showing struggles with spelling certain words and having to pause to think about it, they can lose their train of thought and writing plans and ideas are then forgotten. As the weeks progressed and the learners were exposed to more daily shared reading, I noticed a change in 1. their reading fluency and 2. some spelling skills in their daily writing, meaning that they were not focusing so much on the connections between letters and sounds but were managing to recognise and write words with increased confidence.
- The data below portrays the progression in the focus group's writing. The final assessment was based on similar aspects as the baseline in week 1 of the enquiry. One or two learners have not shown much progression which is due to various circumstances that are stated within the implications.



- The focus group for this enquiry were also part of an intervention group with another class teacher for writing. Focusing on separate writing skills to the enquiry, she still managed to notice a slight difference in the learner's confidence and attitude towards their writing. They were still using visual aids and word banks to assist them, however she highlighted that she was not having to correct them on basic common and spelling word that they have previously learned.
- As well as aiming to improve writing independence and writing accuracy, I also wanted to increase the motivation and engagement of these learners during reading and writing lessons. As stated in Cremin & Locke (2016), that changes in classroom practice with reading and writing can improve motivation, performance and also identity. I believe that this group of learners now feel they have a purpose to their writing and have a positive attitude to learning within literacy, compared to before.

What are the implications?

- For a structured enquiry like this, learner absence especially during assessment weeks.
- Implementing intervention strategies to everyday classroom routine and ensuring the enquiry plan is followed accurately as much as possible.
- Ensuring learners are motivated and understand the task at hand. Having a sense of social, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is paramount for the learners to understand what literacy motivation is, such as goals and 'reasons for writing' states Mata (2011).
- Understanding the barriers to reading and writing for these learners and providing useful and meaningful resources for them to access throughout the enquiry to increase their literacy enjoyment and engagement.

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"To what extent can playful pedagogy encourage, support and motivate learners in writing?"

Sophie Spencer, Aileymill Primary School, Contact Details: gw22spencersophie@glow.sch.uk



Learners creating the class floorbook to showcase their proud work.

Why did you do it?

One of Aileymill Primary's School improvement plan targets for this session was to introduce play-based learning in Primary 2. The learners engage well with free-play and are very creative within this time.

Additionally, due to the demands of the first level outcomes, some of the learners have found the expectations quite daunting and some have become withdrawn and reluctant to write to their fullest potential. The attainment of writing within my class varies so I wanted to explore whether there was a correlation between reluctant writers and attainment within my classroom.

Due to these observations, I wanted to investigate ways in which I could encourage and motivate learners within their writing tasks. Having recognised the high levels of engagement during free-play, I decided to utilise this to conduct a series of semi-structured play-based lessons to target specific writing themes. I also wanted to examine if there were any change in levels of engagement during the free play sessions in the writing area.

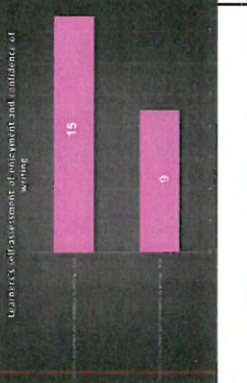
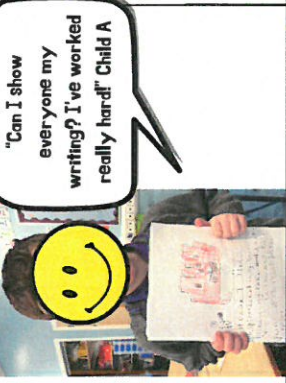
"Imaginary play is one of the best ways to engage young learners in the classroom." (Ram, 2022)

What did you do?

Upon returning to school at the beginning of term three, I held a discussion with the learners in the class about their enjoyment and confidence towards writing. From this discussion the learners filled in their own self-assessment sheet to privately tell me their own thoughts and feelings about writing. The data evidenced that just 9 out of 20 learners enjoyed and felt confident during the writing process. The data allowed me to gain a base starting point on the attitudes towards writing as a class. From here, I planned a series (6 weeks) of semi-structured play experiences as part of our writing lessons and free play to evaluate if this would have any impact on the learners' attitudes towards writing. I moved the format of the lesson from a more traditional approach to providing learners with time and play-based experiences to develop their creativity and let their imaginations run free.

"Play-based learning results from the active engagement of a child or the interaction between the child and peers and the environment. Young learners need safe spaces for social interaction to promote play-based language learning" (Daniels and Pyle, 2018).

From this literature, we had a class consultation to discuss if the learners would like any adaptations to the free-writing area within the class. This allowed me to adapt the area with the resources that the learners wanted to help and support their experiences and engagement. The learners also set up a floorbook to share their writing which they are proud of. This was a highly motivating tool to engage learners. Finally, I examined the learners' assessed writing pieces to gather a clear starting point of attainment for the learners and then re-assessed at the end of the enquiry to gain further data.



What has happened as a result?

Before I adapted my writing lessons to suit a more play-based approach, the learners had a more traditional based lesson of teacher input, discussion time/ co-constructed pieces and then transferring onto individual work. Due to the change in routine the learners required some settling time to adjust to having the opportunity to play before their writing. Providing the learners with play opportunities allowed learners to gain life, in-person experiences which they may not have experienced out with school. Education Scotland (2020) states that we (as facilitators); "should tap into what we know about the child's interests and family life to attach talking, listening, reading and writing to meaningful environments and experiences created within settings." As the learners had the opportunity to play within these experiences and environments it appeared that the learners were more engaged and willing to provide ideas when it came to the discussion time in writing. Learners that appeared reluctant before the enquiry started to contribute more of their ideas to whole class discussions. Additionally, when consulting literature it has been found that learners learn better, remember and can relate better to experiences had by them rather than being told about them by an adult (Patterson, 2003). An observation which appeared most apparent was the barrier of creating ideas individually was removed. As the learners had time to play and explore their imaginations before their writing, they were using and hearing language that they could transfer into their writing and experienced things they could write about. In literature, it has been found that play facilitates more creative language which learners can unconsciously transfer into their writing (ibid). The more reluctant writers within my class began actively participating and displaying high levels of engagement when writing independently and this was observed through play and work produced. It would appear that the pressure of creating independent thoughts and ideas were taken away or minimised through the introduction of play-based experiences. Learners who had been withdrawn in writing before the enquiry appeared more confident and wanted to proudly share their pieces of writing with peers and other members of staff (as seen in the photo beside). During observations of free play, it became much more evident that learners were gravitating towards the writing area and were highly engaged with this. The motivation of learners became much more evident when after our class writing sessions, the previously more reluctant writers wanted to add pieces of writing to the floorbook to showcase their hard work. As the series of lessons progressed the learners continued to remain highly engaged. At the end of the enquiry, I asked the learners to re-assess their attitudes towards writing. Analysis of the data found that learners' enjoyment and confidence had risen from 9 out of 20 learners to 15 out of 20 within the six weeks. Additionally, when analysing assessment data from this time period, more children assessed as on track.

What are the implications?

A key feature of play is knowing when it is appropriate, as an adult, to engage with play or observe. Sometimes adult involvement can interrupt or disrupt play, impacting on their experiences and learning. Hamilton (2018) highlights that this is an essential skill to any play-based learning to best support the child's development. Additionally, I re-assessed their work to evaluate if the learners' attainment had changed. I found that within every learner that their attainment within writing had risen. This must be a key point to consider when exploring writing through play-based experiences in the future. However, play-based learning may not be feasible in some learning settings. For effective play and experiences learners require a variety of resources to play with. I was in the fortunate position to have access to a variety of resources however, this is something to be considered if this was to be implemented in a different setting as engagement may not be as high with the lack of resources. Even though attainment was not the main focus of this enquiry, it was explored and examined. Through evaluation it showed that the learners' levels of attainment within writing did increase however, this would need to be investigated further to make this correlation. As a result of this enquiry, I intend to continue to implement and incorporate play-based writing lessons to encourage reluctant writers and build learners' confidence. Through this enquiry it has also highlighted the benefits of play-based learning within the curriculum.

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How does the provision of self, peer and instant oral teacher feedback help raise attainment in writing?

Sarah-Jayne Gorman - Class Teacher - Saint Andrew's Primary School



What did you do?

As agreed with SMT to raise attainment of writing within my class, I have taught two writing lessons a week. Over a six-week block of persuasive writing I placed more of a focus on feedback. Prior to the enquiry commencing I introduced features of the genre. Each week I utilised a triangulation of writing ensuring my class were always working with the Class Teacher, the Support for Learning Teacher and a Pupil Support Assistant.

Week 1 – What is feedback? I gathered information on pupils understanding of feedback and any prior knowledge the pupils had with regards to feedback. Throughout this first week, I gave the pupils a cold piece of writing as a baseline assessment.

Week 2 – Focus on self-assessment using Fast Feedback Machine.

Week 3 – Focus on peer-assessment using Fast Feedback Machine.

Week 4 – Focus on teacher assessment using Fast Feedback Machine.

Week 5 – Assessment. On the final week, I assessed what the pupils learned and what form of feedback worked best for the learners in my class. I assessed their writing against the Inverclyde Writing Progress Record 2.



Example of fast feedback machine, how it looks in a jotted and the user interface on mobile phone.

Why did you do it?

General Teaching Council Scotland (GTCs) recognise the need for teachers to continue their professional development throughout their careers (GTCs, 2021). I recognise the importance to embrace the qualities of an enquiring practitioner to embed these qualities into my daily practice. Through planning and tracking meetings and discussions with the previous class teacher it was clear the children had gaps in their learning. Following the School's Improvement Plan from the previous academic year where writing was developed as a focus for all classes; I knew that writing was an area in my class which required further development. Reflecting on the work they were producing, prior to the enquiry, I had observed that feedback was an area which could be improved. The class regularly self-assess in their taught writing jotters using traffic lights. However, as the class teacher I lacked confidence that they truly knew what assessment/feedback looked like or understood how to give high quality feedback in line with success criteria. Furthermore, through classroom observations, I had noticed that when they gave peer feedback they were not directly linking this back to the success criteria and consequently, the next steps they provided their partner with were often meaningless (Burgermeister, A, 2021). In addition, due to the age and stage of my class I often found that pupils did not respond or fully understand teacher written comments and therefore, felt instantaneous feedback using a fast feedback machine was the best means to provide a high quality teaching and learning environment, boost learners self-efficacy in writing and their attainment. (How Good is our School? 4th edition, 2015)

What has happened as a result?

When asked at the end of the block how my class felt about writing there was an increase in positive responses. They stated they felt more confident about their own writing as they could see the progress they were making.

I observed an increase in the quality of my classes writing over the block of learning and throughout other areas of curriculum. Overall, the class required less reminders for core targets such as full stops, capital letters and finger spaces. I also found my class were more willing to challenge themselves with uplevelling their vocabulary throughout the writing process.

Due to my classes age and stage I found a combination of instant oral teacher feedback and self assessment was most effective in improving writing. Peer feedback is something which still requires more support.

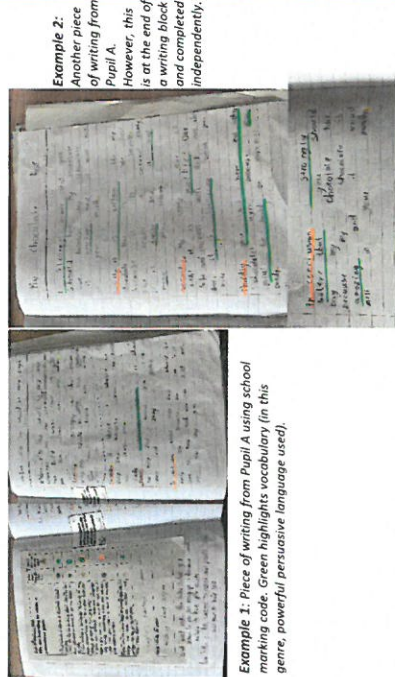
The use of the "Fast feedback Machine" increased the classes engagement with their feedback. The feedback I provided would be printed instantly and stuck into writing jotters on a sticker which the class found exciting and enjoyed receiving – this in turn caused them to refer to it more regularly throughout the writing process. (Hattie, J., 2008) By removing the barrier of writing, children were able to provide better quality self feedback.

Addressing this gap in the pupils understanding has led to an increase in pupil engagement and attainment. I have included pupil voice below which demonstrates their feelings of accomplishment:

Pupil voice: "I don't feel scared of writing anymore. I know exactly how to make my writing better each week and I can't wait for Thursday now."

Pupil Support Assistant: "You can really see the difference in their attitudes to writing, they are so hard-working and want to make their work better."

Picture Evidence:



Example 2: Another piece of writing from Pupil A. However, this is at the end of a writing block and completed independently.

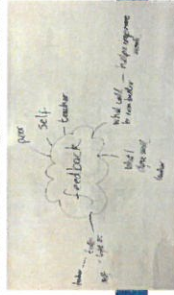
What are the implications?

Throughout this enquiry I experienced various implications. My primary 4 class feel they have more autonomy of their writing and I have observed an overall increase in the quality of writing they are continuing to produce.

The ability in my class is widely varied, I found that some children were able to self-assess their own work but there are others who still require scaffolding and teacher support to do so.

I also found that peer feedback is something which still requires a direct focus within my class. The class are less confident in providing high quality feedback for each other. I believe this is because pupils do not want to upset their peers. However, with regular HWB inputs on growth mind set and resilience, I believe this could be addressed.

As I aim to achieve full registration and for future classes I will be responsible for, this enquiry has supported me to become more knowledgeable of the impact that a focus on high quality feedback can have on the attainment of writing. Therefore, moving forward I will use the knowledge I have developed and confidently teach writing, using a variety of high quality feedback to raise attainment and consistently create high quality teaching and learning environments for all.



Week 1: What is feedback?

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To what extent does a daily number talk impact children's mental agility?

Olivia Black, P2, St.Ninian's Primary School

What did you do?

My practitioner enquiry investigated the impact of daily number talks on mental agility. I developed a 6 week enquiry for my focus group of children who found it difficult to calculate mentally. The enquiry began with pupils completing a baseline questionnaire which was beneficial as it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of students' thoughts towards number talks/mental agility. During the enquiry, purposeful daily number talks were carried out focusing on addition and subtraction within 100 with the aim of raising attainment, improving students' efficiency and accuracy when solving mental calculations. Throughout this enquiry, I examined the impact of daily number talks on children's mental agility and monitored their progress.

On a weekly basis, pupils completed a consistent Test of Change as a form of summative assessment. The time provided to finish the assessment was 8 minutes and it was displayed as a chill challenge which became increasingly challenging as the assessment progressed (mild, spicy, hot and super sizzling). Despite, the progressive nature of this assessment, the Test of Change maintained the same level of difficulty and time limit each week, over the course of the enquiry. This enabled me to make comparisons and assess the learner's progress. Using both my observations and assessment data, I was able to identify children who required additional support and practice. Therefore, I implemented a small group numeracy intervention focusing on additional practice of calculations within 100 to support these students.

Prior to concluding this enquiry, I carried out a questionnaire to compare with the initial findings. This provided me with a deeper insight into the students' perceptions of number talks and changes in their thinking from the beginning through to the end of the enquiry. The process was conducted with the whole class, however, the evidence gathered was based on my focus group of children who find it more difficult to calculate mentally. By the end of this study, learners were able to mentally calculate with accuracy and could confidently share their answers and strategies with others.

Why did you do it?

Sherry Parish (2010) highlights that the purpose of number talks is to help students focus on number relationships and use these relationships to mentally compute efficiently and flexibly. Through my observations in numeracy lessons, I was aware that the group of students selected for my enquiry found it more difficult to calculate mentally, therefore, my enquiry aimed to improve this.

My practitioner enquiry focused on implementing daily number talks in order to improve children's ability to calculate mentally. I carried out this enquiry because number talks was a method of learning that I was passionate about developing in the classroom. I aimed to enhance my knowledge and skills of this methodology in order to deliver purposeful, high quality number talks. Therefore, I engaged in career long professional learning about number talks. As a result of engaging with academic literature, professional development courses and observing good practice from experienced colleagues, my confidence increased and I improved my delivery of effective number talks which was evident in my classroom.

My enquiry specifically links to St. Ninian's School Improvement Plan for 2022-2023 with the aim of raising attainment in numeracy (St. Ninian's Primary School, 2022). This is also highlighted in Scotland's National Improvement Framework which indicates that one of the Scottish Education priorities is focusing on making an "improvement in attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy" (Scottish Government, 2023:1).

What has happened as a result?

Pupils

As a result of carrying out this enquiry, implementing daily number talks has had a significant impact on students' mental agility. Through analysis of evidence gathered, all learners involved in the enquiry showed great improvements in their responses to mental calculations. Through my observations, children's efficiency and accuracy of mental calculations has improved. This was evident in their day to day participation in number talks and also through the weekly test of change. The results of the Test of Change has demonstrated a real improvement in their numeracy attainment which is a local and national priority. Evidence of the weekly assessments showed that 100% of the focus group's scores have progressed throughout the course of enquiry further highlighting the positive impact of the daily number talks. The evidence demonstrates students' improvement in their ability to answer more questions with accuracy in the set time allocated to the assessment (see graph below). The senior management team have observed an improvement in students' attainment, as well as, motivation and confidence.

Students can confidently use a wide range of strategies to solve different calculations. Pupils' confidence in their ability to calculate mentally and share strategies has significantly improved. Evidence from the initial questionnaire showed that the majority of the focus group were unsure of numerical strategies. Child X stated "I find maths boring and I am not good at it". This highlights that it was crucial for me to implement this enquiry to increase learners' mental agility as well as their confidence. The final questionnaire demonstrated a change in Pupil X's perception of number talks as she stated "I enjoy maths now because it feels easier and I am better at it". The data from the questionnaire shows that 100% of the focus group are more confident in their ability to calculate mentally. Drawing on this evidence, it is clear that children now have more confidence and self belief. Furthermore, children displayed higher levels of focus and engagement throughout the enquiry which has had a positive impact on their learning.

Implementing this enquiry has allowed children to develop their number sense and become more confident in working out calculations mentally using appropriate strategies. There has been an improvement in children's understanding, perceptions and attitudes towards number talks and their ability to calculate mentally. Ultimately, this enquiry has evidently increased pupils' efficiency and accuracy to solve calculations.

Teacher

Humphreys and Parker (2015) state that many educators have found substantial changes in teaching and learning when using number talks to improve mental agility. Therefore, I engaged with academic literature to enhance my knowledge and skills in number talks. As a result, I became more confident in delivering purposeful high quality number talks and my questioning techniques have substantially improved. During daily number talks, I used effective questioning and modelled strategies to develop children's skills and knowledge. As a result, pupils' mental agility has improved.

It is reflected in the Standards for Registration that teachers should have a depth of knowledge and understanding of Research and Engagement in Practitioner Enquiry (GTCS, 2021). I believe that conducting a practitioner enquiry has been beneficial for both learners and myself. It has developed my classroom practice and enhanced learners' mental agility.



What are the implications?

The implications of my practitioner enquiry are:

- In my class, there is a wide range of abilities. Therefore, creating differentiated Test of Change assessments to meet the needs of every learner was a time consuming process.
- Furthermore, absences can have a detrimental impact on children's ability and confidence. Any absences would impact their progress and the results of the enquiry.

However, despite the implications mentioned, I value the importance of the impact of high quality number talks on students' mental agility. Pupils' efficiency and accuracy of mental calculations have improved. All students have shown increased engagement and confidence. Ultimately, this enquiry has significantly raised attainment for all learners.

I will continue to implement purposeful daily number talks and embed this into my practice. Additionally, I will conduct enquiries in my future practice as I strongly believe it is beneficial to promote growth and development for both learners and myself.

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How can I use feedback to support learning in writing of children using English as an additional language?

Kieran Docherty, P6 Teacher, King's Oak Primary School

What did you do?

I began my enquiry by identifying a mixed-ability group of 4 learners within my class who use English as an additional language (EAL). Having sought advice from Inverclyde's EAL and Bilingual Service, I began by carrying out a baseline assessment in which learners were required to write their own sentences and 'up-level' some further basic sentences. A range of technical aspects were highlighted, ranging from spelling and grammar to syntax and verbal conjugation. Hardman and Bell (2019) argue, however, that writing feedback far to often relies on the use of grammatical metalinguage which results in a change of mindset within learners wherein writing becomes a 'box-ticking exercise with no real focus on the content itself.

Going forward, my enquiry therefore progressed by means of an intervention which involved a combination of tasks across a 7-week period, during development time, I would take the group of learners to discuss differentiated VCOP boards and examples of how these words could be used. I would then ask learners to write a sentence using a word from each section and provide verbal feedback around spelling, grammar and verbal conjugation whilst also including written feedback in the form of a modelled sentence. Learners would then refer back to their 'sentence jotter' when writing in other tasks. As Gajpov and Brownhill (2021) argue that there is a need to support EAL learners in writing in a way which creates a link between the L1 and the L2 (English), I also ensured to allow access to English/ Arabic bilingual dictionaries which learners used to label sentences which contained unfamiliar words. As a further form of summative assessment, evidence was also gathered from VCOP sentences in order to assess how learners responded to writing tasks within a whole-class setting. The enquiry was then concluded by carrying out a summative assessment, allowing me to compare this with my initial baseline assessment and evaluate the effectiveness of this feedback approach.

Why did you do it?

In recognising that there is a variance in the duration of English language acquisition among all 4 learners, there is a corresponding variance in all aspects of literacy attainment, with some learners working at first level and others at second level. Accordingly, the range of needs among all four learners varied considerably, but all 4 demonstrated a lack of confidence in writing, presenting itself during writing tasks through different behaviours such as avoidance and distress.

The Scottish government has also recognised that children who use English as an additional language already experienced a gap in attainment when compared to learners for whom English was the L1, but that the COVID19 pandemic and resulting school closure has widened this further, with many key language skills needing to be revisited (Scottish Government, 2021). The main goal of the enquiry was therefore to raise attainment where possible and remove barriers from learning by giving learners a more comprehensive form of feedback whilst maintaining feasibility.

Beyond my own classroom, my motivation for the enquiry also grew from the possibility of having a whole-school impact, with English being used as an additional language by some learners at almost every stage throughout the school. Development of teaching and learning approaches in writing is also a key area of focus within our School Improvement Plan (SIP) with the goal of raising attainment across multiple stages (King's Oak Primary School, 2022) – the results of the enquiry could therefore be made available to all staff members and applied in different contexts should other practitioners wish to do so.

What has happened as a result?

Following the accumulation of evidence, it was possible to triangulate data via sentence work carried out in jotters, AfL strategies and comparative baseline and summative assessments. In the images below, the work of 'Learner E' is shown which shows jotter work carried out independently during week one (she labelled her work as 'red'). This was then compared with self-assessment of jotter work carried out in week 7 of the enquiry which shows a marked increase in the level of confidence which the learner has in their own work. Additionally, I noted that the learner was able to successfully conjugate irregular verbs in past tense which were formed incorrectly in the learner's baseline assessment, showing that modelling is likely to have had a corrective effect over the course of the enquiry. I was able to offer my own work alongside theirs and use this as a tool for discussion rather than simply picking out an aspect which needs 'fixed', which has been identified as a key technique within national framework (Scottish Government).

Another child within the group who is currently working at second level benefitted from the inclusion of VCOP strategy boards within the small-group tasks. I had noted from their baseline assessment that their writing style was often too conversational. When comparing this with its summative assessment, a wider range of vocabulary was being used throughout each of his sentences which allowed the tone of his work to remain in tune with that of formal, written English. I wanted to ensure the longevity of this impact, however, so made sure to have a writing station within my class where EAL learners could access VCOP strategy boards and bilingual dictionaries where necessary.

AfL was the final pillar of my research – a useful choice as it is a pedagogical approach which I use daily. The use of a traffic light system, wherein learners self-assessed independent writing by sticking dots onto sentences/ paragraphs, allowed me to facilitate discussion around unfamiliar words or difficulty in formulating parts of sentences, such as prepositional phrases. The use of labelling unfamiliar English words with their Arabic translation also allowed me to gauge any areas which presented a gap in vocabulary but, more importantly, allowed learners to access concepts on their own by using the skills of their first language. It has been argued that corrective feedback alone is insufficient in allowing the development of writing skills in learners who use English as a second or additional language. Such learners also require access to explicit instruction, modelling and opportunities for peer/self-assessment (Ferris, 2010). The amalgamation of these approaches was a key focus throughout the enquiry.

What are the implications?

An important realisation made as a result of carrying out my enquiry is that learners will differ greatly in their responsiveness to support in writing depending on their needs are. Whilst some learners benefitted considerably from to use of VCOP strategy boards, others used these less and preferred to establish links with their first language when carrying out writing tasks through the use of bilingual dictionaries.

A possible reason for this may be a variance in each of the learners' level of Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS – social language) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP – academic language). Cummins (2000) theorises that whilst BICS normally takes 2 years to reach linguistic competence, CALP can take anywhere between 5 to 7 years to fully develop, which is the form of language principally used when writing. In any future enquiries, I would therefore intend to further explore ways in which support tools can be tailored to learners needs by providing multiple resources and allowing choice.

It has unfortunately been noted, however, that there remains a lack of academic research around the effective teaching and learning of EAL children within the Scottish context (Anderson et al., 2016). Given that government framework has already highlighted the existence of an attainment gap between EAL learners and those using English as a the L1, it is my hope that further enquiries will be carried out to explore ways of removing barriers for such learners as the primary-aged population of Scotland continues to diversify.

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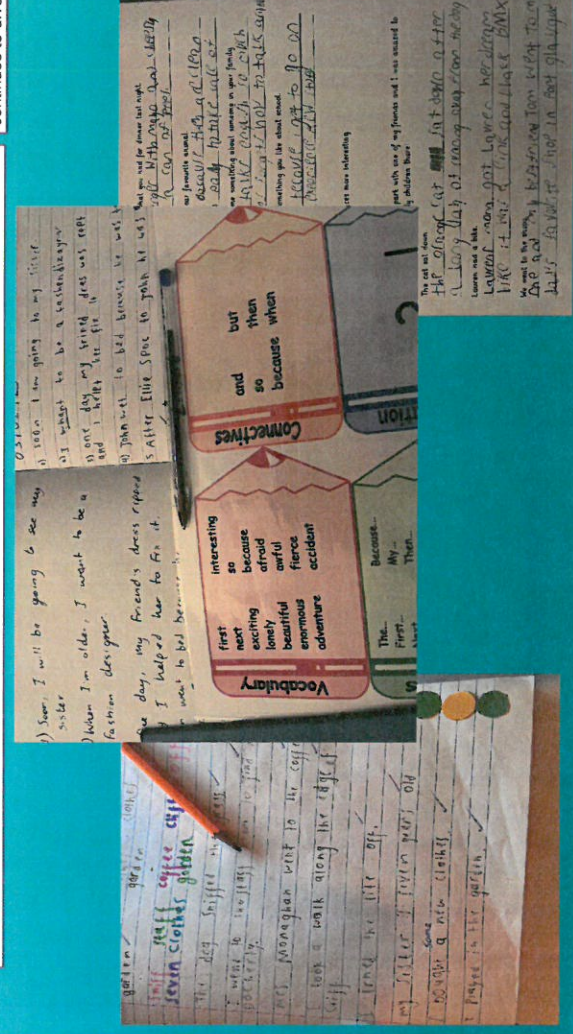
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How do different reading strategies impact children's willingness to read for pleasure?

Kirsty Clark – Wemyss Bay Primary School

What did you do?

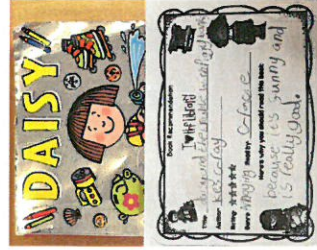
After identifying in Term 1 that my children's willingness to read for pleasure was lacking in my composite Primary 3/4 class, I decided to use Terms 2 and 3 to introduce a variety of strategies in an attempt to create a positive reading culture and to prove to my learners that reading can be fun. During our daily ERIC (Everyone Reading in Class) time, I first taught the children how to select a book that was suited to both their interests and ability. We discussed the importance of a front cover and blurb for gaining information about a story, and I explained that if they find an author they like then another book written by the same author would be a good choice. Throughout this year, the children have had a wide variety of books to choose from, as they have access to a selection of books in their class library as well as an additional 50+ age-appropriate books provided by myself. In addition to this, we visit the whole school library on a regular basis to return and borrow new books and we also had a box of books delivered from Inverclyde Library for the children to choose from too. We learned about the importance of reviews and recommendations when selecting a suitable book, and I introduced book review templates for the children to complete and leave inside books once they had read them. I also created a book recommendation wall, where the children can write down a book title and post it in the cup belonging to a peer who they believe would enjoy the story too. Furthermore, when reading to the class, I deliberately picked engaging, funny stories that would appeal to my learners to show them that reading can be exciting. After whole class and independent reading time, we met in reading circles to share our thoughts and ideas with others, and we used Bloom's questioning to gain a deeper understanding.

Why did you do it?

Since the beginning of the year, we have always had scheduled ERIC time, however due to a lack of reading enjoyment, my learners often became irritable and unsettled during this time. Numerous excuses were used to avoid participating, such as unnecessary toilet breaks, swapping books that had not yet been read, emptying and refilling water bottles and asking to collect random objects from school bags in the corridor. This quickly highlighted that more time was being wasted than was being spent on reading and therefore, major changes were required. This issue was made more significant by the fact that 'Reading for Pleasure' is a big focus in Wemyss Bay Primary School, and class libraries, soft-furnished reading areas and daily ERIC time are mandatory in all classes. From staff meetings and an NQT training course delivered by members of the Scottish Book Trust and Inverclyde Library, I learned about the benefits of having a positive reading culture as well as how best to create this in my classroom. These training sessions, and professional literature from Education Scotland, provided many of the ideas which I introduced and had success with during my learning enquiry (Education Scotland, 2015).

What has happened as a result?

Reading appropriate and appealing books to the children was the first strategy I used to enhance ERIC time, and immediately after reading 'Green Eggs and Ham' and 'Fox in Socks' by Dr Seuss, they became the most popular books in the classroom. The children were excited to challenge themselves by reading the tongue twisters and they enjoyed using expression and tone to convey the different characters' personalities. My learners also engaged well with the book reviews and they were motivated to share and recommend their favourite books to others. This was beneficial for me too, as the quality of the reviews revealed which children had fully engaged with their book. The Bloom's Questioning acted as a motivator, because the children had to read in order to have something to talk about and share with their peers. They enjoyed talking about the characters, summarising the plots, making predictions and finding comparisons between their story and real life. Finally, my learners have become very competent and confident at choosing books for themselves. They are able to explain which genres and authors they like best and why, and they now look at the font size, quantity of text and number of pages in a book to assess whether it is likely to be too easy, too challenging or just right for them. For two weeks in November, I tracked the number of ERIC time excuses and interruptions in my composite P3/4 class of 21 children. On average, during 15 minutes of reading time per day, approximately 9 children asked to visit the toilet, 11 children asked to visit the library to change their books, and there were at least 5 other random interruptions each day. While some children had no issues at all and would happily read silently, the majority of my learners would make at least one or more attempts to avoid ERIC time. However, from tracking our ERIC time disruptions for 2 weeks across March, it is clear that the reading willingness of my learners has increased as a result of the new strategies I have introduced. On average, during an increased 30 minutes of ERIC reading time, approximately only 6 children asked to visit the toilet, 5 children asked to visit the library to change their books and the number of tiredness or boredom related interruptions also reduced to just 1 or none each day. I believe that all of these strategies helped to break down the barriers to reading within my class, and once my learners started giving reading a go, the excuses reduced significantly and now we can have up to 30 minutes of settled quiet reading time.



What are the implications?

Since the beginning of this learning enquiry, the atmosphere in my classroom has drastically improved during reading time. The interruptions, distractions and complaints about ERIC time have reduced and most of the children now find themselves enjoying reading for a variety of different reasons. Some are mesmerized by the facts they can learn from non-fiction books, others love the mystery and adventure that fiction books create, some enjoy answering questions and discussing stories with their peers, whilst others like to critique, review and recommend books to others. The strategies introduced throughout this enquiry have made reading more interesting and exciting for my learners, and these strategies have encouraged my children to choose a book and engage with it. For this reason, I would highly recommend these strategies to other teachers who may be battling against reading barriers in their classes. This would enable my learning enquiry to benefit teachers and motivate learners in other classes and schools as well as in my own. As a result of the positive impact this enquiry has had on my practice, I will continue to seek out, try and test new strategies to further improve my learners' willingness to read for pleasure, both when in class and also when at home. Finally, I will continue to use these strategies on a daily basis in my current class and in future classes, to create positive reading cultures and to encourage all of my pupils to engage with literature and to read for pleasure as frequently as possible.

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Can Outdoor Learning Enhance Questioning Skills In Primary 4?

Kirsten Irvine, King's Oak Primary School, @Miss_Irvine_



Relevance and Importance

The National Improvement Framework outlines the need to improve children's mental, emotional and physical wellbeing (Scottish Government, 2019).

Research has shown that children play outdoors less than they used to. Data recorded by The National Trust in 2012 showed that children play outside for an average of just over four hours a week (The National Trust, 2012). Despite the fact that there has not been updated data about children's relationship with playing outdoors, the research from 2012 is enough to reiterate the importance of outdoor learning in schools.

Taking learning outdoors (particularly learning through play) provides children with the opportunity to communicate about the natural world and solve problems that the classroom does not provide (Bilton, 2010). After all, "one of the primary functions of play is to develop children's language" (Bilton, 2010, p.59).

Some of the benefits of outdoor learning include:

- Creative freedom to explore multi-sensory environments that the classroom cannot provide (Quibell et al, 2017).
- Children being more active outdoors than indoors – positively impacting on their health and wellbeing (Bilton, 2010).
- Developing a deeper understanding of the natural world and appreciation for Scottish landscapes (Scottish Government, 2010).

Impact and Implications of Enquiry

- The final data gathered during my enquiry found that the children in my class were **80% more likely** to use the skill of questioning during Outdoor Learning in comparison to learning within the traditional classroom setting.
- This enquiry allowed my class to develop their skills in questioning, which they initially found difficult due to the social implications of the global COVID-19 pandemic.
- As a practitioner, this enquiry allowed me to fully appreciate both the academic and social benefits of Outdoor Learning.
- Additionally, undertaking this enquiry project allowed me to experiment with various types of play pedagogy and how the outdoor environment can enhance children's play. Importantly, it forced me to consider how the traditional classroom setting can be adapted to encourage and develop children's questioning.

"The outdoor area is a complete learning environment, which caters for all children's needs – cognitive, linguistic, emotional, social and physical." (Bilton, 2010, p.1)

Aims

- Utilise available outdoor spaces to allow for rich learning experiences.
- Encourage the skill of 'questioning' in a post-COVID world, a skill which my Primary 4 class find challenging.
- Allow children to 'question' through child-led play outdoors to stimulate observable discussions, comparing this with the traditional classroom setting.
- Engage in discussions with children about their learning outdoors, using open questions to encourage and develop the skill of independent questioning.

The Enquiry Steps

Step 1

- Through random sampling, I selected four different children every week during Outdoor Learning to provide a concise analysis of questioning over the course of six weeks (Hall and Wall, 2019).
- The four children had autonomy to choose who they worked with during Outdoor Learning. I observed the children and took brief notes about the types of questions they were inclined to ask whilst engaging with play-based Outdoor Learning (mastery play, imaginative play etc.)

Step 2

- After Outdoor Learning, the four children were invited to engage in group talk with me about their experiences outdoors.
- I asked the children open questions about their learning outdoors to stimulate the use of language. For example, "what made you choose to forage in the plant pots?" and then recorded their responses.
- Afterwards, I consolidated and extended language development through modelled responses.

Step 3

- After the discussion, I set a time to observe the four children each week working in the traditional classroom setting with a play-based approach, focusing on their use of questioning.
- The information I gathered from both Outdoor Learning and classroom-based learning (in relation to how often they used the skill of questioning) was recorded in a spreadsheet and updated every week, for six weeks. Eg. 'Observation 1- Child A asked eight open questions outdoors and two closed questions in the classroom.'
- At the end of the six-week period, the information was examined, and a conclusion was determined.

National and Global Influences

- Froebelian theory highly values Outdoor Learning due to the impact it has on child creativity, problem solving and confidence (Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014).
 - Frobel believed that the outdoor environment could transform the development of children living in poverty and disadvantage. Additionally, Outdoor Learning has been a staple in Nordic education for decades (Conkbayir and Pascal, 2014).
- Teachers in Scotland are required to have a comprehensive understanding of "Outdoor Learning, including direct experience of nature and other learning within and beyond school boundaries" (GTCS, 2021, p.7).
- The CFE Outdoor Learning document highlights the many benefits that learning outdoors can bring to children across the entire primary curriculum (Scottish Government, 2010).
- The rise in child obesity and obsession with video games suggests that children need to get outdoors more.

Data Collection Tools

Using the 'Analysis of Talk' tool outlined by Hall and Wall (2019) would allow for a specific analysis of children's questioning when learning outdoors. It is worth noting that this approach is time consuming and required transcribing and repeated listening to be successful (Hall and Wall, 2019). However, in my view, this method was the most reliable way to analyse the development of questioning outdoors.

This approach can be broken down into three steps: content analysis, interaction analysis and discourse analysis. The figure below shows some of the key points I considered when collecting my data.

Content Analysis

What is said?

Interaction Analysis

Who speaks, how long do they speak for?

What about the outdoor environment encourages questioning?

Discourse Analysis

How are children's ideas developed collaboratively through questioning?

Figure 1.1 (adapted from Hall and Wall, 2019)

'To what extent does knowledge and autonomy of moderation and assessment have an impact on motivation and writing test scores?



Scan the QR code to hear about the moderation process from one of my P6 pupils.

Kimberley McIver, Class Teacher, Aileymill Primary School

writing test scores?



What did you do?

I wanted to test if having knowledge of moderation would have an impact on my learners' writing test scores and their motivation towards writing. The learners participated in a class discussion about writing to understand how they felt about it. It was evident that numerous learners did not feel very positive about their writing and were not sure how to progress. They had seen the writing assessment criteria before but had not looked at it in great detail. My aim was to teach learners how to moderate and give feedback on a range of texts so they would pay more attention to success criteria and know what they have to do to achieve it.

Over the 9 week block, rather than doing a new piece of writing every week, we spent 2 weeks on one piece of writing. The aim was to provide learners with opportunities to moderate and assess their own writing so they could gain an understanding of the criteria and in turn improve their test scores. This involved T1 learners in Primary 6. This group of learners were targeted as they were borderline on track and close to achieving Writing Level 5**.

Moderating and giving feedback is a skill that requires explicit teaching. I taught these skills at the beginning of the 9 weeks and it was reinforced throughout the block. Initially we used individuals writing from primary 7 and the class would provide feedback based on the success criteria and moderate it using the assessment criteria. They would then agree on the level they thought had been achieved using evidence to justify. As the weeks progressed the class started to do this for their own writing.

Time was allocated every second week to read and reflect on feedback and to think about their next steps for improvement.

Why did you do it?

Writing is an essential skill that learners need to master in order to succeed academically and in their future careers. However, writing can be a challenging task for many learners, especially when it comes to editing and reviewing their work. By teaching learners how to moderate their own writing, we can help them become better writers and more confident in their abilities.

Moderation refers to the process of assessing and ensuring the consistency and accuracy of teacher judgements about student learning and achievement. The purpose of moderation is to ensure that teachers have a shared understanding of what constitutes high-quality learning and achievement, and that their judgements are fair, valid, and reliable (Scottish Government, 2019).

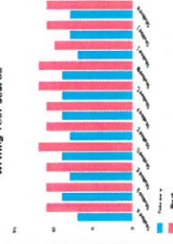
Making learners more aware of the moderation process could help to close the gap in their learning. I guided them through the process of analysing evidence, making judgements, and reflecting on their learning to help them become more independent, reflective and critical learners (Education Scotland, 2019a). When learners are taught how to moderate, they learn how to make fair and consistent judgements about their own and others' work. This can help improve the accuracy and fairness of assessments and evaluations, which can benefit both teachers and learners (Education Scotland, 2019b).

My hope was that as learners looked at the writing criteria in more detail and what they had to do to achieve it, their writing test scores and motivation towards their writing would improve. The moderation process encourages individuals to reflect on their own work, identify strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for improvement. Teaching children to moderate can help them be more self-aware and become independent writers. Additionally, I wanted to enhance learners' motivation towards their writing. The moderation process can help develop a growth mindset, which is the belief that intelligence and ability can be developed through effort and perseverance. By reflecting on their own work and setting goals for improvement, learners can embrace challenges and see mistakes as opportunities for learning.

What happened as a result?

At the beginning of the 9 week block, a baseline assessment was completed to see what level each child was at. At the end of the block, they were assessed again to see if improvements had been made.

Writing Test Scores



- Improved writing skills: By learning to moderate their own writing and make appropriate revisions, learners were able to improve their writing skills and produce higher-quality work.
- Increased confidence: When learners took ownership of the editing and reviewing process, they felt more confident in their writing abilities and were more likely to take risks and try new things.
- Better time management: Learners were able to work more efficiently and manage their time more effectively, which was especially beneficial during timed writing assignments.
- Deeper understanding of writing conventions: When learners understood how to moderate their own writing, they gained a deeper understanding of grammar, punctuation, and other writing conventions, which helped them become more effective communicators.
- Improved self-reflection skills: Moderating writing involves reflection and self-assessment, which helped learners develop critical thinking skills and a better understanding of their own writing process.

Overall, teaching learners how to moderate their own writing can help them become more confident and effective writers and can set them up for success both in school and in their future careers.

What are the implications?

This enquiry has impacted my learners greatly. The learners know their targets and know the steps that they need to take to achieve them. Their attitude towards their writing is also more positive. Their confidence is growing, and the learners are enjoying writing lessons.

Several learners are now seeking opportunities to improve using assessment information as a tool to support them. Assessment grids are also stuck in the back of their folders.

This has also had an impact on my own teaching skills. Teaching learners how to moderate their own writing requires teachers to provide additional support and feedback, which did increase my workload. However, when learners were actively involved in the editing and reviewing process, I saw greater engagement and investment in their work.

I had to engage in professional development to develop the skills and strategies needed to effectively teach learners how to moderate their writing, which was very beneficial for me as a newly qualified teacher.

Overall, teaching learners how to moderate their own writing can require additional effort and planning on the part of teachers but can lead to improved outcomes for learners and greater engagement in the writing process.

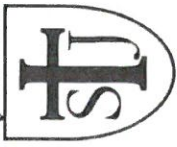
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What impact does diacritical marking have on reading and spelling accuracy?



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What did you do?

At the beginning of term 3, I started to introduce diacritical marking as a whole class learning tool. My focus was on a group of 4 children that, up until term 3, were finding it difficult to use the various strategies that I had in place to help them read and write. We embedded it in all of our spelling every day and it was part of our daily routine. In week 1 I carried out a verbal pre assessment which involved reading a selection of words and recorded the results. In week 6 I then carried out a verbal post assessment and recorded the results. Throughout the enquiry I used an emoji fan as part of a survey based plenary approach to gather data and I used exit passes to record how the group was responding to the new approach. (Hall et al., 2019) The exit passes consisted of the children picking a word from a selection that I had on the board. They wrote this word on their exit pass and input diacritical marking on it. I then asked my selected group to read me the word they had chosen from the list using the diacritical markings they put down. I made a recording of this as evidence.

What has happened as a result?

Upon studying the results of this enquiry, I have seen mixed results within the focus group. The wider class did take diacritical marking onboard as a useful strategy, however, considering the level they were already reading at, it did not make a huge difference in their current attainment level in reading. Within the focus group, 2 of the children have shown excellent progress in their reading and spelling accuracy. This in turn has resulted in a marked increase in their enjoyment when reading. The other 2 children in the focus group have shown slight improvement but not enough to continue to use this strategy. I am currently implementing additional strategies for these children which will run alongside diacritical marking with an aim to improve their reading level. In line with Article 28 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, n.d), all children have the right to education. It is essential to continue trying to find a strategy which give the children who are struggling, equal opportunities to learn.

What are the implications?

In terms of my own practice, the main thing I have taken from this enquiry is that diacritical marking can be a useful and effective tool. Although this strategy is not usually introduced until primary 4, I would have no hesitation in using diacritical marking in primary 3 again as a supplementary tool due to the positive results achieved during the enquiry. Within the context of the wider school there are several implications that can have a positive impact on the children's learning. If the school chooses to adopt this as a successful strategy then it can lift the attainment level which will consequently give the children a much better understanding of language.

The wider implication of these findings could help other schools who consider using diacritical marking at a younger age. This in turn could raise the overall reading standard in the UK and help children to have a greater appreciation of the books they read.

"Being literate increases opportunities for the individual in all aspects of life, lays the foundations for lifelong learning and work, and contributes strongly to the development of all four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence." (Education Scotland, n.d)

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Why did you do it?

According to the St Joseph's School Improvement Plan, the reading attainment across the school is lower than listening, talking and writing. Raising the overall attainment within schools is very important and reading is one of the key areas that needs to be addressed within our school. Also, in relation to the Inverclyde Council Inclusive Schools Policy, I felt that the pupils who needed the most support within the class can easily be disconnected from their peers especially if there are additional barriers to their learning. (Inverclyde Council, n.d)

During active literacy lessons I had increasingly become aware that a small group of children were not progressing at the same rate as their peers. This became evident during reading sessions and from spelling test results.

After discussion with the Principal Teacher of Literacy (previous CMO Literacy) it was decided that some form of intervention would be required to try and level up the attainment gap.

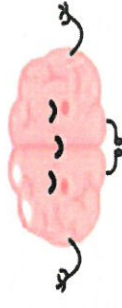
During my research I studied Ruth Miskin and her various approaches to phonics and reading. This led me onto choosing diacritical marking as the subject of my enquiry. I felt that this strategy is used to encourage the children to think about all of the different sounds that make up a word which in turn will give them a solid base to blend the words from.

"the more quickly children learn to read, the more they want to read and the more they understand; and the less they struggle with spelling, the more capacity they have for writing what they want to say." (Brierley, n.d)



Mindfulness: Can it improve Health and wellbeing and time on task in the afternoon?

Johann Herd - St John's Primary



Methodology

Methodology:

Three weeks enquiry with upto 10 minutes mindfulness every day straight after lunchtime.
A mixture of guided meditation and focus on breathing.

Data collection:

I used a mixed method of data collection to allow a greater degree of understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative data - I used a simple tally chart to assess time on task. Prior to starting the task I chose 6 focus children and identified their behaviour on/off task and then followed this up while doing mindfulness. I was able to identify any changes to the time. Qualitative data - using the same focus group I questioned children's experience of mindfulness practice and the impact it had on their wellbeing. Does it have a positive impact on wellbeing? How does it make them feel? Does it positively impact their focus? Is it worthwhile?

Why it is important?

The enquiry had two aims:

Investigate the effect mindfulness practice will have on the health and Well Being of a primary 3 class.
Investigate if mindfulness would increase the time on task

Health and Wellbeing (HWB) are a core area of the Curriculum for Excellence, further to this it is an area highlighted in the school improvement plan. For this particular class the time immediately after lunch is an unsettled time and I wanted to see if mindfulness would create a more settled environment which in turn would lead to more settled afternoon with more time spent on task. I felt that this in turn would assist in raising attainment of all in the class.

The research highlighted that HWB must be recognised to have a holistic link to attainment. Research has indicated that mindfulness can have a positive effect on the HWB with Wear (2013) highlighting that it can work as a low cost intervention to prevent spending on physical and mental health. Wear (2013) presents a wealth of evidence that mindfulness can also develop cognitive skills and function (Bauchemin et al., 2008; Flook et al., 2010). Further to this the OECD (2019) recognised that mindfulness has a place in the curriculum and that it can build meta-cognitive skills needed in education.

Results

The class were receptive and excited about mindfulness being used daily in the classroom as some children have said that they find the noise overwhelming at times.

"I love listening to the calm voice"

"I feel calm"

"I feel relaxed and ready to do my learning"

"It stops all the noise for me"

"It helps me be calm"

Unfortunately, this was not the experience of all children within the class. Two children in the class struggled with the experience and their distress was evident and increased as the study continued. The children were unable to join in with the mindfulness even if they had other activities to participate in during this time. I had offered both children alternatives to do during this period but they actively shouted or screamed throughout the mindfulness sessions as they went on. In turn this started to cause distress for other participants. I had hoped that with this in a routine that these children would participate. However, this did not happen and for them mindfulness was not appropriate now.

The time on task increased initially but then following the distressed behaviour increasing this initial increase was lost.

Implications

Mindfulness had a mixed impact on my class with some children finding it helpful and others finding it distressing.

For the majority of children mindfulness had a positive impact with them feeling better and me noticing an increased time on afternoon tasks.

For others it led to increase in distressed behaviours which ultimately meant that the practice has ceased in the class. As it went in direct opposition to the second nurture principle that the class was a safe base

It is something I would consider using again with other classes but be mindful of the individuals within the class and move away if the practice caused distress.

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What impact could daily play based experiences have on motivation to engage in spelling lessons, and to develop common word recognition within a primary 2 classroom?

Lesley Gillan, All Saints Primary School. gw22gillanlesley@glow.sch.uk



Why did you do it?

All Saints Primary School is an attainment challenge school with the School Improvement Plan prioritising raising attainment in literacy and numeracy, and developing play pedagogy in primaries 1 and 2.

During terms 1 and 2 it was clear that there was a gap in a group of 6 children within the class in their ability to recognise and read common words. Additionally, there was a clear lack of motivation during spelling lessons and they required significant support to remain engaged and to stay on task. Within the group of 6 children there were a number of contributing factors that affected their progress, therefore, as I work towards my full registration with the GTOS, my enquiry became all the more meaningful and important to me on my teaching journey.

"Demonstrating a commitment to motivating, and including all learners, understanding the influence of gender, social, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious and economic backgrounds on experiences of learning, taking account of specific learning needs and seeking to reduce barriers to learning." (GTCS, 2021)

In line with the SIP and local authority priority, my purpose and aim in carrying out the enquiry was to determine how play based learning experiences could motivate and engage learners, and improve common word recognition and fluency.

What has happened as a result?

The daily activities that the targeted group of children participated in included:

- splat
- common word bingo
- magnetic boards
- common word snap
- writing in sand
- building words with playdough
- word hunt – outdoors and in books
- wordsearches
- colour by words
- find the path – using train set and cars

Before I began my enquiry, the children received a weekly teaching input of common words and thereafter they would be displayed on our phonics working wall. Having a daily input, through repetition and reinforcement, has made a significant difference to the children's ability to recognise and read common words.

The group of children responded extremely well to the daily play based activities and were keen to take part. Taking the children and working in a smaller group was unquestionably beneficial in terms of keeping the children focused and on task. The children who were part of the group were of similar level of ability and so worked well together. The children showed their support of one another and became one another's biggest supporters when they recognised previously unfamiliar words. By the second week, the children would ask if they would be playing the word games that day as they quickly became something to look forward to. To ensure that the children had ownership over their learning, I prepared 2 different activities per day and gave the children the choice of what we would do that day. Again giving the children autonomy over their learning encouraged engagement and focus.

The results of the test of change assessment highlighted the positive affect that a daily teaching input of common words through play has had on the targeted group of children. There was a significant difference in the results from the baseline assessment, particularly for the 2 children who have English as an additional language. All children involved have made steady progress and with continued input, will continue to do so.

What are the implications?

The children involved in the enquiry clearly enjoyed taking part in the lessons. The benefits of the daily teaching input of common words is evident from the progress that the children have made. There is also a markable difference in the children's confidence which is clear when taking part in discussions and group work, during whole class spelling lessons.

Moving forward I will continue to implement a daily teaching input of common words to the whole class. To maximise engagement and success, I will continue to adopt a playful approach and children's choice as well as have small working groups.

Furthermore, the daily teaching input of common words has had an impact on the children's reading skills and I have found that there is also an improvement in the children's fluency when reading.

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What did you do?

I began by carrying out observations on the group of children as they played during free play in the classroom. During these observations I completed the Leuven Scale for Involvement on each child to determine their engagement with other children as well as to establish which resources they enjoyed playing with. Laevers (2005) discusses the benefits of the use of the Leuven Scale for Involvement in terms of enhancing practice to achieve a higher level of engagement with children and the teacher and environment. This helped to inform my plans for the play based learning experiences I would deliver to maximise engagement and success. I then carried out a baseline assessment to gather quantitative data that I would compare to a test of change assessment at the end of the enquiry to allow me to measure and analyse data.

For the next 6 weeks, at the start of our whole class spelling lessons, I would introduce and revise the new common words for the week as well as review previous learning. The children's attention would be directed to our phonics working wall where all common words they had learned would be displayed. During daily free play sessions, the targeted children and I would take part in a variety of play based activities that I knew from my observations would engage the children. Realising the Ambition (2020) reinforces the importance and value of play pedagogy and children being leaders in their own learning. *"Child-centred play pedagogy requires us to take the lead from the children. This approach actively responds to the individual and constantly changing needs of a young child. A young child's voice is interpreted by our observations of their actions, emotions and words. These observations are central to assessment and inform us what children need."*

"Play is the work of the child."
MARIA MONTESSORI

“What impact do social games have on children’s social skills in a small group setting.”

Hannah Castle, St Francis Primary School

What did you do?

For this enquiry, I was investigating the potential impact that social games could have on improving children’s social skills in a small group setting. The enquiry began with an initial social skills checklist to determine a baseline for each child’s ability to function appropriately in a social setting. Next, over a 5-week period, I would take my small group of selected children and play different social games with them each focusing on a different skill e.g. trust, problem solving, body awareness etc. While playing these games, I would observe how the children interacted with each other and kept note of this in a personal reflective diary. Finally, the social skills checklist was carried out again to see if there were any changes in each child’s social skills compared to how they interacted at the beginning of the enquiry.

Why did you do it?

Part of my school’s School Improvement Plan (SIP) was to upskill staff on emotional literacy strategies/nurture principle to break down barriers to learning and foster an ethos of inclusion within the classroom. Also, after the Covid-19 pandemic, I had observed that children’s ability to interact with each other had dropped significantly. “In the context of COVID-19 crisis, researchers worldwide have observed alarming behavior problems among young children since the pandemic outbreak and subsequent lockdowns and a worsening trend compared to pre-pandemic time”(Sun et al., 2022 p.2). To be specific, the boys in my class have particular difficulty getting on with each other and I wanted to see whether focusing on social skills in a game setting would have any impact on improving their ability to interact with each other.

What has happened as a result?

At the beginning of the study, the scores from each child’s social checklist showed that the majority of the subjects had particularly poor emotional regulation skills. The 4 categories for each skill were demonstrating them, Almost always, Often, Sometimes and Almost never. This group averaged out at demonstrating this skill 67% of the time sometimes and 27% of the time often. Through my observations over the 5-week period I discovered a significant increase in each child’s ability to interact with each other appropriately in a small group setting and also in the wider context of the classroom. Compared to the beginning of the enquiry, almost all of the children now demonstrate greater trust in each other, are more accepting of winning/losing games. They can also talk about their differences in opinion in a more appropriate way without shouting at each other or becoming physical. They are also more able to self-regulate when they are upset by an interaction they have had with another child and can use the skills they learned during the games to do this. Some observations which I recorded in my diary are:
Week 3 – “Child B showed greater empathy when consoling child D after beating them in the game.”
Additionally, even though I wasn’t measuring the factor of schoolwork productivity, I noticed that most of the children were engaging better in their schoolwork as they were engaging less in undesirable behaviours with classmates.
Finally, when completing the social check-list again at the end of the enquiry, the children were now on average demonstrating the emotional regulation skill 25% of the time Almost always and there was an increase of 13% in the Often category with children now demonstrating this skill 40% of the time often.

What are the implications?

Overall, this enquiry has demonstrated that social games are particularly effective in improving children’s social skills, particularly in a small group, structured setting. This enquiry highlighted that after the Covid-19 pandemic, it may be worthwhile to allocate time for social games to improve and recover children’s social skills which in turn improves their concentration and engagement when learning which was a positive bi-product of the enquiry.

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Bloom's Taxonomy



What did you do?

- I implemented the use of questioning methods from Bloom's taxonomy throughout different areas of the curriculum. I had a large focus on using Bloom's questioning in Numeracy and Health and Wellbeing as well as continuing to measure the impact of questioning during Literacy lessons.
- A qualitative method was appropriate to conduct this enquiry due to the focus on discussion and questioning in the classroom.
- Pupils were surveyed and questions were posed during discussions to gather qualitative data.
- Professional reading was used to conduct research into Bloom's Taxonomy and how best to implement this throughout all curricular areas.
- The qualitative data and professional reading were combined to be able to make professional judgements about questions used to differentiate and then support and challenge learners.

Why did you do it?

For my practitioner enquiry, I chose to explore an area that could support differentiation in my classroom as differentiation was identified as an area within the standards that I needed to focus on and develop. Through research I found that Bloom's Taxonomy questions would be an appropriate strategy to employ in my classroom.

In my composite Primary 3/2 class, differentiation is vital to ensure I am meeting the needs of the two year groups whilst also providing appropriate support and challenge for individual pupils.

Bloom's Taxonomy will allow me the opportunities to question children in their learning and encourage learner participation across the curriculum.

What is the impact of using Bloom's Taxonomy to support differentiation across the curriculum in a Primary 3/2 classroom?

Emma Smith – gw22smithemma@glow.sch.uk
Whinhill Primary School – Primary 3/2



What happened as a result?

- Gaps in knowledge across the class were able to be identified prior to any written assessment. These gaps were able to be filled by 1:1 differentiated support, scaffolding learning between group and mixed ability pairings.
- 'It tells you what we already know and what you need to teach us.'** – E (Primary 3)
 - Children have been able to be visible learners and identify what they don't know before they attempt and complete their active or written tasks.
 - 'So that if we give you the wrong answer, we can learn from our mistake.'** – R (Primary 2)
 - Children have been able to use dialogic skills in group and mixed ability pairings and have been able to challenge and support each other.
 - Children were asked at the beginning of this enquiry if they thought being asked questions was an important part of their learning. Out of 22 children 13 said yes and 9 said no (see Table 1), discussions then took place between myself and the children.
 - 'Because if we give you the wrong answer, you can help us to find the right one and we can be visible learners'** – A (Primary 3)
 - 'You ask me questions so that you know what I think.'** – H (Primary 2)
 - 'I don't like when I have to say what I think the answer is in case I get it wrong.'** – R (Primary 2)
 - Children were asked again after 6 weeks and we discussed that asking and answering questions helped us to find out what they weren't sure of and allowed me to support them. It also enabled them to support their own learning by asking different questions. This time, 19 children agreed that being asked questions was important to their learning (see Table 2).

Do you think being asked questions is an important part of your learning?



Do you think being asked questions is an important part of your learning?



Implications

- 'According to this taxonomy, each level of knowledge can correspond to each level of cognitive process.' (Soozandehfar, S. & Adeli, M, 2016).
- Using Bloom's taxonomy throughout different aspects of the curriculum has enabled and empowered learners to take control and access their learning in fun and engaging ways that are differentiated to each individual learner.
- The implications of my enquiry were particularly prominent during Numeracy lessons, asking differentiated questions structured by Bloom's taxonomy during teaching inputs allowed me to check for understanding amongst pupils on the both pathways. This enabled me to identify gaps in knowledge and provide 1:1 support and scaffolding to pupils, so that they were able to have a clear understanding of their learning. Children were able to identify the gaps in their knowledge during teaching inputs and at times where 1:1 support took place: **'I thought this was the answer, but I made a mistake and I'm not sure what it was.'** – M (Primary 2).

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BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



How does teacher modelling of feedback improve peer feedback in the classroom with regards to writing?

Brooke Skilling, Primary 3, Gourrock Primary, Inverclyde



What did you do?

During my six-week enquiry, I both taught and modelled how to give effective feedback on an extended writing piece. Firstly, I began with a questionnaire for pupils regarding their feelings towards providing feedback in the classroom. Secondly, I collected a baseline assessment where pupils assessed an anonymous piece of extended writing from another first level class with little teacher input. Then, we analysed the video 'Austin's Butterfly' and discussed the importance of feedback being specific and that, in the classroom, feedback had to be specific to the success criteria. Additionally, we discussed the importance of being 'critical' and how to do this in a positive manner. Following this, I anonymously displayed feedback from the baseline assessment and pupils reflected on this and highlighted that the feedback was not very specific or 'useful'. I highlighted to pupils that this is something we would be working on and, following this, I allowed pupils to choose the feedback method they would like to use in their writing and together they decided on the method 'Two Stars and a Wish'.

Afterwards, I modelled how to give effective feedback on an anonymous piece of writing sourced from another first level class. I highlighted the importance of referring to the success criteria. Here, I provided pupils with sentence starters which they could use when providing both a 'star' and a 'wish' in their feedback. Then, pupils provided feedback, with my support, working in a small group on a different anonymous piece. I found this effective as it allowed pupils to be leaders of learning and also provided anonymity which reduced any fears regarding upset that children had.

Then, I began to provide pupils with opportunities to provide feedback to one another weekly and, as the weeks progressed, both my input and modelling gradually decreased until pupils provided feedback mostly independently. For this process, I selected 'feedback partners' where I had to consider both the different writing levels in the class and friendships. Each week I collected physical evidence from the peer feedback exercise and reflected on this to inform my planning.

At the end of the enquiry, I did the same questionnaire with pupils to see if their feelings towards feedback had changed.

Why did you do it?

'Stone' in my shoe:

Providing effective feedback in the classroom, particularly with regards to writing, was a 'stone in my shoe' as I felt overwhelmed trying to provide effective feedback to everyone and felt that my writing lessons lacked structure in terms of feedback. I wanted to create a feedback system in the class which was more effective and not just teacher based but, instead, involved the pupils in the process too. Therefore, the first step for this was to engage pupils in feedback and, ultimately, teach them the skills to provide effective feedback that will contribute to the feedback system in the class whilst also helping my workload.

Policy:

Building the Curriculum 5 highlights the importance of teachers providing opportunities for feedback and conveys the significance of teaching children the skills to be able to peer assess to help learners both support and extend one another's learning (Scottish Government, 2010). Thus, feedback, particularly peer feedback, is of utmost importance in the classroom. Additionally, raising attainment in writing was part of my school's improvement plan. Therefore, through increasingly engaging children in feedback in writing it was hoped that this can also raise attainment in this area.

Literature:

One of the key findings from the literature surrounding feedback in the classroom is that teacher feedback is not enough (Boon, 2015). Additionally, the literature highlights the benefits of peer feedback. For example, Kemp (2019) highlights that by involving pupils in peer feedback, we are engaging them in the highest level of learning: asking them to teach. Thus, providing feedback on a peer's work involves deeper and more meaningful engagement with the tasks at hand and encourages pupils to become leaders of learning. Furthermore, Kemp (2019) states that involving pupils in peer feedback encourages more independence in the classroom. Moreover, the literature highlights that peer feedback can be more immediate and in greater quantity (Topping, 2009 & Liu and Carless, 2006). However, the literature highlights that many pupils lack the confidence of assessing a peer's work and that sufficient time is needed for scaffolding and modelling how to provide effective feedback, in relation to the success criteria, to initiate good practice and help increase confidence amongst pupils. Thus, this provided the starting point of my practitioner enquiry.

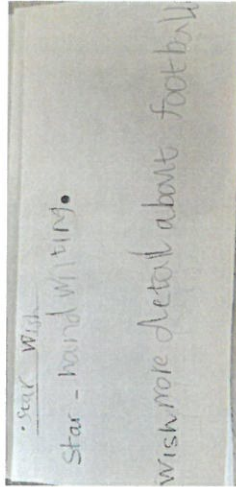
What has happened as a result?

A key finding from the questionnaire that I did at the start of my enquiry was that pupils lacked confidence and felt their feedback was not effective. Thus, this highlights the importance of this enquiry and the need for modelling feedback to pupils.

I repeated this questionnaire at the end of the enquiry to assess pupils' progress. One of the main findings from this is that pupils now feel more confident providing feedback and feel that their feedback is now more effective. Pupil X commented, "Before I would write things like 'nice handwriting' but now I know it needs to be more specific to the success criteria." Additionally, pupils commented on the usefulness of the feedback sentence starters to scaffold their feedback comments. Thus, teacher modelling and scaffolding have clearly had an impact on learners' confidence in providing peer feedback and the effectiveness of peer feedback within the classroom.

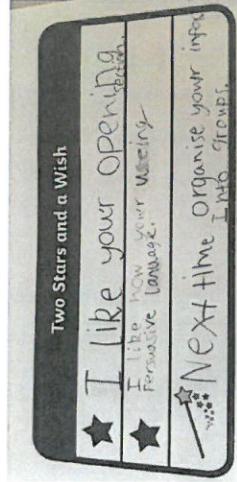
Additionally, through analysis of the weekly data collected, I have seen a huge progression in learners' feedback and the relevance and significance of the feedback comments to the success criteria for the writing piece. An example of this can be seen below. Ultimately, because of teacher modelling and support, pupils' feedback in writing has greatly improved and is now more effective.

As a result of this, peer feedback has become more embedded in writing within the classroom and peer feedback has also become more prominent within the classroom not only in literacy.



Week 1: Baseline assessment

Pupil feedback comments are very vague and not related to the success criteria.



Week 5: After modelling through enquiry but minimal teacher support. Pupil feedback comments are more specific to the success criteria.

What are the implications?

In my class, pupils are working at different writing levels. Therefore, creating 'feedback friends' was of utmost importance, and this is something I will do again in the future.

Additionally, when pupils began providing feedback to peers in the classroom, pupils were eager to know who they were providing it to and still felt conscious about 'hurting feelings'. Therefore, it is essential to create a safe and respectful environment for feedback to be both meaningful and effective.

Going forward, I will continue to support pupils' skills and confidence in providing feedback in writing and encouraging engagement with the success criteria to do so. Moreover, as a result of this enquiry, I now have increased knowledge of the importance of taking time to model feedback to pupils and the impact this can have. Thus, I now have increased confidence, and a range of resources, to help me do so in the future.

Additionally, now pupils have increased confidence and knowledge to provide more effective feedback to their peers, I would like to create a more structured approach to feedback both in my practice and in the classroom. For example, I would like to create, alongside pupils, a feedback routine where pupils self-assess, receive peer feedback, or receive teacher feedback during writing time. This feedback routine would rotate on a weekly basis.

Moreover, I have seen an increased engagement with the success criteria as pupils have to analyse pieces of work, that are not their own, and their relevance to the success criteria. As pupils were looking for the success criteria in their peer's work this, in turn, made pupils more conscious of the success criteria in their own writing. Thus, teaching pupils to provide effective feedback and encouraging their involvement in feedback has numerous benefits within the classroom.

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What happens when I implement Visible Learning principles into my teaching practice?



Ashley Cairns, Kilmacolm Primary School

What did you do?

I chose to explore what would happen when I implemented Visible Learning principles into my teaching practice with a Primary 5/4 class. I began by introducing a shared language of the learning in the classroom and teaching the pupils about growth mindset and SMART target setting. I then introduced individualised target setting where we dedicated time in our week for reflection and discussed what went well during the week and identified next steps.

Why did you do it?

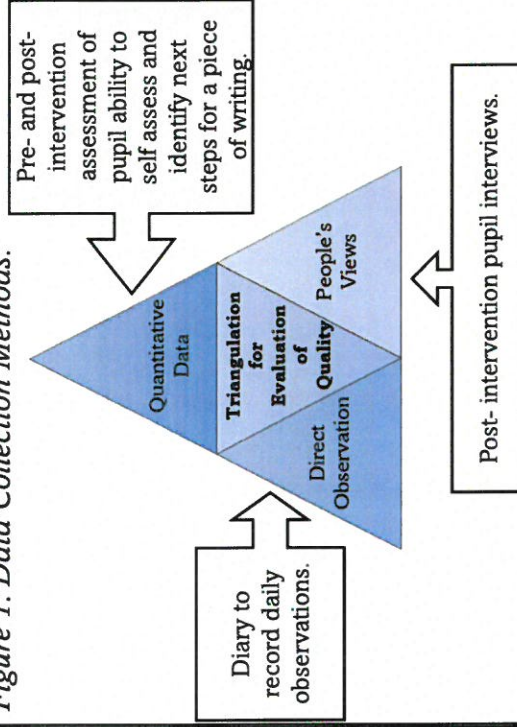
The National Improvement Framework (NIF) states that raising attainment and improving outcomes is a priority for Scottish Education. The NIF drivers of 'Teacher Professionalism' and 'Assessment of Children's Progress' supported me to identify that the implementation of Visible Learning principles into my practice may support achievement in my classroom.

Hattie (2009) states that Visible Learning allows for children to understand what is being asked of them and have a feeling of control over their learning, thus improving self efficacy. I decided to implement this with hopes of improving achievement through the development of learners' skills, confidence

What has happened as a result?

I collected three forms of data to enhance the credibility and validity of my findings.

Figure 1: Data Collection Methods.



Through my direct observations, I noticed that the use of a consistent, shared language of learning in the classroom provided clear expectations for learning. This was supported by pre- and post- intervention assessment of pupils' ability to self assess and identify next steps which became more tailored to the LI, SC and pupils' individual pathway. By the end of the intervention, pupils showed increased independence and confidence in self assessment and identification of SMART targets. These findings were upheld by pupil interviews which revealed SMART targets enhanced pupils' intrinsic motivation to improve their learning.

What are the implications?

The findings of my enquiry suggest that the use of Visible Learning in the classroom improves pupil understanding of expectations, pupil confidence and intrinsic motivation to achieve SMART targets.

A whole school approach where Visible Learning principles are consistently embedded at all stages may allow for greater progression of skills (eg. self assessment, stuck strategies, target setting) as pupils progress through the school.

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What did you plan to do and why?

Reading for pleasure can be defined as "reading we do of our own free will, anticipating the satisfaction we will get from the act of reading" (National Literacy Trust UK, online). While this may characterise physical reading for pleasure as a solitary experience, it is important to recognise the profoundly social nature of reading that stems from the conversations that flow within a community of readers (Boyask et al, 2022). As research has shown that enjoyment of reading can boost educational achievement and attainment, as well as wellbeing (Education Scotland, 2015), I deemed it important to establish a reading culture within my classroom through reading for pleasure and chose to implement learning activities that would complement the social nature of reading.

Having already utilised ERIC time in class, I noticed that not all pupils showed enjoyment of reading and would frequently change their book, stating that they didn't know what they would enjoy reading and didn't enjoy the independent nature of silent reading. As part of my School Improvement Plan is to raise attainment in reading, and as there are already reading interventions in place from the SLT, I chose to focus on enjoyment of reading with the overall aim of creating a culture of reading, with the additional recognition that this should impact attainment in reading too.

What are the implications and next steps of your enquiry for:

You practice: This enquiry enabled me to expand my own knowledge of children's literature in order to be able to source and recommend books suited to the interests and needs of children in my class. This is something I will continue to develop after my enquiry as well as allocating time for my own reading for pleasure. In addition, I have become increasingly aware of the benefits of the social nature of reading and will continue to place a focus on this during ERIC time. My own next steps would also include involving parents and families to ensure that reading for pleasure transcends the classroom. I received feedback from a few parents at Parents Evening that their child has developed a more positive attitude to reading at home, therefore I would like to build on the connections between home and school to further develop reading for pleasure in the future.

Your learners: Overall, my learners have developed an increase in confidence of reading for pleasure and it is now something that is valued and respected within our classroom. Through the activities, pupils have increasingly taken ownership of their own reading and have been able to make more informed and independent choices, which has expanded to other areas of learning. For some pupils, extrinsic motivation was needed to encourage reading for pleasure, thus I will continue to acknowledge the achievements of these children in reading with the aim of moving away from incentives and building on the genres they enjoy. For other pupils who already enjoyed reading and knew what genres of books they enjoyed, I will continue to encourage them to try books that are out with their comfort zone to expand their reading skills. Furthermore, learners who enjoyed reading still gained from the activities through encouragement of reading socially and through myself reading aloud. The next steps for these pupils should involve inclusion of, for example, audio books in order to ensure they still feel enjoyment when reading. However, I believe the impact of my enquiry could have been greater on pupils if I was in class full time (having been out one day each week due to NQT commitments) and had teacher strike days been avoided.

Your colleagues and/or more widely: I intend to share my findings with my colleagues, as sharing good practice is recommended, and intend to share the learning activities I used to build a reading culture. Additionally, the school as a whole has been impacted through pupils in my class encouraging communication about books through our displays, reviews, challenges and awards. Furthermore, my school is working towards the Bronze Reading Schools Award and the results of my enquiry should contribute to this achievement.

What impact has this had on your professional identity?

Undertaking this enquiry has given me the confidence to embrace and try something new in hopes of becoming a better teacher and boosting enjoyment of reading. It has reinforced the value I place on enjoyment of reading and has encouraged me to continue to be curious and reflective in my practice. I found time to be the most challenging factor in my enquiry and as a result, I will continue to implement the activities utilised until the end of the year and further into my career, striving to continue my research on this area too.

Further questions

In what ways might the use of QR codes through technology boost reading for pleasure?

In what ways might the use of audiobooks boost the reading skills of pupils who need supported when reading?

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In what ways can I create a culture of reading in my classroom through encouraging reading for pleasure?

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What has happened?

Through engaging in professional reading and attending CLPD courses, I established a number of learning activities that I could implement in my classroom to build a reading culture. I recognised the limitations of providing rewards for reading, as this can reduce children's desire to read over the long term as rewards can imply that reading is not something worth doing for its own sake (Such, 2021), therefore I tried to implement activities that would boost pupils' intrinsic motivation for reading as well as providing some extrinsic motivation for those who needed to begin at that stage.

I created a weekly plan of action and noted observations of my class during the activities implemented. Firstly, I gathered pupil opinions on reading for pleasure to confirm my observations and to compare with those at the end of the enquiry in order to establish if there has been change. Then, I introduced a Book Personality Quiz in which pupils answered questions to find what genre of books suited their personality. From here, I introduced different weekly learning activities, such as a special reading box; a book challenge; a co-created book review station; book awards and a book tastings, which all took into consideration the types of books that each pupil would enjoy as per the results of the Book Personality Quiz.

I found that all activities implemented had a positive impact on enjoyment of reading and contributed to establishing a culture of reading in the classroom. Beginning with a Book Personality Quiz enabled pupils to feel more comfortable when choosing books, similar to the book tastings which also enabled pupils to sample different genres of books. The special reading box allowed conversations to flourish between pupils and I about books that were common interests. The book challenge motivated pupils who needed some extrinsic motivation, who didn't find enjoyment in reading, and brought excitement to the classroom. This activity in particular showed the largest increase in enjoyment of reading as pupils who already were already reading books they enjoyed didn't need extrinsic motivation from the challenge, but the pupils I was targeting in regards to enjoyment of reading were motivated to read different genres of books and by different authors, receiving a certificate at the end. The Book Awards and book reviews enabled conversation and debate between pupils in my own class and also in other classes, complimenting the social nature of reading. I undertook a final opinions survey at the end of my enquiry and pupils who had low opinions of enjoyment of reading identified that their enjoyment had increased as they have been able to sample different books, they have found genres that they enjoy and they enjoy the conversations that books bring.



How does the use of dialogic teaching approaches impact attainment in writing?

Rebecca Cameron, Whinhill Primary School



Why did you do it?

I have a passion for improving the writing attainment within my class. Many of my pupils have been impacted negatively by the Covid-19 pandemic and their opinion of themselves as writers has changed. For this reason, a focus now needs to be on the quality of work they are producing. Within Whinhill Primary, the dialogic approach is used throughout each age and stage and the school's goal is that it is embedded in every classroom. For this reason, I decided to research if the use of dialogic teaching strategies would impact attainment in writing. My pupils had lost their confidence when writing and required support and encouragement to reflect on areas for personal development and in discussing their progress and next steps. Within our School Improvement Plan, Priority 1 discusses the goals to review the pedagogical approaches used when teaching writing, with a particular focus on the tools for writing. Ensuring the continuity of approach. It also outlines that teachers should aim to engage in reflective practice through use of a journal. The Improvement Plan also highlights the importance of a dialogic teaching approach. Whinhill is focused on high quality learning and teaching and we are looking at keeping consistent with quality pedagogical approaches.

THE HGIOS Q1 which is one of the main indicators, focused on this year is 2.3 - Learning, teaching, and assessment. During staff meetings, we discuss the importance of pupil engagement and learner participation. As well as this, we must ensure high-quality questioning is being used at every opportunity to promote and develop thinking. The focus articles of the UNCRC this year are Article 28 (Right to education) and Article 29 (Goals of education). Within my classroom, I have a diverse group of students some of whom have additional support needs and one pupil with English as a second language. Every child in my class has the right to an education, no matter their ethnicity, race or gender. A dialogic teaching approach is something that every child can benefit from, and engage with. Talking and listening rules in my classroom are based around our Y chart and pupils understand that good talking and listening makes people feel respected. My pupils also chose Article 29 as one of their rights for our class charter at the beginning of the year. It focuses on being able to build respect for other people around them. Dialogic teaching strategies should enable my pupils to focus on the areas of development in writing that they are focusing on themselves, and at the same time, allow them to be vocal in highlighting areas for development to others.

What did you do?

At the beginning of the six-week block, the pupils were given the task of writing a personal piece. Prior to writing, they used planning strategies of mind maps, story boards and word banks to support them. I purposely gave no dialogic teaching input before their writing began. They began writing with *no dialogic teaching approaches or input*. Pupils did not discuss their ideas or build on to the ideas of others. This writing piece was marked against the Inverclyde Writing Criteria and logged in an assessment folder. Each Tuesday for the next five weeks, before, throughout and after writing lessons, a dialogic teaching approach was initiated. Pupils were given the personal writing title prior to the writing activity, discussing their ideas and building on to one another. At planned/responsive moments throughout the lesson, writing was paused to discuss progress so far and to check in with success criteria.

After every writing lesson, I recorded my own personal reflections on my practice and what I found to be successful/what needed tweaked. Each week, I engaged in professional dialogue with my colleagues regarding pupil progress. Pupils also self-assessed their work at the end of each writing piece and were given both written and verbal feedback from myself. My own professional observations and assessments were used to track pupil progress and attainment both throughout the session and from week to week. A final personal writing assessment was carried out during week 6 and results were compared to results in week one.

What has happened as a result?

In week 1, I noticed that pupils struggled to engage in the writing task and to sustain enthusiasm for the duration of the lesson. The first personal writing assessment highlighted to me that pupils were finding it challenging to use the tools for writing effectively. From my own assessment, more than 50% of my class were not including a wide range of adjectives or interesting vocabulary in their work. From week 2 of this enquiry pupils became more enthusiastic about the opportunity to discuss their ideas with one another and in their own academic abilities within writing.

It was apparent through my own observations, and observations from other members of staff, that most pupils had grown in confidence by the end of week 3. This was, particularly true in those pupils with additional support needs, as well as those who struggled to generate ideas. Across weeks 4, 5 and 6, I noted that many pupils who previously struggled to contribute ideas within writing lessons began to volunteer and confidently suggest ideas of interesting vocabulary, similes and 'wow' words to up-level their written work.

Pupils became more aware of their own strengths and areas for development and were able to articulate these confidently to myself and to their peers. Alexander, R (2006) states that dialogic teaching harnesses the power of talk to stimulate and extend pupils' thinking and advance their learning and understanding. This was evident within weeks 5 and 6, when pupils verbalised their desire to include further dialogue in lessons across the curriculum. Pupils were successfully able to identify skills used in writing lessons within other curricular areas. Furthermore, their ability to articulate their skills for learning, life and work and children's rights increased, with most pupils contributing to class discussion frequently within all lessons.

My own final summative assessment during week 6 highlighted the positive impact that the dialogic teaching approach had on the attainment of pupils. All pupils, including those that were on track, behind and beyond expectation, showed an increase in use of descriptive language such as adjectives and 'wow' words. In addition to this, a final dialogic session in week 6 was carried out with the pupils. Pupils were asked to give feedback on their own progress in writing and the progress of others. This formative assessment highlighted that pupils felt one another's stories had become more 'exciting, imaginative and creative' and that they were more inclined to 'find out what happened next'.

Pupils collectively agreed that being given the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas prior to writing, helped them to maintain focus and enthusiasm. When given a choice, they made their opinion clear that dialogic input, prior to writing lessons was a huge benefit to the overall quality of their writing. As a result of this intervention, all future writing lessons will be based around a dialogic approach.

If we improve the quality of classroom talk, we improve the quality of learning
— Neil Mercer, 2014

What are the implications?

Talking partnerships evolved throughout the process and the positive impact of this can clearly be seen across learning in other curricular areas. For example, a talking partnership developed between an EAL pupil and a pupil with ADHD. This resulted in an excellent presentation about Ukraine and pupils used the translator app to successfully build on to one another's ideas.

Another apparent area of progress was pupils' individual resilience when up-leveling their own written work. This was evident in a writing piece they produced as part of their Europe topic.

In general, the overall enthusiasm for writing has increased and pupils visibly enjoy discussing and contributing their writing ideas to the lesson. It is evident that when this is done in great depth prior to pupils beginning to write, they are more engaged and focused. Furthermore, a dialogic approach allowed pupils to take ownership of their writing and to be clear of where they are going in their learning, responsible for their own progress.

Pupils are more confident with the language of self-assessment and in identifying any gaps in their writer's craft. They noticeably want to progress and are more confident in sharing their own strengths and areas for development with one another. It is clear that a dialogic approach has a vast number of benefits, particularly on ownership of work and confidence, which has shown to make a positive impact on the writing attainment within my classroom.

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