

Research & Development Impact Report No. 4

If teachers plan & prepare innovative and alternative formats for presenting writing would boys' writing outcomes improve?

"The whole class felt more enthusiastic once they had to interview people and take control over their writing. The boys actually wrote more than they ever had previously!"

Year 5 teacher

"There was more engagement, more enthusiasm and better quality writing. The children were so proud of their work they were desperate to share their penguin books and diaries with parents at parents' evening."

Year 3 Teacher

"The writing we did this year was different and fun. The teachers were very supportive and praised our strong areas".

Karmelle, Y6 Pupil

Who might find this research useful?

- Primary Class teachers
- English Subject Leaders
- Primary Head teachers

For further information please contact:

Debi Cookhorn Millfields Community School
dcookhorn@millfields.hackney.sch.uk

Research & Development Impact Report

Improving Writing Outcomes using different forms of presentation

Project Participants	All class teachers and pupils	Phase(s)	Primary (KS2)
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School context relevant to this research:

Millfields Community School is a very popular three form entry primary school with a Nursery and an Autism Resource Provision Unit as well as a Children's Centre, in the London Borough of Hackney. The school has a strong identity in the community and is a popular choice for parents who value the diverse and inclusive nature of the school. The intake of the school is varied with just over half the children coming from minority ethnic groups and more than 30 languages spoken by pupils and families.

Current context:

- The school has 671 children on roll.
- 39% of pupils have English as an additional language
- Overall, 26 % of pupils are pupil premium
- Attendance is in line with national averages at 96.1%
- The deprivation indicator places the school in the second highest quintile nationally
- 11% of pupils have SEN, 4% of children with an EHCP 8% receiving support for other identified additional needs

Millfields Community School was graded as a good school by Ofsted in November 2012.

Key actions:

- Pupils' progress is not as rapid in mathematics as it is in English in Key Stage 2.
- Some teaching, especially in mathematics, does not challenge pupils of higher ability
- Pupils are not given enough opportunities to apply what they have learnt to real-life experiences.
- Teachers' planning does not always build effectively on pupils' skills in mathematics to help to make rapid progress

Current data shows that although the school outperforms national data in writing both at expected and at greater depth, PPG pupils and boys perform less well than their peers. (PP at expected 70%, Non PP at expected 91%, girls at expected 97%, boys at expected 76%)

In KS2 there are 194 boys. 74 (38%) of these are PP boys and of these 74 boys 55% are also EAL, 36% are SEN and 20% are both EAL & SEN.

All pupils will benefit from this research but data analysis will concentrate on the 74 PP boys in KS2.

Starting point(s)/ Baseline evidence:

Why are we embarking on this research project?

- Despite progress of both girls and boys writing being better than National progress, boys writing attainment is considerably lower than girls and although this is a national issue the gap at Millfields is wider than the national gap
Attainment at KS2 2016
Millfields Boys = 76% National boys=68%
Millfields Girls= 97% National girls= 81%
Millfields Gap=21% National Gap 13%
- At KS1 13/15 from the low prior attainment group did not make expected
- Writing practices over time have resulted in most writing being in the lined writing book (where children are faced with a blank page) boys are harder to engage in writing tasks and often find it difficult to complete tasks within the time given
- Boys moan when asked to write and are not enthused or excited by it! We were looking for better engagement in written pieces of work from the start

Key R&D question(s)

Does the purpose and format of writing have a direct impact on the engagement of boys with their writing?

Is this developing the findings of existing research evidence?

There have been many studies of boys writing; many talk about the use of ICT to remove the physical aspect of writing, but I haven't read anything about the design & making of the writing product as a way of engaging pupils

- DfE National Curriculum Assessments at KS2 in England 2016 document confirms that girls outperform boys in writing nationally (the largest gap is in writing 13% gap)
- Clark 2012 (*Children's and Young People's Writing in 2012 Findings from the National Literacy Trust's annual literacy survey*) research found that there was a link between enjoyment and attainment and that pupils enjoy writing for family and friends more than for school
- Ofsted 2005b/Daly 03 Strategies for Raising boys' performance identified a number of key approaches for improvement included: explicit language teaching and the use of drafting and writing frames

Intended successful outcomes

- The gender gap for writing attainment narrows
- Improvement in boys progress in writing
- Boys feel more enthusiastic & engaged with writing
- Teachers plan for the end writing product at the start of each unit ensuring a variety across the academic year, resulting in increased variety of writing products

Success criteria/ Impact measures

- Attainment data over time shows gaps narrowed
- Data shows improved progress
- Staff and pupils report higher levels of enthusiasm and engagement
- Evidence of increased variety in teacher planning, displays, pupil books and written materials

Summary plan of action

- A questionnaire was used to find out attitudes to writing of a mixture of disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils
- Professional development for teachers 4 January provided a practical session for teachers to experience the difference between writing in specifically formatted booklets or on a blank sheet of paper followed by a session of sharing the information that came from the questionnaires/videos. Listening to the pupils talk about their writing experiences supported the teacher dialogue about small changes that can be made in the classrooms to improve the pupils experiences
- Planning of writing stimuli and presentation formats at the start of new units ensuring pupils are not faced with a blank page and that teacher examples have been pre-prepared

Initial timescale

Academic year 2016-2017

Initial resource allocation (human, material and financial)

SLT time to complete questionnaires and write up the information
1 x AM CPD for all teachers
1 after school CPD session to evaluate impact

Other points to note

This project prompted us to look more closely at the EAL data and what has been put onto the system – actually we found there to be more EAL pupils - parents don't always understand the initial form

25% of PPG pupils have SEN

More than 50% of PPG pupils have English as an Additional Language

Progress and Impact Review July 2017

Visible Actions completed

- Questionnaires
- Teacher INSET 4th January 2017
- All teachers planned writing outcomes for a new film Unit using a new format
- Teacher evaluation session April 2017

Outcomes to date and analysis

“The writing has definitely been more interesting because of the booklets we've been able to design. Writing was easier because we saw examples first. The teacher praised me more for my efforts”.

Bartosz, Year 6 pupil

Pupils consistently spoke of how important it was to them when teachers publicly praised and recognised their ‘best’ writing – teachers are now more consciously targeting boys writing through praise, display and certificates.

In end of year reflections (for school reports) many pupils referred to the film unit as their favourite part of their literacy learning this academic year.

The children also felt the benefit of seeing an example – they said in their questionnaire that writing would be easier if they could be shown examples of ‘what a good one looks like’. Teachers ‘mocked up’ example writing samples. This resulted in the output of better quality writing.

Staff responses were overwhelmingly positive:

Teacher Evaluation Questions	1	2	3	4
	Better before	No Difference	Some Positive difference	Strong positive difference
What difference has using different formats for writing made to all children?			5	7
What difference has using different formats for writing made to the boys in your class?		2	8	2
Has the change increased the willingness of pupils to start writing?		1	7	3
Has the change increased the willingness of boys to start writing?		2	8	1
Has the use of a mix of writing formats had an impact on the quality & length of writing? – all children		2	7	2
Has the use of a mix of writing formats had an impact on the quality & length of writing? – boys		3	5	2
Have the pupils shown any difference in how proud they feel of their work?			3	8

Initial KS2 Data shows that for this cohort the gap between boys and girls writing has narrowed
Attainment at KS2 2017:

Millfields Boys = 71% (77% without 3 statemented boys) National boys=TBC%

Millfields Girls=89% National girls= TBC%

Millfields Gap=18% (12% without 3 statemented boys) National Gap TBC%

Taking out the statemented boys brings our gender gap in writing in line with National last year which is positive progress.

"I definitely think writing has been more interesting this year - it has been more fun. The teachers helped me be more independent".

Tyrese, Year 6 Pupil

Evaluation

The size of the data samples were small but the evidence collected strongly supports the view that the approach taken was successful in engaging both teachers and pupils.

Whilst this year's KS2 data shows a decrease in the gender writing gap, the length of the project was insufficient for related data to evidence significant and sustained impact (we will continue to monitor this). However, the increased willingness of boys to start written pieces of work reported by teachers and the pupils' own reflections of their increased enjoyment of written work mean that the project was a worthwhile undertaking.

Other outcomes/ impact and points to note

Teachers also noted a positive impact on presentation of pupil work, though this was not the focus of the project.

It is worth noting that there needs to be forethought to ensure resources don't limit the actual amount of writing produced through arbitrary factors such as size of the diary (dimensions or number of pages)

What next? / Wider learning

- Share this report with teachers and publicise via school website
- Sustain and embed
- Keep the gender gap under review
- Develop further examples of excellent outcomes to be used in future
- Make it an expectation of the literacy curriculum within the school

Review of resource allocation (human, material and financial)

1. There was an additional cost to prepare appropriately engaging resources. Teachers mocked up sample diaries etc. which were then replicated by support staff.
2. The additional teacher time was generously given

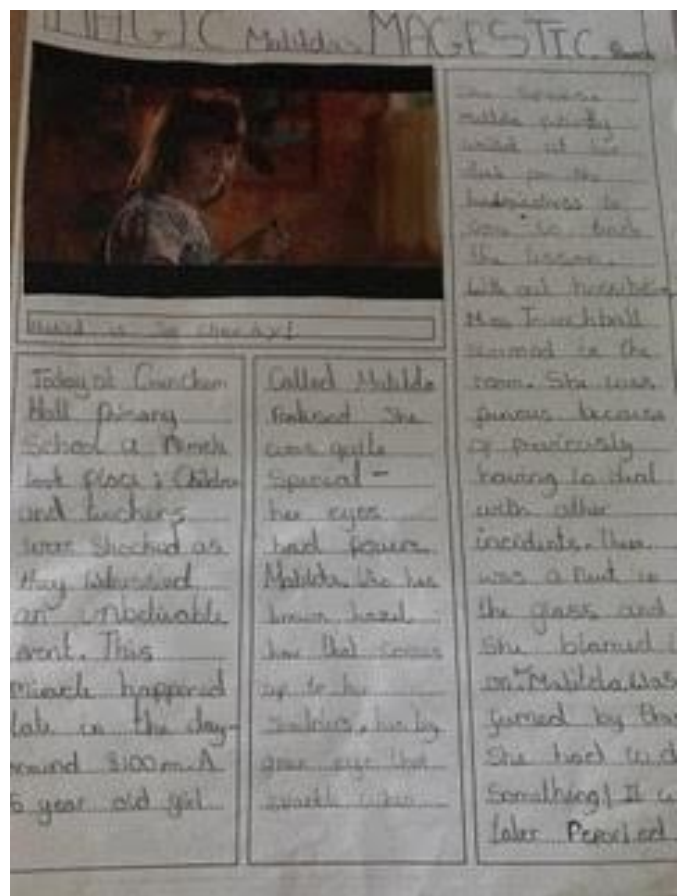
References

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Debi Cookhorn Deputy Head
Millfields Community School, Hackney E5 0SH
dcookhorn@millfields.hackney.sch.uk

Kevin McDonnell, R&D Leader HTSA and Headteacher
Stormont House School, Hackney E5 8NP
kmcdonnell@stormonthouse.hackney.sch.uk

Appendix- Photos of pupils' written work





"The writing we did this year was more interesting and exciting because we did a variety of different pieces. I feel it's much better now".

Gideon, Year 6 pupil



“Writing has definitely been more interesting but not all of them because some of them were very long”!

Elvizo, Year 6 pupil