



CASE STUDY REPORT

Using lesson study as a whole-school approach to improving guided writing

Kelly Ashley

This study was originally published in 2009 as part of the 'What Works Well' initiative, part of the National Strategies for Education in England.

Abstract

Background: The purpose of the study was to use the lesson study model to improve pedagogy in relation to guided writing and measure the impact on children's learning.

Aims: The main aim of this development work was to improve pedagogy in relation to guided writing and to measure the impact of this on pupils' learning.

Methods: The participants in this lesson study model of CPD included the English consultant, headteacher, middle leaders, members of staff, and pupils. They all worked together to improve pedagogy and outcomes in writing. The lesson study model of CPD was used to improve pedagogy in guided writing, with coaching facilitated through lesson observations, learning conversations, and targeted teaching. Data analysis was used to measure progress and impact on pupil learning.

Findings: The main findings of this development work are that the lesson study model of CPD has improved pedagogy in guided writing, resulting in improved outcomes for pupils. Middle leaders have been empowered to foster professional discussion and a greater clarity of Assessment for Learning has been achieved.

Implications: The findings of this study suggest that the lesson study model of CPD can be used to improve pedagogy and pupil learning. Through collaborative planning and observation, teachers have been able to identify areas for improvement and measure the impact of guided writing on pupils' learning.

This abstract was generated by Camtree using a large language model (LLM) and added to the original report in 2023.

Keywords: Primary education; Assessment and target setting; Self evaluation and review; English - writing

Introduction

What were your reasons for doing this type of development work?

This developmental work stems from support carried out directly with the school in my role as English consultant. Teachers identified a need for improving their understanding of the planning, teaching and delivery of guided writing. As members of staff work well collaboratively as a supportive team, I considered lesson study as a key tool in supporting the development of pedagogical knowledge.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Head of school improvement
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- Senior leadership team (SLT)
- SIP (School Improvement Partner)
- Subject leader

Description

What specific curriculum area, subject or aspect did you intend to have impact on?

- Assessment and target setting
- Self evaluation and review
- English - writing

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

In the targeted focus on guided writing across the school, the desired impact on pupil learning was to further focus guided sessions on pupils' authorial needs as they arise throughout the teaching sequence.

What were your success criteria?

To identify a school-level improvement need through data analysis (guided writing); To use collaborative planning and observation within the lesson study model to build upon a shared understanding of guided writing by establishing the learning that has taken place; To improve pedagogy in relation to targeted teaching through the use of guided writing; To analyse the improvements that have been made including measured impact on children's learning and improved teaching focus in guided sessions.

What information or data did you use to measure progress towards your success criteria?

- Observation outcomes

Describe the CPD approaches you used

To improve outcomes in writing, the consultant provided training focused on the development of guided writing and its varied role throughout the teaching sequence and the writing process. The lesson study model was used to embed knowledge of guided writing in classroom practice. Coaching was facilitated through lesson observations. Members of staff had time after the observed lessons to engage in focused discussion with the target children to measure the impact of the guided work. Learning conversations took place after all observations were completed. All teachers discussed the impact of the model on classroom practice and identified next steps for development.

What CPD materials, research or expertise have you drawn on?

Primary English consultant support (North Yorkshire LA)

Colleagues' expertise & support within school

'Improving writing with a focus on guided writing' Ref: 00618-2007BKT-EN

'Leading improvement using the Primary Framework' Ref: 00484-2007BKT-EN

'Improving practice and progression through Lesson Study: a handbook for headteachers, leading teachers and subject leaders' Ref:00887-2007DWO-EN

Related National Strategies resources:

Assessing pupils' progress in the Primary phase

Support for writing

Talk for writing

Who provided you with support?

- Other

How were you supported?

The consultant drew upon current information provided by National Strategies regarding the lesson study model of CPD and materials to support the improvement of guided writing in order to appropriately target the needs of the school.

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Targeted support is provided to pupils based on needs as they arise throughout the teaching sequence. Guided writing is seen by both teachers and pupils as a flexible approach to support progress through each 'learning journey'. Curricular targets are being explicitly taught through the use of guided sessions and measured success towards targets is being identified through the use of Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) guidelines for pupils in KS2. Children are more aware of next steps in learning and can use self-evaluation tools effectively to determine success and areas for improvement.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

The following are quotes recorded from pupils who were observed as part of the lesson study approach:

I like to use the displays in the classroom to help me learn.

I learned to read through my work and spot where it could be better.

I like looking at my own work and making it better.

I know what I need to do next to make my writing better.

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Observation outcomes
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

Evidence of the impact on pupil learning is qualitatively contained within the observation outcomes and pupil interview information gained by all members of staff. Pupils were clearly focused on next steps in learning as was evidenced in the choices they made throughout the observed lessons. Objective feedback given by observers through data collection in pupil interviews reflected the impact on learning and the increased independence of pupils as more ownership of the learning process was evident.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teachers felt valued during this CPD exercise as they were part of the learning process. Observational feedback within the coaching model provided a 'risk-free' environment to discuss the impact of guided writing and ways forward. Greater confidence in the teaching of guided sessions has been the key outcome with all staff clearly focused on the needs of children and planning sessions accordingly to target those needs.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

The following are quotes taken from members of staff who participated in the study:

I've learned that children don't always need me to model writing in the guided session. Sometimes, it is has more use to the children if I support them during the session based on where they are in their writing.

By observing others, I have seen opportunities to share resources across the school that will help with transition and consistency of approach.

By having another pair of eyes in the classroom, I have more opportunities to reflect on what children are getting out of the lesson.

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Teacher perceptions

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Teacher's perceptions of the components of guided writing and its role within the teaching sequence have been clarified. Teachers have realised that guided writing is a flexible tool to be used throughout the teaching sequence, based on individual pupil needs. Guided writing groups are flexible and fluid and not necessarily based on numerical target needs. Curricular targets are taught explicitly through guided sessions as evidenced in planning. Teachers have considered the use of guided writing as a tool to support children before, during and after writing to provide scaffolded support throughout the learning journey. The purpose of guided writing is to provide a bridge of support between shared writing and independent writing. Teachers use their knowledge of children to decide who needs the support of the metaphorical bridge and who can cross safely into independent writing without additional support.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

The headteacher has fully participated in the lesson study model alongside all members of staff. She has expressed interest in using the lesson study model of CPD in the future to develop teaching practice in other areas of the curriculum. Guided writing has been a key focus for improvement this year. Through the use of in-school CPD, members of staff have been given quality time to engage in discussions which have improved their professional understanding of guided writing and its role in the impact on children's learning. Middle leaders have been empowered through the model by fostering professional discussion focused on whole-school improvement in writing.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

In regards to the impact on school leadership, middle leaders now have a greater role in school improvement through the identification of areas for development and the supportive climate created through the lesson study model of CPD. A greater clarity of Assessment for Learning across the school has provided a focus for targeted teaching and learning during guided sessions. The applications of this model can be used in the future to further develop pedagogy in other areas of the curriculum.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

The key element that made the difference to pupils' learning in this school was the drive of all members of staff towards school improvement. All stakeholders played a role in the improvement of writing across the school. The supportive climate evident within the school allowed teachers to improve practice and, therefore, improve outcomes for children.

What key resources would people who want to learn from your experience need access to?

Literacy guidance papers & publications (e.g. 'Developing Early Writing', 'Grammar for Writing', text type progression papers, etc) all available at:

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

Guided Writing CPD materials on the online Framework (training materials, film clips, guidance booklets etc):

Leading Improvement using the Primary Framework:

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where would they start and what would the essential elements be?

See the information provided in the flow chart under 'related information'.

What further developments are you planning to do (or would you like to see others do)?

The school has considered the utilisation of the lesson study model of CPD to further pedagogical knowledge and understanding across a range of curricular areas. The consultant would like the school to share their practice with others in the cluster to improve outcomes for a wider range of children.

Supplementary Materials

This report is accompanied in the library by the following supplementary material:

- Observation of guided writing sample
- Flow chart describing the process of lesson study used
- Pupil conference feedback samples

About Camtree

Camtree: the Cambridge Teacher Research Exchange is a global platform for close-to-practice research in education. Based at Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge, Camtree draws on high-quality research from around the world to support educators to reflect on their practice and carry out inquiries to improve learning in their own classrooms and organisations. You can find out more about Camtree and its digital library at www.camtree.org.

About 'What Works Well'

This case study was originally published as part of the 'What Works Well' section of the National Strategies for Education in England. The National Strategies were professional programmes aiming for improvements in the quality of learning and teaching in schools in England. 'What Works Well' involved teaching practitioners from all phases and areas of education sharing accounts of real developments which had improved learning and teaching, and made a difference to pupil progress. 'What Works Well' case studies were designed to support practice transfer and include sufficient detail and resources to enable others to implement the effective practice described. They were reviewed by experts prior to publication as 'User Generated Content' (UGC) under a licence which encouraged reuse and derivative works, but which precluded commercial use.

Licence

This edited version of this case study is published by Camtree as a derivative work of the original under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Licence (CC-BY-NC 4.0). The structured abstract that accompanies it was generated by Camtree in 2023 using the OpenAI GPT-3.5-Turbo Large Language Model.