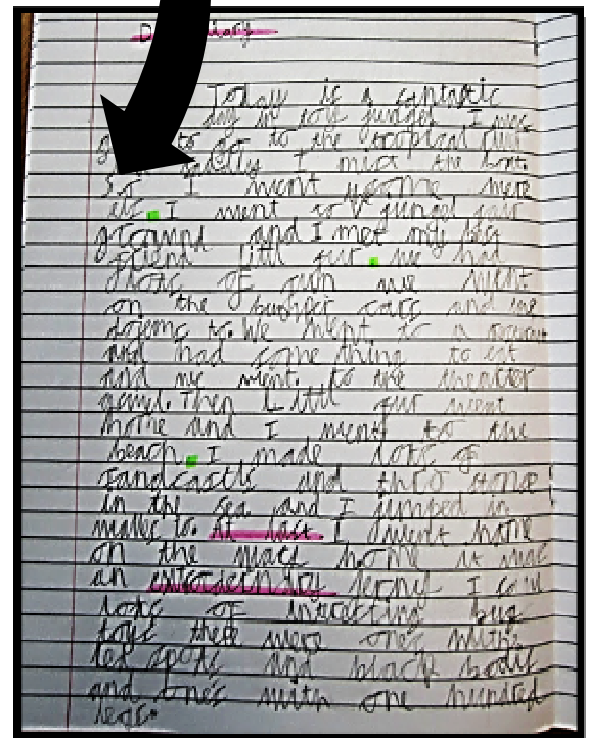
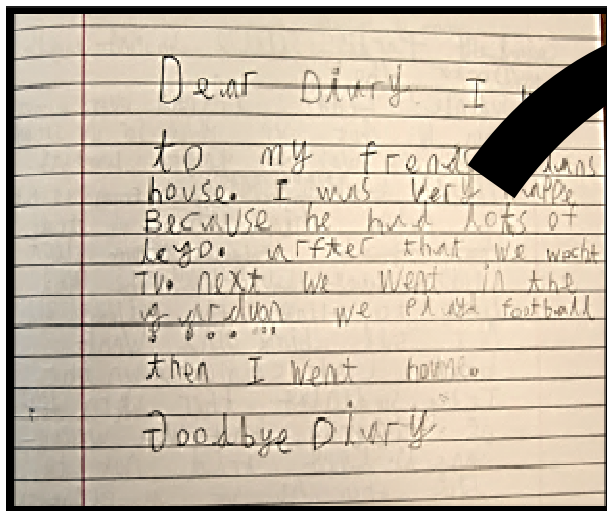




# Transforming Writing

## Interim Evaluation Report



November 2012  
Jonathan Rooke  
University of Winchester

# Words for life

**Registered address:** National Literacy Trust, 68 South Lambeth Road, London SW8 1RL  
t: 020 7587 1842 f: 020 7587 1411 | [contact@literacytrust.org.uk](mailto:contact@literacytrust.org.uk) | [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)

Registered charity no. 1116260 and company limited by guarantee no. 5836486 registered in England and Wales and registered charity in Scotland no. SCO 42944.  
Patron: HRH The Duchess of Cornwall

## About the National Literacy Trust

We are the only national charity dedicated to raising literacy levels in the UK. Our research and analysis make us the leading authority on literacy. We run projects in the poorest communities, campaign to make literacy a priority for politicians and parents, and support schools.

Visit [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk) to find out more, donate or sign up for a free email newsletter. You can also find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.

## Copyright

© National Literacy Trust 2013. You may report on findings or statistics included in this report if you accredit them to the National Literacy Trust.

Suggested reference for this report is: Rooke, J (2013). Transforming Writing: Interim Evaluation Report. London: National Literacy Trust.

We will consider requests to use extracts or data from this publication provided that you:

- Acknowledge that the content is the work of the National Literacy Trust and provide appropriate references in any publications or accompanying publicity;
- State that any views expressed are yours and not necessarily those of the National Literacy Trust.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, who funded the Transforming Writing Project ([www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk](http://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk)). Registered charity number: 200061).

We would like to thank the pupils and staff at the following schools without whom this study would not have been possible:

- Alderman Jacobs Primary School, Peterborough
- Edward Bryant Primary School, West Sussex
- Eliot Bank Primary School, London
- Gordonbrock Primary School, London
- Knowle Park Primary School, Bristol
- Lowedges Primary School, Sheffield
- Penn Wood Primary and Nursery School, Slough
- Rose Hill Primary School, Oxford
- St Thomas of Canterbury RC Primary School, Salford
- Trevithick Learning Academy, Cornwall
- Westbourne Primary School, Bradford
- Windsor Community Primary School, Liverpool

We would like to thank the steering group:

- Shirley Clarke - Leading expert on the practical application of formative assessment (freelance consultant, researcher and writer)
- Professor Debra Myhill - Acting Dean, College of Social Science and International Studies, University of Exeter
- Professor Philip Gross - Professor of Creative Writing and Course Leader, MPhil in Writing, University of Glamorgan
- Elizabeth Chamberlain - Senior Lecturer in Education and PGCE Route Manager, University of Winchester, Hampshire
- Christopher Brislen - Executive Headteacher, Belgrave CE Primary & Weston Coyney Infant Schools, Stoke-On-Trent
- Sam Hurst - Headteacher, Glebe Primary School, Stoke-On-Trent
- Annie Ashraf - Assistant Headteacher, Tetherdown Primary School
- Philip Jarrett, HMI - National Adviser for English, Ofsted (until August 2012)

We would like to thank the project team:

- Pie Corbett – Expert adviser and trainer
- Jonathan Rooke – Project evaluator
- Julia Strong – Expert adviser and trainer
- Sarah De Zoysa – Project manager (to 31 August 2012)
- Julie Gibbings – Project manager (from 1 September 2012)

Thanks also go to Penny Lawrence, Research Officer at the University of Winchester and Christina Clark, Head of Research at the National Literacy Trust.

We would like to thank TTS Group Ltd ([www.tts-group.co.uk](http://www.tts-group.co.uk)) who kindly supplied our schools with visualisers to support collaborative assessment.

We would also like to thank Helen Loader at the University of Winchester.

# Contents

Acknowledgements .....	3
Contents.....	4
Summary of Findings .....	6
Introduction .....	8
Aims .....	8
Phases .....	8
Rationale.....	9
Procedure.....	11
Sample.....	11
Action Research.....	11
Exploratory Workshops.....	11
Evaluation Methodology .....	13
Data Collection Techniques .....	13
Findings: 12 Classroom Approaches.....	15
The Transforming Writing Model for Formative Assessment .....	16
Explanation of the 12 Classroom Approaches .....	19
1. Teachers used a variety of marking techniques to engage children in assessment .....	19
2. Teachers and children collaboratively constructed writing goals to guide assessment .....	21
3. Teachers collected and displayed knowledge about writing for children to use for assessment .....	23
4. Teachers created dialogic spaces for children to collaboratively talk about and assess their writing.....	24
5. Teachers modelled how writers talk and think when assessing their own writing.....	25
6. Teachers found shared reading comprehension and children’s assessment of their own writing were mutually supportive .....	27
7. Teachers created safe learning environments for children to collaboratively assess their own writing.....	28
8. Teachers had a clear sense of how children’s assessment talk about writing should progress .....	30
9. Teachers used flexible and responsive planning.....	32
10. Teachers used mini writing lessons to rapidly respond to formative assessment.....	33
11. Teachers used guided writing lessons to rapidly respond to formative assessment.....	34
12. Teachers’ confidence and credibility supported children’s formative assessment of writing .....	35
Impact on children’s attainment of embedding formative assessment in writing .....	36
Summary of analysis.....	36
Data collected .....	36
Age-related expected progress.....	36
1. Children made good progress in writing attainment during the research project .....	37
2. Most children in each year group made progress in writing attainment of at least 4 APS during the research project .....	38

3. Boys and girls made similar progress in their writing attainment during the research project ....	41
4. Children for whom English is an additional language and children who received free school meals made similar progress in their writing attainment to other children during the research project .....	42
5. Children's progress in their writing attainment was not affected by whether they began the year at, below or above age-related expectation.....	48
6. Key Stage 2 children participating in the Transforming Writing project made better progress in their writing attainment compared to the national average.....	49
Impact of embedding formative assessment in writing processes on children's confidence and engagement .....	52
Summary of perception survey findings.....	52
Skills teachers use to support children's collaborative talk about writing .....	57
Impact of Transforming Writing on participating teachers .....	60
Next steps .....	62
Appendix 1: Glossary .....	63
Appendix 2: Talk for Writing - what is it? .....	67
Appendix 3: Table to show connections between the developing practice and findings of participating teachers on the Transforming Writing project in Phase 1 of the research project and the research of John Hattie.....	71

## Summary of Findings

1. Children made good progress in writing attainment
2. Most children in each year group made progress in writing attainment of at least 4 APS during the research project
3. Boys and girls made similar progress in their writing attainment
4. Children for whom English is an additional language and children who received free school meals made similar progress in their writing attainment to other children
5. Children's progress in their writing attainment was not affected by whether they began the year at, below or above age-related expectation
6. Key Stage 2 children participating in the Transforming Writing project made better progress in their writing attainment compared to the national average
7. Some small difference was made to children's perception of how hard they found writing
8. There was an increase in the number of children who said they enjoyed writing
9. There was an increase in the number of children who perceived themselves as good writers
10. There was an increase in the number of children who said they enjoyed talking about writing
11. There was an increase in the number of children who thought talking about writing helped them to write
12. Teachers used a wide range of strategies to develop children's independent use of formative assessment and needed a model of writing that facilitates children's guided experimentation with talk about their own and each other's writing
13. Extended talk and collaborative language around the genre of writing before children start writing provides a rich resource for children to revisit and from which to draw during all stages of their writing. It supports a type of talk that is explicit and targeted, and it enables teachers to assess children's writing and intervene as the children's learning is taking place. It allows children to independently assess their own and others' writing and learn from one another
14. When talking about assessment of writing, teachers were modelling for children a 'voice' for thinking about writing. They were insistent that modelling was the most significant strategy they used to develop children's talk about writing and the quality of writing. The voice they modelled was shaping the same voice that children have in their own heads when they are writing. When teachers are modelling, what they are modelling is how children should think about writing. Thinking about writing is part of assessment
15. Flexible approaches to planning were essential as teachers used formative assessment to target and rapidly respond to children's emerging needs
16. Teachers needed a clear vision of how they want their children to progress in talk to ensure effective formative assessment of writing. Teachers expressed this vision as children being increasingly able to unpick how and why their writing

works, knowing what to do to improve it and having an increasing awareness of the impact and effect of their writing on the reader

17. The co-constructed writing goals (the 'toolkit') were the pivot around which children's talk about their own writing took place. Transforming Writing teachers frequently refer to the writing goals or toolkit as a means of unlocking and unleashing assessment of writing. They provide a 'North Star' around which children's assessment talk about their own writing is navigated
18. Children's talk about writing improves in advance of children actually utilising what has been talked about in their own writing
19. Children are more able to comment critically on other children's writing than on their own writing
20. Transforming Writing teachers believed there was a mutually reinforcing positive relationship between children's comprehension talk about books and their assessment talk about their own writing. Now, as well as the reader being in the writer, the writer is in the reader
21. Written assessment feedback can be written in such a way that it 'shapes' the way children thought about their writing processes
22. Teachers felt it was essential to develop learning environments where children were without fear of peers' judgements and were happy to publicly reveal and work on improvements in their own writing
23. Children need to be actively involved in co-constructing their own success criteria and learning intentions
24. Children need carefully scaffolded learning experiences so that they can assimilate practices and understanding of formative assessment and see for themselves how it benefits progress in their writing
25. Children need confident and credible teachers

## Introduction

Transforming Writing is a two-year action research project, sponsored by Esmée Fairbairn, which aims to develop a model for the teaching and learning of writing that more fully incorporates a focus on embedded formative assessment. In the first year of the project, the 12 participating schools developed a model of writing underpinned by Talk for Writing, an approach developed by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong (see Appendix 2). This interim report evaluates to what extent the model of writing developed by the teachers during the first year of research impacts on children's writing in terms of attainment, confidence and engagement.

The evidence so far suggests that the focused use of formative assessment by teachers with children and by children with peers can make a major difference to children's writing progress in terms of attainment, engagement and confidence.

This report identifies some of the successful classroom approaches to embedded formative assessment in writing teachers developed in the first year of the research project. The report suggests that during Transforming Writing research, teachers became evaluators and activators in the sense that Hattie (2012) proposes (see Appendix 3). Teacher interviews and reflections reveal that teachers were evaluating the effect their teaching had on the children's learning then using the powerful feedback that formative assessment provided to rapidly respond and adjust teaching of writing. Teachers saw their key role as evaluating *their* effect on children's learning of writing and then responding by implementing deliberate and focused interventions.

## Aims

The principle aim of the project is to develop a powerful, well-researched and evaluated model of effective practice which underpins the teaching and learning of writing with formative assessment at its heart. Specific research questions are:

- Which teaching and learning approaches to formative assessment worked and why, and with which children in what contexts?
- Which skills and knowledge did the teachers need and how were they best acquired?
- What substantive difference was made to children's confidence, engagement and articulation of their writing processes?
- How did collaborative talk support the children's development and the teacher's role?

## Phases

The project has two phases. In the first phase, 2011/12 project schools developed and evaluated a model of writing practice with embedded formative assessment. In the second phase, 2012/13, teachers will develop this writing practice by disseminating the model across the whole school and then develop a model of CPD to enable project schools to transfer this practice to other schools.



## Rationale

Transforming Writing is a response to the growing awareness that formative assessment must sit at the heart of the writing process in primary schools. Recent research and reports indicate that this is timely and appropriate because of perceived inadequacies of formative assessment generally and in writing in particular. The research acknowledges the complex interrelationship between talk, reading and writing and allows for productive crossovers between children's writing processes, feedback, links to direct teaching of writing (shared and guided writing) and the incorporation of the child's voice in the criteria related dialogues.

Assessment that is not feeding forward into planning from which pupils can effectively benefit has been identified as an area in need of development in schools by Ofsted (2009) in their survey of English and Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (2009). Evidence emerged of "learning objectives that described tasks rather than learning and which therefore did not enable pupils to review their own learning" (Ofsted 2009, p. 25). In addition, "The use of assessment to plan improvements in writing is not as effective as the use of assessment information to improve reading" (Ofsted p. 6)<sup>1</sup>. The consequence of marking that focuses on degrees of effort or pupils' weaknesses without guidance on how to improve is demoralising. Transforming Writing teachers are developing classroom approaches that will embed effective formative assessment at the centre of children's experience of learning to write.

While there are challenges to implementation, there is a growing consensus regarding what is effective formative assessment. Ofsted recommends that formative assessment should actively involve pupils and help them to clearly understand how to improve their work (Ofsted, 2009). Enabling teachers to implement effective formative assessment procedures is a challenge. Sachs investigated teachers' perceptions of formative assessment and barriers to its more widespread use: "Though worthwhile, the further development of formative assessment practices in schools may be complex and difficult. Constructing a set of recommendations is relatively straightforward, but if teachers are to achieve more than 'lip service' to them, support is needed to effect real and lasting change" (Sach, 2010 p16)<sup>2</sup>. Transforming Writing seeks to find some workable solutions to this challenge.

One challenge facing teachers is changing the classroom environment to accommodate formative assessment in writing. Webb and Jones' study shows formative assessment practices can give rise to positive characteristics of classroom culture including:

- learning orientation rather than performance orientation
- an acceptance that mistakes and getting it wrong are an essential part of learning

---

<sup>1</sup> Best practice in the reading and writing of pupils aged five to seven years old. Publisher: Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, 2009  
[http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports/best\\_practice\\_in\\_the\\_reading\\_and\\_writing\\_of\\_pupils\\_aged\\_five\\_to\\_seven\\_years.pdf](http://www.estyn.gov.uk/ThematicReports/best_practice_in_the_reading_and_writing_of_pupils_aged_five_to_seven_years.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Sach, E (2010) Teachers and testing: An investigation into teachers' perceptions of formative assessment. Paper presented at the British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Warwick, 1-4 September 2010, pp. 18.  
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/193216.doc>

- mutual support for each other's learning; willingness to give and receive criticism; willingness to take risks in trying new ideas
- a shared language of assessment and feedback; and
- an emphasis on dialogue and exploratory talk to support thinking (Webb and Jones, 2009)<sup>3</sup>.

Hodgeson and Pyle (2010)<sup>4</sup> advocate the need for teachers to create a classroom where a co-constructivist, non-threatening environment frees children to express their ideas and misconceptions and enables the teacher to work out what children do and don't know. Underpinning this environment is talk, questioning, feedback and self and peer assessment. Wolfe and Alexander's review of dialogic teaching suggests exploratory talk, argumentation and dialogue support high-level thinking through engaging teachers and pupils in co-construction of knowledge; assessment for learning is regarded as the assessment most significant to children (Wolfe and Alexander, 2008)<sup>5</sup>. Transforming Writing teachers have identified effective classroom practices which have facilitated these characteristics and developed children's dialogue that supports formative assessment of writing.

---

<sup>3</sup> Webb, M and Jones, J (2009) Exploring tensions in developing assessment for learning *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* Vol. 16, No. 2, July 2009, 165–184  
<http://www.informaworld.com>

<sup>4</sup> Hodgson, C and Pyle, K (2010) A literature review of assessment for learning. National Foundation for Educational Research, 2010, pp. 34. <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/AAS01/AAS01.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Wolfe, S and Alexander, R. (2008) Argumentation and dialogic teaching: Alternative pedagogies for a changing world. [www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk](http://www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk)

## Procedure

### Sample

A sample 12 primary schools were selected from mostly disadvantaged areas. Two teachers from each school were nominated by the headteacher to take part in the Transforming Writing project: 21 Key Stage 2 teachers and three Key Stage 1 teachers. Each teacher had previously been engaged with Talk for Writing at a significant level and had skills in talking about writing. The schools were selected according to the following criteria:

- Familiarity with and expertise in Talk for Writing
- Participation in relevant research projects e.g. Teachers and TAs as Writers
- High standards of school leadership
- High standards of leadership in English
- High-quality Ofsted reports
- Situated in areas of social challenge identified by the proportion of children entitled to free school meals

### Action Research

Schools were visited in June/July 2011 by the research team to clarify the participating teachers' role as action researchers during the action research project. Action research is traditionally defined as undertaking the following stages: acting and then observing what happens following the change; reflecting on these processes and consequences; then planning further action (Newby 2010 pp 61-64)<sup>6</sup>. Teachers understood that reflection is of paramount importance and that fundamentally, action research can be seen as a reflective practice (McIntosh, 2010)<sup>7</sup>.

### Exploratory Workshops

Exploratory workshops, led by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong, facilitated teachers' collaborative development of an understanding of embedding formative assessment practices in the writing process. The four workshops, in part informed by the work on formative assessment by Dylan Wiliam and Shirley Clarke, were structured around: classroom culture, analysis and discussion of what excellence looks like and ongoing feedback, and evaluation and development of critical thinking and reflection as writers. Teachers were invited to experiment with formative assessment techniques within the framework of Talk for Writing.

Between workshops teachers experimented with embedded formative assessment in their classrooms and reflected on the differences made to teaching and learning of writing. In workshops, teachers collaborated with their professional peers to critically reflect on this classroom experience.

To support teachers' critical reflection on embedding formative assessment in the writing process, they collected the following data: video sequences of children and teachers engaging in dialogue about formative assessment of writing, a written analysis of the 3-5 minute video sequence and a reflective journal of about 500

---

6 Newby, P. (2010) Research Methods for Education Pearson Education Limited: Edinburgh

7 McIntosh, P. (2010) Action Research and Reflective Practice Oxon: Routledge

words. In addition, in September 2011 and July 2012, pupils completed questionnaires about their perceptions of writing while participating teachers completed questionnaires about their teaching practices in writing and understanding of embedding formative assessment in writing. 16 teachers were interviewed in pairs at their school in July 2012 in order to reflect in greater depth on what they had learned about embedding formative assessment in writing during the academic year.

Reflective journals and some analysis of video sequences of dialogic talk about assessment of writing informed the professional discussion of each workshop and influenced the agreed focus of classroom interventions following each workshop.

**Workshop 1 (September 2011):** 24 teachers and the headteachers of each school attended the first workshop in September 2011. In this first workshop they experienced activities that help children read-as-a-writer and co-construct meaningful sets of criteria to inform different types of writing (a 'writing toolkit' (see appendices)). Following this workshop, teachers focused in their classrooms on facilitating joint construction of success criteria with their pupils.

**Workshop 2 (November 2011):** Held at Penn Wood Primary School, Slough, 24 attending teachers fed back and discussed the reflections from their action research in their classrooms. Focus then shifted to developing talk about collaborative formative assessment in writing during whole class and guided group writing contexts. Teachers observed Pie Corbett teaching writing to Year 5 children and leading formative assessment of writing with the whole class. Following this workshop, teachers focused in their classrooms on developing children's talk about assessment of writing and setting targets that informed their own improvement.

**Workshop 3 (March 2012):** 24 teachers attended and critically reflected in groups on the outcomes of their action research. Successful techniques were recorded and tabulated in a planning structure for writing (see grid below, *Embedding Formative Assessment in Writing: A model developed by Transforming Writing teachers during Workshop 3*). Teachers critically reflected on the challenges and opportunities these approaches afforded for embedding formative assessment in the process of writing in their classroom. Following this workshop, teachers focused in their classrooms on child and teacher initiated group teaching of writing based on children's own assessment of their writing.

**Workshop 4 (July 2012):** 24 teachers and members of the steering committee attended and teachers presented case studies of their pupils' use of formative assessment and their progress in writing. Teachers reflected critically on reflections from action research in their classrooms.

A steering committee met in July 2011 and December 2012 to guide and influence the direction of the project.

Between workshops, research newsletters were circulated with some of the key themes and insights teachers had brought to the workshops.

Teachers were contacted by telephone between the workshops to discuss their progress with members of the research team.

# Evaluation Methodology

## Data Collection Techniques

The report draws on a range of data: children's writing perception surveys; teachers' perception surveys; reflective journals; interviews with participating teachers and attainment progress of participating children.

### 1. Children's writing perception surveys

Teachers conducted a writing perception survey with each of their six focus children at the beginning and end of Phase 1. The focus children included children who began Phase 1 working at, below and above age-related expectation in writing. The survey provided both quantitative and qualitative data. The purpose was to identify any changes in children's perception of their own confidence and their level of engagement with writing as a consequence of embedding formative assessment in writing.

### 2. Reflective journals

Teachers were asked to submit four reflective journal entries, one at each workshop. The journals were structured around the four key research questions. In addition, teachers were encouraged to keep personal classroom-based reflective journals that they could make notes in as relevant events occurred and this would inform the submitted journal entry. Reflective journals were intended to reveal teachers' developing understandings about their own practice and 'catch' their understandings of what aspects of their practice were successful in promoting formative assessment and children's progress in writing attainment. It was an attempt to address the pedagogical underpinnings of their practice and provide a record of transitions in their own thinking.

### 3. Interviews with teachers

Teachers were interviewed in pairs in June and July 2012. Eight out of 12 schools were visited and 16 teachers were interviewed. The interviews were based upon analysis of the reflective journals and a set of questions provided a grounded terrain across which open and exploratory discussion with the teachers could take place. Aspects of their reflections were expanded upon to clarify and extend understanding. Gaps in research data were addressed in the interviews and these gaps opened and closed as the research was collated and consequently, the direction and content of the interviews shifted in response to this. The interviewer spoke with both teachers at once. Sometimes, headteachers were included in the interview. These interviews took on the form of professional discussions and provided a site for building teachers' metacognition of their own practice as well as informing and consolidating the research report.

### 4. Attainment progress of children

Children's progress in writing levels from September 2011 to July 2012 was measured and differences in sublevels and average point score recorded. These were intended to reveal any progress in attainment sublevels and average points score using Assessing Pupil Progress assessment procedures which were commonly used in the participating schools. Expected progress is defined by the government as two National Curriculum levels of progress between Key Stages 1 and 2. Consequently, schools generally aim for at least one sublevel progress each

year which is equivalent to two average points and hope children achieve two sublevels progress each year which is equivalent to four average points progress. It was intended that the gathering of this attainment information would emerge from existing assessment procedures in the school recorded by teachers for school tracking purposes rather than any separate assessment specifically for the project. Any difference between September and July scores attained by the participating children may not have been solely due to an emphasis on assessment of writing but is likely also to be the consequence of a range of factors operating in the school and the specific classroom.

### **5. Video of assessment talk episodes**

Teachers were asked to submit four filmed recordings of writing dialogue exchanges between teacher and pupils or between pupils themselves. Each recording is between three and five minutes in duration and was collected at each workshop. Teachers themselves identified the episode of talk about writing to submit. The videos were intended to offer opportunities for analysis of the quality of collaborative talk during episodes of talk about writing that had assessment of writing at their heart. Teachers transcribed each filmed episode of writing dialogue exchanges and submitted these with their recording at each writing workshop. Teachers offered some comments about the quality and content of their interactions with children and the children's interactions with each other. Recordings varied in quality and a selection of schools was chosen for coded analysis. The results of this analysis will be presented in the final report. A sample is attached to this report (see appendices).

### **6. Teachers' perception surveys**

Each teacher submitted a perception survey reflecting on their own practice and attitudes to writing in their classroom at the beginning and at the end of Phase 1. The purpose is to identify if and how teachers' perceptions of their own use of assessment in writing had changed as well as their understanding of their role in the writing process in relation to the children.

## Findings: 12 Classroom Approaches

Teachers used a range of teaching and learning approaches in the classroom to embed formative assessment in the children's learning of writing.

1. Teachers used a variety of marking techniques to engage children in assessment
2. Teachers and children collaboratively constructed writing goals to guide assessment
3. Teachers collected and displayed knowledge about writing for children to use for assessment
4. Teachers created dialogic spaces for children to collaboratively talk about and assess their writing
5. Teachers modelled how writers talk and think when assessing their own writing
6. Teachers found shared reading comprehension and children's assessment of their own writing were mutually supportive
7. Teachers created safe learning environments for children to collaboratively assess their own writing
8. Teachers had a clear sense of how children's assessment talk about writing should progress
9. Teachers used flexible and responsive planning
10. Teachers used mini writing lessons to rapidly respond to formative assessment
11. Teachers used guided writing lessons to rapidly respond to formative assessment
12. Teachers' confidence and credibility supported children's formative assessment of writing

These approaches were summarised and condensed into a grid by participating teachers during Workshop 3. The grid, which is reproduced below, is called *The Transforming Writing Model for Formative Assessment*. The page numbers printed in the fourth column of the grid identify where some further detail about the approach can be found in this report.

The project team drew upon a wide range of already existing good practices. These were modified and developed during the classroom research into approaches that supported embedding formative assessment of writing in a way that promoted children's progress and enjoyment.

A more comprehensive report on each of these 12 classroom approaches can be found on page 19.

## The Transforming Writing Model for Formative Assessment

### Objective 1: What approaches best help children to internalise the ingredients?

Key underlying process in chronological order	Essential features of this	Useful related techniques/ equipment	Classroom approach
<b>1. Providing a motivating stimulus</b> <b>2. Selecting the right exemplar text</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Something that will interest the children and facilitate understanding</li> <li>Building in the appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure and text features that children need to make progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drama</li> </ul>	Approach 6
<b>3. Learning/internalising the text orally</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Story map – making learning visible</li> <li>Exemplar text</li> <li>Boxing up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using icons to help recall text</li> </ul>	
<b>4. Progressively co-constructing features of toolkit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making learning visible</li> <li>Discussing the features</li> <li>Comparing texts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Washing line</li> </ul>	Approaches 2 & 3
<b>5. Shared and guided writing focusing on the key vocabulary, sentence and text features that the children need to make progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Boxing up</li> <li>Making learning visible</li> <li>Modelling how to talk about the ingredients</li> <li>Involving the children in discussing the ideas</li> <li>'Magpieing' good ideas</li> <li>Writing your own version</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Writing journals</li> <li>Washing line</li> </ul>	Approaches 5 & 7
<b>6. Providing a range of focused talk opportunities to strengthen understanding, practise skills and build in progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Warming up tune of text activities</li> <li>Comparing texts</li> <li>Raiding the reading</li> <li>Response partner</li> <li>Group reflection</li> <li>Whole class feedback – essential that text visible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Snowballing pairs</li> <li>Cloze passages</li> <li>Role play</li> <li>Visiting professor</li> <li>Mobile phone</li> <li>Sorting and sequencing</li> </ul>	Approach 4



## Objective 2: What approaches best help children to talk about writing?

Key underlying process in chronological order i.e. stage 1 leads to stage 2 etc	Essential features of this	Useful related techniques/ equipment	Classroom approach
<b>1. Creating a learning environment that encourages focused talk in order to develop the inner judge within each child to help pupils read and write in a discriminating fashion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Okay to change mind</li> <li>• All views valid</li> <li>• Being a good listener (teacher as well as children)</li> <li>• Talking partners/small group work</li> <li>• Strategies to involve all students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking frames</li> <li>• Using visualiser</li> <li>• Snowballing partner work</li> </ul>	Approaches 2, 4 & 7
<b>2. Model how to talk about writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toolkit provides shared framework for understanding</li> <li>• Shared writing</li> <li>• Boxing up</li> </ul>		Approaches 2, 3 & 5
<b>3. Provide lots of opportunities to practise</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toolkit</li> <li>• Making learning visible</li> <li>• Book talk</li> <li>• Compare</li> <li>• Does it work?</li> <li>• Response partner</li> <li>• Raiding the reading</li> <li>• Warming up the tune of the text activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Washing line</li> <li>• Visualiser/some means of projecting text</li> </ul>	Approach 2

### Objective 3: What approaches best help children know how to improve and be supported in that improvement

Key underlying process in chronological order i.e. stage 1 leads to stage 2.	Essential features of this	Useful related techniques/ equipment	Classroom approach
<p><b>1. Marking and feedback with purpose of creating reflective dialogue</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer (helping pupils understand what will help them move forward)</li> <li>• Teacher (enabling teacher to know which aspects to focus on to move the children forward)</li> <li>• Self (to develop the inner judge so can identify own strengths and weaknesses)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toolkit as reference point - source of shared understanding</li> <li>• Visual display to support understanding</li> <li>• Providing time to act on initial feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pink for progress; green for growth</li> <li>• Post-it notes to indicate ingredients</li> <li>• Children comment on own work first</li> </ul>	Approaches 1, 2 & 3
<p><b>2. Targeted teaching to model how to improve in light of marking</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible planning</li> <li>• Shared writing to illustrate key points identified</li> <li>• Visual display of additional teaching focus</li> <li>• Toolkit – reflect on, did it work?</li> <li>• Children motivated by knowing final work will be published</li> <li>• Mini lessons and/or guided writing to rectify identified weaknesses</li> <li>• Providing time to act on initial feedback and polish work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Polishing pens</li> </ul>	Approaches 8, 9 & 11
<p><b>3. Co-construct individual targets – next small steps based on final feedback</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toolkit as reference point</li> </ul>		Approaches 1 & 2
<p><b>4. Curriculum planned so have opportunities to practise and develop skills in a range of contexts</b></p>			Approaches 1 & 9

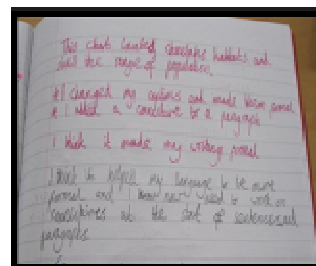
## Explanation of the 12 Classroom Approaches

### 1. Teachers used a variety of marking techniques to engage children in assessment

Teachers used a range of techniques to engage children with the marking that involved them in collaborative assessment of their own and each other's writing. The six techniques described here supported children's active response to assessment as well as initiation of assessment. The teachers' intention was that these in turn would empower children to develop their own capacity and skills to formatively assess their own writing.

#### (1) Children initiating the teacher assessment of their own writing

Children wrote assessments of their own writing at the end of their passage of writing identifying which parts they felt worked best and which parts they felt needed further work. Teachers then responded to this. Such an approach offers children a 'critical point of communication' with the teacher. It inverts the practice of the teacher evaluating writing and doing something to the writing that the child must respond to. Here, children evaluate their own writing first, identify an aspect which they feel needs addressing and the teacher then responds. This supports teachers' formative assessment processes because it reveals the child's priorities, and the level of complexity in writing at which children believe they can work. Teachers felt that requiring children to provide a written response to their own writing can elicit a higher quality assessment response than a verbal response.



*"Some occasions we expect just written responses to their writing. These tend to be better quality than talking partner discussions. Writing it seems to focus the quality of the response."*  
Source: teacher

#### (2) Peer marking

During peer marking, children had to give a written response about their partner's writing. Teachers believed this helped them to overcome the challenge of monitoring and responding to many simultaneous peer assessment exchanges, and it required the children to be focused on the assessment of their peer's writing. It lent some permanence to the impermanent assessment conversations the children have together.

*"It helps me to see who knows what a good bit of writing should be like and if they know where improvements should be made. I've been really impressed with how some have worked out as they have been quite specific. I think this works because they get to be teacher."*  
Source: teacher

#### (3) Teacher writing a personal written response to children's composition

Teachers said it was important to write a personal response to the children's composition. In order to focus children on compositional skills and the impact their writing may have on the reader, one school included as part of marking response, a written comment by the teacher describing the way the writing made the teacher feel and identifying for them how they had achieved that effect.

*"This part makes me want to focus on what happens next."*

*"This part is scary because you have used this word."*

Source: teacher

Teachers said their written assessment was best when it subsequently included a next steps 'moving on' comment and required the child to respond before continuing. Detailed written marking of assessment was identified as 'extremely' time consuming, and in some ways disheartening, because children did not always respond to the marking in subsequent pieces of writing.

#### **(4) Building in sufficient time for children to actively respond to marking**

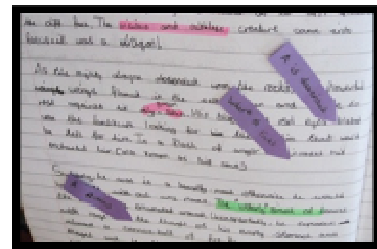
Teachers thought that written feedback was most effective when children had time at the end or beginning of a lesson in which to respond and act on the written feedback. Schools used extended plenaries the day after marking in which children could respond. One school ensured children had a response task to their writing to do at the start of the day.

#### **(5) Children using highlighters**

Highlighters used within a collaboratively constructed three-colour-code supported formative assessment and were used by children individually or collaboratively to locate and identify aspects of writing that went well or needed improvement. These were used by peer partners, with teachers or by children independently in self-assessment. Teachers said highlighting motivates children because they see their own good writing explicitly identified. It clearly identifies sites for revision and focuses children on analysing segments of their own writing which is at the heart of the revision process. It supported peer and collaborative talk and reduced teachers' marking load.

#### **(6) Arrows to focus assessment talk**

Teachers said it was effective when children used stick-on arrows in their writing to identify their use of the collaboratively agreed writing goals (the toolkits) for the genre they were writing. The arrows helped children see and assess their own and their peers' writing. The arrows indicated the focus for the peer talk and helped them to talk at length. Using arrows and talking around them is a skill that children have to be explicitly taught. Using arrows to support assessment talk may take a whole lesson. The procedure used by teachers was (1) children write arrows with reference to the writing goals (toolkit) at the start of the plenary, after they have written (2) children then share their writing with a partner (3) the teacher asks children to focus on specific aspects, depending on the focus of the lesson and (4) they compare and assess their use of writing goals (toolkit) with each other.



Teacher 1: *"Then they discuss, 'Well, you've done that. It's good but I've done it like this. What do you think?' And then they discuss."*

Teacher 2: *"(They say) 'I wrote this question to make them really think' and so they might compare their own ones."*

Teacher 1: *"and explain their choices."*

Teacher 2: *"This is a whole lesson in the first instance. It's lessons and not just added on to the plenary. They need to be taught that...we have to spend time on that to get the children doing that well enough for it to be worthwhile."*

Source: teachers

## 2. Teachers and children collaboratively constructed writing goals to guide assessment

Teachers actively involved children in developing their own writing goals (frequently referred to as language features, success criteria in schools). This is in contrast to teachers presenting a ready-made list of writing goals to children and then teaching them how to use it.

Transforming Writing teachers usually established the writing goals (the toolkit) a little way into the sequence of lessons so that children could identify for themselves what they needed to learn. Skilfully, teachers enabled children to write the writing goals as they emerged through a variety of learning contexts e.g. drama, shared reading of either a professionally written text or one written by the teachers themselves.

To facilitate this more subtle and nuanced way of collaboratively evolving writing goals against which children can formatively assess their own and each other's writing, teachers used the Talk for Writing technique of 'writing toolkits'. A writing toolkit is collaboratively co-constructed with children and provides lists of features of language for children to include in their own writing and guidance for much of the children's formative assessment. The toolkit can be applied to any genre of writing.

Writing toolkits are flexible and they can be adjusted and modified as the children are progressing through the sequence of writing lessons in response to formative assessment of writing.

Teachers used both a general writing toolkit that could be applied to any genre of writing and a writing toolkit that was specific to the genre of writing they were learning in the current lesson sequence.

Teachers said writing toolkits supported children's formative assessment when they were:

- collectively compiled – the children and teachers wrote them together using analysis of extracts of writing to identify key language components children will use in their own writing
- colour-coded – children could see each specific language feature and technique (or 'writing tool') in a different colour on the collaboratively constructed class toolkit poster. When they came to independently assessing their own or a peer's writing this helped them to establish how much of the toolkit they had used successfully
- Referring to the effect on the reader and how the child writer can achieve that effect
- Not used only as 'tick lists,' but issues of quality were discussed. Teachers were assessing *how well* the language feature was used, rather than simply, *if* the language feature was used in a reductive way. In this way children were asked to evaluate 'open' writing goals that required quality judgements about how far they had learned to use the writing tool (language feature or technique)

*"Sometimes children see it (toolkit) as a 'tick off' what you have done activity rather than thinking about have I/they done that well?"*

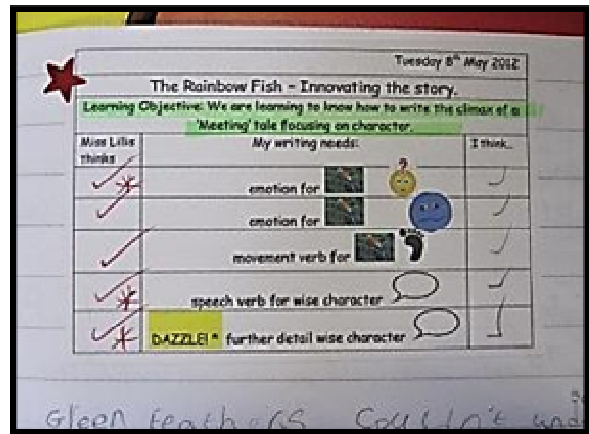
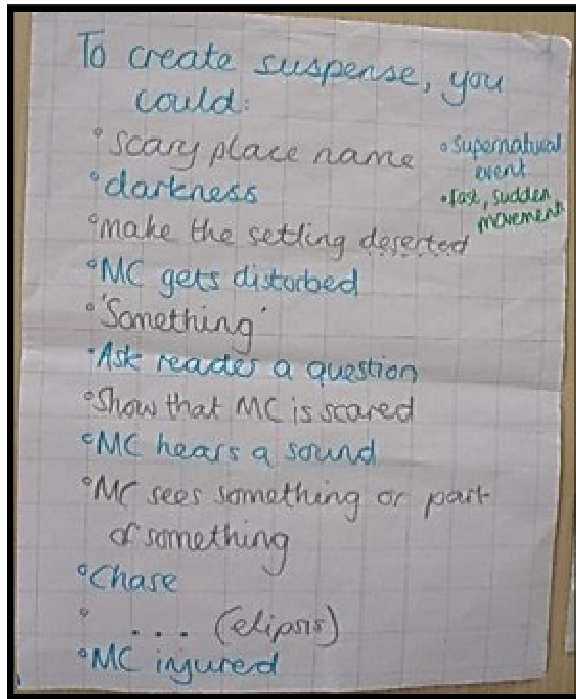
Source: teacher

*"The children are now talking about what makes a good piece of writing in relation to the reader and what it tells them rather than the tools they have used."*

Source: teacher

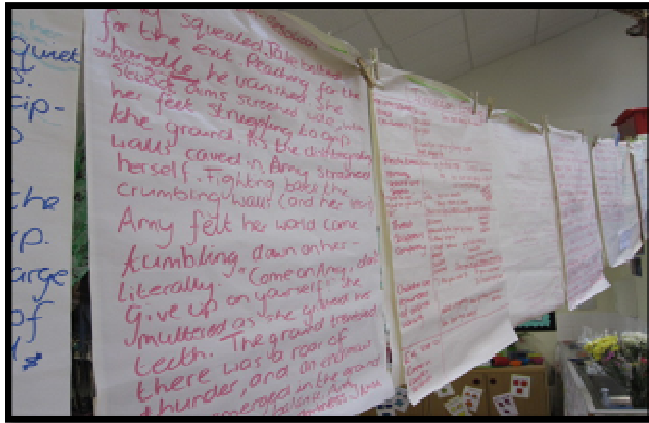
Teachers said that writing toolkits supported ‘deeper’ teaching and learning than lists of success criteria they had previously used. Writing toolkits, accompanied by collaborative analysis of texts and collaborative assessment of children’s writing, can

help children to develop qualitative assessment of ‘how well’ a ‘tool’ or language feature has been used and the effect on the reader. Evolving toolkits were more appropriate for supporting and assessing a generative process like writing because of the way they facilitate children assessing quality and scaffolding children’s learning so they can shape and consolidate their own writing processes on their own.



### 3. Teachers collected and displayed knowledge about writing for children to use for assessment

Many lessons involved the teacher and children writing together. They wrote lists of vocabulary, writing goals (toolkits), mood graphs, collaborative compositions in shared writing, plans and storymaps. These were written on large sheets of paper and then, as they were written each lesson, they were displayed for the children on washing lines – taut lengths of string, stretched across the sides of the classroom.



These ‘washing lines’ served at least two purposes. First, washing lines act as collectively constructed notes for children to refer to and modify while they are composing on their own. Writing is a complex process requiring the simultaneous orchestration of composition and transcription processes. This places a high demand on young writers’ working memory. The washing

lines provide reminders and resources e.g. vocabulary, sentence types, sentence starters, guidance on planning to lighten the cognitive load, and help them write more effectively until they have internalised them for themselves and they more automatically inform their composition choices. For teachers it was a way of providing both a scaffold for writing and handing over writing skills and ways of thinking about writing to the children, so they can use the skills more independently.

*“We are also keen for the children to become familiar with the washing line, using it for planning and resources. We have found it a great way to share the whole class guided and shared writing material.”*

Source: teacher

Second, washing lines act as instant, easily accessible supports for children’s self-assessment or peer assessment. One teacher expressed this use of washing lines as assisting the handover of skills and ways of thinking about writing as helping children arrive at the point where it is:

*“... inside their head. They don’t need it on the wall. They can see it on the wall in their head.”*

Source: teacher

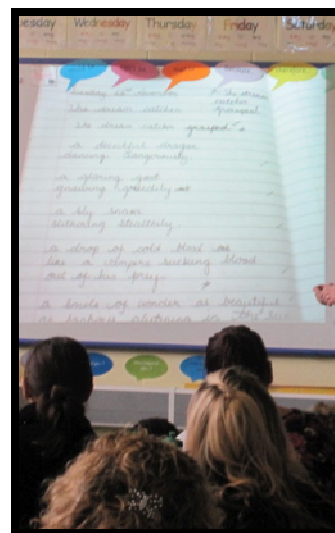


#### 4. Teachers created dialogic spaces for children to collaboratively talk about and assess their writing

Teachers frequently required children to display their writing to the whole class, and then developed a whole class discussion that collectively assessed its quality. Teachers believed this to be a powerful way of teaching children both how to assess writing and how to talk about writing with a focus on assessment.

It was motivating. Children were curious to know what other children had written and were mostly keen to have their own writing evaluated and assessed by their peers. They wanted to engage with their peers in a dialogue about the quality of their writing and teachers believed it motivated them to think about how they were using the writing goals (toolkit) and the effect their choices would have on the audience.

To facilitate this whole class dialogue, a visualiser was used (kindly supplied by TTS). These devices are ubiquitous in primary schools, and enable a teacher to place a child's writing beneath the lens and throw an enlarged image of it on the whiteboard to provide a focal point for class analysis and assessment.



Teachers have the flexibility to create this whole class dialogic space for assessment talk at any point in the sequence of lessons e.g. planning, first draft, final presentation.

Using a visualiser means assessment can be done at the-point-of-writing i.e. during writing as well as immediately after writing, while the paper is still warm and closely connected to the writing and thinking processes that formed it in the young writer's head. Crucially, teachers could responsively integrate whole class collaborative formative assessment of writing at a point in the lesson when children were immersed in the task and engaged in the creative and focused 'atmosphere'. This focused atmosphere takes time for a teacher to build. Teachers felt that if they could assess writing at *that* time, in 'that place' as one teacher described it, it was particularly powerful and made a significant difference to the children's learning about how to assess writing. It also sent out a powerful message that revision is not something children do at the end of a linear unidirectional writing process – it is a reciprocal process and writers are constantly looping back on what they have just written to assess its likely impact and quality and how far the writing is meeting the intended writing goals. Such immediate and collaborative assessment supports the development of children's metacognition about their own writing – their understanding of the processes they are using to achieve writing.

Teachers said this collaborative dialogic space led to a focus on more demanding and deeper assessment questions that dealt with compositional aspects, including choice and effect rather than secretarial aspects of writing, and considered the audience. Teachers found that this approach was facilitating the high level of writing discussion they wanted to encourage among their children.

*"A child will stand up and ...show their work on the visualiser. They get an opportunity to say why they have chosen that sentence and why they think it is effective. Then the class helps the child with improving their work by rewriting it as a workshop."*



Source: teacher,

One school described a process they used with the visualiser to generate a dialogic space for collaborative formative assessment of writing:

- Select a child's writing
- Show writing on the visualiser
- In partners or groups, children discuss what the writer has done well and how to improve it
- Child shares his/her own evaluation – what has worked, what could be done well
- Whole class share their ideas for revision
- Child selects a writing goal from the discussion which is then written on a card and stuck on the child's desk for the day
- All the other children imitate this activity in groups and pairs and make a personal writing goal for the lesson
- Teacher asks how far they have met their writing goal both during and after the lesson
- A different child's writing is evaluated on the visualiser at the end of the day
- Teacher uses highlighter and leads a discussion (e.g. What should be in pink? Why? Any advice to make it better? Why would that help?)
- The writer is asked what writing goal they would now set themselves
- Teacher offers the writing goal they would set the writer

Source: teacher

In order for collaborative assessment of writing to take place among children, teachers had to establish a shared language about writing processes that supported and underpinned the exchange of ideas and helped children to express themselves. Toolkits (collectively agreed writing goals) made by the whole class together, were a central feature of this common language or metalanguage. These would include such words as 'ing word', 'ly word', 'bossy words' and 'sentence starters'. This shared language need not be formal necessarily, but it must be shared and internalised by all the children. This enabled children to articulate ideas about writing and assessment of writing in the way that was *meaningful to them* but they did not need to use the formal grammatical terms, though usually they did. Children could collectively develop and invent much of their own metalanguage and this worked so long as everybody in the class had a shared understanding. Internalising the metalanguage helped children talk about and think about the way they both used language features and techniques and the way they thought about writing.

## **5. Teachers modelled how writers talk and think when assessing their own writing**

Teachers were aware that children needed explicit support and guidance to use talk effectively in formative assessment about writing. This required extensive modelling.

One teacher expressed this as “my role has firstly involved modelling talking about writing”. Teachers modelled what to say and how to say it. They modelled how to construct discussions about writing and how to focus the talk about the impact on the reader. A lot of modelling of assessment talk was done in whole class formative assessment contexts in order that assessment in talk partners would be of a high quality. Peer assessment in groups and partners can be shallow, without detail or justification of opinions, even though it focuses on compositional rather than

secretarial skills. Without modelling of talk about writing children can stall at “I do/don’t like it”. Modelling shows the children *how* to explain how and why their writing works or justify *why* it needs revision. Modelling provides clear expectations of how to articulate responses in talk about writing.

Children’s experience of hearing an expert model talk about writing as well as a peer talking about writing and, indeed, hearing themselves talk about writing, helps them to independently conduct formative assessment of their own writing. When teachers talked about writing, they externalised the internal thinking process of a writer and facilitated children’s independent abilities to assess their own writing.

### Modelling writing assessment talk in reading comprehension lessons

One interesting viewpoint expressed by a teacher was that in reading comprehension, teachers were modelling a *relationship* between the reader and the book e.g. when he modelled asking and answering questions about author intent. This type of talk was transferred by children from reading comprehension lessons to assessment of their own writing during writing lessons.

*“The teacher role between book and child is to model that deeper relationship with the text. You do it constantly – at beginning of the year saying things like, ‘I wonder why they (the author of the book) have done that? That could be because of this.’”*

Source: teacher

### Shared writing was used to model thinking about writing

Teachers used shared writing to show children how to think about creating effects on readers through generating vocabulary and judging the best words and arrangement of words to make the reader feel a particular way. During shared writing, teachers were conducting a running commentary, speaking out loud their thinking processes as they composed and made word and sentence choices. This is modelling how to assess the impact of their writing on a reader.

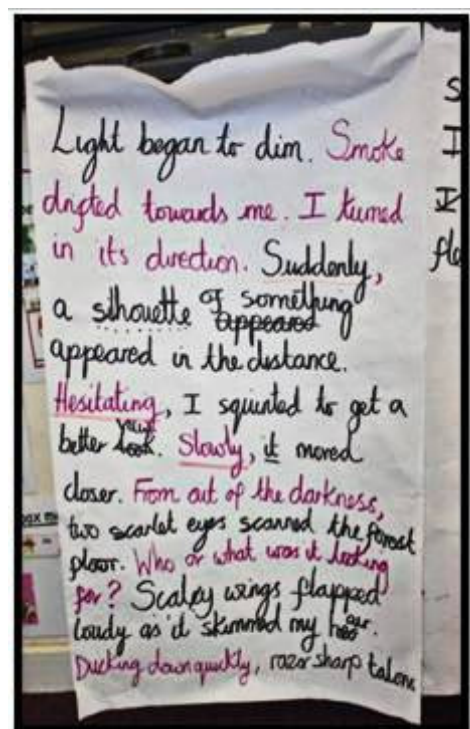
In the examples below we can see how the teacher describes her talk in shared writing to model how to think about writing, so that the children consider purpose and effect. The modelling of thinking about writing in this example is closely connected to assessment of the effect on the reader.

*Teacher 1: “When we’ve been sharing writing, we’ve been modelling that whole process (gives example). I stopped at that part and said, ‘this is what’s happened. Ok, if I was a character, what words will I use for...? What words shall I come up with? Talk to your partner about their emotions? How are they going to react? If you’re in semi-darkness and silhouettes how are you going to feel?’ And we have that discussion about characters’ feelings. Ok, how are they going to feel? We’ve talked about what word am I going to use to best portray that to the reader.”*

*Teacher 2: “You try to talk your thought processes as a writer. So I’ve got choices as a writer...”*

*Teacher 1: “So then they came up with choices. How would they move? How would they behave at that point in the story?”*

Source: teachers



## Teachers were modelling the metacognitive manager

Teachers were modelling the voice in the writer's head during shared writing and during all stages of the writing process. During shared writing the teachers were modelling the choices the writer makes (generating, judging, choosing, adding, deleting, moving, substituting) and focusing on the impact and effect on the reader. The voice the children heard the teacher use was a deliberate representation of the voice in the writer's head; a voice that questions, judges, decides and manages the thinking and writing processes in the working memory. The voice is the metacognitive manager. Whole class discussions and guided writing and peer partner talk were all opportunities for *training* the children's own internal writing voice – their own metacognitive manager – and helping children to think about *how* they think about writing so they can do it independently. Teachers used marking and discussion to get children to reflect on what they were thinking as they wrote.

*"When they work with a partner that's where you are developing that voice, because what you are aiming to do is get children to do that on their own. The partner work and the talking, that's quite difficult (when you are 9 or 10) so the whole partner thing is more supportive."*  
Source: teacher

*Interviewer: "You said you were modelling 'that'. What is the 'that'?"*  
*Teacher 1 and 2: "The process of thinking."*  
Source: teacher

*"Modelling the thought processes behind it. That's a big part of the handover."*  
Source: teacher

## 6. Teachers found shared reading comprehension and children's assessment of their own writing were mutually supportive

Teachers identified a mutually reinforcing relationship between shared reading (the whole class collaboratively analysing a published story or extract of text, guided by the teacher) and formative assessment of writing. Shared reading supported children's deepening and more explicit awareness of the needs of the audiences for their own writing. As they discussed together how published writers purposefully used words to create an impact on their audience, children made connections to how they had used words to achieve their purposes in their own writing and reflected on their own thinking processes.

Teachers said they deliberately sought high-quality published texts for use in shared reading to support high-quality analytical talk among the children. This was a high priority for teachers because they realised that shared writing talk was the flip side of the coin of writing assessment talk. Teachers said that when children 'pulled apart' or analysed a shared reading text they were reading like writers, often identifying features of their own writing goals (writing toolkit) and this collaborative exploration and discussion of a published text enabled them to exercise skills of assessment they would later use independently during formative assessment of their own and peers' writing. In this way, shared reading was, in part, like an assessment of writing.

Teachers observed that in the same way that shared reading supported children's assessment of writing, so children's formative assessment of their own writing had a positive effect on their reading comprehension skills in shared reading. It can be argued that teachers' focus on embedded formative assessment in the writing process put the 'writer in the reader.' Teachers believed this relationship to be positive.

*“The link between reading and writing is becoming stronger all the time.”*

Source: teacher

*“They are also becoming more obvious writers as readers. They will often point out things that they have seen or read that link to our writing in class, which they like to share with the other children.”*

Source: teacher

*“As a sideline to all of the project we’ve been doing, we’ve noticed our children’s understanding of text has massively improved.”*

Source: teacher

*“It’s easier to start with a child’s writing because it is at their level and there’s no inference and deduction really until you teach them how to do that – when they are looking at a piece of child’s writing on the board they can pull it apart and then once you do that with a reading book they can use those skills they have developed with each other’s writing and do the same with that...when we read they are stopping me all the time and saying that is a show not tell, why are they trying to do that, that’s a clue”*

Source: teacher

*“Giving them the tools to tear apart their own and each other’s writing is really now showing in their reading and comprehension. Their comprehension of reading is coming on well now.”*

Source: teacher

## **7. Teachers created safe learning environments for children to collaboratively assess their own writing**

Teachers deliberately shaped classroom learning environments that they believed had a positive impact on the way children perceived themselves and one another as writers. Teachers believed a ‘no fear’ learning environment impacted on the efficacy of formative assessment of writing. This was crucial when children were being asked to publically reveal and purposefully evaluate *how far qualitatively* they had achieved their writing goals. Teachers believed formative assessment was supported by developing children’s sense of self-worth and confidence in relation to their writing because this enabled children to take risks and progress as writers in response to assessment from teachers and peers.

*“It has been extremely important to instil a sense of worth in them regarding what they are writing. This leads to them developing as thoughtful writers that are able to be braver in writing which is leading to improve overall.”*

Source: teacher

*“The children are now happy to talk about their work and have it talked about. They relish feedback and try hard to implement it. This can only happen if the children feel comfortable and safe and they are not going to be ridiculed or made to feel like a failure. I feel that this is a skill I have developed and used – the ability to create this environment. I have done this through modelling and allowing myself to be seen as a writer and as someone who is keen to improve.”*

Source: teacher

### **Shared writing**

Teachers wanted children to learn formative assessment by listening to others, judging the quality of their writing in classrooms where improvements (errors) were seen as something to be learned from and a valuable, normal part of the writing process. Shared writing, when the teacher composed at a board in front of and together with the whole class, was an important factor in generating this environment

because teachers themselves were seen to be accepting and responding to feedback from children as they wrote.

*Teacher 1: "Letting them know we're reading your work and we can make comments about your work and it's not personal. It doesn't mean you're rubbish at this. They take it on board in a much more mature way now."*

*Teacher 2: "It's about improving what they've done and giving them ideas and feedback to improve what they've done."*

Source: teachers

*Teacher: "Shared writing has a lot to do with that because you're showing as a writer, even as a teacher you're not perfect, and you're making errors and you're making changes – 'Actually looking back at this and reading back I've noticed this sentence doesn't quite flow correctly, let's all work on Mr X's sentence...' We're all writers, we're all learners, we're all learning"*

Source: teacher

## **Assessment as a relationship**

One teacher described assessment as a relationship between the teacher and pupil as well as between pupils themselves. It is not something the teacher *does* to the writing of the child. In his classroom, he said, he built relationships with the children, valuing them as writers and critics inviting reciprocal discussions about their writing.

## **Questions and prompts**

Teachers identified the importance of questioning and prompting to develop assessment talk about children's writing and develop a safe learning environment. Open questions were used to encourage responses from children that were increasingly concerned with effect on the reader and to develop a qualitative discussion of what works and why writers make choices (e.g. what has the author done? How has the author created that effect? Why has the author created that effect? What is the purpose?). Questions were used by teachers as a key tool for their own assessment of the impact of their own teaching and the children's learning.

*"As you're questioning them throughout from the very start you are assessing them, because from the outset you are seeing what they know. So you are questioning them before they put pen to paper, before they are really discussing anything. You are already asking them what do you already know about this text? What are you expecting to see? What it will look like?"*

Source: teacher

*"If you don't ask the questions you don't get the thinking, you don't get the responses. I've found myself asking the questions a lot more."*

Source: teacher

Teachers supplied a range of 'writerly' questions that children could internalise and use to support their own assessment talk.

*"(You question) so that at the end they will have more of a discussion and you'll be able to say why did you do that? What's that for? They can articulate: 'I've chosen that because I wanted them to feel sad inside.'"*

Source: teacher

## **Establishing routines**

Teachers consistently used a strongly structured model of writing in sequences of lessons. This model included at the beginning, extended talk about the genre to be written by the children followed by reading and modelling of the writing with structured, responsive, incremental progression towards children's independent composition. Teachers believed that the more familiar children were with these

patterns of a carefully structured writing process the greater attention children could give to assessing the quality of their writing.

*"In the beginning you spend time explaining processes but now they have routines and they just get on with it, more time to get on to the teaching and input and it is higher level."*

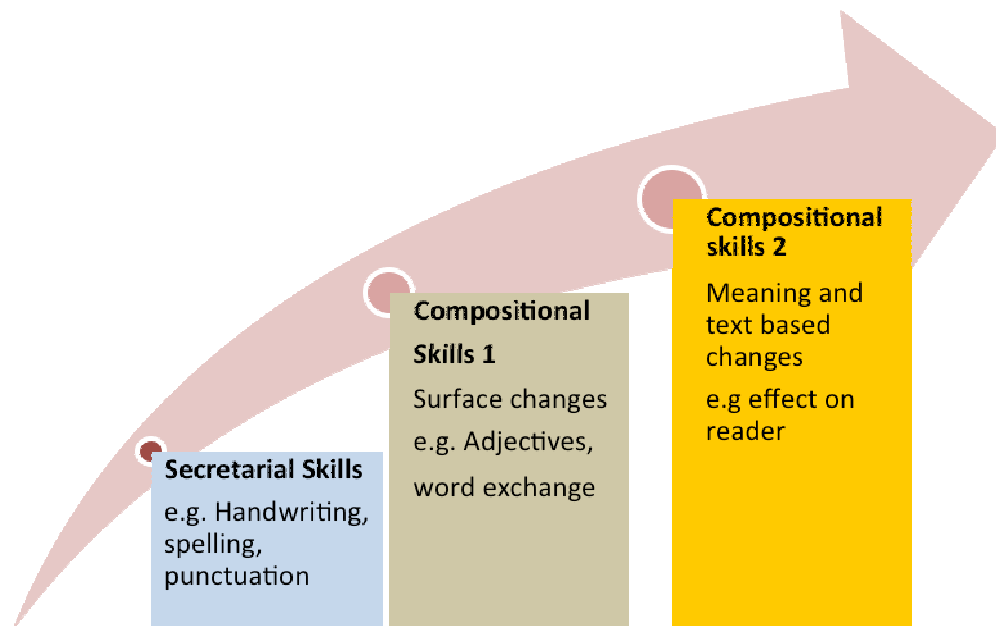
Source: teacher

## 8. Teachers had a clear sense of how children's assessment talk about writing should progress

Teachers developed clear understandings about how the quality of children's talk about writing should progress. They knew where they wanted the children to be 'going next' in terms of the focus and quality of their assessments of their own and one another's writing. Teachers developed steps in progression (shown below). They expressed concerns that children could stall at the point of making assessment comments that were predominantly about revising secretarial skills. Teachers considered these type of responses limited and they were frustrated if children were "still of the opinion that what makes good writing 'good' is neat handwriting and full stops/capital letters".

Teachers wanted children to progress beyond revising only secretarial skills and develop their compositional skills as well. Two compositional steps were identified and we have borrowed and adapted the terms surface changes and meaning and text based changes.<sup>8</sup>

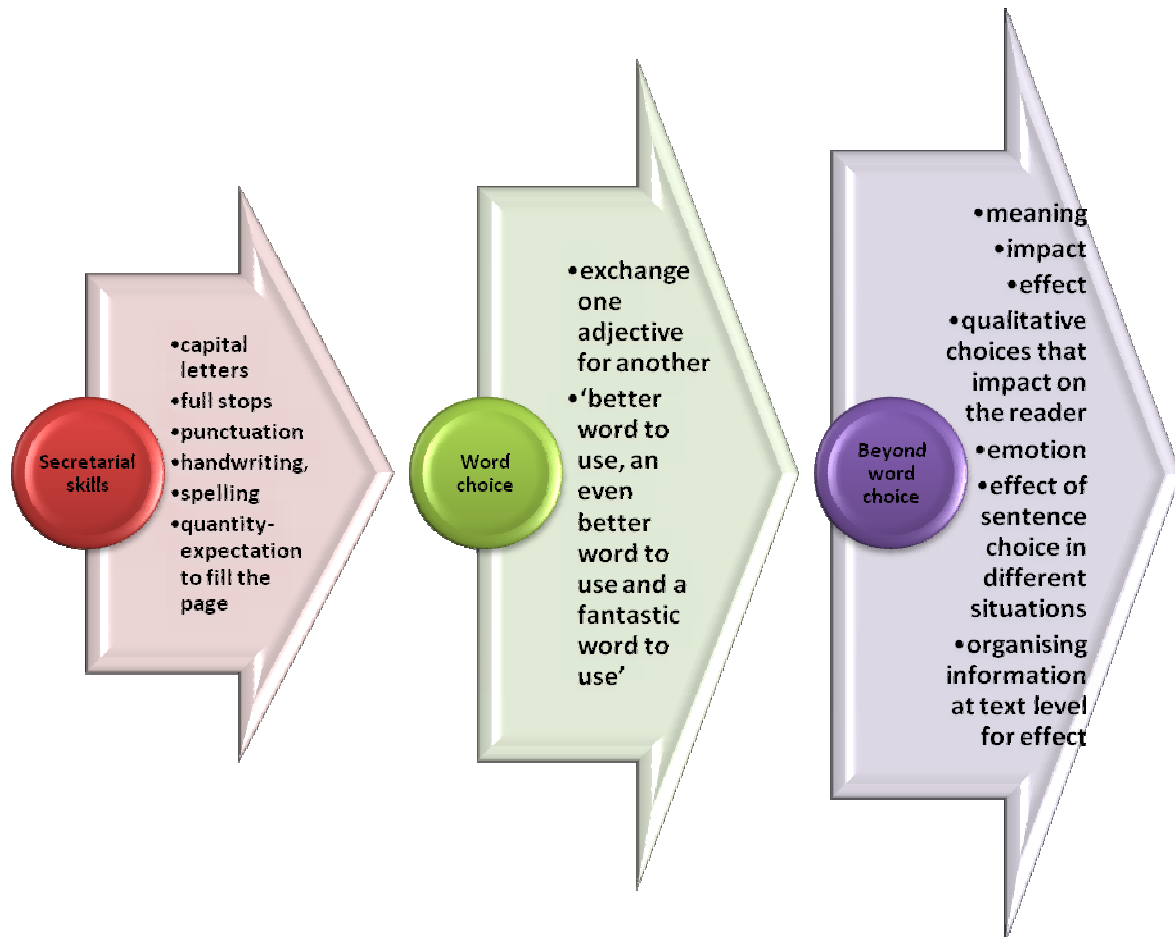
Teachers saw their role as working with children to help them to 'sift out' comments on secretarial aspects of their writing. It was something that took time and energy



and was considered to be 'something we will be working on for a while'. Teachers considered it a significant part of their role to make judgements about how much attention to give to secretarial skills while keeping the focus firmly on composition,

<sup>8</sup> Faigley, L. and Witte, S. (1981) 'Analysing Revision', *College Composition and Communication*, 32: 400-414

purpose and effect on the reader. To guide these judgements, teachers developed the model above. A more detailed and classroom-friendly model identifies the three steps as: secretarial skills, word choice and beyond word choice. The model below summarises the features of assessment talk associated with each of these steps. These features indicate a classroom-friendly pathway forward for developing the content and quality of children’s formative assessment talk about writing.



A model such as this, which was co-constructed by Transforming Writing teachers, supports teachers who want to shift children’s focus away from secretarial skills, but at the same time make sure children do not ignore them so that their secretarial skills suffer as a consequence. Teachers considered it a challenge to judge how much attention to give to each aspect so that the assessment talk with children was reaching the quality described below.

*“(At first) we asked what makes a good piece of writing, they focused on how it looked and handwriting. And we started doing toolkits so you get a lot of it’s got a sense of 3, it’s got a drop-in clause, it’s got an adverbial phrase because they were listing the things in the toolkits –It’s a good piece of writing because it’s got these tools in, which it is, but then what we did, the next step , we said OK , it can have all those tools, but those tools might not work. So the way they work is if it’s a piece of description, the reader who reads it, your partner or you, needs to be able to make an image in their head...and focus on those things more than full stops, capital letters ...trying to get them to mark on the impact, I read the story and it made me feel like this”*

Source: teacher

## 9. Teachers used flexible and responsive planning

Teachers were flexible in the way they planned their sequences of writing lessons in order to facilitate the children's formative assessment of writing. While they had to be very well planned with a well-structured writing unit embodying consistent procedures and have a clear idea of how the unit of writing was going to unfold, teachers had to be willing and able to adjust and modify their lessons as the unit progressed. This is because, teachers said, if formative assessment is to be truly formative, then when a teacher identifies a need from the children or the children identify a need themselves, it must be rapidly addressed at the nearest possible point in the sequence of lessons. This sometimes meant that teachers had to modify a lesson at very short notice, and sometimes slow down. This could mean that the lesson sequence took longer than anticipated.

Extended plenaries were one way of providing this rapid response to formative assessment.

*"Another approach to feedback that I have used with the children is extended plenaries. These often take place the following day, after marking the children's work. Marking often reveals a common area for development amongst the children e.g. being over descriptive in sentences, to the point where the sentence loses its impact. Whenever there has been one or two common themes like this in the children's work, I have amended my planning to teach an extended plenary the following day to address this."*

Source: teacher



Teachers, in reflective journal entries and during interviews, indicated that they were becoming more self-aware and analytical of their own impact on children's learning during writing lessons. Teachers were revisiting their own way of using talk about assessment of writing with groups of children and then analysing and modifying it. Perhaps they were developing a skill of being an 'eavesdropper' on their own teaching and evaluating it in terms of how well it was facilitating the children's own talk about writing with their peers and then modifying it.

*"(I am) paying more attention to my teaching and it has moved the children on in terms of being a good writer."*

Source: teacher



## 10. Teachers used mini writing lessons to rapidly respond to formative assessment

Teachers adapted their lesson sequences to respond to formative assessment of writing. To do this, teachers experimented with mini writing lessons and evaluated how far these responsive learning contexts supported children's learning. In mini writing lessons, children choose the focus of the teaching they receive.

Mini writing lessons are short lessons that children can choose to do based on their own assessment of their own needs. Teachers use assessment from across the lesson sequence to compile a suite of short lessons that children opt into. Teachers might also ask the whole class what they think they need to learn in order to inform the suite of mini lessons to be offered. Teachers might write a list on the board, and then children select which mini lessons they want to sit in, based on what they think they need help with. There might be up to three mini lessons going on in a lesson at once. Children are more likely to opt into a group if they see a comment in their books that the teacher has made relating to a mini lesson option.

*"After marking, you are more aware of children's progress. You ask the children, if you could, what areas would you like a little more practice on and they discuss it with their partners. And then you might come up with and write a list on the board, or look at the toolkit and star which ones do we need a little more practice on before we go to the invent stage, and you might pick 3 of those areas (one might be speech, describing a character, introducing character and setting)."*

Source: teacher

*"If I've looked at their work and there's a few of them in the class and I've gone 'Hang on, none of them are doing this!' I'll go, 'Right! These 5 really need to work on that' and the rest of them can get on carrying on with their work...I'll grab those 5 on the carpet and we'll do a little (mini lesson)"*

Source: teacher

Mini lessons last about 15 to 20 minutes, often at the beginning of a lesson, and children might make notes or do an activity so they can *immediately* go back to their writing and make improvements.

Teachers identified some characteristics of mini lessons as:

- Children have some element of choice in what they learn
- What is learned in the mini lesson is used immediately afterwards in children's own writing
- Relevant exactly to the piece of writing they are doing
- Relevant to feedback from a finished piece of writing so that they go back and improve it – they 'close the gap' between what they are capable of and what the teacher has assessed they have actually done
- Often children are taught in groups of 'mixed ability'
- Mini lessons can have implications for planning and teachers need to keep mini lessons short and sharp

## 11. Teachers used guided writing lessons to rapidly respond to formative assessment

Teachers used guided writing as a way of rapidly responding to formative assessment. Guided writing occurs when a teacher sits with a small group of children and works with them on a specific aspect of writing they all need to master. In this way, it allows teachers to adjust their planning and meet the learning needs of specific groups of children. Because it is collaborative learning, it releases the potential of children to learn from each other as they engage in evaluative discussion and exploratory talk about writing processes. Guided writing offered Transforming Writing teachers an immediate way of responding to assessment of their teaching and children's learning that complemented whole class discussion, peer partner talk and one-to-one talk with the teacher.

Guided writing characteristics include:

- Teacher selects the focus of guided writing – the teacher works with one group of up to six children for about 20 minutes, focusing on an aspect of writing she has identified through marking or oral 'in flight' assessment, during the preceding few days. Guided writing is assessment led
- It allows the teacher to focus on the children's progress *during* the writing process itself
- Groups are composed of children who have a common need – these may not be ability groups
- Children are given instant feedback about their understanding of writing processes and they way they think about writing
- Teachers are thinking the process of writing aloud with the children, 'there and then' at the table, making sure children are going back to their writing, reading it, and checking it makes sense with a 'present' audience of children to assist them
- Children may or may not produce any new writing during the discussion



*"That's something you can really focus on in your guided writing. You're handing it to the child and saying, 'Well, what are your thought processes at this point?' And even if we're saying, 'write this piece of work' and we're asking the rest of the class to assess it at the end and what were you thinking that made you write that, that's time to pull out that writer's voice and you can get that very much in a small group and work with them on that."*

*"Guided writing is so much more than just the writing. It's the thinking that's going with it and it's getting that in a small group and getting children to bounce ideas off each other and discuss it and even if at the end of a session where it's been guided writing the children haven't written anything, that talk can be most powerful and you can see it in their writing the next day"*

Source: teacher

## 12. Teachers' confidence and credibility supported children's formative assessment of writing

Teachers believed that their own confidence to write and talk about writing increased and underpinned their successes in providing formative assessment experiences for children.

### Teachers writing themselves

Teachers wrote texts themselves for the children to analyse. These texts were written in response to the overnight or weekend marking. The self-written texts emphasised the next thing the children needed to learn and allowed teachers to draw out and teach to the children exactly what they needed to know at that particular stage.



Teachers at one school wrote two short extracts overnight in response to marking children's writing. One extract would have the features the teacher wanted to teach written to a good standard. The other extract would deliberately not be written to such a good standard. The children had to compare them and give advice to the writers and then immediately use the same ideas in their own writing. The teacher explains:

*"An activity that the children have now become very familiar with is the analysis of 'Bill and Betty's' pieces of work. Bill and Betty are two fictional characters who often 'visit' our classroom and leave their writing up on the flip chart. When I prepare Bill and Betty's pieces of writing I purposely include sentences that are too long, overly descriptive etc. so that when we come to mark and analyse their work as a class these are themes that we can highlight and comment on. During this activity the children work in response partners to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses in the piece of writing. I then take contributions and we discuss the work at whole class level, ensuring focus of their attention on the key themes, before constructing a comment on the writing. This activity works well to develop the inner critic in the children, as they do not have to critique their own or a friend's work but instead a fictional character's. These extended plenaries are very effective for addressing key teaching points."*

*Source: teacher*

## Impact on children's attainment of embedding formative assessment in writing

This section of the report will document how embedding formative assessment in writing processes affected the participating children's attainment in writing.

### Summary of analysis

- 1. Children made good progress in writing attainment
- 2. Most children in each year group made progress in writing attainment of at least 4 APS during the research project
- 3. Boys and girls made similar progress in their writing attainment
- 4. Children for whom English is an additional language and children who received free school meals made similar progress in their writing attainment to other children
- 5. Children's progress in their writing attainment was affected by whether they began the year at, below or above age-related expectation
- 6. Key Stage 2 children participating in the Transforming Writing project made better progress in their writing attainment compared to the national average

### Data collected

Data was collected from 19 teachers. One teacher withdrew and four teachers did not submit suitable and complete data. Attainment data from 400 participating children was collected and analysed.

Y6	79
Y5	180
Y4	64
Y3	57
Y2	20
Total children	400

Girls	195
Boys	205
Total children	400

As well as data for attainment in writing for each of the children in July 2011 and July 2012, other data collected included gender, free school meals and English as an additional language. Teachers submitted their pupils' progress in sublevels and converted Average Point Scores (APS). The data in this chapter is presented in APS only except for analysis point 6. Data in sublevels is available on request.

### Age-related expected progress

Using end of year assessment data in writing collected by each school in July 2011, children were identified as working below, at or above age expectation. A table of agreed expectations are shown below:

### Age-related expected attainment in writing

Year	Expected sublevel in writing at end of year	Average Point Scores
1	1a	11
2	2b	15
3	2a/3c	17/19
4	3b	21
5	3a/4c	23/25
6	4b	27

Pupils are expected to attain a full sublevel of progress every two years. This is equivalent to 6 APS. In order to achieve this, pupils must make 3 APS progress per year. It is difficult to measure one and a half sublevels across one year. Consequently, head teachers on the Transforming Writing project aimed for 2 sublevels of progress each year to ensure secure progress. This equals 4 APS progress per year.

The use of a control group was discussed at length and it was decided that no control group would be used in Phase 1 of Transforming Writing. A control group will be used for Phase 2 of the research project.

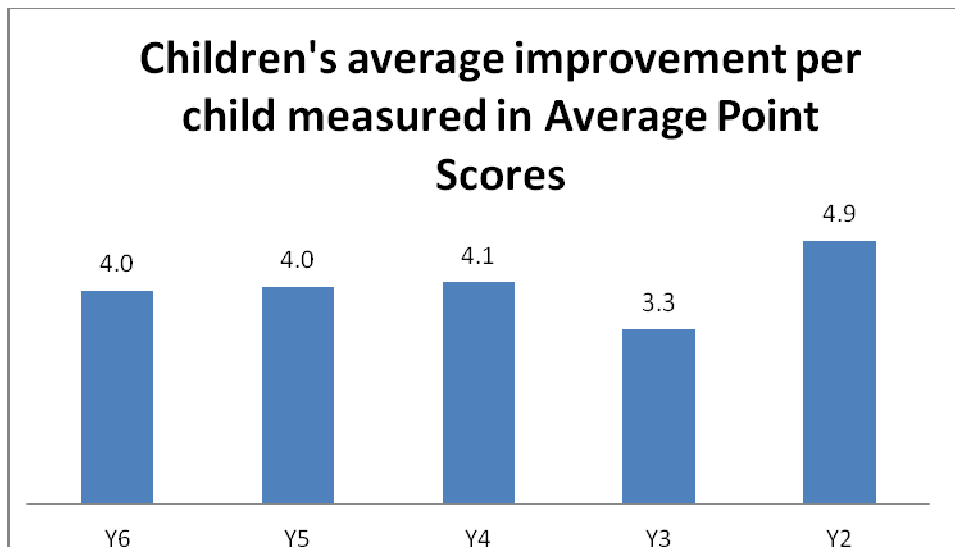
In Phase 2 of the Transforming Writing project less emphasis will be placed on sublevels and a more refined analysis of APS will be used to reflect children's progress.

### **1. Children made good progress in writing attainment during the research project**

The pupil evidence collected shows that on average, children made progress of between 3.3 and 4.9 APS (Average Point Scores). Year 2 made the most progress and Year 3 the least progress. Children in Years 4, 5 and 6 made an average improvement of 4 and 4.1 APS.

#### **Figure 1: This chart shows the average progress in attainment of children in writing measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**

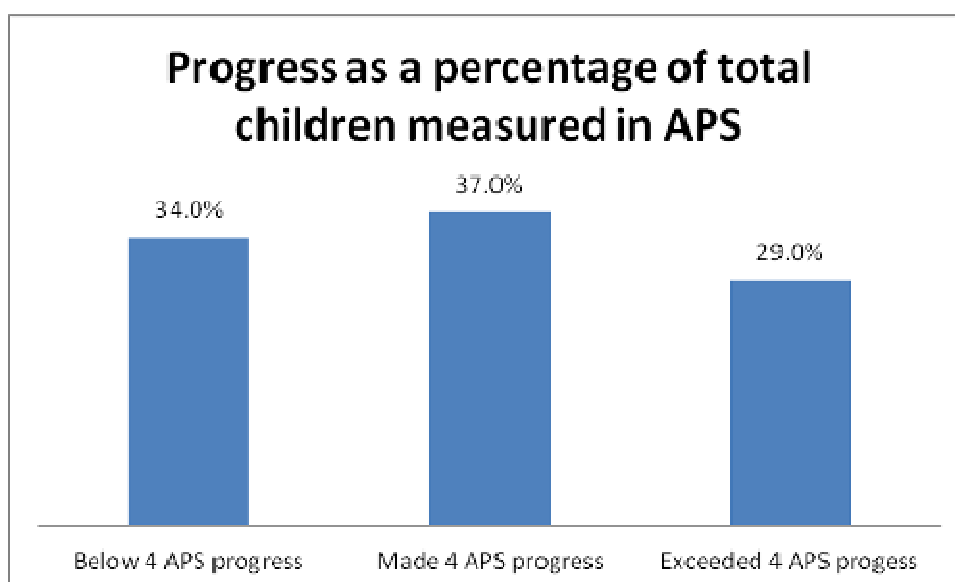
The chart shows that children participating in the Transforming Writing project have met average expected progress targets in every year group.



## 2. Most children in each year group made progress in writing attainment of at least 4 APS during the research project

The pupil evidence collected shows that 66% of all children across all year groups made 4 or more APS (Average Point Scores) of progress in writing during the one academic year of the research project. 29% of children made 6 or more APS progress during the research project. This represents two years' expected progress made in one year for nearly a third of participating children.

**Figure 2: This chart shows the progress in attainment of children in writing measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**

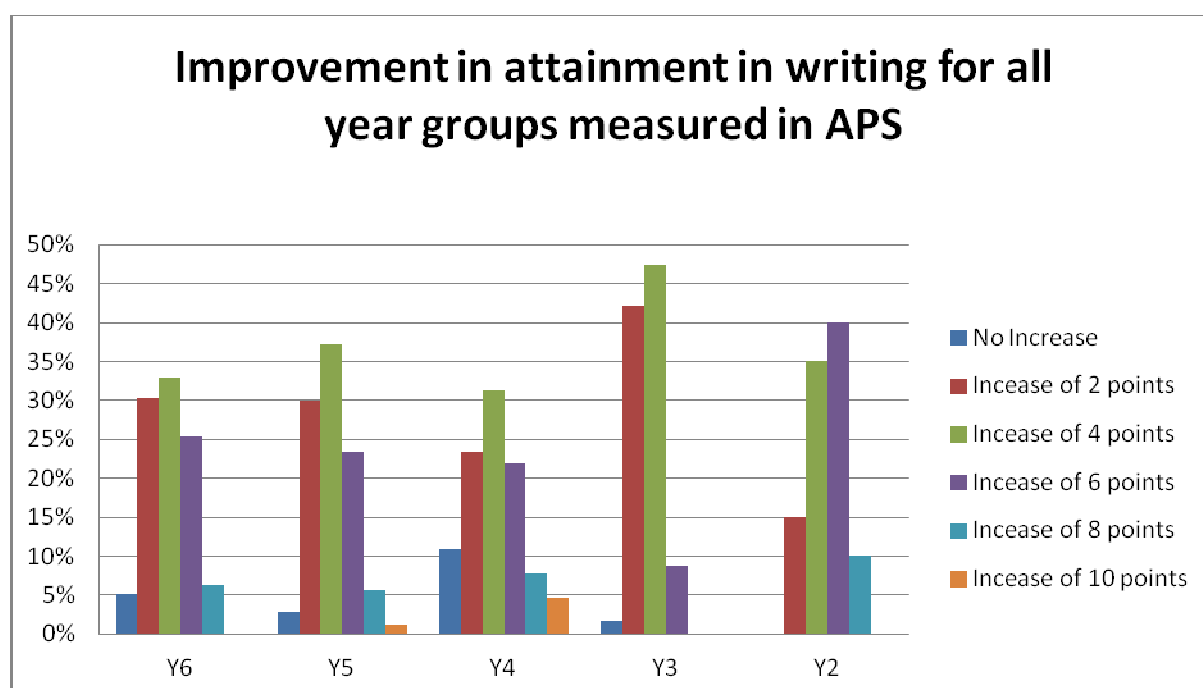


The pupil evidence collected shows that each year group made an average improvement in attainment of at least 4 APS. At least 56% of children made an average improvement in attainment of 4 APS or more in each year group. It is worth noting that apart from Year 3, between 31% to 50% of children made an average improvement in writing of 6 APS or more.

**Figure 3: Table to show average progress in attainment in writing of 4 APS and above for children in each year group**

Year group	4 APS or more progress in writing attainment	6 APS or more progress in writing attainment
2	85%	50%
3	56%	9%
4	66%	35%
5	67%	30%
6	64%	31%

**Figure 4: This chart show the average progress in attainment in writing of all children by year group measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**



In Year 2, 85% of children attained 4 APS or more and half the children attained 6 APS which represents two years' expected progress in one year.

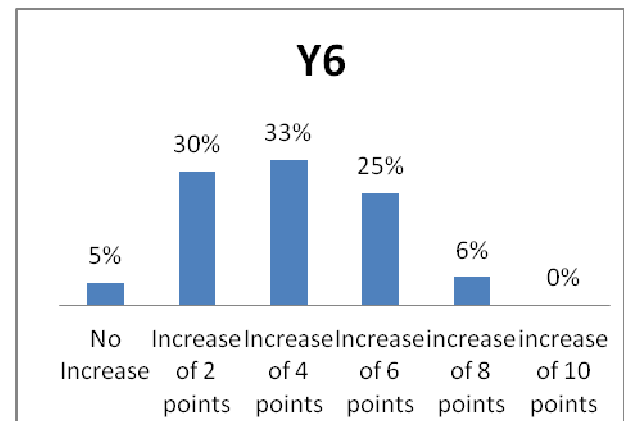
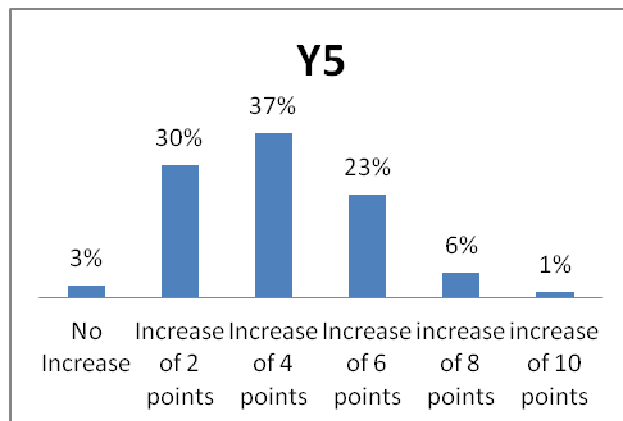
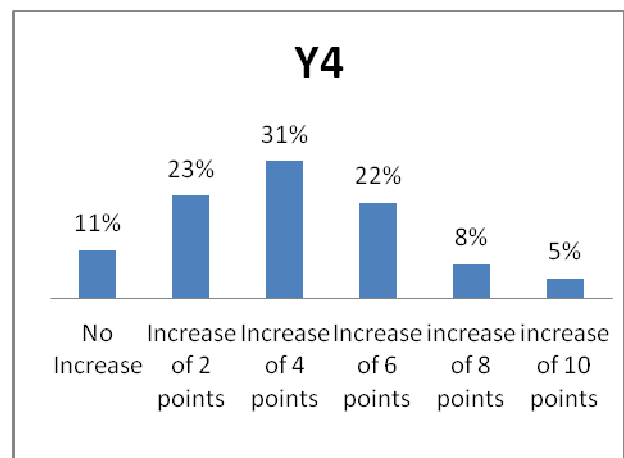
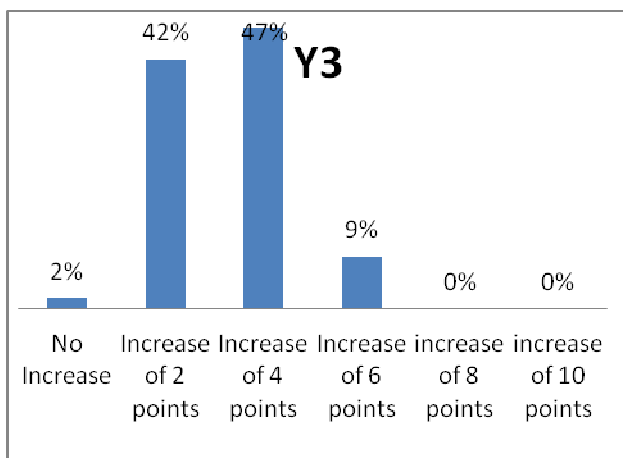
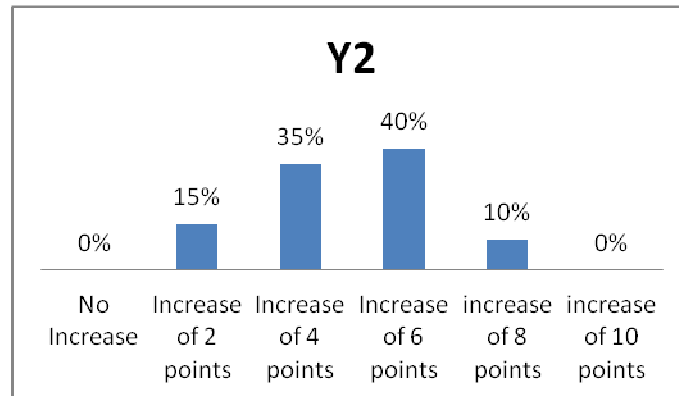
In Year 3, results were less impressive, but nonetheless 56% of children achieved 4 APS progress in one year.

In Year 4, 66% of children attained 4 APS progress and 35% attained 6, 8 and even 10 APS progress in one year.

The attainment of children in Years 5 and 6 is broadly similar. Approximately two-thirds of children made progress of 4 APS and a third made progress of 6 APS or more.

Charts of each individual year group showing % values are produced below for clarity.

**Figure 5: These charts show the average progress in attainment in writing of all children in each year group measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**





### 3. Boys and girls made similar progress in their writing attainment during the research project

The proportion of boys and girls in the data set was roughly equal, with 205 boys and 195 girls.

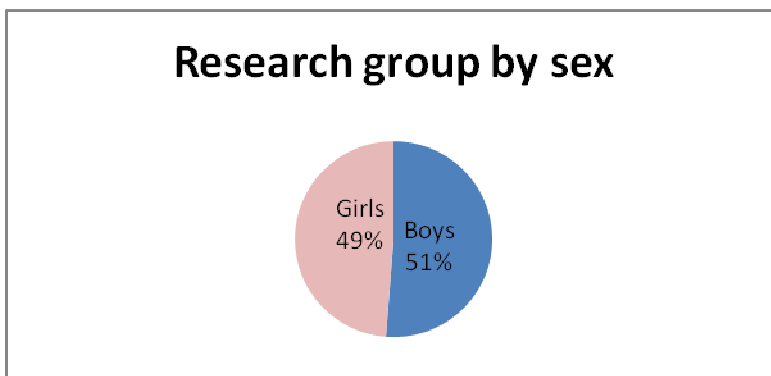
The pupil evidence collected shows that similar percentages of boys and girls in the data set, 51% of boys and 49% of girls, across all year groups,

made an average of 4 APS progress in writing attainment during the research project. The chart shows that 4% more girls than boys made progress of 4 APS during the research project and 3% more boys than girls exceeded progress of 4 APS (or made one whole level progress in one year).

This indicates that attainment was not influenced by gender during the Transforming Writing project. Both boys and girls appear to have benefited roughly equally from the approaches teachers deployed during the project.

This differential can be viewed in the light of national differences between boys' and girls' attainment in writing. In 2010/11 a larger percentage of Key Stage 2 girls than boys achieved the expected level in English reading and writing. The widest gender gap was in writing where the gap was 13 %. 82% of girls attained Level 4 or above in writing, while 69% of boys attained Level 4 or above in writing. 25% of girls attained Level 5 or above in writing, while 15% of boys achieved level 5 or above in writing. The percentage of both boys and girls attaining level 4 or above in writing was 75%. The percentage of both boys and girls attaining level 5 or above in writing was 20%<sup>9</sup>.

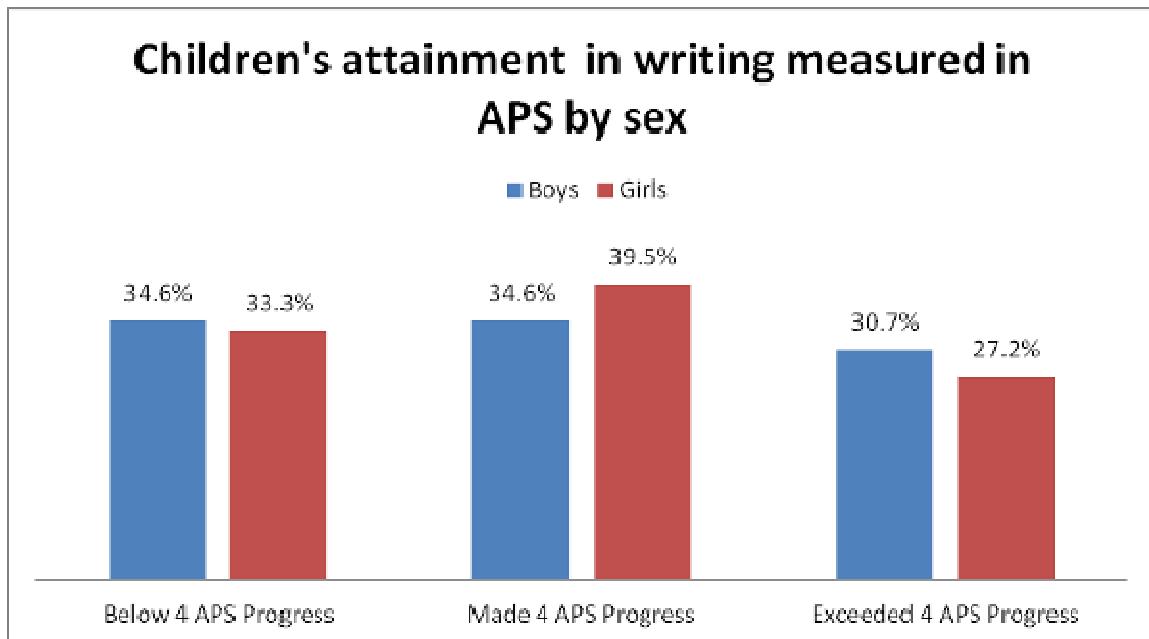
The differential between boys' and girls' achievement in writing for children on the Transforming Writing project is significantly less than the national differential between genders.



---

<sup>9</sup> DfE: National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England 2010/2011 (revised) <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001047/index.shtml>

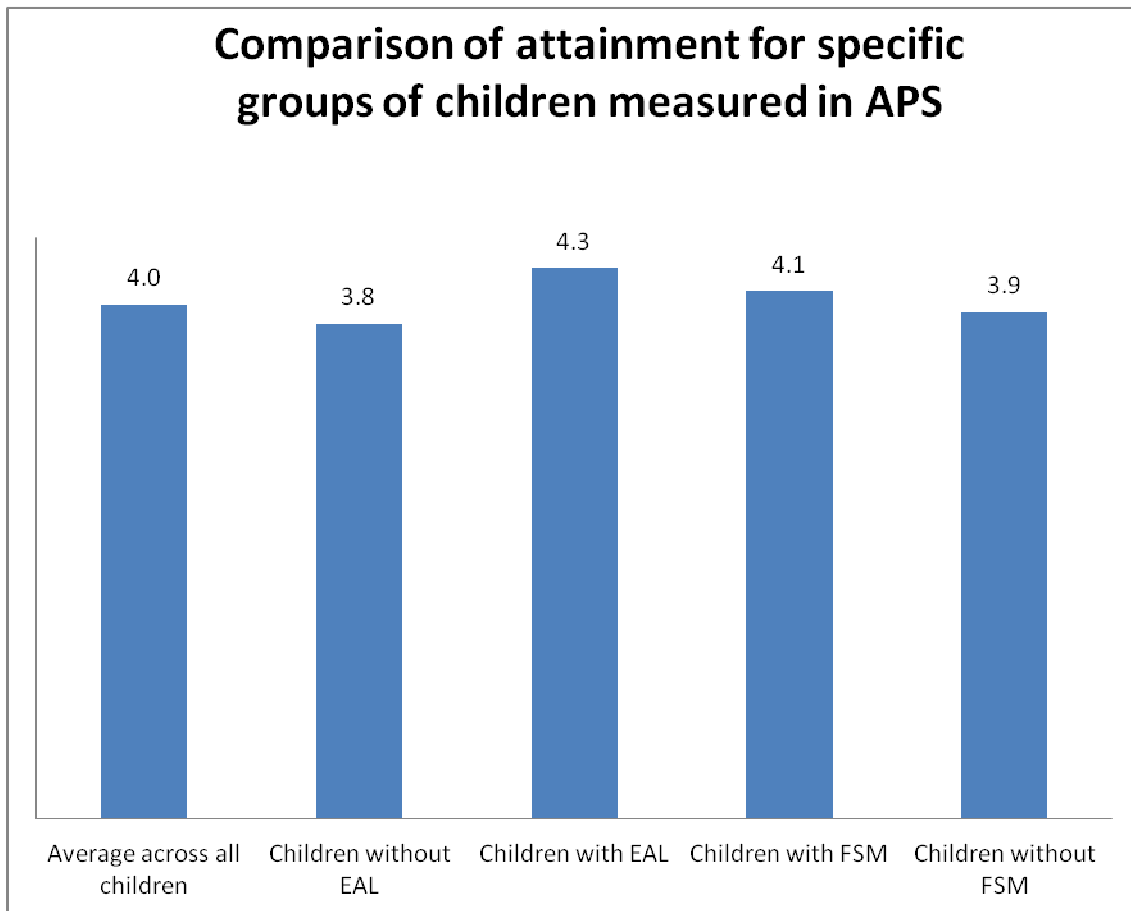
**Figure 6: This chart compares the attainment in writing by boys and girls across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**



**4. Children for whom English is an additional language and children who received free school meals made similar progress in their writing attainment to other children during the research project**

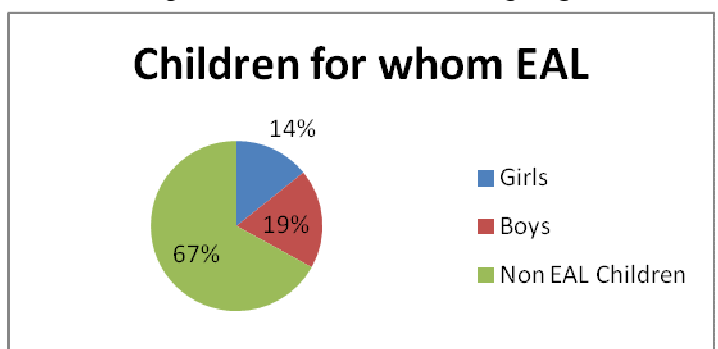
The charts below show that there was little overall significant difference in attainment between children for whom English is an additional language, children who receive free school meals and other children. While it is interesting that children for whom English is an additional language made comparatively better progress, especially exceeding 4 APS progress, overall, the rates of progress for these two specific groups of children are broadly similar. This indicates that the approaches deployed by teachers on the Transforming Writing project benefited all children in the project class.

**Figure 7: This chart compares the attainment of children for whom English is an additional language, children who receive free school meals and all children across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**



The proportion of children in the data set for whom English is an additional language was 33%.

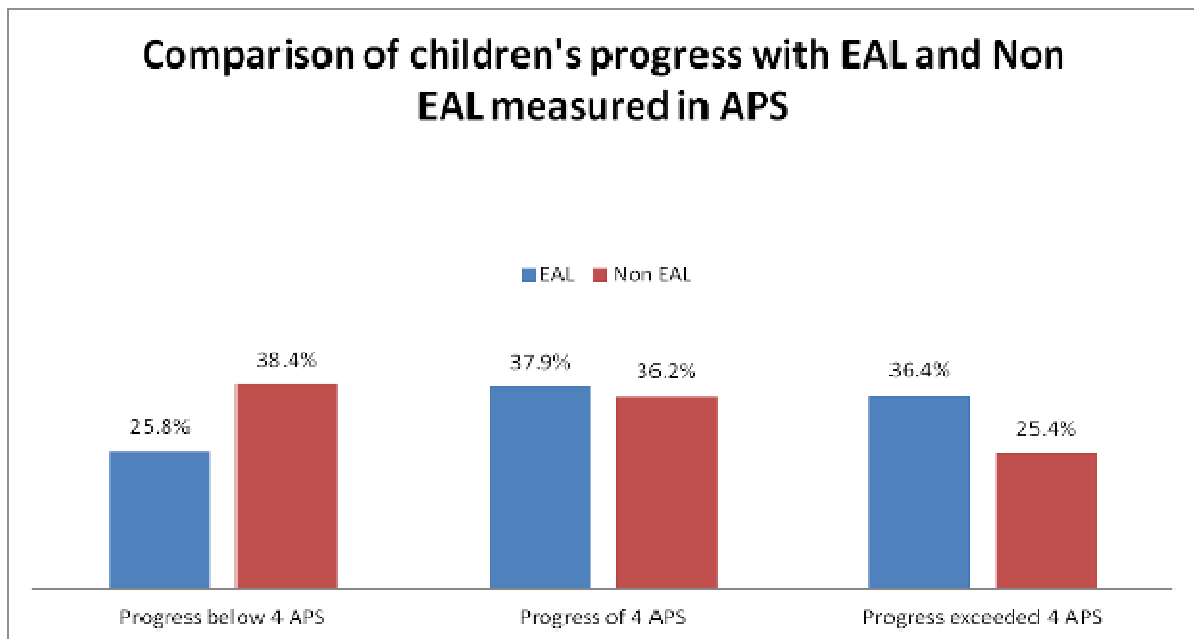
EAL	Number	Percentage of data set
Girls	58	14%
Boys	74	19%
Non EAL Children	268	67%



The pupil evidence collected shows that children for whom English is an additional language made at least as much progress in attainment in writing as all children across the data set.

It is interesting that of the children across all year groups who exceeded 4 APS progress (or made at least one whole level of progress in one year) there is an 11% difference between children for whom English is an additional language and children who do not have English as an additional language.

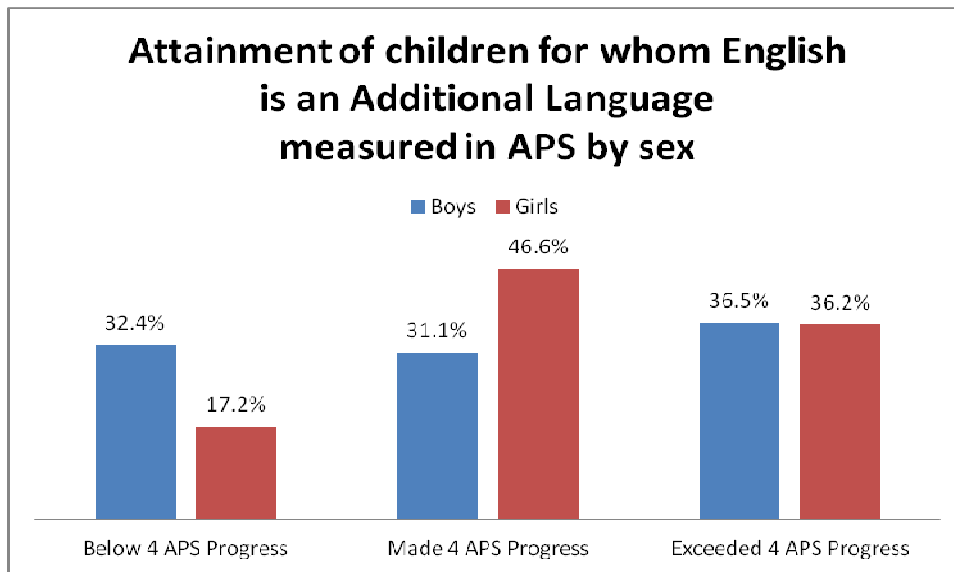
**Figure 8: This chart compares the attainment in writing of children for whom English is an additional language and children who do not have English as an additional language across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**



The pupil evidence collected shows that of children for whom English is an additional language, more boys made below 4 APS progress and more girls exceeded 4 APS progress.

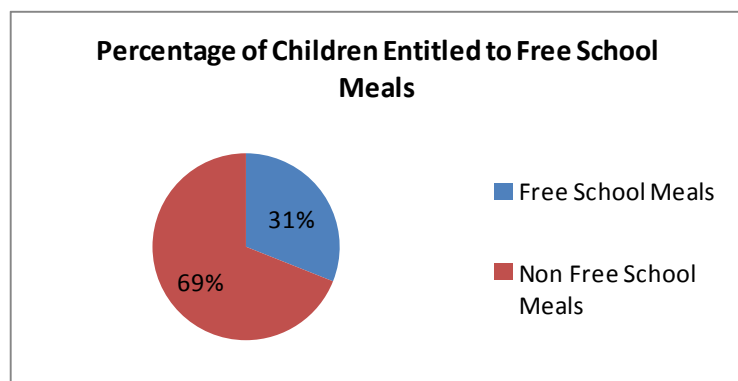
The chart below shows that girls for whom English is an additional language made better progress than boys for whom English is an additional language. A third of boys and nearly half of girls made progress of 4 APS. A third of both boys and girls for whom English is an additional language made more than 4 APS progress in one year. These results reflect the broadly similar attainment of all children for whom English is an additional language with other children.

**Figure 9: This chart compares the average progress in attainment in writing of boys and girls for whom English is an additional language measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**



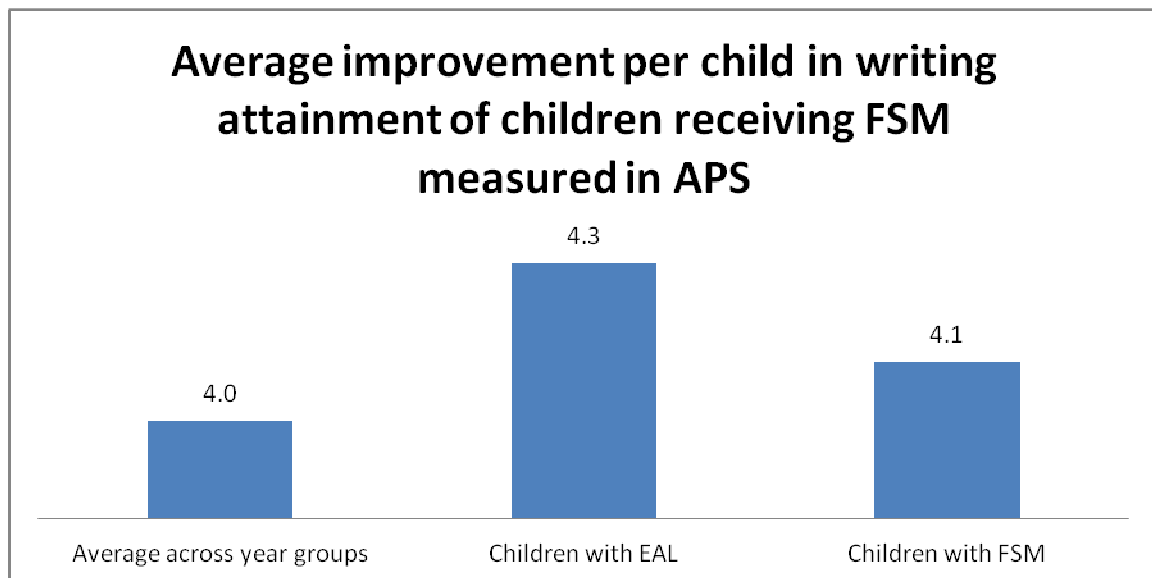
The proportion of children in the data set with FSM is 31%. 124 children were receiving free school meals.

Free School Meals	Number
Girls	63
Boys	61
Total	124



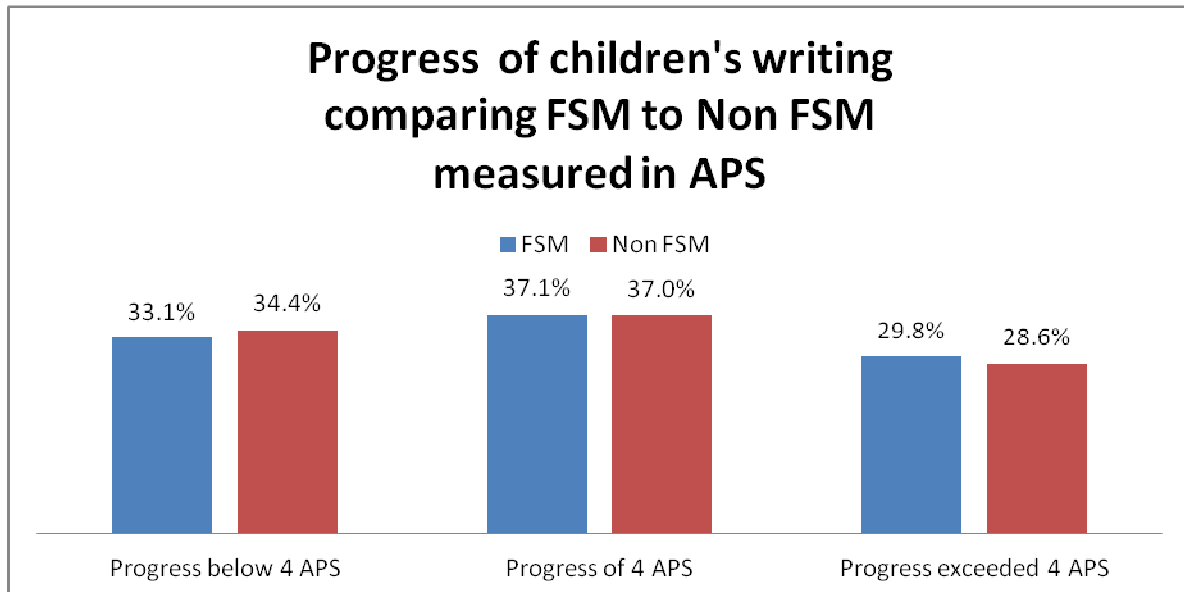
The pupil evidence collected shows that children receiving free school meals (FSM) made similar progress in attainment in writing as all children across the data set including children for whom English is an additional language.

**Figure 10: This chart shows the average progress in attainment in writing of children receiving FSM in comparison to children for whom English is an additional language and all children measured in Average Point Scores during 2011/12**



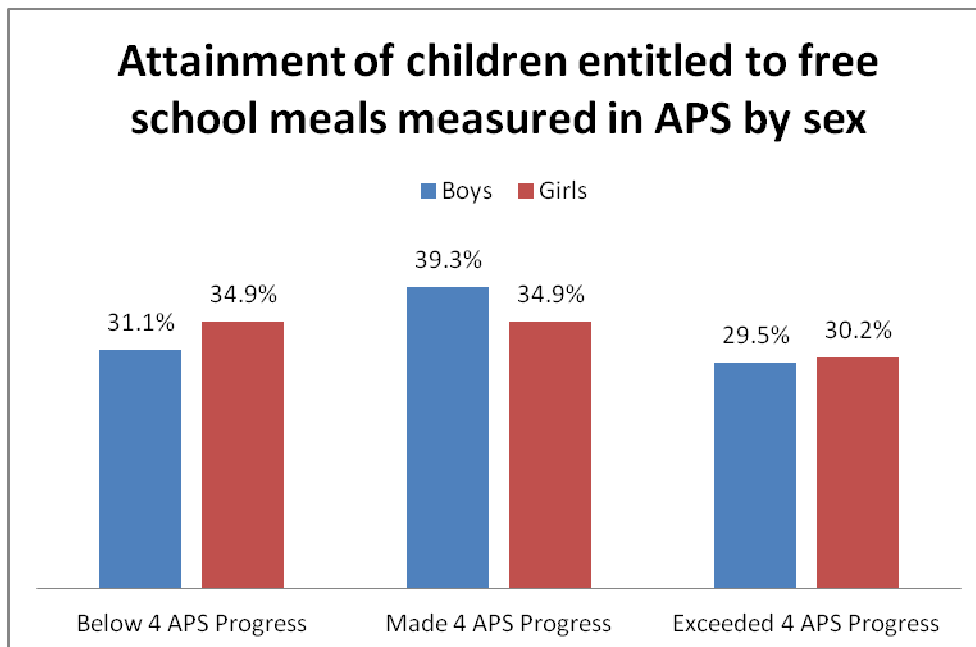
Children receiving free school meals and children who do not receive free school meals made similar progress in writing attainment. This indicates that all children benefit roughly equally from the approaches deployed by teachers on the Transforming Writing project.

**Figure 11: This chart compares the progress in attainment in writing of children receiving free school meals to children not receiving free school meals measured in Average Points Scores during 2011/12**



The pupil evidence collected shows that overall boys and girls receiving FSM made similar progress in attainment in writing during the research project. Girls made slightly less progress than boys. 70% of children receiving FSM attained 4 APS progress and 30% made more than 4 APS progress.

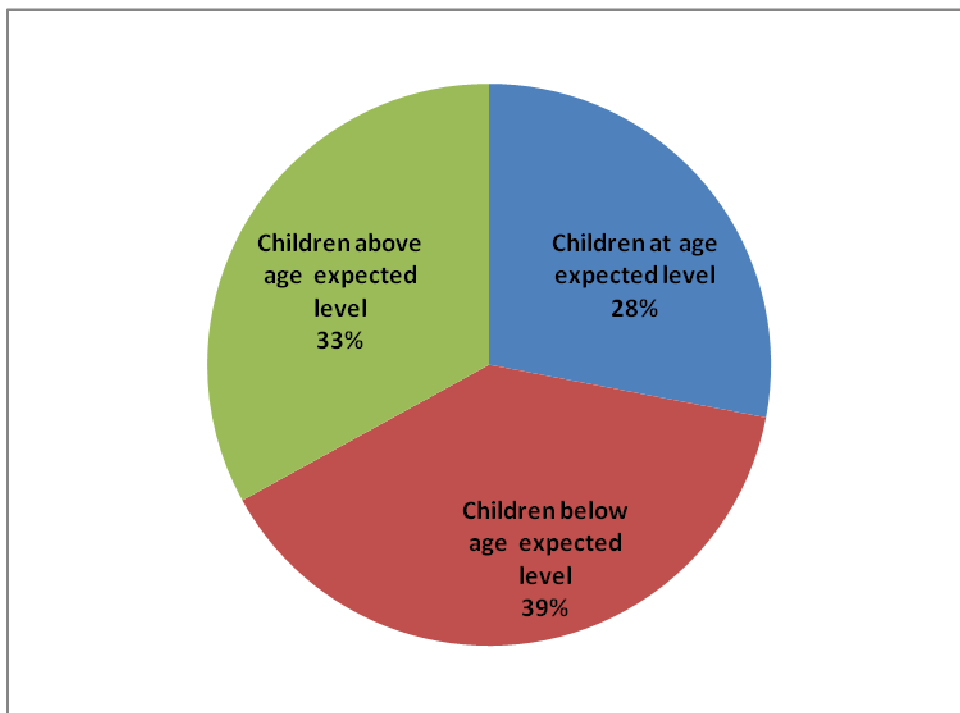
**Figure 12: This chart compares the progress in attainment in writing of boys and girls receiving FSM measured in APS during 2011/12**



## 5. Children’s progress in their writing attainment was not affected by whether they began the year at, below or above age-related expectation

The proportion of children in the data set working at, below or above age-expected attainment in writing at the beginning of Phase 1 are shown below.

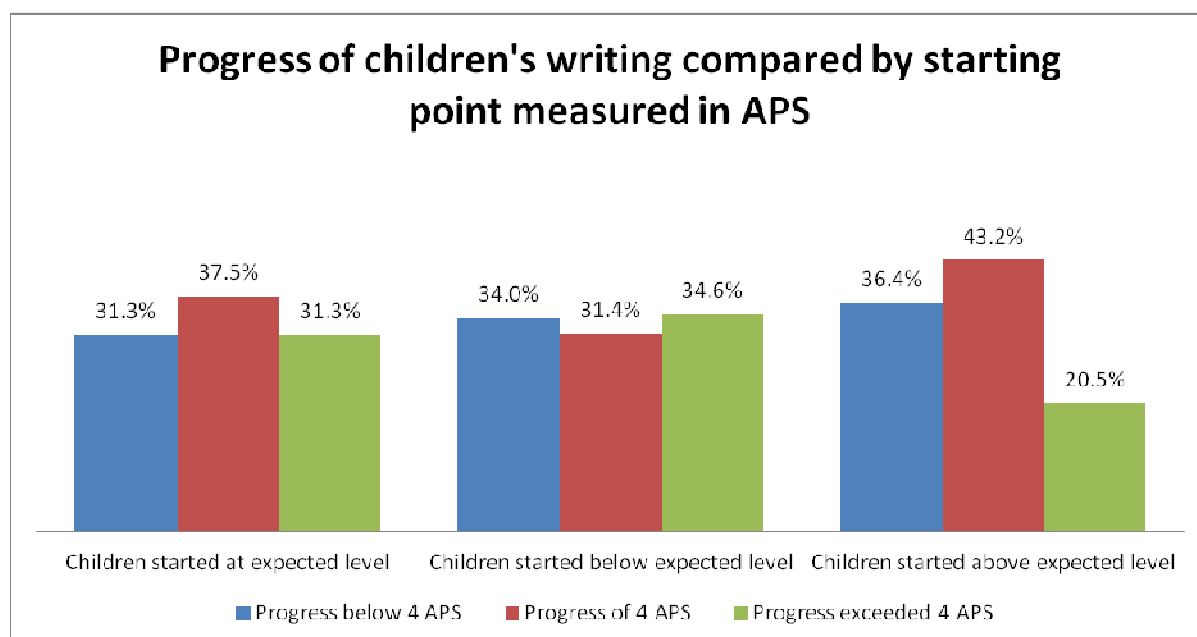
Children at age-expected level	28%
Children below age-expected level	39%
Children above age-expected level	33%



The progress of children was largely unaffected by the starting point of the children at the beginning of Phase 1. Those who started below age-related expectation, those who started at age-related expectation and those who started above age-related expectation made largely similar rates of progress. The numbers of children making more than 4 APS progress (or two years’ progress in one year) were reduced for those children whose starting point was above expected level.



**Figure 13: This chart compares the progress in attainment in writing of children starting below, at and above age-expected attainment in writing measured in APS during 2011/12**

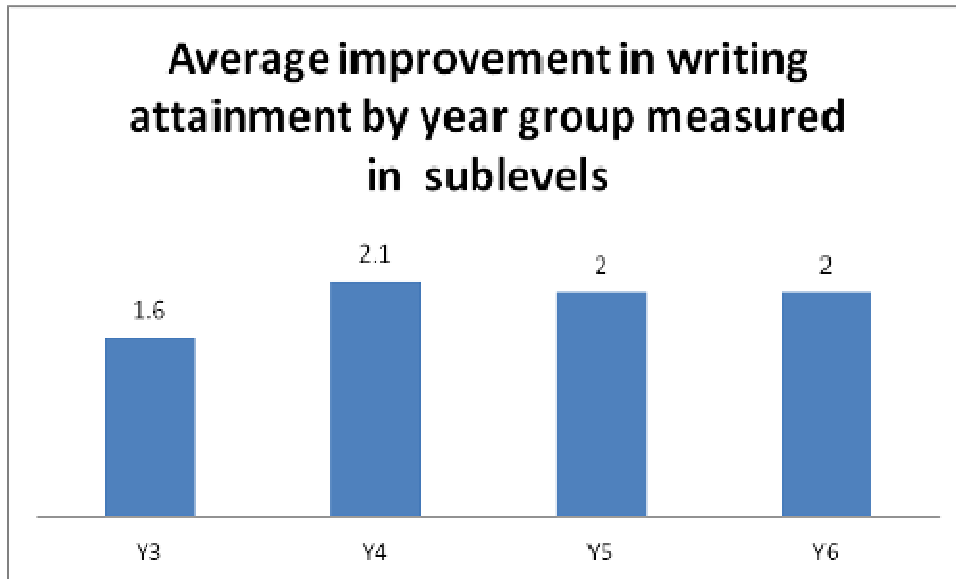


## **6. Key Stage 2 children participating in the Transforming Writing project made better progress in their writing attainment compared to the national average**

Actual average progress in writing in each year of Key Stage 2 has been researched by the Department for Education<sup>10</sup> in 2011. Based on a sample of 70,000 pupils in 10 local authorities, average progress in writing in sublevels in each Key Stage 2 year group was measured over three years (2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10). Nationally, the research shows that average progress in writing was about 1.4 sublevels (or about 2.8 APS) per year in each KS2 year group. However, the table below shows that average progress in each year group participating in the Transforming Writing project was nearer to 2 sublevels in one year (or 4 APS). Our calculations show that children in classrooms where teachers are embedding continuous formative assessment in the teaching and learning of writing are mostly making an average increase of about half a sublevel progress (or 1 APS) in writing more than the national average.

<sup>10</sup> How do pupils progress during Key Stages 2 and 3 Research Report RR096 Department for Education March 2011 <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR096.pdf>

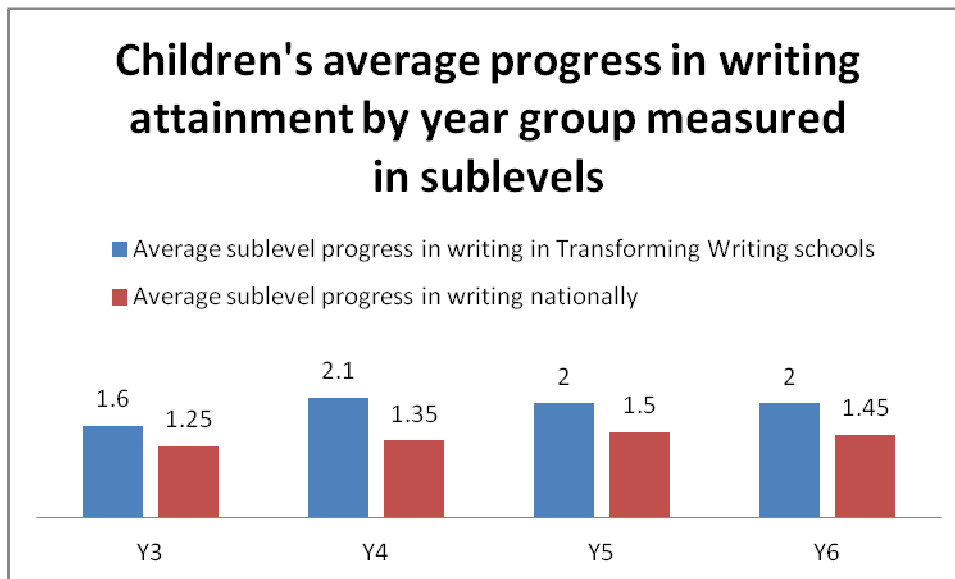
**Figure 14: This chart shows by year group the average progress in writing attainment of children on the Transforming Writing project measured in sublevels**



**Figure 15: Table to compare by year group the average progress in writing attainment of children nationally and children in the Transforming Writing project measured in sublevels and APS**

	Average progress in writing nationally by sublevel	Average progress in writing in Transforming Writing schools by sublevel
Year 3	1.25	1.6
Year 4	1.35	2.1
Year 5	1.5	2
Year 6	1.45	2

**Figure 16: This chart compares by year group the average progress in writing of children nationally with children participating in the Transforming Writing project measured in sublevels**



We have decided to use sublevels to represent this progress because the national data used is quoted in sublevels not APS. Those wishing to convert sublevels to APS may double the sublevel number.

Without a control group we cannot claim this improvement is directly related to the practices of Transforming Writing teachers who are embedding continuous formative assessment in the teaching and learning of writing in their classrooms. However, there are no obvious alternative explanations. No control group was established in Phase 1 of the project so it is possible that other variables may have given rise to the increased progress in attainment in writing.

While we acknowledge the limitations of the sample of children used in Phase 1 which was intended as a mainly qualitative study, the increase in average writing attainment suggests a further quantitative study with a comparison group of children and refined use of sublevels would be worthwhile in Phase 2.

## Impact of embedding formative assessment in writing processes on children's confidence and engagement

In order to find out what substantive difference was made to children's confidence and engagement, focus children in participating classes completed a writing perception survey in September 2011 and again in July 2012. The focus children included those who were working at, above and below age-related expectation in writing. A total of 81 children in 13 classes provided suitable data. The survey provided a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data. Although this is a small sample, the survey provides some interesting indicators about how children responded to embedded formative assessment during writing lessons. Phase 2 of the Transforming Writing project will provide more extensive and detailed data and make connections between children's confidence and engagement and attainment.

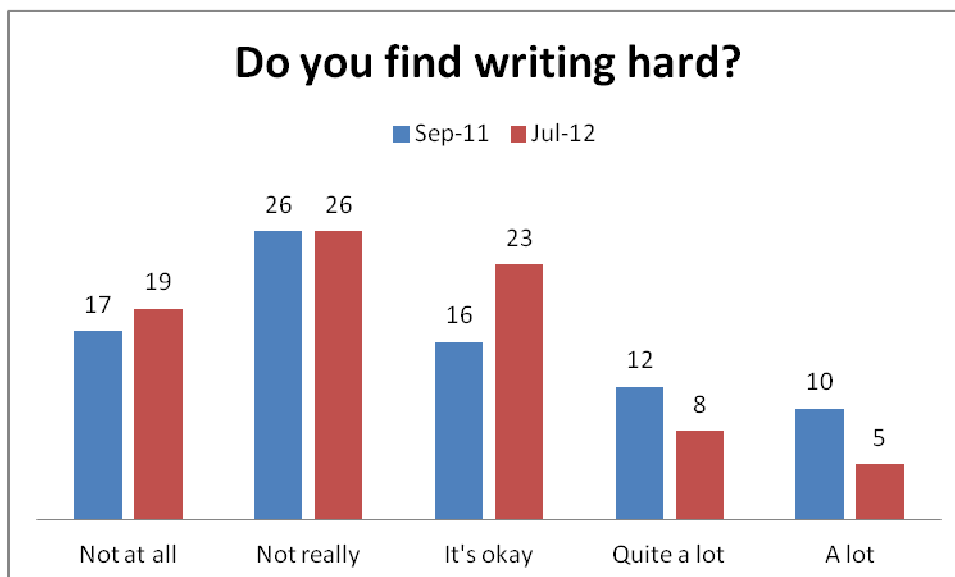
### Summary of perception survey findings

When teachers focused on embedded assessment in writing lessons through collaborative assessment talk in a variety of contexts, the majority of children responded positively and this is reflected in children's own perceptions of their confidence to write and their engagement with writing.

#### 1. Some small difference was made to children's perception of how hard they found writing

The evidence from children's writing perception surveys shows that there was only a small shift in the numbers of children who found writing less hard after a year of teachers focusing on embedded formative assessment in writing lessons. By July 2012, there was a small decrease in the numbers of children who said they found writing hard.

**Figure 17: This chart shows the number of focus children who perceived writing as hard in September 2011 and July 2012**



Fewer children said they found writing hard after the teacher focused on embedded formative assessment in writing for one academic year. The number of children who identified 'A lot' as the most appropriate response to the way they felt about the

challenge of writing halved and those who identified 'Quite a lot' fell by more than a third.

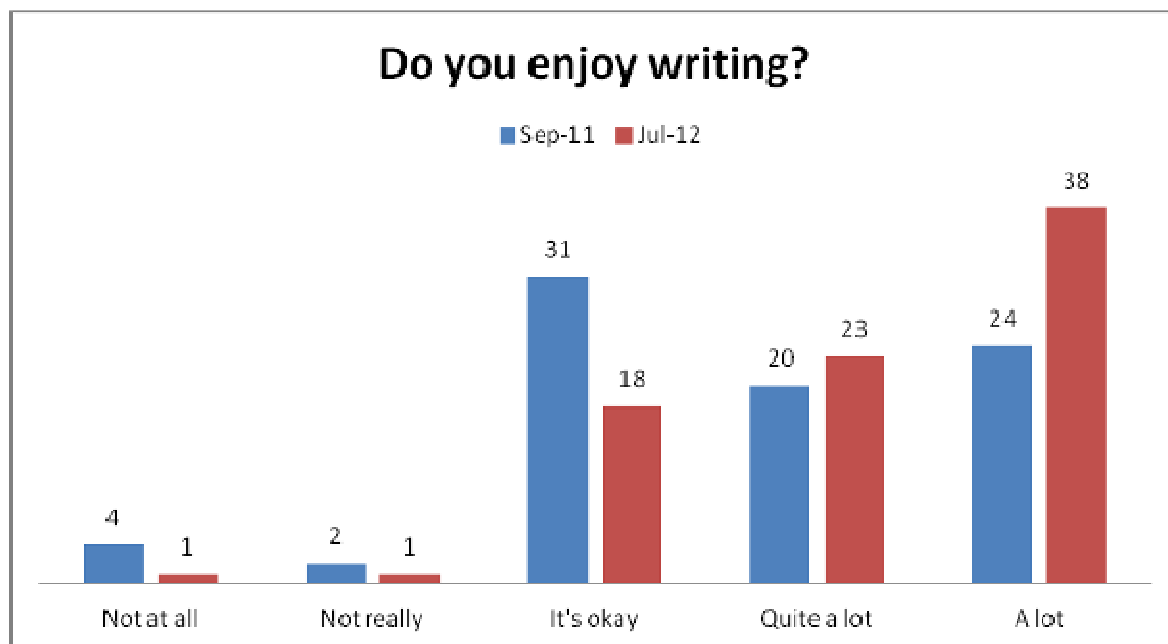
The proportion of children responding 'A lot' or 'Quite a lot' to this question fell from 30% to 19%.

Perhaps, as teachers offered greater writing challenges to the children in response to formative assessment, children were experiencing the level of difficulty appropriate to their development as more sophisticated writers and therefore a significant shift towards children saying they found writing easy would not be a positive result.

## 2. There was an increase in the number of children who said they enjoyed writing

The evidence from children's writing perception surveys shows that there was a positive shift in the numbers of children who said they enjoyed writing after a year of teachers focusing on embedded formative assessment in writing lessons. This implies children were more engaged with writing as a consequence of the approach taken in writing lessons.

**Figure 18: This chart shows children's perceptions of their own enjoyment of writing in September 2011 and July 2012**



The number of children who said they enjoyed writing increased. In September 2011, 44 children said they enjoyed writing 'Quite a lot' or 'A lot' while this increased to 61 children stating this in July 2012.

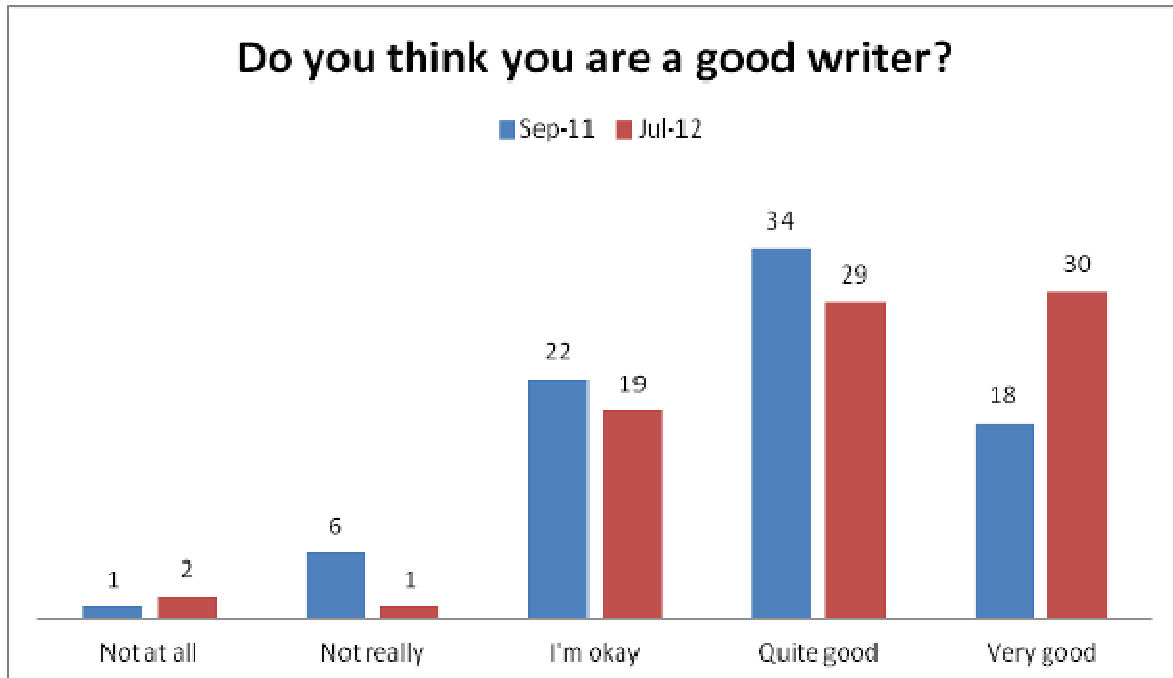
The proportion of children who said they enjoyed writing 'Quite a lot' or 'A lot' rose from 54% to 75% between September 2011 and July 2012.

## 3. There was an increase in the number of children who perceived themselves as good writers

The evidence from children's writing perception surveys shows that there was an increase in the focus children's positive perceptions of their own ability. The combination of an upward trend in children's enjoyment of writing together with an

increase in their perception of themselves as good writers suggests that after a year of teachers focusing on embedded formative assessment in writing lessons, an encouraging proportion of children gained confidence and were more engaged in writing lessons as a consequence of the approach taken in writing lessons.

**Figure 19: This chart shows children’s perceptions of their own ability in writing in September 2011 and July 2012**

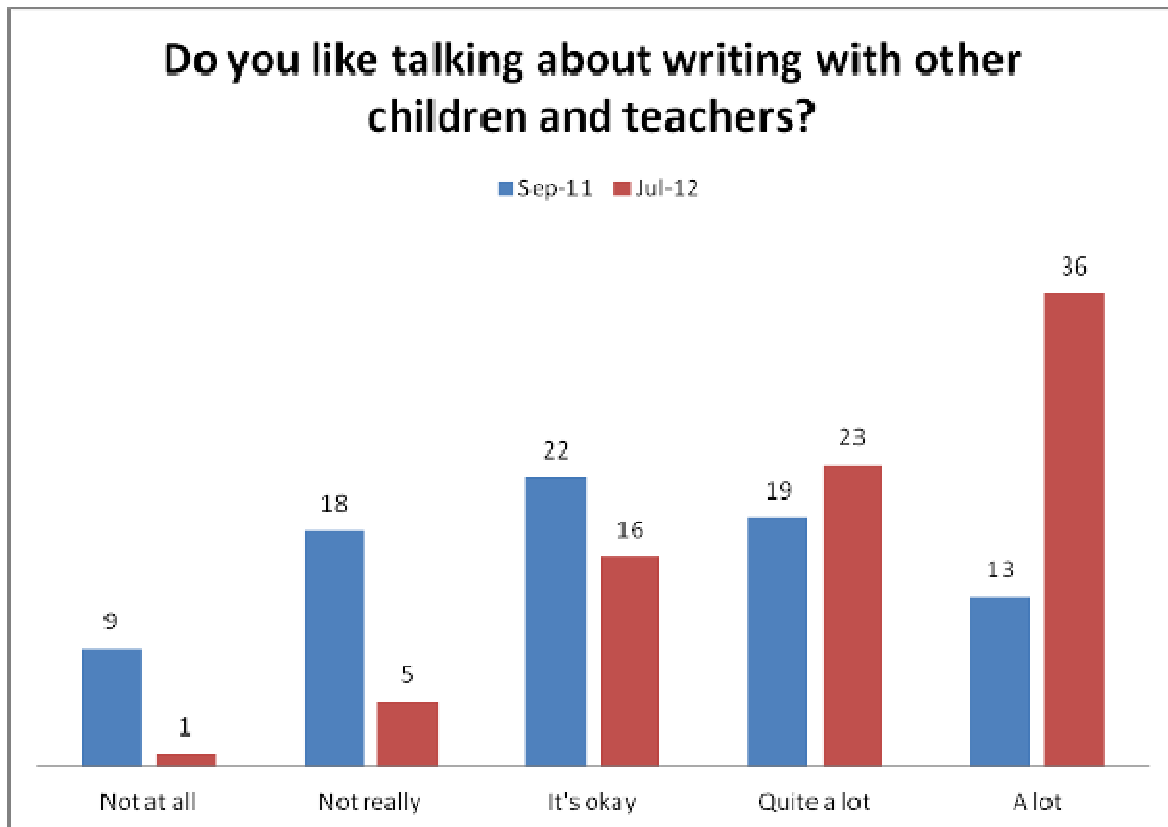


There was an increase in the number of children who thought they were very good at writing. In September 2011, 18 children stated they perceived themselves as very good writers and in July 2012, 30 children stated they perceived themselves as very good writers. The proportion of children who thought themselves ‘Quite good’ or ‘Very good’ rose from 64% to 73%. The proportion of children assessing themselves as ‘Very good’ rose from 22% to 37%.

**4. There was an increase in the number of children who said they enjoyed talking about writing**

The evidence from children’s writing perception surveys shows that there was a significant shift in the number of children who said they enjoyed talking about writing after a year of teachers focusing on embedded formative assessment in writing lessons. This implies children were more engaged with writing as a consequence of the approach taken in writing lessons.

**Figure 20: This chart shows children’s perceptions of their own enjoyment of talking about writing in September 2011 and July 2012**



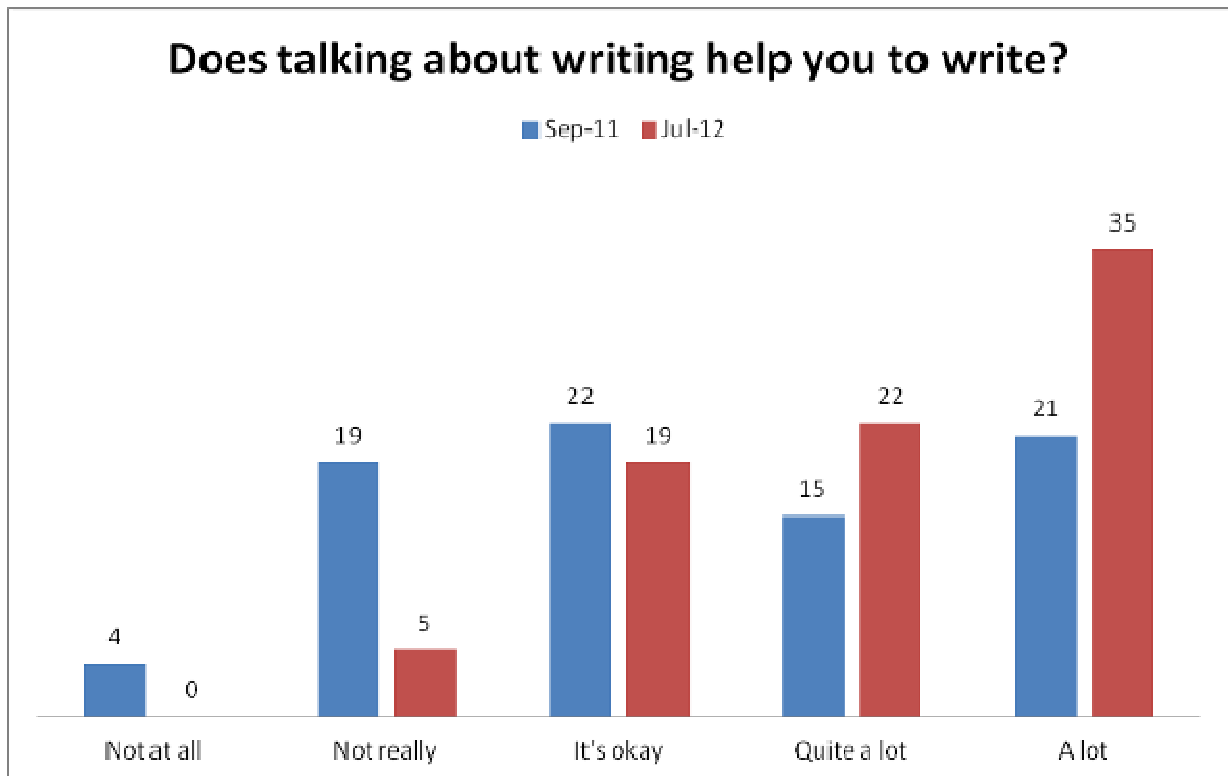
The proportion of children who said they enjoyed talking about writing ‘A lot’ rose from 16% to 44%. The proportion of children who responded ‘Not really’ and ‘Not at all’ fell from 33% to 7%.

There is a significant increase in the numbers of children who stated that they like talking about writing. In July 2012, 59 children stated they liked talking about writing with other children and teachers ‘Quite a lot’ or ‘A lot’, compared to 32 children who stated this in September 2011. This small sample suggests children became more engaged than they were in September 2011.

**5. There was an increase in the number of children who thought talking about writing helped them to write**

The evidence from children’s writing perception surveys shows that there was a small increase in the focus children’s positive perceptions of the value to themselves of talking about writing and a significant reduction in the number of children who thought talking about writing was not useful.

**Figure 21: This chart shows children’s perceptions of the value of talking about writing in September 2011 and July 2012**



The proportion of children who thought talking about writing helped them to write 'Quite a lot' or 'A lot' rose from 44% to 70% while those who thought it helped 'Not at all' or 'Not really' fell from 30% to 6%.

There is an increase in the number of children who thought talking about writing helped them to write. In September 2011, 36 children stated talking about writing helped them 'Quite a lot' or 'A lot'. By September 2012, this number had increased to 57. The number of children who stated talking about writing had not helped them fell from 24 children in September 2011 to only five children in July 2012.



## Skills teachers use to support children's collaborative talk about writing

Teachers found that formative assessment of children's writing is underpinned by purposeful and focused collaborative talk in a variety of classroom contexts. Teachers deployed dialogic teaching skills during talk about writing assessment that are generic and applicable to all primary classroom learning contexts. During Phase 1 of the Transforming Writing project, teachers identified and began to explore how they could increasingly exert conscious control over their own use of talk as well as shape and develop children's independent use of exploratory talk during assessment of writing.

Collaborative formative assessment provides a means of externalising the writer's invisible thinking processes that inform formative assessment of writing. By frequently using focused talk about assessment of writing and encouraging children to talk themselves, teachers hoped to hand over understanding to the children so they could ultimately conduct a silent and independent assessment of their own writing. Talk was used by teachers to help children reorganise and reshape their own ways of thinking about their writing and the effect it will have on the intended reader.

Teachers in interviews and reflective journals reported that they developed and deployed a range of skills to support collaborative talk that would help children to learn how to use formative assessment of their own and one another's writing.

The range of skills they said they deployed in collaborative talk about writing included: building on children's prior comments; balancing teacher and pupil talk; guiding; probing; requiring children to elaborate; refining what children said; prompting and refocusing children. These skills are features of reciprocal, supportive, cumulative and purposeful dialogic teaching.

Teachers thought it was important for them to skilfully use open questions that focused on the effect of the children's writing on the reader. This helped them to assess the difference between their intended outcome and actual outcome of their own writing.

*"(You question) so that at the end they will have more of a discussion and you'll be able to say: 'Why did you do that? What's that for?' They can articulate, 'I've chosen that because I wanted them to feel sad inside.'"*

Source: teacher

*"If you don't ask the questions you don't get the thinking, you don't get the responses. I've found myself asking the questions a lot more."*

Source: teacher

Teachers developed skills of modelling how to talk about writing in order to show children how to think about writing. Shared writing with the whole class was identified as an effective context for the teacher to skilfully externalise their thought processes as they revise writing in response to assessment.

*Teacher 1: "When we've been sharing writing, we've been modelling that whole process (gives example). I stopped at that part and said, 'This is what's happened. Ok, if I was a character, what words will I use for...? What words shall I come up with? Talk to your partner about their emotions. How are they going to react? If you're in semi-darkness and silhouettes how are you going to feel?' And we have that discussion about characters' feelings. 'Ok, how are they going to feel?' We've talked about what word I am going to use to best portray that to the reader."*

Teacher 2: "You try to talk your thought processes as a writer. So I've got choices as a writer..."

Teacher 1: "So then they came up with choices. How would they move? How would they behave at that point in the story?"

Source: teachers

Teachers believed that being very explicit about writing when they themselves modelled talk about writing supported children's collaborative talk about writing.

*"I am making it more explicit. I feel like I'm teaching them to suck eggs but I am literally saying, why does this work, really, really picking out the detail of what does work and why. And giving those pauses and allowing them... you know, not jumping straight back in and trying to put words into their mouth, just allowing them time to soak it all in and see what makes a good bit of writing."*

Source: teacher

In order to support children's independent assessment of writing, teachers reported they modelled: how to articulate thoughts about writing; how to use body language with a partner; how to talk about *quality*; how to ask and respond to questions; how to turn take; how to listen and how to use metalanguage about writing.

Teaching Assistants (TAs) were sometimes used by teachers during shared writing to help them model how to talk about writing. The teacher and TA would demonstrate assessment of writing in front of the children in what teachers described as a type of 'role play'.

*"We're (teacher and TA) saying this is the piece of writing I've done, what do you think about it? You respond to it, you tell me, what bits you think work well, why they work well. We're modelling being the two children basically – showing the children how they need to be responding to one another."*

Source: teacher

*"It showed children how to move collaborative talk towards consideration of compositional skills and talk about more than secretarial skills so that it is taken away from 'it's got really nice handwriting'."*

Source: teacher

Early on in the year, teachers established shared ground rules for talk about writing with the class. Providing explicit expectations for children about how they should treat and value one another during collaborative assessment of writing was important. Teachers skilfully made their expectations clear, thus translating principles of dialogic teaching into usable guidelines for the children (Alexander, 2004)<sup>11</sup>.

*"My class at the beginning, they find the negative. You write something up and they go 'that's wrong', jump down each other's throats if they say anything wrong. But to change the whole way that they are, I've done that through sharing my writing with them, modelling with my TA how it feels to have someone say something horrible about your work. I've done a lot of that kind of role play stuff with them so that now they're just so positive and lovely that actually, what you get at the end of it is a completely different version but no one feels rubbish by anyone because they're always 'I really like what you said. What if you did...?'"*

Source: teacher

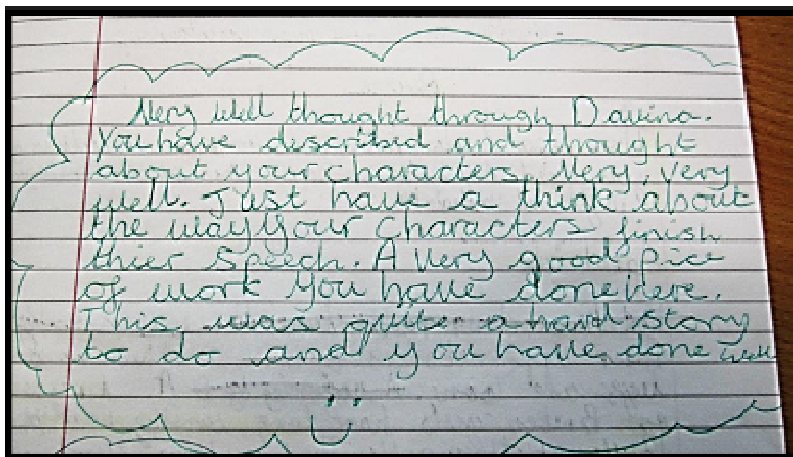
Teachers skilfully monitored the quality of children's peer assessment of one another's writing by listening to the children's responses. Teachers believed progress was indicated, in part, by children's increasing usage of phrases such as: "this works really well because..."; "The writer's used short sentences for impact"; "You've used.." and "This is what it does to you as a reader".

---

<sup>11</sup> Alexander, R (2004) Towards Dialogic Teaching: Rethinking classroom talk: Dialogis

The research question *What skills and knowledge did the teachers need and how were they best acquired?* will be further developed in Phase 2 of the project. However, it is already clearly emerging from interviews and reflective journals in Phase 1 that embedding formative assessment in a structured model of writing places heavy demands on teachers to skilfully use talk to facilitate dialogic exchanges between children about their writing. Teachers are simultaneously using a wide range of dialogic teaching strategies in a busy but well-managed classroom. They are judging children's current writing abilities and then deciding how to scaffold their thinking in order to move them on. This is what Alexander describes as 'cumulation' (2004)<sup>12</sup>. The demands teachers described that they have to meet while teaching and using formative assessment of writing in their classrooms resonate with Alexander's description of the cumulation component of his dialogic teaching model below:

*"Cumulation simultaneously makes demands on the teacher's professional skill, subject knowledge, and insight into the capacities and current understanding of each of the pupils. Compounding the challenge, cumulation also tests the teacher's ability to receive and review what has been said and to judge what to offer by way of an individually tailored response which will take learners' thinking forward."* (Alexander, 2004 p. 50)<sup>13</sup>



Assessment comment written by one child in a peer's writing book

---

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> ibid

## Impact of Transforming Writing on participating teachers

Using questionnaires, participating teachers reflected on their own learning experience and what impact Phase 1 of the research project had had on their own practice and identity. Responses tended to cluster around key themes.

While several teachers felt they were already confident at the beginning of Phase 1, overall there was a sense that confidence and understanding of the role of the teacher and the processes involved in effective formative assessment had grown during Phase 1. They said they had a heightened understanding of underlying principles and values of using talk for formative assessment.

Teachers identified that they had a greater understanding of the importance of listening to the children.

*"I listen now to what they have to say and realise the importance of letting them talk about their own writing."*

*"Listening is the key... too much talking leads to gaps in the child's knowledge being plugged by you and not them."*

*"It has tuned my listening."*

Teachers also reflected on how they were now more inclined to let children take more control of their own talk. This new confidence and awareness of benefits to children was expressed in several ways:

*"I am more confident when handing over to the children and letting their discussions and ideas support their learning and each other. I have seen how this can be powerful for them."*

*"The child has the first opportunity to communicate about their own work... This is such an obvious thing to do, the child speaking first - I can't believe I didn't do it!"*

*"If we want the children to be involved in the journey as writers we have to trust them with being in the driver's seat to some extent and not treat them as mere passengers."*

Teachers identified that the level of children's ownership of their writing had increased as well as their confidence and ability to reflect on and articulate how far they have reached intended writing goals. By the end of Phase 1 teachers were spending more time engaging children in collaborative talking about their writing and had realised the value of giving children time to explain and discuss their work.

Teachers said they had learned to talk less and become facilitators of the children's evaluative discussion about their own writing. One teacher wrote, *"I am more able to facilitate discussions rather than 'talk at'. This can often result in me answering questions with questions."* This reflects the way teachers believed that by the end of Phase 1 they had learned to use a more refined, dialogic engagement with children. Lessons were described as more 'child driven' and the children were consequently talking at a greater depth.

*"I am now more aware of when talk surrounding writing takes place and how best it can be utilised to really help the children improve as writers and have an impact on moving learning forwards"*

Teachers reported that they were more aware of the attainment level of their children and were *'more efficient at diagnosing gaps and providing feedback and structures to improve.'* Other teachers wrote:

*"I have become more acutely aware of any gaps in the child's knowledge."*

*“I have become both more confident and more acutely aware of where children are actually at.”*

This resulted in teachers stating they used more flexible and responsive planning. One teacher wrote, *“I use what I find out during talking sessions to help me plan subsequent lessons”*. They believed they had developed a better understanding of how formative assessment could inform planning and made statements such as, *“It feels more natural now and an increasingly important part of teaching a unit of work.”* Teachers were now willing to plan in time to devote whole lessons to children responding and feed back on their writing.

Teachers wrote that at the end of Phase 1 they were aware of how to move children’s assessment beyond a focus on secretarial skills. The teachers gave more emphasis on the effect of word choice and phrase construction. Teachers said that at the end of Phase 1 they were able to develop a greater quality of talk about composition. One teacher wrote that the focus of talk had shifted from ticking off checklists of language features towards more qualitative talk about how successfully the language feature (writing goal) had been deployed in the child’s writing.

Teachers own thinking and understanding had developed.

*“(I am) developing ability to think deeper myself to enable children to look further and deeper and not settle for the first attempt.”*

*“I think I am beginning to understand more fully the impact that good formative assessment can have on children’s ability to write in an interesting and meaningful way, and the significant impact it can have on their confidence.”*

In response to questions prompting them to reflect on what skills they had learned to use more effectively during Phase 1, teachers listed: listening, modelling; being able to communicate in ‘child speak’ what the next step means for a child; identifying where the child has succeeded and using success criteria to communicate that to them; showing children ‘WHY’ you make changes; stepping back; motivating; being flexible with length of units – spending as long as needed – in response to children’s needs; knowing when to shut up; encouraging children to extend their thoughts; keeping discussions focused, but at the same time not being afraid to let trains of thought veer so that new thinking is discussed; giving feedback as quickly as possible; allowing children to disagree and challenge ideas and suggestions in discussions about writing; being unafraid to be flexible and change track; helping children explain their thoughts; asking searching questions and knowing that a delayed response is often a sign of deeper thinking.

Teachers were required by the questionnaire to offer words that described how, at the end of Phase 1, they now saw their role as teachers who embed formative assessment in structured writing lessons. Words and phrase offered by teachers included:

*Listener, modeller, questioner and enthusiastic participator  
Chairperson, facilitator and enabler  
Teacher, challenger, motivator and observer  
Coach, critical friend and inspirer  
Instigator of workshops*

## Next steps

Phase 2 of Transforming Writing will take place between September 2012 and July 2013. Teacher researchers will further develop and refine models of classroom practice to embed formative assessment in writing.

A key aim is to disseminate formative assessment practice to colleagues within Transforming Writing teachers' own schools and develop successful continuing professional development (CPD) strategies and experiences to support this transfer of research knowledge.

To facilitate this aim, Transforming Writing teachers will participate in four research workshops throughout Phase 2 to inform and support their work with colleagues in their own school (September and November 2012, February and July 2013). They will collaboratively devise and evaluate engaging and successful CPD training sessions for their own staff. Aspects of CPD development these research workshops will address will include: sequences of training sessions; embedding formative assessment as a central feature of all learning; use of feedback with staff; use of critical friends; positioning teachers as learners; refining, revisiting and deepening of understanding; involvement of senior leadership; and collaborative learning both between colleagues within each school as well as between participating schools.

During Phase 2, some Transforming Writing schools will arrive at a stage in their own development which will allow them to experiment with disseminating the Transforming Writing practice to other local schools.

Participating teachers will continue researching the impact of formative assessment on children's attainment in writing using refined APS and there will be a more refined correlation of writing attainment with children's developing perceptions of their own confidence and engagement in writing. As well as gathering attainment data, a small sample of teachers will gather filmed evidence of how talk about writing develops during Phase 2 as a consequence of Transforming Writing approaches to embedding formative assessment in writing. Surveys will be used to research how teachers can be helped to become mentors for their colleagues in formative assessment of writing.

## Appendix 1: Glossary

This glossary explains some of the key terms used in this report, to support understanding of the techniques used by the teachers in the Transforming Writing project.

Word	Definition	Page refs												
Boxing up	<p>A simple two-column grid technique, illustrated below, that can be used to exemplify the structure of any type of text. The same structure can then be used to plan a similar text.</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Beginning</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Middle</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>•</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>•</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>•</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>End</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> <p>There is a new row for each paragraph and the topic of each paragraph is written in the left-hand column of the grid. Its simplicity makes it easy for children to grasp the underlying structure of any text and apply it to any similar writing task so that they can plan their writing right across the curriculum.</p> <p>Typically, once children are familiar with a text, the teacher will use the boxing up technique to co-construct with the class how the text has been structured. Usually the text would be on the whiteboard and the teacher would involve the children in boxing up the text on a flip chart so that they can see how the boxed up text represents the structure of the exemplar text. After that they would analyse the specific features of the text and co-construct the related toolkit. The boxed up planning would then be used to support the ensuing shared writing that would innovate on the exemplar.</p> <p>When a class is first learning how to write a particular type of text, this shared writing might be broken down into each section of the boxed up plan so that the children are first involved in shared writing the introduction and then write their own introduction. In this way, over time, they are shown how to write the whole text within the boxed up plan.</p>	Beginning		Middle		•		•		•		End		16, 17
Beginning														
Middle														
•														
•														
•														
End														
Colour coding	See Highlighters below	20, 21												
Composition skills	The skills that contribute to writing any type of text They include the skills of selecting appropriate vocabulary, crafting sentences and forming them into paragraphs and whole texts that meet the writing purposes so the writing has the intended effect on the reader.	19												
Extended plenaries	Pools of time in the lesson sequence when teachers enable pupils to discuss the writing they have done, the challenges they have encountered and how they have overcome them. It is an opportunity for the children to articulate the processes they used to solve problems in their writing using vocabulary, sentences, paragraphs and whole text structures. In this way, teachers can both assess children and respond to assessment. Children frequently do more of the talking in these collaborative contexts than teachers.	20, 32												

Word	Definition	Page refs
Guided writing	When the teacher guides the collaborative talk of a small group of children as they assess and revise their own and each other's writing. Usually a group of six children engage in a mixture of assessment activities which may include reference to the toolkit; highlighting segments of their own and each other's writing; discussing their choices and thought processes that led to those choices and offering each other suggestions for revisions to vocabulary, sentences and whole text structure that will bring the assessed writing closer to the intended writing outcomes with the desired effect on the reader.	27,34
Highlighters	Children use highlighter pens to colour in segments of their composition during revision of their writing. Each colour is coded. For example, pink for "tickled pink" and green for "growth". Segments of their writing children have coloured in with a pink highlighter might indicate words and sentences they have identified as working well and likely to have the intended effect on the reader. Segments coloured in green might indicate words and sentences that could be revised and improved through addition, substitution, deletion or moving words.	20
Mini writing lessons	When a small group of children focus on one writing technique or language feature to develop in their own writing under the guidance of a teacher, a teaching assistant or even another peer who has understood it already. Children self select and opt to join this group based on their own self assessment or in response to peer and teacher assessment of their writing. Children then use what they have learned in their own writing. Teachers may offer a suite of mini writing lessons from which children can select.	33
Peer marking	When children assess each other's writing and identify those segments that meet intended writing outcomes and are likely to have the intended effect on the reader and those segments that do not. Segments of their writing might then be revised and improved by addition, substitution, deletion or moving words. Peer marking is often done orally in a collaborative context such as guided writing, working with a partner or in whole class contexts when a child will project his or her writing composition onto the whiteboard so the whole class can discuss it. The writing toolkit usually underpins and informs the talk in peer marking. Peer marking may also involve children writing assessment responses on a peer's composition or using highlighters to identify segments that are effective or need revision. Peer marking is accompanied by a dialogue between the writer and the peer marker.	19
Secretarial skills	Writing skills that serve the child's ability to compose and include spelling, handwriting, keyboard dexterity, use of punctuation and paragraphing. A term frequently used interchangeably with transcription skills.	26,30
Shared reading	A collaborative learning approach in which the teacher explicitly models for the children the strategies and skills that a reader needs. As the children become familiar with the skills they increasingly take more responsibility for reading the text. It can also be used as an opportunity to involve the whole class collaboratively in analysing a text to support the evolving construction of a writing toolkit that will support writing similar text.	27



Word	Definition	Page refs
Shared writing	When the teacher involves the whole class in composing a piece of writing using the language features and writing techniques identified in the writing toolkit. It is often supported by an exemplar text displayed on screen and a boxed up plan of the text. The teacher usually scribes with a marker pen on a flip chart or on a whiteboard or s/he might type into a keyboard so the words appear on the electronic whiteboard. Through focused questioning the teacher helps the class make and discuss choices of vocabulary, sentence construction and whole text structure. The class engages collaboratively in rereading and revising, assessing how well the writing works, and judging the effect on the reader. The teacher models the internal voice of the writer, articulating and externalising her/his thought processes as s/he writes. The constant looping back of the writer who simultaneously rereads what has just been written and then writes new words is demonstrated by the teacher. This shows children that assessment and revision of writing is a continuous process writers do as they are writing, as well as after the first draft is completed. Shared writing provides models of talking about writing that children will subsequently use themselves in guided writing, peer marking and as they write independently.	26,28
Stick-on-arrows	Paper arrows with a sticky surface that attach to paper like a post-it note. Children stick these arrows onto their own and each other's compositions during self and peer assessment of writing to identify words and sentences that have either worked well or could be revised. The writing toolkit guides what children write on the stick-on-arrows.	20
Text maps	Simple pictorial representations, drawn by teacher or child, of key moments of a text in sequence sometimes connected by arrows indicating the forward movement of the text. Usually, these are simple cartoon drawings representing key events or facts and act as a support for the children helping them to remember and freeing up their working memory as they compose. Equally, they can be used to represent a text to help children internalise the pattern of language of any text.	23
Toolkit	Lists of collectively agreed writing tools for the particular type of text, often written on a sheet of large paper with a marker pen. Each tool on the list is an ingredient the children will consider using in their own composition. Toolkits are often hung up in the classroom, sometimes on a washing line, so children can refer to them when they are assessing their own and each other's writing. Some teachers stick toolkits in the pupils' books, on the page where the children are writing, so that children can easily refer to them during the writing and revision process and can tick off what writing tools they have used and discuss how well they have used them.	20
Transcription skills	Writing skills that serve children's ability to compose including spelling, handwriting, keyboard dexterity, use of punctuation and paragraphing. A term frequently used interchangeably with secretarial skills.	24
Visualiser	A simple device connected to the electronic whiteboard in the classroom. A pupil's writing book is placed beneath a vertical arm with a lens on the top which projects a live image of the writing onto the whiteboard. This allows the whole class to see the writing and assess it collaboratively.	24

Word	Definition	Page refs
Washing lines	<p>A simple way of providing a flexible working wall in the classroom to visually support learning. A washing line, or a piece of string, plus pegs is strung across the classroom thus enabling the teacher to easily display the key features of a text that have been co-constructed with the class on a flip chart.</p> <p>Sheets are added to the washing line as the teaching sequence progresses. For example, in chronological order it could display the text map, boxed up planning, toolkit, related vocabulary and shared writing for the type of text being focused on. Children can then refer to these while composing their own work. They can be modified by the class as their understanding of the writing genre they are learning develops during the teaching sequence.</p>	23
Writing tool	<p>Language feature or writing technique children may select to construct their writing. These are often collaboratively collected and listed by children and teachers. The list evolves from shared reading of the type of text children are preparing to write themselves.</p>	21

## Appendix 2: Talk for Writing - what is it?

Talk for Writing is an amalgamation of key teaching practices that have been shown to be effective in raising standards in writing, developed by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong.<sup>14</sup> Formative assessment of writing underpins the approach. Children internalise language patterns through oral learning of texts and close reading that are then innovated upon through shared and guided writing. Ultimately, this allows the children to draw upon and manipulate the bank of language patterns in order to write independently. There are three phases to Talk for Writing: imitate, innovate and invent.

### Imitation

In order to build vocabulary and help children internalise Standard English language patterns, children begin by learning a specific text model. This involves a multi-sensory approach, using actions and text maps. As the children are learning the text orally, other classroom activities are used to deepen children's understanding, such as drama, discussion and role-play. Once the children know the model well, it can then be read and discussed. Other examples might also be drawn upon to broaden children's frame of reference.

In order to prepare for the second phase, the class 'read as writers', working out the underlying text pattern (boxing up) and creating 'writing toolkits'. During this first phase, daily spelling, vocabulary and sentence work prepares children for writing by rehearsing spellings and sentence patterns that will be needed to write fluently. Older children might also rehearse paragraphs or short sections, storing these in their writing journals. By the end of this phase, the children can fluently recount the main model and have explicitly identified the key patterns that they will need in order to write.

### Innovation

At this stage, the teacher leads the class in creating a new version. For younger children, this involves altering the text map and retelling the new version before shared and guided writing. With confident writers, the underlying pattern (boxing up) is used as a planner and both the model and the writing toolkit guides the shared writing. Shared and guided writing support the children's own independent writing which is developed over a number of days.

### Invention

Finally, children write their own texts independently or apply what has been learned across the curriculum. This stage may well involve further teaching and feedback. The class will ideally write a number of texts, the best being honed and published.

---

<sup>14</sup> For more information about the underlying principles and approaches used in Talk for Writing, read the opening chapter of 'Talk for writing across the curriculum' by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong (Open University Press). Further information is also available at [www.talk4writing.com](http://www.talk4writing.com)

## A guide to Talk for Writing: Reference tool and support for unit planning

Stage	Related key processes	Formative assessment opportunities
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children write a pre-unit example.</li> <li>Select engaging topic, plan creative activities, gather resources and design role-play area.</li> <li>Create exemplar text to demonstrate features based on understanding of next steps children need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assess, set targets and establish focus for teaching.</li> <li>Choose a topic that will interest children and design unit to maintain curiosity and purpose.</li> <li>Write a main model, building in key structure and language features needed for progress.</li> </ul>
Phase 1: Imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spelling, sentence and paragraph activities, e.g. sentence/spelling games, mini writes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify key spellings and sentence patterns that must be taught for text type and progress.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Talk the exemplar text to establish language patterns – word for word or in own words – feedback and shaping of retelling (<i>or very close and repetitive reading</i>).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure children know and understand exemplar text.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the text as a reader, e.g. book talk, drama, discussion, comprehension, comparison, read other examples.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pitch comprehension at appropriate level – main model and other examples.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read the text as a writer, e.g. boxing up and co-constructing toolkit, adding into writing journals and displaying on washing line or working wall. Toolkits focus on how writers create an effect not a ‘level’ checklist of tickable ‘criteria’.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure boxing up and toolkits are co-constructed, pitched at the right level so children make progress.</li> </ul>
Phase 2: Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New stimulus to build content, e.g. develop a story idea; focus on an experience to use as basis for poetry or develop knowledge/views for non-fiction; build in a sense of audience and purpose.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select topic that will interest children and that ‘matters’.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Model drawing a new map/box up and retell innovation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback to sharpen and develop retelling</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared writing – staged section by section.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus shared writing on aspects that children need in order to make progress as well as writing strategies, e.g. using the plan.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided writing – in focused groups (refer to targets).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Draw together flexible groups, based on what they need as writers/in their writing.</li> </ul>

Stage	Related key processes	Formative assessment opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children write their own versions – weaker writers ‘hug closely’, relying on the original, while stronger writers use the toolkit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children write, drawing on models, shared writing, toolkits and any specific targets</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Daily feedback/marking – teacher and pupil dialogue, using highlighters, etc</li> <li>Whole class discussion on what works</li> <li>Children share work with response partner</li> <li>Immediate improvement of writing in light of discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use examples (e.g. use visualiser) to discuss what works and demonstrate how to improve</li> <li>Feedback should lead to direct action and improvement – focus on targets</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Final reading of texts in writing circles plus evaluation discussion</li> <li>Teacher and children decide next steps</li> <li>Discuss, demonstrate and set tickable targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone reads their completed piece in a circle and discusses/writes about what has been achieved</li> <li>Involve children in deciding on ‘mini lessons’ to help achieve targets and write well</li> </ul>
Phase 3: Invention & independent application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole/group class teaching before independent writing, e.g. reading snippets, mini writes, sentence work, adding to toolkit, varying boxing up, comparisons, improve a dull piece; refine, add to and internalise toolkit, use mini lessons, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher plans in light of assessment</li> <li>Children decide what to focus on</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide new starter as a stimulus, e.g. first-hand experience, image, film, drama, objects, challenge with purpose, cross-curricular topic, creative event, etc</li> <li>Draw new map/box up for planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Choose topic that interests and matters</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared writing of illustrative exemplar to consolidate understanding of toolkit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate how to invent</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guided writing pitched at specific focus for flexible groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be specific</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children write independently – own idea or topic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold in mind key focus</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher feedback/marking – teacher and pupil dialogue, using highlighters, etc</li> <li>Whole class discussion on what works</li> <li>Children share work with response partner and read round writing circle for positive comments</li> <li>Immediately improve writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share good pieces of writing, demonstrate how to improve; make toolkits optional - not checklists</li> <li>Check and refine targets</li> </ul>

Stage	Related key processes	Formative assessment opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher decides next steps, e.g. more work on feedback, further teaching or more independent writing to internalise patterns</li> <li>• Further writing lessons focusing on progress and further independent writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase amount written</li> <li>• Sharpen teaching and learning</li> </ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare with initial pre-unit writing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss progress</li> </ul>
Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Writing is displayed/published in illustrated mini books, class blogs, anthologies, scrapbooks, etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate – audience and purpose</li> </ul>

### Appendix 3: Table to show connections between the developing practice and findings of participating teachers on the Transforming Writing project in Phase 1 of the research project and the research of John Hattie

Hattie's effective teachers	Hattie's explanation	Transforming Writing teachers
<b>See themselves as evaluators of their effect on student learning</b>	Teachers see their key role as evaluating the effect their teaching has on the children Teachers critically reflect in the light of evidence about their teaching by being aware of the impact their teaching has had on the children's learning	Gather evidence about the children's learning of writing through discussion in WC, group and one-to-one contexts, children's initiated written marking, discuss with children, focus on developing children's ways of thinking and reasoning about writing Impart knowledge and understanding and monitor how children gain fluency
<b>Make learning goals transparent and actively involve students in developing success criteria</b>	The more transparent the teacher makes the learning goals, the more likely the student is to engage in the work needed to meet the goal. The more the student is aware of the criteria of success, the more the student can see and appreciate specific actions needed to attain these criteria	Co-construct writing tools (success criteria/learning intentions) in toolkit with the children, drawing these out from the children during the imitation stage so they feel ownership and have a deeper understanding. Children co-construct writing toolkit during imitation stage
<b>Make sure everyone understands what is the learning goal, how to get there and if they have got there in the end</b>	Children are clear about what is to be learned (learning intention) and have a way of knowing that the learning has been achieved (success criteria)	Use the toolkit, read texts together, shared writing and compare written extracts and snippets. Children then evaluate their own writing in shared, peer and individual contexts with reference to the toolkit

Hattie's effective teachers	Hattie's explanation	Transforming Writing teachers
<b>Provide challenging goals which require feedback</b>	Teachers plan by providing appropriately challenging goals and provide feedback on how to be successful as the children work towards these goals and structure situations so they can reach these goals	Use assessment at the beginning of imitation to establish children's prior knowledge and then plan. Daily toolkits are provided during innovation to guide children to their goals and a range of learning contexts are provided in which to learn (e.g. visualiser discussions of writing with whole class, guided writing groups, mini writing lessons, peer assessment)
<b>Are expert teachers who monitor learning and provide feedback that assists progress</b>	Teachers monitor the current status of children's understanding and progress of learning towards success and adapt teaching based on feedback	Are flexible planners, always listening to children and modifying with extended plenaries, teacher-initiated guided writing, child-initiated mini writing lessons
<b>Help children to be their own teachers</b>	Teachers engage in practice focused on improving particular aspects of performance to help children understand how to monitor, self-regulate and evaluate their own performance as learners (as writers)	Model how to talk about writing and how to assess one another in a peer partner dialogue. Teaching assistants are used to role play peer partner talk about writing – how to question, respond, listen, etc.
<b>Welcome errors identified in assessment feedback</b>	Children seek help, ask questions and work through their errors. Teachers help children to see the value of errors as a means to moving forward to the writing goal. Error is seen as an opportunity with low personal risk involved and feedback thrives on error	Help children discuss their writing publicly on visualiser and 'error' is <i>re-understood</i> as 'ways to improve'. They 'improve' each other's writing in guided writing and talk partners



<b>Hattie's effective teachers</b>	<b>Hattie's explanation</b>	<b>Transforming Writing teachers</b>
<b>Support learners' construction and reconstruction of knowledge and ideas</b>	Children assimilate knowledge, make it their own and they do this well in collaborative contexts	Collaboratively construct and develop writing toolkits with children throughout imitation, innovation and invention to support children's understanding and assessment
<b>Attend to children's self-efficacy and motivation</b>	Teachers know what is going on in each of children's minds and try to build children's confidence that they have it in themselves to make their own learning happen	Build children's confidence through creating a safe environment
<b>Create optional classroom climate for learning and welcome errors</b>	Children trust the teacher and peers, feel it is okay to make errors, peers accept each other's mistakes, teacher and children both feel they are engaged in learning	Develop relationships, "like sitting down in Waterstones on a sofa with a coffee"
<b>Attend to children's thinking</b>	Teachers consider how children are thinking, intervene in thinking and practise daily that which improves quality of thinking	Model the 'voice' of the writer for children so that they internalise not only formulaic ingredients of a genre, but can think about how they use them, manage the cognitive processes of writing well, and develop quality of success criteria rather than tick off SC
<b>Have a mind frame that embraces the role of evaluation</b>	Teachers' view of their own role is critical and they need to see themselves as evaluators of their effect on student learning	Know that assessment of children's learning at all stages of imitation, innovation and invention guides planning the next lesson

Hattie's effective teachers	Hattie's explanation	Transforming Writing teachers
<b>Use a balance of monologue and dialogue</b>	Children and teachers join together in addressing questions or issues, exchanging and appreciating each other's views, evaluating different views, collectively resolving issues. Teachers talk less and listen more, less teacher-dominated talk and more student talking and involvement	Listen more, use techniques to develop dialogic exchanges and contexts in classrooms where dialogue between children could occur (whole class workshops with visualiser, guided writing, analysis of texts, peer partners), requiring children to ask questions
<b>Encourage children to become teachers of one another <i>and their own teachers</i></b>	Children become teachers of others through peer tutoring in cooperative learning situations and teachers help children to monitor performance, set goals, evaluate effect and provide feedback	Require children to give each other both verbal and written feedback about writing, question each other about reasons they wrote things and offer suggestions for improvement
<b>Encourage children to be active evaluators of their own learning</b>	The children's role is not just to do the tasks but to actively manage and understand what they have gained in learning by evaluating their progress, be more responsible for their learning, be more involved with peers in learning together about gains in learning	Require children to write in their books what they have learned and use the toolkit to guide children's evaluation of the use and quality of writing features

Hattie's effective teachers	Hattie's explanation	Transforming Writing teachers
<b>Develop children's metacognition</b>	Teachers intervene to help children to become conscious of their own thinking and learning processes and take control of them: to become metacognitive	Model the 'writing voice' when analysing texts, shared writing and contexts for collaborative discussion about children's writing. They are drawing attention to the questions, choices and decisions writers make to maximise impact and effect on the reader so that the children will develop their own independent writing voice and gain metacognition to manage their own writing processes
<b>Allow children to be actively involved in their own learning goals</b>	Children involved in their own learning and taking control by defining their learning goals and a teacher monitoring their progress	Allow children to take control by defining their own learning goals in emerging toolkits during imitation stage and the teacher monitoring their progress through innovation and invention by means of constant peer and teacher evaluation so children become conscious of and take control of their own writing processes <i>and how they learn to write</i>
<b>Become adaptive experts</b>	Teachers know when students are not learning, know where to go next, can adapt resources and strategies to help students meet worthwhile learning and can arrange classroom climate to meet the goals	Are increasingly convinced of importance of flexibility with planning in order to respond to assessment of the impact of their teaching on children's progress and use collaborative talk and teacher and peer written marking to inform themselves

<b>Hattie's effective teachers</b>	<b>Hattie's explanation</b>	<b>Transforming Writing teachers</b>
<b>Make rapid formative assessments</b>	Teachers give short-cycle formative assessments and feedback during the lesson – it is 'in the moment' formative assessment (from Wiliam)	Give 'in flight' guidance to children in all collaborative writing contexts using questioning and dialogic teaching in response to opportunities offered by errors
<b>Activate children's instructional resources for one another</b>	Children become teachers of themselves and each other	Help children teach one another when they help peers revise their writing, asking questions and prompting improvements in peer talk, whole class reading and writing, guided writing
<b>Create mastery related goals</b>	Goals are not about performance in relation to other children but increased mastering of skills and processes	Encourage children to consider quality and effect on reader of toolkit rather than tick off inclusion, and use of writing tool by child is evaluated
<b>Know what progress looks like</b>	Feedback is needed that sets further goals to sustain progress and requires teachers to understand what progress looks like – this is the most critical source of content knowledge required of teachers	Have a more 'explicit' idea of how a writing genre toolkit works and the thinking processes of a writer, and a clear idea of progress in discussion about writing from secretarial skills to purpose and effect
<b>Work from observables</b>	Teachers use what children do, say and write as a basis for assessment and modify their teaching and instruction as a consequence. Assessment is closely linked to teaching	Constantly monitor and assess children's talk and writing and consequently adjust planning with mini lessons, specifically written shared writing for children to analyse and compare (e.g. Bill and Betty, snippets)

Hattie's effective teachers	Hattie's explanation	Transforming Writing teachers
<b>Make the gap transparent</b>	Feedback is used to reduce the gap between where the student is and where she is meant to be. This requires teacher to know prior achievement, current achievement and success criteria	Help children to see and then address the gap between intended writing outcomes (guided by toolkit) and actual writing outcome (that which the child has written). Toolkits and collaborative talk and written marking make this gap transparent and to some extent reveal the thinking processes supporting it
<b>Know feedback is closely linked to challenge</b>	Feedback is most useful when children are challenged at +1, when children are aware of tension between what they do and don't know and want to learn	Sensitively provide challenge to all children
<b>Know power of influence of peers</b>	Peer feedback is most prevalent and most influential in classrooms. Often peer feedback is not helpful	Train and guide peers to give helpful feedback and model how to give peer feedback and what to give feedback about. Peer feedback takes a long time for teachers to develop in the classroom

Table drawn from the work of John Hattie in Hattie, J. (2012) *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximising Impact on Learning* Routledge: Oxon