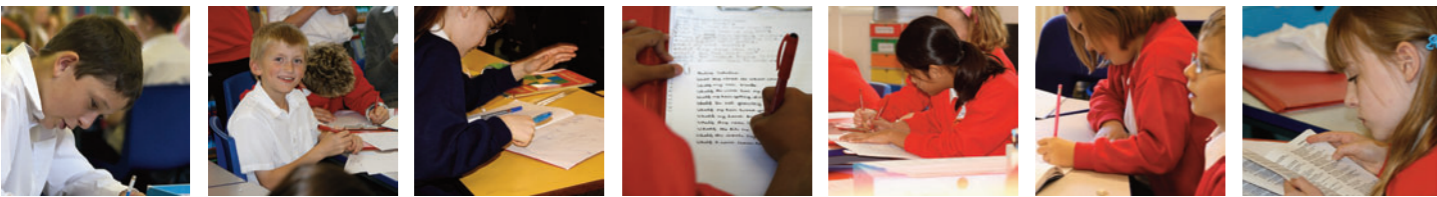


# Class Writing



A NAWE Research Report  
into the Writers-in-Schools Ecology

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# Class Writing

A NAWE Research Report  
into the Writers-in-Schools Ecology

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“ The overall aim of all the work we do in school is to raise standards across the curriculum through improving the quality of learning and teaching. For us this means that whatever we plan to do in the teaching of writing has to be with the aim of improving children’s ability to write. This won’t happen unless teaching is good or better which means providing experiences that motivate pupils and allow them to see themselves as writers with a real purpose and a real audience. The involvement of professional writers in that process allows them to see into a writer’s world – it lets children see the point, it makes it real. This seems to be particularly motivating for boys. ”

(Head Teacher Comment)

## Introduction

This NAWÉ project set out to research the effectiveness of writers working in schools. It involved the placement of writers in nine schools across England (four primary and five secondary) over nine academic terms between September 2006 and July 2009.

Despite the wealth of informal feedback regarding the success of writers’ residencies, it had become clear over the years that potential funders are reluctant to commit significant financial support without hard evidence of the differences being made by such interventions. Consequently, NAWÉ took on the task of researching how the employment of writers in schools has a direct impact on children’s attainment, achievement, and attitude to education.

The ambition of the project was unique, in that other evaluative work had either been related to shorter interventions or submitted for more routine purposes. In this case, there was a varied intervention over a full three years, and whilst some of the findings relate to any writer’s visit, they come across here more starkly. There are, in addition, many other issues arising that are specific to this more developmental type of work, its length and complexity. These relate in particular to the sequencing of writers, incorporating the writer’s input into ongoing curriculum work and maintaining creative momentum.

The planned programme of residencies provided a rich contribution to each school’s schedule, with some remarkable individual outputs and achievements documented. This report is grounded in evidence of those achievements, with attention to exactly what went on in each school. Considerable space has been given to the individual case studies, which represent the database of what took place and with what results: the extraordinary variety of work that was enjoyed and proved profitable; the comparison in progress between pupils who participated and others who did not; and the challenges faced by teachers in embedding and maintaining the effects. The case studies are, however, relatively brief accounts of what was documented overall, and further material can be found on the NAWÉ website and in *Writing in Education*, Nos. 39-45.

There were three main research questions addressed:

- Do sustained residencies of writers in primary and secondary schools enhance the quality of pupils’ writing ?
- If so, what are the conditions which stimulate or prevent such enhancement?
- How is this enhancement demonstrated in pupils’ attainment and attitudes?

In choosing a three-day residency as the model, the aim was to work with something that schools in future might be persuaded to afford. Three days - or six half days, as the time was often apportioned - is a substantial amount of time for a pupil to spend with one writer, and the emphasis of the project was on sustaining that level of input over a long period. It was also considered that three days in one term was a manageable limit in terms of schools needing to rearrange their timetables.

A number of residencies took place out of school, at local literary houses and galleries. It was also intended that some residencies would be delivered online and several schools took advantage of NAWE's Storyspinner project as a 'bonus' residency. This project is described in full in *Writing in Education* No. 48 and on the NAWE website. Pupils were able to work remotely with a writer actually based in France, and one school cited this as a highlight of the whole project.

Selected writers were all experienced, but the problems always associated with finding the perfect writer for the job at any one moment in time meant that the selection was *typical*, as opposed to some dream team that no school could possibly hope to source and employ.

A fundamental consideration was the potential for teachers' own practice to be influenced by the project. This has always been seen as a virtue of any writer's residency and the aim here was also to incorporate INSET for teachers, over and above any work with pupils. There have however been a number of concurrent initiatives with professional development opportunities for teachers as their prime focus and this project therefore kept the writer/pupil contact as its essence.

The project builds on existing research (Robinson, 1982; Harries, 1984; Morley and Mortimer, 1991; Manser, 1995; Dooley, 1996; Sharp and Dust, 1997; Oddie and Allen, 1998 and Jones and Lockwood, 1998). Most recently, the Arts Council England report, *Writers in Schools* (Wade and Moore, 2001) described a one-year pilot study of the effectiveness of writers in schools which concluded with a recommendation that a three-year, longitudinal and cross-sectional evaluation should be carried out, analyzing pupil achievement over the long term and providing evidence from various age groups. This project is thus one obvious response to that recommendation.

It has, however, many recent companions (Griffiths and Woolf, 2008; Harland, 2005; Hall and Thomson, 2007; Ledger, 2003; Owen, 2008; Pringle, 2002 and Galton, 2008) which attest to the characteristics and benefits of writers (and artists in general) working together with educators in classrooms - whether these be around the formal arrangements of desks, chairs, whiteboards and flip charts or the less predictable spaces of local beach, atomic power station or literary museum. There are also many manuals and guidebooks which offer advice on encouraging, managing and evaluating the interactions between writers and schools (Fincham, 1995; Sharp and Dust, 1997; Armitage, 2003; Arts Council England, 2006; Coe and Sprackland, 2005).

For three years, this project went under the title of Writing Together, since it emerged as a result of a long, productive partnership project of that name (involving the National Strategies, QCA, the Poetry Society and Booktrust). The chosen title for this final report, *Class Writing*, is a direct reference to Malcolm Bradbury's anthology, *Class Work* (Bradbury, 1995), a collection of writing by MA students at the University of East Anglia. Bradbury's groundbreaking MA has led to an extraordinary proliferation of HE writing courses in the UK (now linked by NAWE's HE Network). The teaching and assessing of creative writing at university level is now very well defined, so it's somewhat ironic that the subject still struggles for appropriate recognition in British schools, where writers were running workshops long before Bradbury was introducing them at Norwich. The evidence collected through this project - and other recent related research - should assist in correcting the situation.

## Methodology

The project was advertised to schools via the National Strategies and via the TES. Over 80 schools applied, and 9 were selected to provide a balance of primary/secondary, urban/rural - and spread from north to south. Some had experience of visiting artists; others had none. Participating schools were asked to make a contribution to the cost of the project, though this in no way reflected the true cost of the residencies.

The project was widely advertised within NAWE's own membership, from which most of the writers were then selected. These covered a very wide range of genres including poetry, fiction, drama, screenwriting, travel writing, journalism and other non-fiction. 38 writers in total were involved, with several undertaking residencies in more than one school.

The aim was to provide a varied input for each school, with the schools themselves involved in the selection. Teachers involved in the project were brought together at collegiate meetings each year, and these proved invaluable in developing a shared ownership of the project and enhancing the consistency of approach.

The evaluation was based upon the Creative Partnerships 4 phase stepped model of creative learning (Cutler, 2006). The study has drawn its evidence from:

- Pupil Response: samples of work before and after the writer's visit; pupil evaluation forms; pupil interviews and forums.
- Teacher Response: teacher evaluation forms; teacher and head teacher interviews.
- Writer Response: writer evaluation forms; writer interviews.
- Researcher Observations: field notes made by various members of the project team, observing pupils working with writers and teachers.
- Samples of Writing: poems, stories, scripts and other artefacts produced as a result of residencies.
- Quantitative Data: National Curriculum and GCSE related data for Writing, analyzed in conjunction with school staff.

In order to identify any effect on participating pupils' achievement resulting from the project, a similar group of pupils was identified in each school in order to make comparisons. These pupils had a similar curriculum delivered by similar teachers. There are, however, a number of reasons why the comparison remains approximate. There was, for instance, inevitably some 'leakage' of the project from one group to another. It is also perfectly possible for a comparison group to have benefitted from special experiences of their own. It is of course in any case hard to attribute any change exclusively to the input of writers.

Data was collected on an ongoing basis according to the various procedures in place in different schools. It generally related to teacher assessments on a termly or annual basis, sometimes on predictions for GCSEs. Such data is used for a number of purposes within schools and the data collected for this project has possibly been affected by those purposes in some instances.

“ One boy said at the start that he would not be a writer at all. He didn't like it. By the end, he had moved his stance, increased in self-esteem, self-confidence. He showed a strong ability to work with images as inspiration, and we had even discussed careers where photography and the visual arts can mix with writing. Kevin produced a very good piece of work at the end, despite being absent for part of the last day. Clear, lucid prose, in which he displayed good powers of observation. No overwriting or underwriting. A piece with a clear emotional undercurrent. I was delighted. ”

(Teacher comment)



## Summary of Data and Achievement

*I want to be the first whisper heard by a deaf man.*

This line, written by a pupil at Oak college in response to a simple exercise (“I want to be the first...”) encapsulates both the simple, joyous triumph and the complexity of what writers make happen in the classroom. Its minimalism is unlikely to satisfy critics and yet it demonstrates a definite imaginative energy at work, with language as its medium, which is exactly what writers in schools most hope to engender. The particular phrase is beguiling, its aspiration so radical.

The project intended working with schools that shared such a sense of aspiration and this was achieved in nearly every case. Schools of course are fraught with competing demands and, despite the care taken in the selection process, it was clear to the project team that the one school that withdrew from the project had signed up for publicity purposes only. Funds were re-allocated to another school led by a Head Teacher already enthused by the project in his former school, thereby turning a setback to advantage.

Even those schools with real appetite for the project sometimes expressed the familiar concern about such intervention being a distraction from the main endeavour: academic results. This was of course ironic, given the project's aims, but it remained a prevalent issue. Where the concern loomed large, and where the occasional residency unfolded in the least conducive circumstances, some adverse impact might indeed have been expected. The concern though proved unfounded and there were, instead, many indications of positive impact on pupils' academic achievements and other aspects of their development.

### Quantitative Data

The following results from each school relate exclusively to writing, though there was also data submitted by some schools that related to reading, all of which was encouraging. The results are all explained in greater detail within the individual case studies. All data has been anonymized, with schools each given a pseudonym.

In Ash Primary the NAWE group achieved approximately 1 sublevel higher in the Writing SATs than the comparison group (even having started slightly behind). Pupils with special educational needs benefitted the most.

In Blackthorn Primary the NAWE group performed better than the comparison group by the equivalent of 1 National Curriculum level.

In Foxglove Primary, whilst both groups made progress, the NAWE group performed marginally better, even though the project took place for only one year.

Of the primary schools, it was only Cypress Primary where there was no significant difference in

achievement and this may have been related to some disruption to teaching arrangements. The fact that the project was so well shared with the school as a whole may also have diminished the exclusive benefit to the NAWE group. There were other specific successes acknowledged by the Head Teacher, including pupils' improved knowledge and commitment.

Overall, in primary schools there was evidence that, when the project was well implemented, pupils in the NAWE groups made better progress than their peers.

The data from secondary schools was more difficult to interpret, an inevitable consequence of the greater complexities involved in incorporating the project at this level.

In Hawthorn High School the NAWE group performed better than the comparison group by approximately one sublevel. At the end of the second year, there was a difference of more than one level, corresponding with the completion of a year-long residency of a single writer. This increase levelled off in the third year.

In Larch High School both the NAWE and comparison groups improved their performance compared with the larger cohort, though the comparison group did marginally better.

In Juniper High School both the NAWE and comparison groups were drawn from the top set in English, with the NAWE group 1 sublevel lower at the outset of the project. This difference declined a little over the course of the project. Though not substantial, this relatively greater improvement was made in the context of difficulties related to teacher involvement in the project.

In Magnolia High School the NAWE group started approximately 1 sublevel higher than the comparison group, and this difference increased over the programme to a full GCSE grade by the end.

In Oak High School the predictions for the NAWE group at the end of the project were higher than for the comparison group by 1 sublevel. As explained in the case study, the indication is that, had the NAWE group continued in the same pattern as the first year, momentum would have been better maintained and this might have resulted in yet more progress.

This rather mixed picture in secondary schools shows that working with writers is potentially influential but that the logistics and conditions at this level make it harder to sustain such work over a three year period.

Taken together, however, these primary and secondary school results tell a highly positive story, of pupils making better progress when working with writers, even when circumstances were not ideal. There are several factors (addressed in the final section of this report) which suggest that further improvements might have been made if certain issues had been better resolved. These include timetabling and, above all, the extent of planning and the relationships established between writers and teachers.

## Other Aspects of Achievement

Beyond the statistical charting of progress, the feedback from all parties involved bears witness to a considerable enrichment. Pupils' comments about what they learned have been collated for each school. Quotations from teachers are included in the case studies and highlighted on the pictorial pages of this report. In line with other evaluations, there is plentiful comment about increased confidence but it is also striking how the pupils talk about other aspects of their progress including:

- How to write more expressively
- How expressive writing applies to so many different things
- How to edit
- How to think
- How learning is rewarding, enjoyable

Comments point to how the project has had an effect on the technical aspects of writing, including important matters of structure and organization, and also on pupils' imaginative engagement. The writing they produced within the project (some of which is included below) demonstrates this increased grasp of how writing can be used to unlock both intellectual and emotional responses.

The extended nature of the project resulted in some particularly expansive final products. In the secondary schools, work included a fully functional 27 page script with multiple characters, produced in just 3 days, and an animated film that went on to win two prestigious awards. In the primary schools, there were some similarly ambitious projects but the writing often began with simple exercises, model structures that are both instant poetry kits (useful in helping pupils to enter the world of poetry) and prompts to new kinds of thinking. These were often initial stepping stones to more developed pieces of work, but they are themselves indicative of how pupils began to delve with courage into their own experience.

### *6 things I have lost*

*I lost my new new cardigan*

*I lost my dignity when my dad started singing*

*I lost my friend when she moved away*

*I lost my pet lamb when he died for being too small*

*I lost my great uncle when he died of cancer.*

This willingness to write in a more probing way was seen at Ash Primary where a particularly stark contrast was noticed between the anthology of poetry produced in the year prior to the project and the work of the NAWE group displayed on the school walls at the end of the first year.

Discounting any attitude towards the religious content of the former (and certainly not to disparage its 'happy' tone), the latter work is clearly of a very different quality, with its use of the senses, attention to observed detail and the texture and rhythm of the language.

Sample of pre-project work (an acrostic) published in the school anthology:

*Easter eggs yummy yummy  
All the people fill their tummy  
Sent to the cross poor Jesus King  
Tasty Easter cake, listen to the church bells ring  
Exciting Easter time is here  
Rabbits jumping remind us Easter is here*

Poem displayed on the school wall after the first year of the project:

*Fear is cold and dark with nobody supporting you  
Fear smells like cold sweat.  
Fear gathers up inside you,  
Waiting to burst like an over stretched balloon.  
Tastes like sharp acid; sounds like rusty metal  
on a train track; feels like ragged rocks.  
Lives inside you, but dreads people seeing it.*

Another striking example of a major shift in writing attitude and ability is cited by another teacher at Ash Primary:

*Alfie has been a very reluctant writer until very recently. This story represents a real breakthrough in his attitude to writing and his motivation to write. Since he joined us last September he has not written anything longer than two or three sentences at most.*

The beginning of Alfie's story:

*Oliver Arrives at Rockingham*

*Oliver staggered down the pebbled road. His shoes felt like a cheese grater, all sharp and rough. Suddenly he stopped. He thought he saw a boy... he collapsed with exhaustion. When Oliver woke up it was raining. A smart boy, aged 6, with a tailed jacket, was gazing down at him. He had ginger hair and glasses. Oliver sat up immediately.*

*"Hello. My name is Toby."*

*"Oh, hello. I'm Oliver."*

*"What are you doing here?"*

*"I ran away from school."*

*"I am an orphan."*

*"Where are you heading?"*

*"London."*

*"Me too."*

*They both went to London. They were sleeping in the woods. Oliver was woken by a cart bobbling down the pebble road. It stopped. Oliver hesitated for a moment. He woke up Toby.*

*"What? What?"*

*"Sssshhh."*

*Someone was coming into the wood. They started to run. Toby could see a castle in the distance.*

*"Oh. It has a moat!"*

*The footsteps were getting louder and louder. Suddenly a hand grabbed them both. Toby screamed. It was Mr Bumble.*

*"You deserved to die!"*

The story continues for another 35 lines.

A major focus of much of the work was on re-drafting. Below is an example (from Larch High School) of how initial thoughts/jottings were prompted and then extended and refined into effective storytelling.

*I don't think a lot would have changed unless I was in Scotland during the summer because of the weather*

*As I approach it looks a bit grey and green and clean, with with old looking houses either side of the grey narrow road*

*I can hear cars whizzing by and the wind blowing through the trees*

*I can smell freshly cut grass*

*The first thing that strikes me is the tall church...*

*I'm not alone I'm in the car with my mum, my dad...*

*We have come back because it's a short holiday...*

The subsequent further draft:

*As the car seat vibrates and the engine makes a soft humming noise I peer out of the streaky window and see the same old Scotland, just a bit colder. Everything looks a little dull, grey and green are the two colours visible, but despite the lack of excitement the place feels so welcoming and down the grey narrow road I spot the thing that lights Gretna Green up is the tall church with a shining cross on top that glistens in the golden sunlight that peaks through the white wispy clouds.... Suddenly a catchy jingle sounded in the front of the car... it was my brother calling asking how to get there and the worse thing I could possibly have heard was 'I haven't a clue.' From that moment the few things that did have me slightly excited, that I looked forward to seem far away in the future and seemed out of reach.*

And the final version of those last sentences:

*He says "I don't have a clue!" As my dad speaks the words of doom the few things that I was looking forward to seem so far away, out of my reach.*

This nature and importance of this type of re-drafting is discussed together with other emerging issues in the final section of this report.



“ The first afternoon was devoted to writing the stories that the children would use for their animations. This was transformational – not least because there was a genuine and pressing reason to write – the children really responded to the reality of the ‘work’ and the deadline – they could see that this was actually work – they could see the role that the writing played in the process. The excitement was palpable. ”

(Head Teacher comment)



## Case Studies

These are brief accounts of each school's involvement in the project, placing the data analysis in the context of the overall programme of work and its wide range of outcomes. Primary schools are grouped together first, followed by the secondary schools.

Each account includes:

- the basic details about the school
- the aspirations of the school in joining the project
- a chart providing the sequence of residencies (listing writers and genres)
- a summary of the input provided by the writers
- a summary of the project's outputs
- comments from the pupils about what they learned
- a chart of pupils' progress over the course of the project
- a discussion of the data collected
- some concluding remarks

Despite this consistency of approach, each case study has a rather different balance, most obviously in the 'discussion' sections (where attention is sometimes given to one particular residency). Each school brought its own ideas to the project and encountered different issues.

As with the schools themselves, all writers and teachers have been anonymized and pseudonyms have been used.



## Ash Primary School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ash Primary School is a rural primary school in the East Midlands with about 80 children on roll. At the time of the project, 4% of children received free school meals (FSM) and 25% of children had special educational needs (SEN). 16 Year 4 pupils were chosen to participate in the project for the full three years.

The Head Teacher, Polly, claimed that writing was an issue in the school as a whole, as pupils across all groups had not made more

than average progress. There was also a boy/girl difference at the 'more able end'. She wanted the children to be passionate about writing and not see it as a chore. She aimed to improve teaching in writing through work in staff meetings, unit planning and continuing professional development (CPD). Two job-sharing teachers were to be involved.

Polly was confident she knew how she wanted to develop pupils' writing, especially that of boys. She felt that there had been an unstructured approach in the school for too long, which had led to standards slipping. She said they had creative writing books and 'stories with flowery words' but pupils couldn't see that non-fiction could be creative too.

Polly felt that the best thing the project could do early on would be to involve the writers with the units of work for that term. She built on a local LEA project - Write Words - which helped teachers to develop their own writing for one afternoon a week for two terms. This had led to them thinking more about their own writing skills and had given them the confidence to stand up and model writing in class.

She felt it was important for all participants to know each other's agendas and interests. She accepted that the writer needed to be able to challenge school practice and that this would require ongoing dialogue between all parties.

Of particular interest at Ash was the decision to work with one screenwriter, Ray, for three terms spread out over the duration of the project. This was planned in order to develop a longer-term relationship with the pupils, as well as offering regular CPD sessions for staff.

### RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Eamon	storyteller
2	Sharon	writer of children's novels
3	Dave	scriptwriter for theatre and radio
4	Ray	scriptwriter, dramatist, lyricist and children's author
5	Frankie	journalist
6	Ray	scriptwriter, dramatist, lyricist and children's author
7	Josh	writer, performance poet, percussionist, editor
9	Ray	scriptwriter, dramatist, lyricist and children's author

The content of the residencies included:

- Performance of traditional stories
- Use of language which emphasized the role of word play, word games, conundrums and riddles
- Use of the language of film-making
- Visit to Rockingham castle, supporting visualization/descriptive development in the context of a unit of work on classic literature
- Making decisions about characters – thinking about them with a director's eye and solving problems with plotting
- Landmark Robbery project: involving children in a game of ransom demands, photo evidence and plot development
- Language of poetic techniques such as metaphor and imagery
- Ways of thinking about writing: 'the shed in your head'; 'imagi@nation'; show don't tell
- Narrative structure – particularly beginnings, 'muddles' and ends
- The three 'Cs' of scripting (concentration, co-operation, construction)
- Journalistic reporting including accuracy and attention, use of computers, broader thinking, recording information, retaining information and clear concise and imaginative writing
- Use of cameras in class and outside to provide pictures to go with news stories
- Use of local and national newspapers, cutting out stories and making newspaper pages
- How a paper is put together using page plans from a real newspaper; use of radio podcasts to develop listening skills and note-taking abilities.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

Embedding the work:

Eamon encouraged the class to elaborate their work, building upon simple ideas. He offered a broad framework and then asked questions of the class to expand the story. His form of collaborative composition has become a sustainable tool in the school, known as 'The Pain in the Neck Game' on account of how the volunteer storyteller standing up in the class is continually interrupted by other pupils in their desire to expand the story.

Relationships:

*My relationship with the children in connection with the teaching of writing became much more light hearted and fun. Much higher level of enjoyment in the process and a lot of laughter... we shared a feeling of excitement about the work and the originality of the experience. That was great. But it feels natural really not different. (Polly)*

Polly also noted that relationships between the children changed as a result of the programme and that these changes could be felt elsewhere in the school. The CPD sessions with Ray and Michael led to teachers having more confidence to share their writing with pupils, resulting in a less didactic, instructional approach.

Pupils were also astute in understanding the differences between how their teachers worked and how visiting writers performed. They were aware of the different experiences and skills that each participating adult brings to the classroom.

*[Writers] know what to use and know what interests the reader. Teachers though teach all different things, and the writers focus just on one thing... writers go into it more... teachers teach us the basics – writers go quite deep. (Various pupil comments)*

#### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

16 pupils benefitted from the project over the full three-year programme which began when they were in Year 4.

Data was collected as National Curriculum sublevels for Writing at three measurement points: their Year 2 Key Stage 1 SATs; immediately after the beginning of the project in Year 4; and at the end of the project when they reached Year 6.

Attainment data was collected both for the participating pupils (the NAWE+ group) and a comparison group (NAWE-), a year group of children who attended the school in the year prior to the NAWE intervention and who did not participate in the programme. They had similar teachers and the same kind of curriculum.

For the NAWE+ group, the English SATs results, Summer 2009, were significantly above national expectations, in direct contrast to pupils in the previous year. In addition:

- 14 out of 16 pupils made good progress or were moving fast from a low starting point.
- Nine pupils achieved Level 5 compared with 1 pupil in the previous year.
- All boys in the class were on the special needs register and made stronger progress in comparison with the girls.

- 1 pupil who achieved level 4c made expected progress in national terms but this was in the context of difficult personal circumstances. He had been missing from class for half of Year 5 and was a persistent absentee through Year 6. The only writing work he did was with the NAWE writers.
- One of the boys who had reached Level 5c in Year 6 made exceptional progress from his earlier starting point.

Measurement Point	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
NAWE+	15.88	21.75	29.13
NAWE-	16.38	19.00	27.15
Difference	-0.5	2.75	1.98

Overall, whilst the NAWE+ started slightly behind the NAWE- group, they achieved approximately 1 sublevel higher in the Writing SATs than the NAWE- group. Pupils with special educational needs especially benefitted.

Attitudes to writing were significantly enhanced with numerous children – boys in particular – shifting from an antagonistic or disinterested position to one of enthusiasm and engagement.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The residencies at Ash Primary enhanced both the quality and quantity of pupils' writing throughout the project. Writers had a particularly beneficial effect on pupils' abilities to generate meaningful content, in turn assisting them (particularly boys and pupils with special educational needs) to appreciate the value of *authorship*. Writers working in successful partnership with teachers ensured that pupils' writing was enhanced in terms both of secretarial skills and imaginative flair.

The conditions in the school which enhanced pupils' writing included

- Shared planning between writer and teacher
- Use of external spaces and resources to provide new stimuli for engagement and interest.

The successful, repeated involvement of one particular writer suggests that pupils' learning can be reinforced effectively this way.



## Blackthorn Primary School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Blackthorn Primary School is a primary school in West London with about 320 children on roll including children from Arabic, Somali, Portuguese, Albanian and Bengali communities. There are over 20 languages present in the school and mobility of children has reached 8% in recent times. 57% of children receive free school meals.

Sheila, Literacy Co-ordinator, took on the role of project co-ordinator in the school with the support and interest of the Head Teacher,

Cara. As the project continued, other staff also became involved and each worked with different writers: Barbara, class teacher (with Eamon); Louise, class teacher (with Eamon and Tracey); Patsy and Joanne (with Beverley); Nicola, student teacher, (with Harry) and Harriet, Year 5 teacher and KS2 Music Co-ordinator (with Ray).

Sheila saw the project as providing significant enrichment opportunities as she felt that children had little access to theatre visits and were not always read to at home. She wanted to inspire children through the project and felt that its outside influence would have a powerful impact. Given the (white, female) profile of the teaching staff, she felt it was important for children to see someone different at work in the classroom. She wanted children to gain confidence in becoming *authors*, rather than merely 'doing the building blocks'. She hoped that visiting writers would enable children to apply what they had learned from their teachers as well as developing their creative capacities. She felt that the project would help children to recognize that a writer is a real person, overturning their misconceptions.

She had no concerns about children's behaviour or co-operation, though she was worried that contact time with writers could be an issue and that some children had problems with writing in SATs activities. Her initial advice to writers was:

*Don't assume anything about the school being based in [a posh part of town], or the notion of 'deprivation'...*

*The children will surprise you; keep an open mind and don't assume prior knowledge of things like the seaside or having attended the theatre.*

Sheila wanted to focus on one trackable core group over 3 years (beginning as Year 4) – so that she could compare SATs and Key Stage 1 results in order to determine the project's added value to the school. She also planned to be involved in the teachers' CPD aspect of the project.

### RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Tracey	poet writing for children and adults, short story writer and radio dramatist
1	Peggy	author
2	Eamon	storyteller
4	Ray	scriptwriter, dramatist, lyricist and children's author
5	Tina	novelist
6	Sarah	playwright
7	Beverley	playwright and short story writer
8	Harry	actor and playwright

The content of the residencies included:

- Introducing different ideas: giving a framework in which a child can think and use their own imagination and experience; talking about and playing with the difference between lies, truth and fantasies; drafting, re-working and re-writing work – not just accepting 'first choice' work
- Introducing different languages; talking about and using metaphors, using a sophisticated level of vocabulary; speaking to children as equals; using humour as much as possible; appreciating teachers' input
- Introducing different resources: the poet's own poems and books; a Michael Rosen poem, a Shel Silverstein poem; a football trophy; model soldiers; book proofs and newspaper reviews
- Use of the internet and a motif index to trace stories of specific countries
- Story planning techniques
- Use of visualized learning storyboards
- Whole class storylines and group composition
- Ways of thinking about writing: 'the shed in your head' (where ideas come from); modelling from 'The Fang Gang'; Alliterative 'Andles Game
- Visit to National Portrait Gallery; painting a picture with words; asking what feelings are in the portraits and describing pictures using all the senses
- Creating fictions from historical characters
- The Writer's Hand and the 5 senses; the Director's Square; visualization techniques
- Turning everyday objects, such as pen and paper, into something inspired
- Use of a teenage play text and graphic novel to show how to write drama from what moves you, from what you feel and think about moral issues; being able to identify with those different to yourself
- Demonstrating how texts can be made up of many other written texts including diaries, letters, poems, opera, puppet play
- Comic strips, speech bubbles and condensed language
- Crossing boundaries of image, dialogue, storyline and soundscape
- Mask-making in the development of character
- Graphic novel making
- Story structure: setting, theme, kick-off, climax and resolution

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Work produced included:

- First drafts of three poems each
- *Barlby Bugle*: the first ever Barlby School Newspaper
- Four small pieces of performance writing
- DVD of performance arising from the work on the Tudors
- Series of short scripts: *Out of Time*; *Lost and Found*; *In a Millennium*; *The Great Fire of London*; *Dead and Gone*; *Whizzing to the Future*; *Destiny*.

What pupils said they learned:

about poetry

- *Poetry can be serious or funny, true or made-up*
- *Rhyming and thinking of ideas*
- *Listening to different types of poems*

about the creative process

- *To give more ideas*
- *The five senses to help us imagine from scenes*
- *Imagining and describing the Tudors*
- *Counting elephants for pauses*
- *'The shed in your head'*
- *Having the freedom to allow our imaginations to work freely*

about writing as a whole

- *Writing can be fun*
- *Hands feeling active*
- *Lack of pressure and relaxation*
- *Liking the shapes across the page*
- *It was like 'talking to the book'*
- *How to get inside a character's mind*
- *I've got more to say in writing*

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

37 pupils (initially Year 4) were involved in the programme for the full three years. Their attainment levels were recorded at the end of Key Stage 1 and at the end of Key Stage 2. The data from this group (NAWE+) was compared with a similar group of pupils (NAWE-, n = 28) who attended the school two years prior to the NAWE+ group.

KS1 data was provided at broad National Curriculum levels only, with no-sublevels provided. For the purposes of the data analysis, it has been assumed that all pupils were performing at the mid sublevel of their attainment level.

Measurement Point	End of KS1	End of KS2
NAWE+	12.35	35.81
NAWE-	11.93	25.93

In Year 6, The NAWE+ group performed better than the comparison group by 1 National Curriculum level in Writing.

## DISCUSSION

As the project developed, Sheila noted that writers arrived with a lot more information about the school, something she felt improved the quality of the subsequent interactions with children and staff. Ray for example referred to the initial protocol developed with the school and was able to refer to it within his planning framework.

At the beginning of the project, Sheila was able to be out of class and could offer support. Despite the best intentions, she felt that planning between writers and teachers was relatively poor in that first year. She did however see a marked improvement in the following years, with the work of teachers and writers becoming more integrated.

Sheila was involved in the INSET provided as part of the project, extending this to other staff too. By the end of the second year, she felt that this had been useful to the school as a whole.

At the same time, she detected some resistance to the project proposals from the teachers of what were now Year 6 children. One writer, Sarah, said that the school declined the opportunity for her to do any INSET. Sheila was able to address this resistance and insist on following the project through, although - as she acknowledged - this was dependent on her status within the school and may not have been something that other staff could have insisted upon.

## CONCLUSIONS

The NAWE intervention – both at a pupil and staff level – contributed to the participating pupils performing at a higher level than the comparison group. A third of the pupils in both groups were performing below national expectations at the end of Key Stage 1, owing in part to having English as an additional language. The NAWE+ group had, however, reached national expectation level by Year 6. The enhanced attainment of the NAWE+ group is remarkable given the increasing difficulty of the project's delivery in the school and the associated resistance to CPD by some teachers.



## Cypress Primary School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Cypress Primary School is a rural school in North Yorkshire with about 140 pupils on the school role, 13% of whom have special educational needs. The project was provided for a mix of pupils as follows:

In the first year: 27 pupils - a mixed group of Years 4 and Year 5;

In the second and third years: 27 pupils - a mixed group as before with the addition of new Year 4s.

The Project Co-ordinator, Peggy, described the group as an 'easy' one, very well disciplined. It included children who were gifted and talented as well as those who had only basic literacy skills. Peggy anticipated though that the project might result in new perceptions of pupils' abilities. She described the reading skills of the group as generally good, whereas writing had been proving a more difficult focus for teachers to address. She described the boys in the basic skills category as "needing a kick up the backside" and she was concerned that there was a risk of disaffection if nothing was done to stimulate their interest in writing. She also felt that gifted and talented pupils in the group did very well up to a certain point but that it would be beneficial to challenge them to take more risks and push past their barriers to writing.

In the past, the school had been involved in one-off visits from museum staff (e.g. from Beningbrough Hall) and this had encouraged pupils' writing but had not been sustained or built upon. Peggy saw the project as providing the catalyst by which writing would become a whole school focus and she wanted all six teachers in the school to be energized by what the project had to offer. She was committed to developing CPD sessions with staff and offering opportunities to attend local cultural sites (e.g. Shandy Hall) as part of the project.

She welcomed the variety of genres the project had to offer the school. Her advice to all participants was summarized as:

to writers: *go in with an open mind, you'll love it, and talk everything through with the teacher;*  
 to teachers: *make sure everything is clearly explained to the children;*  
 to NAWÉ: *allow plenty of notice when planning, especially when taking staff out of class.*

## RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Lydia	biographer
2	Charlie	performance poet
3	Virgil	scriptwriter
4	Tracey	poet writing for children and adults, short story writer and radio dramatist
6	Ray	scriptwriter, dramatist, lyricist and children's author
7	Marcia	poet
8	Evelyn	journalist
9	Eamon	storyteller
9	Angela	poet and short story writer, working with Larry, a visual artist and animator

The content of the residencies included:

- Visiting Shandy Hall and surrounding areas to introduce pupils to the physical, atmospheric and narrative connections of the site
- Creating imaginative journals addressing an invented historical character
- Exploring the names on gravestones in order to help create a character from the past
- Using performance props – bongos, leeks, wigs - to encourage pupils to look at the world around them in an original way
- Demonstrating the writer's own process: showing the writer's writing notebook with scribbles and crossings out
- Exploring what's in a poem: rhythm, rhyme and repetition; getting lines into order
- Cutting up poems for pupils to re-arrange and re-order; experimenting with sequence
- Transforming prose into poetry
- Personal testimonies from local residents
- Staged sequence of performed pieces including monologues, dialogues, diary extracts and columns from an imaginary local paper
- Ways of thinking about writing: painting a picture with words; listening to words and thinking about how we say them for effect
- The use of history (i.e. non-fiction) in fiction
- The use of the language (and practice) of the visual arts and theatre to explore the effectiveness of writing
- The introduction of several poetic forms, e.g. cinquains and limericks.
- Emotion as metaphor
- Riddles/naming
- Simile poems; talk-back poems; life-journey poems; rhyming schemes
- Challenging concepts and perceptions of Shakespeare
- The use of Shakespeare texts including those aimed at KS2 students
- Story mapping and character mapping
- Exploring writing and animating from a whole range of different starting points: character, a set of visual images, metaphors, found objects from the school grounds and soundscapes that the

pupils created

- Encouraging free association, non-linear approaches to work and working as small teams of animators
- Exploring technical concepts such as use of imagery, soundscaping, editing, voice over etc.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS

Work produced included:

- Short fictional episodes set in the past coupled with short autobiographical pieces
- Scripts 'in process' which were planned to be filmed or turned into ICT interactive storymaker pages
- Performances in front of school and parents
- Poetry anthologies
- Poems published on one of the writers' websites
- Village newspaper
- Six short poetry-films

Further outcomes of the residencies included some surprising individual achievements:

*One boy, who had never read aloud or performed before, performed his poem. This was a significant individual achievement. (Ray)*

*One boy was dyslexic. I'd read a poem about my nephew who has dyslexia. When asked what dyslexia is he had said "Can't do much". He produced four poems and read two out at the assembly. Pat said he wouldn't normally have done this. He was praised by one of his former teachers after the assembly. Of another boy, [the teacher] said he was very creative in the sessions and ran with every idea. (Tracey)*

*One dyslexic boy, G, was excruciating to watch on the second day as he struggled with tasks and concepts and ideas. Yet on the last day, he was so turned on to everything and wanted to try anything set that he came to perform very well when entertaining the 6-year-olds. (Eamon)*

The online Storyspinner project, involving a writer based abroad, was also a notable success:

*The children love the visual elements of the video which introduces the next session, and the lessons have been broken down into small manageable chunks. The quality of work the children are producing is excellent and it is actually possible to fit in two sessions a week without it feeling too stressful. (Teacher)*

#### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

12 Year 4 pupils were involved for the full three years of the project (NAWE+3).

15 Year 4 and 5 pupils were involved for only two years (NAWE+2).

Data was collected (for both writing and reading) as National Curriculum sublevels at three measurement points: their Year 2 Key Stage 1 SATs; immediately after the beginning of the project in Year 4; and at the end of the project when they reached Year 6.

Attainment data was collected for the NAWE+3, NAWE+2 and NAWE- groups. The latter was a year group of children who were in Year 3 at the start of the project but did not participate in it.

Measurement Point	Year 2	Year 4	Year 6
NAWE +3	16.8	22.3	28.5
NAWE +2	14.3	18.6	27.0
NAWE -	15.8	21.3	30.2

Whilst the NAWE+3 group attainment levels were slightly higher than the NAWE- group at the start of the project, this situation was reversed after three years with the NAWE- group marginally outperforming the NAWE+3 group. This is the case for the NAWE+2 group too.

The Head Teacher noted that the NAWE+3 and NAWE+2 groups suffered some disruption related to staff leaving when they were in Years 3 and 4 and didn't achieve as well as they might have done. The NAWE- group had not experienced any such staffing disruptions.

She noted too that the partial intervention (NAWE+2) group had included some pupils with significant behavioural problems and a higher number of pupils with special educational needs. She suggested that the high achievers had been affected by the other members of the group.

She also argued that it was difficult to show that the NAWE interventions had had a direct effect since other activities were also contributing to the raising of standards throughout the school.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Had the school been able to integrate the writers' work more effectively, then the NAWE intervention may have made more of an impact. It did however result in the school adapting how writing is taught, and pupils' expectations of writing increased. Peggy also acknowledged that the NAWE+ groups had benefitted a lot from the project in ways that are not necessarily reflected in SATs results: their knowledge of writers was much improved; they all spoke about the project with passion at their leavers' assembly; all chose a NAWE memory in the leavers' service. She suggested that the project had made a real impact on those pupils.



## Foxglove Primary

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Foxglove Primary School is a rural primary school in North Yorkshire with about 430 pupils on roll. The pupils come from a wide variety of backgrounds but the percentage of pupils who receive free school meals and/or with learning difficulties is well below the national average.

Its Head Teacher, David, had been impressed by the impact the programme was making at his previous school (Cypress Primary) and so, when one of the other primary schools in the

programme (Elm Primary in Cornwall) had to withdraw at the beginning of the second year, owing to 'various changes in the school's management structure', David discussed his new school's involvement in the programme with NAWE staff and was consequently signed up for the final year of the programme.

David wanted to make sure that the project was school driven. He wanted to bring in writers who shared his vision for developing the curriculum and who would take a thematic or topic-based approach. He felt that anything else would be an 'add on' and against the spirit of the project. He acknowledged, though, that some work needed to be done in the school in order to persuade others that the project was something worth doing.

### RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Eamon	storyteller
2	Charlie	performance poet
3	Sunita	writer, performer and storyteller

The content of the residencies included:

- Performance of traditional stories and demonstration of links with Shakespeare
- Oral storytelling exercises, games and jokes
- Language which emphasized the role of word play, word games, conundrums and riddles
- Character maps
- Collective storytelling exercise; whole class storylines
- Changing a poem into a song
- Pop song lyrics and structure

- Use of everyday objects viewed in a different way
- Use of guitar to support instant performance/rhythm
- Performance of a story-poem in which children participate
- Introduction of additional Indian stories and short performance poems
- Acrostics, tongue twisters, greetings from different cultures, yoga postures linked to the stories
- Turning letters and poems into A4 posters
- Performance of poster poems written by the writer

Work produced included:

- A book of the poems
- Poster poems
- Lesson plans shared with teachers

Continuing Professional Development:

Even though the programme was only run for 3 residencies, David was keen to ensure that CPD was at the heart of it. After one INSET session, he commented:

*The CPD this evening was an excellent addition and a MUST for schools considering future placements - I wish we had considered it 2 years ago. I have this evening managed to reinforce so much of the message I have been delivering, enthused staff to write, be honest and open.*

Writers and teachers both welcomed this approach, acknowledging that it was not only about developing teachers as writers, but also in giving both parties the confidence to work productively together.

### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

40 pupils in Years 2 and 3 participated in the project.

Attainment data was collected both for the participating pupils (the NAWE+ group) and a comparison group (NAWE-), a year group of children who attended the school in the year prior to the NAWE intervention.

	Year 2	Year 3	Improvement
NAWE+	15.1	17.35	2.25
NAWE-	16.0	17.9	2.0

Whilst the NAWE- group had higher initial and final scores, the NAWE+ group improved its performance by a slightly greater margin.



## CONCLUSIONS

The Head Teacher was particularly pleased that teachers were introducing approaches which complemented the work of the writers and which stemmed not only from the CPD but other initiatives too:

*We have moved... to look at learning gaps, the learning process and hopefully more of a discussion, spoken understanding, more fun and a longer lead-in to writing.*

The school's participation in the project arose from the Head Teacher's prior involvement at his previous school, where he had witnessed writers' positive interventions. On the basis of that experience he was able to carry his own enthusiasm forward into a new situation and replicate some of the same success in just the one year.



## Hawthorn High School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Hawthorn High School is an inner city comprehensive in the Wirral with just over 1000 pupils on roll. At the time of the project, 47% of pupils received free school meals and 26% had statements for special educational needs. The school intended the project to engage 20 children from Years 7 and 8, together with children from Years 5 and 6 from partner primary schools, although the latter would not be involved in all nine terms.

Peter, the Head Teacher, wanted to develop creative writing in the school through Gifted and Talented 'pump priming'.

Peter argued that pupils need consistency, not 'one-offs' each term, and this led in the second year of the project to one writer being employed for three consecutive residencies. He wanted the project to develop excitement and a joy in writing and wanted it to make a difference. He felt this was about being creative and also felt that something tangible should come out of the project - a product, website, anthology or performance.

One teacher would be the linchpin of the project. She would work with the Head of English and other staff as necessary, including curriculum support workers and someone from the IT office. Peter was expecting a number of staff to be involved in the CPD aspects of the programme.

### RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Charlie	performance poet
2	Elvis	film animator
3	Gill	scriptwriter
4	Ben	poet
5	Ben	poet
6	Ben	poet
7	Eamon	storyteller
8	Don	scriptwriter
9	Angela	poet, editor and creative non-fiction writer
9	Geoff	children's author

The content of the residencies included:

- Emphasis on the use of everyday language in the writing of poetry
- Use of unusual objects as performance props
- Outside visit to local tourist sites where children took photographs to be used as writing triggers
- Showing different screen-writing structures
- Identifying story structure
- Character development exercises: identifying character journeys, plot points and crisis points
- Hot-seating, role play
- Understanding back story, character ghosts and subtext
- Using screen-writer terminology
- Inventing language
- Task differentiation according to age group: younger pupils describing locations, moods and settings; older pupils working on character development and plot structure
- How to bring a story to life through radio drama, based on action, reaction and sound
- How to establish your environment with sound; how sound can be visual; character building and acting for radio
- Use of writing/word games based on metre, rhythm and rhyme
- How to 'write with your ears, write with your eyes, write with your imagination'
- Poetry games
- Language structure: iambic pentameter
- Writing songs for a musical
- The practice of book-making: selection of material, pagination, blurb-writing, cover-design, inners and prelims, titles etc.
- Storytelling skills: learning and telling stories
- Working with a team of co-performers in managing a large group of younger children
- Collectively devising characters and storylines; writing dialogue
- Concepts of character motivation
- Use of different starting points for writing from different angles
- Writing about family
- Approaches to address 'writers block': how to think laterally about a story such as changing scene, introducing conflict, changing sensory detail, thinking about a new character etc.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS

Work produced included:

- Production of a poetry anthology, *Postcards from New Brighton*
- Production of a project blog
- Production of an animation script, *Banshee Hall*
- Production of a 30 minute play, *Hotel Babylon*
- Autobiographical writing
- Extended short stories

*The project gave the opportunity for some of the quieter pupils to speak out... our relationship grew stronger and we began to work more as a team.... pupils improved their speaking and listening skills and also learnt how to work together as a team... Pupils have been able to create a poetry anthology of poems they actually wrote themselves. Unexpectedly pupils who didn't want to do the workshop changed their mind and asked if they could do it next time as a result of all the excellent feedback from pupils. (Sarah, English teacher)*

Further outcomes of the residencies were:

- Increased self-esteem
- Confidence in public speaking (boys especially)
- Photography skills
- Performance skills
- Collaborative working to a tight deadline
- Improved relationships with teachers
- Increased enthusiasm in English lessons
- Enhanced English lesson plans especially for speaking and listening and creative writing work

*The pupils were still enthused and excited about what they had done... all of the pupils' levels of creativity were pushed but they all believed they could achieve as they did. (Sarah, English teacher)*

What the pupils said they learned (about poetry in particular) after Ben's extended residency:

- working with Ben was different
- Ben explains it more, and very clearly
- had never done anything similar
- used to think of poetry as boring, plain, now I see the fun side
- I like writing at home

#### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

37 children from Year 7 participated in the project over the 3 years although not all for the same length of time:

12 pupils participated for the first year of the project (NAWE+1). 67% of these received FSM.  
14 pupils participated for the first and second years of the project (NAWE+2). 43% received FSM.  
11 pupils participated over all 3 years (NAWE+3). 36% received FSM.

There were 53 non-participating pupils in the same year (NAWE-). 56% of these received FSM.

Teacher assessment data was collected both for the NAWE+ cohorts and a NAWE- group each term.

Points scores of students participating in the project in each of the nine terms are given below, with the endpoints of each group's participation highlighted.

M't Point	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
NAWE -	23.89	23.74	25.44	25.81	26.30	30.08	28.15	28.85	27.85
NAWE +1	24.09	25.0	27.50	27.73	28.64	30.00	29.00	28.67	29.00
NAWE +2	28.69	29.15	31.46	32.86	33.29	37.86	35.86	35.86	34.43
NAWE +3	27.60	27.55	30.45	31.73	32.45	35.91	34.45	35.00	34.82

Difference in points scores between the three NAWE groups, with endpoints again highlighted:

M't Point	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
N - / N +1	0.20	1.26	2.06	1.91	2.34	-0.08	0.85	-0.19	1.15
N - / N +2	4.80	5.41	6.02	7.04	6.99	7.78	7.71	7.01	6.58
N - / N +3	3.71	3.80	5.01	5.91	6.16	5.83	6.31	6.15	6.97

There was a significantly greater improvement by the NAWE groups generally, with the best progress made by those pupils who remained involved beyond the first year.

There was a peak in achievement in both the NAWE+ and NAWE- groups at term 6 and the Co-ordinator suggests that this was related to a revision of the school's assessment procedures for pupils when they enter Year 9.

## CONCLUSIONS

According to the school's Project Co-ordinator, the enhanced performance of the NAWE+ group as a whole demonstrates how the project fitted well with - and enhanced - the creative curriculum they were introducing. She also noted that, with an all female English department, the involvement of male poets had a significant effect and impact on boys.

Ben's year-long residency was cited as particularly beneficial but he was only able to provide one INSET session during this time and questions remain about how progress is maintained if the school does not embed the practice introduced. Other writers commented on the lack of continuity amongst teaching staff involved and this too may have been a contributing factor to the improvement ebbing away as the intervention came to an end.



## Juniper High School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Juniper High School is an inner city humanities specialist college for boys in Liverpool with about 700 pupils on role, an above average number of whom receive free school meals. 29% of pupils have special educational needs.

Whilst it is in the centre of a community with some complex social problems, staff described the school as being 'on the up' at the start of the project. The new Head Teacher had been there for 3½ years, during

which time the results had 'shot through the roof'. Achievement had been English led but, according to Cerys, the Project Co-ordinator at the start of the project, the focus had been on the mechanics of writing, rather than anything more creative.

The reputation of the area meant that a certain type of writer was sought. Cerys wanted writers to be 'up for it', able to communicate with fairly challenging pupils. She wanted pupils to get the 'pleasure' back into their work and to develop more 'colour' and expressiveness in their writing.

Whilst nervous about getting the project properly structured and delivered, she was enthusiastic about its aims and wanted the writers to have fun too. Like other schools in the project, Juniper had had some visiting writers running workshops in the past and had also been involved in a radio programme through the LEA, which was connected to a GCSE/AQA anthology. The concept of longer residencies, however, was new. Cerys hoped that the writers would both motivate pupils and sustain their achievement, widening their experience without controlling it.

Her hopes extended to visions of how staff would buy into the project. It was located within the English department, with other full-time teachers expected to engage with it and write alongside the pupils. The department was keen to use the project as an opportunity for CPD and Cerys felt that there might even be an issue about 'keeping staff at bay'. She also sensed other possibilities within the project, particularly through developing some collaborative INSET with other schools in the area, spreading good practice.

12 pupils in Year 7 started and remained on the programme throughout the 3 years. They were drawn from the 'top' English set of the year but were described by the Project Co-ordinator as being at the 'lower end' of that set. They were selected on the basis that they 'were not achieving as much as they could have been'.

## RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Elvis	screenwriter and film animator
2	John	poet
3	Charlie	poet
4	Colin	writer whose work includes videocasting, podcasting and online journalism
6	Eamon	storyteller
7	Mike	songwriter
8	Roy	poet
9	Don	scriptwriter, theatre director and community artist
9	Geoff	children's author

The content of the residencies included:

- Animation as opposed to live action; the animation process; script format and screenplay terminology
- Setting up blogs and websites
- Straplines and summaries
- Story structure and describing action
- Character development; protagonist and antagonist; dialogue and catchphrases
- Surprise, sub-plots, back story and 'taking it further'
- Conflict and tension; what characters want; initial actions; set-backs; final struggle; endings
- Visit to Liverpool Maritime Museum; introduction to African culture
- Studying the Slave Trade and generating poetry using a common framework
- Griots' poetry structure and comparison with Celtic structures
- Yoruba poetry and how animals illustrate particular qualities
- Similarities between Yoruba Riddles and the Anglo-Saxon variety; introduction to kennings
- Desktop publishing, web design, video and podcasting in the world of modern journalism
- Preparing a 'told' story, reading aloud picture books, presenting riddles and word games in local primary schools
- Use of language relating to songwriting: hook-lines, emotional photographs, 'linguistic explosion'
- Technical language to do with writing, e.g. stanzas
- Introduction to other poets, e.g. William Carlos Williams
- Use of 'free writing'
- Group plotting
- Drafting and re-drafting plans, plots and scripts
- Rehearsal of a script and in-hand 'performance' of the script
- Modelling paragraphs based on the film *28 Days Later*

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Work produced included:

- Production of *Buried above Ground*, an animated film which was screened as part of Liverpool's Biennial festival at FACT; nominated for the Activision First Light awards in the Best Film by over-13s category; winner of award for best animation by 13-16 year-olds at the Films for Kids Festival
- Project blogs and a pupil portal
- Film scripts for stop-motion animation films
- Collection of poems and songs
- Finished play scripts

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

12 pupils in Year 7 started and remained on the programme throughout the three years (NAWE+). Data from this group was compared with the remainder of the top set (NAWE- n = 8).

National Curriculum level data was collected at six measurement points, as in the table below.

M't Point	Sep-06	Dec-06	Jul-07	Dec-07	Jul-08	May-09	Oct-09
NAWE+	29	29	29.2	30.2	32	37.2	34.5
NAWE-	30.25	30.25	30.25	30.5	32	37	35.5
Difference	1.25	1.25	1.05	0.3	0	0.2	1

Whilst both the NAWE+ and NAWE- groups constituted the top set in English, the NAWE+ group were 1.25 points lower than the NAWE- group at the outset of the project. This difference declined to 0 but increased again to 1 point by the end of the programme.

## DISCUSSION

Conflicting stories arose from Juniper. Teachers made public, positive comments that clearly belied some serious problems.

Elvis (a screenwriter and film animator) clearly started with a friendly and welcoming relationship with William, the Year 7 teacher who picked up the project baton at an early stage. Elvis described his appreciation for William's presence throughout the residency:

*I think that without [his] presence, the sessions could become a shouting match, I'm grateful for him being there.*

William was initially a bit sceptical about the work that Elvis was undertaking but came to appreciate that the pupils of his so-called 'cartoon class' were fast becoming active agents of

analysis and meaning-making. Elvis introduced professional terminology that William found challenging but productive, commenting:

*I found his high expectations of the pupils a particularly enlightening aspect of his time in school - indeed I feel it has extended my own targets of what top set Year 7 pupils can produce or at what level of thought they can operate on.*

His enthusiasm was evident throughout the project and in his written evaluation.

*Pupils regularly ask after their film and whether there is any news. Pupils have tried to incorporate several of their new skills ... in the work they have taken on back inside the National Curriculum.*

It was somewhat startling, however, to find these exact same words and phrased repeated in another teacher's assessment of a later phase, an example of 'cut and paste' that went against the very spirit of the project.

Nevertheless, Eamon detected that pupils were identifying the connections between residencies and understanding that they were part of an ongoing programme of work.

*From early on, they mentioned previous writing projects and drew upon local Liverpool folklore, sayings and ghost stories in developing their work and their ideas about stories and storytelling.*

He was though less certain that these connections were being made by staff and the following two residencies of Michael and Roy showed a disappointing - indeed dispiriting - record of staff disengagement with the work in hand.

Michael, like Elvis, had been a previous student at Juniper, and it was expected that he would be welcomed in the same manner and that he would be able to galvanize staff and students to the same degree. These expectations, however, were misplaced: it would seem that there is no such easy solution to identifying the best fit between writer and school. Roy, an eminent poet, also experienced an astonishing level of disinterest and his residency highlighted how a valuable input can go to waste if there is not a shared language between writer and teacher. In this instance, part of the staff opt-out was exemplified in their talk about organizational, technical matters such as photocopying and other aspects of the classroom paraphernalia; nothing about learning or content or language or even writing itself. The lack of a co-language or mutually understood approach to the work meant that opportunities for co-learning between all parties were missed. One of Roy's visits was cancelled owing to an Ofsted visit.

## CONCLUSIONS

The project co-ordinator described the boys as technically weak in English yet saw this project as encouraging their creativity. She felt it was right not to address 'technique' but to go for a more creative angle with the emphasis on generating ideas and promoting original writing. She felt that the programme left the students with a 'great experience', especially the work with Elvis and the

consequent awards that followed, also the work with Eamon which was performed in the neighbouring primary schools and confounded the expectations both of staff and the pupils' own peers.

She said that the majority of writers came in and 'did what they did'; she let them know the pupils' level of achievement and said that they pitched their work so that it was challenging but not out of reach. She felt that she benefitted from all the writers who visited and could take some of their ideas and feed them back into her own teaching.

Eamon's experience indicates that knowledge and skills are built up across residencies: the visiting writer doesn't ever completely leave the building and is capable – perhaps unknowingly in some cases - of leaving behind a legacy of practice which can continue even when there is a significant gap before the next writer arrives. This points to a more significant recommendation about the need for planned progression between residencies so that skills and knowledge are built upon, sequentially.



## Larch High School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Larch High School is a co-educational media arts specialist college in Southend, with about 1300 children on role, 32% of whom receive free school meals and 28% of whom have special educational needs.

Tom, the English AST and Project Co-ordinator in the school, noted at the start of the project that reading was sometimes seen as a chore; writing was limited with little spark; there was little 'natural' interest.

He wanted children 'to fall in love with writing' and to care about how they express themselves, especially those who didn't have that culture at home. It was not that the school didn't focus on writing at all: Tom felt that it was the *kind* of writing that was the issue; there was a habit of concentrating on writing with style as opposed to content. This didn't mean that the project had to become overly serious or academic; Tom wanted to inject fun and enthusiasm into literacy. He was also intent on exploring the possibilities of new, original writing and, by making this the focus of CPD sessions, hoped that the project's possibilities could be extended to other members of staff. He himself was particularly interested in exploring Estuary English and the role of symbols (instead of text) in communication media.

This project was not the first time that such work had been undertaken. The school had hosted a residency funded by the BBC for 2 days per week for a term. The writer had been seen as 'part of the industry' and in Tom's eyes this meant he had insider knowledge of how 'the industry' works. Poets had also visited as part of National Poetry day, although Tom said that these were a bit like 'state visits', one-offs with little lasting impact.

### RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Nigel	novelist and poet
2	Eamon	storyteller
3	Sarah	playwright, reviewer, novelist and collaborative theatre-maker
4	Charles	poet
6	Mike	songwriter
7	Mike	songwriter
8	Ray	scriptwriter, dramatist, lyricist and children's author
9	George	writer of poetry, travel literature, biography

The content of the residencies included:

- Word association games
- Use of metaphor and simile to give advice and guidance
- Poetry structure and shape
- Performing stories
- Use of 'memory game', taking personal/family memories to make a story
- 'Built-up Story' games (a drafting/editing/rehearsal process for developing stories)
- Crazy Titles (making up new stories from changing titles of well known stories and from brainstorm lists)
- How to choose, prepare and read aloud picture books; singing games, finger games and word play
- Modelling constructive criticism; talking about four different aspects of storytelling: the story; the style of telling (informal, simple, theatrical, flamboyant, calm); technique and skills (vocal quality, tempo, volume, tone, eye contact, use of gestures) and language used (appropriate for the story, for the individual, for the situation, for the audience, etc.)
- Free writing
- Focus on language as expressive and looking at words afresh – connections between 'authority' and 'author'
- Making up and mastering words
- Venturing outdoors for writing
- Collective composition
- Song analysis, genre and song structure
- Songs as emotional photographs
- The concept of 'linguistic explosion'
- The introduction of dialect and patois to song-lyric writing
- Song titles from newspaper headlines
- Dreams and hope as a spur to writing
- Film-making techniques and language; story-boarding, shooting log, requisition sheets, cast, costume, make-up, props, location/set, music, sound effects, special effects, shot types: CU, BCU, MS; industry roles
- The collision of autobiography with biography of persons and places
- Motivation and building a 'bridge' between the writer's and the reader's worlds

### ACHIEVEMENTS

*Students learned about the editing process and the time it takes and that making mistakes is a necessary prerequisite... Ray spoke about what the writer 'leaves out' being as important as what he/she puts in. So mastery of the creative process requires being a willing apprentice. I think the students learned a great deal about being willing to make mistakes and start again.*

*Being able to take the students off the timetable and spend extended time writing/filming/ composing allowed for a powerful collaborative learning experience. I think it also helped students to slow down and strive towards accuracy and precision in their creative endeavours. (Tom)*

What students said about what they learned:

- to make people laugh
- how to read properly and it's giving us confidence
- to become a better storyteller
- storytelling skills
- learning stories and to make them up
- how to read stories properly and to build my confidence
- editing the first time and all about Surrealism
- working together in a group and planning and filming
- new words: objet trouvé
- camera shots and what would be better to use
- how fiction doesn't always have to be a part of it... you can use other sources like books to help
- instead of having to be factual (about travel writing) you can put your own opinions into it
- writing in a different style and 'showing not telling'

Students said the project would help them with their English work in the future, specifically:

- with my nerves when performing
- improving my speaking and listening skills
- giving me more confidence with reading and writing
- picking up storylines and making up your own stories with more imagination
- with spelling and concentration

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

There were 3 groups of students involved in the project:

Group 1: 11 Year 8 pupils (classified as disaffected) were involved in the first year (NAWE+1). Data arising from this group was compared with that of a similar group not involved in the project (NAWE-1).

Group 2: 7 Year 9 pupils (classified as able/more able) were involved for the second and third years (NAWE+2). Data arising from this group was compared with that of a similar group not involved in the project (NAWE-2).

The data arising from these groups was also compared with the whole of the cohort (n = 172) who were not involved in the project (NAWE-).

Group 3: 8 further Year 10 pupils (girls, classified as able/more able) were involved in the final year of the programme (NAWE girls +1). No comparable group was identified against which this data could be compared.

For Group 1, there was no significant effect on attainment over the one year that the project was

introduced. Data for Groups 2 and 3, compared with the whole cohort, is given below.

Measurement point	Key Stage 2 (pre-project)	Key Stage 3	March 2010
NAWE+2	30.7	38.7	44.3
NAWE-2	29.9	38.1	46.0
Whole cohort	25.2	32.1	34.7
NAWE girls +1	32.5	n/a	51.25

Both the NAWE+2 group and their comparison group began the programme as higher achievers in English than the larger student cohort. The NAWE+2 group was 5.5 points higher; the NAWE-2 group 4.7 points higher.

By the end of the intervention, both groups had increased their performance more than the whole cohort but the NAWE-2 comparison group marginally out-performed the NAWE+2 group by approximately 1 National Curriculum sublevel.

## CONCLUSIONS

The NAWE programme appeared to make no significant difference to pupils' attainment for either of the participating groups. The school was unable to offer any insight into why this should be the case. There was however other feedback which is revealing.

For Tom, the project co-ordinator, reflective practice was of major importance, something which a number of visiting writers corroborate. *The teacher-in-charge of the project was reflective of his own practice and gave me opportunities to reflect and discuss ways of learning.* (Ray)

Whilst his main aim for the project was to unlock pupils' creativity, regardless of perceived ability, he also wanted pupils to experience the reflective nature of the creative process.

*My dealings with the young people I have worked with on this project have made me realize that it is hard-wired in us to want to daydream, reflect and be creative... reflection was important.* (Tom)

Tom found that every writer offered opportunities for divergent or original ways of thinking, encouraging creative connections. In describing the new skills developed by participants, Tom made links with work on learning dispositions, indicating that such development has to fit within a welcoming host which is thinking about learning in a broader capacity than 'let's have a writer for a term'. For Tom, the project *built [pupils'] learning dispositions which reinforced much of the work we are doing here on Learning to Learn. All of a sudden they would be experiencing the need to be resilient or resourceful or reflective. So the project from this point of view was very worthwhile.*



## Magnolia High School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Magnolia High School is a mixed community comprehensive school in the South Downs, with over 1300 pupils on roll, 25% of whom receive free school meals. The project was introduced at a time when there had been a big drive focusing on the nuts and bolts of literacy, using the Point Evidence Analysis (PEA) approach.

Larry, the teacher who introduced the project to the school, anticipated some ambitious – possibly risky – outcomes: as well as

expressing a desire that the programme should achieve the conventional outcomes of pupils' increased confidence in expressing themselves whilst making sure that the boys were 'on board for writing', he also suggested that the programme would herald the emergence of a meta-language, a language *about* language which would build pupils' knowledge about how language works.

There had been some prior experience of having a writer in residence, but this was in the distant past. Larry stressed the important difference between writers and teachers, and expected that writers would provide pupils with the freedom to experiment in their writing.

He was also clear that writers operating as 'experimental catalysts' would need to have a range of powers and abilities at their disposal. They would need to bring energy to the school as there was, he said, a tendency for some pupils to have an attitude of 'come on, amaze us then', which he felt was exacerbated by pupils' low levels of self-esteem and low parental expectations. Writers would also need to be open-minded, flexible, and capable of delivering CPD to all the school staff, something which Larry was committed to at the beginning of the project.

### RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Ray	scriptwriter, dramatist, librettist and children's author
2	Wendy	poet
3	Albert	fiction writer and poet
4	Josh	writer, performance poet, percussionist, editor
5	Chris	writer in multi-media and experimental left-field prose
6	Geraldine	writers of novels, short stories, flash fiction, poetry
7	Eamon	storyteller
9	Francesca	writer of drama, fiction, scripts, screenplays, journalism and copywriting

The content of the residencies included:

- Discussion of differences between reading books and reading films
- The language of screenwriting and its parallels in the language of English studies
- Screenwriting 'format sheets', 'requisition sheets', 'storyline frames' – materials relating to the professional screenwriting world
- Sixth form Media Studies students were attached to the project to act as 'experts' and 'mentors' in some of the practical aspects of filming and editing
- Linking with the local celebrations for the 250th anniversary of William Blake
- Exploration of visionary poetry
- Performing stories
- Use of 'memory game', taking personal/family memories to make a story
- 'Built up Story' games (a drafting/editing/rehearsal process for developing stories)
- Crazy Titles: (making up new stories from changing titles of well known stories and from brainstorm lists)
- How to choose, prepare and read aloud picture books
- Modelling constructive criticism: talking about four different aspects of storytelling: the story; the style of telling (informal, simple, theatrical, flamboyant, calm); technique and skills (vocal quality, tempo, volume, tone, eye contact, use of gestures) and language used (appropriate for the story, for the individual, for the situation, for the audience, etc.)
- Writing games: writer's roulette, the genre game, jibber jabber storytellers
- Use of detailed description to turn the mundane into the imaginative
- A critical environment in which participants use the language of professional editing
- Insights into the process by which books (including picture books) come about
- Writing a monologue in the context of a 'Big Brother' Diary Room
- Students were given the end of a short story, from which they had to write the beginning and middle
- Writing a 250 word micro-fiction or short story based on photographs; telling the story of one of the characters in the picture
- Introduction of examples of Caribbean culture and London culture into the classroom
- Non-fiction writing, persuasive writing, writing advertisements
- Encouraging the use of different types and genres of writing to demonstrate the uses of non-fiction writing, e.g. writing to a problem page, writing as if you were defending your actions, writing in the style of a restaurant review or a diary, writing a letter to a local newspaper, writing as a specific character
- Using prompts such as newspaper headlines chosen at random, working in pairs to come up with different ideas and develop them

### ACHIEVEMENTS

What students said they learned:

- *Public speaking to others about what we've done*
- *Writing tips - such as using a notebook when ideas come to you*



- To trust yourself and have confidence in what you're writing is valuable

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

12 pupils in Year 8 started and remained on the programme throughout the three years. Data from this group was compared with the larger student cohort (n= 205).

### Sampling Points

Attainment data was collected at the following measurement points:

- 1 English KS2 data
- 2 Autumn 06 English KS3 Current Level
- 3 Spring 07 English KS3 Current Level
- 4 Summer 07 English KS3 Current Level
- 5 Autumn 07 English KS3 Current Level
- 6 Summer 08 English KS3 Current Level
- 7 Autumn 08 English GCSE Estimated Grade
- 8 Spring 09 English GCSE Estimated Grade
- 9 Autumn 09 English GCSE Estimated Grade
- 10 Spring 10 English GCSE Estimated Grade

The data was all converted into points scores in order for the data to be analyzed. It should be noted that:

Point 1: KS2 data was expressed as levels with no sub-levels available. For the purposes of this analysis, all pupils' levels were calculated at the 'b' sublevel.

Points 2–6: These are measurements of current performance at the time of measurement.

Points 5–6: There is no Spring measurement in 2007; data is measured in the Autumn and Summer of that academic year.

Points 7–10: These are estimates of future GCSE English grades, not measurements of current performance. This data is therefore rather different in nature.

M't Point	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NAWE+	30	32.5	33.5	33.8	34.5	38.3	47	47.5	46.5	46
NAWE-	28.1	29.8	29.8	30.7	31.0	33.3	40.2	39.7	39.3	39.7
Difference	1.9	2.7	3.7	3.1	3.5	5.0	6.8	7.8	7.2	6.3

Whilst the NAWE+ group started the programme at approximately 1 sublevel higher than the

NAWE- group, this difference increased over the programme to reach a peak at measurement point 8 of 7.8 points (approximately 1.5 GCSE grades).

It should be noted though that this difference became more pronounced when GCSE estimated grades were used as the measurement tool. This is most noticeable between measurement points 6 and 7.

However, this pronounced increase in performance (by both NAWE+ and NAWE- groups) is not maintained over the remaining 3 measurement points. On the contrary, it would seem that achievement has levelled off by measurement point 8 and starts to tail off from that point onwards.

The difference between the NAWE+ and NAWE- groups also decreases slightly from measurement point 8 onwards. These trends may be related to the different form of measurement, using predicted GCSE grades.

Nevertheless, if the data from measurement points 1–6 is considered alone, it is apparent that the performance of the NAWE+ group continues to improve at a faster rate than the NAWE- group.

## DISCUSSION

*At the start of the programme, I didn't know how to relate to the writers but realized that having a planning meeting before was essential. You met them and they knew your expectations and so on. This was a vital meeting. I met with Chris, Geraldine and Francesca and they have been the more successful residencies as they got to know me and the school. (Patricia)*

### Willingness to Take Risks:

Ray suggests that the risk the school took in wanting pupils to experiment was one that paid off:

*The students were challenging in their attitudes and their lack of confidence at first. But this changed as the project went on, which was really quite rewarding for all concerned.... It's rare that a school has the confidence to let any but its 'gifted and talented', 'socially mature' students out in front of an outsider, particularly for a sustained project like this one – that was a risk they took...*

And it paid off in that, according to Larry, the students involved were those whose skills and confidence in traditional KS3 English lessons were low. Their participation in this project and the quality of the end results showed they had developed not just the technical skills required for screenwriting/film-making, but for more transferable group work and presentations. The school's Head of Media Studies told the students that their piece of work would have got a Grade B at GCSE. The risks involved in this experiment instilled a sense of creative achievement in a group which had never performed well in English before.

Chris, a multi-media writer, continued to push risk-taking within the programme, developing pupils' meta-language skills by making them *think about thinking* at all times. Both staff and

pupils were full of praise. Patricia, however, commented that 'in an ideal world' she would have liked to continue the work in her classroom but the rigidity of the curriculum wouldn't allow for this, being largely target driven.

Patricia was concerned that, whilst the programme was of undeniable value to the pupils, their continued involvement in Year 10 might jeopardize their performance in their GCSEs. She wanted to continue the project with a younger age group, whereas the project team considered the continuity of the group to be essential for capturing meaningful data for the project as a whole.

Patricia went ahead with substituting part of the group, stating:

*I hope you can understand why we have done this – I am pleased with the work that the students have put in, but they have different pressures now and feel extremely reluctant to come out of class. I am looking forward to seeing their SATs results and know that that will be an indication of the great work that has been done.*

A great deal of negotiation and further discussion came about as a result of Patricia's reported anxieties. In the end, to the great credit of the belief in the programme shown by Patricia, the pupils and indeed the whole school, the programme continued with the original group, on the understanding that participation was voluntary and that no pupils would be forced to continue if they felt it was damaging their examination prospects.

Geraldine was the first writer to take part in this post-critical moment of the programme and immediately faced the pressures under which the school was working.

*At planning stage the school asked for [only] two and a half days, due to pressures on the timetable. At short notice this was changed to one full day and two half days... It was a challenge to fit everything in, but we managed.*

She did however manage to resolve the evolutionary curriculum conflict, much to the satisfaction of Patricia and her class.

*I had to pack everything into a shorter timeframe. And did so. And still managed to pick up the leads the students threw out, and maximize their participation.*

Her success, like so many other examples in this project, relied on working with a teacher who had clear objectives but whose strategy for delivering those objectives remained flexible. Geraldine too had to adapt her approach to the demands that Patricia was facing, never feeling that her creative priorities and the attainment agenda were mutually exclusive. Patricia confirmed that the experience had been hugely beneficial, emphasizing how Geraldine worked to establish a particular type of relationship with the group.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite – or perhaps because of – the mid-project crisis point, Geraldine's conviction that a creative writing process could support attainment agendas and not conflict with them was endorsed by teachers' views of the quality of the writing that was produced through her sessions.

Like Patricia, Geraldine was clear that the work also led to an increase in students' confidence and was able to articulate why that was important to the act of writing – and hence attainment:

*I think [people] need a degree of self-confidence to be able to write freely. If that self-confidence rests on a perception that they lack skills, it is harder to 'let go' and create. I saw part of my job as a catalyst to increase self-esteem.*

Patricia confirmed for Geraldine that the work was better than the work already done for GCSE coursework and suggested that, with some further editing, their GCSE submissions would benefit from the residency.

Patricia was sobered by the difficulties she had faced through the process:

*The organization has been a nightmare, pulling them off timetable, getting them out of class. Ideally in future it would be me with a Year 7 class alone, and I could make sure I could try to use it as a block booking through a series of whole days. The logistics of working in a secondary school have not been easy as you're pulling people out of other people's classes.*

This was an issue confronted in the other secondary schools in the project too – with varying approaches and results.



## Oak High School

### THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

Oak High School is a mixed community comprehensive school in the West Midlands with just under 1000 pupils on roll, 6% of whom receive free school meals. 8% of pupils have special educational needs.

The lead contact at the school, Lewis, wanted the residencies to complement the work of the 2D and 3D animators who had previously been in residence, and wanted to spread the notion of residency across the arts as a whole. He wanted to integrate English into the

specialism ethos, to enhance children's learning styles and encourage them to view the classroom as a 'safe space'. He wanted to promote opportunities for children to make things for themselves and to develop more integrated skills. He was confident that staff could teach creative writing and develop risk-taking skills, and that the project would contribute to the development of an English department that writes.

He saw the project as providing an opportunity to investigate genuinely interested, deep learning. He expected a focus on learning transferable skills, and not just as a means of preparing them for an exam.

The school has a link with Keele University and the creative writing element of the PGCE, through which a residency had been organized in 2005. This offered scope for various CPD opportunities to be connected to the project. Lewis also wanted to involve NQTs in something exciting.

Advice to writers included:

*It would be great to get learning resource centre managers on board the project.*

*Teachers should be encouraged to write too – participation is important since many of them won't have had experience of creative writing since their A levels, but writers shouldn't be phased by teachers not wanting to get involved either.*

*Integrate with other staff by coming into the staff room.*

*Use the school library to access books and help increase the project profile.*

He was concerned that writers might not have enough time in the school during the project and acknowledged that there would be an ongoing issue about how the project could be sustained once the residencies were completed.

The school envisaged working with Year 9 pupils, particularly those of 'lower ability'.

### RESIDENCY STRUCTURES

Term	Writer	Genre/Skill
1	Ronnie	writer (& part-time literature development worker), poet, novelist and storyteller
1	Sean	performance poet
2	Ben	poet
4	Eamon	storyteller
5	Eamon	storyteller
6	Mike	songwriter
7	Angela	poet, editor and creative non-fiction writer
8	Adella	poet

The content of the residencies included:

- Reading and performing the poet's own work
- Writing of verse based on the premise of 'I want to be...'
- Rule based composition
- Exploration of metaphors and similes
- Performance poetry
- How to write with your ears/eyes/imagination
- Preparation and delivery of a group storytelling performance for younger children
- Adding to the physicality of a performance and the best use of the physical space – especially related to sound (the functions of whispering, talking, shouting, echo)
- Song analysis, genre and song structure
- Songs as emotional photographs
- The concept of 'linguistic explosion'
- The introduction of dialect and patois to song-lyric writing
- Song titles from newspaper headlines
- Use of physical starting points such as objects, walking, cutting up poems
- Free writing and writing from a 'button'
- Writing about parents' rooms with a focus on relationships with mothers
- Use of Matthew Sweeney's 'Fishbones' poem
- Re-making a poem from the writer's own work
- How language works; nouns and verbs rather than adjectives and adverbs; structure and voice; the need for observed detail
- Writing of meta-poems
- Approaching poetry by interfering in the text, e.g. re-telling Browning's 'My Last Duchess' through extending the narrative by writing in the voice of another character from the poem, or suggested by the poem
- Writing as a new way of reading

After the first year of the project, writers' sessions were not taught solely in curriculum time but also delivered at weekends and out of the main school timetable. This was partly in response to

resistance by teachers to allowing their pupils to leave lessons in order to take part in the project.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

Work produced included:

- Sets of poems by all the pupils involved
- Six completed lyrics, set individually to music
- A piece of creative non-fiction in draft form
- An anthology of writing

What pupils said they learned:

- *Knowing we are able to make mistakes and adjust them*
- *Keeping things away from the audience and gradually telling them*
- *You don't have to give everything away in a piece of writing*
- *Modelling our writing on a very good book*
- *The way to approach a story... how to say it rather than just read it*
- *Telling stories helps you learn new words - the more you read a book, the more words you learn*
- *Positioning things - thinking about your next thing in your writing assessment*
- *When you're writing you don't always have to start at the beginning but can start at the bottom and work your way up to the top*
- *I can use some of the techniques we have learnt back in my lessons. I liked cutting up the poem and making my own one up.*

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

12 pupils from Year 9 participated in the programme (NAWE+). The group demonstrated a spread of ability, two thirds with higher attainment and one third with lower attainment.

For the first half of the programme, the NAWE+ pupils were extracted from their timetabled classes (which were not necessarily English classes). In term 4, however, this changed and there was a tendency to deliver the programme out of the main school timetable and at weekends. Attendance at these residencies became somewhat voluntary.

The school uses a system of SPC (Student Progress Charts) points to assess progress. These aim to predict future GCSE grades rather than measure what students are achieving at that point in time. This means that the data received from the school is a reflection of how predictions (for GCSE English) changed, as opposed to the students' actual performance.

Data from the NAWE+ group was compared to a similar group of pupils in the same year (NAWE-) and the whole pupil cohort for that year (NAWE-W).

Five measurement points were used as shown in the Data Summary table below:

M't Point	Y8 (baseline)	Y9 SPC 2	Y10 SPC 1	Y10 SPC 3	Y11 SPC 1
NAWE +	38.42	44.00	42.75	43.75	44.25
NAWE -	34.00	42.08	40.23	41.15	39.54
Whole cohort	37.32	41.33	40.60	40.00	41.93

Differences between groups:

NAWE+ / NAWE -	4.42	1.92	2.52	2.60	4.71
NAWE+ / cohort	1.10	2.67	2.15	3.75	2.32
NAWE- / cohort	-3.32	0.75	-0.37	1.15	-2.39

## DISCUSSION

The predictions for the NAWE+ group at the end of the project were higher than for the NAWE-W group by just under 1 National Curriculum sublevel.

The NAWE- comparison group performed at a lower level than the NAWE-W cohort and the NAWE+ group itself, suggesting that the identification of them as a comparison group was not particularly accurate.

The difference in predictions of achievement between the NAWE+ and NAWE-W group increased through the programme (from 2.67 to 3.75 points) up until the end of the second year, but tailed off in the final year to 2.32 points. The NAWE+ group was therefore closer to the whole student cohort (the NAWE-W group) at the end of the programme than they were at the start of it, albeit still with higher predicted performances.

The project co-ordinator confirmed that the overall reduction in predictions in both groups was likely to be owing to more critical teacher assessment of pupils' grades as they got closer to their GCSEs.

## CONCLUSIONS

Whilst starting at a marginally higher attainment level than the whole student (NAWE-W) group at the start of the project, the predictions of the NAWE+ group's attainment increased at a greater rate over the course of the project, peaking at the end of Year 2. This declined in the third year, partly on account of stricter marking regimes. Moving the project away from the core timetable may also have contributed to this reduction in attainment difference.



“ The writers have taught us about wisdom; mystery; uncertainty; connectivity; precision; concision; discipline; ‘chipping away’ at things; planning; collaboration; valuing deadlines; asking questions; taking risks; valuing laughter and playfulness. ”

(Teacher comment)

## Critical Factors, Emerging Themes

The following considerations emerged across all the schools involved. Some, such as the role of the writer and the relationship with teachers, are fundamental to any writer’s visit; others, such as the importance of variety and sequencing, relate specifically to the longer-term nature of this particular project. There are, here, both commendations and issues unresolved.

### The Role of the Writer

Writers are natural mavericks and a hugely varied bunch, which is part of their appeal. Schools however tend to have certain expectations. One popular ‘request’ is the rather vague ‘role-model for boys’, which seems to imply a sort of action hero. Pupils on this project were certainly enthusiastic at meeting writers with clear ‘industry’ roles, e.g. screenwriters.

Quite early on, the Project Manager identified a certain type: *These troubadours... don’t have to show up in the same place tomorrow. And they don’t have to check whether the seedlings they have planted are germinating.* The role that is valued here is part entertainer, part catalyst. The implied criticism is of ‘jobbing’ writers too quick to leave the scene, a rarity on this project; it was more that their sense of independence was identified as providing a specific (and perhaps limited) type of input. At the other end of the spectrum are writers who have themselves been classroom teachers and for whom the whole, patient business of working with young people is second nature.

*Sharon is a professional secondary English teacher as well as a writer and brought a well-organized scheme of work, meticulously planned and inspirational. She used the language of film making to really spark the children’s creativity and combined with the first hand experience of the visit to Rockingham castle, supported their visualization/descriptive development in the context of a unit of work on classic literature.* (Head Teacher, Ash Primary)

Focusing on the longer-term residency, as this project did, it is tempting to see this second ‘type’ as being a better fit, except that the longer project enables *all* writers (including the ‘troubadours’) to be more true to the realities of their work, to move away from acting as magician/catalyst and to concentrate instead on the business of developing individual pieces of writing. Angela, a poet working at Cypress Primary, commented:

*Over a longer residency there is much more time to build relationships, share skills with the staff, support students’ drafting and editing skills and work towards an end product such as a performance or anthology.*

Writers in schools do not tend to use the word pedagogy; they do however consider in depth the manner in which they facilitate pupils’ writing in accordance with their own practice. It is interesting to note how, at Hawthorn, the pupils thought Ben ‘explained’ poetry better, and yet he denies telling them how it was done, insisting he had shown them ‘where to find poems’, not ‘how



to write them'. Polly, Head Teacher at Ash Primary, confirms this professional knack:

*Ray had more success in five minutes teaching the children about using similes in poetry than I'd obviously had in eighteen months – since they all disclaimed any knowledge of the term when he broached it with them! They were all able to improve their poems later when he had gone by introducing a simile – and can still explain very articulately what a simile is to a friend now – three weeks later. They responded very positively to the concept of the toolkit – and can see that a simile is something that a good writer can choose to pull out of the*

*toolkit to have a particular and precise effect on his/her reader.*

Writers often address the very same aspects of writing on which teachers may be working, and yet the effects can be radically different. Polly cited an example of a clipped piece of work, written in phrases with unconventional sentences and phrasing, which she saw as powerful, suspecting though that other teachers might not see it as 'good writing'. She expressed her frustration at markers who were looking exclusively for certain writing conventions; they were marking to a formula but marking writing that was not formulaic.

Writers enter the classroom determined to be themselves but they are nevertheless fulfilling a certain role for the school. It goes beyond their obvious role as outsiders, valuable as this is, and which Ian McMillan cites as such as influence on his own schooling, referring to the 'vivid visitors', colourful characters who visited the school to deliver an invigorating blast of something completely different to the norm (McMillan, 1996). It is associated with the fact that their focus in the classroom derives directly from their professional life: their very living relies on their craft, on matters of imagery, structure and style, and this clearly makes some important connection with pupils. Most importantly, writers convey the crucial business of writing about subjects that matter to them, something that is reflected in teachers' comments about 'authorship'. These are perhaps the areas where the professional writer will always have a valuable edge. Teachers can learn some of the things that writers do so well but that does not negate the value of the writer's ongoing role in the classroom.

*Alongside the essential teaching of skills lies the teaching of the craft of writing – providing real purposes, meaningful contexts, fun, engagement, enjoyment, satisfaction, pride, opportunities to find your 'writer's voice', apprenticeship to a real master of the art – all these things help to complete the jigsaw of the teaching of writing to primary school children. (Polly)*



## The Relationship with Teachers

Residencies tended to work best when a strong relationship was established between the writer and teacher. There was also evidence that connecting with a greater number of staff paid additional dividends.

*The staff meeting on creative writing was inspirational because, by putting Ray's connections and 'story sack' ideas into practice, teachers were able to see the practical implications for their work with children. (Head Teacher, Ash Primary)*

Teachers were quick to praise those writers who achieved a seemingly effortless rapport with a class. Some writers clearly find this easier than others (and that is certainly one reason why not every writer should be encouraged to undertake work in schools). Teachers however can play a major part in helping writers to acclimatize and communicate effectively with a particular group of pupils.

If the teacher maintains a distinct, dependable presence complementing the writer's input, then there is less likelihood of writers being drawn into the trap of behaving too much like traditional teachers themselves. When such distortion does occur, frictional questions can arise. What is the writer doing that is so far above the teacher's own capability? If teaching better, then the teacher can feel undermined. If not, the teacher can be dismissive. If everything is too similar, the teacher simply thinks "I can do that." The writer needs to be distinctively different, an *artist*, but both parties need to understand and respect the other's practice. Such understanding needs to be reached at the very beginning of the project, as part of the planning process. This then avoids the possibility of a residency labouring under the misconceptions that were occasionally encountered on this project. There was, for instance a residual and problematic tendency for teachers to consider that creativity and technique are separately addressed. The most successful residencies disproved this entirely.

The occasional comments about teachers 'resisting' INSET raises a question about teachers' own willingness to be 'taught' by those without a teaching qualification. Their resistance is no doubt also connected to a reluctance to risk exposing their own lack of confidence in writing. This can also hold them back in class when a writer would prefer them to engage with the same tasks as their pupils. It might be helpful to describe INSET offered by writers with greater care, rather than take its value for granted. Through working with writers - both through INSET and witnessing their work with pupils - teachers can gain the necessary confidence to demonstrate writing as exploration, rather than rely on models prepared earlier.

Of his residency at Larch, storyteller Eamon wrote:

*In some ways, I think my work reminds teachers of various ideas, techniques and skills they've been trained in but haven't used as much, or that they do use [but] by seeing them applied or presented in different ways refreshes their skills, outlooks and ideas.*

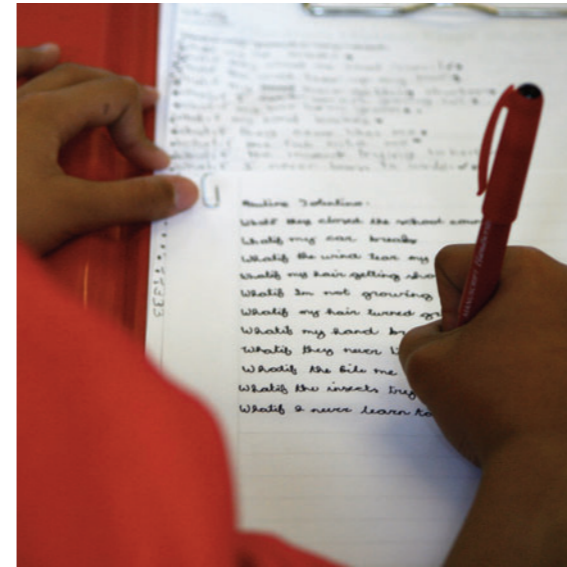
Tom, the Project Co-ordinator at Larch, commented:

*The writers have taught us about wisdom; mystery; uncertainty; connectivity; precision; concision; discipline; 'chipping away' at things; planning; collaboration; valuing deadlines; asking questions; taking risks; valuing laughter and playfulness.*

These examples, expressed from each side of the equation, reflect the shared understanding between writer and teacher which helps to bring about a successful residency. Instances of failed communication are there as stark reminders of how these relationships are only achieved with a flexible attitude on both sides.

Despite having mentioned some writers as being naturally more adept at establishing classroom relationships, it is also worth noting that this ease, perceived in one context, is not necessarily reproduced with any guarantee elsewhere. What works well in one school may be somewhat less effective in another. The necessary chemistry between individuals remains hard to predict.

The subtitle of this report with its reference to the writers-in-schools *ecology*, was chosen to reflect the critical interdependence of writer and teacher which characterizes successful residencies and on which the pupils' own writing then thrives. If successfully established and nurtured, there is then good reason to make repeated, extensive use of the relationship.



## Planning and Follow-up

There were varied levels of planning that took place, with commensurate results. Where writer and teacher struck up an instinctive relationship, it was that much easier, and expansive, but attention to planning would seem to be the most surefire means to establish the connection in the first place. Project management can play its part but it finally comes down to two individuals being prepared to share personal contact details and/or taking some significant time out of their other schedules.

Even when funding is available for planning, it can fall by the wayside. The full day mysteriously shrinks to a half-day, a single lesson, a lunch-time, then gets cancelled at the last moment: "Let's have a word on the phone." Such casual recklessness stems ironically from experience, a writer's sense of confidence in delivering the work. The teachers' comments (e.g. those of Patricia at Magnolia) are explicit in reference to planning being the key to success.

Good planning also sets the scene for sustaining the work and embedding it. Some writers left clear indications of how their work might be extended by the teachers. This varied from further drafting tips to a more curriculum-based approach. At Ash Primary, the work of Eamon and Sharon was integrated into ongoing literacy units of work, introduced before they arrived and continued and extended after they had gone. Some writers are undoubtedly more skilled than others at articulating what pupils have grappled with and gained.

Some writers were able to follow up their work with further residencies. The Project Co-ordinator at Hawthorn cites the extended (year-long) residency as a great success. She even mentioned the idea, for the future, of hosting a writer every two weeks, stressing the need for teachers to be refreshed by such interventions.

Where writers and teachers are both involved in evaluating the work that has taken place, further plans tend to emerge quite naturally. Where such collaborative evaluation is ignored, however, there can be some confusion as to just what 'follow-up' might mean. In answer to the question "Was work sustained beyond the project hours?", one teacher wrote: *Yes – children wrote up their poems in best writing.* This tiny remark received considerable attention at one meeting of the project reference group. One school of thought considered that it showed proper pride in the work; another that it failed to grasp the question - a view to which most writers would surely subscribe.



## Curriculum Links

*The three workshops that we've done, even though they were about different things, like songwriting and filmmaking and stuff, I think you can kind of combine them with some of the things we've learned from each of them like the titles of songs that we got from newspaper headlines - that could easily be combined with what we are doing now.*  
(Pupil, Larch High School)

*I'm taking Geography and I am doing Drama and Theatrical studies but - I know this sounds quite different - but you could sort of combine the Geography into the writing and*

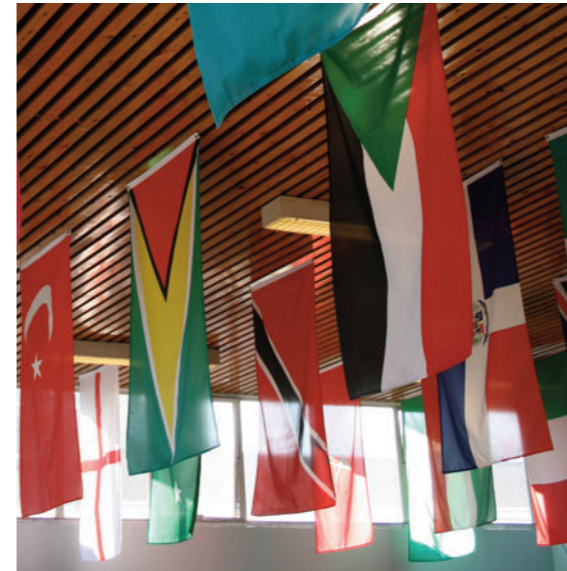
*the drama skills with your imagination...* (Pupil, Larch High School)

These two separate comments attest to how pupils grasped the connections between different areas of work and in particular how their work with writers could feed back into completely different areas of study. So whilst some residencies were explicitly linked to curriculum matters, even when this was not the focus, pupils still made links of their own. This is to be valued not only in relation to its curricular usefulness but also as a fundamental skill.

There could undoubtedly have been more curriculum connections made by the writers at the planning stages, in conjunction with teachers, and general guidance on this might be provided in future, in addition to the 'curriculum update' sessions occasionally available.

Some writers engaged on the project represented a number of genres, some of which (e.g. travel writing) were more neatly related to a particular area of the curriculum. Other writers, including those working with animation, screenwriting and film-making, were offering specific skills that related to the curriculum more broadly. There was however real benefit to this, an engagement with highly technical skills leading usefully to an interest in creative writing's many applications, and leaving scope for almost any subject matter to be addressed.

Sometimes the work developed with complex input. At Cypress Primary, where pupils were already familiar with Shandy Hall from the first writer's residency, a further visit was made in the second year. It was based around curriculum work on World War 2, and the subject of evacuees. The Hall had been the destination of an evacuee who now lives in the neighbouring village and who came to talk to the pupils in the very location of his original experience. Unsurprisingly, they were mesmerized and went on to produce writing that demonstrated the depth of their engagement.



## Variety and Sequence

The project achieved success in providing schools with the variety of writing genres that they requested and which were central to the project's aims. A range of cultures was also represented.

The variety of the input was considered to be one of its strengths. Such breadth may not always be available in any one geographical area and this may lead to certain logistical decisions. Writers for this project sometimes travelled from considerable distances, dictating a particular structure for the residency: a compact three days.

The comment in the Juniper case study about the legacy of residencies suggests that more consideration might usefully be given to the sequence in which they are organized. Residencies that were 'progressive' would enable writers to plan their work into a coherent programme, ensure their work met particular learning objectives and, at the very least, ensure that pupils weren't presented with the same writing exercises repeatedly. That several writers of one genre were included in some schools' programmes was no bad thing: where one poet might use rhyme as a key tool, another might favour free verse, and a more balanced approach to poetry is then achieved. Schools however need to know of these distinctions in advance.

In the project overall, the choice of storyteller as one of the writers 'first in' was a deliberate one, but the organic way in which schools recommended that storyteller to collegiate partners later on effectively over-ruled those initial intentions. It is tempting to think that a better 'master plan' might have been put in place at the start: an ideal/logical sequence of one genre following another. Such a notion however is too formulaic, suggesting a uniformity of approach by writers of a particular genre and disregarding the fluidities of schools' own plans. More relevant is the sequencing of the detailed content of residencies. This can be a matter of simple common sense, for instance to avoid repetition, but it is hard to conceive of purposeful and productive sequencing happening without teachers and writers liaising closely, looking together at the grain of previous interventions, subsequent progress, current curricular preoccupations and the writer's own repertoire. The incoming writer needs to know exactly what has gone before. Otherwise, he or she may simply not question the degree to which favoured workshop approaches will be properly novel and invigorating.

The repeated use of a certain writer for multiple residencies, whether successive or not, appeared to have a largely positive effect. Pupils generally appreciated the growing familiarity. There was however the rare, dissident voice that would have preferred even greater variety.



## Environment

*In the classroom we did sum sums and sum Litsea... Then we went back into class and did some writing.* (Pupil, Cypress Primary)

The contrast within this amusing comment, referring to work before and after a trip to a literary museum, dramatizes the special, successful difference made by taking pupils out of their normal environment to visit more exotic locations. The shift was undoubtedly liberating for the writer as well as the pupils and their teachers. The combination of heritage site with living artist clearly represents a powerful relationship and opportunity, linking creative writing with literary study.

Looking at the exercise books in which the Cypress pupils wrote, it is clear that the visit - combined with the writer's commentary - had a striking effect. The writings contain details drawn directly from the location - candlelight, the well - which have been instrumental in making the imaginative leap into another world. All the excursions, including those to art galleries and open spaces, proved fertile.

Even when such trips were not possible, it was noticeable how pupils responded well to lessons taking place out of their usual classrooms - some of which were poor environments for learning of any sort. At one school, the classroom where the writer had to work was entered through a door with shattered glass and there was nothing on the walls. Improving such spaces is more fundamental than any aim of this project but changing the space in which learning happens is nevertheless something to be addressed, even by small adjustments. The writer's very presence goes one step in that direction. For the residency to go further afield is one logical and particularly effective next move. Sometimes, too, it is the *pace* which changes productively, as a result.

*Tranquillity is a tortoise walking slowly at home in the morning.* (Pupil, Cypress Primary)



## The School as a Whole

At Cypress Primary, where work had been undertaken so effectively off-site, there was also a demonstration of how that work can be brought back into the school and shared with all other classes. Writing was shared in school assemblies and everyone was aware of how it had originated. It helped that the writing was genuinely remarkable: the work around evacuees, already mentioned, culminated in a performance to pupils, parents - and the evacuee who had shared his stories. His experience was presented on stage in the pupils' own voices, in diary extracts, monologues and dramas. It was a

strong example of how - and why - a school can establish a creative writing culture that is prized.

When the Head Teacher at Cypress moved on after the first year to take up a new post, not only did the Cypress project continue to thrive, but the departing Head negotiated the involvement of his new school in the project, a particularly strong endorsement of its worth.

All this is of course easier in primary schools. There is an indication that many benefits of the writer's residency are indeed most easily realized at this level. In large secondary schools, especially where there is a rapid turnover of staff, embedding a major project poses particular difficulties. Secondary teachers were, however, similarly effusive about the possibilities. They were, if anything, clearer on how long-term intervention is also the most wide-reaching in its impact. Secondary schools have many people passing through their staffrooms: on a writer's first visit, he or she may be almost ignored but over time there is recognition and increasing interest. Ongoing conversations allow other members of staff to understand the writer's role, rather than perhaps resent it. The benefits of a slow-burning impact were expressed by the Project Co-ordinator at Larch in the following terms:

*I am of the distinct belief that humans crave sustenance from wisdom but also from mystery. And both, if they are to be sustained, need to be slowly, slowly percolated.*

This comment is clearly not only about writing; such percolation relates to pupils' progress generally. A pupil at Larch commented:

*I think it's really different because I was expecting it to be really geographical because of the geography side of it; travel writing. But really it's actually about your mind and your feelings.*

If writing has this breadth of impact, then its role in educating the imagination and in pupils' overall development is likely to be recognized throughout the school.



“ Alongside the essential teaching of skills lies the teaching of the craft of writing – providing real purposes, meaningful contexts, fun, engagement, enjoyment, satisfaction, pride, opportunities to find your ‘writer’s voice’, apprenticeship to a real master of the art – all these things help to complete the jigsaw of the teaching of writing to primary school children. ”

(Head Teacher comment)

## Conclusions and Recommendations

*We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.*

TS Eliot, from ‘Little Gidding’

It’s tempting to say that this research has confirmed what proponents of writers-in-schools work have claimed all along - that it’s undeniably a *good thing* - but the detail of the findings has established a new level of understanding about what, exactly, works well, and why. The evidence suggests that, where relationships are well established and managed, achievement is raised and pupils’ creativity takes on new dimensions. The data does also point to such benefits being harder achieved in secondary schools.

As this project commenced, some individuals worried that it was setting out to establish pupils’ improvements in writing based merely on their SATs results. This was a reasonable concern, given the criticism levelled at those tests, and exacerbated by the way in which the tests themselves became increasingly discredited and began to fall by the wayside as the project ran its course. It was however of prime importance that the results of writers’ interventions in schools could be seen to withstand such statistical scrutiny.

Back in 1997, Robyn Bolam, in her inaugural lecture at St Mary’s College, quoted David Craig’s response to the question about assessing creative writing. *“But how do you mark it?” they wonder; meaning, How on earth do you mark it? “Out of 100”, I reply.* (Bolam, 1997)

We make no apology for taking the statistics seriously - *alongside* our evaluation of the broader impact on pupils and their schools.

### Re-defining the Re-drafting Process

Particular note was taken of the ‘the journey of the artefacts’, the manner in which pupils improved a piece of writing over time. This is a somewhat contentious area. The imperative to re-draft has become a sort of mantra that often goes unquestioned but which many pupils struggle to understand, seeing it as ‘having to write it all out again’. Some eminent writers, including Anne Fine and Philip Pullman, have condemned it.

*I feel extremely distressed at the moment about watching some children being expected to re-draft on the grounds, the very spurious grounds, that that is what a real writer does... art is the product and not the process. I hope this fashion for re-drafting will die out very fast because it’s putting an awful lot of really bright, cheerful, happy children off English.* (Fine, 1998)

And within the frame of their usual lessons, re-drafting tends to be, by teachers’ own admissions, perfunctory. So to discover re-drafting as a genuinely creative process - even if you end up with

'less product' - can be a revelation. In an earlier Writing Together residency, one pupil - when questioned as to what he had liked best - cited 'getting rid of all the rubbish'.

Having witnessed the good, the bad and the ugly versions of re-drafting, it is time to re-describe it. In America they call it editing, but that seems inadequate. More enticingly, we might refer to a set of activities: Adventuring; Expanding; Editing; Completing. These would seem much closer to the reality of writing that Anne Fine would recognize. There should be time to explore, enlarge, tighten up, and see something through to a satisfying conclusion. It's hard for anyone to understand the purpose of writing or find any joy in it if you don't allow for that full journey.

Adventuring can be either bold or tentative; both are equally valid and important. If the stimulus is vibrant enough, it may well be that significant thinking is sparked and remarkable, strong writing emerges almost fully formed. The delight in both the initial act of creation and subsequent work is well captured by this following single comment:

*You could make your own thing completely up – so some people could do their own thing... We had to make our own song with Ray which we recorded – actually got to share it and listen to each other's and could discuss how we could improve it.* (Pupil, Ash Primary)

### **Entitlement and Offer**

These two words have peppered official documents with almost the same frequency as 'creativity' now appears in the curriculum. If 'entitlement' is to be meaningful, then schools need clear information about how it is made available. Entitlement to an education enriched through the arts - including contact with writers - is important regardless of academic achievement but we now have indication that schools can indeed have their cake and eat it. This needs to be communicated clearly to all schools, over and above existing entitlement statements, addressing the perceived lack of permission which was sometimes expressed by teachers on this project. The 'offer' made by writers' organizations would then mesh well with schools' own aims and could be implemented more widely.

### **Taking Planning to a New Level**

There needs to be clear guidance available both for writers and teachers in order to make the planning of residencies more meaningful. This should not need to dwell too much on practicalities: these are necessary but relatively easily addressed. The conversations between writer and teacher should be free to concentrate more on the content of the residency in relation to pupils' levels of achievement and the learning that is desired. If this stage of the project is suitably diligent, it is likely to result in a good understanding between writer and teacher, a relationship that will maximize the benefit of the project. It is possible that some compromise of approach may be required of both parties. Planning the writer's intervention should also address its legacy, detailing how the work might be sustained. Particular attention should be given to how a residency relates to other interventions. Guidance on this should be formulated by the network now established for those managing writers-in-schools projects across the country.

### **Professional Development for Writers...**

Observing the residencies, it was evident that even experienced writers are occasionally naïve in some respects; 'tried and tested' workshop techniques can become formulaic and decidedly unimpressive. If the frequency of writers' visits to schools is to increase, then it will become even more important that writers do not rely on an over-familiar repertoire. Writers working in schools should be aware of current policy developments in education and give full consideration to the appropriateness of their pedagogies. This should be supported by NAWE and other writer-development agencies.

### **... and for Teachers**

As evidenced in other reports, teachers benefit from development as writers. INSET sessions with writers as part of any residency are clearly invaluable but this is not always as easy to arrange as it should be. Input to Initial Teacher Training would of course be the most comprehensive solution, as anything else is simply playing catch-up, important as CPD may still be. As demonstrated by the project's collegiate meetings, it is highly positive for schools to share their experiences, though it should also be recognized that the same writer may not have the same effect in all situations. There is also the risk of a narrowing focus on the talent pool. Local agencies have a key role here; it is difficult to support teachers - and residencies - at a geographical remove.

### **Educating the Imagination**

Pupils' comments bear testimony to the fact that writers help pupils develop in fundamental ways, not just in their English work or general writing. This adds to the argument for the writer's visit but also suggests that it need not be the preserve of the English department. The benefits of taking pupils outside the classroom altogether are clear, and such possibilities should be explored wherever possible.

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It seems fitting to conclude this document with reference to its origins. When the Writing Together partnership project was first launched, Andrew Motion (NAWE Patron and then Poet Laureate) contributed an article to *The Guardian*, from which the following paragraph is taken. At a time when many aspects of education are set to change yet again, his comments still ring true.

*Even though so much has changed in English teaching during the past 40-odd years, the need to protect space for the imaginative growth of children is as great as ever. Greater than ever, maybe. By making writing a central part of their school experience, we offer pupils the chance to make heartening discoveries of themselves, and to deepen and diversify their connection with the world. If they produce important works of art, we shall all be grateful. If they don't, we'll still be grateful: they'll have learned what it is to be educated in the round.* (Motion, 2003)

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## **The Subject Association for Creative Writing**

NAWE's mission is to further knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of Creative Writing and to support good practice in its teaching and learning at all levels. As Subject Association, NAWE promotes Creative Writing both as a distinct discipline and an essential element in education generally. The membership includes those working in Higher Education, the many freelance writers working in schools and community contexts, and the teachers and other professionals who work with them.

## **The NAWE Annual Conference**

This is the essential UK event for all those involved in the teaching of writing, enabling members to share their experience of teaching writing at all levels and to address current issues.

## **Writing in Education**

The NAWE journal features articles on the writer's craft, critical issues and workshop techniques, plus a wealth of news items and reviews; published in 3 editions each year.

## **Online Resources**

The NAWE website has details of all the latest opportunities and events for writers throughout the UK. The archive includes over 500 articles covering the very wide range of members' activity, an invaluable resource for anyone teaching writing, planning a project or undertaking research.

## **Professional Directory**

This listing of professionals suitably experienced at working in educational settings is the prime source for schools and others wishing to engage writers to run workshops or residencies.

## **Professional Development Programme**

NAWE is committed to ensuring that all writers working in education are prepared to the highest professional standard. A range of training days are offered both for writers and teachers, plus one-to-one sessions to help members plan their writing careers. Through the Writer's Compass (formerly literaturetraining), NAWE also provides free information and advice on professional development for writers and other literature professionals.

## **Membership**

All members receive free copies of all NAWE publications, benefit from reduced rates to NAWE events and have access to the extensive online Archive. For Professional Members, NAWE processes Enhanced Disclosure applications to the CRB and can assist in dealing with any other government clearance schemes. NAWE also offers free public liability insurance cover to members who work as professional writers in any public or educational arena.

For further information, please visit the NAWE website or email [info@nawe.co.uk](mailto:info@nawe.co.uk).



This NAWE project charted the progress of pupils in nine schools, who worked with writers every term for three years.

We are publishing here the results, together with recommendations for future partnerships between writers and teachers.

“It's exciting to see evidence that working with writers really does have a positive influence on pupils' levels of attainment. And we also have many new pointers to improve how writers' visits are managed - something that our network will now be putting into practice.” Paul Munden

“This project suggests that a programme of visits by writers working with children can, with positive school co-operation, raise standards of writing and so is a worthwhile investment, especially given the concomitant increase in pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm.” Sue Horner



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