**Jacqui Pennington Whitton Green Primary School, Lowestoft, Suffolk**

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| Improving writing : maximising progress through Lesson Study |
| **Who might find this case report useful?**  Teachers and assistants supporting children’s learning |
| **Key points:**  Look closely at a single child and apply what you discover to groups.   * Why doesn’t his writing get better? * How can I help him write on his own? |
| Names and usual roles and contact details of LS group members  Jacqui Pennington Year 2 teacher: Whitton Green Community School  Amanda Lyons Year2 teacher: St Marys Primary School  Amy Gislam Year 2 teacher: Roman Hill Community Primary |
| Section A: Context and overall aims  Whitton Green Primary has approximately 210 pupils with an age range of 3 years to 11 years. It is situated within a suburban housing estate and serves a mixed catchment area of privately owned and council owned properties in an area of the town classed as deprived. It has a higher than average take up of free school meals. 22% of children are on the special needs register .The school provides a nurture group, a breakfast club and various after school activities to enhance the learning of many children. Often children enter nursery with poor language and social skills.  The school aims for children to be active learners and topics are chosen to be both appealing and of relevance to them. Boy-friendly texts and methods of learning are also a big consideration when choosing materials and activities as the boys generally underperform, particularly in writing. The school works hard to boost children’s self-esteem and aspirations; visitors that may prove inspirational to many children are welcomed. Outdoor learning is a feature of the school and visits to places of interest and sporting fixtures are frequent. |
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| **Section B. Aims of the LS, class and case pupils you worked with** |
| The lesson study focus is to improve story writing in Year 2 using a ‘talk for writing’ approach as advocated by Pie Corbett and his three ‘eyes’ notion - ‘imitation, innovation, invention’.\* The class had just begun a unit of work on Traditional Tales and the Story of Finn McCool was chosen as we thought the characters of the two giants would capture boys’ interest particularly. Generally the children’s writing of stories was lack-lustre and so we wanted the children to learn how story-tellers make their tales come to life and make listeners want to hear the rest of the story. We wanted to introduce new vocabulary to children and for them to incorporate some of it in their writing. Recently I had acquired some new teaching materials that would help my delivery in a style in which I had little experience and I was keen to use them. The resources were very effective and prior to the RL the class had learnt to retell sections of the story linking lively characterisations with actions.  Two boys were chosen for the case study so that we could specifically monitor learning from a boys-eye-view. Both were making little noticeable progress in writing.  \*How to teach Story Writing at Key Stage 1: Pie Corbett 2003  Getting to know Child A   * Very talkative (leads him into trouble) * Fluent ‘ex-reading recovery’ reader (NC level 2A) * Writing at level 1A * Popular * Football-mad * Assertive * Poorly presented work that is brief, unfinished or missing the point * No sense of pride in his writing   Our Aim: to improve his response in lessons to learning objectives, time constraints and to result in a greater sense of achievement and pride in his work.  Getting to know Child B   * Poorly developed speech; speech is unclear and immature * Keen and valued contributor to class discussions * Writing level dips into 1C occasionally * Making fair progress in phonics lessons, but doesn’t apply skills to his writing independently * Creative * Eager to please * Hard-working * Resorts to copying any text around him if left to his own devises   Our Aim: to enable him to apply his phonic skills independently and to write whole sentences relevant to the subject that are a better indicator of his knowledge and creativity. |
| Section C: Your first research lesson1) (RL – planning, delivery, observations and analysis meeting (300 words) |
| 1st session. Teacher J.Pennington  observer child A: A.Gislam  observer child B: A.Lyons  Lesson Objective.: to use descriptive language to describe the features of a new character.  In this first Research Lesson the observers set out to see how the children usually operate within a lesson. Support was given to child B by a TA, whilst child A worked independently.  The class have spent the week getting to know the story. Most have internalised the first part of the story and taken part in several drama activities. They have met a new happy-go-lucky, sporty, but lonely giant. With a group of children they were to decide how he looks and to choose a name and then draw him large scale. Finally, still working as a group, they were to add descriptive phrases on post-it notes to their poster. After a class brain-storming session on how the descriptions could be improved we used the class’ top-tips’ to improve the descriptive phrases which would then be displayed with the giant.  Observations of Child A   * found it hard to work co-operatively with his peers, * talked a lot, but to nobody in particular and his ideas were not adopted by the group * worked alone most of the time * wrote his post-it without consultation with the others * his idea was brief and unadventurous * helped others to improve on their choice of adjectives when prompted by the teacher. * took part in the class discussion and appeared to take on some of their ideas. ‘He has big stripy feet’ became ‘He wears stripy football socks with a hole in them.’ * extra time was given to complete the task * presentation remained poor.   On reflection child A was aware of the Lesson Objective and thought he had wasted time in the lesson. He was aware of his writing targets but had not achieved them today.  Action for Research Lesson 2: the class would hear several reminders of the Lesson Objective and success criteria and a timer would be used to help him work with more urgency.  Observations of Child B   * visually stimulated * fully engaged with his group * offered original ideas to his group about the giant’s features * when the writing began on whiteboards his confidence waned * appeared unsure of sounds, * reluctant to take risks * frequently looked at others’ boards. * had difficulties sequencing his ideas and forming a sentence * found it hard to remember his ideas so he could write them down * constantly rubbed out and rewrote his sentence.   Action for Research Lesson 2: Child B would be encouraged to refer to a phonic mat and a word bank of key words, labelled pictures of characters, setting etc. He will be trained to use a talking tin to record his ideas. |
| Section D: Your second research lesson (RL2) – planning, delivery, observations and analysis meeting |
| Lesson Objective: to improve our writing with time connectives, adventurous language and dialogue.  The focus this week has been on making improvements to our sentences. The children have invented a new story using their new character. I have modelled writing sharing my thought processes and they have used response partners when composing new sentences. Child A has responded well to this and he has become more aware of whether his work is legible.  In this lesson we planned that children should talk about their ideas for a good story ending. To emphasise the success criteria the children shared the writing of a list of top tips for writing an exciting ending, including using WOW words, time connectives and interesting dialogue. This checklist would be displayed on the working wall and would be referred to during the lesson. Children would be encouraged to stop periodically and read their writing to a partner and to make improvements to it. A stop-watch would provide a count-down of time left to complete the task at each stage and would be used to focus children on the task. A voice recorder would be used by the guided group.  Observations of Child A   * did not engage well in discussions about a potential ending * when asked to share their idea he was able to invent an idea on the spot * offered a low level ‘top tip’ for improvement voluntarily. * wrote only one sentence during independent writing * read his sentence to his partner, but did not improve it * very distracted throughout the writing session. Time allocated to polishing his sentence was used to continue writing as so much of his time was spent off-task. * His final piece of writing showed improved handwriting and use of time connectives, but no adventurous language.   On reflection he was aware of the LO and knew he had not achieved it, but none the less he was pleased with his writing. He thought it could be better if the teacher helped him.  What was holding Child A back?   * Choice of partner, * child’s own low expectations, * lack of motivation * distractions (this includes the stop watch used)   Aim for Research Lesson 3: Working up to and during the next RL child A will work with selected partners who will help him focus, the stop watch will be replaced by a sand-timer, any achievements he has made within the classroom will be acknowledged publicly, guided work will focus on editing, playtimes would be used to pay back time wasted in lessons (as a mad-keen footballer this had a huge impact).  Unfortunately Child B was absent for this lesson and so a child, child C, of similar ability was observed.  Observations of Child C   * lacked ideas for writing. * liked using the voice recorders * recording of sentences appeared to help him spot mistakes in his work * edited his work using finger spaces and improving handwriting. * Copying from his board to his book led to mistakes.   He was extremely pleased with his work. The voice recorders were very successfully used by the group with the teacher’s support though children need training on how to use them independently. |
| Section E: Your third research lesson (RL3) – planning, delivery, observations and analysis meeting (300 wds) |
| Lesson Objective: to think twice about word choices /use all of our senses to write a riddle  This lesson was planned as part of the ‘spring-time’ topic. The children have undertaken a variety of writing tasks this week using descriptive language, but have not worked with riddles before. The first part of the lesson aimed to familiarise them with the genre and they read and solved riddles together. They are then to write a riddle using familiar spring-time images as a stimulus. Child A would work independently in his usual place for literacy, a sand timer would be used, frequent reminders about Lesson Objective and opportunities to share work with a partner as it progresses would be part of the lesson. The teacher is to feed- back good choices of words and phrases.  Child B will work with Teaching Assistant to form simple sentences and improve them before writing them down to make a group riddle. He will use a voice recorder and phonics mat.  Observations of Child A   * read some of the riddles aloud, but did not attempt to solve them * appeared distracted by the timer on the table * when everyone else ignored him he finally settled to solve a riddle and wrote an answer on the back * appeared inattentive on the carpet, but was clear about the task and LO when asked. * found it hard to select and settle with one picture * talked to whoever would listen. At one point he told others to be quiet as he was writing, but then joined in the conversation. * Finished basic task, but not the extension.   What held him back today?   * Talking incessantly! * The timer was a distraction   On reflection he has enjoyed getting recognition for his achievements in class, as well as on the football field, and is beginning to take more pride in his work. Child A seems to talk through habit not through necessity and it is hard to find a partner to cure him of this so an isolated spot away from distractions works well for him and he often chooses to do this. The timer will continue to be used at a distance and a carefully selected response partner will help him to focus on the LO.  Observations of Child B   * really engaged in the picture riddles * good ideas for the riddle about a frog. ’ His legs are squashy’ * found it hard to distinguish his words on the talking tins. * wrote his words and counted them then listened and counted the words. * listened to the sentence over and over again and practised saying it several times. * wrote the sentence correctly in his final riddle.   What held him back today?   * The voice recorders helped, but he needs to learn to use them independently * found it hard to spot mistakes when writing a whole sentence.   On reflection: through guided work we will help him to write separate words on cards so that words can be easily inserted. A talking partner will help him rehearse sentences before recording them. He will continue to be encouraged to use phonics picture mats when he is stuck. |
| Section F Impact on pupil learning and progress |
| Through this project I have been reminded that learning behaviours are developed over time and that whilst some adopt them readily others need constant reinforcement of them. Behaviour, as seen in child A, that counteracts learning can be changed over time, but it is a long haul task and could not be corrected within three short weeks. Child A and others like him in my class have benefitted from clearer expectations (time constraints, success criteria etc.) and explanations of what we are learning and why we are learning it. Presenting their work to a partner, the class or their group and not just their teacher has raised their awareness of audience and with that that they raise the standard of work.  From the observations I was made aware of the needs of children that find language difficult. Planning will allow time for them to organise their thoughts and give extra rehearsal time to help them achieve. Pictures and actions will be used to help them to remember. Simple procedures to follow when writing are being taught so that they will be automatically adopted enabling this group of children to function independently in the class room. Pupils, like child B, who in addition to under-developed speech have a poor memory will be given aides to support them as they work on their own encouraging them to work without the support of an adult.  . |
| Section G Impact on practice and future teaching |
| I have listened to my colleagues’ observations and advice and have been able to put into place measures that will help groups of my children learn. However, much of my learning has come from observing children in other settings. An engaging lesson that we assumed would be enjoyed by all revealed a shy child that made no progress in the drama lesson taught in preparation for writing. Given a piece of paper to plan his story cartoon-style, adding speech bubbles and extra details he blossomed. Variety will play an important part of my teaching.  The second child I observed helped me to understand that the level of support given to a child can help or hinder significantly. Over reliance on help from an adult stopped the learning. The adult did not expect the child to speak in sentences so he did not. She was quick to come to his rescue as soon as he began to struggle (learn?) so he learned an easy way to get the job done that required no effort. My lowest achievers will be taught how to use resources to become independent learners as far as possible and the expectations for the finished job will be in-line with this.  Overall this project has made me consider the variety of ways in which we learn and how to make children take responsibility for their own learning. Changes have been made to incorporate not only what we are learning today , but how we are going to learn it; what will I do to help them and what they have to do for themselves. |
| Section H: Impact on departmental and school approaches to teaching, learning and to CPD. |
| The school is about to undergo a period of change so it is unclear how this experience will impact on our school. I believe it can have a positive impact on teaching and learning if the school is committed to the time and organisation of it. In a small school I think working in trios may be unworkable, but can see that paired study partners may be more appropriate. I think it could work well across year groups if a specific focus is identified and that working collaboratively to address any issues the school/ KS may have in this practical way will have a longer lasting effect than meetings of individuals working in isolation. The school will be developing ways to teach learning behaviours to children and this might be an appropriate focus for lesson study.  *.* |
| Section I: Personal reflections |
| *Being part of this lesson study group has been a good experience, but not without drawbacks. It has been time consuming and has taken me away from teaching my class more often than I would like. However, having had time to reflect during the half time break I am sure what I have learnt from this is now deep rooted and won’t be washed way easily. The observations, discussions, collaborative thinking, commitment to the project, record keeping and reporting back to colleagues at various levels have all added a layer to the learning experience which will be hard to forget even during a busy week in the classroom.*  *.* |