



CASE STUDY REPORT

Power of Reading - Raising achievement in literacy through enjoyment and creativity

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This study was originally published in 2010 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 motivate underachieving boys to become enthusiastic readers and writers, and to increase their motivation for reading and writing fiction texts.

Aims: The main aim of the Power of Reading project was to motivate underachieving boys to become enthusiastic readers and writers, and to increase their motivation for reading and writing fiction.

Methods: The participants included teachers, support staff, headteachers, middle leaders, national strategies consultants, pupils, and subject leaders. They all worked together to increase motivation for reading and writing, especially among underperforming boys. The Power of Reading was used to motivate underachieving boys to become enthusiastic readers and writers. Teaching approaches such as drama, thinking skills and quick writing activities were used to change their attitude. CPD approaches included working with the Year 4 teacher, attending seminars, and working with the Deputy Head.

Findings: The Power of Reading project has had a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organisation and leadership. It has increased motivation for reading and writing, particularly among underperforming boys, and has narrowed the attainment gap between boys and girls. It has also made teaching more cross-curricular, imaginative, and creative.

Implications: The Power of Reading has had a positive impact on pupil learning, teaching, and school organization and leadership. It has increased motivation for reading and writing, narrowed the attainment gap between boys and girls, and improved teaching approaches and curriculum documentation.

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

Keywords: Junior education; English - reading; English - writing

Introduction

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

The Power of Reading was to show teachers a range of exciting teaching approaches relating to both fiction and non fiction texts. Also to give teachers ideas how to teach a creative curriculum from one text as the focus.

I had limited knowledge regarding current quality children's authors and relied heavily on the books I had read as a child.

I had a group of underachieving boys within my class who were reluctant readers (especially fiction texts) and reluctant writers (especially creative writing). The Power of Reading was a way to motivate this group to become enthusiastic readers and immerse themselves within literacy. This would inspire them to write and have a purpose in the process and in doing so change their attitude.

Who might find this case study useful?

- Support staff
- Headteacher
- Middle leader
- National Strategies consultant
- Pupil
- Subject leader
- Teacher

Description

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

- English - reading
- English - writing

How did you intend to impact on pupil learning?

An increase in motivation for fictional reading and writing in particular under performing boys.

I wanted children to become excited about reading fictional texts and become enthusiastic, self motivated readers. My aim was to expose them to quality texts and through drama, thinking skills and quick writing activities change their indifferent attitude to reading and writing to one of enthusiasm and excitement. Through reading more fictional texts children would experience more creative language and ideas that they could then use within their writing. I also wanted them to have a purpose for their writing.

What were your success criteria?

- Increase in motivation for reading more fictional texts leading to children managing this themselves
- Increased motivation for writing and more creative language and ideas
- Writing viewed as purposeful
- Boys attaining higher standards and making accelerated progress

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

- Logs or interviews
- Periodic teacher assessment
- Pupil consultation data

- Pupils' work
- Test results

Describe the CPD approaches you used

- Working closely with the Year 4 teacher enabled us both to reflect what went well and what we would change
- Demonstrating the key principles and some teaching approaches from the Power of Reading in a staff meeting and modelling how they are used within a class room context
- Demonstrating and celebrating the varying outcomes of Power of Reading in a staff meeting
- Working with the Deputy Head to ensure that the Power of Reading was developed across the whole school with a cross curricular approach taken and identifying areas for CPD for individuals- to start 2009

Who provided you with support?

- External agency
- Middle leader
- Senior management
- Subject leader

How were you supported?

- Worked alongside Y4 teacher who was also involved with the Power of Reading project
- Attended Power of Reading seminars
- Head teachers commitment
- Other teachers who attended the Power of Reading seminars
- LEA advisers

Impact

What has been the overall impact on pupil learning?

Children are much more motivated, positive and excited about reading and writing especially fictional based work.

They are more able to empathise with a character and understand their motives.

They take more pride in their writing outcome.

More book talk whether this is related to their personal reading book, the one we are working from as a class or the one we read at the end of the day in read aloud (story time)

Thoughts you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Both teachers involved developed their knowledge of quality children's authors and the range of texts available. We both learnt various teaching approaches that made the lessons fun, active and creative and also catered for the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners. We now read an ongoing story to the class each day which allows the children to discuss a book, compare to other books read and enables the teacher to highlight writer's techniques and assess children's understanding through key questioning. This read aloud time is important as it allows all children access to a text which some may not be able to read or understand without the support of class discussion and teacher input. We became more confident at planning a cross curricular approach which provides a cohesive approach to learning.

Quotes you think are relevant to overall impact on learning

Video of children and their thoughts

TA quote

"I loved it because it kept describing it and I could see the pictures all the time in my head" Girl aged 10.

"I am so pleased with A.....'s attitude at the moment. She is so motivated by the book she has been reading. Thank you so much." Y5 girl's mum

Quantitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Periodic teacher assessment
- Test results

Qualitative evidence of impact on pupil learning

- Learning walks / study visits
- Logs or interviews
- Pupils' work

Describe the evidence of impact on pupil learning

In Year 5, 30% of children made 2 or more sub level progress in reading and 41% of children made 2 sub level progress in writing with 34% by 3 or more. In reading the boys made more rapid progress than the girls.

According to the "Power of Reading" analysis of data from four participating local authorities (2008-09) showed that 70% of children progressed by 2 or more National Curriculum sub levels and nearly and 33% by 3 or more. Data specifically indicates that as a result of the project the rate of progress for boys is narrowing the attainment gap between boys and girls.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Teaching is now cross curricular, more imaginative and creative. The teaching approaches made the lessons more active and catered for all aspects of learning (Visual Auditory Kinaesthetic VAK), as a result the children were motivated which gave the teachers more confidence. These can now be applied to other areas of teaching and used with any quality text and not limited to those suggested by the Power of Reading. The children's work showed a willingness to work with a marked improvement from the SEN groups who previously were very limited with both ideas and written outcomes. It is now very easy to combine ICT with literacy due to extent of drama activities involved.

It has changed my view of teaching literacy. The features of genres and grammar do need teaching but this can be incorporated in separate lessons throughout the unit or incorporated 15 min slots.

Quotes you think are relevant to the impact on teaching

My headteacher previously hated 'The Highwayman' and came to observe a literacy lesson. She went away loving the text and this was because of the drama involved and the passion from the children who were gripped by the story.

"Because the lessons are more active and the children are highly motivated it makes teaching easier as the children are doing all the hard work"Y5 teacher

"The Power of Reading is so exciting. The children love it and produce quality pieces of work throughout" Parallel

Y5 teacher

Evidence of impact on teaching

- Evidence from observation and monitoring
- Evidence from planning
- Improvements in curriculum documentation

Describe the evidence of impact on teaching

Through a staff meeting based on the 'celebration of the Power of Reading' staff were able to show examples of children's work, discuss the various teaching approaches and discuss the impact on their teaching. Overall it was agreed that teachers felt more able, confident and motivated to teach literacy.

Ofsted inspectors judged a Y4 literacy lesson using the Power of Reading as 'good'

Head teacher judged a Y5 literacy lesson using the Power of Reading as 'good with outstanding features'

Both of the judgements, for both teachers, were an improvement on previous teaching.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

The Y5 and Y4 involved in the Power of Reading project have seen the value in the teaching approaches and cross curricular approach being employed throughout the whole school, rather than simply being limited to two year groups. The school leadership team recognised the positive impact the Power of Reading project had on Year 4 and 5 and therefore agreed that two units should be taught in the academic year, one in the Autumn term and one in the Summer term and a cross curricular approach was to be taken.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

The head teacher provided the time for the teachers to take part in the programme and to discuss ideas and any potential difficulties. Therefore, the teachers' skills have developed and the impact in teaching and learning in reading and writing in Year 4 and Year 5 have improved; this is evident in the results achieved.

Programme rolled out to the rest of the year groups and embedded into the curriculum map.

Summary

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

- Adopting the teaching approaches through engagement and immersion of the quality texts
- Not being afraid to take a risk and do so having fun
- Support from the head teacher / Year 4 teacher

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

This enrolls you onto the course which provides you an understanding of the key teaching strategies and the opportunity to share classroom experiences

What CPD session and resources were particularly useful?

- Power of Reading training for both teachers
- The key teaching strategies
- A range of KS2 quality, engaging texts

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

- Review the Power of Reading research summary
- Enrol 1 or 2 teachers on the Power of Reading Project
- Review and develop the reading environment
- Establish read aloud in the classroom
- Establish reading corners in the classroom
- Enrolled teachers to then trial the text sequences and incorporate into year group planning - Have a range of texts and at least 3 to understand the approaches throughout
- Review and disseminate to rest of the school

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

- Continuing, across all year groups, to teach the text sequences using different texts to broaden the teacher's knowledge of texts, teaching strategies and motivation.
- To incorporate APP reading and writing into the Power of Reading
- To consider the teaching of non-fiction and how to seamlessly incorporate it into the text sequences
- To consider the sentence and word level objectives and to incorporate them into the teaching sequences

Supplementary Materials

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

- Example of children's work - Street Child
- Example of children's work - Way Home
- Example of children's work - The Highwayman
- Street Child teaching sequence
- Can't and don't June - July
- Can't and don't Sept-Oct
- Year 5 CLPE data - Reading and Writing
- Impact of the Power of Reading presentation

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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.

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