

## CLPE Case Study: The Reader in the Writer (2022/23)

██████████ is located in ██████████. They have 430 pupils on roll, including Nursery provision. 50% of pupils are in receipt of Pupil Premium. In 2014, they had been judged as Requires Improvement by Ofsted. The school became part of the ██████████ Trust in September 2014. A new Principal took over in 2016. A variety of resources and techniques had previously been used to teach reading and writing, which she described as ‘a sweetie shop approach – grabbing on to whatever looked good at the time.’

In 2016, the Trust introduced the school to the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education’s (CLPE) Power of Reading training programme. Through the programme, as modelled in the CPD sessions, teachers focussed on recognising the impact high-quality children’s literature has on children’s engagement and attainment in reading and writing and teacher’s knowledge and understanding of the interrelationship between reading and writing.

### Case study

The new Principal recognised progress and engagement in Literacy was suffering. Children saw reading as a chore and, in the worst cases, it was used as a punishment – missing playtime and being made to stay in a read a book. For teachers, it was a means to an end, pushing for achievement in SATs results, rather than building a love of reading and writing.

She was looking for an evidence based approach, grounded in research, to empower teachers to develop subject knowledge in the teaching of reading and writing, based around high-quality children’s literature - lifting pupils to the level of texts they would not have met before, improving language, vocabulary, reading and writing.

The programme is based on the research from *The Reader in the Writer* (Barrs and Cork, 2002), which set out to explore the influence of children’s reading of high-quality literature on their writing development, using a range of creative teaching approaches, designed to improve children’s comprehension of texts, developing their language, vocabulary and ideation for writing.

Through the training, and in using the associated texts and teaching plans, teachers quickly became empowered with the knowledge of how reading and writing develop, as well as experiencing new texts and an enhanced understanding of how to teach English, using a range of creative teaching approaches designed to develop reading comprehension and writing.

Many children did not have a rich experience of reading or have texts in their homes. School was the place where they needed to be exposed to high-quality literature to engage them in reading and inspire their writing. Leaders and teachers worked together to map texts across the school, ensuring children had a broad, rich and relevant repertoire, with opportunities available to read and write in different contexts and forms. Support and internal training were provided for the wider staff in how to use the texts and teaching plans practically with their classes.

Krashen (2004), notes the power of the act of reading as a means of developing reading comprehension ability, writing style, vocabulary, grammar and spelling. In the teaching plans, before starting any piece of writing, children are introduced to the focus text. This happens in a variety of ways. Teachers read the text aloud, pupils might also have extracts from the book to read themselves or they might take part in paired or shared reading. This enables them to become

engaged with the text itself, but also the language, vocabulary, sentence structures, themes and ideas. Exposure to the text gives children exposure to the voice, style, tone, language and grammatical structures of the text-type, which teaches them much about how they might write.

The teaching plans exemplify how to build up to writing outcomes, inspired by the focus text, over time through an authentic writing process; taking pupils through key stages from ideation, to creation, then through to reflection and publication, based on the process of practicing writers, developed through CLPE's Power of Pictures research (Anders, Shure, Wyse, Barnard, Abdi, Frerichs, 2021).

The model was developed in partnership with authors, describing the steps a practicing writer goes through, in a way that is replicable in a classroom. Each circle represents a different part of the writing process. A writer will often work through each of the parts in sequence, but the continuous line between each small circle aims to show how they will often have to go back and forth through the steps as work is developed and the writing progresses from ideation to publication. At its centre, the model shows that a classroom needs to work as a community of writers; a place where the writer identity of all pupils is fostered, developed and celebrated. In a classroom, the teacher adopts the dual positions of a teacher who is an active and practiced writer and a writer who teaches the craft of writing. In a purposeful writing community, pupils and adults explore how and why we write and work together to support each other to develop, reflect on and celebrate writing.

Ideation is the creative process of generating, developing, and communicating new ideas. At this stage of the writing process, we explore where and how we get ideas from in the real world and have time, space and stimuli to begin to form and shape ideas for our own writing for real life purposes and audiences.

At the start of a Power of Reading teaching sequence, children are immersed in the world of the text through hearing it read aloud. They will talk about the book, drawing on Aidan Chambers' approaches to Book Talk (2011), sharing their likes and dislikes, investigating questions they have and drawing connections to their own lives and the lives of others. For the population of pupils at ██████████, this has been of vital importance. As a broadly mono-cultural community, staff are keen that texts enable children to not just see themselves and their own reality but also offer the opportunity to encounter realities beyond their own, developing more sophisticated skills of empathy and being able to see things from multiple perspectives, which impacts on writing as much as it does reading, as noted by Serroukh (2020).

Goodwin (2004), explores the benefits of inspiring children to respond to literature through the creative arts and the range of opportunities this offers to all learners. The creative approaches used in the sequences allow children to delve further inside the text. An approach like Role on the Wall promotes inference and deduction, giving children a rounded picture of a character, understanding their motivations and actions. Art and Illustration help children to explore ideas and concepts, providing them with vocabulary and ideas for their own writing. Drama and Role Play is beneficial in allowing children to step inside texts, see events from the direct perspectives of characters and try out dialogue, as well as inspiring ideas for writing in role. Looking at the language of texts through text marking and discussion helps children to investigate authorial choices, hearing and seeing the tone, structure and patterns of different texts, looking at how language and grammar choices make impact on the reader.

These approaches run throughout sequences for children of all ages, so their language, vocabulary, knowledge and skills build through the choice of texts and the sophistication of the learning opportunities offered.

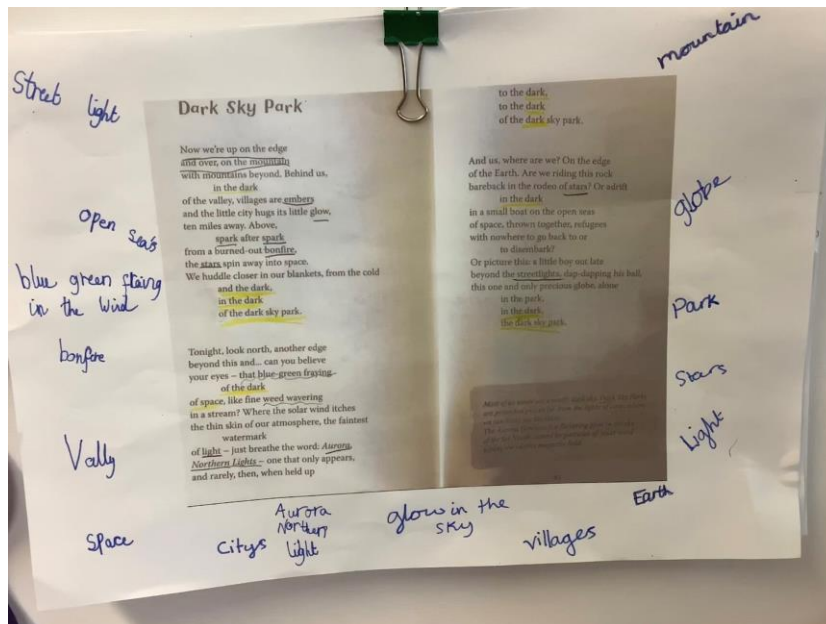
Nursery children worked with Julia Donaldson's *The Gruffalo*. Initially, they were immersed in the world of the story through their forest school provision, using key vocabulary and exploring events in a real-world version of the setting. They began by hearing the first part of the story read aloud and responding to the illustrations, giving the teacher the opportunity to assess prior knowledge and vocabulary, which could then be built upon.

The text is slowly revealed over a period of weeks, which enables the children to do the weight of the reading work in terms of predicting and responding to events, as well as building vocabulary and understanding of story concepts and structure. Working across areas of learning, they learnt about the forest habitat and the different creatures living there, including characters in the story. The Nursery teacher saw the invaluable impact not only on children's vocabulary, reading engagement and ideation for writing, but also their personal social and emotional development – learning to look after each other and the world around them. At all times, adults recorded children's talk, validating their responses and ensuring they understood that writing is a way to record and communicate thinking.



Year 5 worked with Philip Gross' poetry collection, *Dark Sky Park*. At the start of the sequence they watched Philip Gross perform the title poem, using art and illustration to represent what they saw in their mind's eye as they heard the poem read a number of times. This visualisation activity was an invaluable opportunity to assess children's understanding of the language and concepts introduced. They went on to read and discuss the poem in pairs or groups, text-marking and annotating to identify language that helped build their visualisations, as well as language that made impact on them as readers.

Teachers observed the effectiveness of these approaches in immersing children in the text, deepening their understanding of authorial intent, preparing children for the writing that would follow and increasing their enthusiasm to write.



As the sequences progress, the focus is on transferring knowledge gained from reading into children's own writing. They are encouraged to write down and shape ideas with a purpose, audience and form in mind and will explore different ways to capture, work up and develop ideas in the journey to publication, looking at how the work will often begin rough, in note form and tentative before being worked up more fully for an audience.

Approaches like using art and illustration, to visualise and consolidate ideas prior to writing, reading, re-reading and looking at the language of texts which are good models of the writing being undertaken and using drama and role play to try out dialogue and ideas for events continue to be drawn upon, and shared and modelled writing are emphasised.

Before writing is published, children are encouraged to reflect on their work, alongside a response partner, which may be an enabling adult or peer, to give attentive consideration to writing produced in order to make sense of the content, and to make appropriate changes if these are required. Children explore where ideas are working well for the purpose, audience and form of the writing and where challenges or sticking points are arising. The focus is on the content and overall structure of the writing, with the perceived audience in mind, rather than the technical handling of the writing system (spelling, punctuation etc.). Reading the writing aloud is a crucial part of this process, so that writers can hear how the words sound and flow off the page as well as how they scan and sit on the page. A culture of supportive response is developed in the writing community through asking questions and making supportive suggestions to guide the writer in developing their work to be the best it can be for themselves and their audience.

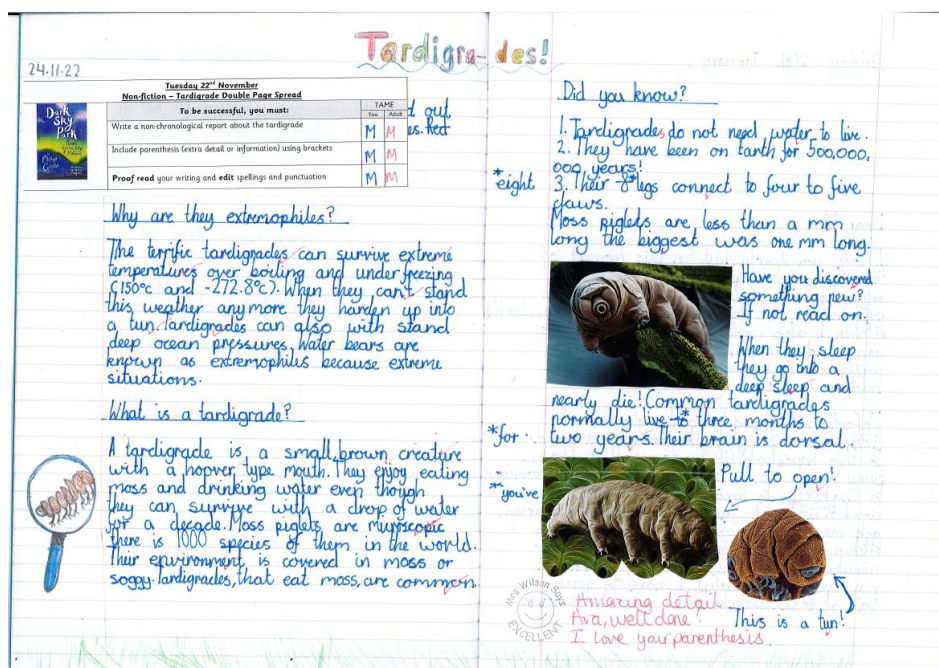
Children then work to publish their writing for their intended audience, presenting it in a way that is most appropriate for the purpose, audience and form. This may be through the spoken as well as the written form and may also involve visual communication, if appropriate. Prior to publication, they work with a supportive partner to polish the work ready for publication - proof-reading work and checking for spelling and punctuation accuracy. Teachers provide materials that facilitate the most appropriate forms of publication, reflecting those used by a practicing writer, to give them the full sense of the satisfaction publishing and presenting writing can bring.

In the Nursery class, the children progressed to learning about the structure of the story of the Gruffalo. They used a number of different storytelling approaches to support them in retelling the

story for themselves, including children making their own story maps and props, making representations of characters using art and malleable resources, using puppets of the characters made from spoons, and by engaging in role play. The physical development involved in these activities is crucial in supporting the development of children's gross and fine motor skills, prior to writing at these early stages.



Within the sequences, children might work across genres. Threaded through the poetry collection used by the Year 5 class were a number of poems about Tardigrades, which the children had little prior knowledge or understanding of. The sequence uses this as an opportunity to develop non-chronological writing about these fascinating creatures. In this case, a quality example of this kind of writing is shared with the children. They watched video clips and conducted their own research on Tardigrades. Writing at the first stage was tentative, taking notes, making sketches and working this up over time learning, from the quality examples read, how to use the appropriate voice, style, language and layout for the form and audience of the writing. They went on to produce their own information texts to teach another reader of their own age about these creatures.



The progression in texts and additional resources identified in the Power of Reading programme provides a more challenging and stamina building range of texts and resources, allowing the children to progress in their knowledge, skills and reading and writing sophistication and outcomes as they move through the school, within a familiar range of approaches to support engagement with and writing outcomes from each text. The focus on building understanding and awareness of voice, style, vocabulary and concepts from the reading meant that this immediately fed into children's independent writing. Teachers observed that writing became much more purposeful, natural and less stressful for pupils. This approach was particularly beneficial for pupils with additional needs or those who had been less engaged in the ways in which literacy was previously taught.

### **Summary**

In implementing the Power of Reading plans and approaches, the interrelationship between reading and writing became apparent and embedded across the school, with children learning about character, settings, events, topics and themes for their writing from high-quality texts, seeing effective models of language and the idea of how to make an effect on a reader to provide the children with ideas and inspiration to take into their own writing. Writing within the context of the text provided purposeful opportunities for writing which engaged all children.

The impact has recognised by Ofsted. In 2017, the school was graded Good and received praise for how reading, writing and literacy were taught, evidencing the impact of the approach:

*"Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising because of the good progress pupils now make...The good progress made by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics means that more pupils are now at the expected standard for their age and ready for the next stage of their education."*

In December 2022, Ofsted completed an Inspection of a good school which noted *'There is enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school could be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded (section 5) inspection now.'*

The school's results evidence the impact of the investment in staff subject knowledge and pupils engagement over time. In 2018, reading results jumped from 40% to 70% of children at the expected level at the end of KS2 with writing jumping from 69% to 79%, and in 2019, jumped again to 76% reading and 84% writing. In 2022, despite interruptions to learning because of COVID, the school achieved an all-time high of 84% for reading and 77% for writing, which, although was a slight drop, was above the national average of 69%.