

## Effective Feedback in Writing – Case Study Burgh Primary South Lanarkshire

As one of the school priorities within the Scottish Attainment Challenge, Burgh Primary identified active literacy as a key area for raising attainment. Building on active approaches to spelling and reading, which had been implemented in Year 1 of the Challenge, it was decided to extend this approach to include writing. All staff participated in two professional development workshops which focussed on book making projects as a stimulus for providing a real life context for creativity through becoming “authors”.

### **Rationale**

The school plan was influenced by research evidence which indicates that there are key variables which can influence children's writing competence. These include: mother's education, family size and opportunities for home writing activities. (DFE, “What is the Research Evidence in Writing,” 2012). Indeed, a recent report from the Rowntree Foundation (Ellis & Sosu, 2014, Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education) indicates that SSLN data shows a 21% attainment gap in writing based on SES of pupils.

The school anticipated that they could engage learners more effectively in the writing process by encouraging a focus on creativity and ideas, supported by developing pupils' understanding of technical aspects of writing. It was expected that this would positively influence attainment in writing. The school aimed to develop awareness of best practice in writing which would equip staff with the confidence and knowledge to teach writing effectively. Additionally, it was hoped to establish opportunities for parents to become more involved in writing, thus positively influencing pupils' attainment in writing. The case study has been split into 3 key areas of focus.

1. Professional Learning & Moderation
2. Writing Projects/sharing learning with parents
3. Feedback in writing

## Section 1 - Professional Learning & Moderation

The school identified a need to increase staff knowledge and confidence in teaching writing. This was achieved through training, engagement in continuous professional learning, moderation activity and professional dialogue. This is now important in improve writing across all stages of the school and raising attainment.

### Professional Learning

Staff undertook training on active literacy approaches to writing between October and November 2016. Staff also participated in professional learning around the creative writing process.

### Impact

- All school staff trained and shared understanding of the approach has been developed.
- Staff knowledge of the approach has been increased.
- Staff are beginning to adapt their practice in line with the approach.

### Evidence

#### Staff Questionnaire Results

- |  |                                   |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Participating in active literacy writing training has improved my knowledge and skills                      | 100% staff surveyed felt it had   |
| 2. Participating in active literacy writing training has improved my confidence                                | 100% staff surveyed felt it had   |
| 3. Since participating in active literacy training have begun to implement new approaches within the classroom | 100% staff surveyed felt they had |

#### Staff Comments

*“Writing training provided guidance on how to teach writing effectively and approaches to recognise achievements. I particularly liked the idea of using green and pink highlighters to identify what was good about their work and what they need to think about.”*

*“Children are using their daily writing jotter everyday which is a huge part of the writing approach. Also using the taught writing jotter weekly. This is improving pencil control and allowing the children to attempt spelling common and CVC words as well as short sentences with increased independence on a daily basis.”*

*“Children are improving at using the core targets and genre criteria to self and peer assess. They are then using them to inform their next steps for themselves and a peer.”*

*“Children really enjoying the spelling strategies and writing workshop approach, just started using non-fiction theme: Volcanoes”*



*“Great ideas and good to have the benefit of her experience and what works well.”*

Class Display – Shows Implementation of approach

### **Implementation Development (Next Steps)**

Celebrating achievement and creating a writing culture.

Following on from training, staff met in November to look at ways of developing this in the months ahead. It was agreed to develop resources such as Word banks, common words posters, writing genre fans, posters for core writing targets to support writing.

To celebrate writing the school bought lanyards and cards to create star writer awards – which allow all members of staff to ask children about writing. This has been very successful. The school also plans to purchase boards to publicly display work and develop themed writing chests which can be used across the school to stimulate writing.

## **Moderation**

As writing is a focus in the school's Scottish Attainment Challenge Plan / School Improvement Plan, moderation focus was writing. In support of this a writing assessment calendar was introduced. This has provided an opportunity for staff to meet at regular intervals to explore the writing produced within each stage.

## **Impact**

- Teacher confidence in professional judgements in writing increased.
- Pupil understanding of expectations increased as a result of consistent use of criteria.
- Shared expectation of progress across a level improved through moderation process.

## **Evidence**

### Staff Questionnaire Results

1. Participating in writing moderation - 100% of staff surveyed agreed activities with colleagues have been beneficial.

### Direct Staff Quote

*“Great dialogue between peer teachers as we reviewed each writing level. Reassuring to know that children’s writing has been assessed to the right level.”*

*“It has been very beneficial having the opportunity to engage in moderation activities with colleagues as this has allowed us to develop a shared understanding and expectation of writing criteria used. I am looking forward to further moderation activities to continue to develop my confidence in teaching/assessing writing.”*

*“gave staff reassurance and confidence about their judgements and offered the opportunity to get another teacher’s opinion on the writing.”*

## Section 2 - Writing Projects/Involving Parents

As mentioned earlier, staff participated in professional learning around creating good writing contexts. This took place in August and November in-service days. The training focussed on using book making projects in order to create real opportunities for children to act as authors. Evidence from this approach suggests that pupils become more motivated through the opportunity to write for a real purpose and audience. The school's plan hoped to achieve the following

### **Outcome**

Pupil confidence in their writing ability will increase, impacting on the quality of their work and in turn raising attainment

### **How will this be measured**

- Pre/post intervention focus groups and questionnaires will allow for specific questioning centring upon pupil attitudes to writing. Responses will be analysed for gender, ethnicity and class stage.

### **What would this look like?**

In each of the analysis groups, there will be a shift in attitudes towards writing. Pupils will see themselves as "apprentice writers" and will be willing to take risks. As a consequence, attainment will improve.

### *Excerpt from school plan*

As a trial, it was decided to use elements of book making in a small-scale project. The school used the theme of "Elf" since the work took place in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

When the classes completed their writing projects, each class had the opportunity to look at the others' work. Through this, pupils were able to give their peers verbal feedback. Parents were invited to attend a sharing learning session (see photos below) and encouraged to leave feedback. Some comments are listed in the evidence section of the report.

### **Impact**

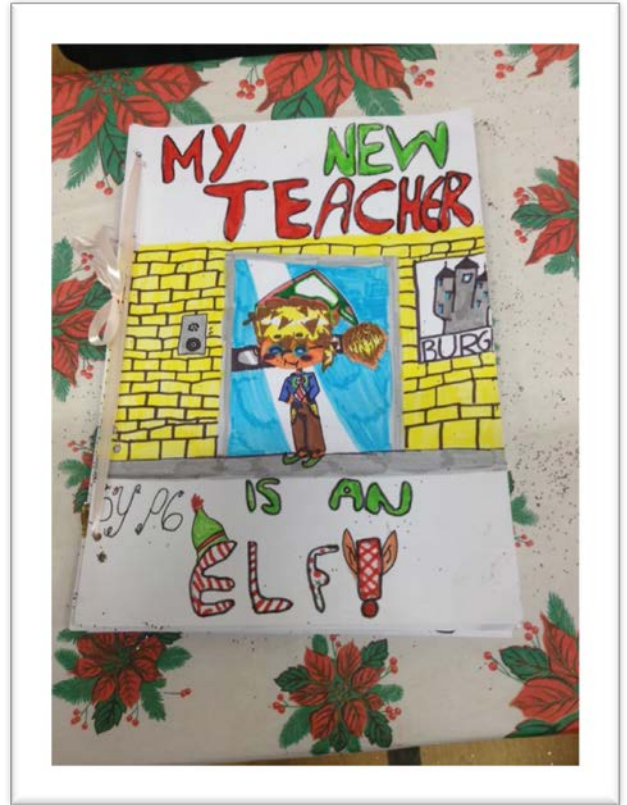
- Pupils motivated to write.
- Parents shared in the learning.

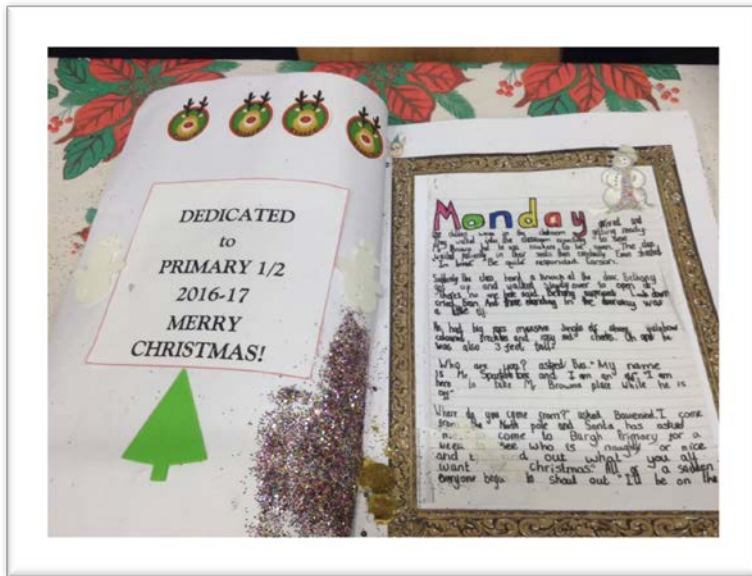
## Evidence

Photos from pupil/parent sharing session



P1 Elf Books





P6 Elf Books

Parent Comments

- “Good effort by all the children, Lots of ideas for home.”*
- “Fantastic idea. Love the P1 books and a cuppa is always welcomed.”*
- “Fantastic idea. Books were brilliant. Well done.”*

Pupil Comments

- “It made me think more about creative writing.”*
- “Made me use my imagination more and made me write more.”*
- “It was fun so it made me get into writing more.”*

Implementation Development (Next Steps)

Having trialled on a small scale, staff will undertake a focus block of writing using the approach in April 2017.

## Section 3 - Feedback in Writing

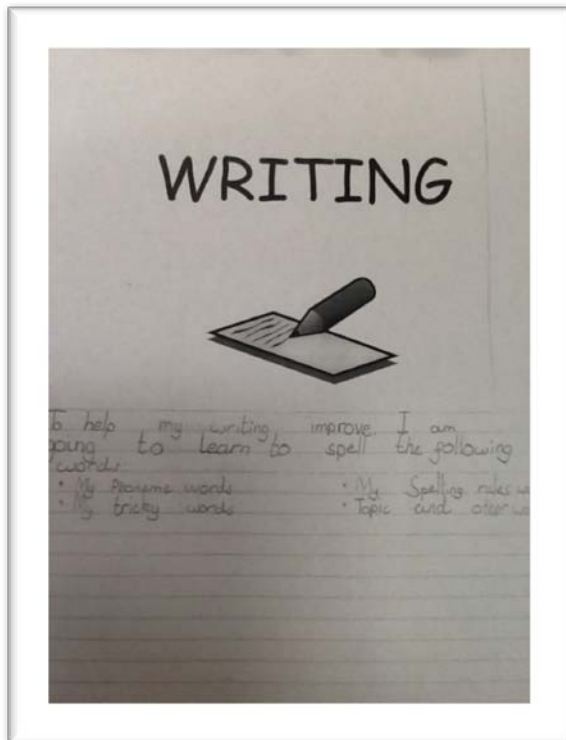
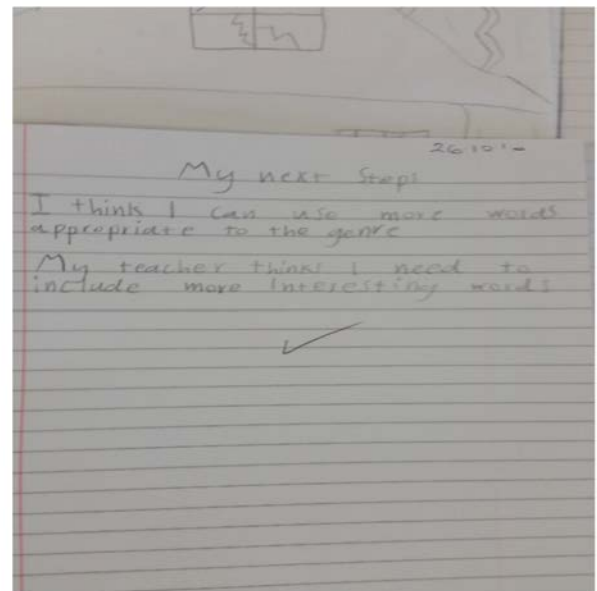
The staff were interested in evidence from the Education Endowment Foundation which suggests that feedback has very high effects on learning. Some classes began trialling this approach and have noticed an impact. Staff involved made time to have focussed dialogue with pupils and used a range of self, peer and teacher assessment.

### **Impact**

Pupils demonstrating that they can improve their next piece of writing following feedback from teacher and/or peers.

### **Evidence**

Pupil Next Steps Jotter P5



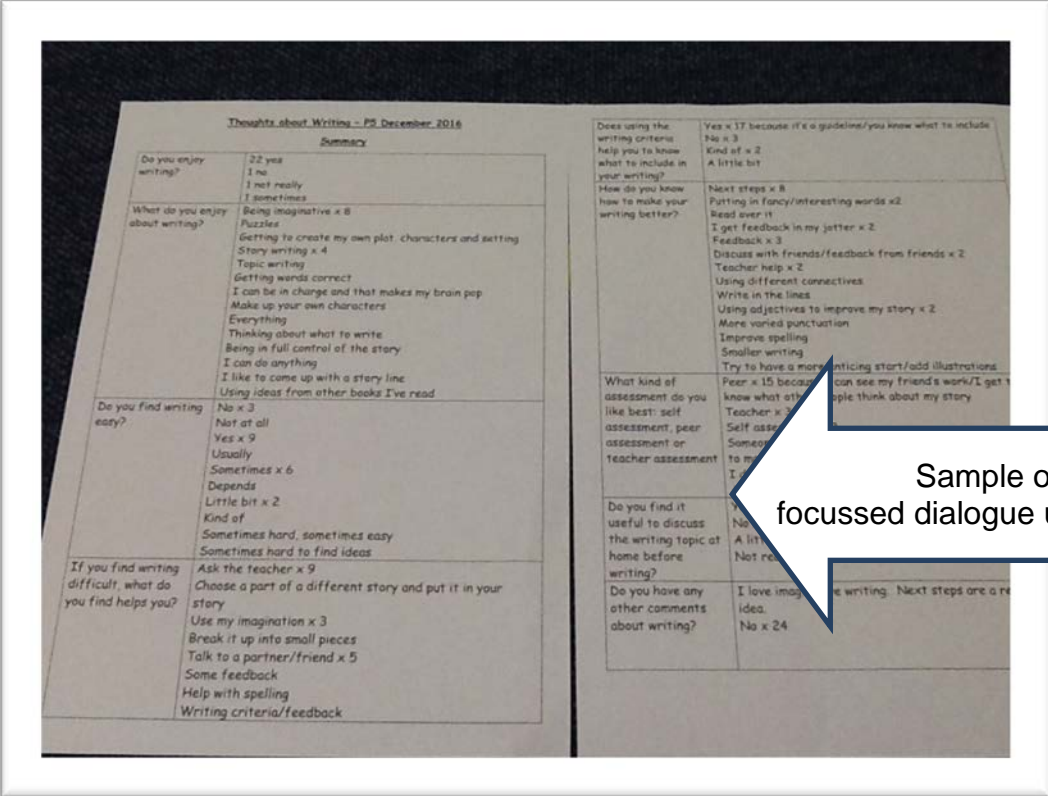
Pupil Next Steps Jotter P6



## Pupil Feedback

Thoughts about Writing	
Do you enjoy writing?	Yes. I write things for my sister at home when playing school
What do you enjoy about writing?	I liked writing biographies and our Volcano Bot Project, Halloween + Elf stories
Do you find writing easy?	Sort of!
If you find writing difficult, what do you find helps you?	Having the criteria helps. Talking about work first and after the completed it
Does using the writing criteria help you to know what to include in your writing?	Yes. When I am stuck, it helps me
How do you know how to make your writing better?	My teachers tell me what criteria to work on, to improve. eg Different connectives vary sentence openings
What kind of assessment do you like best: self assessment, peer assessment or teacher assessment?	Teacher first, then my own assessment
Do you find it useful to discuss the writing topic at home before writing?	I don't really know
Do you have any other comments about writing?	I feel I am doing more writing this year and it is improving

P5 Whole Class  
Questionnaire Results



## Pupil Work Sample

Account about the Titanic

Teacher assess and self-assess.

Feedback - next steps generated by teacher and child.

Following piece of writing demonstrates a wider range of connectives, more interesting words and is longer

Follow up piece of writing was peer assessed in trios and by teacher with 2 stars and a wish.

On the Titanic there were 885 crew members and quite a lot of guest facilities, including a telephone system and electric lights in all bedrooms. For guest facilities there were two libraries and a heated swimming pool.

Sadly the three years of building the Titan went to waste. Five days after the huge ship set sail it hit an iceberg. People and crew members were panicking because the lifeboat drill was cancelled that day, but the band played to keep everyone's hopes up.

Luckily the Carpathia ship came to the rescue! 706 lucky people survived, 402 from first class and 214 crew members. The Titanic hit the ocean floor, roughly 400 miles from Newfoundland Canada.

There were roughly 1,500 deaths, that's a lot of devastated families. In 1985 the Titanic's wreck was discovered, probably lots of dead bodies too. Disgusting. And that's the end of the story.

Writing Piece 1



Feedback on piece 1

A fantastic account Leia - well done!

- \* You have used some interesting vocabulary eg devastated, discovered, disgusting
- \* You have used a wide range of punctuation eg, exclamation marks, apostrophes and commas

Next time - try to use a wider range of connectives

Your level is 53 which is 200-250 words

Wednesday 26th October 2016

My next step is to make my writing longer.

I think I need to use more interesting words.

Next time - try to use a wider range of connectives.



## Nightmare or Reality!

Me and my friends [redacted] were sitting on the intensely green grass in a murky, bitter and lonesome forest. There's that rustling again... I blurted out, Brooke was the serious one, she had very lengthy hair and stunning blue eyes. Amy was the energetic one, with brown hair and greyish-blue eyes. Levi was the funny one, with heavy hair and turquoise eyes.

"I'm boooooored." Amy groaned, then she sprinted away. "Owwwwww" she screamed. I yelled "Amy?! Are you okay?!" Amy jogged staggering towards me, Brooke and Levi. Levi giggled. "What's so funny?" [redacted] asked. "Amy has a bump on her head." Levi snickered. "THAT'S NOT FUNNY!" me and Brooke shouted.

I yawned loudly. "Brooke, you have to help Amy, I'm tired." I noted. I went into the tent and lay down. After a lot of shuddering and turning I finally fell asleep...

I woke up in the centre of the dull forest, my friends' corpses encircling me. "G-G-GUYS?" I screeched. A jet black cat raced towards me, I attempted to pet it however, it transformed into a wrinkly, short ugly old lady with light grey hair and a stick from a tree to help her walk.

Piece 2





stuttered. My friends were too panicky to listen.  
"Look at yourself!" Amy bawled. "Maybe you  
should look at your head Amy. Levi giggled.  
"HEY!" Amy yelled. She gave me a mirror.  
My face was covered in sweat and tears, my  
eyes were also red.

"It must have been that rustling that gave  
me that nightmare," I blurted out. "So you  
had a nightmare? What happened in it?"  
Levi enquired. I told my friends what  
happened in my blood-curdling dream.

✦ Use more linked writing

✦ All common words correctly  
✦ describe character well

✦ Great use of different sentence lengths  
✦ You used some fantastic vocabulary,  
particularly adverbs

✦ Try to have a more dynamic story  
opener which would hook the reader

A wonderful story Leia - well done!

Piece 2 – with peer and  
teacher feedback



## **Conclusion**

- The majority of pupils involved in writing projects thus far are demonstrating early signs of increased motivation and improvements in their writing.
- All staff have begun implementing elements of the active literacy approach within their classes. This is impacting on pupils. Increased moderation and focus on writing is impacting on teacher confidence in assessing children's writing, this will improve the quality and expectations of pupil work.
- The adoption of an active literacy approach to writing is ensuring that progressive writing criteria/targets are being consistently used with pupils. This universal approach is beginning to benefit learners in terms of the feedback they receive.
- Staff have received high quality training for writing which has developed their professional skills and knowledge