The Write Book

Final Evaluation

March 2015

Table of Contents

BookTrust — Inspire a love of reading

Executive summary

What was the project?

The Write Book project was run by Book Trust and funded by Arts Council England. It supported Year 5 teachers in four primary schools to run whole-of-year-5 writing projects inspired by classic or popular children's books, enabling pupils to respond creatively to high quality children's fiction and nonfiction texts. The schools chose 'The Write Book' for their school: one that they thought would inspire children to enjoy writing.

The project was delivered over two academic years. Teachers attended seminar-style Inspiration Days where they worked with writers on creative approaches to inspire writing based on books, then were supported by Book Trust to deliver a writing project in school. Teachers wrote up their experiences into case studies which were profiled on the Book Trust website and shared good practice with each other at the Inspiration Days.

The project adhered to Arts Council England's five strategic goals, in particular goal one: Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries; and goal five: Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries. The project also fulfils the seven Arts Council England quality principles for work with children and young people: striving for excellence, emphasising authenticity, being inspiring, and engaging, ensuring a positive child-centred experience, actively involving children and young people, providing a sense of personal progression and developing a sense of ownership and belonging.

The aims of The Write Book were:

- Increasing teachers' confidence in teaching creative writing

- Increasing teachers' knowledge of children's books

- Raising pupils' attainment in writing at Y5

- Increasing pupils' enjoyment of writing at Y5

- Creating a whole school writing plan and creating a personalised legacy for writing in the school

- Making cross-curricular links for writing

- Linking reading and writing

What was successful?

Key successes of The Write Book were:

- Reaching reluctant and disengaged readers and writers

- Engaging EAL children in reading and writing

- Making home-school links for reading and writing

- Increasing teachers' access to, and knowledge of, high quality children's books

- Helping teachers, particularly NQTs, develop a flexible, personalised and bespoke approach to teaching writing inspired by books

- Providing teachers with a comprehensive strategy for implementing the curricular requirement of a holistic reading for pleasure agenda in the school.

What did we learn?

- Children enjoy writing more, and write better, when they're inspired by a high quality book they've loved

- Book choice is key in encouraging children's creative response

- Children love having more time to read and write at school

- Children enjoy writing when it's taken beyond the classroom or involves an intriguing event

- Teachers value the opportunity to talk to knowledgeable experts about new releases and contemporary children's books

- Using high quality books to inspire and emulate writing encourages children to think of themselves as writers

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

- Using "books as hooks" encourages creative learning and helps embed reading and writing for pleasure deep into the curriculum
- Using books as inspiration for writing works well with lower achievers and reluctant writers

What difference did it make?

Pupils:

- Reported that they thought their creative writing had improved since they did the project (**88 per cent** in the first year of the project and **87 per cent** in the second year)
- Said that they liked creative writing more as a result of the project (**79 per cent** in the first year of the project and **78 per cent** in the second year)
- Enjoyed having **time to read** a whole book as a class and **time to write** individually
- Improved the technical elements of their writing such as vocabulary, descriptive writing skills and sentence structure
- Developed more interest in and enthusiasm for books and writing
- Wrote voluntarily at home and in free time at school, often when they had never done so before

Teachers:

- Made significant and sustained **changes to teaching practice**
- Created projects designed to **fascinate** children with books and writing
- Increased their knowledge of new and contemporary **high quality** children's books
- Began to consider implementing long-term **legacies for writing** within the project and other writing work at school

Schools:

- Adopted a **"books as hooks"** approach to teaching after the projects – putting a high quality text at the centre of each unit, either just in Year 5 or across the whole school
- Engaged families with reading and writing and developed other **home-school links**

Introduction

Book Trust's history of reading and writing in schools

Book Trust has a long history of supporting schools with reading and creative writing, via Children's Book Week, The Children's Laureate, Writing Together and the Everybody Writes project.

Book Trust (in its current iteration and formerly as the National Book League) has promoted Children's Book Week for over 80 years, inspiring children and primary teachers to be passionate about books, and respond creatively to them. Similarly, the Children's Laureate has always celebrated great writing and illustration, and (at the time of writing this report) current Laureate Malorie Blackman's Project Remix and YALC – Young Adult Literature Convention - is making explicit links between reading and writing, weaving creative responses to text into the heart of her tenure.

Everybody Writes

Everybody Writes was a writing project for primary and secondary teachers, managed by Book Trust and funded by the Department for Education from 2006-2011. Everybody Writes provided teachers with innovative ideas and practical resources to help them run projects to get children in primary and secondary schools excited about writing. The key principles of Everybody Writes were:

- Finding ways to take writing beyond the classroom
- Providing students with exciting stimuli for writing based on their experiences and interests
- Establishing real audiences for children's writing
- Writing across the curriculum

An Everybody Writes project could involve staging an alien spaceship crash landing in the playground to trigger a whole school newspaper writing project; creating a school recipe book for vegetables grown on the school allotment; developing a school radio station broadcasting children's writing to parents; or running a science writing project where students explore creative explanations for strange phenomena. The approach was fun, experiential and organic, focusing on the specific needs and possibilities for each school and encouraging teachers to take a personalised approach to learning; empowering teachers to think of themselves as enablers of pupil creativity and removing worries around needing to be expert writers themselves.

Everybody Writes focused on getting teachers to share their projects with each other, both in person and by sharing their case studies online. It was this peer-to-peer grassroots exchange and championing of ideas and practices that gave it an inbuilt legacy of empowerment and learning between teachers. Sharing good practice and creating the conditions for writing to be fun meant that teachers using the approach saw marked increase in enthusiasm for, and therefore attainment in, writing. The University of Sheffield, which evaluated the project independently, concluded:

'Everybody Writes has been outstandingly successful in meeting its objectives. A wide range of innovative and creative work has taken place in schools which has impacted on pupil engagement and achievement and teachers' subject and pedagogical content knowledge.'

Over the life of the project, over 238,000 teachers visited the project website; Book Trust distributed 34,700 project brochures. The project also worked with 12 local authorities that in their turn introduced Everybody Writes to 428 teachers in 331 schools. Teachers in the Everybody Writes network of professionals engaged in creative writing rose from just 20 in July 2007 to 1470 in March 2011.

The Write Book

"Children's literature is a natural avenue for encouraging and motivating student writers"[1].

The Write Book project aimed to support teachers to run writing projects, involving all children in Year 5, inspired by classic or popular children's books, enabling pupils to respond creatively to classic or contemporary children's fiction and nonfiction texts. Schools chose 'The Write Book' for their school: one that they thought would inspire children to enjoy writing, and help create a whole school writing culture.

Reading and writing have an instinctive connection, and research shows clear links between reading and writing habits. In N. Flynn's article in the journal *Literacy* *"… reading and writing are inextricably linked, developing in children as 'a holistic package"*[2]

Many writers cite reading widely and enthusiastically as their number one writing tip; fan fiction is engaging a new generation of teens in writing; the instant read/write

---

[1] Morrow, L. M. (2005). *Literacy development in the early years: Helping children read and write* (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

[2] Flynn, N. (2007) 'What do effective teachers of literacy do? Subject knowledge and pedagogical choices for literacy', *Literacy*, 41 (3) p.143

responsiveness of social media makes most of us writers every day, and, on school level, projects such as CLPE's 1998-99 research project *Reader in the Writer* and their current Power of Reading/Power of Writing course emphasise the vital links between loving books and being inspired to write because of them. For Book Trust, working with schools to support the love of the written word, making a bridge from reading to writing and utilising our children's books expertise seemed a logical next step.

The Write Book incorporated the successes of Everybody Writes in its approach: its focus on fun, writing outside the classroom, cross curricular writing and immersive events that inspire writing.

Book Trust also wanted to pilot a project that would aim to develop strong and evidenced links between reading and writing in primary schools: to investigate the book as stimulus, muse and inspiration, and encourage childrens' creative responses to it. Some Everybody Writes projects had used a book as a focus for a wide range of creative writing – one using Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* with Key Stage One pupils, and one using Ted Hughes' *The Iron Man* at Key Stage Two, and those projects helped form the ethos of The Write Book.

Providing a copy of the chosen book for each child involved in the project was also important. We know from the successful Bookstart, Booktime, Letterbox and Bookbuzz book-gifting programmes that the impact of a high quality book (often more than one) for every child is huge, and that research shows that the more books a household possesses, the better academic and life chances for the child – and, in fact, that having access to books in the home is as important as the education level of the parent.[3]

We also wanted to empower teachers, as we did with Everybody Writes, knowing that teaching "creative writing" can be intimidating, and that as many other projects have shown, teachers teach writing better when they have some experience of writing

---

[3] Mariah Evans, University of Nevada, "Family scholarly culture and educational success: Books and schooling in 27 nations" (2010)

creatively[4]. Everybody Writes evidenced that teacher confidence with teaching creative writing is generally low, and that teachers are not usually creative writers themselves, (although, of course, some are, and indeed a remarkable number of successful writers are or have been teachers during their careers). Whilst The Write Book was not a Teachers as Writers project, it still aimed to upskill teachers with easy and achievable writing games and ideas that could be used in class projects, demystifying the writing process for teachers and pupils alike. The Write Book, like Everybody Writes, aimed to be fun and enriching for teachers as well as pupils.

Book Trust's strategic aims for writing focus on writing specifically linked to books and emphasising the strong relationship between reading and writing. Year 5 was chosen for the project's pilot age group partly because primaries are better suited to running creative curriculum projects, and partly because offering a project to Year 5 would provide a clear line of progress in terms of Book Trust's offer to schools, from **Booktime** in Year 1, **Read for My School** in Years 3-8, through the Year 6-7 transition period with **Summer Active** and into Years 7 and 8 with **Bookbuzz**. A writing-about-books project also fitted well with the aims of the **Children's Laureate** Malorie Blackman, whose Project Remix and YALC events focused on creative responses to books.

The Write Book was a pilot project with four primary schools, involving 540 children, running over two academic years, 2012-13 and 2013-14. As part of Book Trust's support, each school was provided with a copy of the chosen book for each child in Year 5. Participating teachers also attended teacher inspiration days where they worked with well-known children's authors to get ideas on how to plan writing projects around books, and were supported by Book Trust staff to begin planning their projects with site visits and feedback on project plans. Book Trust supported the schools to run two writing projects, one per academic year, and published case studies detailing how each school used books as a stimulus for creative writing on the Book Trust website.

---

[4] Some analysis of this concept can be found in Bath Festivals The Write Team *Creativity, Confidence and Challenge*; Cremin, Teresa and Baker, Sally (2010). *Exploring teacher-writer identities in the classroom: Conceptualising the struggle*. English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 9 (3), pp. 8–25; and the work of the American National Writing Project. A smaller scale UK version is now also underway – www.nwp.org.uk

As The Write Book projects always begin with the book, choosing "The Write Book" to inspire writing in each Year 5 group was very important. A key part of choosing the book was ensuring that the teachers involved acquired a good knowledge of current and contemporary classic children's literature as well as relying on the more familiar classics from their own childhoods, or books popularly used in the classroom. The 2006-2008 study *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers* showed that, in general, teachers' knowledge of children's books and authors reflected a "considerable cause for concern", and that teachers:

"were not really in a position to motivate readers through their own knowledge of children's literature, indeed across the survey minimal knowledge of global literature was indicated. The study seemed to indicate that primary professionals may not know a sufficiently diverse range of writers to enable them to foster reader development and make informed recommendations to emerging readers with different needs and interests. They were reading aloud infrequently and tended to refer to using texts and extracts of texts mainly to mine for particular textual features and to emulate and imitate for the purpose of teaching writing,"[5]

Myra Barrs' and Valerie Corks' 2001 *The Reader in the Writer* project found that "*Reading aloud and rereading were features of effective classrooms and helped children to take on the language and style of texts*" [6]; therefore, reading aloud and reading and loving whole books as a class has a positive impact on children as reader and writers.

Teachers consulted in this study were also generally only using children's books familiar from their own childhoods in schools. We therefore felt that a new project empowering teachers to design creative writing projects around children's texts should both demystify writing and widen knowledge of contemporary children's books.

---

[5] Cremin et al, (2006-2008) *Teachers as Readers: Building Communities of Readers,* UKLA
[6] Barrs, M. and Cork, V. (2001) *The Reader in the Writer.* London: Centre for Language in Primary Education.

Another starting point for the project was the knowledge that primary schools generally achieve better results in reading than writing. By using reading as the springboard to connect to writing, we hoped that children would transfer their enthusiasm for reading to the writing process. Additionally, using the book as the focus for the creative process foregrounds the excellence of contemporary children's literature today and enables children to learn from, be inspired by and model their artistic practice on that of the very best children's writers and illustrators. Great books should inspire great things – great writing, great art. Great daydreams of better days to come.

Everybody Writes showed us that when children enjoy writing, they do it more, and improve as a result, as this quote from a Senior school inspector from Southampton Local Authority shows:

"All of the schools in the project were able to demonstrate ways in which progress and attainment in writing, within the groups of children that they were working with, have increased: some schools by an astonishing amount. We have one school where over 37 per cent of children made a whole level of progress in two terms. So in terms of the standards agenda, we've absolutely achieved that."

We felt that it was important with The Write Book to evidence impact on attainment as much as possible, and so in addition to the case studies, we factored in teacher interviews, pupil surveys and analysis of levels data to create as meaningful an overview as possible for assessing the project's impact. However, when evaluating the success of a project like The Write Book, we have to allow for the fact that schools' other curricular activities during the school year will have an impact on children's attainment, and that teachers will be the most important source of knowledge on impact on particular children.

At the time of writing this report, schools are increasingly looking for ways to integrate a reading (and/or writing) for pleasure agenda across the curriculum and throughout the school plan:

"The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment."
English programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2, National curriculum in England, September 2013

The curriculum also recognises, specifically in Key Stage 2, that exposure to a range of texts increases language skills and that, therefore, creating communities of readers has a direct influence on language acquisition and fluency in writing as well as reading:

"During years 5 and 6, pupils' knowledge of language, gained from stories, plays, poetry, non-fiction and textbooks will support their increasing fluency as readers, their facility as writers, and their comprehension." **National Curriculum Programmes of Study 2014, upper Key Stage 2: Writing**

The Write Book also encouraged cross-curricular writing, as did Everybody Writes, knowing that children respond well to writing that happens outside of English and Literacy lessons, and recognises that reading and writing happens in all areas of life.

Lastly, although this was a Year 5-focused project, we aimed to encourage schools to work on long term legacies for writing after the project, and to think about embedding writing based on books into their teaching practice and across all year groups in the school. We hoped that they would take their successful projects and share them with peers and leadership teams to help inform an ongoing and cohesive, creative approach to writing in the school. We knew from Everybody Writes that a whole-school commitment to making writing fun and using cross-curricular, creative approaches demonstrated huge impact on pupils and teachers alike, and were keen to help schools think about where they could integrate low-level but long-term activities into the whole school plan after and as a result of the project.

Project aims and principles

Project aims

- Increasing teachers' confidence in teaching creative writing

- Increasing teachers' knowledge of children's books

- Raising pupils' attainment in writing at Year 5

- Increasing pupils' enjoyment of writing at Year 5

- Creating a whole school writing plan and creating a personalised legacy for writing in the school

- Making cross-curricular links for writing

- Linking reading and writing

Principles

The Write Book is an Arts Council England-funded project, and as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, Book Trust's work for children is informed by Arts Council England's seven principles of high quality work by, with and for children and young people. We envisaged that the project would fulfil the criteria as follows:

1. **Striving for excellence**

Encouraging schools to use high quality children's texts as the focus for their projects, increasing teachers' knowledge of high quality contemporary children's books and enabling teachers to work with well-known children's authors would ensure that pupils were inspired by examples of excellent artistic work as well as teachers learning skills from writers demonstrating excellence in their professional work.

2. **Being authentic**

Teachers enjoy an authentic experience of working with well-known children's writers at the Teacher Inspiration Days and are inspired with ideas and new skills to take back into school. This high quality training, as well as an increased knowledge of high quality, exciting children's books, will transfer to the children via teachers' increased confidence and creativity in the classroom. This will help to engender in children themselves an artistic and aesthetic awareness of the techniques and approaches used by children's writers and illustrators to make art.

3. **Being exciting, inspiring and engaging**

The Write Book project approach was both to use inspiring and exciting books to encourage children to write, stretching more able pupils and challenging the less able, as well as to encourage teachers to create engaging and immersive projects for the pupils to interact with. This would be achieved by encouraging teachers to develop cross-curricular work, creating immersive, sometimes out-of-the-classroom experiences to inspire writing, visiting

unusual locations, creating opportunities to write and share work with families and create exciting end products for the projects such as books, films, performances etc. This would help foster positive attitudes to books and writing and therefore improve aspiration and later career choices.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

4. Ensuring a positive, child-centred experience

The project should be fun and enjoyable as well as academically enriching, and be responsive to the needs and interests of the pupils, teachers and wider school environment. The Write Book approach encourages teachers to create projects that are bespoke, particular and personalised to the characteristics of their own pupils and the school, with the potential for identifying a particular group of children they might want to target as well. The child-centred, school-centred approach of The Write Book maximises likely pupil engagement by appealing to what children are likely to be interested in and appreciate, valuing the diversity of the school body and of wider culture and celebrating the achievements of children in the project.

5. Actively involving children and young people

Primary school pupils are directly involved in their school projects as participants, and, where possible, hands-on decision makers and producers. All projects should also encourage a range of creative activities to inspire writing so that all children have access to the learning goals of the project regardless of learning style, ability or engagement level.

6. Providing a sense of personal progression

Schools are encouraged to develop writing legacies after their main projects have ended, both to ensure that writing stays on the school/Year 5 agenda, and to keep writing current in pupils' minds. These legacies might include strategies for individual children or for groups of targeted pupils over a longer period of time such as a creative writing club or a class blog; or the project might, for instance, instigate a larger change that impacts individual pupils' progression over a longer period, such as investing in new books for the school library inspired by the project – impacting on more enthusiastic and engaged readership, or making new writing and/or reading areas around the school, encouraging children to read and write in their spare time. The Write Book project prioritises a personalised approach to learning

and recognises the different starting points of the children in the project, supporting them to progress onto next steps in their achievement.

7. Developing a sense of ownership and belonging

As part of the project, Book Trust provides each child engaged in the project with their own copy of the book used as the focus for writing. Book ownership (even if only for the duration of the project, or the school term) and the ability to take the book home, is important in getting children invested in the story and the activities around it. It also provides opportunities for children to share the book with family members and therefore a wider sense of family "belonging" to the project, as well as introducing family members to the book in the event that the school decides to implement family engagement activities.

In a sense, too, spending a few weeks reading and writing inspired by a book engenders a sense of belonging to its world on the part of the reader; by creatively responding to and reinterpreting the text, the child belongs to it and in it as much as the book belongs to them to be taken where they will. Perhaps this sense of belonging is the experience of all readers when they lose themselves in a book – fiction or nonfiction. By becoming more familiar with a range of children's books, children can start to make informed choices about which books they like. They develop a *voice:*

"… when children are given the opportunities to engage more deeply with texts, they can use this power to find a voice, both oral and written."[7]

Lastly, the personalised, bespoke nature of the Write Book project, as opposed to other more "off the shelf" resources and projects, means that schools design writing projects that are right for them, based on books that they choose. This holistic approach taps into the interests and specialisms of the children and staff and takes the needs of learners into

---

[7] Bower, V. (2011) Enhancing children's writing, *Creative ways to teach Literacy,* London: Sage, p.1.

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED
Supported using public funding by

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

account. The Write Book is an approach to writing: a flexible framework rather than a rigid set of prescriptive resources. The Write book is a project that allows children and teachers to develop together.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading
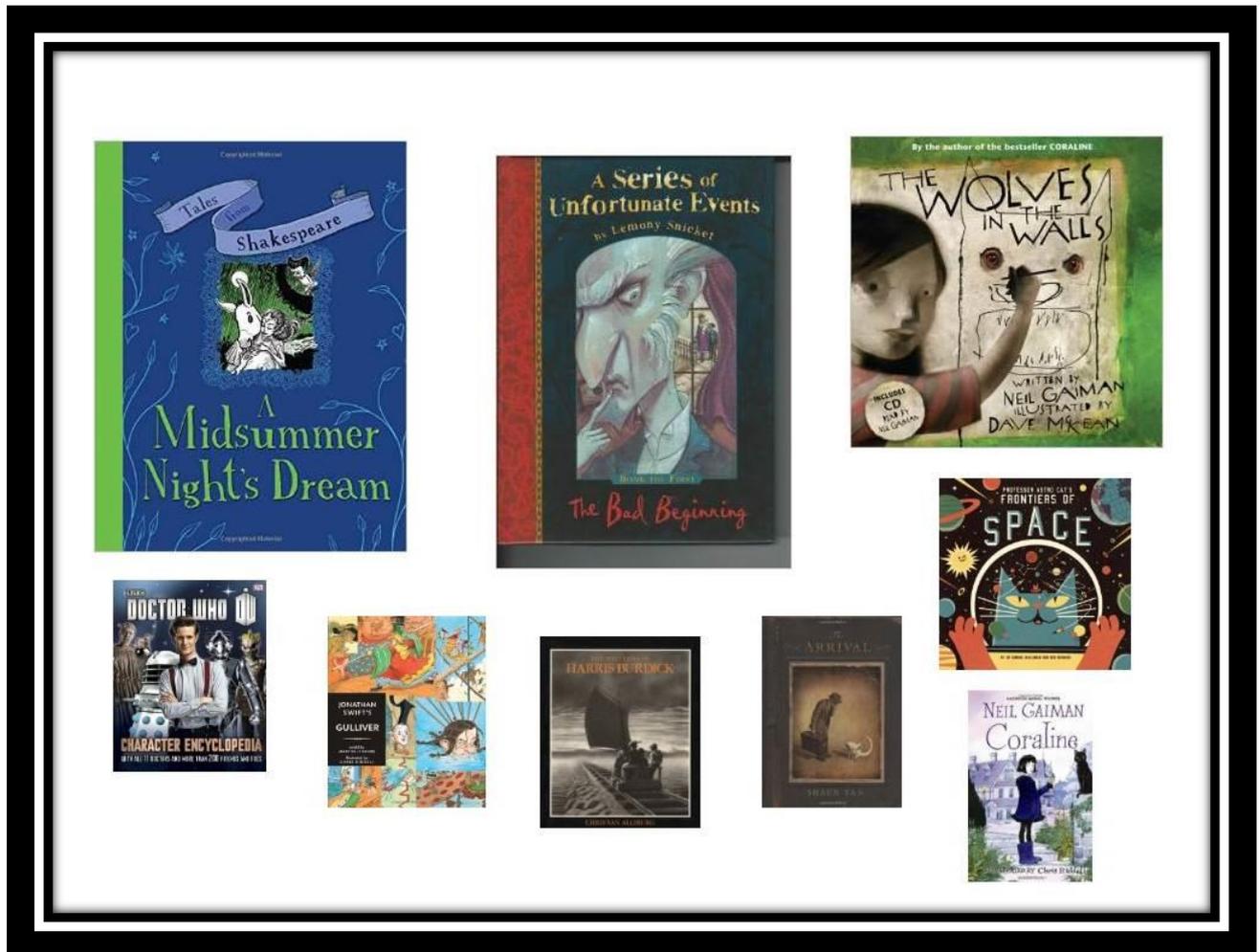
The project

Four primary schools took part in the project. They shared the characteristics of being interested in developing how they taught creative writing at school; having specific groups of children they wanted to engage more in writing; not being failing schools, but also not performing as well as they wanted to in writing. We looked for schools across England that comprised a variety of demographics: inner city and suburban locations; differing levels of English as an Additional Language (EAL), experienced teachers and NQTs, differing groups of engaged and less engaged writers.

The schools

The following schools were involved in the project:

- Heaton Park Primary School in Bury, Lancashire

- Sandringham Primary School in Newham, East London

- Claremont Primary School in Cricklewood, North West London

- Swaythling Primary School in Southampton, Hampshire

Each of the schools had a two form entry in Year 5 with the exception of Sandringham Primary School which had four Year 5 classes. To varying degrees the schools faced a range of challenges within diverse year groups including EAL pupils (approximately 90 per cent at Sandringham Primary School), large proportions eligible for free school meals (FSM) and/or pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Schools also reported a small number of pupils (predominantly boys) with emotional and behavioural problems. In preparation for the project, each of the schools targeted groups of children with specific needs and challenges as well as trying to encourage greater enjoyment of writing amongst reluctant readers and writers across the year group.

Once the schools were involved, we gathered the Year 5 teachers and a member of senior leadership from each school for the first of three Teacher Inspiration days.

The Teacher Inspiration Day

The first Teacher Inspiration day in February 2013 included an introduction to the aims of the project, a session with the children's writer Christopher Edge, generating ideas for writing around books (sequels, prequels, genre mashups, creating maps for fictional locations etc.,) and guidance and ideas on choosing "The Write Book" for the school, and planning a writing project that met the needs of the school and the pupils. Book Trust staff worked with teachers to find the most suitable book to inspire writing in their school – a book as prescription, almost; responding to the individual characteristics of the school: the

needs and enthusiasms of the pupils, the existing opportunities in the curriculum, and the interests and skills of school staff.

The second and third Teacher Inspiration Days – in September 2013 with featured writer Louie Stowell running a workshop with a focus on writing fiction inspired by nonfiction, planning for the second Year 5 projects, and the final Teacher Inspiration Day in September 2014 with children's writer Tony Bradman running a session on rewriting fairy tales, also included teacher presentations, where schools shared their projects with each other, highlighting good practice, impact on children and sharing any challenges they had encountered. These were consistently highly rated parts of the sessions, and as with Everybody Writes, the opportunity to share good practice with peers away from school in a creative environment was valued as a key part of the project by the teachers. Additionally, at the second teacher inspiration day, teachers watched a short film made for The Write Book project of children's writer Laura Dockrill talking about her favourite books as a child and how they inspired her to be a writer.

As well as the chance to share good practice with peers, teachers valued Book Trust staff's expertise, enjoying the chance to look at a wide range of high quality children's books and talk about recommendations in person.

The Inspiration Days were well received by teachers and selected wider staff (e.g. Deputy Head Teachers, LA Advisers):

Thank you for allowing us to be part of such an amazing project.

A fantastic opportunity to gain a greater understanding of practice in our own school and others.

Excellent eye-opening day that offered imaginative ideas that could be implemented in school. Great to see resources and talk to other teachers.

Really informative day and lots of good practical ideas to try out in the classroom.

25

The attendance of authors at all events was very well received, as was the opportunity to explore potential texts in conjunction with Book Trust staff. The ideas either generated or developed further during and after the Inspiration Days included:

- Taking characters from a book and placing them in different contexts
- Using technology to engage children in writing (e.g. developing a video trailer for a book)
- Exploring the graphic novel genre
- Linking the texts and the outdoor environment as a creative stimulus
- Using creative writing books or journals to log ideas
- Using space-themed texts to capture the imagination of boys in particular
- Introducing a greater focus on nonfiction texts
- Using books with striking illustrations to engage with EAL pupils
- Rewriting fairy tales

A book for every child

Part of Book Trust's support for participating schools was providing a copy of the school's chosen "Write Book" book for every child in Year 5 for both years of the project. This was a valuable resource for schools and meant that every child could have ownership of the text and take it home during the project if required. Schools also found it easy to repeat the book projects in subsequent years because they had a class set of the chosen book to use, meaning that the books themselves provided an ongoing legacy for writing in the school. Book Trust's **Letterbox, Bookstart, Booktime** and **Bookbuzz** programmes have bookgifting at their core, with the belief that every child should have direct access to high quality books, so providing a class set of books to participating schools fit well with Book Trust's overall values: transforming lives by getting children and families reading and inspiring a love of books.

Project design

The projects developed by each school, although based on a similar premise of using classic or popular children's books to inspire writing projects, each utilised their books as the catalyst for a wide variety of writing and wider curricular activities. Book Trust supported schools to develop their plans at this stage, but teachers were given an open brief as to project design and time taken. Book Trust saw its role as facilitator, encouraging projects that:

- Produced writing inspired by books
- Were enjoyable for pupils
- Included cross-curricular content
- Might include an intriguing event or out of the classroom location
- Might engage parents

Project delivery

The four school projects were delivered each year over two academic years 2012/13 and 2013/14, and each project took approximately five weeks across a half term. Preparation time was typically concentrated at the beginning of the project in order to map out the project followed by ongoing planning to support activities as the project developed.

Most schools stated that their projects included approximately 40-50 hours of class work (i.e. approximately 1-1.5 hours in class per day over 5-6 weeks), with the second project generally incorporating slightly more class time than the first. In the majority of cases, the projects began with a concentrated period of reading followed by writing activities, although one school moved towards a parallel process of reading and writing activities in the second year.

What the schools did

Claremont Primary School

2012/13: Using Chris Riddell and Martin Jenkins' *Gulliver's Travels* (Candlewick Press, 2009) as inspiration to imagine new worlds populated with new creatures. The classes made lots of art and craft objects – maps of imaginary lands, displays of labelled monsters and giants and craft models of Lilliput as well as writing stories about their own imagined creatures.
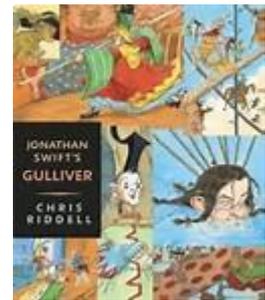
- **2013/14:** Targeting boys and reluctant writers within a year group project with high SEN and EAL cohorts, the school used *The Wolves in the Walls* by Neil Gaiman (Bloomsbury, 2007) as the stimulus for approaches to encourage pupils to use their imagination in retelling or changing the story.
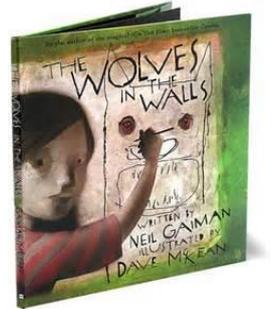
Heaton Park Primary School

- **2012/13:** Using a book with a strong female lead/hero character, *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman (Bloomsbury, 2012), to stimulate children's senses, ability to contrast imaginary and real settings and link the school to the wider community through a series of visits to local churches, graveyards and parks for opportunities to write outside.

- **2013/14:** Developing a 3D fact and fiction cardboard Tardis book inspired by the *Dr Who Character Encyclopedia* (Dorling Kindersley, 2013) and the wider topic theme of space; establishing space-themed reading and writing areas in Year 5 areas and the school library.
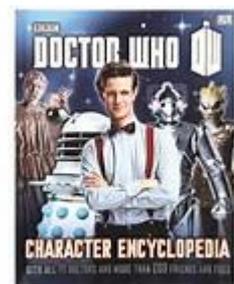
Sandringham Primary School

- **2012/13:** Linking reading and writing through *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Caroline Plaisted (QED Publishing, 2012) and the creative stimulus of a fairy-themed writing day in Epping Forest, leading to descriptive work using persuasive text in the form of adverts and diary
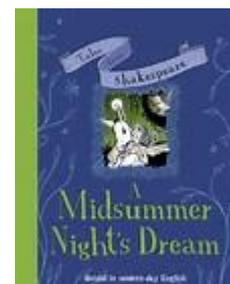
entries, culminating in a celebratory assembly in the forest.

- **2013/14:** Combining aspects of the design and layout of Dr Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman's *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* (Flying Eye/Nobrow Press, 2013) with space and science-themed topic work alongside a range of writing outputs including newspaper reports, comprehension exercises, note taking and letter writing. The project culminated in a pupil-curated open assembly/interactive event for parents.
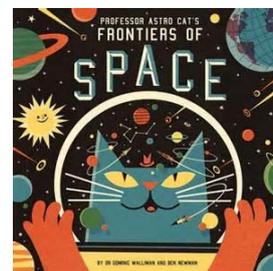
Swaythling Primary School

- **2012/13:** Using two picture books (*The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* by Chris Van Allsburg – Andersen Press, 2011; and *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan – Hodder, 2007) to stimulate imaginations and inform discussions of the potential scenarios behind the illustrations, developing accompanying text and informing drama and role play including applying the themes to their own lives and issues around immigration. The children remade sections of *The Arrival* (a book without text) in small groups and inserted their own text to accompany the images, interpreting the story their own way.

- **2013/14:** Using book 1 of the *A Series of Unfortunate Events* series (*The Bad Beginning* – Egmont, 2012) by Lemony Snicket to inform reading and writing activities which were documented in a scrapbook journal on an ongoing basis following the development of the storyline and characters.
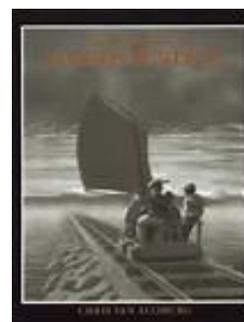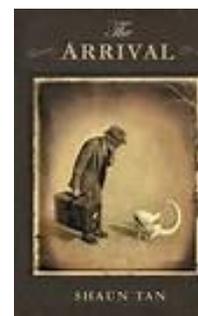
Case studies

After the projects ran, Book Trust supported the lead teacher at each school to write a case study, detailing the aims, outcomes, impacts and pedagogy of their project. These were then featured on the Book Trust website as a free resource, sharing good practice. Case studies were written accessibly but in detail and often documented children's work in pictures and sometimes included extra planning documents or resources. **Case studies** reflected on the impact of the project on the year group and on key individuals.

Evaluation

At the start of the project we put an evaluation process in place to measure the impact of the project on pupils and teachers.

Teacher telephone interviews

Two rounds of in depth teacher telephone interviews were scheduled, one after each year's project, for the teachers involved to reflect on their practice, what they had learnt and how they would work as a result. The interviews were conducted by an independent research organisation and results summarised to Book Trust in written reports after each set of interviews.

Pupil attitudes to writing surveys

An attitudes to writing questionnaire was also designed for pupils, to be completed before and after each project. The questionnaires differed slightly, in that the second questionnaire asked children to reflect on the project they'd just done as well as rate themselves – how good a writer they considered themselves and how much they enjoyed writing.

Other evaluation modes

- Attainment data from schools
- Anecdotal feedback from teachers participating in Teacher Inspiration Days, via email correspondence or conversation

Impact
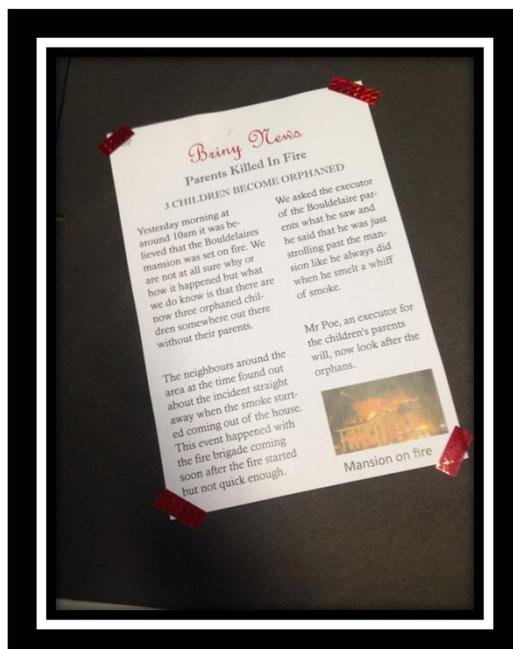
Project performance

All of the projects across both years were stated by all teachers to have been very successful. Examples of positives highlighted by teachers during the telephone interviews included:

Pupil enjoyment

- Pupils targeted by the projects enjoying the activities and gaining in confidence and motivation in terms of literacy work
- Seeing pupils having a great sense of pride linked to their achievements

Pupil attainment

- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers and lower achievers in particular

- Improvements in the quality of descriptive writing stimulated by using their imagination including the use of 'wow words', similes and metaphors
- Pupils using more adjectives and adverbs to describe settings and characters in their work
- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers
- Stimulating a wide range of writing outputs

Teaching practice

- Providing teachers with the flexibility to take more risks or do things differently
- Being able to develop intensive activities and dedicate more time than usual with pupils requiring additional support with literacy
- Enabling teachers to target groups better
- Raising expectations from teachers in terms of the quality and quantity of work that can be produced by pupils
- Teaching books from a different angle (e.g. looking at an author's intentions rather than just the words)
- Being enjoyable to teach
- Concentrating on achieving an end product for writing

Whole school

- Positive remarks on the project offered by Ofsted following a school inspection:

"Pupils did not achieve so well in writing because some lack a wide enough vocabulary and do not use sufficiently sophisticated language, such as figures of speech. Year 5 pupils have taken part in an innovative project to tackle this that centres on using high-quality literature to inspire pupils in their writing. This has proved successful, and Year 5 pupils produced some very good stories based on, for example, Gulliver's Travels." **Claremont Primary School Ofsted report, 2014**

- The development of a whole-school approach to basing units on texts

- Encouraging the school to invest in classroom sets of books
- Positive responses to calls for parent involvement

The very few negatives emanating from the project as highlighted by teachers consulted were:

- The time-consuming nature of the projects in terms of planning and preparation
- Too short a time between the first Inspiration Day and the extensive planning required to facilitate delivery of the project
- The use of scrapbook journals producing multiple drafts of pieces of writing which take time to complete/edit and can therefore lead to the crucial stages being rushed without sufficient structure

To address these negatives, at the second teacher inspiration day, the group discussed ways of designing projects that didn't need to "reinvent the wheel" – to think about running activities that drew on existing strengths and capacities of staff and pupils rather than trying to do too much that was new and unwieldy. With this in mind, teachers found that in the second year projects, they spent less time in preparation, having done one project already and learnt key lessons in terms of making the project suit their existing plans as much as possible whilst still delivering the results they were looking for.

There was a short lead-in between the start of the project in February of the first year and the school projects needing to be completed by the end of that school year; however, in the second year, teachers attended the Inspiration Day in September and delivered their projects throughout the following academic year as they found appropriate.

The reflection such as the one above regarding one specific project's writing format is an interesting example of the outcome of trialling a new process and the subsequent learning and change that is common in all teaching. New units and ways of working often need experimenting with before a workable model is found, and it is part of The Write Book approach to encourage experimentation and new practices, both so that the children can

try new ways of working (and perhaps suggest refinements themselves), and so that teachers can develop new learning modes in a practical, hands-on way.

Specific areas of good practice identified by the teachers involved in the project included:

- An intensive period of reading and understanding of the text in the initial week of the project
- Incorporating ICT
- A transitory or organic approach to teaching encouraging buy-in from the pupils
- Changes in guided reading to make better use of individual quality texts (depth) rather than skimming a number of books (breadth)
- Maintaining a focus on the completion of quality end products
- An encyclopaedia format enables children to dip in and out of the text far easier than with most fiction books
- Using the outdoors to stimulate enthusiasm in learning leading to a whole-school project linking texts and the outside environment

Home-school links

Parents and the wider community were involved in two out of the four projects in the first year of the project and three of four projects in the second year. The most frequent form of parental involvement was a celebratory assembly, presentation or sharing event. These events were consistently reported to generate a greater than usual level of interest amongst parents and provided a key source of inspiration and pride amongst parents and pupils alike.

"During our celebration presentations to the parents it was really incredible to see the confidence of the children. They had devised and developed the content themselves, allowing us to see the high levels of text knowledge and comprehension they had developed". **Class Teacher, Sandringham Primary School**

"About twenty parents and family members attended the session which we held for an hour first thing in the morning, to enable parents to stay after dropping the children off. Both parents and children really enjoyed the workshops - we made it quite structured and guided a lot of brainstorming and writing about possible new locations for our imaginary creatures

to explore, but also kept the emphasis on fun. There was a real buzz in the classrooms and children clearly enjoyed seeing parents learning something new, and having the time to be creative together." **Class Teacher, Claremont Primary School**

At Claremont and Sandringham Primary Schools, the successes that schools enjoyed with engaging parents both during the writing process and in final assemblies/sharing events meant that they both plan to involve parents in reading and writing projects in the future.

Linking reading and writing

Although utilising different approaches, each teacher stated that the projects had been successful in linking reading and writing in the school across both years. Projects were found to generate great enthusiasm amongst pupils to read and write around the topic/text, often assisted by the combination of activities chosen:

- Combining reading and writing with ICT (e.g. developing the script for a video trailer for a book)
- Addressing gaps in non-fiction writing
- Inspiring children to write by discussing the illustrations in picture books
- Using guided reading supported by illustrations and other stimuli (e.g. the outdoors)
- Enabling reluctant writers to use the structure of the text as the basis for their own version with additional imaginative descriptions of characters and settings with enabled greater consistency and quality of their end product
- A focus on the quality of the end product by encouraging the children to think about writing for a reader and vice versa (e.g. knowing who your audience is, learning how to use language to make people interested, reviewing their own work) was supported by teachers taking the time to explore the structure and rationale behind a text

There were consistent examples across each of the eight projects of children's ongoing interest and engagement in reading and writing outside of allocated time. These included:

- Pupils continuing to read the book or the series of books after the project ended

- Pupils having a stronger desire to complete tasks at home if unfinished at school

- Three boys (one a high achiever and two creative boys who struggle technically) writing a story in their own time

- Increased library use

- Children asking for similar texts for Christmas presents

- Children bringing in books from home connected to the project, e.g. other books about space, etc.,

Levels data

All schools' levels data shows an upward trend in achievement in writing in Year 5. In the first year at Sandringham Primary School, 67 per cent of pupils (a couple of percentage points above the national expected levels) achieved the expected level 3A/4C for Year 5, with 39 per cent of pupils achieving above the expected levels, and 11.8 per cent of pupils achieving level 5s.

"Before the project, our progress data in writing during the autumn term was not showing sufficient levels of progress. Many children had not moved a sub-level from July to December 2012. Since the project, progress data has shifted, with most children attaining one or more sub-levels in writing since January. The progress made in the attainment data is reflected in their increased confidence in writing as well as evidence of increased writing stamina across the year group. The children are more able to write for longer and with more coherence than at the beginning of the year." **Class Teacher, Sandringham Primary School**

Data from Heaton Park Primary School in year one of the project showed that although 63.8 per cent of the cohort achieved expected levels 3A/4C after the project, every child in the group had progressed by at least one sublevel, with 67 per cent progressing by two or more.

Whilst their year 1 project was successful in engaging reluctant writers, with average levels at the end of Year 5 roughly on national targets, Swaythling Primary School's second year of the project was of particular interest from a data point of view. Figures from both Year 5 and 6 show that the project had a direct effect on "quiet girls" in both year groups. In the Year 5 group (first graph) you can see that the quiet girl group (dotted line) fell below the year average quite considerably at the end of Year 3, caught up at the end of year 4 and in fact surpassed the overall class by the end of Year 5.

The Year 6 group of quiet girls were working consistently higher than the overall year group from Year 4 onwards, but their performance at the end of Year 6 was even higher than before.
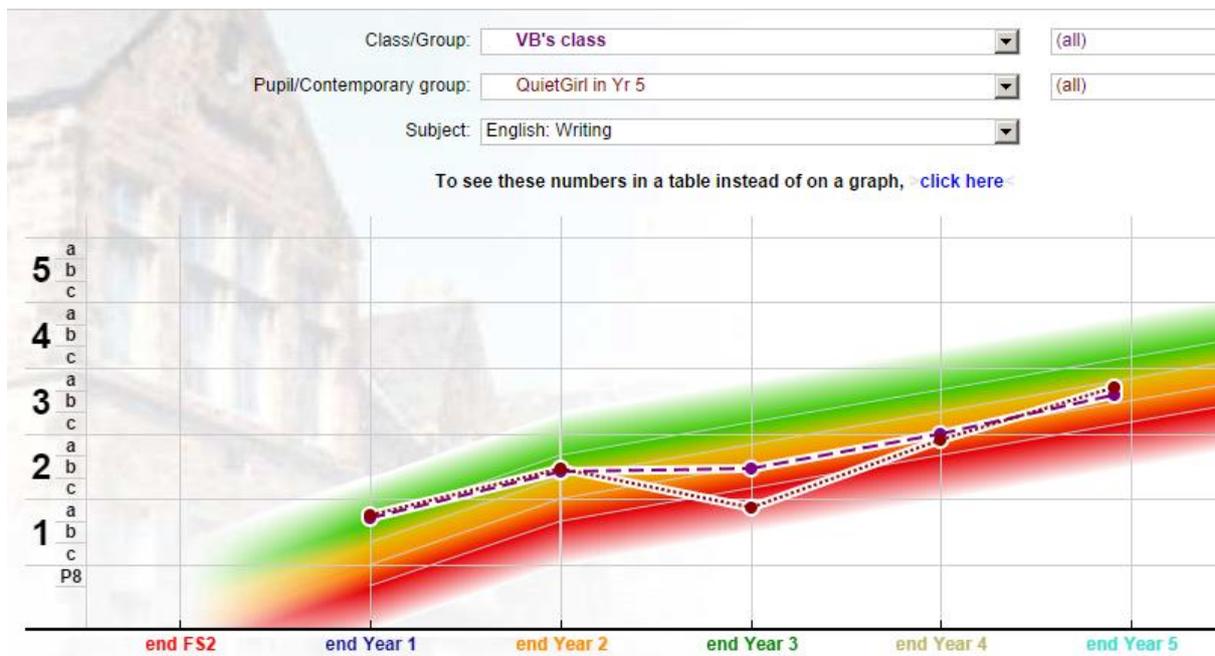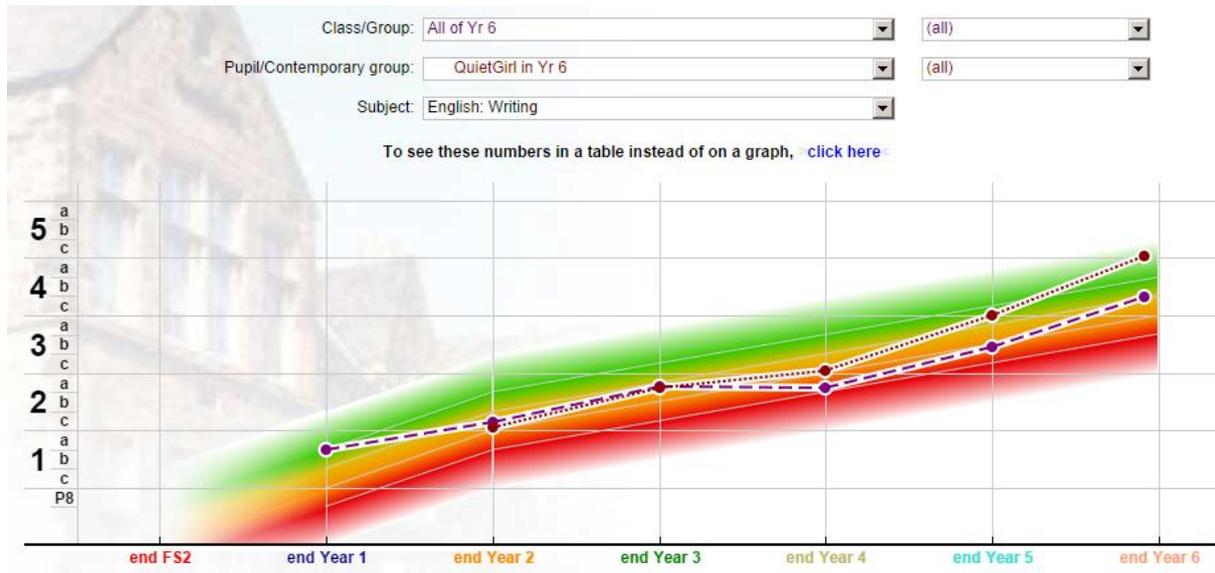
Pupil comments

Year one of the project

The pupil surveys carried out before and after the writing projects (in appendices) asked children to reflect on how they saw themselves as writers, how much they enjoyed writing, what they liked or disliked abut creative writing at school and what types of writing they enjoyed most. Whilst the comparison of before and after showed little meaningful difference in terms of *types* of writing enjoyed before and after the project (the highest scoring were drawing and writing, stories, making books and newspaper/magazine articles), the comments from children about what they *felt* about creative writing were very enlightening.

Before the project, 78 per cent of children said they liked creative writing but few could articulate good reasons for liking it except for reiterating that it was creative, and that they were free to write what they liked. There was no sense of having a detailed knowledge about what one might like to write, for instance. The feedback was very vague.

The overwhelming feedback in terms of comments about what children liked least about writing in school, outside of The Write Book projects, was writing being dull; not having enough time to write, the over emphasis of technical elements of writing during "creative" projects and finding it hard to come up with ideas to start writing. Typical comments were:

> *Sometimes I get bored because I don't know what to write. Sometimes I found writing really fun but sometimes I found it really boring.*

> *Sometimes I cannot think of creative vocabulary, phrases, adjectives and sentences opener's. This is really confusing. I sometimes miss my commas.*

> *Sometimes it is too long and you don't know how to start it off and you run out of ideas.*

After the project, children were more enthusiastic about creative writing and more specific about what they enjoyed about it. They were able to give more examples of the genres they enjoyed writing in, a sense of autonomy in their writing and the knowledge that they could use existing stories and illustrations to inspire their own writing, to tweak and reuse and to give them new ideas.

> *I especially like role play because I like acting and doing acting through literacy is awesome! I also like writing stories you get to make up incredible stories! I drawing it's fun and give your an understanding with your writing!*

> *Things I like about creative writing is that your imagination can run free and wildly it gives you a huge chance to let people discover what fiction, non-fiction, really whatever you want to write.*

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

> *Creative writing is fun and I like it because you really visualise what the author's writing about for an example Andy Mulligan. I am reading his book he's amazing he lets it flow through and he's very into books especially making his own I also like writing.*

> *I like creative writing because whatever story you heard or read you can make it your own writing with a few more details.*

Children's feedback about what they didn't enjoy about creative writing after the project still included a few "it's boring" comments, but there were a wider variety of other comments about why writing might be bad that were more specific and connected to the writing project the children had been doing. These comments showed a greater engagement with the issues and processes of writing and as such, to some degree, demonstrate a better informed or skilled child. Many of these comments are also ones that professional writers would agree with, and that (arguably) reflect the genuine challenges of writing as a craft:

> *The thing that I dislike about creative writing is how much effort you have to put into it for it to be a good story.*

> *I don't like long days on pieces of writing! I also don't like spider webs as well as long writing on a story!*

> *When there is not action and good phrases in the writing.*

Year two of the project

Similarly, in year two, pupils expressed similar concerns about a lack of time for writing, a lack of confidence in finding ideas to inspire writing and a writing following a less creative approach in class:

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

We should draw more pictures for all to see at enjoy. We need more time at school for it.

Sometimes, stuff like big write is that we have to write a lot in a short but not a lot amount of time.

I don't like when people want us to do this writing or that writing. Or when we can't draw a picture and never imagine.

Find it a bit hard to come up with ideas.

After the project children commented in more detail about the elements of writing they had enjoyed – genres, processes and types of end product, and also fed back positively about opportunities to share writing with their peers and with families.

Because I got to make up my own scene about Bonnie getting sucked into the man's hair and lay it out as a newspaper article.

Like you base it on a story (like Matilda) and write a story about it but your own version of it. I like it when you can make a story of anything you want.

I like making teachers smiling and children seeing my story my work.

That we enjoyed sharing our ideas together. We were trying our best.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

Elements children disliked about writing after the second year project again still included some negatives, but again the comments tended to be more specific about elements of writing the children enjoyed less, including, again, some writerly concerns about the vulnerability of sharing a work in progress.

People make fun of it. People hate it. They be silly with my writing.

Not being able to add more writing like a thing at after the end that might lead to the next story.

I dislike making stories with small papers.

Sometimes you have to write it for a particular age.
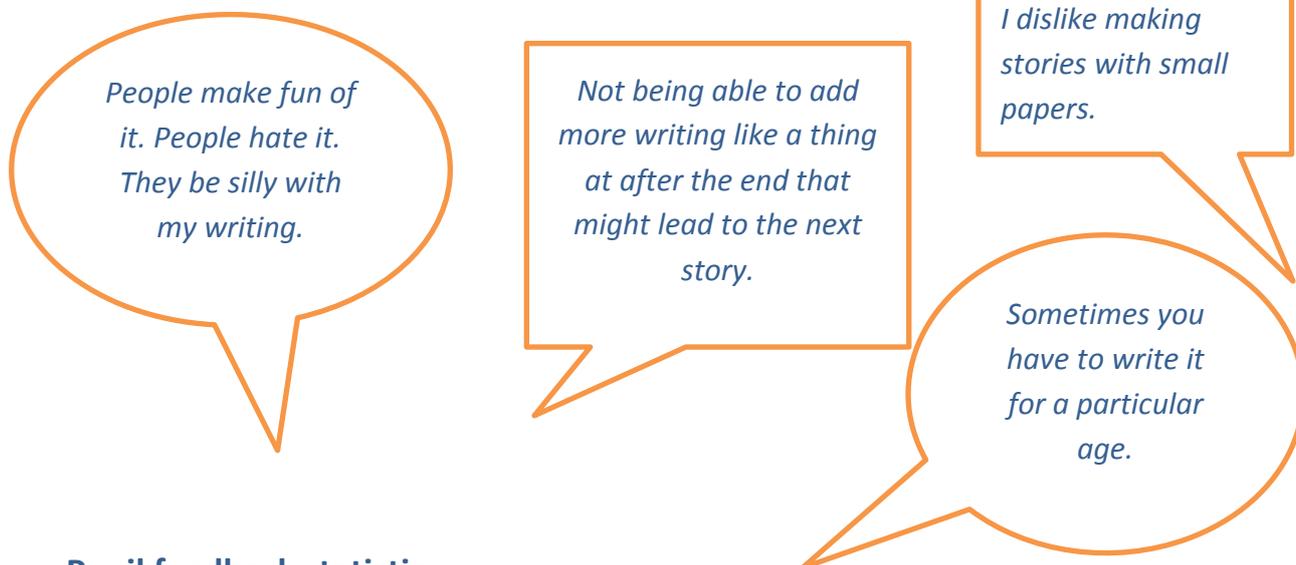
Pupil feedback statistics

Year 1

- 71 per cent of children said they enjoyed the creative writing project
- 88 per cent of pupils thought their creative writing had improved since they did the project
- 79 per cent of pupils said they liked creative writing more as a result of the project

Year 2

- 83 per cent of children said they enjoyed the creative writing project
- 87 per cent of pupils thought their creative writing had improved since they did the project
- 78 per cent of pupils said they liked creative writing more as a result of the project

Interestingly, although the statistics in both years of the project stayed at relatively similar high levels, the makeup of the answer around how much more pupils enjoyed creative writing after taking part in the project differed from year 1 and 2 in terms of the proportion

of the total that answered "a bit more" and "a lot more". In year 1, 37 per cent liked writing a lot more and 42 per cent liked it a bit more, whereas in year 2, 50 per cent liked it a lot more, with 28 per cent liking it a bit more as a result of the project. This result might represent the result of teachers' greater confidence in the second year of the project, having had the opportunity to develop their skills in year 1 and therefore create more creative and challenging projects for the children in year 2. It would be worth speculating that this improvement might also reflect on children enjoying greater levels of autonomy in their writing and participating in projects (such as Claremont Primary's pupil-curated open assembly) and, for the Swaythling Primary pupils, enjoying a highly creative and engaged second year of the project.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

Who did it help?

Reluctant writers

All four primary schools reported successes with engaging identified reluctant writers using The Write Book approach. Often, although not always, the reluctant writers identified were boys. After their first Write Book project with Neil Gaiman's book *Coraline*, teachers at Heaton Park Primary School in Manchester reported that:

"There have been huge improvements in children's attainment levels in descriptive writing. Since doing this project, 54 per cent of the children in our classes have gone up by 2 or more sub-levels in their reading attainment. Attitudes, particularly amongst the boys, have improved immensely towards writing in general and this was reflected in their attainment levels at the end of the school year. Every child across the year group has improved by at least one sub level, with 67 per cent improving by 2 or more sub-levels."

One boy at the school with ADHD and behaviour issues, who is a very reluctant writer, particularly loved a trip into the community to write in a local graveyard, inspired by the spooky theme of *Coraline.*

He said *'This is the best work I've ever done'* and *'I don't like writing about pictures but I love it here!'* Teachers said: *"His work shows a great deal more writing than usual, and much more engagement and sophisticated language than we have seen before."*

EAL learners

Claremont Primary School used *The Wolves in the Walls* by Neil Gaiman as a starting point for a project that gave children the opportunity to get to know a story in depth, in order to think of and develop ideas and then write and redraft their own work. Claremont were responding to mixed ability groups with high levels of EAL, where some children had little English at all. Therefore, what sounded initially like an unadventurous project – to read *The Wolves in the Walls* as a class and either rewrite it with a different ending, or do a straight retelling, depending on the linguistic confidence of the pupil - was a deeply impactful practice.

"One boy, who had no English when he started at Claremont at the beginning of Year 5, read his story to his parents in their language and then in English. He was immensely proud of his work, especially because he had been able to write a whole story by following the existing structure of The Wolves in the Walls and introducing his own details." **Year 5 Teacher, Claremont Primary School**

For pupils who were low literacy achievers, or those who were new to the language altogether, a rehearsal and retelling process enabled them to complete a whole story on their own, and be proud of sharing that story with parents and peers. More confident writers were able to become familiar with the rhythms, structure and characteristics of a modern cautionary fairy tale and divert the storyline at a given point, making their own

alternate ending. All pupils loved the vivid, evocative illustrations of the book which helped them understand and discuss how suspense and drama was being conveyed.

Quiet girls

At Swaythling Primary School, staff had noted that a group of girls in Year 5 and 6 were underperforming in reading and writing, and designed the second year of the project to ensure that it would present them with opportunities to engage with the books in ways that were more suitable for them. Uniquely, Swaythling decided to involve Year 6 as well as 5 with the rationale that the project would provide a valuable revision for pupils in Year 6 to revisit the different modes of writing assessed in SATS in an enjoyable way, as well as running the project as standard in Year 5. This also enabled the children to work together and share their work with each other.

"Due to the higher number of 'boisterous boys' in both classes, groups of quiet, undemanding girls developed. This was the inspiration for choosing a book with a strong female character (the character of Violet in A Series of Unfortunate Events) and for including a number of hands-on, creative activities for the children to participate in. This benefitted the quiet girls by giving them a strong female role model and having a creative, 'arty' feel to the project for them to express themselves, and the boisterous boys by having a semi-dark/twisted, humorous story line for them to follow and engage with." **Year 5 Teacher, Swaythling Primary School**

Families

Claremont Primary School showed exemplary practice in engaging parents as part of their writing projects in both years of the project. In their first project, based on Chris Riddell and Martin Jenkins' version of Gullivers Travels, teachers invited family members in at the start of the project for a day of co-writing, brainstorming and imagining new lands and new creatures with the children. At the end of the project they asked families back in for a sharing of childrens' stories, and children whose family members did not attend were still able to share their tales with the ones that did. Children really loved the opportunity to

share their writing with a real audience, and teachers reported on the vibrant atmosphere of the event as well as the enjoyment it lent to the whole writing process.

In the second project at Claremont based on *The Wolves in the Walls*, teachers also invited parents in at the end of the project to be the audience for children, who read their Wolves in the Walls-inspired stories to them – in some cases, in English and the language spoken at home. Sandringham Primary School's space-themed project in the second year of the project incorporated a vibrant and successful four-classroom, pupil-curated sharing event which involved parents in writing, reading and responding to a variety of stimulus based on the theme of space and the *Professor Astrocat* book.

What did we learn?

Children enjoy writing more, and write better, when they're inspired by a high quality book they've loved.

"When primary students' writing is inspired by high-quality picture books and shared with peers, children benefit academically and socially."[8]

Teachers purposefully chose beautifully illustrated, inspiring, well-written, unusual and/or immersive books as the focus for their writing activities, with the hope that exposing children to books different than ones traditionally used in the classroom would engender higher levels of interest. This approach worked very well, and the exposure of children to

---

[8] Paquette, K. (2007) 'Encouraging Primary Students' Writing through Children's Literature', Early Childhood Education Journal, **(35)**, 2.

texts exhibiting artistic excellence is an important element of The Write Book approach, and fulfils the Arts Council England's principles of striving for excellence and being authentic.

Books used by schools were:

- Coraline – Neil Gaiman
- The Wolves in the Walls – Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean
- Tales from Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream – Caroline Plaisted, (QED Publishing)
- Gulliver's Travels – illustrated by Chris Riddell (Walker Books)
- The Mysteries of Harris Burdick – Chris Van Allsburg
- The Arrival – Shaun Tan
- Professor Astrocat's Frontiers of Space - Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman
- The Dr Who Character Encyclopedia – Annabel Gibson and Jason Loborik
- A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning – Lemony Snicket

"The children have really enjoyed reading and learning from a high quality quirky non-fiction text. The level of discussion and ideas generated have been far higher than with more traditional non-fiction extracts or texts. The book will be revisited again in a similar way next year as the topic has developed children's confidence with nonfiction and produced a high standard of writing. Spring data has shown a high number of children making good progress in their writing and increased confidence in approaching non-fiction style texts and questions in their summer QCA tests." **Year 5 teacher, Sandringham Primary School, on using *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* by Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman, Flying Eye Books / Nobrow Press**

T: To use question mark and exclamation marks.

(Before Project)

Dear diary,

Today I was at the niagra falls ~~were~~ *where referring* interviewers were interviewing me. The croud were so infatiee *impatient* to see a glimpse of me. It felt like I ~~off~~ *was* in paradise. I went to see the Niagara falls and a question was running through my head ~~is~~ would I survive? No one can deny the fact ~~that~~ ~~fact that~~ from this start I am going to be rich and famous.

You're mixing your tenses up.

Now it was ~~six only~~ 16 more hou when the clock ~~strok~~ *struck* to six it started raining, and I hoped it rained tomorrow so it could postpone my start from taking place. As I went home, I wished ~~it~~ there was a timemachine so I could stop myself from declaring *declaring decloring* to go down niagara falls. I have gone so far so I can not back out now. Tomorrow we will found would I be able to ~~fight about~~ *write* the trip about niagara falls or not. You must read ~~words~~ *write* every sentence you write and make sure that ~~goodbye diary.~~ it makes sense.

rewrite to
Tomorrow I will find out would I be able to write about it.

As I was sleeping the same idea was running through my head would I survive.

Please continue to work on your current target. You have used a question mark in this writing but you need to use exclamation marks too.
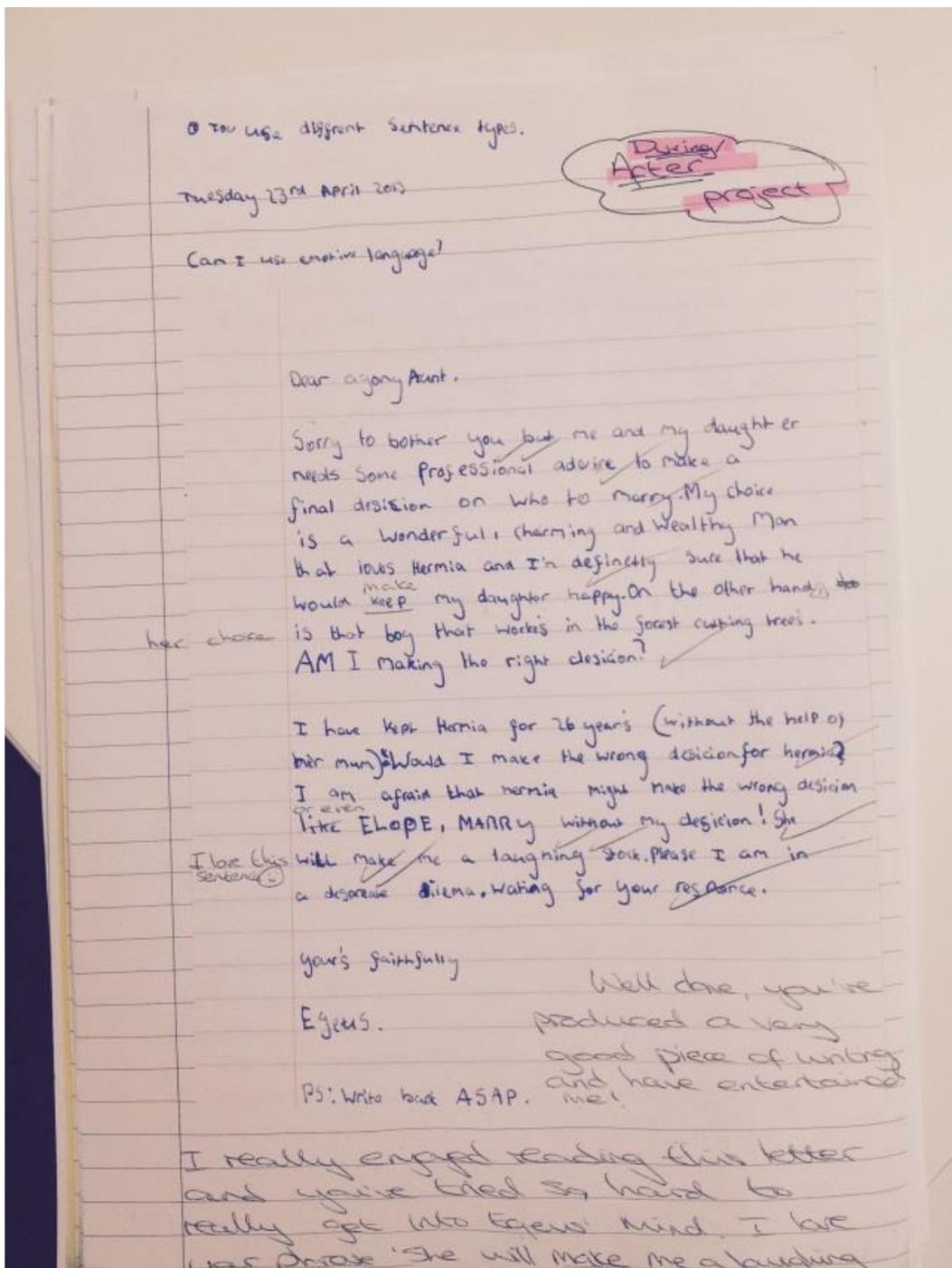
Pupil work before and after Sandringham Primary School's A Midsummer Night's Dream forest writing project.

The choice of a quirky and high quality book to inspire writing was key for all the schools: it is important to pique children's interest with a book that seems un-schoolish, beautiful,

funny or anarchic. The Year 5 teacher at Sandringham Primary School, said of using Nobrow Press' gorgeously designed, large format, high quality hardback *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* :

"The children have really enjoyed reading and learning from a high quality quirky non-fiction text. The level of discussion and ideas generated have been far higher than with more traditional non-fiction extracts or texts. The book will be revisited again in a similar way next year as the topic has developed children's confidence with nonfiction and produced a high standard of writing. Spring data has shown a high number of children making good progress in their writing and increased confidence in approaching non-fiction style texts and questions in their summer QCA tests."

Choice of book was also key because it responded to the characteristics of the school, and the particular interests or abilities of the children. Choosing "The Write Book" for the school was something we encouraged teachers to invest time in – and something that Book Trust staff were able to help with, given their expertise in high quality children's literature. The Book Trust Bookfinder was recognised by teachers to be very helpful in finding books and developing teachers' knowledge of new releases and titles – and, again, demonstrating Book Trust's expertise in recommending the best in children's books, and promoting excellence.

For instance, Swaythling Primary School chose the first book of the Lemony Snicket *Unfortunate Events* series for their second project because it had a positive female lead character which would appeal to the "quiet girls" in Year 5; it was funny and anarchic, appealing to the childrens' (and the teacher's) sense of humour, and it featured the characters taking a journey which could be documented with a scrapbook writing/making project. By getting the buy-in of the "quiet girls" with the right (write) book, teachers were able to boost their confidence in writing.

One of the key elements of developing the skills of all the writers in the class, but particularly the quiet girls in Swaythling's scrapbook project was emphasising that everyone makes mistakes when they write, and that is all part of the writing process. Modelling making mistakes when writing themselves, teachers both engaged in the creative process

alongside their pupils and foregrounded rewriting as a vital part of challenging your own skills:

"We wanted to ensure a positive attitude to writing throughout the project as well as attainment, and focused mainly on the attainment of the quiet, undemanding girls. We demonstrated that challenging yourself and making mistakes are key ways of learning and should be celebrated. By ensuring that teachers modelled making mistakes when writing, but also showed the children strategies that can be used to correct them, the children became less concerned about taking risks with their writing such as using adventurous vocabulary that they couldn't necessarily spell. Every classroom now displays a 'Wonky Wall' where errors that have been noticed, by both children and adults, are displayed and celebrated as a learning curve." **Year 5 Teacher, Swaythling Primary School**

The choice of the Lemony Snicket book was therefore key in enabling teachers at Swaythling Primary School to bring the quiet girls on board and effect meaningful learning for the whole group.

Book choice is key in encouraging children's creative response.

It was also interesting to note that often, children enjoyed writing inspired by nonfiction texts as well as fiction. Heaton Park and Sandringham Primary Schools both explored the possibilities of nonfiction to inspire writing with space-themed texts, responding to the second Write Book teacher inspiration day where space-fan and author of the *Usborne Write Your Own Story Book* and *Write and Draw Your Own Comics* Louie Stowell was the featured writer. The selection of nonfiction titles in both these instances was due to teachers creating bespoke, personalised projects that would appeal to the specific demographics of children in their Year 5 groups. This personalised Write Book approach – considering which book would interest the children, based on themes they were already interested in, hobbies they might have outside of school, even down to their sense of humour – ensured a positive, child-centred experience during the writing project – another Arts Council England principle.

Heaton Park Primary used colourful, large format hardback *The Dr Who Character Encyclopedia* and a couple of copies of Chris Riddell's fabulously illustrated *Alienography* to anchor a combination nonfiction/fiction writing project. Teachers began the project with a nonfiction focus on space and the planets and then moved into looking at the Dr Who books – it being the 50th anniversary of Dr Who in 2013 – to help children create their own imaginary planets and the imaginary beings that might reside there. Children then made cardboard Tardis box books containing a pull-out story about their imaginary worlds and beings. The Tardis books were displayed in the library as the focus of a new fun space-themed writing area.

Teachers at Heaton Park found that children who had previously been uninterested in books were asking to take the Dr Who books home, as well as bringing books in from home along similar themes or formats – the *Star Trek Encyclopedia*, for instance. From the end of Year 4 to December 2013, in the first term of Year 5, when the project took place, 32 per cent of the children taking part in the project had gone up by one or more sub-levels in their reading attainment. Attitudes, particularly amongst the boys, had improved immensely towards writing in general and this was reflected in their attainment levels at the end of the Autumn term, after the project. Every child across the year group had improved by at least one sub level, with 62 per cent improving on their Year 4 levels.

"We had one child that had recently joined our school with serious behaviour issues. On the first few days of joining he was out of class on numerous occasions. However, once the project started his attitude to his work changed completely and he became very excited about his research and writing, creating his own alien and making his Tardis book. At the end of the project he was proud to show his work - what he called 'a great job' - and told his parents how much he enjoyed his lessons." **Year 5 Teacher, Heaton Park Primary School**

Children love having more time to read and write at school.

The Write Book school projects usually began with an intensive whole class reading period, usually over a week or ten day. Reading a whole book as a class in stages, involving discussion of the story, characters and the techniques the writer was using to create

particular effects, was new for many of the teachers, but invariably they found it deeply effective in creating enthusiasm in the children.

"We were surprised at the level of enthusiasm and involvement that the children displayed regarding reading a complete book together. This high level of excitement continued into our next project based on The Street Child by Berlie Doherty, even after we had finished our project on Coraline." **Year 5 Teacher, Heaton Park Primary School**

Once the intensive reading period was over and the writing started, some teachers found the idea of perhaps a whole day or half day of free writing time at a time rather intimidating; however, the children relished the chance to have more time to mull and develop their work. Before starting her Write Book project, a pupil at Claremont Primary School said:

'I'm looking forward to spending time on writing. We have looked at poems and newspaper articles. I've enjoyed it but everything is so rushed because we have to move on to the next unit of learning.'

Children's comments from their pre-project attitudes to writing questionnaires included the following comments about not having enough time to write creatively at school:

I only dislike it because sometimes we are not given enough time so we have to write some things really quickly so I can't go into it thoroughly.

I don't like that we do not get enough time for creative writing.

The only thing I dislike is sometimes, we are not given enough time for me to put everything I want to in full detail.

One of the teachers at Claremont told me about how well the children wrote when she gave them free writing time, and how in fact with one child, who normally needed reminding to stay on task, was so engrossed in writing her Gulliver-inspired story that the teacher didn't want to disturb her by moving the class on to the next part of the task, as she could see Faith was writing so freely and enthusiastically. The teacher commented that *"Knowing that*

she can write at her own pace over time has given her the confidence and self belief that that she is a writer."

Children enjoy writing when it's taken beyond the classroom or involves an intriguing event.

The Write Book followed the Everybody Writes project in encouraging teachers to take writing out of the classroom and into community settings, or even just outside spaces in the school grounds., creating exciting, inspiring and engaging writing projects for children, actively involving them in discovery and learning.

During Sandringham Primary School's Dream of Epping Forest project, where teachers began the project with a fairy-inspired forest writing day, one child said *"I enjoyed the discovery and detective work because we can let our imagination go far. Every clue made us go further and further and make our imagination run free."*

Emma Parker, the then-Deputy Head at the school, described how the experience of writing outside had changed one child's attitude during the project.

"Child 2, a high achiever in the class with strong potential, has always had great ideas for his writing but has sometimes struggled to structure these into clear pieces of writing. He has always had an extensive vocabulary but has sometimes found it difficult to choose the most appropriate words and phrases. This is one of a group of children that can be difficult to sufficiently challenge, yet, during the project, I feel that his writing has become a lot more confident and his understanding of how to structure a clear piece of writing has really improved.

He said *"If you just had to imagine being in the forest your writing wouldn't be that good. Being in the forest means you have the atmosphere and can see and feel it."*

His writing has improved from a 3A (beginning of year 5) to a 4B during year 5 and has shown great improvements from being 3A/4C borderline (beginning of a project) to a secure 4B (after the project)."

For their second project, Sandringham Primary School immersed themselves in *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* as part of a wide-ranging nonfiction writing focus. As part of this space-themed writing project, Sandringham adopted the popular Everybody Writes concept of the "alien landing"– an immersive experience that inspires a day of writing about a mysterious occurrence.

"We began the project by staging an alien invasion in Year 5; classrooms were 'trashed' with mysterious objects left hidden around the area. Year 5 children were read a letter from the 'aliens'. On entering the school, children from other year groups were given slips of paper outlining the mystery and were asked to help Year 5 solve the problem. Many staff got involved filming themselves, being interviewed and bringing in photos of strange sightings in the neighbourhood! The children loved this day and were so enthusiastic about solving the mystery. Throughout the day, the children investigated, taking notes ready to prepare their findings and write letters back to the 'aliens'. We ended the unit by having an open afternoon for parents where the children set up interactive workshops based on the topic to present their work and answer questions about their learning." **Year 5 Teacher, Sandringham Primary School**

The project included a final sharing exhibition/curated classroom event which was very well attended by families. Teachers had given the children free rein in designing their own tables, with each group covering a different area of learning on the subject of space. Children had devised writing activities for attendees to take part in at most tables, and a multimedia approach was much in evidence, with one table featuring the music videos of David Bowie as Ziggy Stardust.

"During our celebration presentation to the parents it was really incredible to see the confidence of the children. They had devised and developed the content themselves, allowing us to see the high levels of text knowledge and comprehension they had developed. Reinterpreting and presenting information is something our children can find challenging, yet even those working below expectations were fully engaged in the development process.

Before the project our progress data in writing for this group was below expectations when they entered Year 5. Since the project, progress data has shifted, with most children

attaining one or more sublevel in writing by the spring term. The progress made in the attainment data is reflected in their increased confidence in writing and evidence of increased writing stamina across the year group with their ability to write for longer with more coherence than at the beginning of the year." **Year 5 Teacher, Sandringham Primary School**

At Sandringham Primary, the mysterious occurrence of visiting aliens combined with the high quality *Professor Astrocat* book as well as the independence of being able to create and curate their own learning made space and writing accessible and fun.

Teachers value the opportunity to talk to knowledgeable experts about new releases and contemporary children's books.

Championing the best books for children is a key part of Book Trust's work, and we know that teachers can find it hard to keep up with new releases and the best children's books. It was therefore a key aim of The Write Book to expand teachers' knowledge of the range of high quality material available. Teachers found discussions around book choices and looking at the Book Trust Bookfinder invaluable at the teacher inspiration days. Additionally, at Swaythling Primary School, Book Trust hoted a book familiarisation session where teachers could peruse a wide selection of titles in a relaxed setting and talk about how they could be used as hooks for writing and other projects.

"We would highly recommend setting aside the time for a large group of teachers to look at new and exciting books, and think about how they might be used as a "hook" for teaching. You might do this by visiting your local independent book shop or Waterstones and talking to the children's book specialist, or asking your local library to run a session on new and other lovely books that are available.

The Book Trust Bookfinder has also been a fantastic tool for us, helping to suggest books for topics. It is also great to broaden teachers' knowledge of what books are available, especially for our three NQTs." **Year 5 Teacher, Swaythling Primary School**

It was particularly the element of being able to talk to an "expert" in children's books, like the writers at the Teacher Inspiration days and Book Trust staff, that teachers valued. The

experience of being shown new, exciting books in person, being recommended something by an expert and looking at books "in the flesh" was the most effective way of enthusing teachers about new and hitherto unknown books. The project was also recommended by the schools taking part as particularly helpful for NQTs, helping them to develop their emerging practice around reading and writing for pleasure.

Using high quality books to inspire and emulate writing encourages children to think of themselves as writers.

At Claremont Primary School the project has increased confidence and self-esteem for a large number of children, and they now see themselves as writers. One reluctant writer at Claremont Primary has written a rap for the school song, and three boys have been inspired to write their own stories at break and lunch times.

Teachers reported that the children at Claremont have also become more confident in discussing their writing - what they like about it and how it can be improved. Teachers have promoted the concept of "reading as a writer; writing as a reader" throughout the school.

One pupil said: *"If I need an idea I know I can think about the other books I've read and adapt them"*

Another said: *"I'm going to read lots of different types of books - picture books and non-picture books - at first they can help you with your ideas."*

Claremont was also very keen that pupils wrote for real audiences, and as well as a wonderful and well-attended family sharing event, children's stories were shared at a school assembly and displayed around the school as inspiration for younger pupils. Children were writing for their readers: assessing *The Wolves in the Walls* and applying its techniques to their own writing for maximum success.

"We invited family members in to listen to the children read their stories, both to the group and then one-to-one with their own families. Even though some children didn't have family members there, parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers of other children were more than happy to listen to their stories too, and children read to each other. Everyone seemed

very happy that they had told their stories to a real audience, and been heard and appreciated."

This sharing represented the joining up of the cyclical process of being a writer: being an enthusiastic reader; developing ideas, processes and techniques from what you've read, incorporating them in your own writing and delivering that writing to a readership; an audience.

Using "books as hooks" encourages creative learning and helps embed reading and writing for pleasure deep into the curriculum.

All the Write Book schools have, in slightly different ways, started using books as the focus for writing and other teaching and learning – in some cases, as a whole-school approach. Heaton Park Primary are implementing a "writing outside the classroom" approach across the school – making the most of the development of their wonderful field and outside space - as well as keeping books at the centre of the curriculum.

Using books as hooks represents a clear pedagogical move forward for many of the schools involved in the project, automatically introducing a reading for pleasure agenda into the school plan, and using books as the stimulus for other learning and new work.

Claremont Primary's Ofsted inspection made particular mention of their Wolfish Plots Write Book project and approved of the school's plans to move forward using books as the focus for learning in literacy and non-literacy units across the school:

"As a result of the project we plan to introduce a book-based curriculum to inspire reading and creative writing. In our most recent inspection in March 2014, Ofsted could see that real progress had been made in year 5 in terms of children's progress in writing," **Year 5 Teacher, Claremont Primary School**

At Swaythling Primary School, the second year's Write Book project involved Year 5 and Year 6 pupils – as a standard unit in Year 5, and as a fun revision opportunity to rehearse different writing genres and types pre-SATS in Year 6. Using books as hooks to prepare for SATS is an excellent example of a school developing the creative concept of The Write Book

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

to fit the specific requirements of their school, and being flexible enough to make creative approaches work in a variety of contexts.

This embedding of reading and writing for pleasure into the curriculum helps ensure a sense of personal progression for teachers, providing a framework of support for teachers to develop their knowledge and love of children's literature. It also provides support for pupils in terms of creating a clear and coherent plan of reading and writing development across their school career.

Using books as inspiration for writing works well with lower achievers and reluctant writers.

"I also enjoyed the book because it didn't have much words so you had to use your imagination," **Pupil at Swaythling Primary School**

Beautifully illustrated or anarchic, funny books – fiction or nonfiction – are a great way to get reluctant writers on board, often when the books have a relationship to existing interests outside school. This was certainly the case with Heaton Park and the *Dr Who Character Encyclopedia* which tapped into an existing interest in Dr Who with the pupils, many of whom were watching the series at home, as well as the Dr Who 50 year anniversary which was just coming to a close in 2013/2014. Teachers reported that the children saw the Dr Who books as unlike the usual type of book they'd see in school, and many children asked to take them home to read, or brought in other books from home about space, or that reflected the "Bestiary" nature of the book. Because of their enthusiasm for the Dr Who book, children at Heaton Park were full of ideas when it came to creating their own space creatures and planets and making their Tardis books to display the stories in.

Similarly, the quiet girls at Swaythling Primary and reluctant writers at Claremont and Sandringham Primary School were both engaged with projects that used engaging books at the core of a wide-ranging and creative project, providing a number of cross-curricular activities around a core theme.

Often, when reluctant writers discovered a book they liked, there was a strong sense of the pleasure of ownership of the book – at least for the duration of the project - and a sense of

belonging with the story, recalling the Arts Council England principle of developing a sense of ownership and belonging. Claremont Primary's rewriting *The Wolves in the Walls* project provided low attainers and EAL children with a way to "belong" to the story – by learning it and retelling it, they became reader and author, owning the story in their own way, and becoming part of a community of readers and writers who were all immersed in the story.

Legacy
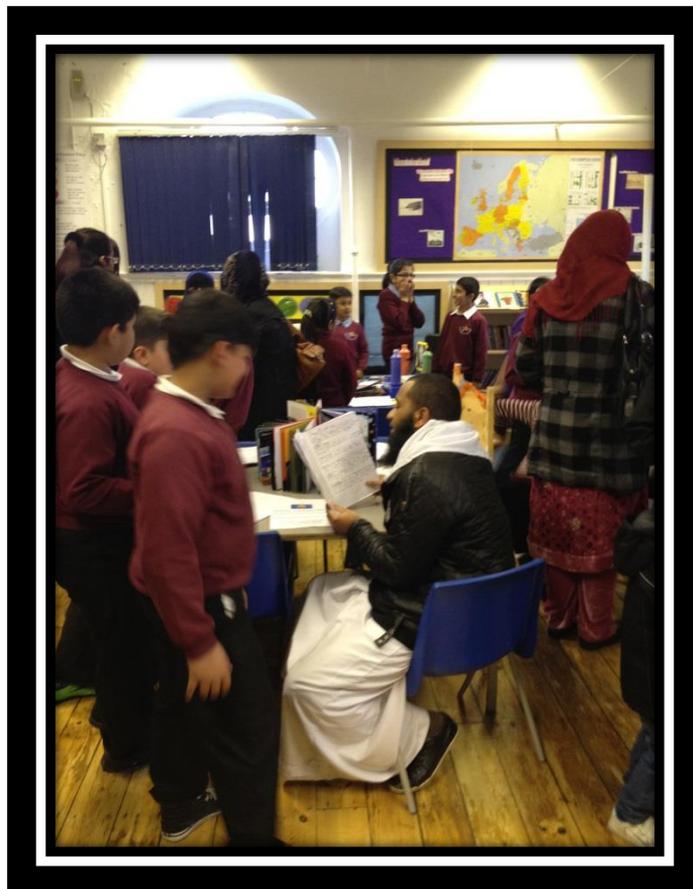
The legacy for schools

Common impacts identified across projects from both years, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly linked to project objectives, include:

Attitudes to writing

- Enhanced confidence in writing and better attitudes to literacy

- Greater concentration levels, listening and attention spans in pupils

- Increased dedication stimulated by taking a different approach and dedicating more time to writing

- Better attitudes to learning and confidence in writing – especially amongst reluctant readers

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

- Increased confidence in writing and greater writing stamina

- Enhanced pride in pupils' work

- Greater comprehension skills

- Greater engagement in the text

Writing attainment

- Improved sentence construction

- Greater comprehension skills

- More empathy and understanding of characters

- Greater and more sophisticated use of adjectives, adverbs, similes and metaphors

- Examples of faster than expected progression in reading attainment

In terms of impacts on teaching pedagogies, two of the schools already utilised approaches to delivering units of work (encompassing literacy as well as wider subjects) based on a book but were able to learn from the project to add value to their teaching (e.g. utilising the outdoors, investing in classroom sets of books, using text from the books in wider comprehension exercises and using speaking and listening activities to inform small writing activities).

There are also examples of the ethos and approach used in the project being extended to other year groups with joint planning across year groups/teachers, repetition of the first year's project with different year groups and sharing knowledge between teachers and a move to a whole-school approach, basing units on texts in two schools. The Write Book is therefore being used as an approach in all schools for future learning in Year 5 and sometimes across the whole school.

The legacy for Book Trust

The legacy from The Write Book project for Book Trust, going forward, is the creation of a creative writing toolkit for teachers based on approach of using books as inspiration for

writing. This online toolkit will contain a number of resources for primary school teachers to be used in the classroom, including:

- Top line information: Why The Write Book approach works, who it works for and why you should use it
- Two writing workshop films for the classroom, with Tony Bradman and Sarah McIntyre
- A downloadable PDF containing exclusive writing games and activities from Fleur Hitchcock, SF Said, Lucy Coats, Abi Elphinstone, Chris Bradford and Elen Caldecott
- The Write Book case studies
- Ways to engage parents
- Ideas for end products for writing
- Guidance on how to run a Write Book project
- Personalised writing tool and link to Book Trust Bookfinder
- Advice on finding a writer for school visits
- Advice and links for finding and working with your local independent book shop and library

The toolkit is available free online for primary teachers to use and will be shared at the Book Trust regional teacher roadshows in 2015-2018. Based on the successful outcomes of The Write Book project, the toolkit provides guidance and practical resources for teachers interested in running a Write Book project and implementing the approach in their school.

The toolkit demonstrates Book Trust's expertise in producing high quality support, training and resources for teachers, and making it available free online shows our commitment to teachers and schools, showcasing our offer for schools and encouraging participation in other Book Trust programmes.

The Book Trust teacher roadshows, part of our work with Arts Council England, are a new project for Book Trust, taking an interactive conference "on the road" to reach teachers around the UK. The conferences (nine over three years, 2015-2018) will share good practice

gained in projects including The Write Book and promote ways that Book Trust can help teachers develop whole school approaches to reading and writing, work with families to promote shared reading and engagement, work with digital reading and share our book gifting work on projects like The Letterbox Club[9]. The roadshows will be open to all class teachers, head teachers/senior leadership, literacy specialists and indeed all teachers interested in sharing good practice in reading and writing.

As well as at the Book Trust teacher roadshows, we will disseminate the findings of The Write Book in national and teaching press, conferences and other appropriate avenues.

Book Trust continues to integrate writing into all its projects. We are interested in developing opportunities for disadvantaged communities to engage with the written word. Most of all, though, we will continue to work to transform lives through reading.

---

[9] The Letterbox Club – www.letterboxclub.org.uk is Book Trust's book gifting programme for looked after children. Children in care are posted monthly parcels containing high quality fiction and nonfiction books and fun creative writing resources.

Conclusion
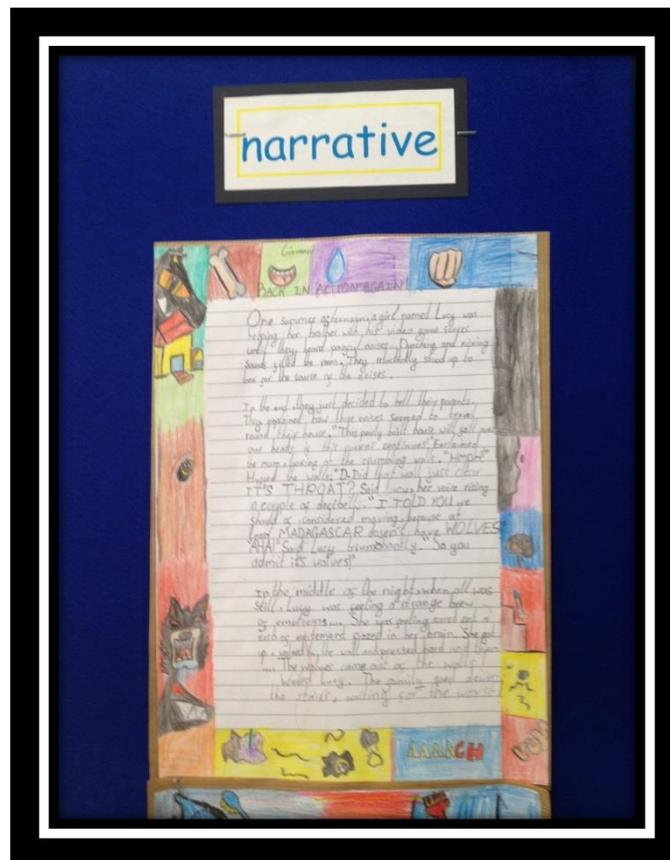
Book Trust's mission is to promote the love of reading, and within school settings, encourage a whole school reading (and writing) for pleasure agenda. We have confirmed, rather than learned, that having books at the centre of the curriculum fosters a rich and empowering learning environment.

In terms of the seven Arts Council England principles that underpinned the project, we can conclude that The Write Book promotes **excellent** models of creative writing in the form of high quality texts to children, as well as encouraging teachers to work with respected children's authors to develop their creative skills. This element of **authenticity,** of contact with artistic professionals, gave teachers both confidence in the project, and, after the workshop sessions, increased confidence in their own creative practice. We saw that teachers valued the opportunity to talk to knowledgeable experts about new releases and the best contemporary children's books, placing Book Trust's authentic **expertise** at the

centre of the project. The creative nature of the project enabled pupils to develop an aesthetic awareness of the elements of a successful, high quality children's book, and the ability to respond creatively to it.

Write Book projects were designed to be **exciting, inspiring and engaging**: some children may have been inspired to be professional writers themselves in the future, perhaps; but the real inspiration was in the experience of immersion in a great book, and being supported to respond creatively to it. Becoming excited about a book at all, or about the process of writing, was a huge hurdle for many children involved in the project, but one that many children sailed over in their sheer enjoyment of being able to relax and enjoy a page-turning, hilarious or gripping story, or lose themselves in the illustrations. Activities were cross-curricular, practical, hands-on, outside the classroom, in community spaces, with family members, and sometimes full of mystery and wonder. Because the projects involved whole year groups but were particularly designed to reach small, targeted groups of reluctant or disengaged writers, The Write Book challenged more able writers with an open writing brief and provided less able writers with achievable structures with which to make something to be proud of.

Many projects, like Claremont Primary School's space-themed writing, modelled a **child-centred** approach that not only **actively involved** children in space writing, but let them curate the family sharing event themselves. Giving control over to the children for this part of the project was challenging for the teachers, but the risk paid off: every child in each of the four Year 5 classes taking part took responsibility for creating and presenting their own part of a group activity to parents. Celebrating children's work was key to The Write Book and gave status and importance to writing, whether with parents, peers or other classes reading, hearing and appreciating pupils' work. The projects, run by a selection of schools demonstrating diverse cultures and pupil characteristics, also demonstrated diversity by encouraging children to write in home languages, including families in the writing process and at sharing events and utilising texts like *The Arrival* to explore issues of belonging and difference.

If children taking part in The Write Book become more interested in books or writing – if they take more books out of the library to read at home, start making their own comic

based on *The Wolves in the Walls*, or start writing their own stories to accompany *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* – then, as children more happily acquainted with the enjoyment of books, they will have started their own **personal progression** towards other books, other words and worlds. As well, schools that follow their Write Book projects with ongoing writing activities for children, or a more integrated reading and writing for pleasure whole school plan, are providing a wealth of continuing routes for children to improve literacy and become better readers and writers, taking account of their differing starting points. In this itself there is a sense of ownership – of children's own reading, of their own reading journeys, and the sense of **belonging** in a book that only comes with immersion, rereading and thinking about long after the book has finished. Projects like The Write Book work to create communities of readers and writers; a group with a book in common that it is possible to belong to, and, when making a creative response, to own that story and the one you create. This sense of belonging to a community of readers – and of knowing yourself as a reader – leads to a greater sense of confidence in being able to choose what books to read next, and to form personal aesthetic preferences for the future. It is this confidence that *books are for me* that can lead to higher expectations of our life experiences, and influence the choices we make, going forward.

We can conclude that high quality books are essential in inspiring children to write. A sense of the exciting, unusual and special, whether in design, illustration, production or story/information content, is important. A boring book will not inspire great writing. As Neil Gaiman, a writer favoured by The Write Book teachers, said:

"We have an obligation to understand and to acknowledge that as writers for children we are doing important work, because if we mess it up and write dull books that turn children away from reading and from books, we 've lessened our own future and diminished theirs."

We can conclude that having **time to write** is of vital importance to children and teachers.

We can conclude that **immersive experiences,** writing beyond the classroom and creating high quality end products for writing engender a sense of excitement about writing that is, arguably, often missing from the classroom and the literacy hour.

We can conclude that teacher creativity, confidence and knowledge of a wide range of high quality children's books – classics, contemporary big-hitters, picture books, nonfiction and quirky, unusual texts has a direct influence on children's reading and writing. When teachers lead writing and reading projects from a loci of flexibility, confidence and creativity, learning flourishes.

The Write Book has complemented Book Trust's existing bookgifting work, and re-emphasised the value of access to, and ownership of, great books. This applies both to the individual pupils and the schools: schools have a physical legacy of the project in a class set of books that can be reused to inspire new groups of children. Pupils get their own copy of something special for the time of the project and immerse themselves in it at school and at home, often sharing it with their families. The book is the muse; the book is the door to visioning new futures, both creative and socioeconomic.

The Write Book is a practical application of the inspiring nature of books: a way of accessing the possible worlds they contain; extracting the stories of those worlds and making them new, making the books stretch with new meaning; creasing their spines and bulging their covers, so full are they of creative potential for new readers and writers. The Write Book is a practical learning application for everything we know, or feel, intuitively, about books: Reading expands the mind and widens horizons. Reading changes lives. Books can be our liberation, our truth, our education, our route to a better life. As Madeleine L'Engle, the American Young Adult writer said: *"A book, too, can be a star, a living fire to lighten the darkness, leading out into the expanding universe,"*

If that expanding universe is a story written by a child, a story inspired by a book – or a comic, a poem, a recipe book or a journal – then it is a new universe, a new path through the stars, that the child makes her own. She learns to write her own story, writing by the light of other stars. Then, in turn, she becomes a guiding light for another reader, another seeker: another star in the darkness: another reference point on the long path home.

Appendices

1. **Appendix 1:** Pupil writing questionnaire: pre-project
2. **Appendix 2:** Pupil writing questionnaire: post-project
3. **Appendix 3:** Teacher interview Evaluation Report from Consilium
4. **Appendix 4:** Teacher interview – Executive Summary from Consilium
5. **Appendix 5:** Case study: A Letter from Gulliver
6. **Appendix 6:** Case study: A Dream of Epping Forest
7. **Appendix 7:** Case study: The Arrival
8. **Appendix 8:** Case study: Book trailers
9. **Appendix 9**: Case study: Out Of This World!
10. **Appendix 10:** Case study: Space: The Final Frontier
11. **Appendix 11:** Case study: Wolfish plots
12. **Appendix 12:** Case study: A Series of Unfortunate Scrapbooks

Creative Writing Survey 1

This is a survey about creative writing. There are no right or wrong answers so please be as honest as you can.

1. **Please read the sentences below about writing and tick the box to say how much the sentence is like you.**

	A lot like me	A bit like me	Not much like me	Not at all like me	Don't know
I like writing stories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think writing is boring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to write in my spare time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like creative writing at school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find it hard to think about what to write	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think creative writing is fun	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I wish I had more time to write at school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to read	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think I'm a good writer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to share my creative writing with other people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2. **What kinds of writing do you wish you could do more of?** (Please tick as many as you like)

☐ Stories   ☐ Diaries

☐ Poems   ☐ Topic writing

☐ Drawing and writing   ☐ Newspaper/magazine articles

☐ Making books   ☐ Blogs

☐ Letters   ☐ Other writing

☐ Emails   ☐ None of these

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

3. **What do you like about creative writing?**

4. **What do you dislike about creative writing?**

9. **What is the name of your school?**

10. **What is your full name?**

11. **Are you a boy or a girl?** ☐ Girl ☐ Boy

Creative Writing Survey 2

This is a survey about creative writing. There are no right or wrong answers so please be as honest as you can.

1.   **Please read the sentences below about writing and tick the box to say how much the sentence is like you.**

	A lot like me	A bit like me	Not much like me	Not at all like me	Don't know
I like writing stories	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think writing is boring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to write in my spare time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like creative writing at school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I find it hard to think about what to write	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think creative writing is fun	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I wish I had more time to write at school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to read	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I think I'm a good writer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I like to share my creative writing with other people	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

2.   **What kinds of writing do you wish you could do more of?** (Please tick as many as you like)

☐ Stories   ☐ Diaries

☐ Poems   ☐ Topic writing

☐ Drawing and writing   ☐ Newspaper/magazine articles

☐ Making books   ☐ Blogs

☐ Letters   ☐ Other writing

☐ Emails   ☐ None of these

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

4. What do you dislike about creative writing?

You recently did a creative writing project.
Please answer these questions about the project:

5. How did you feel about the project?

☐ I really enjoyed it

☐ I quite enjoyed it

☐ It was okay

☐ I didn't enjoy it much

☐ I didn't enjoy it at all

☐ My creative writing has got a <u>lot</u> better

☐ My creative writing has got a <u>bit</u> better

☐ There has been no change in my creative writing

☐ My creative writing has got a <u>bit</u> worse

☐ My creative writing has got a <u>lot</u> worse

7. How has the project changed how you feel about creative writing?

☐ I like creative writing a <u>lot</u> more now

☐ I like creative writing a <u>bit</u> more now

☐ There has been no change in how much I like creative writing

☐ I like creative writing a <u>bit</u> less now

☐ I like creative writing a <u>lot</u> less now

8. What was the best thing about the project?

```




```

9. What is the name of your school?

10. What is your full name?

11. Are you a boy or a girl?   ☐   Girl   Boy

Evaluation of The Write Book Project

Final Report

September 2014

Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

In February 2013 Consilium Research and Consultancy Ltd. (Consilium) was commissioned to undertake telephone consultations with teachers involved in The Write Book project (the project). Consilium completed telephone interviews with two teachers from each of four schools (eight in total) in order to discuss their involvement in and impact of the project towards the end of both its first and second academic years (summer term 2013 and 2014). The telephone interviews were based on a topic guide designed by Consilium in conjunction with Book Trust. The second topic guide was revised to assess the sustained impacts of the project and to assess potential demand for a linked offer building on the project's successes.

Context

The Write Book project aims to support Year 5 teachers to run whole-of-year writing projects inspired by classic or popular children's books, providing an important link between reading and writing and enabling pupils to respond creatively to books. The aims of The Write Book project are to:

- Increase teacher confidence in teaching creative writing and knowledge of children's books
- Raise pupils' attainment in writing at Year 5
- Increase pupils' enjoyment of writing at Year 5
- Create a whole school writing plan and creating a personalised legacy for writing in school
- Make cross-curricular links for writing
- Link reading and writing

The project lasts for two years, with schools receiving support from Book Trust on the areas detailed above, and specifically to run a Write Book project in their school each year with Year 5 children. Teachers attended a training or 'inspiration' day to inform each year's project in which they discussed ideas for creative writing activities, worked with a children's author and began the process of auditing the reading and writing activity in their school and thinking about an action plan with the input of Book Trust staff/resources.

The Schools and Target Groups

The following schools were involved in the project:

- Heaton Park Primary School in Bury, Lancashire
- Sandringham Primary School in Newham, East London
- Claremont Primary School in Cricklewood, North West London
- Swaythling Primary School in Southampton, Hampshire

Each of the schools has a two form entry in Year 5 with the exception of Sandringham Primary School which has four Year 5 classes. Each of the schools targeted groups of children with specific needs and challenges as well trying to encourage greater enjoyment of writing amongst reluctant readers and writers across the year group.

To varying degrees the schools face a range of challenges within diverse year groups including pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) (approximately 90% at Sandringham Primary School), large proportions eligible for free school meals (FSM) and/or pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Schools also reported a small number of pupils (predominantly boys) with emotional and behavioural problems.

Generating Ideas for the Project – The Inspiration Day

The **Inspiration Days held in February and September 2013 in London were both well received by teachers and selected wider staff** (e.g. Deputy Head Teachers, LEA Advisers) with teachers appreciating the opportunity to learn from the approaches and feedback from the other participating schools. The attendance of authors at both events was very well received, as was the opportunity to explore potential texts in conjunction with Book Trust staff. The ideas either generated or developed further during and after the Inspiration Days included:

- Taking characters from a book and placing them in different contexts
- Using technology to engage the children (e.g. developing a video trailer for a book)
- Exploring the graphic novel genre and authors having enjoyed reading a Neil Gaiman text at the Inspiration Day
- Linking the texts and the outdoor environment as a creative stimulus
- Using creative writing books or journals to log ideas
- Using space-themed texts to capture the imagination of boys in particular whilst facilitating a range of cross-curricular activities around evidenced-based science
- Introducing a greater focus on non-fiction texts
- Using books with striking illustrations to engage with EAL pupils

Project Delivery

The four school projects were **delivered each year over two academic years, and each project took approximately five weeks** across a half term rather than a shorter project - over one week, for example. Most teachers struggled to accurately recall how much time had been spent on the preparation and delivery of the projects although most stated that the time and effort involved, especially in the first year, was significant. However, one school in the second year of the project reported that it was no different from that required to support other literacy units it delivered using a similar approach. Preparation time was typically concentrated at the beginning of the project in order map out the project followed by planning to support activities on an ongoing basis as the project develops.

Most schools stated that their projects included approximately 40-50 hours of class work (i.e. approximately 1-1.5 hours in class per day), with the second project generally incorporating slightly more class time than the first. In the majority of cases, the projects began with a concentrated period of reading followed by writing activities, although one school moved towards a parallel process of reading and writing activities linked to the story and character development in the second year.

Project Design

The projects developed by each school, although based on a similar premise of using classic or popular children's books to inspire writing projects, have each utilised their books as the catalyst for a wide variety of writing and wider curricular activities as follows:

Claremont Primary School

- First Project: Creating a story within a story based on **Gulliver's Travels** using an understanding of the characters and scenarios in the book to inform related literacy activities based on islands, escapes, giants etc.
- Second Project: Targeting boys and reluctant writers amongst a year group with high SEN and EAL cohorts, the school used **The Wolves in the Walls** by Neil Gaiman as the stimulus for approaches to encouraging pupils to use their imagination in retelling or changing the story.

Heaton Park Primary School

- First Project: Using a book with a strong female lead/hero character, *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, to stimulate children's senses, ability to contrast imaginary and real settings and link the school to the wider community through a series of visits.
- Second Project: Developing a 3D fact and fiction book inspired by the *Dr Who Character Encyclopedia* and the wider topic theme of space.

Sandringham Primary School

- First Project: Linking reading and writing through *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the creative stimulus of a writing day in Epping Forest leading to descriptive work using persuasive text in the form of adverts and diary entries culminating in a celebratory assembly in the forest.
- Second Project: Combining aspects of the design and layout of *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* with space and science-themed topic work alongside a range of writing outputs including newspaper reports, comprehension exercises, note taking and letter writing.

Swaythling Primary School

- First Project: Using picture books (*The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* and *The Arrival*) to stimulate imaginations and inform discussions of the potential scenarios behind the illustrations, developing accompanying text and informing drama and role play including applying the themes to their own lives and social/cultural issues.
- Second Project: Using book 1 of the *A Series of Unfortunate Events* series (*A Bad Beginning*) by Lemony Snicket to inform reading and writing activities which were documented in a scrapbook journal on an ongoing basis in line with the development of the storyline and characters.

Project Performance

All of the projects across both years were stated to have been very successful by all consulted. Examples of positives taken from the project highlighted by teachers consulted include:

Year 1

- Pupils targeted by the projects enjoying the activities and gaining in confidence and motivation in terms of literacy work
- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers and lower achievers in particular
- Being able to develop intensive activities and dedicate more time than usual with pupils requiring additional support with literacy
- Providing teachers with the flexibility to take more risks or do things differently
- Improvements in the quality of descriptive writing stimulated by using their imagination including the use of 'wow words', similes and metaphors *[Heaton Park Primary School]*
- Enabling teachers to target groups better *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Raising expectations in terms of the quality and quantity of work that can be produced
- Teaching books from a different angle (e.g. looking at an author's intentions rather than just the

words) *[Swaythling Primary School]*
- Pupils using more adjectives and adverbs to describe settings and characters in their work *[Claremont Primary School]*

Year 2

- Positive remarks on the project offered by Ofsted following a school inspection; *[Claremont Primary School]*
- Stimulating a wide range of writing outputs
- Being enjoyable to teach
- Concentrating on achieving an end product and seeing how pupils having a great sense of pride linked to their achievements
- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers
- The development of a whole-school approach to basing units on texts *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Encouraging the school to invest in classroom sets of books *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Positive responses to calls for parent involvement

The very few **negatives** emanating from the project as highlighted by teachers consulted are:

Year 1

- The time consuming nature of the projects in terms of planning and preparation
- Some children being very tired due to the intensive nature of the work*[Swaythling Primary School]*
- Too short a time between the Inspiration Day and the extensive planning required to facilitate delivery of the project *[Claremont Primary School]*

Year 2

- The use of scrapbook journals producing multiple drafts of pieces of writing which take time to complete/edit and can therefore lead to the crucial stages being rushed without sufficient structure
- Not being able to generate greater cross-curriculum activities *[Claremont Primary School]*

Specific areas of **good practice identified by the teachers** involved in the project include:

- An intensive period of reading and understanding of the text in the initial week of the project
- Incorporating an element of ICT
- A transitory or organic approach to teaching encouraging buy-in from the pupils
- Changes in guided reading to make better use of individual quality texts (depth) rather than skimming a number of books (breadth) *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Maintaining a focus on the completion of quality end products
- An encyclopaedia format enables children to dip in and out of the text far easier than with most fiction books *[Heaton Park Primary School]*
- Using the outdoors to stimulate enthusiasm in learning leading to a whole-school project linking texts and the outside environment *[Heaton Park Primary School]*

Parental Involvement

Parents and the wider community were involved in two out of the four projects in the first year of the project and three of four projects in the second year. The most frequent form of parental involvement was a celebratory assembly, presentation or sharing event. **These events were consistently reported to generate a greater than usual level of interest amongst parents and provided a key source of inspiration and pride amongst parents and pupils alike.**

Linking Reading and Writing

Although utilising different approaches, **each teacher stated that the projects had been successful in linking reading and writing in the school** across both years. Projects were found to generate great enthusiasm amongst pupils to read and write around the topic/text, often assisted by the combination of activities chosen:

- Combining reading and writing with ICT (e.g. developing the script for a video trailer for a book)
- Addressing gaps in non-fiction writing
- Inspiring children to write by discussing the illustrations in picture books
- Using guided reading supported by illustrations and other stimuli (e.g. the outdoors)
- Enabling reluctant writers to use the structure of the text as the basis for their own version with additional imaginative descriptions of characters and settings with enabled greater consistency and quality of their end product
- A focus on the quality of the end product by encouraging the children to think about writing for a reader and vice versa (e.g. knowing who your audience is, learning how to use language to make people interested, reviewing their own work) was supported by teachers taking the time to explore the structure and rationale behind a text

In the main, the teachers consulted struggled to confirm whether the project could be strongly linked to any extracurricular reading and/or writing for pleasure activities. There were however **consistent examples across each of the eight projects of potentially positive attribution to children's ongoing interest and engagement in the project linked to their activities outside of allocated time**. These included:

- Pupils continuing to read the book or the series of books after the project ended
- Pupils having a stronger desire to complete tasks at home if left unfinished at school
- Three boys (one a high achiever and two creative boys who struggle technically) writing a story in their own time
- Children continuing project activities long after its completion
- Some increased library use
- Children asking for similar texts for Christmas presents

Project Legacy

Teachers detailed a **range of impacts stemming from their respective projects although in many cases the impacts were only in their infancy**. There remain issues of attribution to the projects however which often operate alongside complementary measures to support literacy in school. The common impacts identified across the four projects from both years, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly linked to project objectives, include:

Year 1

- Enhanced confidence in writing and better attitudes to literacy
- Greater concentration levels, listening and attention spans
- Improved sentence construction
- Greater comprehension skills
- More empathy and understanding of characters
- Greater and more sophisticated use of adjectives, adverbs, similes and metaphors

Year 2

- Increased dedication stimulated by taking a different approach and dedicating more time to writing
- Better attitudes to learning and confidence in writing – especially amongst reluctant readers
- Examples of faster than expected progression in reading attainment
- Increased confidence in writing and greater writing stamina
- Enhanced pride in pupils' work
- Greater comprehension skills
- Greater engagement in the text

Teachers found it difficult to isolate the attribution of the project on progression and attainment although there are examples at an individual level which can be used to highlight the added value of the projects.

In terms of **impacts on teaching pedagogies**, two of the schools already utilised approaches to delivering units of work (encompassing literacy as well as wider subjects) based on a book but were able to learn from the project to add value to their teaching (e.g. utilising the outdoors, investing in classroom sets of books, using text from the books in wider comprehension exercises and using speaking and listening activities to inform small writing activities).

There are also examples of the ethos and approach used in the project being extended to other year groups with joint planning across year groups/teachers, repetition of the first year's project with different year groups and sharing knowledge between teachers and a move to a whole-school approach to basing units on texts from the second year of engagement onwards in one school [Sandringham Primary School].

Support from Book Trust

Teachers from all four schools in the first year of the project, and three of the four schools consulted in the second year, stated that they had received the right level and quality of support from Book Trust to run the project.

The majority of support required by the project was stated to be appropriately concentrated at the early planning stages of the project (i.e. from the Inspiration day onwards) with the provision of a full class set of books by far the most significant area from the perspective of all teachers consulted. The majority of teachers were grateful for any innovative and new ideas stemming from the Inspiration Days with the ability to share learning between schools and a productive visit to their school by Book Trust particularly appreciated.

Future Project Development

Each of the teachers consulted in the second year of the project was asked for their views on paying for all or certain elements of the project based on their experience and knowledge of its benefits for pupils. However, whilst the majority found it very difficult to place a value on any potential payment, they were able to offer a general, hypothetical direction of travel in terms of paying for all or certain elements of the project. Overall, there is relatively limited evidence of demand for a costed version of the project based on feedback from the four schools consulted. The key finding to emerge from this analysis is that **the provision of a classroom set of books is viewed as the key asset from the project** with schools typically willing to pay 50% of the costs of books if a discount can be achieved.

Conclusion

Before the Project

1. The four schools participating in the project are characterised by high proportions of EAL and SEN pupils in classes with a wide variation in abilities and motivation. Delivery mechanisms (i.e. a combination of resources and staff skills and experience) need to be flexible enough to cope with such a diverse cohort of pupils.

Generating Ideas for the Project – The Inspiration Day

2. A premium is placed in the Inspiration Days on discussing experiences with other schools, practical support and specialist knowledge from Book Trust and its partners.

The Project

3. The project was very well received overall with teachers more confident in planning and delivering Write Book activities with the benefit of the experience of the first year of the project. The confidence in the impact of the project in terms of engagement and attainment is reflected in the significant amount of class time dedicated to the project in the second year by each of the schools, across often 4-5 weeks of a half term.

4. There has been a growing consensus from the schools over the two years of the project that the process of planning and preparing for the project was closer to their existing practice than initially thought after the first project.

5. Each of the projects were stated to have been very successful by all consulted.

6. The project has provided a wide range of positives, as identified by the teachers consulted, including:

   - Stimulating a wide range of writing outputs
   - Enhanced enjoyment, confidence and motivation in literacy work
   - Seeing pupils having a great sense of pride linked to their achievements
   - Benchmarking the project against the previous year and seeing improvement
   - Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers and lower achievers in particular
   - Being offered the freedom via participating in the project to pilot new ways of working
   - The development of a whole-school approach to basing units on texts
   - Encouraging responses to calls for parent involvement
   - Facilitating the effective targeting of specific groups

7. The main negative point raised by the teachers was the time taken to either plan or complete activities to a sufficient standard although this varied significantly from school to school and between cohorts of students.

8. The projects reiterated the real value of parental involvement to both pupils and parents with

opportunities to experience and/or participate in the work of children in the school setting (e.g. reading, listening, at celebration events) encouraging higher than usual parental involvement and attendance.

9. Each of the projects were found to link reading and writing quite naturally although teachers struggled to confirm whether the projects could be strongly linked to any extracurricular reading and/or writing for pleasure activities.

10. Cross curricular links have been varied in scale and scope although projects needing to overcome multiple barriers to learning tended to struggle to maximise cross curriculum work.

Project Legacy

11. Teachers were able to detail a wide range of impacts stemming from their respective projects although in many cases the impacts are difficult to accurately attribute or only in their infancy. The common impacts identified across the four projects, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly linked to project objectives, include:

- Better attitudes to learning and confidence in writing – especially amongst reluctant readers
- Enhanced pride in pupils' work
- Examples of faster than expected progression in reading attainment
- Greater and more sophisticated use of adjectives, adverbs, similes and metaphors
- Greater comprehension skills
- Greater concentration levels, listening and attention spans
- Improved sentence construction
- Increased writing stamina
- More empathy and understanding of characters

12. Teachers found it difficult to isolate the attribution of the project on progression and attainment although there are examples at an individual level which can be used to highlight the added value of the projects.

13. Teachers were able to offer anecdotal evidence of project legacy although schools are progressing at varying speeds in sharing the successes, lessons and good practice derived from the project to date. Three of the four schools use or are moving towards a whole-school approach in line with the ethos of the project and all four schools have repeated the project with other year groups, adapting the approach to suit the year group and incorporating lessons learnt.

Future Project Development

14. There is relatively limited evidence of demand for a costed version of the project based on feedback from the four schools consulted.

15. The key finding to emerge from this analysis is that the provision of a classroom set of books is viewed as the key asset from the project with schools typically willing to meet Book Trust half way on costs if a discount can be achieved.

16. There is a perception of the value of the project to less experienced teachers/schools in particular with a teacher inspiration day seen as helpful for less experienced teachers in particular. The consultancy visit was least popular and seen as a relative luxury or bolt on extra.

1   Introduction

1.1   In February 2013 Consilium Research and Consultancy Ltd. (Consilium) was commissioned to undertake telephone consultations with teachers involved in **The Write Book** project (the project).

1.2   Consilium completed telephone interviews with two teachers from each of four schools (eight in total) in order to discuss their involvement in and impact of the project towards the end of its first academic year.   The telephone interviews were based on a topic guide designed by Consilium in conjunction with Book Trust.

1.3   This report summarises the results of a repeat of these interviews undertaken in July 2014 towards the end of the following academic year (summer term 2014). The eight telephone interviews, which ran for approximately 50 minutes, were based on a revised topic guide to assess the sustained impacts of both projects on the school, the delivery of the second phase of the project and to assess potential demand for a linked paid for offer building on the project's successes.

2   Context

The Write Book Project

2.1   The Write Book project aims to support Year 5 teachers to run whole-of-year writing projects inspired by classic or popular children's books, providing an important link between reading and writing and enabling pupils to respond creatively to books. The aims of The Write Book project are to:

- Increase teacher confidence in teaching creative writing and knowledge of children's books

- Raise pupils' attainment in writing at Year 5

- Increase pupils' enjoyment of writing at Year 5

- Create a whole school writing plan and creating a personalised legacy for writing in school

- Make cross-curricular links for writing

- Link reading and writing

2.2   Book Trust has worked with a total of four primary schools to develop creative writing in Year 5 and increase teacher confidence with writing. Book Trust helped them to celebrate each school's successes by featuring case studies and documenting the projects online in order to provide inspiration and resources for other schools looking for help with creative writing.

2.3   The project lasted for two years, with schools receiving support to run a writing week/project in their school with Year 5 children in 2013 and a second writing week in the following academic year.

2.4   Teachers attended a training or 'inspiration' day in mid February 2013 in which they discussed ideas for creative writing activities with an author and began the process of auditing the activity in their school and thinking about an action plan. They received support from Book Trust to develop this plan and to run a writing week/project. The teachers reconvened in September 2013 to discuss and showcase their projects and make plans for the following year with the input of Book Trust staff/resources and the advice of an author.

3 Before the Project
The Schools and Target Groups

3.1 With the exception of Swaythling Primary School where interviews were undertaken with teachers delivering the project across Years 5 and 6, telephone interviews were undertaken with two Year 5 teachers from each of the following schools:

- Heaton Park Primary School in Bury, Lancashire

- Sandringham Primary School in Newham, East London

- Claremont Primary School in Cricklewood, North West London

- Swaythling Primary School in Southampton, Hampshire

3.2 Each of the schools has a two form entry in Year 5 with the exception of Sandringham Primary School which has four Year 5 classes. To varying degrees the schools each continue to face a range of challenges within diverse year groups including pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) (approximately 90% at Sandringham Primary School), large proportions eligible for free school meals (FSM) and/or pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Schools also reported a small number of pupils (predominantly boys) with emotional and behavioural problems.

3.3 Teachers at **Heaton Park Primary School** targeted the Year 5 boys specifically, but were also keen to make sure that the project was exciting for the entire year group. This is reflected in their 2014 book choice criteria with the school looking for something different to their 2013 text, *Coraline*, which had a very strong female character.

3.4 The second year project developed by **Sandringham Primary School** targeted the majority of a year group characterised by very high levels of EAL pupils and described by the teachers as very immature, having made very little progress in Year 4 and with behavioural issues.

3.5 Staff at **Swaythling Primary School** were focused on supporting and encouraging pupils from inner-city Southampton with specific needs (the school has above average levels of EAL, SEN and FSM pupils) in the second project. The teachers looked to target "quiet girls" in Year 5 alongside the remainder of the class and reluctant writers, particularly boys, in Year 6 who can exhibit challenging behaviour.

3.6 The second year project developed by **Claremont Primary School** complemented an ongoing and acknowledged need in the school's development plan to boost engagement with writing and develop writing skills of Year 5 pupils. The project targeted boys and reluctant writers amongst the year group with high SEN and EAL cohorts (i.e. approximately 20 pupils from 27 in one class) as well as pupils with emotional behavioural difficulties.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

Generating Ideas for the Project – The Inspiration Day

3.7   The Inspiration Day held in September 2013 in London was attended by each of the eight teachers consulted as well as selected wider staff (the Deputy Head Teacher and an adviser from Bury LEA also attended alongside the year 5 teachers from Heaton Park Primary School). In contrast to the Inspiration Day held in February 2013, although positive overall, this event received a higher proportion of mixed reviews with attendees commenting on elements which they both enjoyed and found useful as well as areas which could be improved.

3.8   Each of the teachers consulted stated that the presentations from the other participating schools were the highlight of the day. These were viewed as both informative and interesting with a wide variety of writing and ways of using different genres on display. Schools would typically have liked a greater amount of time dedicated to learning from their peers who are often dealing with very similar issues in attempting to meet the needs of a diverse group of pupils.

3.9   The attendance of the author was very well received, as was the opportunity to explore a wide range of 'fresh, new books'. Moreover, the 'developing your imagination' element received praise with the opportunity to discuss books with Book Trust staff in relation to existing and evolving ideas for 2014 projects being particularly appreciated.

"Great - short burst of lots of input".

"The Developing your Imagination element was really useful – informative with examples of books and texts."

3.10   The ideas and information provided on the day were especially appreciated by some of the less experienced teachers amongst the attendees. Many of the activities suggested at the Inspiration Day were stated to have subsequently worked well in class including writing exercises, story planning led by children and the five minute non-stop blast[10].

3.11   However, other elements of the remainder of the Inspiration Day came in for a degree of criticism. Teachers from two of the four schools stated that many of the ideas for inspiration were already being used whilst they were *'looking for something more innovative – new ideas'*. In addition, elements of the latter half of the day were stated to have overrun which shortened the following planning sessions with other schools - the element some teachers were looking forward to most.

3.12   One school stated that whilst the event was useful to an extent with *'some lovely ideas'*, they would struggle to see how they could be applied to a group with a high proportion of SEN and EAL pupils. They did however acknowledge the value of the session with the option to '*pick and mix from the ideas suggested'*.

"For lower ability pupils it is more important and less challenging to retell a story as their own version with a focus on sentence structure and developing their own ideas rather than making up a story as a class on the spot."

---

[10] This is a five minute free writing exercise where a brief stimulus is given and participants write continuously without stopping for five minutes, without reviewing or correcting spelling or grammar.

3.13 **Heaton Park Primary School** were looking for an approach which would capture the imagination of the boys in the year but at the same time a project which enabled a little more cross-curricular activities than their previous text, *Coraline*. Specifically, the project needed to fit into the evidenced-based element of science within the curriculum, in this regard linked to space. Their initial choice of the illustrated book *Alienography: Or: How to Spot an Alien Invasion and What to Do About It* by Chris Riddell was found to be out of print. However, they changed their choice to the *Dr Who Character Encyclopedia* which maintained the link to space and was known to be of interest to lots of children, especially as it was in the news with the 50th anniversary of the TV programme.

3.14 Staff at **Sandringham Primary School** regularly use rich texts but realised as part of their literacy planning that they hadn't used, or observed how pupils read/use non-fiction as much as other genres. The school was looking to maximise the visual impact derived from books with striking illustrations which are attractive to EAL pupils in particular. In reality, the teachers chose *Professor Astrocat's Frontiers of Space* by Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman first given its look and potential to explore its design with the pupils (e.g. how the page is designed, how it draws people in) but it also fitted neatly with their forthcoming space-themed topic work.

3.15 **Claremont Primary School project** staff also looked to utilise the hook of illustrations with EAL pupils and knew that a picture book would fit the bill for readers or different interests and abilities. Neil Gaiman's *The Wolves in the Walls* was judged to offer the picture-led access afforded by amazing illustrations and a gripping storyline.

4   The Project

Project Delivery

4.1   As in the previous year each of the four school projects was delivered over the course of (typically) five weeks across a half term. Whilst most teachers struggled to accurately recall how much time had been spent on the preparation of the projects, there was less of a consensus on the scale of additional time required to plan and deliver the various components of the project. Whilst the teachers from three schools stated that the project required additional time for planning, one school reported that it was no different from that required to support other literacy units.

4.2   The **Heaton Park Primary School** project ran for around four weeks as a unit and incorporated approximately 50 hours of class work (i.e. approximately 1.5 hours in class a day during weeks 1, 3 and 4 and 2.5 hours a day in week 2 of the project). The project was said to require approximately 30 hours of preparation time between the two teachers involved which is approximately twice the typical amount for an equivalent set of lessons which are usually repeated year on year. Preparation incorporated not only the development of lesson plans but also undertaking the research which underpinned the plan (e.g. ensuring that clips downloaded from YouTube etc. are suitable for the age group).

4.3   The **Sandringham Primary School** project utilised between four and six hours of class time per week for six weeks, so a total of approximately 24 to 36 hours of class time. Preparation time was concentrated at the beginning of the project with around two hours taken to map out the project holistically over time with around one hour a week per teacher thereafter.

4.4   The **Claremont Primary School** project spanned approximately four and a half weeks with the majority of each week dedicated to the project. The project was thought to take an equivalent amount of planning to other literacy work and used the same method of planning although employed double lessons in delivery. Preparation for the project was estimated to account for around half an hour per day.

4.5   The **Swaythling Primary School** project ran for the whole of the five week half term. The project delivery differed from that of other schools and the previous year by moving away from an intensive period of reading followed by writing activities towards a parallel process of writing activities linked to the story and character development in the book. The planning and delivery of the project followed the same pattern for other work with mini units rather than one large unit, although it was hard to gauge how much time overall it took.

Project Design

4.6   The project developed by **Heaton Park Primary School** was based on the development of a 3D fact and fiction book inspired by the *Dr Who Character Encyclopedia* and the wider topic theme of space.

4.7   The aims of the project were:

- Linking ICT and writing

- Promoting writing with boys – in particular by using a book that the children wouldn't expect the school to promote

- Building on the current interests of the children – Dr Who and the 50th anniversary of Dr Who http://www.doctorwho.tv/50-years

- To provide pupils with the opportunity to create an end product for writing – in this case, Tardis books

- Helping to develop a new approach in the school where a quality fiction or nonfiction text is central to units the school teaches – literacy and otherwise

4.8   Key elements of the project included:

Heaton Park Primary School – *The Dr Who Character Encyclopedia*

Week 1 – Focusing on the Science Facts
Creating a research background for the writing element of the project through cross curricular lessons on their science topic of space. The children focused on the solar system, studying the features of the different planets, their relationship to the Sun and the physical conditions this has created on them.

Week 2 – Introducing to the Text
Identify the features of non-chronological reports, creating papier-mâché planets and identify an alien from the book that might live on the planet their group had made.
Alien treasure hunt in the school grounds involving following instructions to make alien masks, search through encyclopedias to identify who they were and creating non-chronological reports about their new alien identities using the clues they had found.

Week 3 – Research Real Planets
Typing a non-chronological report about a particular planet for their books using laptops and imported images of planets from the internet.
Creating fictional aliens, anticipating which features would be best matched for survival on their choice of planets. This work was presented as a picture with accompanying text in zigzag-style books.

Week 4 – Creating a Tardis
Using 2D shape nets to create a Tardis in which to place their zigzag-style books.
Continuing with books, creating contents and glossary pages and a front cover using Purple Mash Cams (a computer programme - http://www.purplemash.com), incorporating photographs of their own faces on character's bodies.
Adding to and helping develop space-themed reading and writing corners.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

4.9 The project was cross-curricular, intentionally taking in art, Design and Technology (DT), ICT (using laptops to research space etc. and to word process) as well as incorporating science and literature. Techniques such as using www.purplemash.com to impose student faces on aliens were useful in gaining and sustaining interest.

4.10 The project has built on and learnt from the 2013 project based upon *Coraline* (e.g. by making use of the outdoors) although *Coraline* will also be repeated and become an established module subject to changes in the new curriculum. It was however realised that the *Coraline* text is a little heavier, both in language and length, than *Dr Who* and is therefore better suited to later in the school year.

4.11 The project developed by **Sandringham Primary School** was underpinned by the following aims and principles:

- To create imaginative writers that produce high quality writing
- To engage and enthuse more reluctant writers
- To allow children more control over their own writing
- To explore a high quality non-fiction text to produce writing

4.12 Key elements of the project included:

Sandringham Primary School – *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space*

- Redesigning the literacy curriculum to allow the text to be the focus for both literacy lessons and guided reading sessions
- Staging an alien invasion in the Year 5 classrooms with 'mysterious objects' left hidden around the area. Year 5 children were read a letter from the 'aliens' and set about trying to solve the mystery via clues, interviews with staff and examining photos of strange sightings
- Pupils investigated throughout the day, taking notes and preparing to write down their findings in letters back to the 'aliens'
- The unit culminated in an open afternoon for parents where the children set up interactive workshops based on the topic to present their work and answer questions about their learning

4.13 The project generated a range of writing and complementary outcomes:

- Note taking- examining the evidence of the alien invasion
- Letter to the aliens
- Responses to images of the alien landings
- Newspaper report about the invasion
- A number of different information pages mimicking the style and layout of the book based on different aspects of the space topic
- Reading comprehension questions and activities based on the book

> - Planned and delivered presentations for parents based on an aspect of learning during the project

4.14 The project was integrated into a range of other work and curriculum areas with the text providing lots of information for their topic across history, geography and science. Examples of linked work included discussing space within science, looking at the history of the International Space Station, analysing the layout of books, exploring the use of colour and illustration in the work of Andy Warhol, using ICT to create their own non-fiction presentation and making large 3D models of the solar system within art.

4.15 The **Swaythling Primary School** project looked at book 1, *A Bad Beginning* of the *A Series of Unfortunate Events* series by Lemony Snicket. The project differed from other schools by running reading and writing activities in parallel. Writing techniques/exercises were documented in a scrapbook journal on an ongoing basis in line with the development of the storyline and characters. In this way the journals provide a journey and collection of writing styles/tasks which both evidence the development of the book/story but also provide a useful revision tool for the Year 6 class in particular, who were also taking part in the project.

4.16 The scrapbook provided the evidence base for assessing pupils' writing across a range of genres as part of 'mini units' rather than larger, standalone units utilised in other projects. The project sought to maintain a sense of writing for a purpose amongst the pupils (i.e. maintaining the link with the book) by completing discrete tasks including:

> ● Writing a diary entry linked to a chapter
>
> ● Designing estate agency particulars
>
> ● Writing recipes
>
> ● Developing a collection of 'unfortunate vocabulary'
>
> ● Writing letters
>
> ● Arts and crafts including drawing ideas stemming from the text

4.17 Supported by the knowledge of the story (with the majority of the pupils having seen the film), the book was seen to have been successfully used as a hook amongst the pupils with many showing a great deal of pride in the content and presentation of their work. The 'snappy' nature of the tasks, coupled with the real life nature of many of the tasks (e.g. estate agency), was also thought to help maintain concentration and interest amongst the pupils.

4.18 The project actively drew on the Year 6 pupils' memories of and excitement generated by the previous year's Write Book project which they undertook in Year 5. It also built upon it through a text which 'captivated' a greater proportion of pupils and encouraged different types/genres of writing stimulated by the journey provided by the choice of text.

4.19 Based on a cohort of Year 5 pupils including significant proportions of reluctant readers and specifically EAL pupils, the **Claremont Primary School** project aimed to utilise a range of drama activities linked to the characters and actions in the story combined with flexible

approaches to encouraging pupils to use their imagination in retelling or changing the story.

4.20   Key elements of the project included:

> **Claremont Primary School – *The Wolves in the Walls***
>
> – Immersing the pupils in the story with a thorough reading of the text supported by drama activities
>
> – Increasing pupils' skills in forming characters and describing settings to prepare them for developing their own story
>
> – Writing a story based either on a retelling of the original with additional descriptors (for lower ability/reluctant writers) or by changing the book and taking it in a new direction
>
> – Editing, analysis and a half day literacy lesson

4.21   The structured approach to the project was reported to work really well with pupils able to work together or individually according to their own ability or confidence levels. Whilst the 2013 project exhibited a greater cross curricular element, the greater support needs of the 2014 Year 5 group necessitated stronger links to a single complementary activity in drama in order to encourage buy-in to the writing element of the project.

4.22   The project utilised learning from the 2013 project linked to *Gulliver's Travels* by encouraging parental involvement through a sharing event and producing an extended piece of writing. Other lessons learnt from the first phase of the project included setting aside sufficient time for writing, individualising the story, encouraging greater confidence in an individuals' writing by maximising engagement in the project and showcasing pupils' best pieces of work.

4.23   The value of the project was also highlighted in the school's Ofsted inspection of March 2014 which made positive comments linked to examples of good writing displayed in the Year 5 Classrooms, highlighting the children's use of elaborate vocabulary.

> *"Pupils did not achieve so well in writing because some lack a wide enough vocabulary and do not use sufficiently sophisticated language, such as figures of speech. Year 5 pupils have taken part in an innovative project to tackle this that centres on using high-quality literature to inspire pupils in their writing. This has proved successful, and Year 5 pupils produced some very good stories based on, for example, Gulliver's Travels".[11]*

Project Performance

4.24   **Each of the four projects was stated to have been very successful by all consulted.**

4.25   The following points are taken from discussions with teachers from each of the schools in order to highlight particular positives and negatives, identify good practice and outline lessons learnt from their experiences of delivering the project. ***Unless stated, the points are***

---

[11] Inspection report: Claremont Primary School, 18–19 March 2014
(http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/files/2366741/urn/131750.pdf)

equally relevant to each project and school. School and/or project-specific points are highlighted in parentheses.

4.26   The **main positives** as highlighted by teachers consulted include:

- Positive remarks on the project offered by Ofsted following a school inspection *[Claremont Primary School]*

- Stimulating a wide range of writing outputs

- Being enjoyable to teach

- Concentrating on achieving an end product and seeing pupils having a great sense of pride linked to their achievements

- Benchmarking the project against the previous year and seeing the benefits of changes in delivery ranging from

- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers

- Being offered the freedom via participating in the project to pilot new ways of working

- The development of a whole-school approach to basing units on texts from Year 2 onwards *[Sandringham Primary School]*

- Encouraging the school to invest in classroom sets of books *[Sandringham Primary School]*

- The response to calls for parent involvement

- Encouraging children to try out new things (e.g. ICT) *[Heaton Park Primary School]*

4.27   The very few **negatives** emanating from the project as highlighted by teachers consulted are:

- The use of scrapbook journals can lead to a need for multiple drafts of pieces of writing before a final version is agreed. This can take a large amount of time to complete and edit with the potential for rushing the crucial stages without sufficient structure.

- Not being able to generate greater cross-curriculum activities *[Claremont Primary School]*

4.28   Each school/teacher stated that they would repeat the majority of the project and had learnt from their experience from the previous phase. Specific areas of **good practice** identified by the teachers involved in the project include:

- Introducing a system of writing projects across a school to support assessment

- Using 'books as hooks' and basing teaching around a fiction or nonfiction book

- Changes in guided reading to make better use of individual quality texts (depth) rather than skimming a number of books (breadth) *[Sandringham Primary School]*

- Maintaining a focus on the completion of quality end products

- An encyclopaedia format enabling children to dip in and out of the text far easier than with most fiction books *[Heaton Park Primary School]*

- Using the outdoors to stimulate enthusiasm in learning leading to a whole-school project linking texts and the outside environment *[Heaton Park Primary School]*

4.29   There were very few major **learning points** identified by teachers. Details of those lessons emanating from consultations with teachers include:

- Selecting a text with a contents page and page numbers to support analysis of text *[Sandringham Primary School]*

- Use of the internet by the whole class can drastically reduce processing speeds and reduce the effectiveness of group work *[Heaton Park Primary School]*

- Just attempting one project a year given the effort involved *[Heaton Park Primary School]*

Parental Involvement

4.30   Parents and the wider community were involved in two out of the four projects to varying degrees although some projects were yet to be completed at the time of consulting teachers with the prospect for a final event to be arranged.

4.31   Parents of pupils at **Sandringham Primary School** were invited to a celebratory / sharing event which generated significant interest and a degree of inspiration stemming from presentations of work to parents.

4.32   Parents of pupils at **Claremont Primary School** were invited to a celebration / sharing event where pupils spent an afternoon recounting their stories to their own parents or groups of parents and other pupils. The event built upon previous opportunities for parents to engage with the school and their child's work (e.g. a kite-making workshop, school 80th anniversary), and generated a great deal of pride within the pupils and parents alike.

4.33   Plans were being made at the time of consulting with teachers from **Swaythling Primary School** to involve parents, potentially in showcasing work, at the end of the project.

Linking Reading and Writing

4.34   **Although utilising different approaches, each teacher stated that the projects had again been successful in linking reading and writing in the school.**

4.35   Within the **Heaton Park Primary School** project, the teachers stated that the project had been very successful in this regard with pupils showing great enthusiasm to read and write around the topic/text. This is stated to have been assisted by the combination of activities chosen (e.g. combining reading and writing with ICT).

4.36   Teachers from **Sandringham Primary School** highlighted that the project had addressed a gap in terms of non-fiction writing in the school with pupils designing their own pages based on reading sections of the text.

4.37   Staff from **Swaythling Primary School** stated that the project had used all the literacy objectives for the new curriculum in its planning and had successfully linked reading and

writing through a range of tasks. Indeed, the experiment in joint planning between Years 5 and 6 is set to be expanded throughout the school in subsequent years.

4.38   Staff from **Claremont Primary School** highlighted the value of enabling reluctant writers to use the structure of the text as the basis for their own version with additional imaginative descriptions of characters and settings with enabled greater consistency and quality of their end product. Also, a focus on the quality of the end product by encouraging the children to think about writing for a reader and vice versa (e.g. knowing who your audience is, learning how to use language to make people interested, reviewing their own work) was supported by teachers taking the time to explore the structure and rationale behind a text.

4.39   In the main, the **teachers consulted struggled to confirm whether the project could be strongly linked to any extracurricular reading and/or writing for pleasure activities. There were however several examples of potentially positive attribution to children's ongoing interest and engagement in the project linked to their activities outside of allocated time.**

4.40   These included pupils from Swaythling Primary School continuing to read the series of books after the project ended and pupils having a stronger desire to complete tasks at home if left unfinished at school.

4.41   Teachers from Claremont Primary School highlighted a group of three boys (one a high achiever and two creative boys who struggle technically) that had started to write a story in their own time at break, lunch and in 'Golden Time'[12].

4.42   Teachers from Heaton Park Primary School also reported a big impact in terms of reading and/or writing for pleasure activities stimulated via the project with children continuing to bring in descriptions of aliens long after the project's completion as well as children asking for similar texts for Christmas presents. The Sandringham Primary School project formed a telescope club as a result of an interest in astronomy fuelled by the project whist teachers were also aware of increased reading and library use although the attribution to the project is difficult to assess.

---

[12] Golden Time refers to free time and a choice of activities offered to pupils as a reward for good work and/or behaviour

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

5   Project Legacy

5.1   As per the 2013 projects, teachers were again able to detail a **range of impacts stemming from their respective projects although in many cases (especially those linked to the 2014 project) the impacts are only in their infancy** given the relatively short period of time since the projects were completed. There are also issues of attribution to consider as the project operates alongside complementary parallel measures to support literacy in school.

5.2   The common impacts identified across the four projects, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly linked to project objectives, include:

- Increased dedication stimulated by taking a different approach and dedicating more time to writing

- Better attitudes to learning and confidence in writing

- Greater comprehension skills

- Greater engagement in the text

5.3   **Teachers again found it difficult to isolate the attribution of the project on progression** although there are examples at an individual level which can be used to highlight the added value of the projects.

5.4   The project was stated to have had a positive impact on pupils from **Heaton Park Primary School** in terms of a variety of performance and behavioural areas. For example, usually reticent pupils were found to be increasingly asking to read the *Dr Who Character Encyclopaedias* at every opportunity whilst others began to bring in and share their own similar books from home (e.g. Encyclopedia of Star Wars). The appeal of Dr Who to both boys and girls, as well as the 50th Anniversary during the project were thought to add to the excitement and motivation of pupils to write and research information around the subject matter. The school then built on this by presenting work in assembly which contributed to both confidence and attainment levels.

5.5   In terms of reading attainment, 32% of pupils in Year 5 also went up by one or more sub-levels in the period to December. In addition, attitudes, particularly amongst the boys, improved immensely towards writing in general and this was reflected in higher than anticipated attainment levels at the end of the autumn term. Every child across the year group improved by at least one sub level, with 62% improving on their Year 4 levels. Indeed, as the project improved many of the children's reading and writing levels so quickly and was seen as so successful, Heaton Park Primary School are running the project again in 2014/15 before Christmas.

'There has been a huge impact on boys and those that don't have faith in themselves'.

'They have taken a real pride in what they have written'

> *One with severe behavioural problems who was continually being 'red carded' who it was later found out had a real interest in space. He became really interested and behaviour and attainment improved as a result.*
>
> *Another boy is a yellow band reader – 'he can't really read' but asked to read the Dr Who Character Encyclopaedia during registration reading time whereas previously 'it was an argument just to get him to sit down'.*
>
> *We had one child that had recently joined our school with serious behaviour issues. On the first few days of joining he was out of class on numerous occasions. However, once the project started his attitude to his work changed completely and he became very excited about his research and writing, creating his own alien and making his Tardis book. At the end of the project he was proud to show his work - what he called 'a great job' - and told his parents how much he enjoyed his lessons.*
>
> *We recently asked the current Year 6 children which literacy topic they enjoyed the best last year. The majority said Dr Who because it was so much fun and the reading, the researching and writing felt easy and they learnt so much.*

5.6   Teachers from **Sandringham Primary School** highlighted progress amongst Year 5 pupils during the spring term although this coincided with wider, intensive literacy development work. Progress in attainment (e.g. most children attaining one or more sublevel in writing) is stated to be reflected in increased confidence in writing and writing stamina with pupils writing for longer and with more coherence than before the project.

> *"The children have really enjoyed reading and learning from a high quality quirky non-fiction text, the level of discussion and ideas generated has been far higher than with more traditional non-fiction extracts or texts".*

5.7   In terms of **impacts on teaching pedagogies**, two of the schools consulted already utilise approaches to delivering units of work (encompassing literacy as well as wider subjects) based on a book. However, even these schools drew on aspects of the project to improve their approach. For example, Heaton Park Primary School has formalised its focus on the 'Great Outdoors and Writing', whilst Sandringham Primary School is investing in classroom sets of books to support its initiatives in this area.

5.8   Staff from **Claremont Primary School** recognised improvements in attitudes to writing and reading after the project associated with greater pride in pupils' work and improvements in work quality.

5.9   Teachers from **Sandringham Primary School** reaffirmed the school's movement towards the ethos of the project, with work ongoing to inform parents via the school website of the texts that each year group will be using.

5.10   Staff from **Swaythling Primary School** highlighted a desire to expand the experiment of joint planning between different year groups given the positive experience with the project, with this seen as a method through which good practice can be shared between teachers and year groups simultaneously.

5.11   In terms of impacts on specific groups or pupils, the projects each referenced impacts on reluctant readers and boys in general. Staff from **Swaythling Primary School** highlighted positive impacts on the quiet girls targeted by the project who had been supported to be less worried about being judged. The project was also found to have stimulated more personality and humour in Year 5 pupils' work whilst the quality and substance of Year 6 pupils' work was also reported to have increased as the project provided a release valve to their SATs.

Support from Book Trust

5.12   **Teachers from three of the four schools consulted stated that they had received the right level and quality of support from Book Trust in running this project.**

5.13   The majority of support required by the project was again appropriately concentrated at the early planning stages of the project (i.e. at the Inspiration day) with the provision of a full class set of books by far the most significant area from the perspective of all teachers consulted. Most teachers were appreciative of the support provided but were keen to highlight that the project represented just one of their objectives and the need to balance support and available time effectively. As such, knowledge that Book Trust staff were available for support and encouragement at any time was sufficient for the majority of those consulted – especially where confidence and knowledge levels were higher based on involvement in 2013. There were however calls from one school for more detail to be provided in terms of practical support (e.g. having an example plan to look at that mapped out an entire unit with detailed breakdowns of activities).

"This is just 1 of 10 subjects I have."

5.14   Staff from one school were very appreciative of the selection of 'beautiful books' provided during a visit from Book Trust. The selection helped to improve knowledge of the range of 'hooks' across fiction and non-fiction areas which could form the basis of a unit of work. Two schools also highlighted the impact of a visit from Book Trust on the pupils themselves. Pupils were said to be appreciative of the support with teachers having made them aware of their role in the project although pupils were stated to gain inspiration from people viewing their work.

5.15   **One school was disappointed with the level of innovation, new ideas and added value generated from the visit to their school by Book Trust.**

6   Future Project Development

6.1   Each of the teachers consulted was asked for their views on paying for all or certain elements of the project based on their experience and knowledge of its benefits for pupils. The elements of the projects teachers were asked to assess were:

> **a.**   Attendance at a teacher inspiration day, like the days put on as part of this project
>
> **b.**   A classroom set of books, like the one you received as part of this project
>
> **c.**   A consultancy visit to your school on reading/writing, like the one you received as part of this project

6.2   Analysis of this element of the evaluation should be assessed alongside the following caveat:

- Whilst all but one teacher (who was an NQT) were able / felt comfortable in providing a general, hypothetical direction of travel in terms of paying for all or certain elements of the project, the majority found it very difficult to place a value on any potential payment. As such **it is recommended that separate research is undertaken with budget holders within schools before any pricing structure is developed**.

6.3   A consensus of opinion found that attendance at a teacher inspiration day would be strongly linked to the literacy needs of the year group/school and the experience of the teachers set to deliver the activities. Two schools provided a figure of £100 for this element, one did not know and another would not pay for this element.

6.4   The key finding to emerge from this analysis is that the provision of a classroom set of books is viewed as the key asset from the project. Each of the schools were favourable towards paying a proportion of the costs for this element of the project subject to the unit price of the books. Each school would generally be happy in paying 50 per cent of the cost of buying in bulk from an online source.

"Books are the main incentive. Need at least 50% discount off the internet retail price."

6.5   The consultancy visit received the coolest response of the offer overall with the majority of teachers seeing this as more of a (long-term) bolt on feature or luxury, especially if the other elements had been purchased given limited funds in most schools. Three schools did not know if and how much they would pay for this element whilst the other would not pay for this at all.

6.6   Overall, there is relatively limited evidence of demand for a costed version of the project based on feedback from the four schools consulted. The key finding to emerge from this analysis is that the provision of a classroom set of books is viewed as the key asset from the project with schools typically willing to meet Book Trust half way if a discount can be achieved.

7 Conclusion

Before the Project

7.1 The four schools are characterised by high proportions of EAL and SEN pupils in classes with a wide variation in abilities and motivation. Delivery mechanisms (i.e. a combination of resources and staff skills and experience) need to be flexible enough to cope with such a diverse cohort of pupils.

Generating Ideas for the Project – The Inspiration Day

7.2 The Inspiration Day was less well received overall than the event used to support the 2013 project. A premium is placed on discussing experiences with other schools, practical support and specialist knowledge from Book Trust and its partners.

The Project

7.3 The project was very well received overall with teachers more confident in planning and delivering Write Book activities with the benefit of the experience of the previous year's project. The confidence in the impact of the project in terms of engagement and attainment is reflected in the significant amount of class time dedicated to the project by each of the schools across often 4-5 weeks of a half term.

7.4 However, whilst the teachers struggled to consistently estimate how much time had been spent on the teaching of and preparation for the projects, there was less of a consensus compared to 2013 on the extensive scale of additional work that the project requires. Whilst one school highlighted the length preparation required to support the project, others stressed that the process of planning and preparing for the project was no different from their existing practice.

7.5 The degree of preparation and learning from the previous year's projects, was reflected in the delivery of the latest projects and the range of activities developed to engage pupils and sustain their interest. Each of the four projects were stated to have been very successful by all consulted with a key lesson from 2013 in setting aside time to create quality outputs.

7.6 The **main positives** drawn from the projects by teachers included:

- Stimulating a wide range of writing outputs
- Concentrating on achieving an end product and seeing pupils having a great sense of pride linked to their achievements
- Benchmarking the project against the previous year and seeing improvement
- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers and lower achievers in particular
- Being offered the freedom via participating in the project to pilot new ways of working
- The development of a whole-school approach to basing units on texts
- Encouraging the school to invest in classroom sets of books
- The response to calls for parent involvement

7.7 The **main negative point** raised by the teachers was the time taken to either plan or

BookTrust — Inspire a love of reading

complete activities to a sufficient standard although this varied significantly from school to school and between cohorts of students.

7.8 Key areas of **good practice** identified by teachers included:

- Introducing a system of writing projects across a school can support assessment

- Changes in guided reading to make better use of individual quality texts (depth) rather than skimming a number of books (breadth) [Sandringham Primary School]

- Maintaining a focus on the completion of quality end products

- Displaying examples of quality writing using elaborate vocabulary in classrooms as highlighted positively by Ofsted following a school inspection [Claremont Primary School]

- The encyclopaedia format enables children to dip in and out of the text far easier than with (most) fiction texts (Heaton Park Primary School)

- Using the outdoors to stimulate enthusiasm leading to a whole-school project linking texts and the outside environment [Heaton Park Primary School]

7.9 The projects reiterated the real value of parental involvement to both pupils and parents with opportunities to experience and/or participate in the work of children in the school setting (e.g. reading, listening, at celebration events) encouraging higher than usual parental involvement and attendance.

7.10 Each of the projects were found to link reading and writing quite naturally with a greater emphasis on non-fiction in 2014. However, as was the case last year, teachers again tended to struggle to confirm whether the projects could be strongly linked to any extracurricular reading and/or writing for pleasure activities although there were several examples of positive attribution amongst pupils of all abilities.

7.11 Cross curricular links were varied in scale and scope although projects needing to overcome multiple barriers to learning tended to struggle to maximise cross curriculum work.

Project Legacy

7.12 Teachers were able to detail a wide range of impacts stemming from their respective projects although in many cases the impacts are difficult to accurately attribute or only in their infancy. The common impacts identified across the four projects, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly linked to project objectives, include:

- Increased dedication stimulated by taking a different approach and dedicating more time to writing

- Better attitudes to learning and confidence in writing

- Greater comprehension skills

- Greater engagement in the text

7.13 In the majority of cases there had been little opportunity to accurately evidence the impacts of the project on attainment although one school highlighted a 'dramatic' and higher than

anticipated increase in reading attainment in the period to December with 32% of pupils in Year 5 rising up by one or more sub-levels. Overall, teachers enjoyed delivering the project and felt, that when benchmarking against previous years, it had a positive effect on attainment.

7.14   Teachers were able to offer anecdotal evidence of project legacy. For example, one school pointed out that attitudes, particularly amongst the boys, improved immensely towards writing in general and this was reflected in their attainment levels at the end of the autumn term.

7.15   Schools are however progressing at varying speeds in sharing the successes, lessons and good practice derived from the project to date. Two of the four schools are moving towards a whole-school approach in line with the ethos of the project.

7.16   Three of the four schools were happy with the support offered by Book Trust overall.

Future Project Development

7.17   There is relatively limited evidence of demand for a costed version of the project based on feedback from the four schools consulted. The key finding to emerge from this analysis is that the provision of a classroom set of books is viewed as the key asset from the project with schools typically willing to meet Book Trust half way on costs if a discount can be achieved.

7.18   There is a perception of the value of the project to less experienced teachers/schools in particular with a teacher inspiration day seen as helpful for less experienced teachers in particular. The consultancy visit was least popular and seen as a relative luxury or bolt on extra.

Appendix 1: Topic Guide

Introduction

Thank you again for agreeing to be consulted as part of the evaluation of The Write Book project. Consilium is undertaking interviews with teachers to gather your thoughts on your involvement in the project, its delivery and impact. All of your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

The focus of this interview is on the second project that you ran as part of The Write Book, but we would like you to reflect throughout on any comparisons between the way the two projects worked for you, and also on the legacy for your school of taking part in the whole project.

The school

2. Could you start by telling me a little about the school and your role?

Before the project

3. What did you think about the second inspiration day in London? Was it useful?

4. How did you choose the book?
    (Decided on book first and fit project to it or other way round or bit of both?)

5. Were there any particular groups you were interested in engaging?

The project

6. What did you do for the project?
    (informed by background info/case study docs from schools in advance of interview)
    a. How much time was spent on the project (teacher preparation/class time)

    b. How was it integrated into other work? Did it follow on from other projects or lead into new work? Was the project cross-curricula?

    c. Did it happen throughout the term or have more of a short sharp focus? Did you spend time on the project every day for a period of time or was it more spread out through term? What were the factors which influenced this decision?

7. Did the second project link with or build on the first project that you did?

    a. Did you continue the previous project as well? Has it become an established module? Did you adapt/improve the first project at all if you ran it again?

    b. Did you use your learning from the first project to inform the second one?

    c. Did the two projects link together? How?

8. How do you feel the project went overall?

    a. Positives

    b. Negatives

    c. Good practice (do the same)

    d. Learning points (do differently)

9. Were parents and the wider community involved?

    a. In what way?

    b. How successful was this?

10. How successful do you think the project has been in linking reading and writing in your school?

    a. Linked to how this has been approached

    b. Was the project linked to the curriculum at all? Was this successful?

    c. Re extracurricular reading and writing for pleasure activities

    d. Re cross curricular work

    e. Has the project impacted on the school's approach for other year groups? Has it helped create a whole school approach to reading and/or writing?

    f. How did the second project compare to the first? More/less successful? More/less ambitious in scope?

Since the project

11. Do you think there have been any impacts from the project?

    a. Were these intended or unintended?

    b. Re pedagogy

    c. Re school planning

    d. Re teachers as creative individuals

    e. On particular children or groups

    f. For the school as a whole

12. Has it impacted on attainment and/or attitudes to writing/reading?

    a. Do you have any specific examples/case studies? (probe for detail)

    b. Also think about a general impression/across the group involved, or for particular groups of children

13. Do you think any impacts have gone beyond the school?

    a. Are children writing more at home?

    b. Others? Community?

    c. Parents (seeking own help with literacy/becoming more involved in child's learning)

14. Have you shared the project with others in your school? If so how? (e.g. have you talked about it at staff meeting, has there been an assembly for children to share with other children?

15. Where are you for writing now? What are your next steps as a school, and next steps for you personally as a teacher?

16. What are your legacy plans for the project?

    a. Do you intend to run either/both of the projects again?

    b. Do you intend to do anything differently with reading and writing than you have done in

the past? (probe for details – with this year group and/or others)

    c. How will you build on what you have learnt from the project as a whole?

17. Did you get the support you needed from Book Trust in running this project?

    a. What was the best element?

    b. What other areas could be supported/what would have helped?

18. Anything else you would like to tell us?

<u>Future project development</u>

19. If Book Trust were to run the project again, and your school had not yet taken part, would you consider paying for certain elements of the project? If yes would you consider paying for
    a. Attendance at a teacher inspiration day, like the days put on as part of this project? How much?
    b. A classroom set of books, like the one you received as part of this project? How much?
    c. A consultancy visit to your school on reading/writing, like the one you received as part of this project? How much?
    d. For each question – follow up and tell them how much we would need to charge for each element, and check again if this seems feasible/if they would consider paying.

If Book Trust were to run the project again, and imagining your school had not yet taken part but was aware of the benefits, would you consider paying for the overall project or certain elements of the project?

Overall Project / Certain Elements / No

If no, what are the barriers to paying for the project?

If yes/certain elements would you consider paying for?

    e. Attendance at a teacher inspiration day, like the days put on as part of this project? How much?
    f. A classroom set of books, like the one you received as part of this project? How much?
    g. A consultancy visit to your school on reading/writing, like the one you received as part of this project? How much?

    h. For each question – follow up and tell them how much we would need to charge for each element, and check again if this seems feasible/if they would consider paying

Evaluation of The Write Book Project

September 2014

Executive Summary

Introduction

In February 2013 Consilium Research and Consultancy Ltd. (Consilium) was commissioned to undertake telephone consultations with teachers involved in The Write Book project (the project). Consilium completed telephone interviews with two teachers from each of four schools (eight in total) in order to discuss their involvement in and impact of the project towards the end of both its first and second academic years (summer term 2013 and 2014). The telephone interviews were based on a topic guide designed by Consilium in conjunction with Book Trust. The second topic guide was revised to assess the sustained impacts of the project and to assess potential demand for a linked offer building on the project's successes.

Context

The Write Book project aims to support Year 5 teachers to run whole-of-year writing projects inspired by classic or popular children's books, providing an important link between reading and writing and enabling pupils to respond creatively to books. The aims of The Write Book project are to:

- Increase teacher confidence in teaching creative writing and knowledge of children's books
- Raise pupils' attainment in writing at Year 5
- Increase pupils' enjoyment of writing at Year 5
- Create a whole school writing plan and creating a personalised legacy for writing in school
- Make cross-curricular links for writing
- Link reading and writing

The project lasts for two years, with schools receiving support from Book Trust on the areas detailed above, and specifically to run a Write Book project in their school each year with Year 5 children. Teachers attended a training or 'inspiration' day to inform each year's project in which they discussed ideas for creative writing activities, worked with a children's author and began the process of auditing the reading and writing activity in their school and thinking about an action plan with the input of Book Trust staff/resources.

The Schools and Target Groups

The following schools were involved in the project:

- Heaton Park Primary School in Bury, Lancashire
- Sandringham Primary School in Newham, East London
- Claremont Primary School in Cricklewood, North West London
- Swaythling Primary School in Southampton, Hampshire

Each of the schools has a two form entry in Year 5 with the exception of Sandringham Primary School which has four Year 5 classes. Each of the schools targeted groups of children with specific needs and challenges as well trying to encourage greater enjoyment of writing amongst reluctant readers and writers across the year group.

To varying degrees the schools face a range of challenges within diverse year groups including pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) (approximately 90% at Sandringham Primary School), large proportions eligible for free school meals (FSM) and/or pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Schools also reported a small number of pupils (predominantly boys) with emotional

and behavioural problems.

Generating Ideas for the Project – The Inspiration Day

The **Inspiration Days held in February and September 2013 in London were both well received by teachers and selected wider staff** (e.g. Deputy Head Teachers, LEA Advisers) with teachers appreciating the opportunity to learn from the approaches and feedback from the other participating schools. The attendance of authors at both events was very well received, as was the opportunity to explore potential texts in conjunction with Book Trust staff. The ideas either generated or developed further during and after the Inspiration Days included:

- Taking characters from a book and placing them in different contexts
- Using technology to engage the children (e.g. developing a video trailer for a book)
- Exploring the graphic novel genre and authors having enjoyed reading a Neil Gaiman text at the Inspiration Day
- Linking the texts and the outdoor environment as a creative stimulus
- Using creative writing books or journals to log ideas
- Using space-themed texts to capture the imagination of boys in particular whilst facilitating a range of cross-curricular activities around evidenced-based science
- Introducing a greater focus on non-fiction texts
- Using books with striking illustrations to engage with EAL pupils

Project Delivery

The four school projects were **delivered each year over two academic years, and each project took approximately five weeks** across a half term rather than a shorter project - over one week, for example. Most teachers struggled to accurately recall how much time had been spent on the preparation and delivery of the projects although most stated that the time and effort involved, especially in the first year, was significant. However, one school in the second year of the project reported that it was no different from that required to support other literacy units it delivered using a similar approach. Preparation time was typically concentrated at the beginning of the project in order map out the project followed by planning to support activities on an ongoing basis as the project develops.

Most schools stated that their projects included approximately 40-50 hours of class work (i.e. approximately 1-1.5 hours in class per day), with the second project generally incorporating slightly more class time than the first. In the majority of cases, the projects began with a concentrated period of reading followed by writing activities, although one school moved towards a parallel process of reading and writing activities linked to the story and character development in the second year.

Project Design

The projects developed by each school, although based on a similar premise of using classic or popular children's books to inspire writing projects, have each utilised their books as the catalyst for a wide variety of writing and wider curricular activities as follows:

Claremont Primary School

- First Project: Creating a story within a story based on **Gulliver's Travels** using an understanding of the characters and scenarios in the book to inform related literacy activities based on islands, escapes, giants etc.

- Second Project: Targeting boys and reluctant writers amongst a year group with high SEN and EAL cohorts, the school used **The Wolves in the Walls** by Neil Gaiman as the stimulus for approaches to encouraging pupils to use their imagination in retelling or changing the story.

Heaton Park Primary School
- First Project: Using a book with a strong female lead/hero character, *Coraline* by Neil Gaiman, to stimulate children's senses, ability to contrast imaginary and real settings and link the school to the wider community through a series of visits.
- Second Project: Developing a 3D fact and fiction book inspired by the *Dr Who Character Encyclopedia* and the wider topic theme of space.

Sandringham Primary School
- First Project: Linking reading and writing through *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the creative stimulus of a writing day in Epping Forest leading to descriptive work using persuasive text in the form of adverts and diary entries culminating in a celebratory assembly in the forest.
- Second Project: Combining aspects of the design and layout of *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* with space and science-themed topic work alongside a range of writing outputs including newspaper reports, comprehension exercises, note taking and letter writing.

Swaythling Primary School
- First Project: Using picture books (*The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* and *The Arrival*) to stimulate imaginations and inform discussions of the potential scenarios behind the illustrations, developing accompanying text and informing drama and role play including applying the themes to their own lives and social/cultural issues.
- Second Project: Using book 1 of the *A Series of Unfortunate Events* series (*A Bad Beginning*) by Lemony Snicket to inform reading and writing activities which were documented in a scrapbook journal on an ongoing basis in line with the development of the storyline and characters.

Project Performance
All of the projects across both years were stated to have been very successful by all consulted.
Examples of positives taken from the project highlighted by teachers consulted include:

Year 1

- Pupils targeted by the projects enjoying the activities and gaining in confidence and motivation in terms of literacy work
- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers and lower achievers in particular
- Being able to develop intensive activities and dedicate more time than usual with pupils requiring additional support with literacy
- Providing teachers with the flexibility to take more risks or do things differently
- Improvements in the quality of descriptive writing stimulated by using their imagination including the use of 'wow words', similes and metaphors *[Heaton Park Primary School]*
- Enabling teachers to target groups better *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Raising expectations in terms of the quality and quantity of work that can be produced
- Teaching books from a different angle (e.g. looking at an author's intentions rather than just the words) *[Swaythling Primary School]*
- Pupils using more adjectives and adverbs to describe settings and characters in their work *[Claremont Primary School]*

Year 2

- Positive remarks on the project offered by Ofsted following a school inspection; *[Claremont Primary School]*
- Stimulating a wide range of writing outputs
- Being enjoyable to teach
- Concentrating on achieving an end product and seeing how pupils having a great sense of pride linked to their achievements
- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers
- The development of a whole-school approach to basing units on texts *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Encouraging the school to invest in classroom sets of books *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Positive responses to calls for parent involvement

The very few **negatives** emanating from the project as highlighted by teachers consulted are:

Year 1

- The time consuming nature of the projects in terms of planning and preparation
- Some children being very tired due to the intensive nature of the work*[Swaythling Primary School]*
- Too short a time between the Inspiration Day and the extensive planning required to facilitate delivery of the project *[Claremont Primary School]*

Year 2

- The use of scrapbook journals producing multiple drafts of pieces of writing which take time to complete/edit and can therefore lead to the crucial stages being rushed without sufficient structure
- Not being able to generate greater cross-curriculum activities *[Claremont Primary School]*

Specific areas of **good practice identified by the teachers** involved in the project include:

- An intensive period of reading and understanding of the text in the initial week of the project
- Incorporating an element of ICT
- A transitory or organic approach to teaching encouraging buy-in from the pupils
- Changes in guided reading to make better use of individual quality texts (depth) rather than skimming a number of books (breadth) *[Sandringham Primary School]*
- Maintaining a focus on the completion of quality end products
- An encyclopaedia format enables children to dip in and out of the text far easier than with most fiction books *[Heaton Park Primary School]*
- Using the outdoors to stimulate enthusiasm in learning leading to a whole-school project linking texts and the outside environment *[Heaton Park Primary School]*

Parental Involvement

Parents and the wider community were involved in two out of the four projects in the first year of the project and three of four projects in the second year. The most frequent form of parental involvement was a celebratory assembly, presentation or sharing event. **These events were consistently reported to generate a greater than usual level of interest amongst parents and provided a key source of inspiration and pride amongst parents and pupils alike.**

Linking Reading and Writing

Although utilising different approaches, **each teacher stated that the projects had been successful in linking reading and writing in the school** across both years. Projects were found to generate great enthusiasm amongst pupils to read and write around the topic/text, often assisted by the combination of activities chosen:

- Combining reading and writing with ICT (e.g. developing the script for a video trailer for a book)
- Addressing gaps in non-fiction writing
- Inspiring children to write by discussing the illustrations in picture books
- Using guided reading supported by illustrations and other stimuli (e.g. the outdoors)
- Enabling reluctant writers to use the structure of the text as the basis for their own version with additional imaginative descriptions of characters and settings with enabled greater consistency and quality of their end product
- A focus on the quality of the end product by encouraging the children to think about writing for a reader and vice versa (e.g. knowing who your audience is, learning how to use language to make people interested, reviewing their own work) was supported by teachers taking the time to explore the structure and rationale behind a text

In the main, the teachers consulted struggled to confirm whether the project could be strongly linked to any extracurricular reading and/or writing for pleasure activities. There were however **consistent examples across each of the eight projects of potentially positive attribution to children's ongoing interest and engagement in the project linked to their activities outside of allocated time**. These included:

- Pupils continuing to read the book or the series of books after the project ended
- Pupils having a stronger desire to complete tasks at home if left unfinished at school
- Three boys (one a high achiever and two creative boys who struggle technically) writing a story in their own time
- Children continuing project activities long after its completion
- Some increased library use
- Children asking for similar texts for Christmas presents

Project Legacy

Teachers detailed a **range of impacts stemming from their respective projects although in many cases the impacts were only in their infancy**. There remain issues of attribution to the projects however which often operate alongside complementary measures to support literacy in school. The common impacts identified across the four projects from both years, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly linked to project objectives, include:

Year 1

- Enhanced confidence in writing and better attitudes to literacy
- Greater concentration levels, listening and attention spans
- Improved sentence construction
- Greater comprehension skills
- More empathy and understanding of characters
- Greater and more sophisticated use of adjectives, adverbs, similes and metaphors

Year 2

- Increased dedication stimulated by taking a different approach and dedicating more time to writing
- Better attitudes to learning and confidence in writing – especially amongst reluctant readers
- Examples of faster than expected progression in reading attainment
- Increased confidence in writing and greater writing stamina
- Enhanced pride in pupils' work
- Greater comprehension skills
- Greater engagement in the text

Teachers found it difficult to isolate the attribution of the project on progression and attainment although there are examples at an individual level which can be used to highlight the added value of the projects.

In terms of **impacts on teaching pedagogies**, two of the schools already utilised approaches to delivering units of work (encompassing literacy as well as wider subjects) based on a book but were able to learn from the project to add value to their teaching (e.g. utilising the outdoors, investing in classroom sets of books, using text from the books in wider comprehension exercises and using speaking and listening activities to inform small writing activities).

There are also examples of the ethos and approach used in the project being extended to other year groups with joint planning across year groups/teachers, repetition of the first year's project with different year groups and sharing knowledge between teachers and a move to a whole-school approach to basing units on texts from the second year of engagement onwards in one school [Sandringham Primary School].

Support from Book Trust

Teachers from all four schools in the first year of the project, and three of the four schools consulted in the second year, stated that they had received the right level and quality of support from Book Trust to run the project.

The majority of support required by the project was stated to be appropriately concentrated at the early planning stages of the project (i.e. from the Inspiration day onwards) with the provision of a full class set of books by far the most significant area from the perspective of all teachers consulted. The majority of teachers were grateful for any innovative and new ideas stemming from the Inspiration Days with the ability to share learning between schools and a productive visit to their school by Book Trust particularly appreciated.

Future Project Development

Each of the teachers consulted in the second year of the project was asked for their views on paying for all or certain elements of the project based on their experience and knowledge of its benefits for pupils. However, whilst the majority found it very difficult to place a value on any potential payment, they were able to offer a general, hypothetical direction of travel in terms of paying for all or certain elements of the project. Overall, there is relatively limited evidence of demand for a costed version of the project based on feedback from the four schools consulted. The key finding to emerge from this analysis is that **the provision of a classroom set of books is viewed as the key asset from the project** with schools typically willing to pay 50% of the costs of books if a discount can be achieved.

Conclusion

Before the Project

17. The four schools participating in the project are characterised by high proportions of EAL and SEN pupils in classes with a wide variation in abilities and motivation. Delivery mechanisms (i.e. a combination of resources and staff skills and experience) need to be flexible enough to cope with such a diverse cohort of pupils.

Generating Ideas for the Project – The Inspiration Day

18. A premium is placed in the Inspiration Days on discussing experiences with other schools, practical support and specialist knowledge from Book Trust and its partners.

The Project

19. The project was very well received overall with teachers more confident in planning and delivering Write Book activities with the benefit of the experience of the first year of the project. The confidence in the impact of the project in terms of engagement and attainment is reflected in the significant amount of class time dedicated to the project in the second year by each of the schools, across often 4-5 weeks of a half term.

20. There has been a growing consensus from the schools over the two years of the project that the process of planning and preparing for the project was closer to their existing practice than initially thought after the first project.

21. Each of the projects were stated to have been very successful by all consulted.

22. The project has provided a wide range of positives, as identified by the teachers consulted, including:

- Stimulating a wide range of writing outputs
- Enhanced enjoyment, confidence and motivation in literacy work
- Seeing pupils having a great sense of pride linked to their achievements
- Benchmarking the project against the previous year and seeing improvement
- Progression amongst reluctant writers/readers and lower achievers in particular
- Being offered the freedom via participating in the project to pilot new ways of working
- The development of a whole-school approach to basing units on texts
- Encouraging responses to calls for parent involvement
- Facilitating the effective targeting of specific groups

23. The main negative point raised by the teachers was the time taken to either plan or complete activities to a sufficient standard although this varied significantly from school to school and between cohorts of students.

24. The projects reiterated the real value of parental involvement to both pupils and parents with opportunities to experience and/or participate in the work of children in the school setting (e.g. reading, listening, at celebration events) encouraging higher than usual parental involvement and attendance.

25. Each of the projects were found to link reading and writing quite naturally although teachers struggled to confirm whether the projects could be strongly linked to any extracurricular reading and/or writing for pleasure activities.

26. Cross curricular links have been varied in scale and scope although projects needing to overcome multiple barriers to learning tended to struggle to maximise cross curriculum work.

Project Legacy

27. Teachers were able to detail a wide range of impacts stemming from their respective projects although in many cases the impacts are difficult to accurately attribute or only in their infancy. The common impacts identified across the four projects, the overwhelming majority of which can be directly linked to project objectives, include:

- Better attitudes to learning and confidence in writing – especially amongst reluctant readers
- Enhanced pride in pupils' work
- Examples of faster than expected progression in reading attainment
- Greater and more sophisticated use of adjectives, adverbs, similes and metaphors
- Greater comprehension skills
- Greater concentration levels, listening and attention spans
- Improved sentence construction
- Increased writing stamina
- More empathy and understanding of characters

28. Teachers found it difficult to isolate the attribution of the project on progression and attainment although there are examples at an individual level which can be used to highlight the added value of the projects.

29. Teachers were able to offer anecdotal evidence of project legacy although schools are progressing at varying speeds in sharing the successes, lessons and good practice derived from the project to date. Three of the four schools use or are moving towards a whole-school approach in line with the ethos of the project and all four schools have repeated the project with other year groups, adapting the approach to suit the year group and incorporating lessons learnt.

Future Project Development

30. There is relatively limited evidence of demand for a costed version of the project based on feedback from the four schools consulted.

31. The key finding to emerge from this analysis is that the provision of a classroom set of books is viewed as the key asset from the project with schools typically willing to meet Book Trust half way on costs if a discount can be achieved.

32. There is a perception of the value of the project to less experienced teachers/schools in particular with a teacher inspiration day seen as helpful for less experienced teachers in particular. The consultancy visit was least popular and seen as a relative luxury or bolt on extra.

Appendix 5: Case study: A Letter from Gulliver

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: A Letter From Gulliver

A one line summary of your project: Inspiring pupils with drama and art to write a narrative letter detailing their adventures in an unknown land

Which book did you use as a focus for your project? Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, illustrated by Chris Riddell

Year groups targeted: Year 5

The lead teacher on this project: Lisa McLaughlin, Florence Afolabi and Asmah Batool

The full name of your school: Claremont Primary School

Your region: London

Context:

Claremont is a large ethnically diverse two form entry primary school. The proportion of pupils who have a minority ethnic background is very much higher than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above those found nationally. More than half of the pupils join or leave the school partway through their education, a proportion that is very much higher than the national average.

Attitudes towards reading and writing and attainment before the project:

On analysing pre-project questionnaires that recorded attitudes to writing it was clear that the majority of children enjoyed writing. For example, one pupil, Ines, said *"I like writing stories that I make up"*. However, children were not always clear about why they enjoyed writing. Several children commented that *"Writing is fun."*

A small proportion of the responses indicated that writing was tiring and that children thought they did too much writing. Sadiq said *"I like writing but sometimes it makes me feel tired".*

Aims and principles:

In choosing Gulliver as the key text, we felt that the adventure story with its fantastic illustrations would appeal to boys and engage them in writing as well as introducing all pupils to a text that is regarded as a children's classic.

Aims:

- To improve the quality of pupils' writing with a particular focus on developing their use of imaginative language, vocabulary use and sentence construction

- To improve the enthusiasm and engagement of pupils identified as reluctant writers
- To raise the attainment in writing for boys

In practice:

We decided that we wanted children to write a story in letter form from an imaginary creature that finds itself in a strange land of the children's invention. We liked the imaginative and descriptive possibilities of children creating their own strange new creatures and lands, and the dialogic nature of letter writing.

Before the start of the project, we asked children to complete a short questionnaire indicating their attitudes to writing. We will ask children to complete another attitudinal survey at the end of the overall Write Book project in 2014, and the responses will be compared to each other to see if attitudes have changed over the course of the project.

Before the children began working on the narrative letter, teachers used their existing reading corners and classroom space to promote the theme of adventures. One of the classes developed their reading corner as Gulliver's home: the other classroom became a sailing ship for the project. Gulliver's home featured themed objects to inspire writing, such as a compass, a watch, a feather, a mini telescope, a snow globe, a magnifying glass and bits of rope. The sailing ship classroom featured a large ship's wheel made out of cardboard, nets with paper fish in them and other nautical decorations.

As part of the project and as the start of a longer engagement in creative writing, the teachers introduced writing journals to the children. These were to be used as creative roughbooks and places where children could try out new ideas and write and draw independently as part of the project.

The beautiful illustrations in the book were the initial focus for reading and writing activities. After reading the beginning of the story together, pupils predicted and inferred what the text was about and possible scenarios for the way the storyline might develop I their writing journals. This led to a detailed full reading of the text in which examples of adjectives, 'wow' words and adverbs were collected to create a word bank displayed prominently in the classroom that pupils could use in their own work.

Drama and role play activities such as hot seating, debating, and acting out scenes played a vital part in getting to know and understand the plot of the story and its characters. This led to a dramatic retelling of Gulliver, the creation of maps and languages, the creating of scenes from Lilliput, imaginative character descriptions, crafting models of Lilliput and work on developing descriptive settings. Through the activities we were able to emphasise the writer's role in creating a visual image for the reader to want to continue reading. This focus on imagery was a very strong part of the project.

Children wrote letters to their parents (features of letter writing and conventions having been revisited in a previous session), inviting them to a workshop in which they would collaborate on a piece of descriptive writing that would become part of their narrative letter.

About twenty parents and family members attended the session which we held for an hour first thing in the morning, to enable parents to stay after dropping the children off. Both parents and children really enjoyed the workshops – we made it quite structured and

guided a lot of brainstorming and writing about possible new locations for our imaginary creatures to explore, but also kept the emphasis on fun. There was a real buzz in the classrooms and children clearly enjoyed seeing parents learning something new, and having the time to be creative together.

Children used this brainstorming as a starting point for writing their narrative story letters, drawing on previous learning. They worked on the letter in sections over several days, both individually, in small groups and as a class and had the opportunity to edit and redraft their work.

Outcomes

Each class performed a section of their narrative letters to parents and shared their work at a whole school assembly. The letters have been collated into a class book to share with other classes and to be used as examples of creative writing.

This was a great project which gave a real focus and purpose to writing. Children were motivated and engaged throughout the project and it has had a positive impact on the children, particularly boys and hard-to-reach children, viewing themselves as writers.

An interesting and unforeseen outcome of the parent writing session was that it gave teachers a rare insight into the kind of study support that children did or didn't get at home. One class teacher commented that seeing parents and children work together helped her to reassess homework tasks and expectations for particular children – either because she could see they were getting more support than she expected, or less. Clearly, a one-hour session could only give a limited insight, but she did find it useful.

Attitudes and attainment after the project:

The project has given the opportunity for quiet, less confident writers who work with support to work independently. Faith, a child who needs reminding to stay on task, now works independently. Knowing that she can write at her own pace over time has given her the confidence and self belief that that she is a writer. She said of the project:

"I'm happier to work on my own now. The work on Gulliver helped me think of better sentences."

Faith's teacher described how she almost didn't want to disturb Faith's writing by moving the class on to the next part of the task, as she could see she was writing so freely and enthusiastically. Faith was also very engaged by the visual part of the project – both reading the illustrations in the Chris Riddell version of Gulliver and drawing and painting her own monster creatures and Lilliput model.

For a majority of the boys, the project has set them a personal benchmark: if they can produce a written narrative with detail for an audience and reader the question they are now asking themselves is 'What else I can achieve?' As a school we look forward to finding out! Boys' attainment in writing has also improved over the course of the project.

The children have also become more confident in discussing their writing – what they like about it and how it can be improved. This is a great development from the start of the project where children enjoyed writing but couldn't necessarily articulate why. They now have a critical vocabulary for writing.

Sadiq said, "I'm more confident at planning my stories. I do a plan, write it and then check it - adding

more description if I need it."

Theo commented *"I enjoyed Gulliver, I'm now better at thinking of ideas for a story".* As did Jessie, who commented *"I learnt new words and am now able to add detail to the writing."*

The final quote, showing the impact on children's use of descriptive and imaginative language, goes to Sahra:

"My stories have improved; I know I need to paint a picture in the reader's mind about what will happen and spending time reading the book and retelling the story helped me to write a better story about my own island."

Legacy:

As a result of the project we plan to:

- Introduce writing journals in Years 5 and 6 to promote and encourage independent writing skills. The children primarily used the writing journals in class and for work focused on the Gulliver project for this term, but over time we will work on empowering the children to use them for their own free writing at home and in independent time.
- Set up a blog for other children in the school to respond to the letters their peers have written and use it to encourage children to post their own writing online, on the Gulliver project and any other creative writing too.
- Involve parents in class-based reading and writing workshops on a more regular basis.

Final thought:

We haven't had any feedback from the family members that attended the writing workshop at the beginning of the project, and when we invite parents back in for another creative session we will ask them to perhaps complete a short feedback questionnaire at the end of that session. Alternatively, a good time for parent feedback would have been at the performance assembly – even in a verbal, casual kind of way, talking to parents after the event, would be good. We need to get more of a feel for what they'd like to be involved in in the future, and if they have any particular needs we could be helping with.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

Appendix 6: Case study: A Dream of Epping Forest

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: A Dream of Epping Forest

A one line summary of your project: Creating exciting writing opportunities in the forest

Which book did you use as a focus for your project? A Midsummer Night's Dream

Year groups targeted: Year 5

The lead teacher on this project: Clare Kennedy

The full name of your school: Sandringham Primary School

Your region: Newham, London

Context:

We are a four form entry primary school in Newham. Reading is a whole school priority and we have many systems in place to ensure the children make good progress. Every class takes part in daily "reading gym" activities which involve a carousel of reading activities that engage children with high quality texts and deepen their levels of comprehension. Every child has a home school reading log and are expected to read at home every day for a minimum of twenty minutes.

The school provides the opportunity for our 'target readers' (children whose reading levels are below national expectations) to read every day at school and have time to discuss what they are reading. We are extremely fortunate to have a well-stocked library which has an extensive list of popular children's books. Every class is able to visit the library once a fortnight. We have a volunteer school librarian who comes in once a week, helping with the general running of the library and ensuring that it is kept up to date and is well stocked.

There is a team of about eight children across years 5 and 6 who are our "school librarians". They get to visit our local Waterstones once a term and are very involved in restocking the library and choosing new titles. Every year we celebrate World Book Day and the children come off curriculum for the day and really celebrate the love of reading. This year we also participated in World Book Night where parents came to share food and reading experiences whilst receiving a free book *The Girl with the Pearl Earring* - this proved to be an extremely successful evening.

The children at Sandringham enjoy writing and all our units are based upon a good quality text. The text is always our starting point for planning and all our writing opportunities are linked to this text. The children have good writing stamina and we have high expectations for our children's writing. They are always encouraged to think as an author and always consider the reader. We do however have a group of children who are harder to engage in the writing process, including a number of disaffected boys and quiet girls. They are often those children whose reading age is behind national expectations and who receive little if any home support for reading and completing homework.

Attitudes towards readings and writing and attainment before the project:

The majority of children in year 5 have always been very positive about their writing and enjoy it most of the time. However, at the beginning

of the year their writing stamina as a whole was poor, and writing at length with sustained form and voice was something they struggled with in the autumn term.

The quality of their sentences and use of grammar was an area for concern and became a key focus for modelling through the exciting creative opportunities afforded by this writing project. The combination of a rich textual stimulus with clear focussed teaching of writing skills led to the majority of the children showing a marked improvement in the quality of their writing across the year.

Aims and principles:

- To create imaginative writers that are producing writing of a high quality
- To engage and enthuse more reluctant writers
- To allow children more control over their own writing

What we did and how we did it:

We based a whole term's work around A Midsummer Night's Dream and have provided many different writing opportunities based on the story during the project.

We began the project by having a 'writing day' in Epping Forest, which is close to our school. The children loved this day and were so enthusiastic about having the freedom to be able to write outside and to be able to use creative writing books. These journals were free spaces for them to collect words and ideas without restraint with a view to drawing on them for inspiration in completing more formal pieces later on.

Throughout the day the children completed three different pieces of writing:

1. Unlock Your Imagination

We made lots of laminated pictures and quotes from A Midsummer Night's Dream and sourced items such as flowers, a wooden LOVE sign, a large glass bottle, glitter, feathers etc, with the intention that we would use them to create a fairy-inspired space in the forest that, perhaps, Titania and her fairies may just have left. We set the props up as scene which the children happened to 'stumble' across on our walk and asked them to write down all the questions that they had about it, and try and unpick what an earth they thought might have taken place. The children were very engaged and the boys were particularly enthusiastic about having to work like detectives and try to things together.

2.   Poetry Tree Corner

Children used the forest as inspiration for writing a line each of a poem. The children then pegged these between the trees to create their own 'poetry tree corner'.

3.   If I were a tree…what would I see?

Children had to imagine they were a tree and write about everything that they would see and how

they would feel.

The writing completed during and after the experience became part of a grand visual display area outside the Year 5 classrooms. The display has formed a powerful visual image of some of our reluctant writers fully and engaged and excited by the writing process.

Each week the children also completed differentiated comprehension questions based around the text.

Other writing opportunities throughout the unit included:

- Descriptive writing about Epping Forest
- Agony aunt letters (pupils pretended to be Hermia or Hermia's father) and wrote letters explaining their 'love dilemma.' The children then wrote a response to another child's agony aunt letter, reading and responding to comments made in the letter.
- Writing a personality profile of Puck
- Persuasive text – the children created their own magic potion or flower and had to write an advert to persuade people to buy it
- Letter of warning from King Oberon to Puck. The children were asked to consider how King Oberon might be frustrated by Puck's continual mischief. The children decided it was time to write Puck a letter of warning!
- Diary entry from Bottom's perspective after he had been turned into a donkey
- Writing stories – taking the character of Puck and placing him into one of three different settings: A Victorian school, outer space or a mystery scene

We ended the unit by having an assembly in the forest attended by the leadership team and year 5 parents which was hugely successful. It was very special for the children to be able to perform in the forest and making it magical for them. In this assembly we included:

1. A rap about William Shakespeare
2. An performed abridged version of Midsummer Night's Dream (using the reduced Shakespeare company as inspiration)
3. A commercial break! (children created a play based around their magic flowers which were for sale)
4. Exploring the character of Puck (role-play of Puck's mischievousness) and reading letters of warning from King Oberon to Puck

Outcomes:

In their free writing books:

- 'If I was a tree what would I see' collecting words and imagery in the forest
- 'Unlock your imagination' using props and settings as an inspiration for writing

In their Literacy books:

- Descriptive writing about Epping Forest
- Agony Aunt Letters from Egeus regarding Hermia and the reply to this letter
- Answering high level reading comprehension questions based on the story to develop children's inference skills
  - Puck character study

- Designs for a magic potion - both visual and in writing
- Letter from Oberon to Puck warning him to not repeat his mistake!
- Diary entry from the scene when Bottom turned into a donkey explaining his feelings
- Puck's story - taking the character out of the original story and placing him into the children's own stories

Other outcomes:

- Drama – designing scenes for the class performance as detailed below
- Year 5 visual display of the Epping Forest Writing Experience

Attitudes to learning:

- All the children have really enjoyed the project, text and the opportunity to write in the forest
- All the children have a very good understanding of the story and have been very confident when discussing the story
- Their attitude towards all their writing work has been extremely positive and they have had some highly original ideas for their writing
- Children loved performing their 'assembly in the forest'

Attitudes and attainment after the project:

During our celebration assembly in the park it was really incredible to see the confidence of the children - they had devised and developed the assembly content themselves, allowing us to see the high levels of text knowledge and comprehension they had developed. Reinterpreting and presenting a story is something our children can find challenging, yet even those working below expectations were fully engaged in the development process. One class suggested reinterpreting the story in the form of a musical rap and it was incredible to see them bring Shakespeare alive in such an original way!

Before the project, our progress data in writing during the autumn term was not showing sufficient levels of progress. Many children had not moved a sub-level from July to December 2012. Since the project, progress data has shifted, with most children attaining one or more sub-levels in writing since January. The progress made in the attainment data is reflected in their increased confidence in writing as well as evidence of increased writing stamina across the year group. The children are more able to write for longer and with more coherence than at the beginning of the year.

Quotes from children:

"I liked the trip because you got to learn new things and see things you've never seen before."

"Working in the forest makes you more relaxed."

"At first I thought the book might be boring but when we started to read it, it really captured my imagination."

"I liked it when Titania fell in love with a daft donkey!"

"I loved reading 'Midsummer Night's Dream' as it really made me giggle"

Extracts from two children's writing journals:

Child 1

What I enjoyed:

1.   I enjoyed poking around, examining all the pictures and reading the writing.
2.   I felt really interested and curious about all the odd-looking pictures and fairies and mischief they make. I also liked exploring all the decorations too!
3.   It was fun!

What I disliked:

1.   The spider
2.   The bee

Child 2

"I enjoyed the discovery and detective work because we can let our imagination go far. Every clue made us go further and further and make our imagination run free."

One child's attitude has particularly changed during the project. Child 2, a high achiever in the class with strong potential, has always had great ideas for his writing but has sometimes struggled to structure these into clear pieces of writing. He has always had an extensive vocabulary but has sometimes found it difficult to choose the most appropriate words and phrases. This is one of a group of children that can be difficult to sufficiently challenge, yet, during the project, I feel that his writing has become a lot more confident and his understanding of how to structure a clear piece of writing has really improved.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

He said *"If you just had to imagine being in the forest your writing wouldn't be that good. Being in the forest means you have the atmosphere and can see and feel it."*

His writing has improved from a 3A (beginning of year 5) to a 4B during year 5 and has shown great improvements from being 3A/4C borderline (beginning of a project) to a secure 4B (after the project).

Legacy:

The children have really enjoyed learning about Shakespeare and, in terms of an initial short-term legacy, have been bringing in books to class from the library about Shakespeare as well as other Shakespeare books adapted for children. In the longer term, we will continue to teach Shakespeare in year 5 and will give children opportunities to write in the forest. Our celebration assembly will take place in the forest every year. The children will continue to have their own creative writing books.

Resources:

The Orchard book of Shakespeare Stories:

http://www.amazon.co.uk/Orchard-Book-Shakespeare-Stories/dp/1860391613/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1372149922&sr=1-1&keywords=orchard+book+of+shakespeares+stories

Tales from Shakespeare: A Midsummer Night's Dream: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Midsummer-Nights-Dream-Tales-Shakespeare/dp/1848358326/ref=sr_1_4?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1372149882&sr=1-4&keywords=tales+from+shakespeare+a+midsummer+nights+dream

Educational resources from the RSC: http://www.rsc.org.uk/

- Feathers
- Glass bottle
- Glitter
- Cut flowers
- A wooden LOVE sign belonging to a member of staff
- Writing journals for every child in the form of a school notebook

Final thought:

When we do this again next year, we'll include another writing day in the forest in the middle of the unit where the children can have the freedom to write about anything that inspires them. This will emphasise the focus of the project on writing freely and creatively as well as working on more structured pieces of writing.

Appendix 7: Case study: The Arrival

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: The Arrival

A one line summary of your project: Using *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* as a model, children have written the text for the images of Shaun Tan's picture book *The Arrival.*

Which book did you use as a focus for your project?

The Mysteries of Harris Burdick by Chris Van Allsburg

The Arrival by Shaun Tan

Year groups targeted: Year 5

The lead teacher on this project: Miss Martin/ Mr Mackay

The full name of your school: Swaythling Primary School

Your region: Southampton

Context:

Swaythling Primary School is a small one-form entry school with a total of 210 children on roll, in an inner city catchment area. 22 languages are spoken in the school and we have a good multicultural focus. In the past, the school improvement plans have focused mainly on raising standards in writing as this was an identified weakness of the school, and this focus remains key.

We are using a new reading scheme from Pearson, the educational publisher, which includes the use of online books. This is the Bug club scheme: http://www.bugclub.co.uk/ - 'a whole-school reading programme that joins books with an online reading world to teach today's children to read'. We also use the phonics bug programme from Pearson.

Attitudes towards reading and writing and attainment before the project:

Before the project began, we were keen to encourage our reluctant readers and writers in Year 5, particularly the White British boys. In the run up to the project, the children had been taking part in Growth Mindsets work, inspired by the work by psychologist Carol Dweck (http://www.mindsetonline.com/whatisit/about/index.html) and we were promoting positive attitudes to learning. Growth Mindsets posits that:

"In a fixed mindset, people believe that their basic qualities such as as intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits. They spend their time documenting their intelligence or talent instead of developing them. They also believe that talent alone creates success – without effort. They're wrong.

In a growth mindset, people believe that their most basic abilities can be developed by dedication and hard work – brains and talent are just the starting point. This view creates a love of learning and

a resilience that is essential for great accomplishment,"

Generally, the class in question are able writers but lack motivation in both reading and writing. Two of the White British boys we were keen to target are Billy and George. Both boys, who should gain level 5s at the end of next year according to school data, underachieved in their writing at the end of KS1 because they lack confidence in their ability to write.

In the recent past both boys have consistently indulged in displacement activities at the beginning of a writing task. The outcome of this is that they then find themselves behind the other children in terms of progress and often decide that they can't think of what to write, or state that they are 'no good at writing'. If one can guide them past this initial stage by providing attractive or exciting enough tasks (or in some other way) then they manage very well.

Aims and principles:

- Raise the standards of writing in Year 5
- Engage reluctant writers – in particular the white British boys in the class
- Children to develop a greater sense of empathy with a character
- Identify and comment on the writers' purpose and viewpoints (AF7)
- Make inter-cultural links based on the fact that we are a very multi-cultural school

We would also like to include aspects of the Intercultural Understanding strand from the Framework for Languages. We have a number of children within the class who have migrated to England for a variety of reasons. This project gives us the opportunity to consider the realities of these situations within the constructs provided by the subtexts of *The Arrival*. We can allow the children to look at the reasons why the family is moving and relate this safely to situations in their own experiences or those of their classmates.

In practice

The Mysteries of Harris Burdick offered the children an opportunity look closely at its intriguing illustrations and create a story for themselves either independently or with the help of the minimal texts and titles provided by the author. Many of the children in class five are not used to analysing the pictures in picture books and we felt that in order to do undertake this project effectively they would need extended experience of such activity.

The attitudes and life experiences of many of the white boys in particular insulate them from too deep a consideration of 'art'. We wanted particularly to get the children to consider what the artist might be saying to himself as he designed these highly considered pieces. Why did the artist put this here and why that there? What does he want you to notice first when you look at the picture? We feel that this questioning on our part initially and then from the children would help them with the questioning which is a necessary part of the story-building process.

The Arrival is an incredible piece of work, tackling the subject of immigration with enormous intricacy and subtlety. We felt that the children would need time to be introduced to and led towards an understanding of the themes and ideas contained in it.

Instead of a week's intensive project, we decided to deliver the project as a unit of Literacy work, so that the children could have time for the understanding of both books to sink in, and for them to develop their skills interpreting images over a longer timeframe. We spilt the delivery of the unit into phases and the children received a lesson a day over four weeks. The phases were as follows:

Phase 1

The Mysteries of Harris Burdick is a picturebook with black and white pencil illustrations. Rather than containing a conventional narrative, the book faces each full-page illustration with an intriguing half-line of text, giving the reader the freedom to decide what's happening in the pictures. The images are purposefully a little fairytale-like and mysterious, inviting creative responses and reasoning around what could be happening.

We explored the images in *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* through talk for writing, drama, role play, hot seating and conscience alley. We explored the text attached to the pictures and thought about the writers' purpose and viewpoints of the characters in the images.

The most fruitful activities were those that allowed the children become involved in the stories in *Harris Burdick*. We gave children opportunities to role play the scenarios they felt the pictures represented, working in groups and presenting their ideas to the class. George shone in the drama activities and Billy is confident of his ability to perform in front of the others. They both found the writing process easier after such activities.

Phase 2

As per phase 1 but using *The Arrival*. The Arrival is a picturebook about the experience of a refugee in a strange land. To reflect the experience of being somewhere that you don't understand the language, there is no text in the book.

Phase 3

We concentrated on making sure pupils were confident using the necessary ICT skills they needed to contribute towards our final book.

Phase 4

The Arrival was divided into sections and each child planned and wrote an individual piece of text according to the images allocated to them. The children typed up their writing and carefully chose six images that would support their text. Together as a whole class, the children wrote the text for *The Arrival* in a combined effort.

Outcomes:

The children were very positive about the books used throughout the project. They responded well to the texts and enjoyed using ICT to manipulate and type up their work.

Further writing opportunities were developed using the texts. For instance, the children wrote a short story using the illustration, title and single sentence from the Harris Burdick books. The children constructed their own questions

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

investigating the artist's intentions and then used these questions to create their own stories.

We also explored the idea of immigration, inspired by *The Arrival* and the children watched a documentary on a real life example. The children now have a better understanding of immigration and why people migrate.

The Arrival introduces the idea of the necessity to move from one's own country to another one in a very subtle way. The threat to a population, or certain members of a population, is represented by shadows which suggest the presence of predatory dragons. We spent some time talking about the fact that these dragons could stand for something - a threat, rather than be actually there in the text as characters. It remains to be argued whether it is our children's ages or their lack of life experience which tends to make them very literal in their interpretations.

There are many clues in the drawings that the dragons are not real, but it was a real effort to introduce that idea to the children and to get them to think about what the dragons might represent. One of our girls is from a family who are here from Afghanistan but, for her, it was almost as if such things are not spoken of because they are too real and present.

It was wonderful to see childrens' understanding emerging as we talked more about what the dragons represented and also to watch their developing empathy for the man who left his family.

Attitudes and attainment after the project:

Overall the attainment for reading and writing has risen over the past academic year. This has been down to the implementation of many projects in the class, including this writing project.

The children particularly enjoyed reading the books as they were very different to anything that they have had access to previously. They enjoyed the freedom to interpret the books and create their own stories from the images. George and Billy are still much more motivated and confident to commit themselves in writing.

Taking part in this project is the first small step towards the goal of making these feel they are writers asking themselves the questions: 'What do I want to say?' and 'How am I going to say it?'.

Legacy:

We will use the unit of work and *The Arrival* and *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* to support the creativity of writing for Year 5 classes next year and beyond.

We are very interested in using picture books more widely and have a good resource bank for this purpose.

Two classes are now watching current affairs programmes on a regular basis at the end of the day.

Culturally, we are already a very rich school but there is always room for new ways to address the issues and we are really pleased that we have been able to address both confidence and enthusiasm for writing as well as investigate a socially relevant topic with the class. .

   2. **Resources:**

BBC Newsround documentaries on immigration

A range of picture books to show how illustrations and text can be presented. We looked at books by:

- Oliver Jeffers
- Neil Gaiman
- Anthony Browne
- David McKee
- John Burningham
- Wolf Erlbruch
- Alan Ahlberg
- Eric Carle
- Shirley Hughes
- Dr. Seuss

Final thought:

When we run this project again with next year's Year 5 we will find opportunities to stretch the children's sentence work and encourage the children to write an original story of their own as well as descriptions of the pictures in an existing text.

Appendix 8: Case study: Book trailers

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: Book Trailers

A one line summary of your project: Pupils write descriptively in community locations, imagining they have entered strange new worlds, and create a filmed book trailer.

Which book did you use as a focus for your project? Coraline by Neil Gaiman

Year groups targeted: Year 5

The lead teacher on this project: Mrs Darbyshire and Mrs Whatmough

The full name of your school: Heaton Park Primary School

Your region: Bury

3. **Context:**

There is below average attainment on entry to the school in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Children rise to be average and above average at the end of KS2. Standards overall have improved in the past few years.

We have worked with Nikki Gamble over two years to develop writing, which has led to an increased engagement in creative writing, and positive changes in teaching and learning writing across the school.

As a school we aim to give creative writing a real purpose and meaning. We want our children to be engaged and enthusiastic writers, with basic skills firmly embedded. Senior leadership at the school is very supportive in continuing to develop writing across the school and curriculum.

4. **Attitudes towards readings and writing and attainment before the project:**

In Key Stage 2, 83 percent of pupils achieved Level 4 or above for writing in 2011, with 89 percent at Level 4 for reading.

Aims and principles:

Our aims were:

- Linking ICT and writing
- Promoting writing with boys – in particular by working with a book with a strong female lead character
- Building on the current interests of the children – film
- Making more links to the community
- To explore writing in unusual environments

In practice:

We ran this project as a unit over four weeks in the spring term.

Week 1 – We spent this week immersed in the text over five sessions, one a day. In each session the class teacher read aloud two or three chapters of the book and questioned them about the story as it unfolded. At the end of the reading, the class did a number of response activities, such as discussing the chapters in pairs; writing down anything that puzzled them on post-it notes; writing diary entries as Coraline; drawing Coraline on the other side of the mirror and depicting how she might be feeling etc. We concentrated a lot on using the senses in our descriptive writing. In the fourth session of this week, we asked children to draw the cellar as described by Gaiman – reading the description carefully and noting down the details they could use, also thinking carefully about what colours to use to create mood.

Week 2 – In the second week of the project we concentrated first on writing descriptive adjectives, imagining that we had landed on an alien planet. In the first session we turned off the lights in the class and shut the blinds, played strange alien music and let children experience two sense details – the planet's surface (jelly mixed with slate) and the smell of the planet (boiled eggs). Children had to make a list of descriptive words based on their experiences.

In the second and third sessions we did more imaginative writing sessions – imagining we were stepping through a door and into a snow scene (shown on the interactive whiteboard) and opening the classroom window and door and really listening to all the sounds. We discussed the sounds we heard and modelled them into good descriptive sentences. We also watched an online trailer for The Chronicles of Narnia and wrote about what could be beyond the wardrobe door.

In the last two sessions of the week we went on a walk into the local village and visited the graveyard, woods and the street. At each setting we imagined we were Coraline and that we had just gone through a secret door to arrive here. We asked them to imagine they were Coraline and to imagine each place with all their senses. We used this writing to compile a word bank back in the classroom.

Week 3 – In the first two sessions of this week we looked at three book trailers on YouTube – The Fire Chronicle, Found by Margaret Peter Haddix and A Dark and Grimm. We looked and listened for sounds, special effects and devices and recorded these on our sheets. The class teachers and teaching assistants performed their own book trailer based on Jack and the Beanstalk for the children and asked them what special effects and devices they thought they used, too.

In the last three sessions of the week we started planning our own book trailers for Coraline, making cards with the order of events from the book's plot and reminding ourselves how to use flip cameras.

Week 4 – In this week we edited our book trailers using Movie Maker, added sound effects and narration to the films and worked with partners to critique each others' work and give helpful feedback. In the last session we watched all the films and gave each other constructive feedback.

Outcomes:

The book trailers were sent home for children to show friends and family,

which generated a lot of interest in the project.

There is a lot more enthusiasm about writing across the curriculum now, and we are pleased that the project provided the children with real-life opportunities to use multimedia, as well as improved engagement with their local community.

Attitudes and attainment after the project:

There have been huge improvements in children's attainment levels in descriptive writing.

One boy in particular with ADHD and behaviour issues, who is a very reluctant writer, said:

"This is the best work I've ever done" and *"I don't like writing about pictures but I love it here!"* (in the graveyard). His written work can be seen here **(link to pics of work)** all of which were completed in outside locations. These samples show a great deal more writing than usual, and much more engagement and sophisticated language than we have seen before.

Legacy:

- Staff attended an ICT course with the local authority to improve their MovieMaker and film editing skills, and as a result, held a staff training session for the whole school to pass on the expertise.
- This unit has been so successful and the children enjoyed it so much that we are going to teach it to year 5 classes every year.
- There is also a legacy of awareness of the children of their local area, and this is something we are keen to expand on for future writing projects.

Final thought:

This has been a very time-intensive project, but the feedback from children and the writing results have made it worthwhile. We would recommend that if teachers haven't used MovieMaker before and wanted to use it in a project like this, it would be a good idea to go on a course first, as this was something we found difficult without any initial training.

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

Appendix 9: Case study: Out Of This World!

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: Out of this world!

A one line summary of your project: Pupils created a 3D fact and fiction book inspired by Doctor Who.

Which book did you use as a focus for your project? The Dr Who Character Encyclopedia

Year groups targeted: Year 5

The lead teacher on this project: Mrs Whatmough and Mrs Darbyshire

The full name of your school: Heaton Park Primary School

Your region: Bury, Greater Manchester

Context:

There is below average attainment on entry to the school in reading, writing, speaking and listening. Children usually rise to be average and above average at the end of Key Stage 2. Standards overall have improved in the past few years.

We have worked to develop writing over the past three years, which has led to an increased engagement in creative writing, and positive changes in teaching and learning writing across the school. As a school we aim to give creative writing a real purpose and meaning. We want our children to be engaged and enthusiastic writers, with basic skills firmly embedded.

Senior leadership at the school is very supportive in continuing to develop writing across the school and curriculum. This project represented the second year of involvement in this project and the new Year 5 children were already aware of the previous year's project. As soon as we began they were excited to share their own experiences with the current Year 6 groups and staff.

Attitudes towards reading and writing and attainment before the project:

In 2013 in Key Stage 2, 87 per cent of pupils achieved Level 4 for writing and 29 per cent Level 5. In reading, 74 per cent achieved Level 4 and 35 per cent Level 5.

Many of our children aren't really exposed to books at home and therefore have difficulty identifying the elements of a story – for instance, what elements an adventure or a spooky story has. However, in school they generally enjoy writing and enjoy their own individual writing when the opportunity is presented.

Aims and principles:

Our aims were:

- Linking ICT and writing
- Promoting writing with boys – in particular by using a book that the children wouldn't expect the school to promote

- Building on the current interests of the children – Dr Who and the 50th anniversary of Dr Who http://www.doctorwho.tv/50-years
- To provide pupils with the opportunity to create an end product for writing – in this case, Tardis books
- Helping to develop a new approach in the school where a quality fiction or nonfiction text is central to units we teach – literacy and otherwise

In practice:

We ran this project as a unit over four weeks in the Autumn term 2013.

Week 1 – We spent this week working on five cross curricular lessons on our science topic of space, so creating a research background for our writing. The children focused on the solar system, studying the features of the different planets, their relationship to the Sun and the physical conditions this has created on them.

The children were very interested in the moon and produced a mini flip book of the phases of the moon to take home, which enabled them to identify each phase on a nightly basis.

One of the activities was Mars landing project that asked children to imagine that they were part of the first team of astronauts to land on Mars in 2030. They could choose six objects to take with them. Children stuck pictures on poster paper and wrote brief notes on colourful post–it notes to explain why they chose their objects (and why they didn't choose others). The children were asked to nominate one person as the 'chair' and one as the 'scribe' to ensure the teams worked effectively. At the end of the session, groups presented their posters to the class. Children offered constructive feedback on their peers' ideas.

Week 2 – In the second week of the project the children were introduced to our chosen text for the project – The Dr Who Character Encyclopedia - and were asked to identify the features of non-chronological reports.

As the week progressed we asked them to create and paint papier mache planets and identify an alien from the book that might live on the planet their group had made.

In another lesson, groups of four children had to go on an alien treasure hunt in the school grounds, being told that we had assigned themnew alien identities. Each group chose an unmarked envelope. In the envelope were pictures of four masks for their new alien identities. As a group they needed to follow instructions to make their masks, and then search their encyclopedias to identify who they were (we had chosen Ice Warriors or Silvurians from the Dr Who Character Encyclopedia). In their groups they then had to create their own non-chronological reports about their new alien identities using the clues they had found.

Week 3 –In the third week the children had to research real planets and type a non-chronological report about a particular planet for their books. They used laptops to do this and imported images of planets from the internet onto their completed reports. Following on from this, each child had to create fictional aliens, anticipating which features would be best matched for survival on their choice of planets. This work was presented as a picture with accompanying text in zigzag-style books.

Week 4 – In the fourth week each child used 2D shape nets to create a tardis in which to place their zigzag-style books (a book made of folded pages). The children continued

with their books and in addition created contents and glossary pages. They also created a front cover using Purple Mash Cams (a computer programme - http://www.purplemash.com), incorporating photographs of their own faces on character's bodies.

As the week progressed the children were able to add to and help develop our space-themed reading and writing corners (e.g. hanging our newly made planets).

Outcomes:

- We designed and created an 'Out of This World' reading and writing area in our school library for all the school to enjoy.
- Each child in Year 5 created their own fact/ fiction zigzag Tardis book based on space and aliens.
- Staff assembly launched a school-wide project, linking reading and writing to the great outdoors.
- Several children enjoyed the Dr Who Creature Encylopedia and the topic of space and aliens so much that they have purchased further books linked to both. Some children even asked for them on their Christmas lists!

Attitudes and attainment after the project:

As a year group we try to encourage independent and quiet times for reading regularly throughout the day, with some children happier to do this than others. After week 2 of the project, the usually reticent children in particular were asking if they could read the Dr Who encyclopaedias at every opportunity. In addition, several children began bringing in and sharing their own books from home which were either linked to the project or from the same format (i.e. the encyclopedia of Star Wars etc.). Many children have continued to bring in their own ideas for aliens, even though the project has now finished, whilst others have brought in their own work completed on the solar system.

We had one child that had recently joined our school with serious behaviour issues. On the first few days of joining he was out of class on numerous occasions. However, once the project started his attitude to his work changed completely and he became very excited about his research and writing, creating his own alien and making his tardis book. At the end of the project he was proud to show his work - what he called 'a great job' - and told his parents how much he enjoyed his lessons.

From the end of Year 4 to December 2013, in the first term of Year 5, 32 per cent of the children in our classes have already gone up by one or more sub-levels in their reading attainment. This figure takes into account the summer dip created by the holiday period.

Attitudes, particularly amongst the boys, have improved immensely towards writing in general and this was reflected in their attainment levels at the end of the Autumn term. Every child across the year group has improved by at least one sub level, with 62 per cent improving on their Year 4 levels.

Legacy:

We have started the ball rolling on turning our space-themed library area into a permanent writing area in the school library and are planning on making existing reading corners in the school into reading and writing corners by adding writing

materials and perhaps getting children to take turns theming and curating the spaces.

The Write Book Project Coordinator Anna Loudon co-presented The Write Book with us to the rest of the school staff, to start to encourage colleagues to consider using quality texts as a key part of teaching all units.

A significant legacy of this project and last year's Coraline project is the school's new focus on "the great outdoors" and writing, though we did more outdoor writing in the Coraline project than in this one.

We are delighted to have a new senior leadership-driven focus on integrating working outside – in the school grounds, in the community and using school trips – with writing activities. Additionally, the school has large grounds which are in the process of being developed, presenting an ideal opportunity to think about permanent and temporary outdoor writing areas.

Final thought:

From a practical point of view, if we were to do this project again we would use different materials for the tardis books due to the difficulties of cutting and shaping the thick cardboard that we used this time.

Also, we would prefer to add in additional lessons for self and peer review and the editing of the children's final work. Unfortunately, time restraints did have an impact, even though we attempted to use a cross-curricular approach as much as possible.

Appendix 10: Case study: Space: The Final Frontier

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: Space: The Final Frontier

A one line summary of your project: Inspiring writing from a nonfiction text along with an intriguing "alien visit"

Which book did you use as a focus for your project? *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* by Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman, Flying Eye Books / Nobrow Press

Year groups targeted: Year 5

The lead teachers on this project: Clare Kennedy and Hollie Parsons

The full name of your school: Sandringham Primary School

Your region: Newham, London

Context:

We are a four form entry primary school in Newham where reading is a whole school priority; we have many systems in place to ensure the children make good progress. Every class takes part in daily booktalk/guided reading sessions which involve activities and questions that engage children with high quality texts to deepen their levels of comprehension. Every child has a home school reading log; they are expected to read at home every day for a minimum of twenty minutes.

The school provides the opportunity for our 'target readers' (children whose reading levels are below national expectations) to read every day at school and have time to discuss what they are reading. We are extremely fortunate to have a well-stocked library which has an extensive list of popular children's books and every class is able to visit the library once a fortnight. We have a volunteer school librarian who comes in once a week, helping with the general running of the library and ensuring that it is kept up to date and is well stocked.

There is a team of about eight children across years 5 and 6 who are our school librarians. They get to visit our Waterstones Piccadilly once a term to assist restocking the library and choosing new titles. Every year we celebrate World Book Day and the children come off curriculum for the day and really celebrate the love of reading. This year we also participated in World Book Night where parents came to share food and reading experiences whilst receiving a free book *Reading Lolita in Tehran* - this proved to be an extremely successful evening. We also strive to invite in authors where we can in order to enrich the books we teach. Andy Mulligan, the author of *Trash* (currently being made into a film) joined us in Year 6 in the autumn term and we were very lucky to host Anne Fine OBE, Children's Laureate this term across KS2!

The children at Sandringham enjoy writing and all our units are based upon a good quality text. The text is always our starting point for planning and all our writing opportunities are linked to this text. The children have good writing stamina and we have high expectations for our children's writing. They are always encouraged to think as an author and always consider the reader. We do however have a group of children who are harder to engage in the writing process, they include a number of disaffected boys and quiet girls. They are

often those children whose reading age is behind national expectations and who receive little if any home support for reading and completing homework.

Attitudes towards readings and writing and attainment before the project:

The majority of children in year 5 have always been very positive about their writing and enjoy it most of the time; however, at the beginning of the year their writing stamina as a whole was poor, and writing at length with sustained form and voice was something they struggled with back in the autumn term. The quality of their sentences and use of grammar was an area for concern and became a key focus for modelling through the exciting creative opportunities afforded by this writing project. The combination of a rich textual stimulus with clear focussed teaching of writing skills led to the majority of the children showing a marked improvement in the quality of their writing across the year.

Aims and principles:

- To create imaginative writers that produce high quality writing
- To engage and enthuse more reluctant writers
- To allow children more control over their own writing
- To explore a high quality non-fiction text to produce writing

What we did and how we did it:

We based a whole term's work around *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* and redesigned the literacy curriculum to allow the text to be the focus for both literacy lessons and guided reading sessions. The unit provided many different writing opportunities based on the book during the project.

We began the project by staging an alien invasion in Year 5; classrooms were 'trashed' with mysterious objects left hidden around the area. Year 5 children were read a letter from the 'aliens'. On entering the school, children from other year groups were given slips of paper outlining the mystery and were asked to help Year 5 solve the problem. Many staff got involved filming themselves, being interviewed and bringing in photos of strange sightings in the neighbourhood! The children loved this day and were so enthusiastic about solving the mystery. Throughout the day, the children investigated, taking notes ready to prepare their findings and write letters back to the 'aliens'. We ended the unit by having an open afternoon for parents where the children set up interactive workshops based on the topic to present their work and answer questions about their learning.

Outcomes:

Writing outcomes

- Note taking - examining the evidence of the alien invasion
- Letter to the aliens
- Responses to images of the alien landings
- Newspaper report about the invasion
- A number of different information pages mimicking the style and layout of the book based on different aspects of the space topic

Other outcomes:

- Reading comprehension questions and activities based on the book
- Planned and delivered presentations for parents based on an aspect of learning during the project

Attitudes to learning:

- All the children have really enjoyed the project, the text and the opportunity to write in a variety of different styles
- All the children have a very good understanding of the text and have been very confident when discussing the content and layout
- Their attitude towards all their writing work has been extremely positive and they have had some highly original ideas for their writing
- Children loved the alien invasion hook!

Attitudes and attainment after the project:

During our celebration presentations to the parents it was really incredible to see the confidence of the children. They had devised and developed the content themselves, allowing us to see the high levels of text knowledge and comprehension they had developed. Reinterpreting and presenting information is something our children can find challenging, yet even those working below expectations were fully engaged in the development process.

Before the project our progress data in writing for this group was below expectations when they entered Year 5. Since the project, progress data has shifted, with most children attaining one or more sublevel in writing by the spring term. The progress made in the attainment data is reflected in their increased confidence in writing and evidence of increased writing stamina across the year group with their ability to write for longer with more coherence than at the beginning of the year.

Quotes from some of our children below expectations in writing:

Child A

"I liked it when the Aliens came and messed up the whole room."
"I really liked writing about the UFO picture because it made me a bit scared in an excited way."
'I enjoyed looking at Professor Astro Cat's travelling around space and learning about what happened to them"
"I didn't like the real Alien that poked its head in through the door."
"I didn't like the slimy stuff they left in our class."

Child B

"The first thing I liked was the objects they left with signs on them"
"It was good to use Professor Astro Cat to help make our own Non-Fiction Space pages because I got information on space but also on how to set the information out."
"I liked investigating and collecting evidence from the Alien Invasion. We

drew pictures and made notes to help us write a newspaper story about the attack."

"The thing I didn't like was when they ruined our plants."

"Making a mess of our tables and touching our stuff"

Legacy:

The children have really enjoyed reading and learning from a high quality quirky non-fiction text. The level of discussion and ideas generated have been far higher than with more traditional non-fiction extracts or texts. The book will be revisited again in a similar way next year as the topic has developed children's confidence with nonfiction and produced a high standard of writing. Spring data has shown a high number of children making good progress in their writing and increased confidence in approaching non-fiction style texts and questions in their summer QCA tests.

Resources:

- Text - *Professor Astro Cat's Frontiers of Space* by Dominic Walliman and Ben Newman, Flying Eye Books / Nobrow Press
- Alien invasion - an assortment of objects around the classroom: silly string, painty handprints, goo etc
- 'Scientific notebooks' for note taking
- Film clips of staff describing their experiences
- Photoshopped images of aliens in the local environment
- Alien letter to the children

Appendix 11: Case study: Wolfish plots

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: Wolfish Plots

A one line summary of your project: Inspiring writers through drama and the editing process to write their own versions of a story

Which book did you use as a focus for your project? *The Wolves in the Walls*, written by Neil Gaiman and illustrated by Dave McKean

Year groups targeted: Year 5

The lead teacher on this project: Lisa McLaughlin, Asmah Batool and Eleni Georgiou

The full name of your school: Claremont Primary School

Your region: London

Context

Claremont is a large, ethnically diverse and thriving two form entry primary school. The proportion of pupils who have a minority ethnic background is very much higher than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils whose first language is not English. The percentage of pupils who are entitled to free school meals and the proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well above those found nationally. More than half of the pupils join or leave the school part way through their education, a proportion that is also very much higher than the national average.

Attitudes towards reading and writing and attainment before the project

On analysing responses to a set of pre-project questionnaires we conducted with the children around their attitudes to writing, and in discussions with them, it was evident that boys enjoyed non-fiction texts but were reluctant to engage with other genres, as they required a sustained commitment over a greater period of time.

Mahir said *"I like finding out information about the world and talking to my friends about it"*

This partiality to non-fiction texts suggests that the boys' reading is having minimum impact on the quality of their creative writing as they have a limited resource bank of ideas to call on and adapt.

This correlated with attitudes towards writing, as the majority of children found coming up with ideas for writing challenging and that they felt that they didn't have enough time to complete a piece of work.

Matti said *"I like writing but it is hard to think of ideas. I don't know where to get them from."* Alexi agreed and felt that it was easier to *"retell stories than write your own as you can get your writing finished quickly."*

Molly said *"I'm looking forward to spending time on writing. We have looked at poems and newspaper articles. I've enjoyed it but everything is so rushed because we have to move on to the next unit of learning."*

Aims and principles

In choosing *The Wolves in the Walls* as the key text, we felt that this scary and humorous story with its fantastic illustrations would appeal to boys and engage them in writing. Additionally, following the structure of the text would allow for consistency in their writing and ensure that those children who were new to learning English would be able to complete a narrative that they were proud of.

Aims

- To improve the quality of pupil writing with a particular focus on developing their use of imaginative language, vocabulary use and sentence construction (as identified in our OFSTED report June 2011)
- To improve the enthusiasm and engagement of pupils identified as reluctant writers.
- To raise the attainment in writing for boys.

In practice

Week 1 focus: Engage with and understand the story

- Prediction activities - What do you think the book is about? What is going to happen?
- Drama activities: In groups devise your own wolfish plot. Role play activities to empathise with and understand the thoughts and feelings of the characters. In groups of four, children to freeze frame sitting around the fire, each as a family member. Tap each child on the shoulder in turn to hear a brief 'inner monologue'
- Guided reading and discussions about the book

Week 2 focus: Elements of an extended narrative

- Character descriptions: physical appearance and personality
- Children to self-assess character descriptions. Do you think this is a good character description? Why? What makes it a good character description?
- Describe the setting using the senses.

Week 3 focus: Children plan and write their own version of *The Wolves in the Walls*

- Plan (story mountain planning sheet) and write opening, build up, problem, resolution and ending

Week 4 Focus: Editing

Children were provided with resources to help them in the editorial process of writing.

- Examples of character descriptions
- Examples of setting descriptions
- Examples of story endings
- Powerful verbs
- How to use adjectives
- Sentence starters (adverbs; linking time and events)
  - How to use paragraphs

- How to use punctuation (capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas, apostrophes, inverted commas and parentheses)

The editing process - being "Real Writers"

- Edit work on laptops
- Provide children with a photocopy of their work to edit with a colouring pencil
- Number and rewrite individual sentences
- Class Teacher to select parts of individual children's work for them to rewrite

Outcomes

We invited family members in to listen to the children read their stories, both to the group and then one-to-one with their own families. Even though some children didn't have family members there, parents, grandparents, sisters and brothers of other children were more than happy to listen to their stories too, and children read to each other. Everyone seemed very happy that they had told their stories to a real audience, and been heard and appreciated.

One boy, who had no English when he started at Claremont at the beginning of Year 5, read his story to his parents in their language and then in English. He was immensely proud of his work, especially because he had been able to write a whole story by following the existing structure of *The Wolves in the Walls* and introducing his own details.

The children also had the opportunity of sharing their work at a whole school assembly, attended by Mrs Anscomb, our headteacher, who was immensely proud of their commitment to the project and impressed by the length and the quality of the work.

Following that, a selection of the stories were collated into a class book to share with other classes and to be used as examples of creative writing. The remaining ones were displayed around the school to inspire young writers.

Having the focus of a real audience helped the children to understand the importance of redrafting work for the best effect possible. We very much worked with the idea of reading as a writer, and writing for your reader.

The project also inspired the children to take responsibility for their own learning, in discussion with their teachers they requested to work on another Neil Gaiman and David McKean text as they had really enjoyed *The Wolves in the Walls*. Therefore, *Crazy Hair* (link to http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/crazy-hair-9780747595991/) became a focus text in the summer term in which the children responded with non-chronological reports and a creative story. This is a wonderful outcome, as the children, particularly the boys, are changing their reading habits and are beginning to look at fiction texts in a new way.

Attitudes and attainment after the project

The project has given the opportunity for children to have the time to get to know a story in depth, in order to think of and develop ideas and then write and redraft their work accordingly.

Matti said *"I liked devising the wolfish plot it was great fun"*

Hadia continued *"Talking about the book and the role play really helped me with my story"*

Patrick said *"I enjoy creative writing, it's great being able to redraft my work on the computer, change things just as any writer would do"*

Nadia agreed with Patrick and said she *"enjoyed thinking about and selecting the words and sentences that would make the reader feel frightened"*

Nadia wrote:

"The tiny hairs on the back of Lucy's neck stood up. Something was wrong. She did not know what it was. Her eyes contracted. She could barely breathe the damp air and then heard the terrifying sound,"

The importance of building up the tension in a piece of work and drawing the reader in is evident in the children's work.

Nusayaba wrote:

"Have you ever heard mysterious sounds coming from the walls? Well Lucy has one quiet evening as he was walking…"

And Mahir wrote:

"She took one step to the door. She touched the dusty door knob. Her palms and ears were against the wall. She heard crunching, rumbling, stumping and stamping coming from the WOLVES!"

For a majority of children, the project has increased confidence and self-esteem and they now see themselves as writers. One reluctant writer has now written a rap for the school song. And three boys have been inspired to write their own stories at break and lunch times.

As with our previous Write Book project with Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver*, the children have also become more confident in discussing their writing – what they like about it and how it can be improved.

Daniel said, *"If I need an idea I know I can think about the other books I've read and adapt them"* Aya commented *"From the story I've learnt new and interesting adjectives that I can use in other pieces of work."*

The final quote goes to Molly. Molly was very excited about the project and enjoyed writing her own stories, but had reservations about *The Wolves in the Walls* as a main text because it was a picture book and *"I'm too old for those books"*.

However, Molly has now changed her mind. *"I'm going to read lots of different types of books picture books and non-picture books, at first they can help you with your ideas."*

Giving the children the opportunity to read something new and be inspired by it – to read more or write in their own time - has been a positive and empowering experience for those involved.

Legacy

As a result of the project we plan to introduce:

- A book-based curriculum to inspire reading and creative writing (in our most recent inspection in March 2014, Ofsted could see that real progress had been made in year 5 in terms of children's progress in writing)
- Continue to involve parents in class-based reading and writing workshops on a more regular basis
- Develop a story telling place and writing area in our "secret garden"

Final thought

This was a great project which gave a real focus and purpose for writing. Children were motivated and engaged throughout the project and it has had a positive impact on the children viewing themselves as writers and readers.

When we use the book next year we will plan a trip to an old house/farm so that the children can have some spooky experiences to support them in their writing, imagining what it *really would* be like to be in those old walls…

Appendix 12: Case study: A Series of Unfortunate Scrapbooks

The Write Book Case Study

The title of your project: A Series of Unfortunate Scrapbooks

A one line summary of your project: Making scrapbooks documenting the journey of one of the book characters to particularly engage "quiet girls" in Year 5

Which book did you use as a focus for your project? *A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning* by Lemony Snicket

Year groups targeted: Years 5 and 6

The lead teacher on this project: Vicki Brewer

The full name of your school: Swaythling Primary School

Your region: Southampton

Context:

Swaythling Primary School is a small one-form entry school with a total of 210

children on roll, in an inner city catchment area. We have 50 per cent EAL and a high proportion of transient pupils. 22 languages are spoken in the school and we have a good multicultural focus. Recently, the school improvement plans have focused mainly on raising standards in writing as AF1 and 2 (the more creative elements of writing) were identified as a weakness across the school.

The school has been very successful in regards to phonics and early reading which has enhanced an early love of books. A keenness to read both in class and at home (using an online reading program called Bug Club) has been identified by the teachers across the school. Mrs Whatley, our Year 2 Teacher, said that the children also show confidence in using more adventurous vocabulary when writing as they are able to use their phonics knowledge to help attempt the spelling.

As a school the concept of having a book as a "hook" for topics has been implemented. In Year 5 the children have used a number of CLPE's Power of Reading schemes of work to encourage a love of reading and adapted these to include opportunities to write.

Alongside using 'books for hooks', the school is also including a number of Pie Corbett's Talk for Writing based activities. The children, across the school, have been learning to retell a number of stories/texts throughout the year. For example:

- Reception – A range of fairy tales including *The Gingerbread Man*
- Year 1/2 - *The Gruffalo, Tiddler*
- Year 3/4 – *Room on the Broom, Alice in Wonderland*
- Year 5 – *The Highwayman, Theseus and the Minotaur*

We have also taken inspiration from Pie Corbett's stages of writing and used it in our planning format as phases of learning. The stages we've

used are: Imitation (Learning to recite the text using images), Innovation (adapting the text to create your own version) and Application (Writing your own version).

Attitudes towards reading and writing and attainment before the project:

This year's Year 5 children had a positive attitude towards reading and writing before the project. As a cohort they show a similar level of ability in reading and writing (levels in both range from 2a – 4b) and have a strong work ethic. However, a significant number of children in the Year 6 class were less keen participants in literacy lessons prior to the project and would often choose to not participate in a lesson if it had a strong reading or writing focus.

Due to the higher number of 'boisterous boys' in both classes, groups of quiet, undemanding girls developed. This was the inspiration for choosing a book with a strong female character (the character of Violet in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*) and for including a number of hands-on, creative activities for the children to participate in. This benefitted the quiet girls by giving them a strong female role model and having a creative, 'arty' feel to the project for them to express themselves, and the boisterous boys by having a semi-dark/twisted, humorous story line for them to follow and engage with.

Aims and principles:

Our aim was for the children to enjoy reading a story that contained a number of different exciting events, and document these in the style of a scrapbook that a character themselves may have created. This would enable them to identify strongly with fictional characters, and we hoped that encouraging children to respond creatively as book characters would provide them with a "way in" to the story, thus increasing engagement.

The books in *A Series of Unfortunate Events* are funny and quirky, which we thought the children would really enjoy. The first in the series, *A Bad Beginning*, details the journey of three children to their evil uncle's house, and all the perils that befall them thereafter. We thought that the combination of a quirky action-packed story and strong characters would give the children lots of opportunity to imagine themselves into the events and create "authentic" ephemera for their scrapbooks based on the children's travels and travails.

We wanted to ensure a positive attitude to writing throughout the project as well as attainment, and focused mainly on the attainment of the quiet, undemanding girls. We demonstrated that challenging yourself and making mistakes are key ways of learning and should be celebrated. By ensuring that teachers modelled making mistakes when writing, but also showed the children strategies that can be used to correct them, the children became less concerned about taking risks with their writing such as using adventurous vocabulary that they couldn't necessarily spell. Every classroom now displays a 'Wonky Wall' where errors that have been noticed, by both children and adults, are displayed and celebrated as a learning curve.

We had no specific intentions to improve a single genre of writing. Throughout their time at school the children have already covered a wide range of writing and going through these repeatedly can become monotonous and disengaging. We decided to recap briefly on the genres of writing, give them a purpose for writing linked to the book and more time to actually write and present work they were proud of.

In practice:

We planned to read the book in stages across four weeks in the summer term and produce various pieces of writing across the genres in relation to the significant events in the book. We thought this approach, rather than reading the whole book in one go and following it with the writing, made more sense in the context of scrapbooking, as it is by nature a gradual, cumulative process. Combining reading and writing in stages in this way also made the story more easily digestible.

We chose to do the project in the summer term because the children had already covered a wide range of writing in detail and it would be easier to recap at this point, linking the writing to work they had done previously. For example, when we wrote the newspaper report about the parent's death in the fire, the children were able to think back to earlier in the year when they had written newspapers about *The Iron Man*. This enabled them to recall what was good about their writing then and what they could do to build on and improve this time.

As Year 6 writing SATs levels are now based on teacher assessment, it is important for the children to have a wide range of recent evidence showing their ability. This project was an amazing way of gathering examples of both fiction and non-fiction writing for each child without giving them a series of unrelated tasks simply to produce the evidence.

We ensured that writing tasks:

- Always had a purpose
- Coincided with events in the books
- Were fun

On occasion we gave the children hands-on experiences prior to their writing, such as opening an Italian restaurant and trying new foods. The children were also introduced to the concept of writing in real life (e.g. If you become an estate agent when you are older you will need to apply the persuasive writing skills that you have been learning).

We tailored the tasks to coincide with events that happened in the book – the table below shows the majority of writing that was included and some of the ways we tried to include 'arty' elements.

Plot	Linked Writing Activity	Experience and Fun Stuff
The children - Violet, Klaus and Sunny - are introduced and a brief description of them is given.	The children chose which character they would like to be and began writing a diary as them. The diary entries ran throughout the scrapbook and gave a great insight to the children's understanding of the characters.	Hot seating the characters – this was particularly entertaining as Sunny, the baby, likes to bite things.

The children are playing at the beach when they are informed about the untimely death of their parents.	The children produced articles reporting on the house fire.	-Burning wood as a memento (Painted black! No wood was really burnt in the making of this scrapbook) -Group tableaux of the moment the children are told -Gathering sand from the beach as another memento -Screwing up and staining the newspaper report to make it look like they had taken it from Olaf's desk.
The children go to live with Count Olaf, a distant relative they have never met.		Scribbling on toilet paper (clean!) the children suggested that there would be limited resources for the children to have fun/be creative so they would have to use what they had access to.
The bedroom the children are forced to share is described.	The children produced a set of Estate Agent Details as though Count Olaf was selling his house.	-Creating business cards -Using Microsoft word to combine images and text. -During this time the children also created collage eyes to emphasise how Count Olaf's house had eyes everywhere!
The Children are forced to cook Count Olaf and his troupe of actors dinner.	The children wrote a recipe for the meal made in the book, Puttanesca. They also produced a Trip Advisor review of the 'restaurant' we staged at school.	-We turned the classroom into a restaurant to prepare the food. -The children wrote up their recipe and splashed in with red paint to look like pasta sauce.
	The children produced IMDB biographies about a fictional character they believed to be included in Count Olaf's theatre troupe.	-Role play

BookTrust
Inspire a love of reading

Alongside the cooking, the children are also made to complete a large number of chores.	The children wrote a persuasive letter to Mr. Poe (a friend of the family and the man who placed the children in Olaf's care.)	
	The children produced leaflets on how to look after children as though Count Olaf had written them	Children had free rein on how they would like to produce their leaflets and how they would like to include images.
Count Olaf plans a play in order to trick Violet into marrying him so he will inherit the orphan's fortune. He holds Sunny hostage in a high tower.	A large number of children created posters in their own time to advertise the plan. In class we wrote play scripts for the actors to follow.	-The children acted out the play scripts. - Grappling hooks, like the one used by Violet to save Sunny, were created.
The children also included a number of elements that they had produced at home such as: chore lists, WANTED posters, contents pages, etc.		

Below are a number of images from a couple of scrapbooks. The work placed in the scrapbooks was all the children's work from home and final write ups. They spent time planning, writing and editing in their literacy books before this stage.

Outcomes:

Each individual child produced a large, A3 size, handmade scrapbook comprising each piece of their writing – letters, adverts, etc., and a number of individual items the children had decided to put in the book to make it appear more personal to the characters. For instance, sachets of sand from the part in the book where the children find at about the death of their parents, burnt wood from the fire and cutting bites out of the pages as though Sunny had bitten them.

The children were extremely proud of the work they produced and as a result we would often send them to show the other class (5 to 6 and vice versa) along with members of the SLT. We also invited the parents in to see their child's work on an informal basis.

Also, as the project coincided with the SATs writing assessment in Year 6, the children were able to produce a variety of writing for evidence. So we found that the project was both a creative way to achieve a number of different genres of writing in Year 5, and revisit them in an enjoyable way at Year 6.

Upon returning to school after the summer break I had a number of books (from the *Series of Unfortunate Events*) waved at me with gleeful smiles from the new Year 6 children that had been in year 5 for the project. There were a number of comments from children that had read the second book over the holidays, and discussions about how the film merges the first two books.

A couple of particularly bright girls in year 6 took it upon themselves to take time at home to write an extended narrative to include in their

scrapbooks about Klaus's (a young boy in the book) favourite books, as he is a character that loves reading.

Attitudes and attainment after the project:

A number of children that often appear disengaged from their learning, both boys and girls, appeared to take great pride in their work and loved that they were given the opportunity to present a final copy of their scrapbook to teachers and their parents during an informal after school event.

When asked what their first thoughts about the scrapbook project were, children said:

They are really good people bring things from home and stuck it in the Scrapbook. its fun making it and really creative

Scrap booking was so fun. Reading the book and then making a Scrap book on it. It was a new intresting thing to do.

The scrapbook Project, was just EPIC. It was one of the best projectos I'd ever don to be honest! The working the putting togethe everything was just amazing

As the project took place towards the end of the term, there was no definitive data that can be attributed solely to the project. However, all teachers working within the project reported that the pride the children were taking in their work and their engaged attitudes contributed to some of the best examples of writing they had seen from a large number of children, particularly the boys in Year
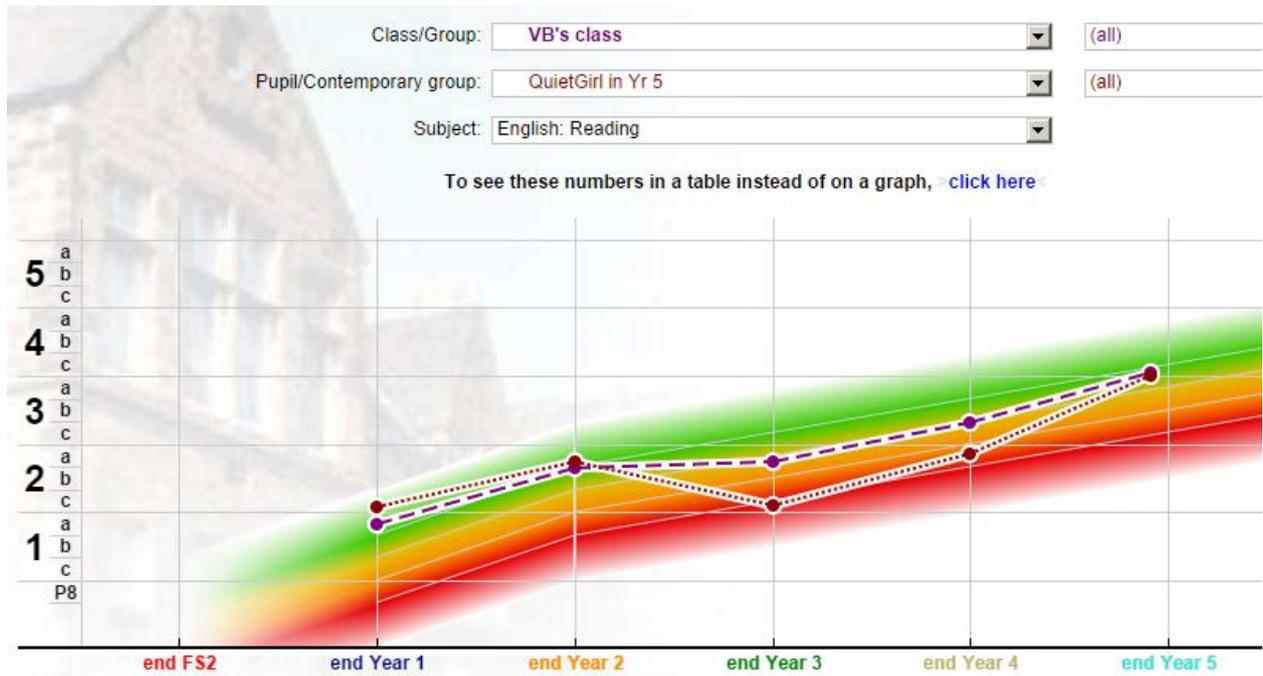
6.
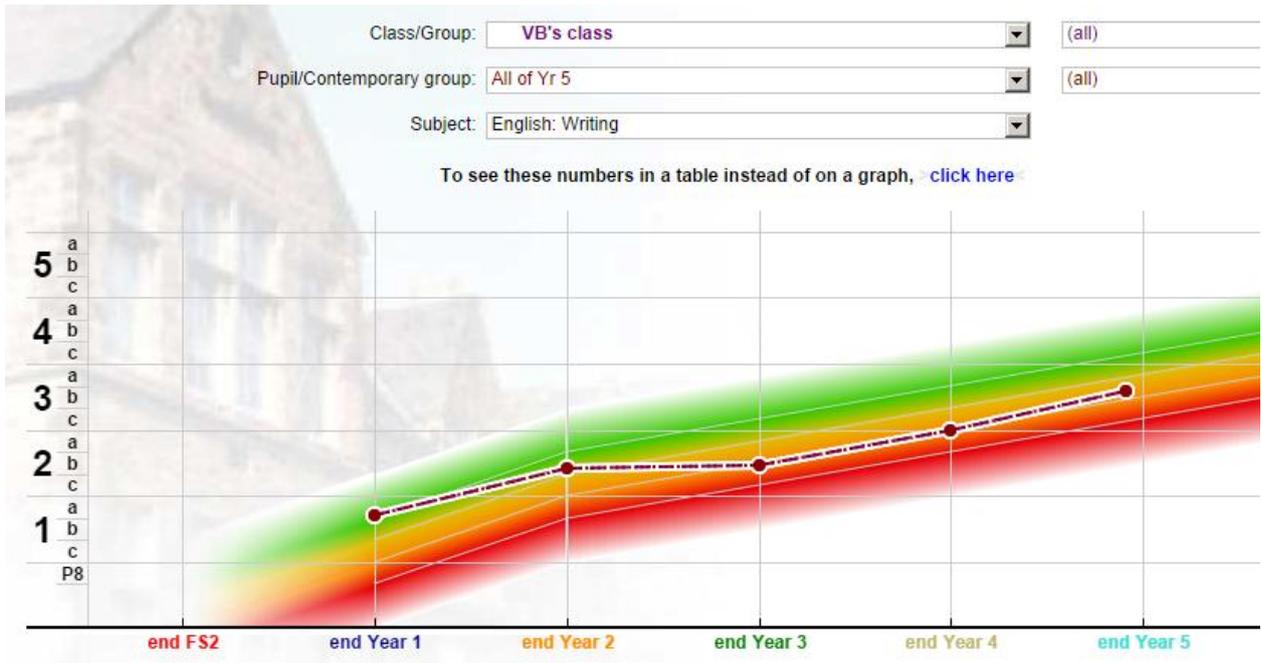
Year 5 Progress Data for the year
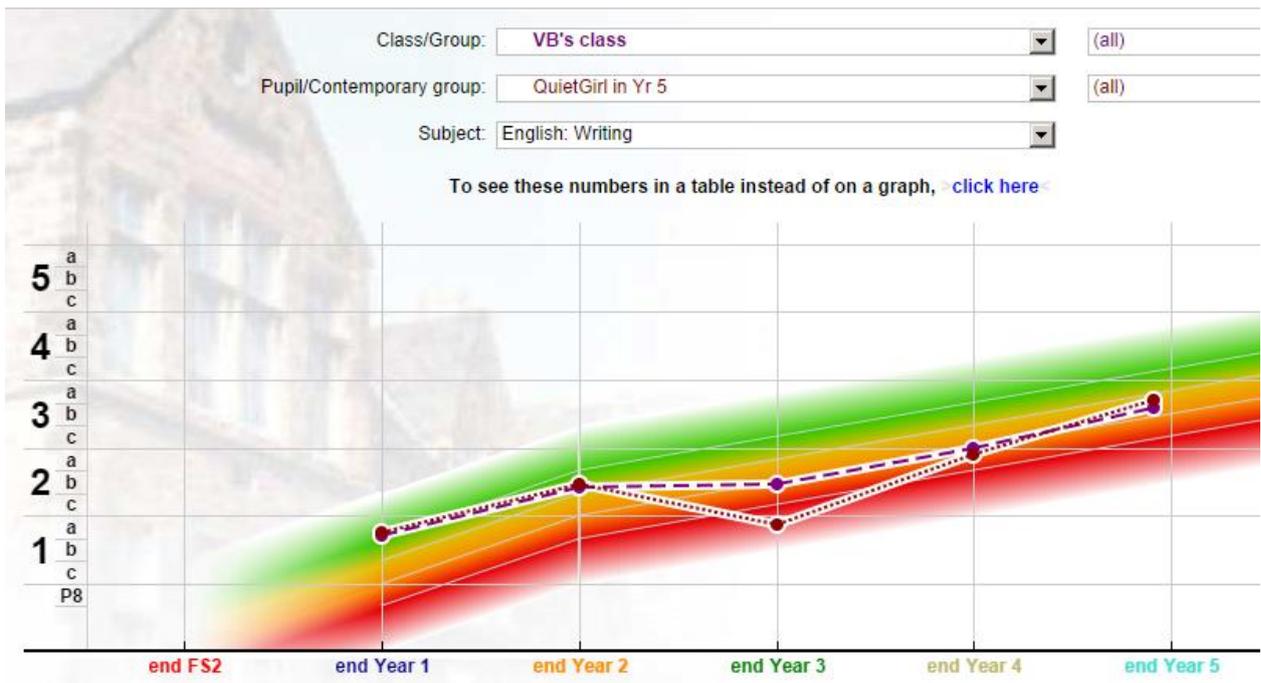
Whole Class Reading
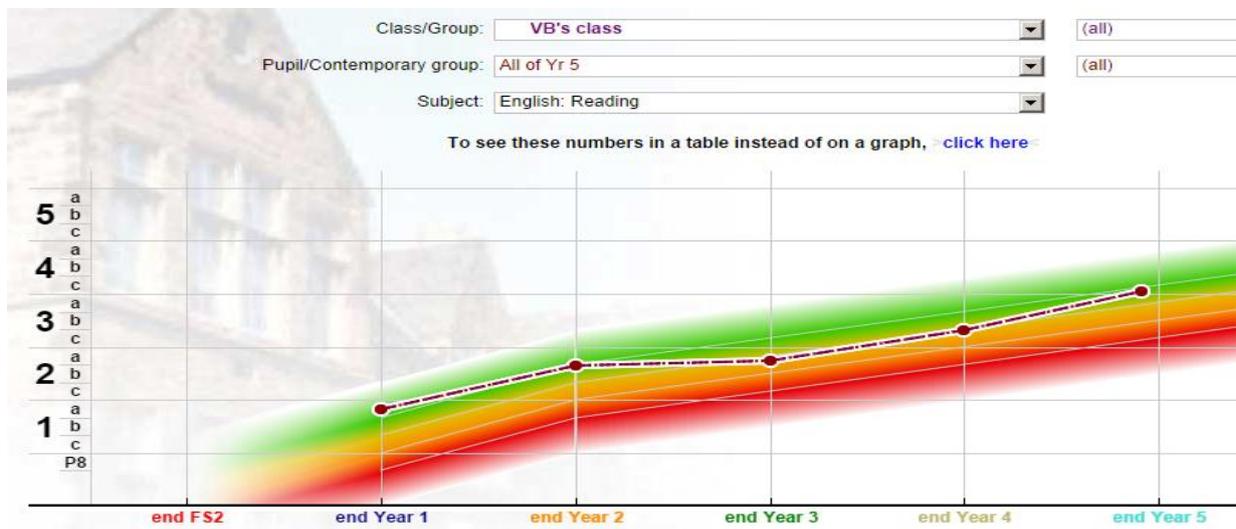
Quiet Girl Reading

Whole Class Writing

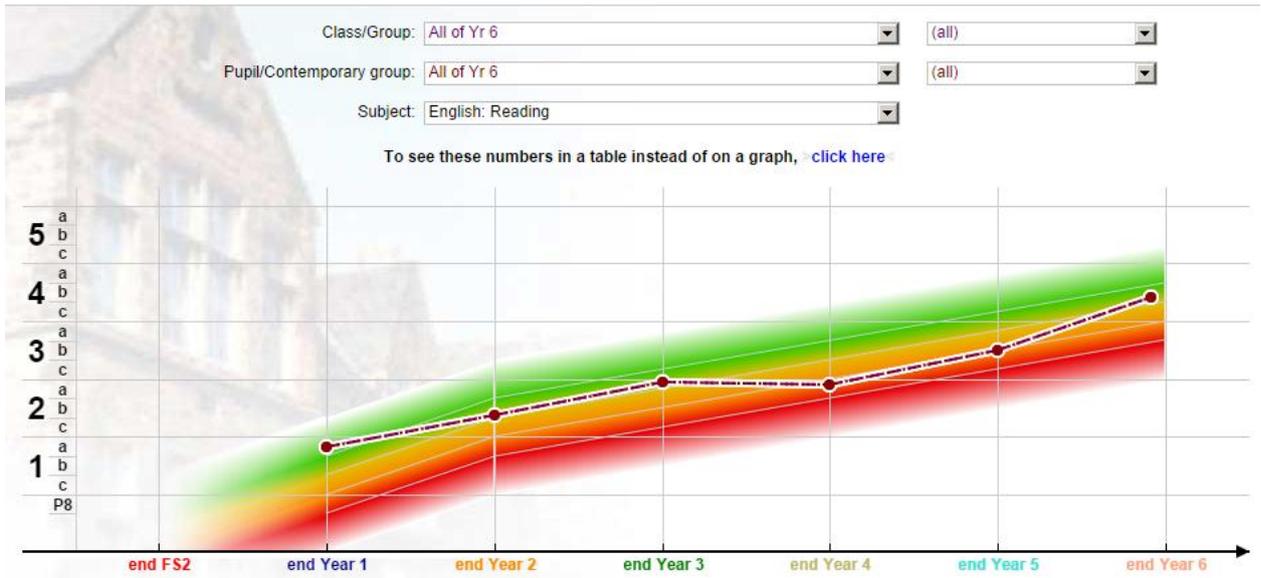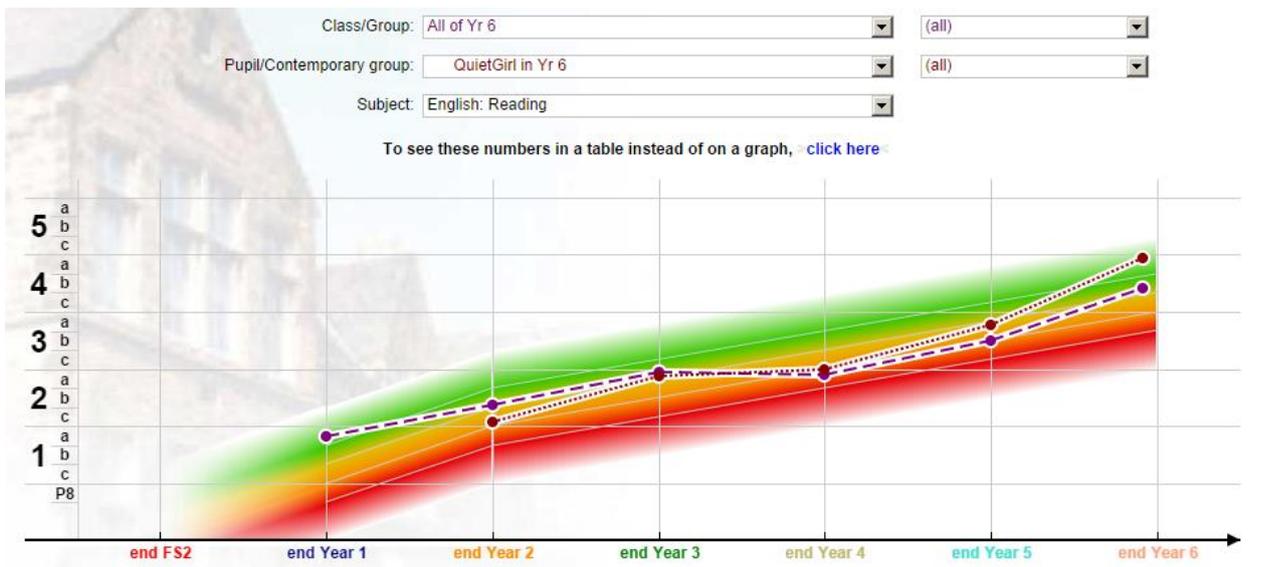**Quiet Girl Writing**
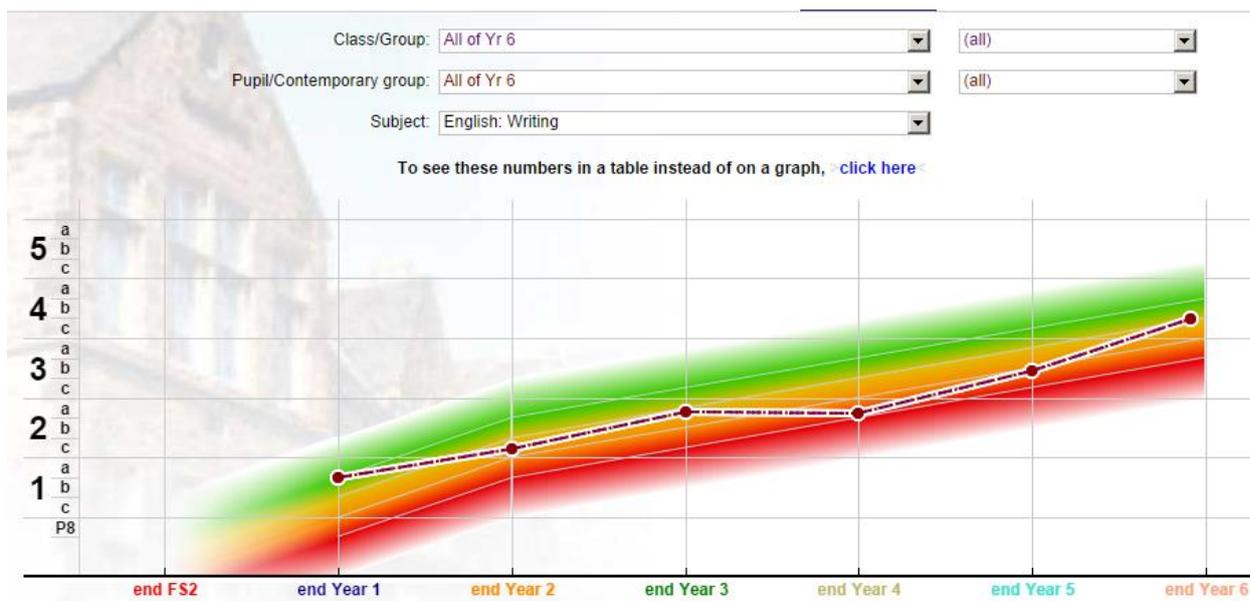

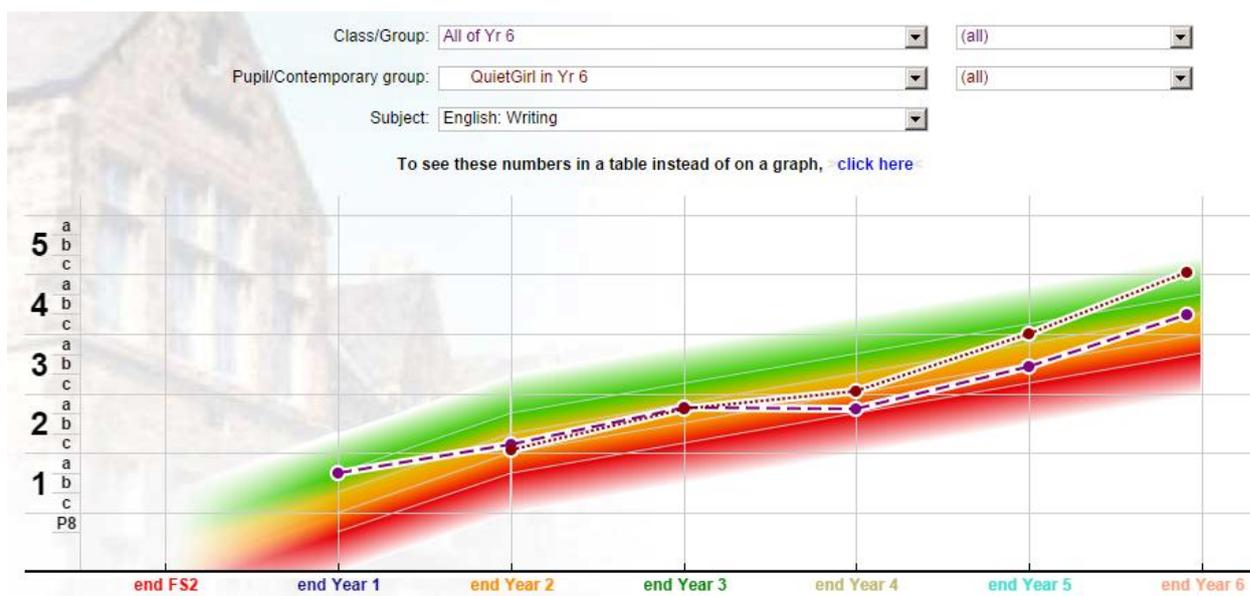**Year 6 Progress Data for the year**

Whole Class Reading

Quiet Girl Reading

Whole Class Writing

Quiet Girl Writing

Legacy:

We shared our project with our colleagues in the staff room, informally, and the scrapbook project has inspired other teachers within the school to conduct a similar task in the Summer term as an assessment piece which can then be passed on to the new teacher.

Year 2 are hoping to develop an idea which can reproduce the benefits of the scrapbook with a "book hook" that would be suitable for their age group, potentially the *Horrid Henry* books. This summer term, Year 6 will be using the book *Kensuke's Kingdom* and the theme of messages in bottles to produce a similar outcome.

As part of the project we asked Anna Loudon from Book Trust to run a book familiarisation session with us, and she brought in a selection of new and classic children's books

that might be good focus for writing and other projects throughout the school. Teachers from across the school attended the session and enjoyed having the time to look at books with colleagues and discuss creative ways they might be used in class.

We would highly recommend setting aside the time for a large group of teachers to look at new and exciting books, and think about how they might be used as a "hook" for teaching. You might do this by visiting your local independent book shop or Waterstones and talking to the children's book specialist, or asking your local library to run a session on new and other lovely books that are available.

The Book Trust Bookfinder (link to http://www.Book Trust.org.uk/books/bookfinder/111/) has also been a fantastic tool for us, helping to suggest books for topics. It is also great to broaden teachers' knowledge of what books are available, especially for our three NQTs.

Resources:

As previously mentioned, we put the writing tasks in a real world context as much as possible. So for instance, we looked at a number of popular websites as models (eg. Rightmove, Trip Advisor and IMDB) in terms of information texts, review and biography writing.

We searched for a scrapbook model to show the children that was published but were unsuccessful in our search. Luckily, the mother of a child in Year 5 had made him a scrapbook for his time spent in nursery and lent us that to demonstrate what we envisaged as a scrapbook.

Final thought:

If we did this project again we would allow longer for the children to complete their scrapbooks.

Though many of the children really loved the A3 size of their books, we might also consider making or using smaller ones, depending on the class, as a big book needs a lot to fill it and takes up rather a large space in the classroom.