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Power of Pictures

FINAL PROJECT EVALUATION

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

Evaluation of the Arts Council England
supported project 2014-17

January 2017

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The Power of Pictures

Centre for Literacy in Primary Education

Evaluation of the Arts Council England supported project 2014-17

Second Report - November 2016

This evaluation focuses on the second year of the project, 2015-16. It considers how far the 3 courses this year have been successful in achieving their aims. An evaluation of the first year was produced in the autumn of 2015 and informed the planning and execution of the second year.

The evaluators of the project and authors of this report are Dr Sue Horner and Janet White.

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1 Introduction

The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) is an independent UK charity which exists to improve literacy in primary schools. The work of the charity aims to raise the achievement of children by helping schools to teach literacy creatively and effectively. The charity works with primary schools and provides training, support and resources to improve the teaching of literacy and knowledge about children's literature. The work particularly emphasises the importance of books and literature in enabling children to become confident, happy and enthusiastic readers and writers, with all the benefits this brings.

CLPE is conducting a three year project investigating and developing the teaching of picture books in primary schools. This project is funded by Arts Council England under their Grants for the Arts programme.

Power of Pictures incorporates nine two-day courses over a three year period. Each course is led by a different writer/illustrator, assisted by a member of CLPE teaching staff. In each course the author/illustrator demonstrates specific artistic and writing skills and techniques, and models creative responses to one of their own titles. Teachers try these out in the workshops, then in school, and finally return to report on their experiences to the writer or illustrator. They are supported to use the materials in school with detailed teaching materials helping them to use the books from Nursery through to Year 6.

To enhance and open out this experience CLPE have also developed short films of the participating writers and illustrators, in which their creative practices are brought to life. These site-specific films have been devised in close collaboration with the writers and illustrators, and filmed in their workspace or studio. The films form the centrepiece on the newly created Power of Pictures website, alongside a range of specially developed materials and resources which show teachers how to use books from all the featured artists throughout the primary age range.

The evaluators were Dr Sue Horner and Ms Janet White. Both are very experienced in the fields of literacy and literature in schools, in the provision of effective professional development and in research and evaluation. The evaluators attended all the courses, scrutinised the evidence from the teacher evaluations and work from the schools and interviewed the authors.

2 Aims of the project

Overall aims of the project

- Teachers' understanding of the craft of picture books
- Teachers' own creative skills
- Impact on teacher's approach to picture books
- Impact on pupils' attitudes and their writing
- Impact on authors and their development

In undertaking the project CLPE were aiming to:

- empower teachers with the confidence and skills to teach purposeful writing in a creative way, developing their own skills as writers and artists
-

- spotlight the work of contemporary picture book producers and give teachers greater confidence in choosing and using picture books in schools
- help teachers to see the importance of using real models of writing as a support for children's writing

- support teachers to work with authors and illustrators as creative partners developing lasting and fundamental relationships between teachers and writers
- stimulate an active and independent writing culture in schools 'coming at' writing through pictures
- investigate the importance of visualisation and drawing alongside writing to support children to develop and extend their creative ideas

Additional intended outcomes at the end of the three years

- Developing an active and independent culture of writing in schools
- A lasting relationship between teachers and writers
- Raising the profile of emerging writers and illustrators
- An ambition to engage parents and carers to foster children's enjoyment of reading and writing

3 Key findings

These Power of Pictures courses are a very impressive success. The design of the courses, with two action-packed days and practical work in the classroom in between, has resulted in intensive learning which teachers say has lasting effects. The authors involved have also benefitted, learning about schools and teachers' ways of working and also thinking again about how their books engage their readers.

In a development from the previous year, the teachers reported that they not only learned new practical approaches to teaching writing and reading but also now had more understanding of some underpinning principles which have the potential to make significant improvements in their teaching and their pupils' achievements.

The teaching approaches and techniques teachers mentioned included

- Using drawing to create character and convey emotions
- Sequencing pictures to create structure
- Bookmaking and other practical activities
- Different drafting and planning options

The more underlying understanding they showed included

- The importance of drawing and talk to develop writing
- The importance of giving children choice and time to write
- Better understanding the processes of writing, particularly from hearing the authors
- How the exploration of picture books can develop critical thinking, inference and multiple interpretations

Authors learned

- about the value of their books in the classroom especially when explored in greater detail than they had previously imagined
- that they can play different roles when they visit schools
- to think afresh about their readers and plan new books for them

4 Evidence for the evaluation

The evaluation is based on a range of evidence:

- The evaluators observed each course
- Teachers filled in evaluations on both Day 1 and Day 2, and many of them responded to a request for further feedback several months later
- Teachers reported on their activities in class between the 2 days, including information on the children's attitudes to writing and their responses to the activities
- Teachers provided examples of the children's writing from before and during the project
- The evaluators interviewed the writers and received further feedback 2 months later
- The evaluators reviewed the texts and the teaching sequences provided

5 Scope of participants

This evaluation is focussed on the second year of the project.

Across the 3 courses in 2015-16:

- A total of 62 participants attended the 3 courses
- A total of 34 schools were represented, with excellent retention for the 2 days (only 1 school dropped out)
- A total of 43 teachers completed courses, including the 2 days attendance and the work in school
- The greatest number of teachers were from Early Years (15) and Years 1 and 2 (12). Years 3 and 4 (7) and Years 5 and 6 (3) were also represented. Some teachers worked across several year groups (7).
- A number of teachers had specific responsibilities, including art, literacy, mathematics, special needs and one headteacher
- Others who attended were from local authorities and a university

Over the three years of the entire project 191 participants from 134 settings attended 9 courses for 2 (or 18 in total) days. 9 Author/Illustrators represented by 6 publishers took part in the project. 14 videos of the authors working and 21 teaching sequences are available on the website and by July 2017 this will rise to 40 videos and 27 teaching sequences.

6 The courses

The courses followed a similar pattern, with different authors/illustrators for each course:

Day 1	
Activity:	Key Focus:
Project overview	Introduction by CLPE, including references to the new national curriculum, the potential of picture books for all ages to inspire children's writing and develop more positive attitudes to writing
Drawing warm up	Working with the author, modelling drawing a character and noting how the drawings convey meaning and support vocabulary development
Interrogating images	Reading illustrations in a range of picture books and noting the techniques used by illustrators to add layers of meaning beyond the words; discussion of application in the classroom
Authors' composition processes	A session led by the writer/illustrators focusing on one of their books, introducing their ways of working and the role of illustrations in their work.
Working with the focus text	Demonstrating key techniques in encouraging responses to illustration, setting up creative writing and responding as a reader.
	Responding to children's writing and implications for feeding back and marking children's work.
Gap Task	Preparations for teaching task to be completed in school
Day 2: Interim work in schools Teachers put into practice the ideas from Day 1, using a picture book to stimulate children's creative writing, aiming to track children's attitudes to and attainment in writing, and noting any changes in these after the project.	
Activity:	Key Focus:
Feedback	Report back from teachers, explaining what they did, showing examples of children's work and evaluating the value of the new teaching techniques
Character creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing how an illustrator gains and builds ideas • Trying this out practically • Demonstrating the time and space needed to create an effective and authentic characters through drawing and writing • Reflecting upon this and considerations for working back in the classroom
Sketching ideas for writing	Teachers begin to compose their own narratives, using their drawings and adding words. They act as response partners for each other before and during composition. They consider the implications of these processes for the classroom
Storyboarding	Using practical activities, consideration of developing ideas together before writing, drafting and redrafting, how words and pictures meet and working towards publication
Bookmaking	Practical session in bookmaking and how formats support drawing and writing; the significance of publication

Author Visit	Discussion of the importance of partnerships with authors and how best to work with writers in schools. Final summary.
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Resources

Available to each participant:

- A copy of a book by the writer/illustrator
- Teaching sequences written by CLPE, related to the text and customised for nursery/reception, key stage 1 and key stage 2
- Handouts giving an overview of some key approaches to developing children’s extended, independent writing, including copies of OHTs used on course

7 Teachers’ responses on the courses

Overwhelmingly the courses were rated very highly as interesting and valuable and the teachers would recommend the course to others. Their evaluations and oral reports revealed how much they had taken from the course, in terms of understanding of picture books and how to use them to teach both writing and reading.

The written teacher evaluations from both days of each of the courses were analysed and revealed how much they had learned. The evaluations mentioned the many techniques and activities from the course that they thought were useful and could be used in their classrooms.

The evaluations also included a different level of comment from the previous year, which suggested a deeper understanding of the significance of these classroom approaches. These understandings seemed to be closer to principles which underpin the teaching of writing and reading and have the potential to change teachers’ pedagogy in a more fundamental way than just implementing some helpful techniques. This is an interesting development as the courses did not seek to be more ‘theoretical’ but the improvements made after year 1 meant that participants were more able to see the underlying implications of what they learned.

The pattern of comments varied in the 3 courses. This is partly due to the difference in participants, the age groups they taught, the variations in input and the authors’ emphases. It is, however, clear that the teachers on Course 4 identified fewer activities and understandings than those attending Courses 5 and 6. It seems that Course 6 was the richest in the range of understandings selected by teachers. They were able to choose, from a full range, the ideas they found the most appealing or applicable. Over the year the course continued to develop, and the range and depth of the responses to Course 6 suggest these changes were effective.

Activities and techniques identified and understandings noted in the evaluation forms:

The numbers in brackets indicate the number of teachers who identified the item.

Course 4 <i>Activities and techniques</i>	Course 5 <i>Activities and techniques</i>	Course 6 <i>Activities and techniques</i>
Bookmaking (9) Drawing to create character (7) Using pictures to sequence a story (8) Drawing/talking before writing (3) Reading pictures (2) Drama (2) Linking art to literacy (2) Stories about character not plot (1)	Reading pictures (7) Sequencing pictures /prediction of story (7) Bookmaking and other practical activities (9) Free writing/choice (6) Using rough book/drafting (4) Writing points of view/drama (4) Response partners in planning (3) Pre-writing activities/drawing (3) Different planning options for writing (3) Activities good for vocabulary development (3) Talking about pictures (3) Read picture books more slowly (3) Reading pictures before text (2) Modelling how to draw (1) Not mark children's first ideas (1)	Drawing to portray emotions (13) Modelling drawing (9) Different planning options for writing (7) Drafting/using rough books (7) Response partners in planning (5) Talking about pictures (5) Bookmaking and other practical activities (4) Sequencing pictures / prediction (4) Reading pictures before text (4) Reading pictures (3) Vocabulary development (3) Free writing (1) Pre-writing activities (1) Not mark children's first ideas (1)
Total:8	Total:15	Total:14
<i>Understandings</i>	<i>Understandings</i>	<i>Understandings</i>

<p>Understanding the challenge of writing and giving freedom to write (5) Importance of talk and drawing to writing (5) The writing process involves more time (3) Suitable for EAL children (4) More teacher confidence (3) Drawing is thinking (2) Publication of writing (1)</p> <p>Total: 7</p>	<p>Understanding the process of writing (7) Picture books are for all ages (7) Writing can be enjoyable and creative (6) Talk with peers about content before writing (4) Importance of picture books and opportunities for inference (3) Developing critical thinking and multiple interpretations (3) Increased teacher confidence (3) Children taking risks (2) Teacher modelling (2) Publication of writing (2)</p> <p>Total: 10</p>	<p>The importance of exploring picture books (12) Understanding the process of writing (11) Visual approaches to writing (11) Giving children choice (10) Take time to read to read picture books, not all in one go (9) Critical thinking/multiple interpretations through picture books (6) Value drawing as communication (6) Picture books feed into writing and talk (5) Importance of teacher modelling (4) Picture books for all ages (4) Talk with peers about content not technique before writing (3) Writing is enjoyable and creative (1) Teacher confidence (1) Children taking risks (1) Explore relationship of image to text in picture books (1) Publication of writing (1) Cross curriculum implications (1)</p> <p>Total: 17</p>
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8 CLPE Teaching sequences

An integral part of the course was the Teaching Sequences devised by CLPE and given to teachers to take away on Day 1. For each course, there were 3 sequences designed for use with EYFS, KS1 and KS2 respectively; all were customised according to the book and author in focus. Each sequence was typically planned to last for between 3 and 5 weeks, with material for a minimum of 16 sessions, set out in numbered sections.

Teachers responded very positively to the materials, as shown by the later feedback. A large proportion of teachers had used them with their classes and some had also shared them with colleagues or planned to do so as the basis of a staff INSET.

8.1 The teaching sequences echo experiences on the course as described in Section 7, above, in ways that amplify them. They contain detailed practical suggestions about how to develop the work in the classroom leading to a range of possible written outcomes, of which a ‘published’ illustrated storybook is the culmination.

The sequences are organised along similar lines, comprising:

- a brief synopsis of the story
- a statement of the aims of the sequences in general
- a list of selected teaching approaches, and outcomes for writing
- a reference list of the particular author’s works, as well as books by others that address similar themes, including full length novels for upper key stages
- internet links relevant to the author and the subject matter of the book
- the actual teaching plans for using the book with children
- a conclusion, giving ideas for related work across the curriculum, at best going beyond topic-based references, emphasising instead extensions into the expressive arts and design.

The breadth of reference helps to ensure that a teaching sequence does not become a ‘one-off’ activity, but implicitly encourages teachers to explore different styles of writing and illustration, all the while expanding their repertoire. Proposed work in the classroom follows a recognisable pattern from one sequence to another, beginning with an art-related activity, then moving to work around the pictures, using drawing, drama and discussion to create characters and scenes.

8.2 A significant strength of the sequences lies in their use of video clips showing the authors talking about the process of composition and reading their books aloud. These engaging and accessible links are a way of having an author virtually in the classroom, and are helpful in demonstrating many of the authors’ techniques and sources of inspiration. The author-clips are well integrated into the sequences along with other web-based resources, purposefully conceived to widen perspectives on writing. Such features provide support and a positive motivation for teachers who have not been on the course to take them up and use them.

8.3 As on the courses, different ways of responding to writing are suggested before and after the children’s own books are finished. An important emphasis in these sessions is on *‘building ... a community of writers who see writing as an ongoing process ... and developing a reflective metalanguage with children to talk about themselves as writers.’* This way of seeing writing in the classroom has major implications for how teachers mark children’s work and these have yet to be explored in the teaching sequences

8.4 The generic text blocks, which introduce sections within the teaching sequences, effectively reinforce teachers’ understandings of the ideas underpinning the course, as seen in these reminders about the rationale for working with images:

Response to illustration

Children's interest in images and their ability to read them can be developed through carefully planned interventions with an emphasis on talk. Time spent focusing on illustration can contribute to children's ability to read for meaning, express their ideas and respond to the texts they encounter.

Visualisation

Asking children to picture or visualise their ideas is a powerful way of encouraging them to move into a fictional world. Children can be asked to picture the scene in their mind's eye or walk round it in their imaginations. Finally, they can bring it to life recreating it in drawing or painting.

Other sections, explaining specific teaching techniques, have introductions in the same format, for example:

Role on the wall is a technique that uses a displayed outline of the character to record feelings (inside the outline) and outward appearances (outside the outline) at various stopping points across the story. Using a different colour at each of the stopping points allows you to track changes in the character's emotional journey.

In these ways, the sequences facilitate the development of a shared language and a whole school approach to developing writing that can be mediated by the course participants. The use of such headings also highlights the relevance of key features of the approach across different books, and for different ages of children, prompting teachers to adapt it more widely, as some teachers reported they had done.

8.6 There is clearly a challenge for the teaching sequences to show adaptation to age and ability. Some teachers questioned whether the same picture book could be used equally effectively with children from EYFS up to Year 6. Progression is shown in the following ways:

- in the early years, there is greater emphasis on hands-on activities, such as constructing and investigating the physical environment of the stories
- older children write in role as a direct way into empathising with a character's dilemma, or engage in debates about the choices on offer
- from the start, the sequences emphasise the value of providing varied and attractive art materials to encourage experimentation with techniques of illustration according to the purpose. Building on these experiences, children learn how to analyse the impact of a colour palette on the emotional content of a narrative, and use this knowledge to develop their own stories
- ideas about ways of structuring stories increase in complexity, developing the idea of a double page spread into full story board of 16 spreads (based on the practice of the authors studied). This technique is one that can be used flexibly to break the task into manageable segments as well as to discipline more verbose writers
- at all stages, writing – including simple mark making - is intrinsically linked to drawing, establishing a supportive relation between words and pictures. Again, as an indicator of progressive learning, children in key stage 2 are challenged to articulate the relation between the two, for example working out how pictures might:
 - complement the text
 - elaborate and expand the narrative
 - contradict what a character is saying, or
 - show feelings that words only imply.
- in KS2, the work towards bookmaking includes more detailed attention to character, setting and plot.

9 Teachers' longer term responses

In addition to the evaluation that they completed on the course days, about half of the teachers responded to a call for a further report up to 2 months after the courses. Their comments showed that they had retained the ideas from the courses and had continued to find them successful and important for their pupils.

Half of these teachers said they had used the teaching sequences provided by CLPE. They found their ability to apply their learning from the course was reinforced by using the teaching sequences and working alongside colleagues back in school.

Teachers reported that:

9.1 they used the techniques successfully on the core text and adapted them to other texts. Drawing,

'Learnt how to use drawing as a way in to discussing character'

'Techniques transfer across all picture books and cross-curricular topics'

'Picture books can be used throughout the school, all ages. Importance of picture books for inference, looking closer at pictures for understanding'

'Definite impact, KS2 now have balance of picture books and longer texts. Teachers able to see challenge and excitement of working with picture books with all ages of children'

book making, drama and role play were amongst the techniques most frequently valued.

9.2 pre-writing discussion particularly supports EAL children and boys who are reluctant writers. Teachers reported the impact of the techniques on promoting high quality discussion, together with improvements in writing and reading.

'Picture books elicit deeper and more thought provoking responses from children, able to draw

the 'extra' story depicted, creates more talk, promotes ideas for writing'

'Picture books are particularly helpful for those children who are struggling to analyse texts in written format and can lead to improvement in inference and deduction'

'Art/drawing can be an alternative, supportive means of expression for less confident writers, can extend ideas of more able writers'

'Less able have shone through, EAL/SEN child transformed, all children in class discuss

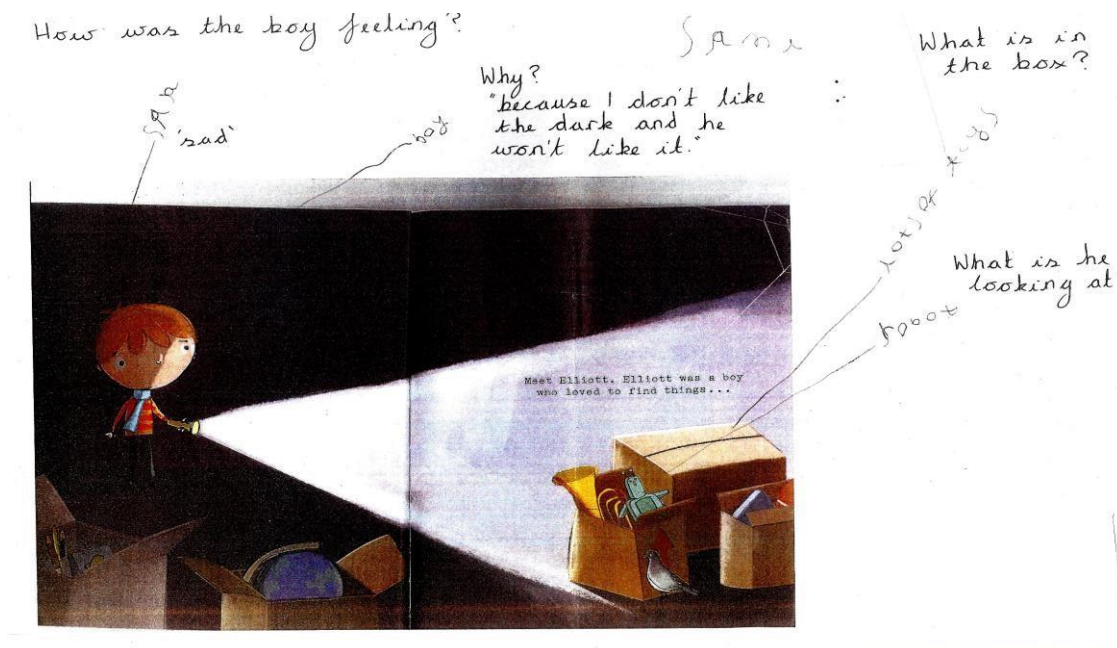
illustrations with confidence, refer to range of authors, discuss connections, becoming aware of

illustrators' techniques to create effects'

'Have noticed lower ability child's ability to spot something that no one else sees, challenges their own ideas of themselves. Motivated to write in role (based on what attracts them in picture)'

9.3 they spent time in the classroom discussing illustrations and the meanings to be found in them. This revealed that children show important skills of inference and can validly interpret illustrations differently.

In discussion about a picture from Tom McLaughlin's *The Story Machine* the children were asked to observe and infer what is happening and the boy's feelings. Their hypotheses reveal how the children put themselves into the situation and so have very different understanding of the picture. These different interpretations can be tested out as the story is read.



'(The boy is feeling) sad'

'because I don't like the dark and he won't like it'

'(in the box there are) lots of toys'

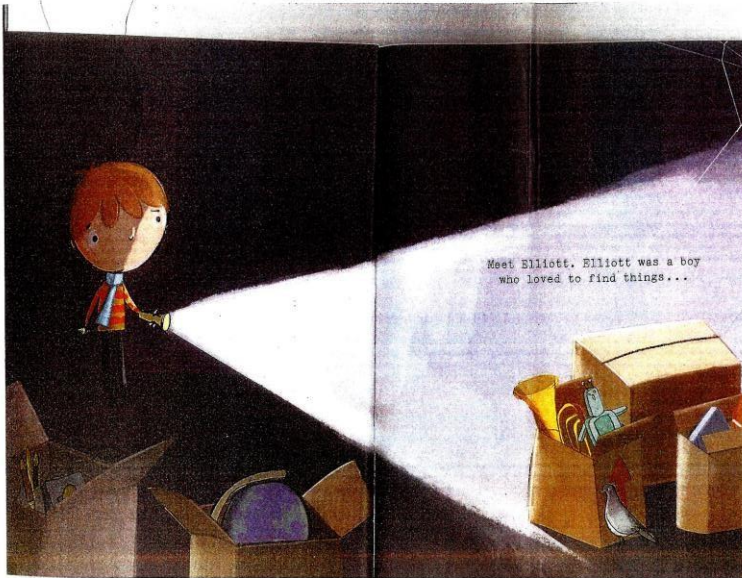
'(he is looking at a) robot'

How would the boy
be feeling?

Happy
Happy Boy

Why? "because it's for him. Like a present."

Happy



What would
you like to
find inside

Toy Pony

'(The boy is feeling) happy'

'because it's for him. Like a present'

'(I would like to find a) toy pony'

9.4 children showed more enthusiasm for writing after discussion and drawing activities.

'Allows children more freedom, pictures more inspiring than 'just words', more excitement and improved attitudes'

'Pictorial representation of stories before writing allows children to experiment, build, practise, rehearse and consolidate ideas as catalyst for future writing'

'In EYFS, children can describe a character in more depth after they have illustrated it'

'Drawing helps feed imagination, helps children organise thoughts, may become aware of details not thought about before'

'Children use observation skills, supports language development, risk taking in saying what they see and making connections with the image, in turn supports willingness to write, commit thoughts and ideas to paper'

9.5 the author-led experience of drawing, writing and bookmaking was significant in understanding the techniques and using them in the classroom.

'I think the biggest area for me was seeing the process of constructing the pictures and words as a whole, from the beginning, rather than always illustrating after completing a piece of writing'

'Bookmaking allows children opportunity to see links between [writing and drawing], reduces hesitancy when writing'

9.6 some teachers reported that they have begun to review their ways of responding to and marking children's writing. They mentioned paying attention to 'the creative impact' of children's writing rather than focusing narrowly on technical features, seeing marking as a process of response, geared to developing a piece of work over time, rather than as an end-point summary judgement. Others said they have not applied their usual marking procedures to the first draft ideas and responded to the content, rather than comment on grammar, spelling, punctuation.

'I now write more about the effort and detail put into their drawing, as well as their writing, and comment about how the two things work together as a whole'

'I now make positive comments on the creative impact, responding ... in small groups of writing conferences, talking through what is effective, alongside more peer assessment' I'm trying to help them explain their thoughts and not just how accurate they are as writers'

10 The richness of picture books

The picture books which have featured in the courses have been very varied with great differences in form, structure, style and presentation. These variations are as clear and complex as in other literary forms such as narrative or poetry.

The texts used on the courses varied in ways such as:

- the story is entirely in the pictures and the writing is an accompaniment which offers some speech though does not elucidate who is speaking. The words emphasise the repetitive structure of the book
- the main narrative is carried by the words, telling a story with an explicit moral. The pictures complement that whilst adding more detail and complexity, provoking discussion of words as well as actions
- the words are in speech bubbles and the narrative is contained in the drawings and opening flaps
- the details in the pictures give echoes referring to what has been seen before, leading subtly to the underlying theme, an implicit unfolding that is also cued by changes in the colour palette
-

- a straightforward narrative text frames seemingly everyday conversational exchanges, but the fact that the ‘speakers’ are very different from each other creates tension and interest
- the story depicts how a narrative is created from isolated words, letter shapes and pictures made from letters, weaving language and pictures together

This list illustrates the richness of picture books and this variety offers more resources for teachers to explore and for children to respond to in their own writing.

11 Authors’ responses to the courses

The authors were varied in terms of the stage in their careers, the types of texts they write and their experience of working in schools. They were interviewed on the days of the courses and were asked to send feedback up to 2 months afterwards.

They all reported that they had benefitted from their involvement in the courses. In particular, they mentioned

- The initial discussions with CLPE about their contributions
- Witnessing the CLPE leadership on the courses
- Interaction with the teachers
- The reactions of the teachers to their books
- How they were prompted into further thought about their books

The authors clearly learned much from these collaborations, which prompted them to develop their thinking about their books and how they can be explored in the classroom.

11.1 They valued the work done in jointly preparing the workshops, and liked the fact that the work spanned a longer period of time with a second day. They also liked the joint delivery of the courses, contrasting both of these aspects to being the sole presenter on a one-off occasion. One author said

‘Previous to the course, I’d not thought so in depth about how my books might work in a learning environment.’

11.2 The authors all commented on what they learned about their books in the classroom. They could see how teachers can attend to the themes and moral purposes in the books and also use the texts to teach children more about reading and writing. One writer commented *‘I was amazed that my book which takes 2 minutes to read could be developed out into such engaging lessons and questioning and exercises over a full day or even several days or weeks. Not only that but in the way it was presented with a few tweaks the same book could work equally well in developing literacy from the very youngest to the older classes in primary.’* Others said *‘The approach in introducing books to children was so inventive and interesting’*; *‘I was extremely impressed with the level of skill, enthusiasm and commitment displayed by the teachers.’*

11.3 They stressed the value of drawing - and talking - as a precursor to writing. They spoke of drawing as giving time for thinking in depth. They noticed the way the text structure and form influenced how the texts are read in the classroom, and so can now imagine the books being read in schools as well as by a parent and child or a child alone, and so can now try to make them good to use in that way.

11.4 The authors thought that picture books prompt discussion of the structure of narratives, which is fundamental to their impact. The use of repetition and references, backwards and forwards, both in the pictures and the written text add to the enjoyment and understanding of the stories. The books are very varied in the way they handle interaction between characters and inner thoughts, and the authors found these are fertile areas for discussion and, perhaps, as models for children's writing.

11.5 Through being part of the courses the authors learned new teaching techniques which they could use when they visit schools. They could see how the techniques could engage the children directly and thought they would use the activities in their visits. One said *'I am finding more to talk about within the images to a depth I hadn't considered approaching with them before. I'd never seen that as my job as the author, but my eyes have been opened in that respect.'*

11.6 This enlarging of their repertoire of how to work with children meant the authors changed their views of their visits from being *'writer-as-entertainer'* to *'writer-as-educator'*. They said they would now make sure they had contact with teachers before their visits, discussing what would fit with current classroom work and what teachers would welcome as learning for the children. This would mean they were collaborating with the teacher rather than being something of a *'strange interruption'*. One said *'as valuable as my input might be it's only really useful if it's properly embedded.'*

11.7 One interesting aspect for the authors was the session when they modelled drawing and the teachers copied the construction of the picture. They felt this was worthwhile and thought it was good that children should be taught to draw and gain a basic level of visual literacy.

11.8 Overall the authors said they now felt more responsible as authors of books for young children, in particular focusing on the social and moral content. They have a renewed sense of how their books are received and what makes an impact, that *'there is a huge power to the imagery and words in picture books, over and above the pure enjoyment of stories as entertainment.'*

12 Summary of findings

12.1 Teachers learned much about interpreting pictures, understanding more about how picture books are constructed and how to get the most out of picture books in the classroom.

An innovation in 2nd year, based on the year 1 evaluation, was to consider a range of pictures from different books. In the session on Reading Pictures, teachers were shown illustrations from a range of picture books

with the text removed. In answering the question ‘what is this picture telling us about the characters, mood, action, context etc.’, teachers realised how much meaning is conveyed in the pictures. Many commented that they had not understood this before and so, in their teaching, they started to spend more time discussing the pictures, rather than just reading the text and finishing the book quite quickly. They previously focused on the words and understanding the vocabulary, missing opportunities to explore character and structure through the pictures and text combined. Teachers on the course commented on how they were developing a range of lessons based on the picture books, aided by the CLPE teaching sequences.

12.2 Teachers learned much about the writing process.

The presence of the writer/illustrators was important, as they articulated their composing processes and explained some of the richness of their art. The teachers said they understood much more about the writing process having heard the authors describe how they developed their ideas. The teachers also made connections to writing in the classroom and how they need to help children with that process.

12.3 Teachers learned much about how giving time to discussion *before* writing means children have something to say and the vocabulary to say it.

Many of the techniques learned on the courses enable children to create characters, settings, themes and plot before they actually write. Most significant in this is the creation of opportunities for children to talk about their ideas and many of the activities provide a structure for this. Teachers commented that this ‘slowed the writing down’, by which they meant it took time to prepare for the writing, but they saw the benefits of the pre-writing activities both in the children’s willingness to write and the quality of what they wrote.

The techniques give children a focus for discussion with their peers and mean that as they turn to writing they have already formed ideas of what to say. The oral work meant they had the vocabulary in which to express themselves. These activities give children permission and opportunity to try things out and take risks. Teachers reported that this was particularly significant for boys reluctant to write and for EAL pupils.

12.4 Teachers learned much about the role of drawing and other techniques in helping children prepare for writing.

Children need time to think in advance of writing – drawing pictures, sequencing pictures, constructing dioramas, collages, storyboards, drama, making a book format, etc. These are all ways of supporting children to generate imaginative ideas and teachers have found that children, particularly reluctant writers, have become more enthusiastic about writing. These activities, together with discussion with others, help generate and select ideas for which some teachers provided ‘rough books’.

12.5 Teachers learned much about being confident in spending time with picture books and developing inference and critical thinking.

Lingering over pictures early in the text invites prediction about plot, character, theme and structure, and these possibilities can soon be modified and re-assessed as the reading continues.

When discussing pictures children can point to evidence for their ideas and interpretations. They also showed skills of inference and deduction using the pictures to hypothesise about character, plot and emotion. In particular, teachers spoke of the benefit of using these texts with EAL pupils, who were thus more readily able to read inferentially. These essential skills for reading can evidently be developed at an early age when using picture books.

12.6 Teachers learned much about how picture books are far more than just for the young or less able readers.

- In key stage 1 picture books have often been used as stimulus for talk, and in upper primary as individual reading books for less able readers. The course participants were teachers of all primary years. Understanding the richness of picture books meant teachers were less dismissive of them and could see there was more to such texts. Picture books should be part of reading for pleasure by all ages of children.
- Teachers were convinced that older children should not be discouraged from reading them as ‘too easy’. Once a school uses picture books to develop important reading skills those skills can be used by all ages. Some picture books are indeed more suitable for older children as the messages and the complexity of the characters and drawings are more challenging, though children need to learn how to spend time on the pages and not just skim through. Some course participants told of their schools allocating picture books to different year groups to ensure that critical attention to pictures continued to be developed through the school.
- The use of picture books for guided reading was also seen as a new approach. The shortness of the texts means they can be read through completely and then discussed in detail, rather than using extracts. This use of complete texts allows for discussion of structure and plot construction overall. Different reading skills can be targeted without overloading the reading demand

12.7 The authors learned much about the potential of their books to be explored with children in the classroom, and how the texts offer many rich possibilities for discussion of themes, characters, structure and plot. They learned how both the drawings and written text offer models for children in their own writing, prompting them to try out ideas and expressions before writing.

12.8 The authors also recognised the value of the kinds of activities on the course and realised that they could alter what they do on school visits to encourage more interaction with children. They grew in confidence in negotiating with schools about what they might do on a visit and how they could contribute to the ongoing learning in the class, collaborating with the teacher rather than being seen as entertainment.

12.9 The courses were rich in content and process. They modelled good teaching, for example, by making the teachers do some creative writing for themselves, using preparatory activities and then sharing their work. The sessions included the policy and school context, the nature of visual literacy, vital understanding about how to teach writing, practical activities which engage learners of all ages, and, importantly, opportunities for inspiration from the authors themselves. The work in the classroom between the 2 days reinforced the teachers' learning.

13 Conclusion

The different participants in these courses all benefitted. The teachers were inspired to develop their classroom practice in using picture books, and teaching writing. The authors gained confidence in and knowledge about working with teachers and schools. They realised more about how their books contribute to children's learning. The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education refined the courses to make them effective in not only helping teachers with activities for the classroom but also in deepening their understanding of the links between talk, reading and writing using picture books.