**Transforming Writing
Final Evaluation Report**

November 2013
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# Acknowledgements

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# Summary of findings

## Attainment

1. 68% of children made more than expected progress of 4 Average Point Scores (APS) in writing in a single year.
2. 28% of children made two years' progress of 6 APS in a single year.
3. At least 64% of children in each year group made an average improvement in attainment of 4 APS.
4. Boys and girls made similar progress in their writing attainment: 66.7% of boys and 69.3% girls made at least 4 APS progress in writing over a single year, a gap of 2.6 percentage points, compared with a gap of 5.8 percentage points between boys and girls in the control group.
5. Children for whom English is an additional language and children who receive free school meals made similar progress in their writing attainment to other children: nearly 78% of EAL children and 69% of children receiving free school meals made at least 4 APS progress in writing over a single year.
6. Children made progress in their writing attainment regardless of whether they began the year at, below or above age-related expectation. Children who began below the expected level were more likely to make progress of 6 APS or more in one year.
7. Key Stage 2 children participating in the Transforming Writing project made better progress in their writing compared with the national average by around half a sublevel (or 1 APS) in writing.

## Attitudes

8. Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on all children's confidence and engagement.
9. Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on both boys' and girls' confidence and engagement but a greater impact on boys. However, it is important to note girls started with greater confidence and engagement.
10. Transforming Writing approaches had a particularly positive impact on confidence and engagement of children who receive free school meals.
11. Transforming Writing approaches had a positive but more nuanced impact on the confidence and engagement of children for whom English is an additional language.

## Teaching approaches

12. Teachers used a wide range of strategies to develop children's independent use of formative assessment using a structured model of writing that facilitated children's guided experimentation with talk about their own and each other's writing.
13. Extended collaborative talk about the genre of writing before children start writing provides a rich resource for children to revisit and from which to draw during all stages of their writing.
14. Transforming Writing supports collaborative talk that is explicit and targeted, enabling teachers to assess and rapidly respond to children's writing and intervene as the children's learning is taking place. It allows children to independently assess their own and others' writing and learn from one another.
15. When talking about assessment of writing, teachers were modelling for children a 'voice' for thinking about writing.
16. Flexible approaches to planning were essential as teachers used formative assessment to target and rapidly respond to children's emerging needs.

17. Teachers needed a clear vision of how children progress in the quality of their assessment talk about writing.
18. The co-constructed writing goals (referred to as the 'toolkit' by teachers) were the pivot around which children's talk about their own writing took place.
19. Children's talk about writing improves in advance of children actually using what has been talked about in their own writing.
20. Children are more able to comment critically on other children's writing than on their own writing.
21. Transforming Writing teachers believed there was a mutually reinforcing positive relationship between children's comprehension talk about books and their assessment talk about their own writing. Now, as well as the reader being in the writer, the writer is in the reader.
22. Children can become teachers of each other using Transforming Writing approaches.
23. Teachers felt it was essential to develop learning environments where children were without fear of peers' judgements and were happy to publicly reveal and work on improvements to their own writing.
24. Children need to be actively involved in co-constructing their own success criteria and learning intentions.
25. Children need confident and credible teachers.

## Training and professional development

26. Teachers new to embedded formative assessment approaches were effectively trained when Transforming Writing teachers:
    o modelled formative assessment approaches
    o positioned the teachers as the children during training
    o required teachers to practise and complete follow up activities which they reported in the next staff meeting
    o provided 'in flight' advice, affirmation and support as teachers practised writing assessment approaches
    o enabled teachers to observe them teaching children in the classroom and in the staff meetings
    o enabled teachers to analyse other teachers' marking feedback in writing books
    o were enthusiastic, expert and created an atmosphere of experimentation and ensured the whole school was training in embedded formative assessment approaches, together at the same time.
27. Teachers welcomed the way Transforming Writing accommodated, enhanced and improved their existing practices of teaching writing and they did not feel like as if Transforming Writing approaches were an imposition.

> *"All these ideas for formative assessment don't cramp your teaching style. You don't have to be a certain sort of teacher to teach it. It should fit all styles. There are too many things in education where teachers are expected to be robots and I think this doesn't do that. I think it fits in with all teaching styles."*

Source: teacher

# Introduction

Transforming Writing was a two-year action research project, sponsored by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, which developed a model for the teaching and learning of writing that more fully incorporates a focus on embedded formative assessment. In the first year of the project, 12 participating schools developed a model of writing underpinned by Talk for Writing, an approach developed by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong. In the second year of the project, 10 of the schools developed a model for training other teachers in their school as well as visiting schools. This report evaluates to what extent the model of writing developed by the teachers during the research period impacted on children's writing in terms of attainment, confidence and engagement. It also evaluates the effectiveness of the training model to spread the approaches to other teachers within the participating school, which was developed in the second year.

The evidence suggests that the focused use of formative assessment by teachers with children and by children with peers can make a major difference to children's writing progress in terms of attainment, engagement and confidence. It also suggests that the model of training effectively supports dissemination of Transforming Writing approaches to other teachers.

The report suggests that during Transforming Writing research, teachers became evaluators and activators in the sense that Hattie (2012)[1] proposes. Teacher interviews and reflections reveal that teachers were evaluating the effect their teaching had on the children's learning then using the powerful feedback that formative assessment provided to rapidly respond and adjust teaching of writing. Teachers saw their key role as evaluating their effect on children's learning of writing and then responding by implementing deliberate and focused interventions within a structured model of writing.

## Aims

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

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

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[1] Hattie, J. (2012) *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximising Impact on Learning.* Routledge: Oxon.

# Rationale

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

Assessment that is not feeding forward into planning and does not effectively benefit pupils has been identified as an area in need of development in schools by Estyn, the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales (2009)[2]. Evidence emerged of "learning objectives that described tasks rather than learning and which, therefore, did not enable pupils to review their own learning" (Estyn, 2009, p. 25). In addition, "The use of assessment to plan improvements in writing is not as effective as the use of assessment information to improve reading" (Estyn, 2009, p. 6). The consequence of marking that focuses on degrees of effort or pupils' weaknesses without guidance on how to improve is demoralising. Transforming Writing teachers developed classroom approaches that embed effective formative assessment at the centre of children's experience of learning to write.

While there are challenges to implementation, there is a growing consensus regarding what is effective formative assessment. Estyn recommends that formative assessment should actively involve pupils and help them to clearly understand how to improve their work. Enabling teachers to implement effective formative assessment procedures is a challenge. Sachs investigated teachers' perceptions of formative assessment and barriers to its more widespread use and stated, "the further development of formative assessment practices in schools may be complex and difficult. Constructing a set of recommendations is relatively straightforward, but if teachers are to achieve more than 'lip-service' to them, support is needed to effect real and lasting change" (Sachs, 2010, p. 16)[3]. Transforming Writing found some workable solutions to this challenge and developed relevant support for teachers.

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

• learning orientation rather than performance orientation
• an acceptance that mistakes and getting it wrong are an essential part of learning
• mutual support for each other's learning; willingness to give and receive criticism; willingness to take risks in trying new ideas
• a shared language of assessment and feedback

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[2] Estyn (2009) *Best practice in the reading and writing of pupils aged five to seven years old*. Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/docViewer/172181.1/best-practice-in-the-reading-and-writing-of-pupils-aged-five-to-seven-years-march-2009/?navmap=30,163

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

- an emphasis on dialogue and exploratory talk to support thinking (Webb and Jones, 2009)[4].

Hodgeson and Pyle (2010)[5] advocate the need for teachers to create a classroom where a co-constructivist, non-threatening environment frees children to express their ideas and misconceptions and enables teachers to work out what children do and don't know. Underpinning this environment is talk, questioning, feedback and self and peer assessment. Wolfe and Alexander's review of dialogic teaching suggests exploratory talk, argumentation and dialogue support high-level thinking through engaging teachers and pupils in co-construction of knowledge; assessment for learning is regarded as the assessment most significant to children (Wolfe and Alexander, 2008)[6]. Transforming Writing teachers have identified effective classroom practices which have facilitated these characteristics and developed children's dialogue that supports formative assessment of writing.

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[4] Webb, M and Jones, J (2009) Exploring tensions in developing assessment for learning. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* Vol. 16, No. 2, July 2009, pp. 165-184. http://www.informaworld.com

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

[6] Wolfe, S and Alexander, R. (2008) *Argumentation and dialogic teaching: Alternative pedagogies for a changing world.* www.beyondcurrenthorizons.org.uk

# Procedure

## Sample

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

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

## Action research

Schools were visited in June/July 2011 by the research team to clarify the participating teachers' role as action researchers during the project. Action research is traditionally defined as undertaking the following stages: acting and then observing what happens following the change; reflecting on these processes and consequences; then planning further action (Newby, 2010, pp. 61-64).[7] Teachers understood that reflection is of paramount importance and that fundamentally, action research can be seen as a reflective practice (McIntosh, 2010).[8]

## Exploratory workshops

Exploratory workshops, led by Pie Corbett and Julia Strong, facilitated teachers' collaborative development of an understanding of embedding formative assessment practices in the writing process. They also supported the development of models for dissemination of embedded formative assessment approaches across the participating teachers' own schools.

The first four workshops (phase 1 – 2011/12), in part informed by the work on formative assessment by Dylan Wiliam and Shirley Clarke, were structured around: classroom culture, analysis and discussion of what excellence looks like and ongoing feedback; evaluation and development of critical thinking; and reflection as writers. Teachers were invited to experiment with formative assessment techniques within the framework of Talk for Writing.

The next four workshops (phase 2 – 2012/13) were structured around: using formative assessment in the construction of toolkits (writing goals); using formative assessment to help children internalise patterns they need to make progress; using formative assessment in shared and guided writing; and using formative assessment in marking and oral feedback.

Between workshops in phase 1, teachers experimented with embedded formative assessment in their classrooms, reflected on the differences it made to teaching and learning of writing and critically reflected on this classroom experience.

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[7] Newby, P. (2010) *Research Methods for Education,* Edinburgh: Pearson Education Limited.

[8] McIntosh, P. (2010) *Action Research and Reflective Practice*, Oxon: Routledge.

Between workshops in phase 2, teachers experimented with, and adapted, training models in whole school staff meetings and interactions with colleagues during the school week e.g. planning and observations. During workshops, teachers collaborated with professional peers to reflect on their experience and modify the training models.

# Evaluation methodology

## Data collection techniques

This report draws on a range of data: children's writing perception surveys; teachers' perception surveys; teachers' reflective journals; interviews with participating teachers; surveys and interviews with teachers trained by project teachers in phase 2; film of classroom practice; and attainment progress of participating children.

### 1. Children's writing perception surveys

Writing perception surveys were conducted by 271 participating children in phase 2 to identify any changes in children's perception of their own confidence and their level of engagement with writing as a consequence of embedding formative assessment in writing.

### 2. Reflective journals

Teachers were asked to submit four reflective journal entries during phase 1. The journals were structured around the four key research questions. It was an attempt to address the pedagogical underpinnings of their practice and provide a record of transitions in their own thinking.

### 3. Interviews with Transforming Writing teachers

In both phase 1 and phase 2, Transforming Writing teachers were interviewed in pairs in June and July 2012 and 2013. Eight out of 12 schools were visited and 16 teachers interviewed in 2012 and eight out of 10 schools were visited and 13 teachers interviewed in 2013.

### 4. Attainment progress of children

Children's progress in writing levels from September 2011 to July 2012 and again from September 2012 to July 2013 was measured and differences in average point scores were recorded. Assessing Pupil Progress assessment procedures were commonly used in the participating schools. At the time of writing the report, expected progress in England is defined by the government as two full National Curriculum levels of progress between Key Stages 1 and 2. The pupil attainment information emerged from existing assessment procedures for school tracking purposes rather than any separate assessment specifically for the project. Any difference between September and July scores attained by the participating children may not have been solely due to an emphasis on assessment of writing but is likely also to be the consequence of a range of factors operating in the school and the specific classroom.

### 5. Video of assessment talk episodes

In phase 2, three case study children were selected from three schools. All the children were from Year 6. The children were filmed three times during phase 2. Short segments of each filmed episode of assessment writing dialogue were submitted and then transcribed. Teachers offered some comments about the quality and content of their interactions with children and the children's interactions with each other.

### 6. Teachers' perception surveys

Each teacher submitted a perception survey reflecting on their own practice and attitudes to writing in their classroom at the beginning and end of phase 1.

### 7. Interviews and surveys with teachers who had been trained by the Transforming Writing teachers in phase 2

At the end of phase 2, interviews were conducted with 16 teachers who had been trained by Transforming Writing teachers when the approaches were disseminated

across the school. Interviews focused on the teachers' experiences of the training approaches that had been developed in the project workshops and any additional support received from Transforming Writing teachers.

# Findings: 12 classroom approaches

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

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

These approaches were summarised and condensed into a grid by participating teachers during the third workshop in phase 1. The grid, which is reproduced below, is called The Transforming Writing Model for Formative Assessment. It has been updated to include the approaches that were further developed during phase 2, which are shown in *italics*.

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

A more comprehensive report on each of these 12 classroom approaches can be found in Appendix 2 (page 52) at the back of this report.

## Classroom approaches further developed in phase 2

At the end of phase 2 teachers identified some approaches they had developed to a more sophisticated level and identified those aspects of Transforming Writing that they had come to regard as especially important.

### 1. Reading corners

Teachers developed their use of reading corners so children could find examples of sentences and paragraphs in the style of the writing unit they were currently doing. Children "spotted" words, sentences and paragraphs in books that they connected to the assessment in the writing lessons.

### 2. Cold texts

Cold texts were highly effective. At the beginning of the writing unit, children write independently in the genre to be learned on a blue sheet of paper (this is the "cold text") and then again on a yellow sheet of paper at the end of unit (this is the "warm text"). Children and parents can see progress, which may not be in length, but in

quality and style of writing. This clearly reveals what has been learned during the unit. Cold texts affect teachers' planning and influence how they approach the whole unit. Teachers can identify gaps in learning immediately and where to focus the teaching.

### 3. Emphasising effect on reader

Teachers emphasised the effect children's writing is having on the reader much more frequently and unpicked in detail why. Constructing toolkits (writing outcomes) together with children was identified as underpinning good assessment practice.

> Teacher: "I've really emphasised this year the effect your writing is having on the reader. So I've really tried to turn the focus around ... every time we've looked at a piece of writing or talked about writing, we've talked about what effect that has had on you as a reader."
> Teacher: "I think building the toolkit is crucial."
> Teacher: "Before, analysis was more about identifying things, wasn't it? It was more of a treasure hunt for things [but now talk with children is more like] 'We've noticed how this works. Let's see if they've used it in a different way here? They have!' It's turning back to the effect again."

Source: teachers

### 4. Modelling speech patterns

Teachers identified the importance of providing vocabulary and frameworks children could use to talk about assessment of writing. They modelled speech patterns to elicit assessment responses of a higher quality.

> Teacher: "I've modelled the sort of speech patterns for reporting back to a child. 'I really like this because' rather than just 'I really like that bit'...now they are saying things like 'I really like that bit because it has created a really good image of what that thing looked like'."

Source: teacher

Teachers used talking frames to modify children's speech patterns when assessing their writing. This moves children away from using normal "home" patterns of speech, which limit their ability to articulate about writing, towards a more specific language of writing revision. Talk frames on the classroom wall support children to structure their talk so that they talk in an author's /reader's voice rather than their normal voice. Teachers reported that concentrating on getting them to talk like this felt quite forced at first but it helped children move beyond their 'chatty' talk when first engaging with talk partners towards a more structured voice appropriate to the assessment of writing.

> Teacher: "It's like giving them a fake way of talking. That's what you are doing. You're giving them formal speech and ways of speech when you're editing, speech when you feedback. But children don't have that naturally."

Source: teacher

### 5. Modelling assessment and writing processes

Teachers reported an increased appreciation of the significance of modelling. They said every single step of the assessment process needs to be modelled and children need to be shown how to use writing techniques at every stage of the writing unit. The toolkit was at the heart of this modelling, providing focus and coherence.

> Teacher: "I've found that my models have become more focused and nuanced towards the tools that I want to demonstrate."

Source: teacher

## 6. Focused learning intentions

Teachers identified the significance of providing focused learning intentions in lessons that precisely stated the effect of the writing. Children needed to see learning intentions as more purposeful than just a title or something to be ticked off.

## 7. Instant and explicit feedback to which children can respond

Teachers identified instant feedback from teachers and from peers as particularly significant. Teachers reported that when children read or hear instant or "next day" meaningful assessments of their own writing that clearly lead to improvement it will have a significant impact on the quality of their writing. Building in time to respond is crucial to the successful assessment of writing. Children need a "couple of minutes built in for revision" to read and respond to assessments as part of routines at the beginning of writing lessons. Instant feedback also has an impact on peers who witness and learn from other children's revisions. This feedback needs to be very focused, on one writing tool or feature of writing, which children can tackle to create an immediate improvement.

## 8. Teaching children how to think about writing

Teachers reported that assessment of writing is teaching children how to think when writing, not just talking about doing a set of things to be ticked off.

> Teacher: "It's almost like structuring their thoughts. Being able to articulate their thoughts about something to enable them to understand the point of these (writing) tools and be able to manipulate those (writing) tools."

Source: teacher

## 9. Careful planning of use of language

Teachers thought it was important to carefully plan how children learned the language of writing assessment and the writing toolkits. They deliberately used specific language relevant to the writing genre or assessment of writing early on in the writing unit and 'dropped' in this language throughout the unit to help them revise it. This provided a metalanguage that supported focused assessment of writing.

# The Transforming Writing Model for Formative Assessment

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

| Key underlying process in chronological order | Essential features of this | Useful related techniques/ equipment | Classroom approach |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Providing a motivating stimulus**<br><br>**2. Selecting the right exemplar text** | • Something that will interest the children and facilitate understanding<br><br>• Building in the appropriate vocabulary, sentence structure and text features that children need to make progress | • Drama<br><br>• *Cold texts* | Approach 6<br><br>*Phase 2, Approach 2* |
| **3. Learning/internalising the text orally** | • Story map – making learning visible<br><br>• Exemplar text<br><br>• Boxing up | • Using icons to help recall text | |
| **4. Progressively co-constructing features of toolkit** | • Making learning visible<br><br>• Discussing the features<br><br>• Comparing texts | • Washing line | Approaches 2 & 3<br>*Phase 2, Approach 3* |
| **5. Shared and guided writing focusing on the key vocabulary, sentence and text features that the children need to make progress** | • Boxing up<br><br>• Making learning visible<br><br>• Modelling how to talk about the ingredients<br><br>• Involving the children in discussing the ideas<br><br>• 'Magpieing' good ideas<br><br>• Writing your own version | • Writing journals<br><br>• Washing line<br><br>• *Reading corners* | Approaches 5 & 7<br><br>*Phase 2, Approach 1* |
| **6. Providing a range of focused talk opportunities to strengthen understanding, practise skills and build in progress** | • Warming up tune of text activities<br><br>• Comparing texts<br><br>• Raiding the reading<br><br>• Response partner<br><br>• Group reflection<br><br>• Whole class feedback – essential that text is visible | • Snowballing pairs<br><br>• Cloze passages<br><br>• Role play<br><br>• Visiting professor<br><br>• Mobile phone<br><br>• Sorting and sequencing | Approach 4 |

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

| Key underlying process in chronological order | Essential features of this | Useful related techniques/ equipment | Classroom approach |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7. **Creating a learning environment that encourages focused talk in order to develop the inner judge within each child to help pupils read and write in a discriminating fashion** | • Okay to change mind<br>• All views valid<br>• Being a good listener (teacher as well as children)<br>• Talking partners/small group work<br>• Strategies to involve all students | • Speaking frames<br>• Using visualiser<br>• Snowballing partner work | Approaches 2, 4 & 7<br>*Phase 2, Approaches 8 & 9* |
| 8. **Model how to talk about writing** | • Toolkit provides shared framework for understanding<br>• Shared writing<br>• Boxing up | | Approaches 2, 3 & 5<br>*Phase 2, Approaches 4, 5, 8 & 9* |
| 9. **Provide lots of opportunities to practise** | • Toolkit<br>• Making learning visible<br>• Book talk<br>• Compare<br>• Does it work?<br>• Response partner<br>• Raiding the reading<br>• Warming up the tune of the text activities | • Washing line<br>• Visualiser/some means of projecting text | Approach 2 |

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

| Key underlying process in chronological order | Essential features of this | Useful related techniques/ equipment | Classroom approach |
|---|---|---|---|
| **10. Marking and feedback with purpose of creating reflective dialogue**<br><br>• **Peer (helping pupils understand what will help them move forward)**<br><br>• **Teacher (enabling teacher to know which aspects to focus on to move the children forward)**<br><br>• **Self (to develop the inner judge to identify own strengths and weaknesses)** | • Toolkit as reference point – source of shared understanding<br><br>• Visual display to support understanding<br><br>• Providing time to act on initial feedback | • Pink for progress; green for growth<br><br>• Post-it notes to indicate ingredients<br><br>• Children comment on own work first | Approaches 1, 2 & 3<br>*Phase 2, Approaches 6 & 7* |
| **11. Targeted teaching to model how to improve in light of marking** | • Flexible planning<br><br>• Shared writing to illustrate key points identified<br><br>• Visual display of additional teaching focus<br><br>• Toolkit – reflect on, did it work?<br><br>• Children motivated by knowing final work will be published<br><br>• Mini lessons and/or guided writing to rectify identified weaknesses<br><br>• Providing time to act on initial feedback and polish work | • Polishing pens | Approaches 8, 9 & 11<br>*Phase 2, Approach 6 & 7* |
| **12. Co-construct individual targets – next small steps based on final feedback** | • Toolkit as reference point | | Approaches 1 & 2<br>*Phase 2, Approach 6 & 7* |
| **13. Curriculum planned so have opportunities to practise and develop skills in a range of contexts** | | | Approaches 1 & 9<br>*Phase 2, Approach 6 & 7* |

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

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

## Key findings

- 68% of children made more than expected progress of 4 Average Point Scores (APS) in writing in a single year.
- 28% of children made two years' progress of 6 APS in a single year
- At least 64% of children in each year group made an average improvement in attainment of 4 APS.
- Boys and girls made similar progress in their writing attainment: 66.7% of boys and 69.3% girls made at least 4 APS progress in writing over a single year, a gap of 2.6 percentage points, compared with a gap of 5.8 percentage points between boys and girls in the control group.
- Children for whom English is an additional language and children who receive free school meals made similar progress in their writing attainment to other children: nearly 78% of EAL children and 69% of children who receive free school meals made at least 4 APS progress in writing over a single year.
- Children made progress in their writing attainment regardless of whether they began the year at, below or above age-related expectation. Children who began below the expected level were more likely to make progress of 6 APS or more in one year.
- Key Stage 2 children participating in the Transforming Writing project made better progress in their writing compared with the national average by around half a sublevel (or 1 APS) in writing.

## Data collected

Attainment data was collected between 2011 and 2013. Progress for each child was measured over one academic year. Data was collected from 19 teachers in phase 1 and 12 teachers in phase 2. One teacher withdrew and four teachers did not submit suitable and complete data in phase 1 while 4 teachers did not submit suitable and complete data in phase 2. Attainment data was collected and analysed from 727 participating children across phase 1 and 2.

*Figure 1: This chart shows composition of the sample of children*

| Year | Boys | Girls | Total Children |
|------|------|-------|----------------|
| Year 6 | 105 | 110 | 215 |
| Year 5 | 148 | 144 | 292 |
| Year 4 | 45 | 41 | 86 |
| Year 3 | 47 | 40 | 87 |
| Year 2 | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| Year 1 | 11 | 16 | 27 |
| **Total Children** | **366** | **361** | **727** |

As well as data for attainment in writing for each of the children in July 2011, July 2012 and July 2013, other data collected included gender, receipt of free school meals and where English is an additional language. Teachers submitted their pupils' progress in sublevels and APS. The majority of data in this chapter is presented in APS only. Data in sublevels is available on request.

## Age-related expected progress

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

*Figure 2: This chart shows age-related expected attainment in writing*

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

National curriculum standards in England are designed so that pupils are expected to make at least two levels of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. This means that most pupils are expected to attain one full level of progress every two years.[9] This is equivalent to 6 APS. In order to achieve this, pupils must make 3 APS progress per year. It is difficult to measure one and a half sublevels across one year. Consequently, headteachers on the Transforming Writing project aimed for two sublevels of progress each year to ensure secure progress. This equals 4 APS progress per year.

A control group was formed of 271 children from Years 1 to 6, using writing attainment data from July 2011. These children were studying in participating schools but had no contact with the Transforming Writing project in July 2011.

## Attainment of all children

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

The pupil evidence collected shows that, on average, children participating in the Transforming Writing project made at least expected progress in every year group and the majority have exceeded it.

*Figure 3: This chart shows the average progress in attainment of children in writing measured in Average Point Scores (APS) during phase 1 and 2*



Children's average improvement by year group measured in APS

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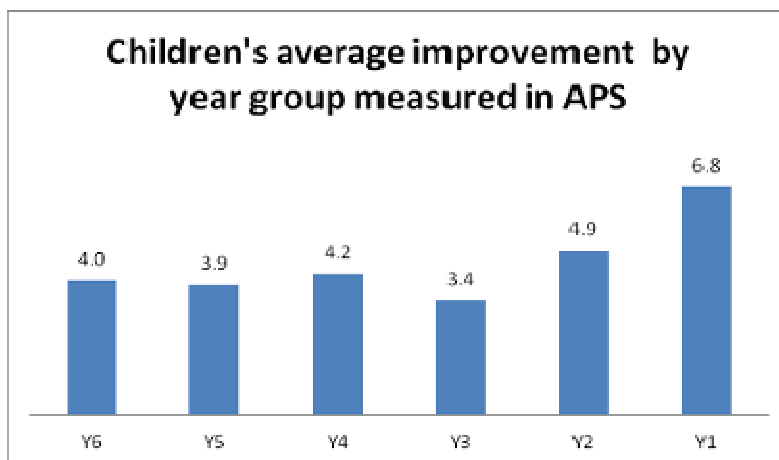
[9] DfE: National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England, 2013 (provisional) http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18393/1/SFR34_2013_KS2_Text.pdf

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

The pupil evidence collected shows that 68% of all children across all year groups made 4 or more APS (Average Point Scores) of progress in writing during one academic year of the research project. 28% of children made 6 or more APS progress during one year of the research project. This represents two years' expected progress made in one year for more than a quarter of participating children. Progress is measured for each child over one academic year of the project during either phase 1 or phase 2. Progress recorded in the data represents attainment of children during either phase 1 or phase 2. It does not represent progress of any child over two years, or both phase 1 plus phase 2.

***Figure 4: This chart shows the progress in attainment of children in writing measured in Average Point Scores***
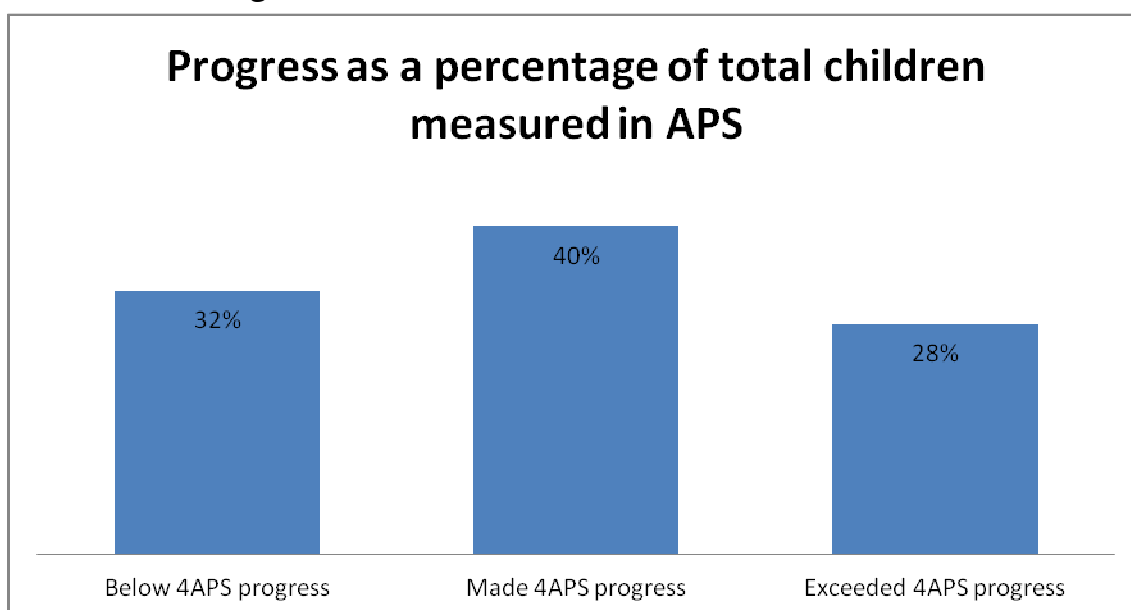


## 3. Attainment in writing improved for each year group

The pupil evidence collected shows that each year group made an average improvement in attainment of at least 4 APS (see figure 5 below). At least 64% of children in each year group made an average improvement in attainment of 4 APS or more in each year group. It is worth noting that, apart from Year 3, between 24% and 96% of children made an average improvement in writing of 6 APS or more.

- In Year 1, 96.3% of children progressed 6 APS or more.
- In Year 2, 85% of children progressed 4 APS or more and half the children progressed 6 APS, which represents two years' expected progress in one year.
- In Year 3, results were less impressive, but nonetheless 64.3% of children progressed 4 APS or more in one year.
- In Year 4, 67.5% of children progressed 4 APS or more and 36.1% made 6, 8 and even 10 APS progress in one year.
- The attainment of children in Years 5 and 6 is broadly similar. Approximately two-thirds of children made progress of 4 APS or more and a quarter made progress of 6 APS or more.

***Figure 5: These charts show the average progress in attainment in writing of all children in each year group measured in Average Point Scores during phase 1 and 2***
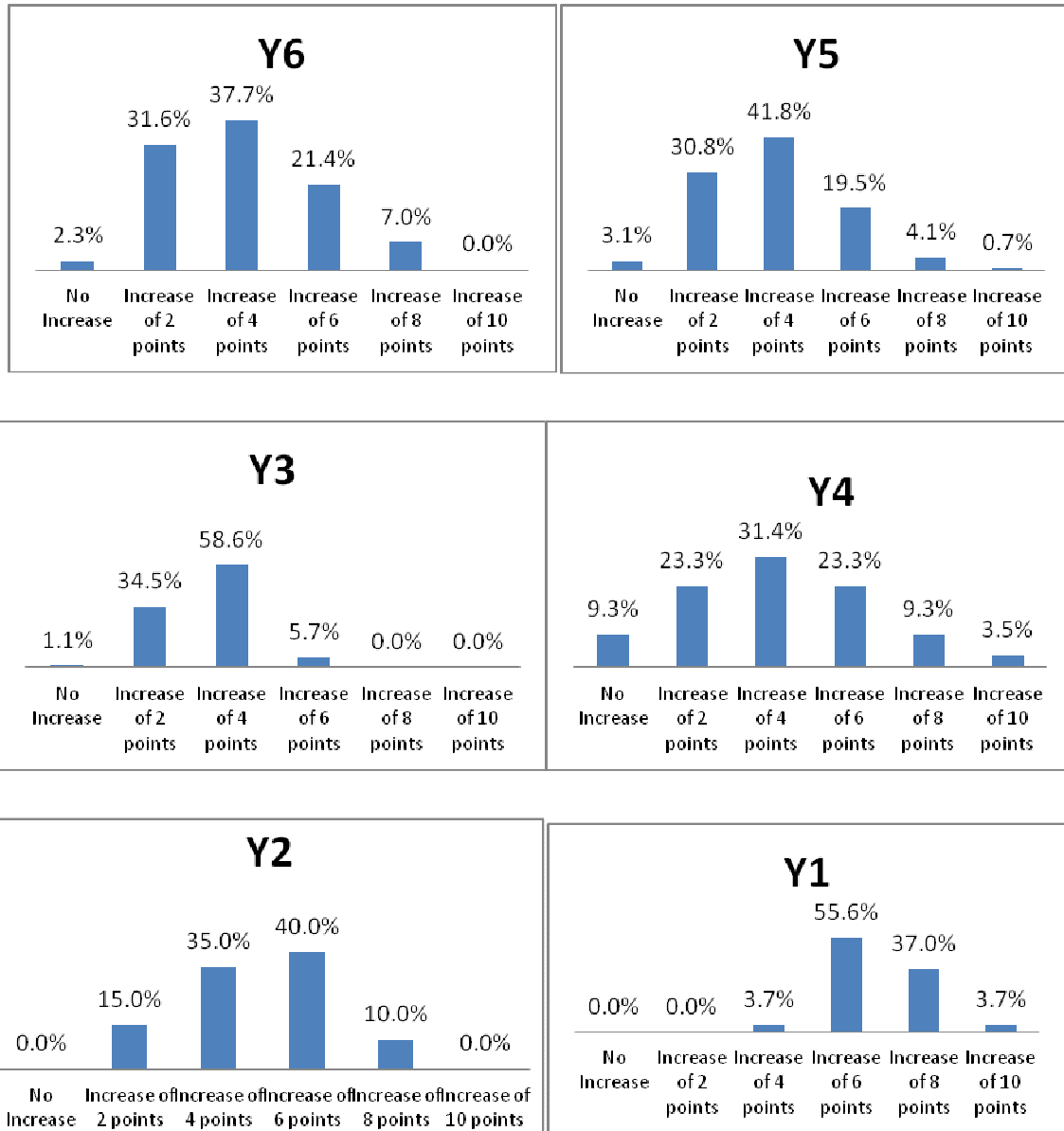


## Attainment of specific groups of children: boys and girls, EAL and FSM

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

The proportion of boys and girls in the data set was roughly equal, with 366 boys and 361 girls.

The pupil evidence collected shows that similar percentages of boys and girls in the data set, 66.7% of boys and 69.3% of girls across all year groups, made an average of 4 APS or more progress in writing attainment during the research project. Slightly more girls than boys made progress of 4 APS during the research project (by 2.6 percentage points) and equal numbers of boys and girls exceeded progress of 4 APS (or made one whole level progress in one year).

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

This differential can be viewed in the light of national differences between boys' and girls' attainment in writing at Key Stage 2. In 2013, the widest gender differential across all assessments was in writing attainment, where the gap was 10 percentage points or more: 78% of boys and 88% of girls attained Level 4 or above in writing; 23% of boys and 38% of girls attained Level 5 or above. Nationally, the percentage of both boys and girls attaining Level 4 or above in writing was 83% and the percentage of both boys and girls attaining Level 5 or above in writing was 30%[10].

The differential between boys' and girls' achievement in writing for children on the Transforming Writing project is significantly less than the national differential between genders. The chart below shows that the gap between Transforming Writing boys and girls making progress of at least 4 APS is only 2.6%.

*Figure 6: This chart compares the attainment in writing by boys and girls across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores during phase 1 and 2*
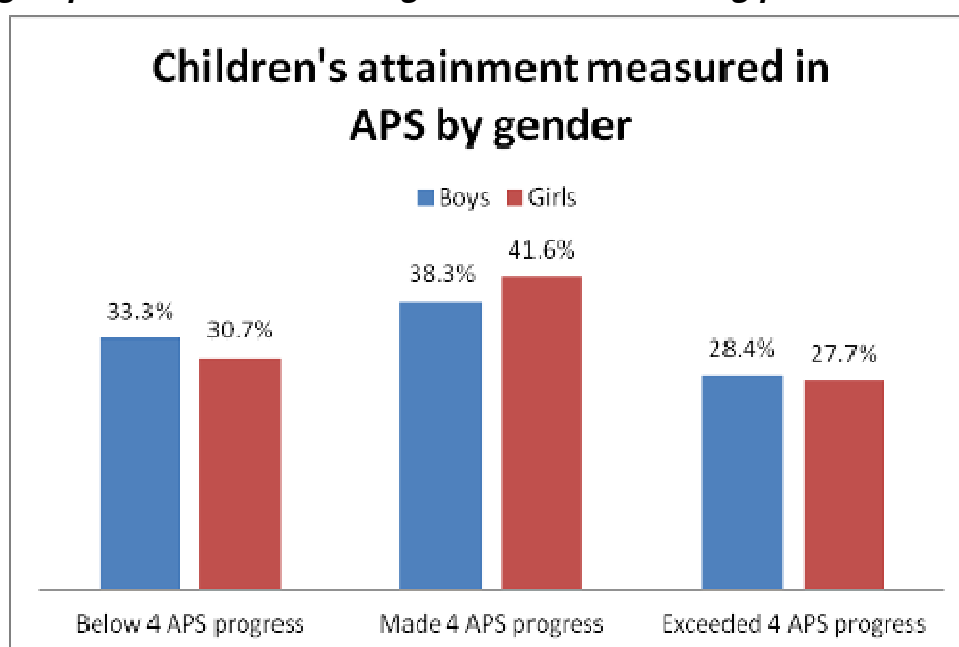


**5. Children for whom English is an additional language and children who receive free school meals made similar progress in their writing attainment to other children during the research project**

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

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[10] DfE: National Curriculum Assessments at Key Stage 2 in England, 2013 (provisional) http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18393/1/SFR34_2013_KS2_Text.pdf. Note that the national writing assessment in 2012 and 2013 is substantially different to previous years because the writing progress measure only uses the teacher writing assessment. Consequently, a direct comparison with previous years may not be accurate.

***Figure 7: This chart compares the attainment of children for whom English is an additional language, children who receive free school meals and all children across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores during phase 1 and 2***
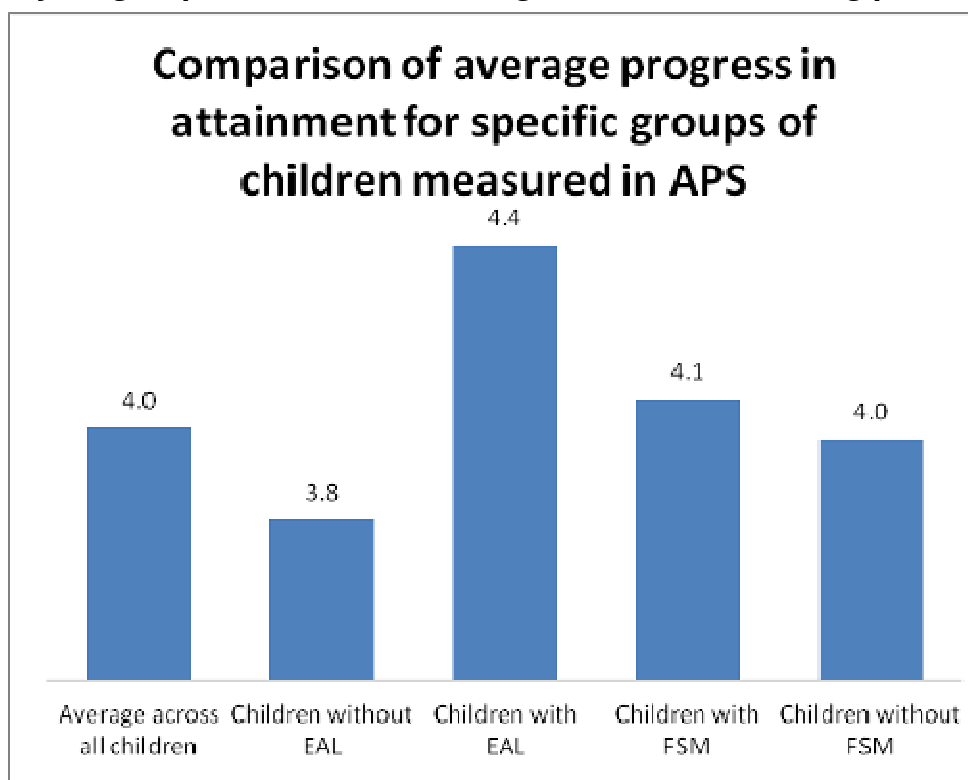


## A. Children for whom English is an additional language

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

| EAL | Number | Percentage of data set |
|---|---|---|
| **Girls** | 126 | 17 |
| **Boys** | 117 | 16 |
| **Non EAL Children** | 484 | 67 |
| **Total children** | **727** | **100** |

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

It is interesting that of the children across all year groups who exceeded 4 APS progress (or made at least one whole level of progress in one year) there is a difference of nearly 13 percentage points between children for whom English is an additional language and children who do not have English as an additional language.

*Figure 8: This chart compares the attainment in writing of children for whom English is an additional language and children who do not have English as an additional language across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores during phase 1 and 2*
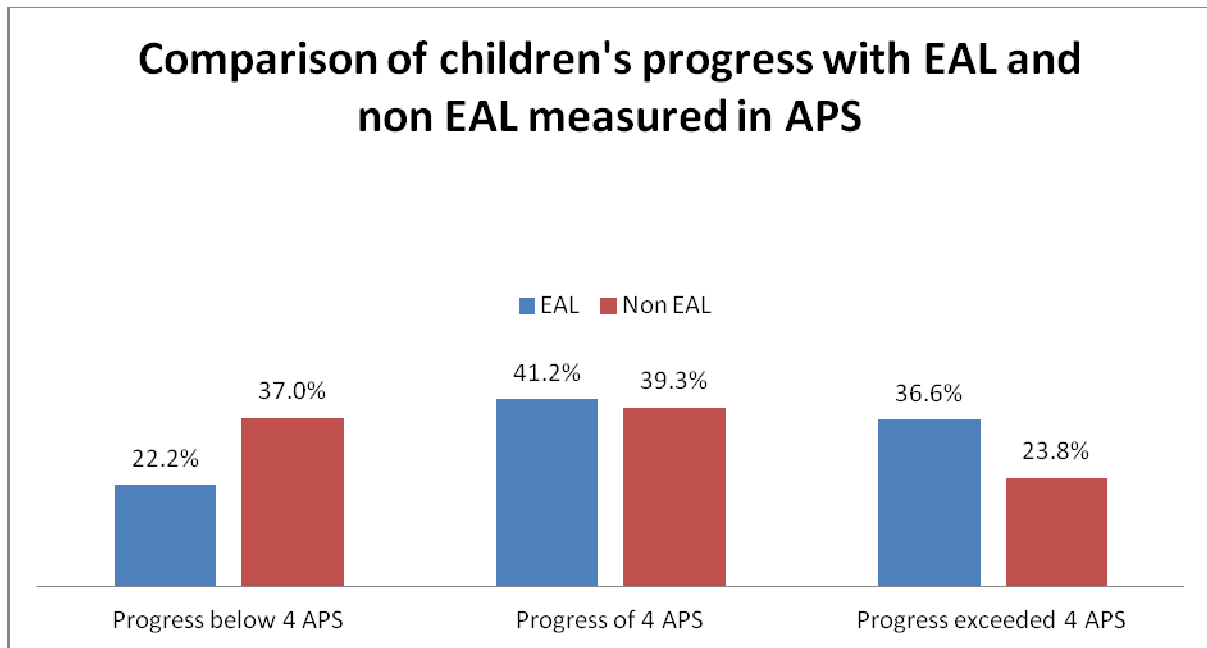


## Girls and boys for whom English is an additional language

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

## B. Children receiving free school meals

The proportion of children in the data set receiving FSM is 39%. 208 children were receiving free school meals.

| Free School Meals | Number of children | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Girls** | 105 | 15 |
| **Boys** | 103 | 14 |
| **Non Free School Meals** | 519 | 71 |
| **Total Children** | **727** | **100** |

Children receiving FSM made similar progress in attainment in writing as other children across the data set, including children for whom English is an additional language.

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

*Figure 9: This chart compares the progress in attainment in writing of children receiving free school meals to children not receiving free school meals measured in Average Points Scores during phase 1 and 2*
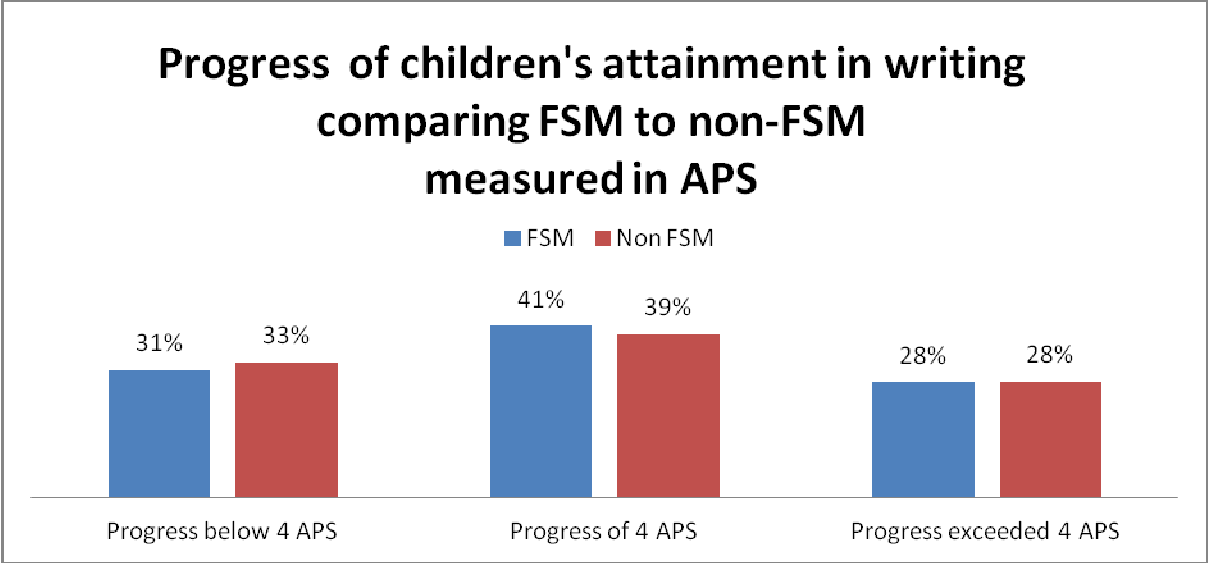


## Boys and girls receiving free school meals

The pupil evidence collected shows that overall boys and girls receiving FSM made similar progress in attainment in writing during the research project. Fewer girls than boys made 4 APS progress but more girls than boys made progress exceeding 4 APS. 69% of children receiving FSM attained 4 APS progress or more and 28% made more than 4 APS progress.

## Children working at age related expectation for writing

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

The proportion of children in the data set working at, below or above age-expected attainment in writing at the beginning of phase 1 and 2 is shown below.
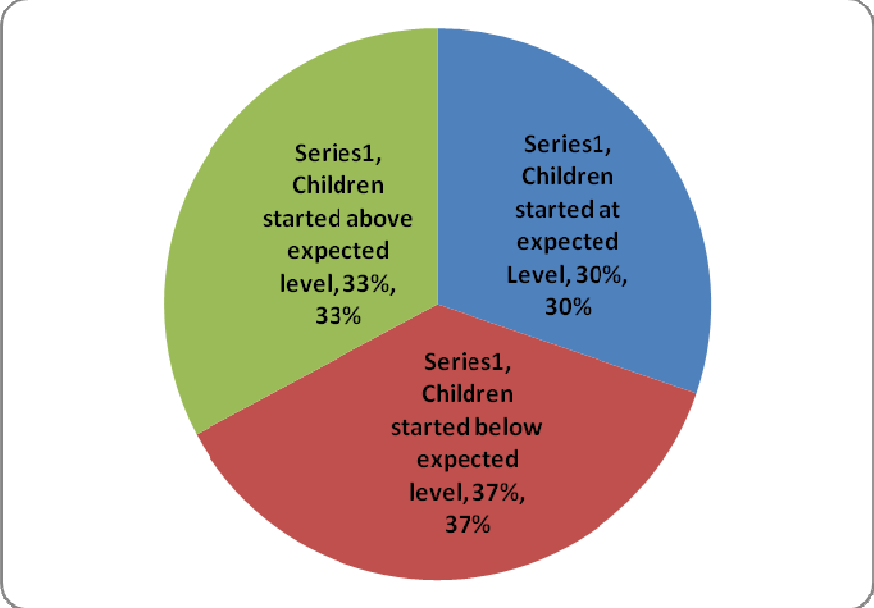


The progress of children was largely unaffected by their starting point at the beginning of each phase. Those who started below age-related expectation, those who started at

age-related expectation and those who started above age-related expectation made largely similar rates of progress.

Around two-thirds of children were making 4 APS progress or more each year regardless of whether they began below, at or above age related expectation.

The proportion of children making more than 4 APS progress (or more than one year's expected progress in one year) was comparatively larger for those children whose starting point was below expected level (see Figure 10). Nearly a quarter of children who started at or above age-related expectation in writing made more than one year's expected progress.

***Figure 10: This chart compares the progress in attainment in writing of children starting below, at and above age-expected attainment in writing measured in APS during phase 1 and 2***
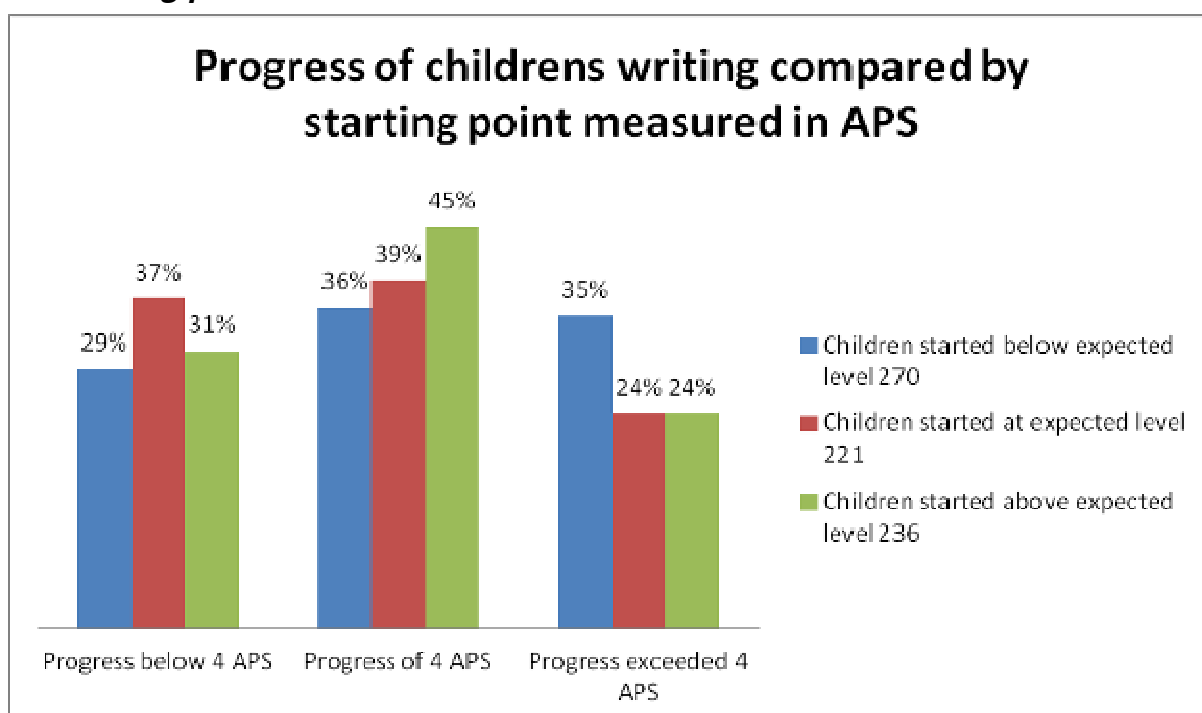


## Comparison of Key Stage 2 children

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

Actual average progress in writing in each year of Key Stage 2 was researched by the Department for Education[11] in 2011. This research was measured in sublevels. Each sublevel can be readily converted into 2 APS for purposes of comparison with Transforming Writing. Based on a sample of 70,000 pupils in 10 local authorities, average progress in writing in sublevels in each Key Stage 2 year group was measured over three years (2007/08, 2008/09, 2009/10). Nationally, the research shows that average progress in writing was about 1.4 sublevels (or about 2.8 APS) per year in each KS2 year group. However, the table below shows that average progress in each year group participating in the Transforming Writing project was nearer to 2 sublevels in one year (or 4 APS).

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[11] Department for Education (2011) *How do pupils progress during Key Stages 2 and 3*, Research Report RR096. https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/DFE-RR096.pdf

Our calculations show that children in classrooms where teachers are embedding continuous formative assessment in the teaching and learning of writing are mostly making an average increase of around half a sublevel progress (or 1 APS) in writing more than the national average.

*Figure 11: This chart compares by year group the average progress in writing of children nationally with children participating in the Transforming Writing project measured in sublevels*



Children's average progress in writing attainment by year group measured in sublevels

■ Average progress in writing nationally by sublevel
■ Average progress in writing in Transforming Writing schools by sublevel

| | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 | Y6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| National | 1.25 | 1.35 | 1.5 | 1.45 |
| Transforming Writing | 1.7 | 2.1 | 1.9 | 2 |
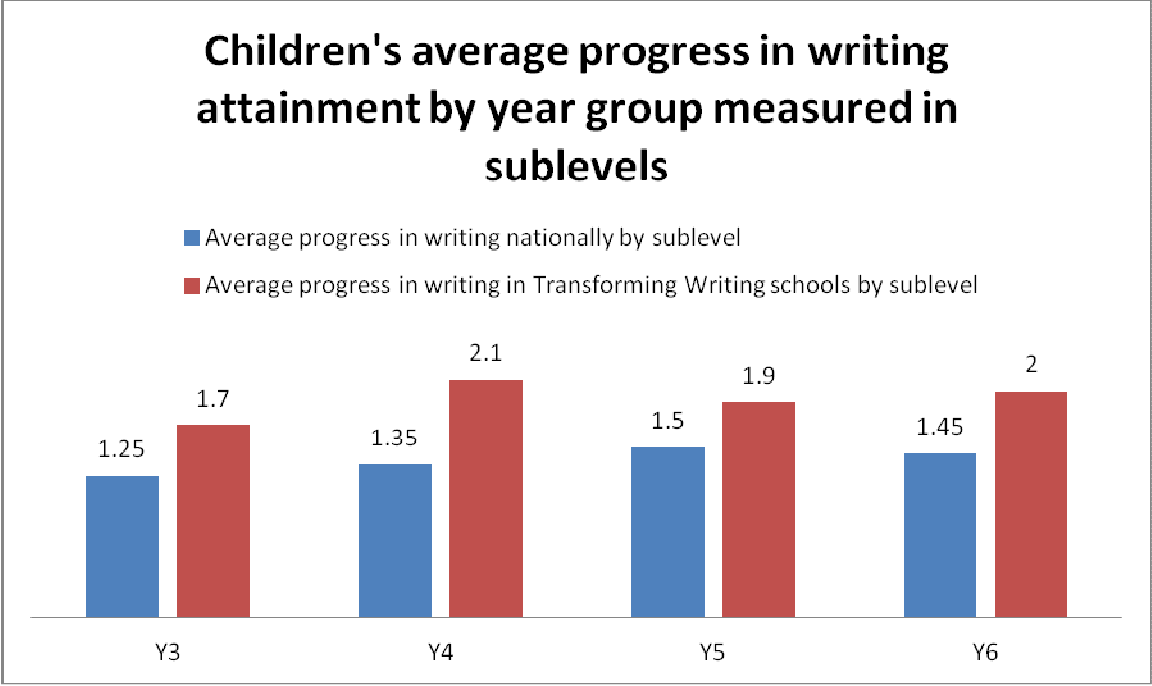
Transforming Writing pupils' progress is represented in sublevels in this chart because the national data used is quoted in sublevels, not APS. Those wishing to convert sublevels to APS may double the sublevel number.

# Control group

The control group was drawn from existing Transforming Writing schools using children's writing attainment data from July 2010 and 2011. Children in the control group had no exposure to Transforming Writing, which began in September 2011. Data was drawn from whole classes and no attempt was made to select individual children. The control group, being drawn from the same schools as those in the Transforming Writing project, shared key variables including socioeconomic context; gender; free school meals and English as an additional language. No control group was established in phase 1 of the project.

The control group sample was composed of 292 children drawn from different year groups across seven schools.

*Figure 12 : This chart shows composition of the control group*

| Year Group | Number of children | Boys | Girls | Number of EAL | Number of FSM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 23 | 13 | 10 | 0 | 5 |
| 2 | 19 | 11 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 25 | 16 | 9 | 2 | 12 |
| 4 | 25 | 16 | 9 | 12 | 10 |
| 5 | 109 | 68 | 41 | 54 | 29 |
| 6 | 91 | 45 | 46 | 20 | 24 |
| Total | 292 | 169 | 123 | 88 | 80 |

The control group was composed of percentages of children in each year group comparable to the percentages of children in each year group in the experimental group.

*Figure 13: This chart shows a comparison of experimental and control group samples by year group*

| Both phases | Experimental | Percentage of total children | Control | Percentage of total children |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Y1 | 27 | 3.71 | 23 | 7.88 |
| Y2 | 20 | 2.75 | 19 | 6.51 |
| Y3 | 87 | 11.95 | 25 | 8.56 |
| Y4 | 86 | 11.81 | 25 | 8.56 |
| Y5 | 288 | 39.56 | 109 | 37.33 |
| Y6 | 220 | 30.22 | 91 | 31.16 |

Comparison with the control group suggests that improvement in attainment can, at least in part, be attributed to the practices of Transforming Writing teachers who are embedding continuous formative assessment in the teaching and learning of writing in their classrooms.

*Figure 14: This chart compares the progress in attainment of experimental and control group children in writing measured in Average Point Scores.*



## Progress as a percentage of total children

■ Experimental Group Data  ■ Control Group Data

| Below 4 APS progress | Made 4 APS progress | Exceeded 4 APS progress |
| 32% / 50% | 40% / 28% | 28% / 22% |
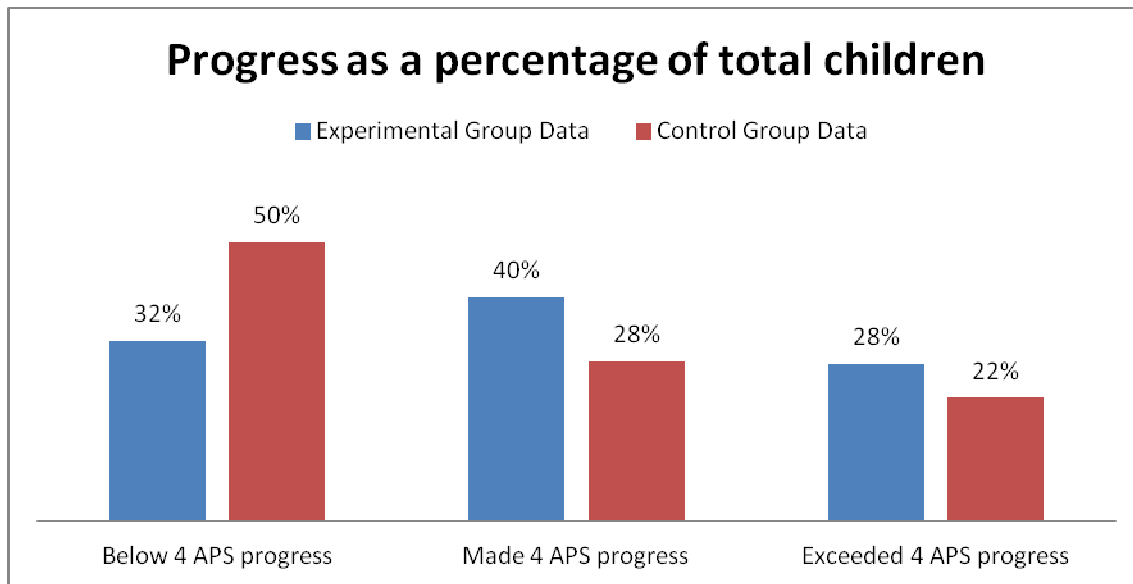
The pupil evidence collected shows that children who experienced Transforming Writing approaches made better progress in writing in comparison with children in the control group. The proportion of children who made progress of 4 APS was 12 percentage points greater than in the control group. The proportion of children who exceeded progress of 4 APS was 6 percentage points greater than in the control group. Significantly, the proportion of children who made progress of less than 4 APS was reduced by 18 percentage points. Statistics in this chart have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

*Figure 15: This chart compares the average progress in attainment of experimental and control group children in writing measured in Average Point Scores*



## Average improvement in writing attainment by year group measured in APS

■ Experimental children  ■ Control children

| | Y6 | Y5 | Y4 | Y3 | Y2 | Y1 |
| Experimental | 4.0 | 3.9 | 4.2 | 3.4 | 4.9 | 6.8 |
| Control | 3.7 | 2.0 | 2.3 | 3.4 | 5.4 | 7.1 |
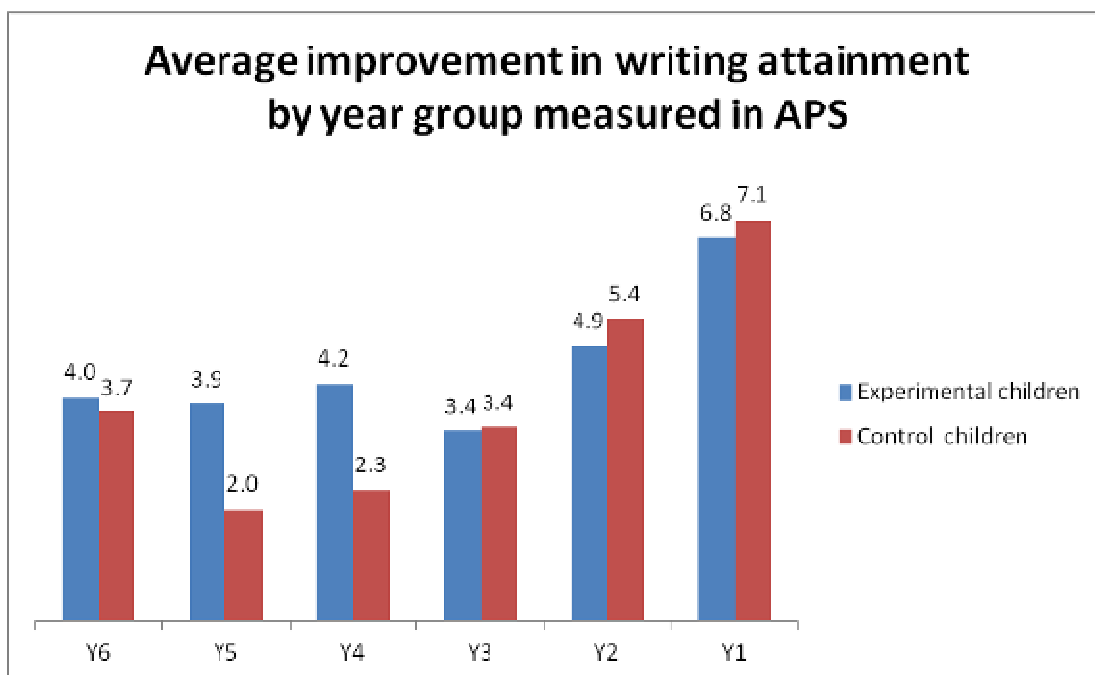
The pupil evidence collected shows that, on average, children who experienced Transforming Writing approaches in Years 3-6 made at least as much progress as

children in the control group. Children in Years 4-6 made progress of between 0.3 APS and 1.9 APS more than the control group. Children who experienced Transforming Writing approaches in Years 1 and 2 made less progress than children in the control group, by 0.3 APS and 0.5 APS respectively. The chart suggests that Transforming Writing approaches make more difference to attainment of children in Years 3-6 or Key Stage 2 in the UK.

**Boys and girls**

Transforming Writing made a significant impact on both girls' and boys' attainment but a more significant impact on boys. Compared with the control group, the proportion making below 4 APS progress was reduced by 19 percentage points for boys, and by 15.5 percentage points for girls. More children made progress of 4 APS, with an increase of 10.5 percentage points among boys and 12 percentage points among girls; those exceeding 4 APS progress increased by 8 percentage points among boys and 3 percentage points among girls. Additional charts can be found in Appendix 3 at the back of this report.

**Children with English as an additional language and who are entitled to free school meals**

The pupil evidence collected shows that children not receiving free school meals who experienced Transforming Writing made more than 0.5 APS better progress than those in the control group. Children for whom English is an additional language and who experienced Transforming Writing made around 1.5 APS better progress than those in the control group. The chart suggests Transforming Writing approaches make a significant difference to attainment of children with free school meals or for whom English is an additional language. Indeed, Transforming Writing benefits all children especially those with disadvantages.

*Figure 16: This chart compares the attainment of children for whom English is an additional language, children who receive free school meals and all children across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores*



Comparison of average attainment for specific groups of children measured in APS

| | all | without EAL | with EAL | with FSM | without FSM |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental group children | 4.0 | 3.8 | 4.4 | 4.1 | 4.0 |
| Control group children | 3.3 | 3.6 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 3.3 |
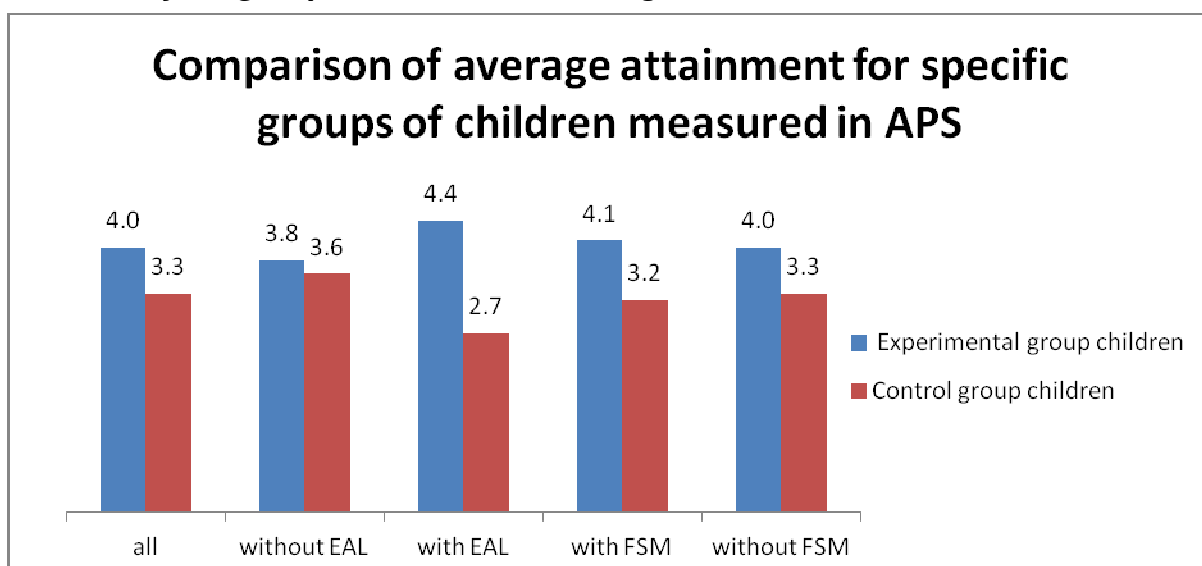
# Impact of embedding formative assessment in teaching of writing on children's confidence and engagement

In order to find out what substantive difference was made to children's confidence and engagement, phase 2 children in participating classes completed a writing perception survey in October 2012 and again in July 2013.

The children included those who were working at, above and below age-related expectation in writing. A total of 271 children from Key Stages 1 and 2 provided suitable data. The survey provides some interesting indicators about how children responded to embedded formative assessment during writing lessons. When teachers focused on embedded assessment in writing lessons through collaborative assessment talk in a variety of contexts, the majority of children responded positively and this is reflected in children's own perceptions of their confidence to write and their engagement with writing.

| Total number of children | 271 |
|---|---|
| Boys | 135 |
| Girls | 136 |
| EAL | 87 |
| FSM | 72 |

## Key findings

- Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on all children's confidence and engagement. The proportion of all children who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot"' or "A lot" and those who thought themselves "Quite good" or "Very good" writers both increased by 10 percentage points.
- Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on both boys' and girls' confidence and engagement but a greater impact on boys. There was an increase of 20 percentage points in the proportion of boys who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot", while the increase for girls was 4 percentage points. However it is important to note girls started with greater confidence and engagement.
- Transforming Writing approaches had a particularly positive impact on confidence and engagement among children who receive free school meals. There was an increase of 16 percentage points in the proportion of children receiving free school meals who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot".
- Transforming Writing approaches had a positive but more nuanced impact on the confidence and engagement of children for whom English is an additional language. The proportion who said they liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 9 percentage points, showing that Transforming Writing positively impacted on their confidence and engagement. However, there was a decrease of 10 percentage points in the proportion of EAL children who said they enjoyed writing "A lot", which could be linked to the level of challenge in lessons.

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

The evidence from children's writing perception surveys shows that there was a positive shift in the numbers of all children who said they enjoyed writing after a year of teachers focusing on embedded formative assessment in writing lessons. The impact was more significant on boys and children who receive free school meals. This suggests that, overall, children were more engaged with writing as a consequence of the Transforming Writing approaches.

***Figure 17: This chart shows all children's perceptions of their own enjoyment of writing in October 2012 and July 2013***
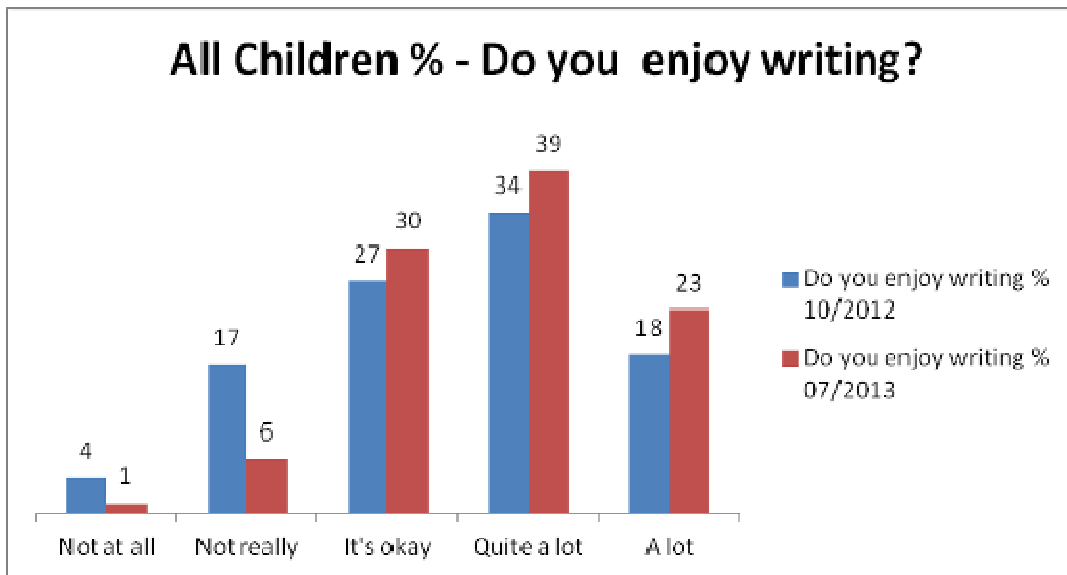


**All children**

Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on the engagement of all children. The pupil evidence collected shows that the proportion of all children who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased from 52% to 62% between September 2011 and July 2012. The proportion of all children who said they enjoyed writing "Not at all' or "Not really" decreased from 21% to 7%.

**EAL**

The proportion of EAL children who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" increased by 21 percentage points but those who said they enjoyed writing "A lot" decreased by 10 percentage points. This shift may imply they are enjoying writing less or they are being challenged at a higher level. The proportion who said they enjoyed writing "Not at all'" or "Not really" decreased from 9% to 2%.

**FSM**

Transforming Writing had a very beneficial impact on engagement of FSM children. The proportion of children receiving free school meals who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased from 48% to 64% .The proportion who said they enjoyed writing "Not at all" or "Not really" decreased from 17% to 1%.

**Boys and girls**

Transforming Writing approaches contributed positively to the engagement of both boys and girls but especially boys. There was a significant reduction in the proportion of boys who said they enjoyed writing "Not at all" or "Not really" from 22% to 7%, compared with a small reduction of 1 percentage point for girls. The proportion of boys who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 20 percentage points while for girls it increased by 4 percentage points. However, girls started with a much higher proportion being very positive about enjoyment of writing.

Additional graphs can be found in Appendix 4.

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

The evidence from children's writing perception surveys shows that there was an increase in all children's positive perceptions of their own ability in writing. This suggests that after a year of teachers focusing on embedded formative assessment, an encouraging proportion of children gained confidence in writing.

*Figure 18: This chart shows all children's perceptions of their own ability in writing in October 2012 and July 2013*
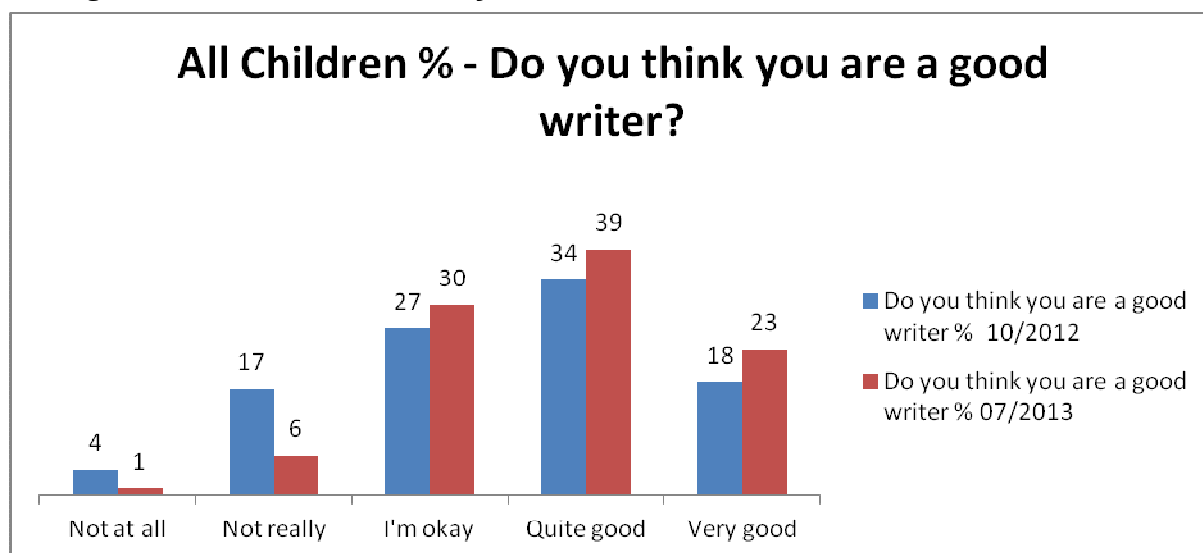


### All children

Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on the confidence of all children. The pupil evidence collected shows that the proportion of all children who said they thought they were 'Not at all' or 'Not really' a good writer decreased from 21% to 7%. The proportion of children who thought themselves "Quite good" or "Very good" writers increased from 52% to 62%.

### EAL

Transforming Writing benefited the confidence of those EAL children who started with the least confidence. The proportion of EAL children who said they were "Quite good" or "Very good" writers decreased from 61% to 58%. This shift may imply their confidence in their own writing ability has decreased or they are being challenged at a higher level and consequently have a more realistic awareness of expectations of writing. The proportion who thought they were "Not at all" or "Not really" good writers decreased from 16% to 8%.

### FSM

Transforming Writing had a very beneficial impact on the confidence of children who receive FSM. The proportion who said they thought they were "Not at all'" or "Not really" good writers reduced from 31% to 12%. The proportion who said they thought they were "Quite good" or "Very good" writers increased by 12%.

### Boys and girls

Transforming Writing contributed positively to the confidence of both boys and girls but had a greater impact on boys. There was a significant reduction in the proportion of boys who said they thought they were "Not at all" or "Not really" good writers, from 31% to 11%, while there was a 7 percentage point reduction for girls. The proportion

of boys who said they thought they were "Quite good" or "Very good" writers increased by 11 percentage points from 44% to 55%, while the proportion of girls increased by 8 percentage points. Again, the girls started with greater confidence in their ability to write.

Additional graphs can be found in Appendix 4.

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

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

*Figure 19: This chart shows all children's perceptions of their own enjoyment of talking about writing in October 2012 and July 2013*
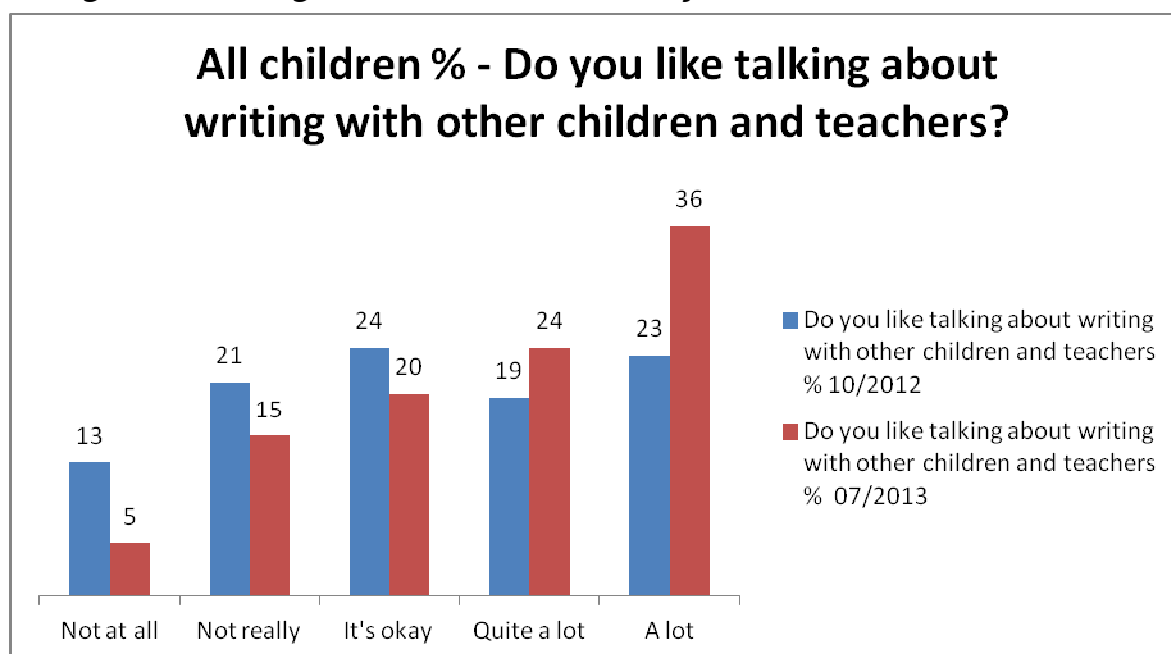


**All children**

Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on the engagement of all children. The pupil evidence collected shows that the proportion of all children who said they liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased from 42% to 60%. The proportion of all children who said they like talking about writing "Not at all'" or "Not really" decreased from 34% to 20%.

**EAL**

Transforming Writing approaches had a positive impact on the engagement of EAL children. The proportion who said they liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased from 44% to 53%.

**FSM**

Transforming Writing had a beneficial impact on the engagement of FSM children. The proportion who said they liked talking about writing "Not at all' or "Not really" decreased from 37% to 20%. The proportion who liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 16 percentage points from 43 % to 59%.

**Boys and girls**

Transforming Writing contributed positively to the engagement of both boys and girls but more positively to boys who started with less engagement. The proportion who said they like talking about writing "Not at all" or "Not really" reduced by 19 percentage points among boys, and by 6 percentage points among girls. The proportion who said they liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot'" increased by 18 percentage points among boys and 15 percentage points among girls.

Additional graphs can be found in Appendix 4.

# Skills and knowledge teachers needed and how they were acquired

> *"All these ideas for formative assessment don't cramp your teaching style. You don't have to be a certain sort of teacher to teach it. It should fit all styles. There are too many things in education where teachers are expected to be robots and I think this doesn't do that. I think it fits in with all teaching styles."*
> Source: teacher

This chapter reports our findings about the skills and knowledge teachers needed to acquire in order to embed formative assessment in writing. It also reports how they were helped by Transforming Writing project teachers when the approach was disseminated across the whole school.

In phase 2, Transforming Writing project teachers disseminated the model of writing practice developed in phase 1 across the whole of each of their schools. Project teachers used a range of strategies to help teachers in their school to embed the formative assessment practices, including a series of CPD training sessions which were developed in workshops to support acquisition of skills and knowledge.

## Data sample

At the end of phase 2, 16 teachers from eight schools were interviewed and surveyed. The teachers' length of service varied from 0 years of service (a GTTP student about to qualify) to 24 years of service. During 2012-13 all of the interviewed teachers had received training and support from Transforming Writing teachers who were disseminating the model of writing practice across their whole school.

## Key findings

Teachers new to embedded formative assessment approaches were effectively trained when Transforming Writing teachers:

- modelled formative assessment approaches
- positioned the teachers as the children during training
- required teachers to practise and complete follow up activities which they reported in the next staff meeting
- provided 'in flight' advice, affirmation and support as teachers practised writing assessment approaches
- enabled teachers to observe them teaching children in the classroom and in the staff meetings
- enabled teachers to analyse other teachers' marking feedback in writing books
- were enthusiastic, expert and created an atmosphere of experimentation and ensured the whole school was training in embedded formative assessment approaches, together at the same time.

Teachers welcomed the way Transforming Writing accommodated, enhanced and improved their existing practices of teaching writing and they did not feel as if Transforming Writing approaches were an imposition.

## What the Transforming Writing teachers did that helped teachers in their school acquire skills and knowledge to embed formative assessment in writing

**Training in staff meetings**

Teachers stated that staff meetings dedicated to embedding formative assessment were very effective. Transforming Writing teachers used the CPD materials they had developed together in workshops. Teachers identified some aspects as having a particularly positive impact on them. These included watching the Transforming Writing teacher modelling assessment approaches with 'real' children in the staff meeting and then viewing and discussing with the children the written assessment in the children's own writing books. Watching film of Transforming Writing teachers in their own classroom, in the staff's own school, using the assessment approaches was also identified as helpful. It gave them a model of what they could then do with their own class.

Interviewed teachers stated that being positioned as learners in interactive and practical staff meetings was effective. It enabled them to better understand how to teach the assessment approaches as well as helping them to appreciate the learning experience of the children and how the approaches might benefit them.

> *"Training was a model of how we would then do it. We were like the children. Rather than be told about something it was ...actually taking part and actually doing it yourself rather than being told about it...makes you feel more confident about doing it, I think."*
> Teacher: *"It was like we were Vicki and Stuart's children for the morning. I felt this is how the children must feel when you ask them to do something."*

Source: teachers

This emphasis on Transforming Writing teachers both showing and telling was regarded as effective by teachers.

They valued those staff meetings that were experienced as part of a sequence of training. At these, they were expected to follow up the training by trying out the assessment approaches in their classrooms and then share the outcomes and reflections at a subsequent staff meeting. Providing the training at a staff meeting, staff having a go themselves and then returning to discuss the experience was regarded as a central and sophisticated aspect of the training. It was effective when they were able to be honest and share those aspects of the assessment approaches they found hard as well as those that were successful. Practising in their own classrooms in between staff meeting training was identified as very important.

Getting the tenor of the staff training was important for teachers. It was best for them when Transforming Writing teachers did not make them feel under pressure and promoted an 'open process that asked staff to try this.' Teachers said this made them feel ownership of a shared learning process into which they were making valuable contributions when they discussed their experiences in the classroom.

Once staff had established use of embedded assessment, it was necessary to evolve appropriate ways of training to sustain professional development. One school organised staff meetings so teachers could choose 'micro groups' within it to enhance specific aspects of their practice. One school identified teachers who were developing expertise in particular approaches and enabled them to lead small groups themselves in staff meetings. Another ensured that they provided staff meetings explicitly for new staff.

### Structured classroom support

Every single interviewed teacher stated in the survey that observing their own class being taught by the Transforming Writing teacher would be of the highest value to them.

> *"It's one thing seeing someone teach another class a strategy but when they come in and do it with the children you're actually working with, I think that is even more helpful because you can see it in your own setting and it gives you the opportunity to stand back and look at your class in a way that you don't get to do very often"*

Source: teacher

Teachers said that observation helped them realise embedding formative assessment in writing was often to do with looking at existing practice in a different way and applying different emphasis. This was important for experienced classroom teachers and supported teachers' confidence.

Thoughtfully structuring an observation or team teaching experience was important to make the experience effective. One teacher described how before the Transforming Writing teacher came to her class, they had planned the lesson beforehand and discussed how they hoped it would go and what approaches they would try out. This "experimenting together"' was regarded as highly effective.

### "In flight" support

Nearly all the interviewed teachers, unprompted by interviewer, enthusiastically suggested that being able to "pop in" and "just have a chat" with the Transforming Writing teachers in between staff meetings was very effective. Teachers valued opportunities to informally revisit aspects of the training in the staff meeting, clarify their understanding, confirm what they were doing was on the right lines or evaluate why an approach was not working as well as they had hoped it would in their own classroom. They liked the chance to evaluate their planning as the unit of writing was developing.

> *"It's very helpful to have someone you can talk to at different stages of the process. So it might be about planning, planning to use particular strategies in class. Or it might be midway through it, 'I've tried this and this is what happened'. It's almost like bouncing ideas off someone. When you're reflecting on something, it's almost easier to reflect when you have someone as a wall in a funny way. It's almost as if they don't necessarily need to comment but can help you reflect on things."*

Source: teacher

Having Transforming Writing teachers explain, support and show them at the point of need was considered highly desirable and effective.

> *"We can go to Katie whenever we need to. Your class isn't the same as everyone else's class. Your needs aren't the same as everyone else's needs. You need to know there is a base of knowledge there to just check up and check you're doing things right. You might not think of it at an Inset (staff meeting training)."*

Source: teacher

### Whole school organisation

Teachers explained that a whole school approach which gives embedded formative assessment a high priority, positively supported them acquiring the skills and knowledge of embedded formative assessment. It was helpful when the whole school was learning together and all the staff were using the same assessment approaches. Teachers valued a clear and shared sense of progression of the writing skills enabling them to be clear about what to teach and the expectations of the school. They approved of being trained in focused, positive schools where the whole school was

immersed in Transforming Writing. Developing whole school structures together that every teacher uses in their classroom was identified as valuable e.g. an 'Everyday Writers Toolkit, or an assessment structure where every teacher does the same assessment on each day of the week.

## Resources

Schools had made providing teachers with resources a priority and teachers appreciated having relevant books and equipment such as the visualiser. Teachers said that when they had a new resource, such as the visualiser, it was useful to be (1) given the resource and have a go with it (2) know the whole school is experimenting with it at the same time (3) observe someone else using it for assessment (4) come back to a staff meeting to talk about what you have done and hear what other people have done and finally (5) to collaboratively decide something specific to do with it next.

## Characteristics of trainer

Interviewed teachers appreciated and respected the personal and professional qualities of the Transforming Writing teachers and this made a difference to the way they acquired relevant skills and knowledge. Teachers described the Transforming Writing teachers as "outstanding, capable teachers" who did not "prescribe'", but because of their enthusiasm, experience and expertise with the assessment approach, were able to help the teachers "believe in the approach". They appreciated Transforming Writing teachers who gave positive feedback to move them forward and who made them feel they could make mistakes as they progressed. They liked Transforming Writing teachers to be "open people who are willing to share their good practice". Teachers appreciated training which made them feel it was a learning process for themselves, with them feeding into the process, rather than something that was "dictatorial" and in which their own style of teaching could be accommodated.

> *"All these ideas for formative assessment don't cramp your teaching style. You don't have to be a certain sort of teacher to teach it. It should fit all styles. There are too many things in education where teachers are expected to be robots and I think this doesn't do that. I think it fits in with all teaching styles".*

Source: teacher

## Book scrutiny

Teachers repeatedly stated that they valued being able to read other classes' writing books and see how their colleagues marked writing, used feedback and developed assessment dialogue. They valued being able to look at the Transforming Writing teachers' marking to see in detail how they develop a dialogue, suggest improvements and how the children respond to the assessment and use peer and self-assessment.

## Survey to identify what teachers believe would support them

Teachers' surveys suggested that their acquisition of skills and knowledge of embedded formative assessment of writing would be supported most effectively by:

- Observing Transforming Writing teacher teach the class of the observing teacher
- Demonstrations of practice by Transforming Writing teacher during staff meeting training
- Planning with Transforming Writing teacher
- Team teaching with Transforming Writing teacher
- Doing what the children are going to do themselves in the staff meeting, e.g. make a toolkit
- Provision of resources to use

The survey suggested that teachers thought that the least effective support would include:

- Filming their own teaching and analysing it with a colleague
- Filming their own teaching and analysing it alone. Interestingly, those teachers that did film themselves said it was very effective.
- Keeping a reflective journal

**Summary of teachers' views on being trained**

Teachers valued a whole school approach that valued their own strengths and style of teaching. They liked to invest purposefully in the development of the embedded formative assessment approaches and to be trained and supported by expert, open and available teachers. They liked to see those training them modelling practices with children and they liked to experience the approaches themselves in staff meetings as if they were " the shoes of the learner". They liked to have follow up tasks to staff meetings and to discuss and share their progress. They liked to plan and team teach and to observe the trainer in the classroom. They were not enthusiastic about being observed themselves or filming and analysing themselves teaching embedded formative assessment. They liked "in flight" advice, clarification and affirmation and they liked to have available the necessary resources.

**Confidence**

All 16 teachers' surveys indicated that they were confident to use most of the Transforming Writing assessment approaches in whole class, small group and one to one contexts and there were few expressions of lack of confidence. Nearly all the surveyed teachers identified themselves as confident in using washing lines, the visualiser, modelling talk that supports formative assessment of writing and planning in response to assessment of writing. The teachers' responses to the survey suggest that they are relatively less confident with using toolkits, though they are confident. This is supported by interviews in which teachers said they found that developing a toolkit collaboratively with children was a more demanding skill to learn. Mini writing lessons were also identified as an approach with which they had comparatively less confidence. Responses to this survey suggest the dissemination of the model of writing by Transforming Writing teachers had been successful in developing teachers' confidence.

Charts of survey results are available on request.

## Next steps

The National Literacy Trust will now begin to spread the approaches developed by the Transforming Writing project more widely into schools. Some of the participating schools will be taking part in this further work. Transforming Writing will form part of the National Literacy Trust's conference and training offer, with conferences on raising writing attainment scheduled for January 2014. A more in-depth training for schools, using the model developed by participants during phase 2 of the project, will also be available.

In addition to this, the National Literacy Trust intends to work with secondary schools to consider how the approaches can be applied to teaching in these settings.

# Appendix 1: Glossary

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

| Word | Definition |
|------|-----------|
| Boxing up | A simple two-column grid technique, illustrated below, that can be used to exemplify the structure of any type of text. The same structure can then be used to plan a similar text.<br><br><table><tr><td>Beginning</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Middle<br>•</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>•</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>•</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>End</td><td></td></tr></table><br>There is a new row for each paragraph and the topic of each paragraph is written in the left-hand column of the grid. Its simplicity makes it easy for children to grasp the underlying structure of any text and apply it to any similar writing task so that they can plan their writing right across the curriculum.<br><br>Typically, once children are familiar with a text, the teacher will use the boxing up technique to co-construct with the class how the text has been structured. Usually, the text would be on the whiteboard and the teacher would involve the children in boxing up the text on a flip chart so that they can see how the boxed up text represents the structure of the exemplar text. After that they would analyse the specific features of the text and co-construct the related toolkit. The boxed up planning would then be used to support the ensuing shared writing that they would innovate based on the exemplar.<br><br>When a class is first learning how to write a particular type of text, this shared writing might be broken down into each section of the boxed up plan so that the children are first involved in shared writing of the introduction and then go on to write their own introduction. In this way, over time, they are shown how to write the whole text within the boxed up plan. |
| Colour coding | See Highlighters below |
| Composition skills | The skills that contribute to writing any type of text. They include the skills of selecting appropriate vocabulary, crafting sentences and forming them into paragraphs and whole texts that meet the writing purposes so the writing has the intended effect on the reader. |
| Extended plenaries | Pools of time in the lesson sequence when teachers enable pupils to discuss the writing they have done, the challenges they have encountered and how they have overcome them. It is an opportunity for the children to articulate the processes they used to solve problems in their writing using vocabulary, sentences, paragraphs and whole text structures. In this way, teachers can both assess children and respond to assessment. Children frequently do more of the talking in these collaborative contexts than teachers. |
| Guided writing | When the teacher guides the collaborative talk of a small group of children as they assess and revise their own and each other's writing. Usually a group of six children engage in a mixture of assessment activities which may include reference to the toolkit; highlighting segments of their own and each other's writing; discussing their choices and thought processes that led to those choices and offering each other suggestions for revisions to vocabulary, sentences and whole text structure that will bring the assessed writing closer to the intended writing outcomes with the desired effect on the reader. |

| Word | Definition |
|------|------------|
| Highlighters | Children use highlighter pens to colour in segments of their composition during revision of their writing. Each colour is coded, for example, pink for "tickled pink" and green for "growth". Segments of writing children have coloured in with a pink highlighter might indicate words and sentences they have identified as working well and likely to have the intended effect on the reader. Segments coloured in green might indicate words and sentences that could be revised and improved through addition, substitution, deletion or moving words. |
| Mini writing lessons | When a small group of children focus on one writing technique or language feature to develop in their own writing under the guidance of a teacher, a teaching assistant or even another peer who has understood it already. Children self-select and opt to join this group based on their own self-assessment or in response to peer and teacher assessment of their writing. Children then use what they have learned in their own writing. Teachers may offer a suite of mini writing lessons from which children can select. |
| Peer marking | When children assess each other's writing and identify those segments that meet intended writing outcomes and are likely to have the intended effect on the reader and those segments that do not. Segments of their writing might then be revised and improved by addition, substitution, deletion or moving words. Peer marking is often done orally in a collaborative context such as guided writing, working with a partner or in whole class contexts when a child will project his or her writing composition onto the whiteboard so the whole class can discuss it. The writing toolkit usually underpins and informs the talk in peer marking. Peer marking may also involve children writing assessment responses on a peer's composition or using highlighters to identify segments that are effective or need revision. Peer marking is accompanied by a dialogue between the writer and the peer marker. |
| Secretarial skills | Writing skills that serve the child's ability to compose and include spelling, handwriting, keyboard dexterity, use of punctuation and paragraphing. A term frequently used interchangeably with transcription skills. |
| Shared reading | A collaborative learning approach in which the teacher explicitly models for the children the strategies and skills that a reader needs. As the children become familiar with the skills they increasingly take more responsibility for reading the text. It can also be used as an opportunity to involve the whole class collaboratively in analysing a text to support the evolving construction of a writing toolkit that will support writing similar text. |
| Shared writing | When the teacher involves the whole class in composing a piece of writing using the language features and writing techniques identified in the writing toolkit. It is often supported by an exemplar text displayed on screen and a boxed up plan of the text. The teacher usually scribes with a marker pen on a flip chart or on a whiteboard or s/he might type into a keyboard so the words appear on the electronic whiteboard. Through focused questioning the teacher helps the class make and discuss choices of vocabulary, sentence construction and whole text structure. The class engages collaboratively in rereading and revising, assessing how well the writing works, and judging the effect on the reader. The teacher models the internal voice of the writer, articulating and externalising her/his thought processes as s/he writes. The constant looping back of the writer who simultaneously rereads what has just been written and then writes new words is demonstrated by the teacher. This shows children that assessment and revision of writing is a continuous process writers do as they are writing, as well as after the first draft is completed. Shared writing provides models of talking about writing that children will subsequently use themselves in guided writing, peer marking and as they write independently. |
| Stick-on-arrows | Paper arrows with a sticky surface that attach to paper like a post-it note. Children stick these arrows onto their own and each other's compositions during self and peer assessment of writing to identify words and sentences that have either worked well or could be revised. The writing toolkit guides what children write on the stick-on-arrows. |

| Word | Definition |
|------|-----------|
| Text maps | Simple pictorial representations, drawn by teacher or child, of key moments of a text in sequence sometimes connected by arrows indicating the forward movement of the text. Usually, these are simple cartoon drawings representing key events or facts and act as a support for the children helping them to remember and freeing up their working memory as they compose. Equally, they can be used to represent a text to help children internalise the pattern of language of any text. |
| Toolkit | Lists of collectively agreed writing tools for the particular type of text, often written on a sheet of large paper with a marker pen. Each tool on the list is an ingredient the children will consider using in their own composition. Toolkits are often hung up in the classroom, sometimes on a washing line, so children can refer to them when they are assessing their own and each other's writing. Some teachers stick toolkits in the pupils' books, on the page where the children are writing, so that children can easily refer to them during the writing and revision process and can tick off what writing tools they have used and discuss how well they have used them. |
| Transcription skills | Writing skills that serve children's ability to compose including spelling, handwriting, keyboard dexterity, use of punctuation and paragraphing. A term frequently used interchangeably with secretarial skills. |
| Visualiser | A simple device connected to the electronic whiteboard in the classroom. A pupil's writing book is placed beneath a vertical arm with a lens on the top which projects a live image of the writing onto the whiteboard. This allows the whole class to see the writing and assess it collaboratively. |
| Washing lines | A simple way of providing a flexible working wall in the classroom to visually support learning. A washing line, or a piece of string, plus pegs, is strung across the classroom thus enabling the teacher to easily display the key features of a text that have been co-constructed with the class on a flip chart. |
|  | Sheets are added to the washing line as the teaching sequence progresses. For example, in chronological order it could display the text map, boxed up planning, toolkit, related vocabulary and shared writing for the type of text being focused on. Children can then refer to these while composing their own work. They can be modified by the class as their understanding of the writing genre they are learning develops during the teaching sequence. |
| Writing tool | Language feature or writing technique children may select to construct their writing. These are often collaboratively collected and listed by children and teachers. The list evolves from shared reading of the type of text children are preparing to write themselves. |

# Appendix 2: Explanation of the 12 classroom approaches

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

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

### 1. Children initiating the teacher assessment of their own writing



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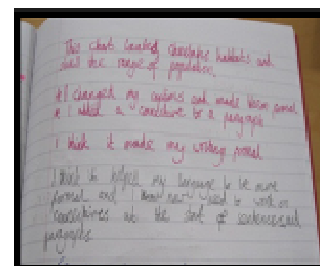
> "Some occasions we expect just written responses to their writing. These tend to be better quality than talking partner discussions. Writing it seems to focus the quality of the response."

Source: teacher

### 2. Peer marking

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

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

Source: teacher

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

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

> "This part makes me want to focus on what happens next."
> "This part is scary because you have used this word."

Source: teacher

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

## 4. Building in sufficient time for children to actively respond to marking

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

## 5. Children using highlighters

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

## 6. Arrows to focus assessment talk



Teachers said it was effective when children used stick-on arrows in their writing to identify their use of the collaboratively agreed writing goals (the toolkits) for the genre they were writing. The arrows helped children to assess their own and their peers' writing. The arrows indicated the focus for the peer talk and helped them to talk at length. Using arrows and talking around them is a skill that children have to be explicitly taught. Using arrows to support assessment talk may take a whole lesson. The procedure used by teachers was (1) children write arrows with reference to the writing goals (toolkit) at the start of the plenary. After they have written, (2) children then share their writing with a partner using the arrows to guide and stimulate assessment talk then (3) the teacher asks children to focus on specific aspects, depending on the focus of the lesson and (4) they compare and assess their use of writing goals (toolkit) with each other.
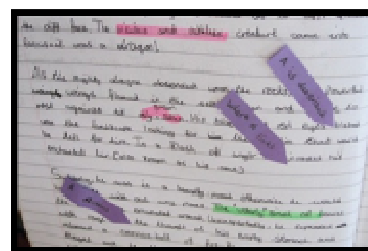
> Teacher 1: "Then they discuss, 'Well, you've done that. It's good but I've done it like this. What do you think?' And then they discuss."
> Teacher 2: "(They say) 'I wrote this question to make them really think' and so they might compare their own ones."
> Teacher 1: "And explain their choices."
> Teacher 2: "This is a whole lesson in the first instance. It's lessons and not just added on to the plenary. They need to be taught that…we have to spend time on that to get the children doing that well enough for it to be worthwhile."

Source: teachers

## 7. Immediate teaching in response to precise assessment

Prioritising assessment and immediately acting upon it were regarded by teachers as essential qualities of an effective Transforming Writing teacher. Teachers need to identify the single most important piece of feedback and be very focused on one

feature of writing that children can tackle and will lead to an immediate improvement. Assessments done by teachers need to be addressed in the next lesson . The teacher needs to know exactly what it is s/he wants the children to respond to as a result of the assessment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*"The children are now talking about what makes a good piece of writing in relation to the reader and what it tells them rather than the tools they have used."*
Source: teacher
*"It's not about ticking off a list. It's actually thinking, which parts of this work well in this particular part of the writing and why, you know, and why am I using this? Why would this effect work well in this part? Then making those choices themselves but being able to talk about those choices they've made very articulately."*
Source: headteacher

Teachers said that writing toolkits supported "deeper" teaching and learning than lists of success criteria they had previously used. Writing toolkits, accompanied by collaborative analysis of texts and collaborative assessment of children's writing, can help children to develop qualitative assessment of "how well"' a "tool" or language feature has been used and the effect on the reader. Evolving toolkits were more appropriate for supporting and assessing a generative process like writing. This is because they facilitate children assessing writing quality and scaffold children's learning. Toolkits help children shape and consolidate their writing processes on their own.
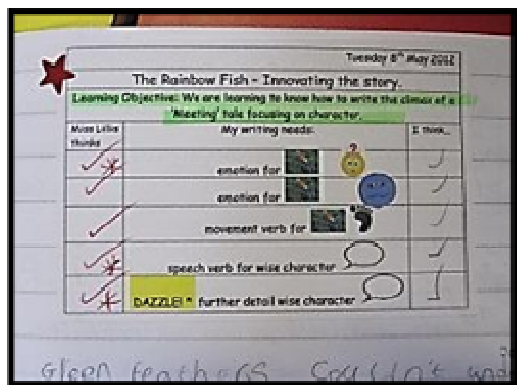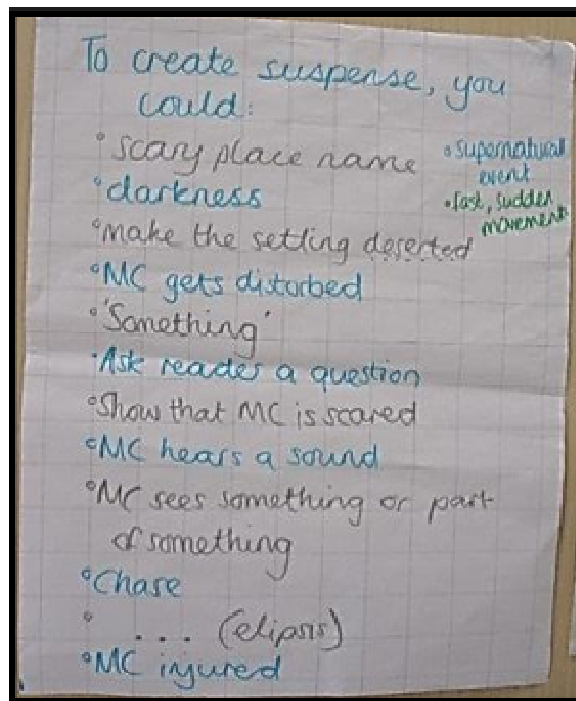




As schools developed their use of Transforming Writing approaches, the toolkit became a working document made by teachers and children together. They were never "finalised" but organically grown as their knowledge grew, and added to during the year.

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

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

These "washing lines" served at least two purposes. First, washing lines act as collectively constructed notes for children to refer to and modify while they are composing on their own. Writing is a complex process requiring the simultaneous orchestration of composition and transcription processes. This places a high demand on young writers' working memory. The washing lines provide reminders and
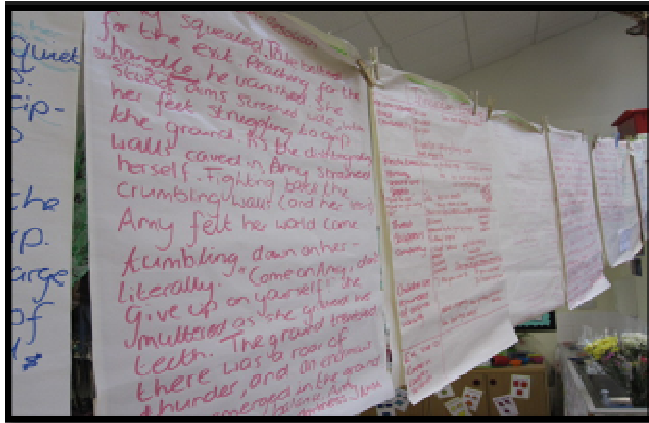
resources e.g. vocabulary, sentence types, sentence starters, guidance on planning to lighten the cognitive load, and help children write more effectively until they can internalise them for themselves. For teachers it was a way of providing both a scaffold for writing and of handing over writing skills and ways of thinking about writing to the children, so they can eventually use the skills more independently.

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

Source: teacher

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

*"… inside their head. They don't need it on the wall. They can see it on the wall in their head."*

Source: teacher

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

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

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



To facilitate this whole class dialogue, a visualiser was used (kindly supplied by TTS). These devices are ubiquitous in primary schools, and enable a teacher to place a child's writing beneath the lens and throw an enlarged image of it on the whiteboard to provide a focal point for class analysis and assessment.
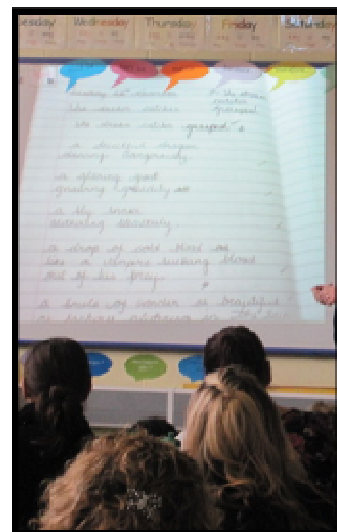
Teachers have the flexibility to create this whole class dialogic space for assessment talk at any point in the sequence of lessons e.g. planning, first draft, final presentation.

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

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

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

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

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

Source: teacher

In order for collaborative assessment of writing to take place among children, teachers had to establish a shared language about writing processes that supported and underpinned the exchange of ideas and helped children to express themselves. Toolkits (collectively agreed writing goals) made by the whole class together, were a central feature of this common language or metalanguage. These would include such words as "ing word", "ly word", "bossy words" and "sentence starters". This enabled children to articulate ideas about writing and assessment of writing in the way that was meaningful to them but they did not need to use the formal grammatical terms, though

usually they did. Children could collectively develop and invent much of their own metalanguage and this worked so long as everybody in the class had a shared understanding. Internalising the metalanguage helped children talk about and think about the way they both used language features and techniques and the way they thought about writing.

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

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

One teacher expressed this by saying, "my role has firstly involved modelling talking about writing". Teachers modelled what to say and how to say it. They modelled how to construct discussions about writing and how to focus the talk about the impact on the reader. A lot of modelling of assessment talk was done in whole class formative assessment contexts in order that assessment by talk partners would be of a high quality. Peer assessment in groups and with partners can be shallow, without detail or justification of opinions, even though it focuses on compositional rather than secretarial skills. Without modelling of talk about writing children can stall at "I do/don't like it". Modelling shows the children how to explain how and why their writing works or justify why and how it needs revision. Modelling provides clear expectations of how to articulate responses in talk about writing.

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

### Modelling writing assessment talk in reading comprehension lessons

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

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

Source: teacher

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

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

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



> Teacher 1:*"When we've been sharing writing, we've been modelling that whole process (gives example). I stopped at that part and said, 'this is what's happened. Ok, if I was a character, what words will I use for…? What words shall I come up with? Talk to your partner about their emotions? How are they going to react? If you're in semi-darkness and silhouettes how are you going to feel?' And we have that discussion about characters' feelings. Ok, how are they going to feel? We've talked about what word am I going to use to best portray that to the reader."*
> Teacher 2: *"You try to talk your thought processes as a writer. So I've got choices as a writer…"*
> Teacher 1: *"So then they came up with choices. How would they move? How would they behave at that point in the story?"*
> Source: teachers

## Teachers were modelling the metacognitive manager

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

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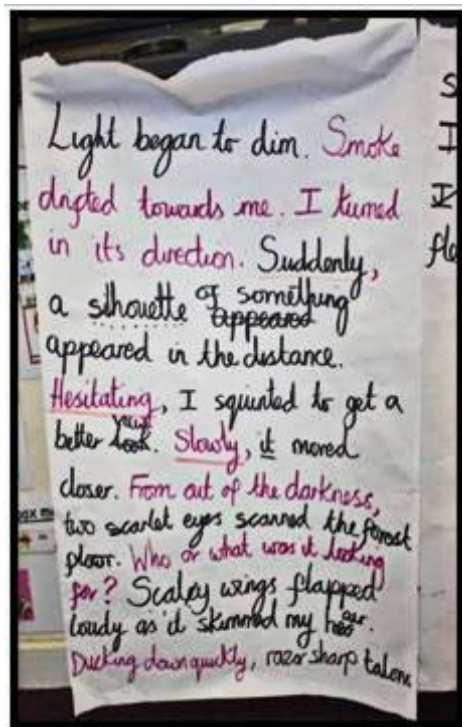> Source: teacher

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

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

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

Teachers identified a mutually reinforcing relationship between shared reading (the whole class collaboratively analysing a published story or extract of text, guided by the teacher) and formative assessment of writing. Shared reading supported children's

deepening and more explicit awareness of the needs of the audiences for their own writing. As they discussed together how published writers purposefully used words to create an impact on their audience, children made connections to how they had used words to achieve their purposes in their own writing and reflected on their own thinking processes.

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

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

> *"The link between reading and writing is becoming stronger all the time."*
> Source: teacher

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

> *"As a sideline to all of the project we've been doing, we've noticed our children's understanding of text has massively improved."*
> Source: teacher

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

> *"Giving them the tools to tear apart their own and each other's writing is really now showing in their reading and comprehension. Their comprehension of reading is coming on well now."*
> Source: teacher

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

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

because this enabled children to take risks and progress as writers in response to assessment from teachers and peers.

> *"It has been extremely important to instil a sense of worth in them regarding what they are writing. This leads to them developing as thoughtful writers who are able to be braver in writing which is leading to improvement overall."*
> *Source: teacher*

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

**Shared writing**

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

> *Teacher 1: "Letting them know we're reading your work and we can make comments about your work and it's not personal. It doesn't mean you're rubbish at this. They take it on board in a much more mature way now."*
> *Teacher 2: "It's about improving what they've done and giving them ideas and feedback to improve what they've done."*
> Source: teachers

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

**Assessment as a relationship**

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

**Questions and prompts**

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

> *"As you're questioning them throughout from the very start you are assessing them, because from the outset you are seeing what they know. So you are questioning them before they put pen to paper, before they are really discussing anything. You*

*are already asking them what do you already know about this text? What are you expecting to see? What it will look like?"*
Source: teacher

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

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

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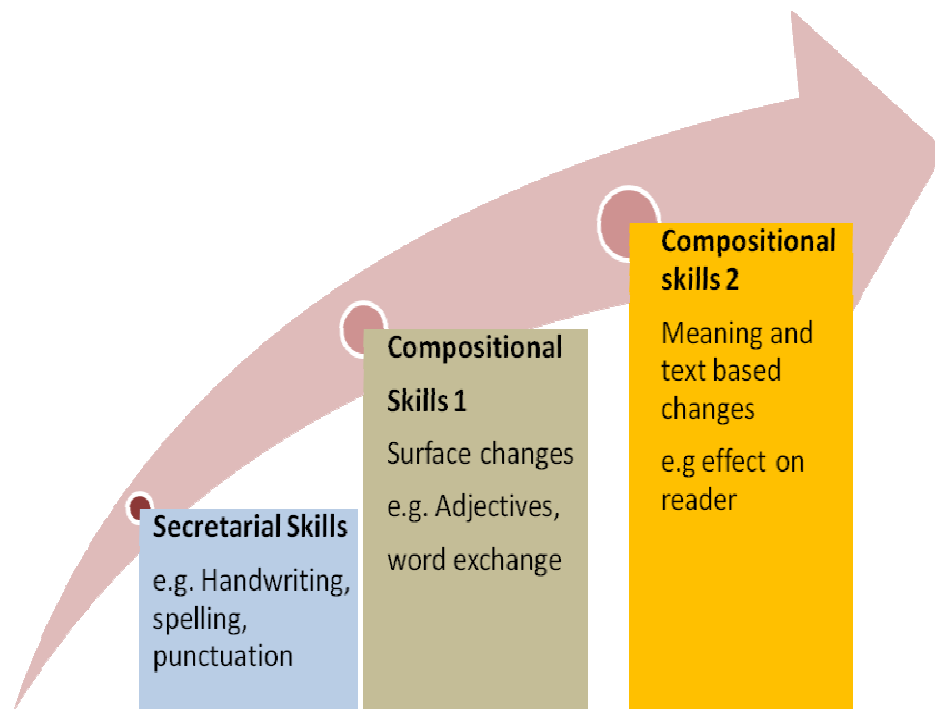Source: teacher

## Establishing routines

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

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

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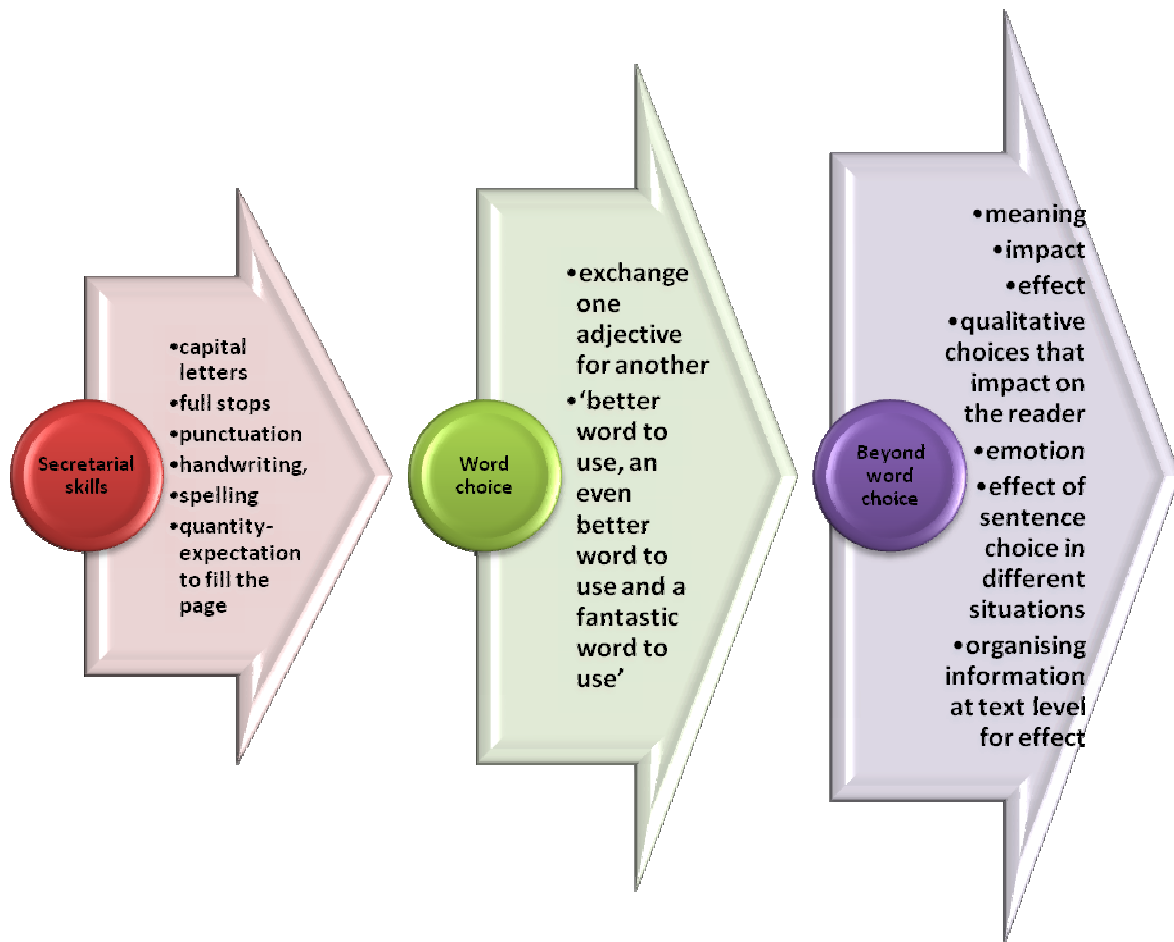
Teachers developed clear understandings about how the quality of children's talk about writing should progress. They knew where they wanted the children to be "going next" in terms of the focus and quality of their assessments of their own and one another's writing. Teachers developed steps in progression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

**Compositional skills 2**

Meaning and text based changes

e.g effect on reader

**Compositional Skills 1**

Surface changes e.g. Adjectives, word exchange

**Secretarial Skills**

e.g. Handwriting, spelling, punctuation

Teachers wanted children to progress beyond revising only secretarial skills and develop their compositional skills as well. Two compositional steps were identified and we have borrowed and adapted the terms "surface changes" and "meaning and text based changes".[12]

Teachers saw their role as working with children to help them to "sift out" comments on secretarial aspects of their writing. It was something that took time and energy and was considered to be "something we will be working on for a while". Teachers considered it a significant part of their role to make judgements about how much attention to give to secretarial skills while keeping the focus firmly on composition, purpose and effect on the reader. To guide these judgements, teachers developed the model above. A more detailed and classroom-friendly model identifies the three steps as: secretarial skills, word choice and beyond word choice. The model below summarises the features of assessment talk associated with each of these steps. These features indicate a classroom-friendly pathway forward for developing the content and quality of children's formative assessment talk about writing.

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[12] Faigley, L. and Witte, S. (1981) 'Analysing Revision', *College Composition and Communication,* 32: 400-414.

**Secretarial skills**
- capital letters
- full stops
- punctuation
- handwriting,
- spelling
- quantity-expectation to fill the page

**Word choice**
- exchange one adjective for another
- 'better word to use, an even better word to use and a fantastic word to use'

**Beyond word choice**
- meaning
- impact
- effect
- qualitative choices that impact on the reader
- emotion
- effect of sentence choice in different situations
- organising information at text level for effect

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

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

Source: teacher

## 9. Teachers used flexible and responsive planning

Teachers were flexible in the way they planned their sequences of writing lessons in order to facilitate the children's formative assessment of writing. While they had to be very well planned with a well-structured writing unit embodying consistent procedures and have a clear idea of how the unit of writing was going to unfold, teachers had to be willing and able to adjust and modify their lessons as the unit progressed. This is because, teachers said, if formative assessment is to be truly formative, then when a

teacher identifies a need from the children or the children themselves identify a need, it must be rapidly addressed at the nearest possible point in the sequence of lessons. This sometimes meant that teachers had to modify a lesson at very short notice, and sometimes slow down. This could mean that the lesson sequence took longer than anticipated.

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

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

Source: teacher



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

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

Source: teacher

Teachers said it was important to be "fluid" with the groups formed for guided writing in the following lesson in response to assessment. Differentiation in lessons is based on assessment of what the children have written in the previous lesson. Fixed guided writing groups were undesirable.

> "For your guided writing groups you'd mark that night...(and) it's differentiated on what the children have done the night before. So rather than saying Red Group, you're with me for guided writing today, you say, Tom, Joe, so-and-so you're with me today and we're going to focus on this."

Source: headteacher

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

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

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

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

Source: teacher

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

Teachers identified some characteristics of mini lessons as:

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

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

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

Guided writing characteristics include:

- Teacher selects the focus of guided writing – the teacher works with one group of up to six children for about 20 minutes, focusing on

an aspect of writing she has identified through marking or oral "in flight" assessment, during the preceding few days. Guided writing is assessment led

- It allows the teacher to focus on the children's progress during the writing process itself
- Groups are composed of children who have a common need – these may not be ability groups
- Children are given instant feedback about their understanding of writing processes and they way they think about writing
- Teachers are thinking the process of writing aloud with the children, "there and then" at the table. They make sure children revisit their writing, read it, and revise it with a "present" audience of children to assist them
- Children may or may not produce any new writing during the discussion

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

Source: teacher

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

Source: teacher

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

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

### Teachers writing themselves

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

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

> *"An activity that the children have now become very familiar with is the analysis of 'Bill and Betty's' pieces of work. Bill and Betty are two fictional characters who often 'visit' our classroom and leave their writing up on the flip chart. When I prepare Bill and Betty's pieces of writing I purposely include sentences that are too long, overly descriptive etc. so that when we come to mark and analyse their work as a class these are themes that we can highlight and comment on. During this activity the children work in response partners to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses in the piece of writing. I then take contributions and we discuss the work at whole class level, ensuring focus of their attention on the key themes, before constructing a comment on the writing. This activity works well to develop the inner*

*critic in the children, as they do not have to critique their own or a friend's work but instead a fictional character's. These extended plenaries are very effective for addressing key teaching points."*
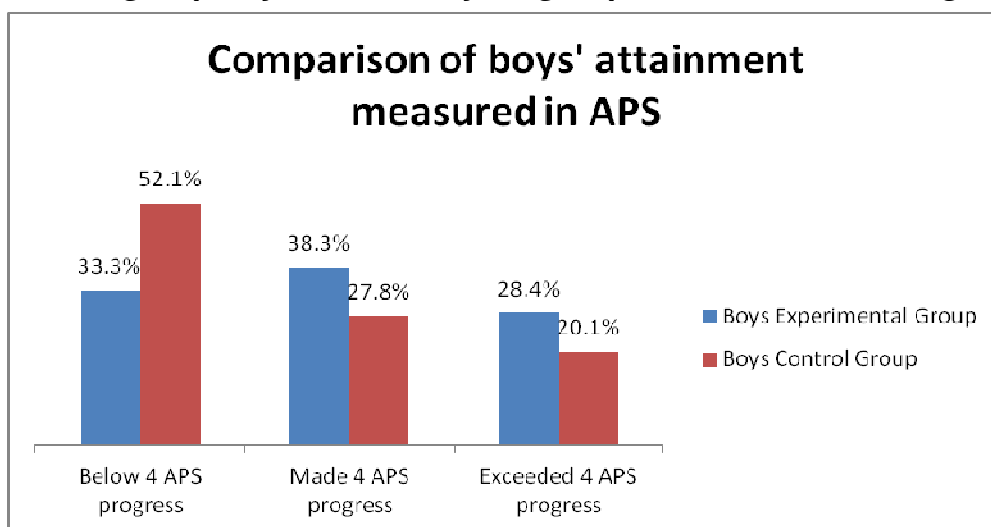
Source: teacher

# Appendix 3: Control group – additional charts

## Boys and girls

*Figure 20: This chart compares the attainment in writing of experimental and control group boys across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores*



Comparison of boys' attainment measured in APS

The pupil evidence collected shows that Transforming Writing made a significant impact on boys, particularly the proportion that made progress below 4 APS, which was nearly 19 percentage points less for those who experienced Transforming Writing compared with boys in the control group. A larger proportion of boys who experienced Transforming Writing made progress of 4 APS compared with the control group, with a difference of 10.5 percentage points; the difference for those exceeding 4 APS progress was 8 percentage points.

*Figure 21: This chart compares the attainment in writing of experimental and control group girls across all year groups measured in Average Point Scores*



Comparison of girls' attainment measured in APS
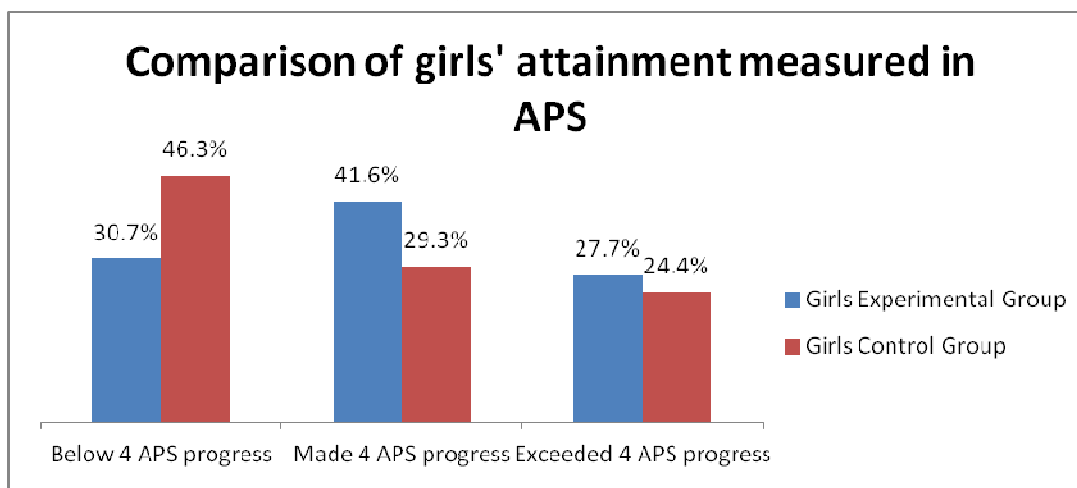
Transforming Writing made a similarly significant impact on girls, particularly the proportion that made progress below 4 APS, which was nearly 15.5 percentage points less for those who experienced Transforming Writing compared with girls in the control group. A larger proportion of girls who experienced Transforming Writing made progress of 4 APS compared with the control group, with a difference of 12 percentage points; the difference for those exceeding 4 APS progress was 3 percentage points. Transforming Writing made a significant difference to both boys' and girls' attainment but it made a more significant difference to the boy's attainment.

# Appendix 4: Impact on children's confidence and engagement – additional charts

## Do you enjoy writing?

*Figure 22: This chart shows how children for whom English is an additional language perceived their own enjoyment of writing in October 2012 and July 2013*
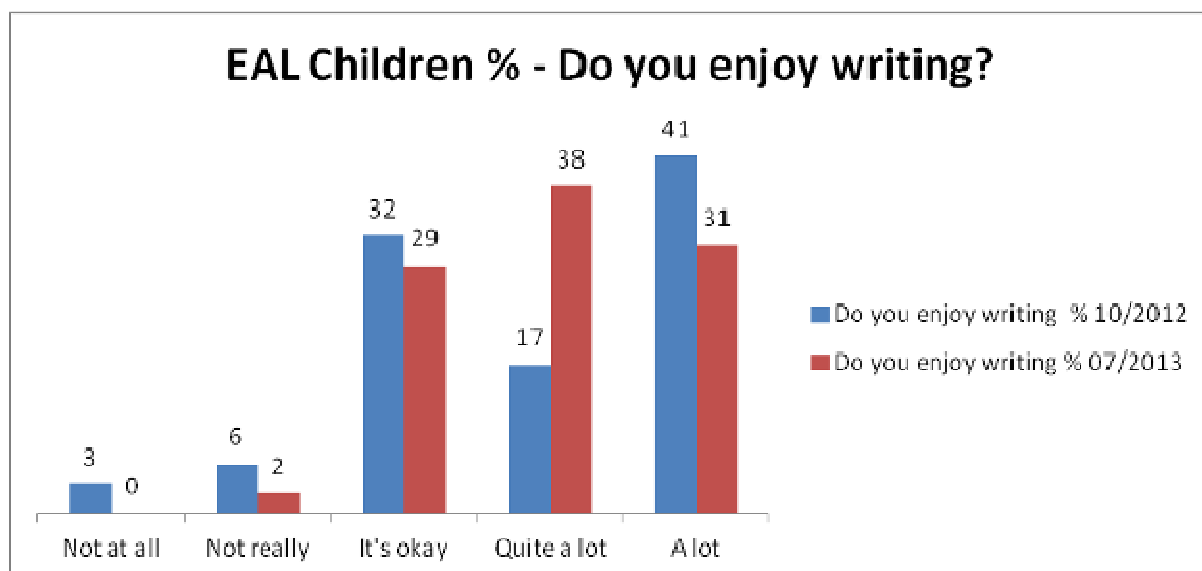


The pupil evidence collected shows that the proportion of EAL children who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot'" increased from 58% to 69% between October 2011 and July 2012. Interestingly, fewer EAL children said they enjoyed writing "A lot", with a difference of 10 percentage points, but more said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot", by 21 percentage points. This shift may imply they are enjoying writing less or they are being challenged at a higher level. The proportion of all children who said they did enjoyed writing "Not at all" or "Not really" decreased from 9% to 2%.

*Figure 23: This chart shows how children who receive free school meals perceived their own enjoyment of writing in October 2012 and July 2013*
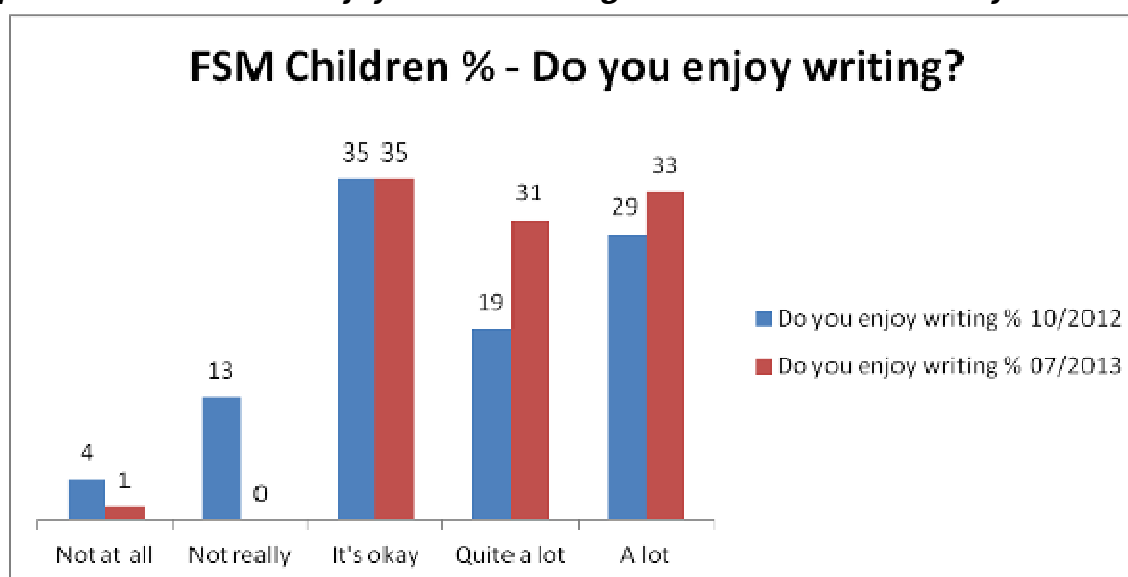
The pupil evidence collected shows that the proportion of children receiving free school meals who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased from 48% to 64% between October 2011 and July 2012.

The proportion of all children who said they enjoyed writing "Not at all" or "Not really" decreased from 17% to 1%. This suggests it had a very beneficial impact on engagement of FSM children.

*Figure 24: These charts show how boys and girls perceived their own enjoyment of writing in October 2012 and July 2013*
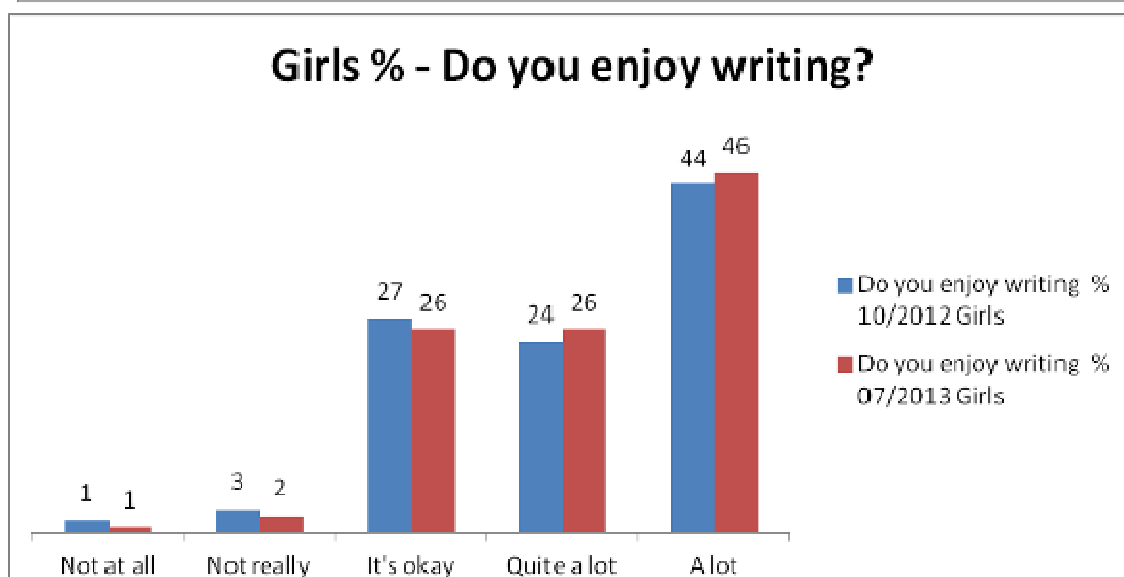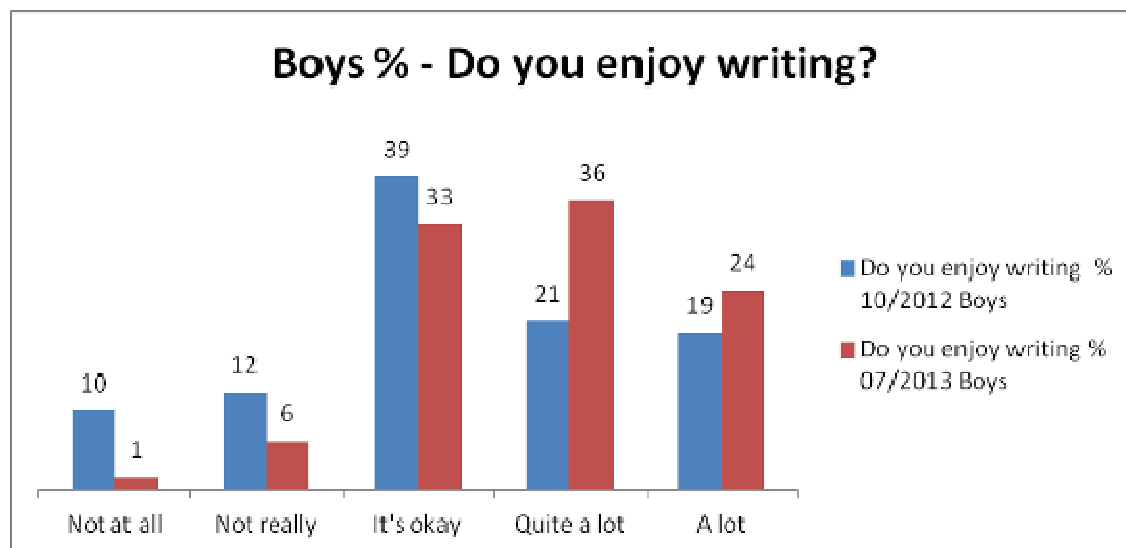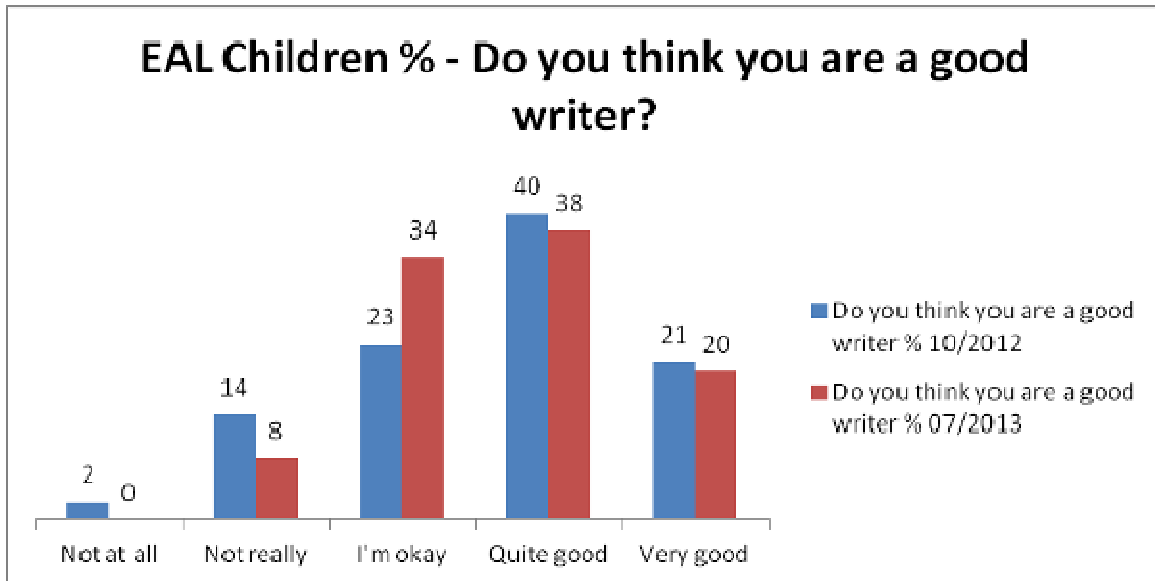


The pupil evidence collected shows there is a significant reduction in the proportion of boys who said they enjoyed writing "Not at all" or "Not really", from 22% to 7%. The proportion of girls who said they enjoyed writing "Not at all" or "Not really" decreased by only 1 percentage point.

The proportion of boys who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 20 percentage points from 40% to 60%. In contrast, the proportion of girls who said they enjoyed writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 4 percentage points. Girls started with a much higher proportion being very positive about enjoyment of writing. This suggests Transforming Writing practices contributed positively to the engagement of both boys and girls but especially boys.

# Do you think you are a good writer?

***Figure 25: This chart shows how children for whom English is an additional language perceived their own ability in writing in October 2012 and July 2013***
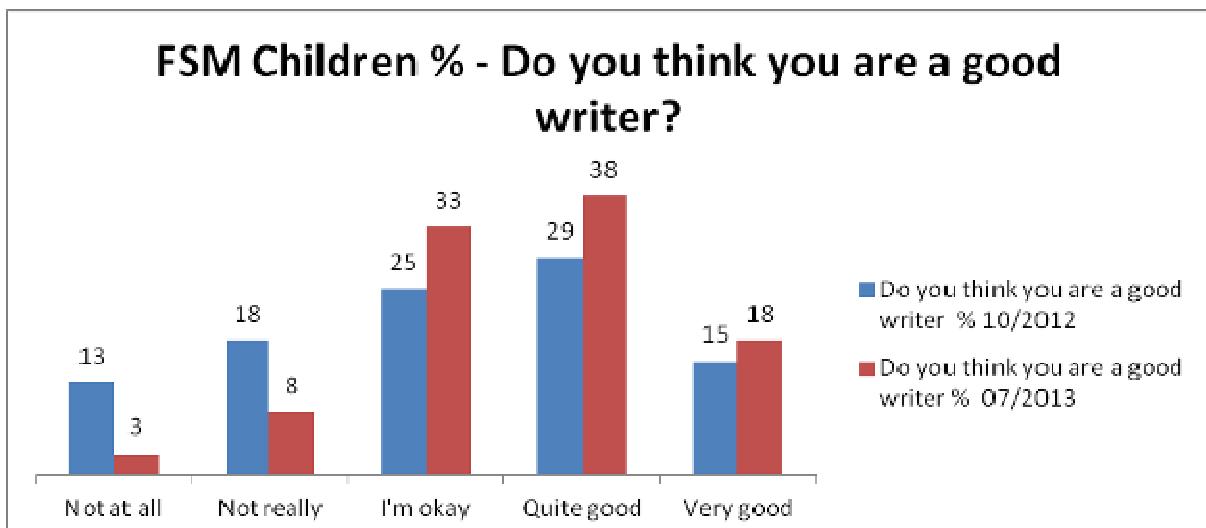


The pupil evidence collected shows that the proportion of EAL children who said they were "Quite good" or "Very good" writers decreased from 61% to 58% between October 2012 and July 2013. This shift may imply their confidence in their own writing ability has decreased or they are being challenged at a higher level and have a more realistic awareness of expectations of writing.

The proportion of all children who said they thought they were "Not at all" or "Not really" good writers decreased from 16% to 8%. This suggests Transforming Writing has benefited the confidence of those children who started with the least confidence.

Perhaps Transforming Writing demanded a higher level of communication for sophisticated peer evaluation, and greater language capacity to access a more demanding assessment curriculum. Perhaps more is demanded of the language user to access these sorts of sophisticated writing curriculum activities. This may affect their perceptions of themselves as writers, so they are more realistic.

***Figure 26: This chart shows how children who receive free school meals perceive their own ability in writing in October 2012 and July 2013***

The pupil evidence collected shows that there is a reduction in the proportion of children receiving FSM who thought they were "Not at all" or "Not really" good writers, from 31% to 12%. The proportion who said they thought they were "Quite good" or "Very good" writers increased by 12 percentage points. This suggests Transforming Writing had a very beneficial impact on confidence of children who receive FSM.
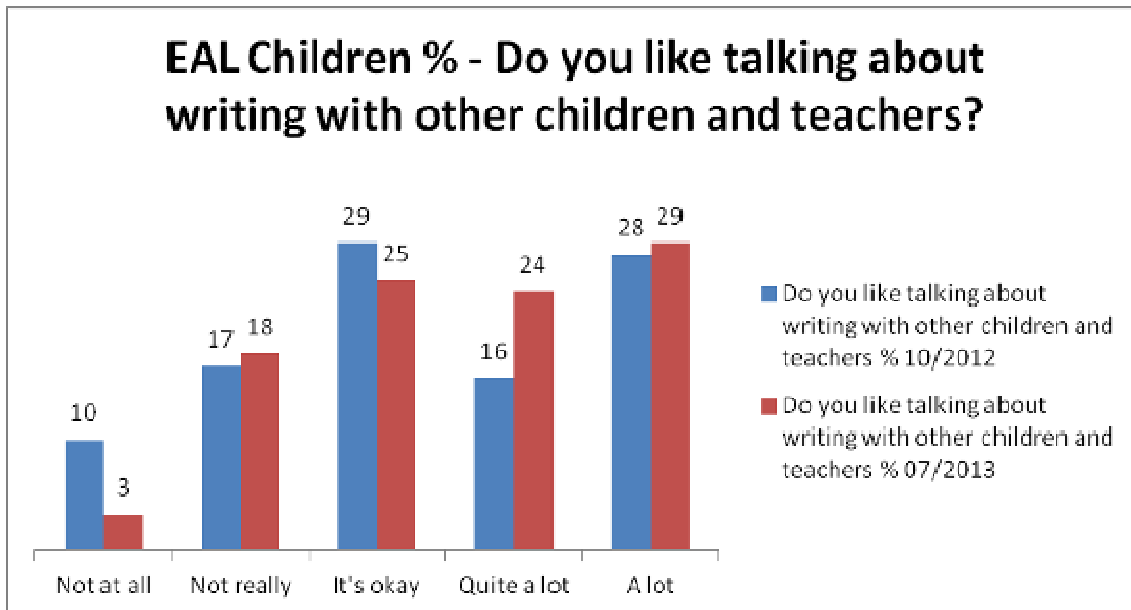
***Figure 27: These charts show how boys and girls perceive their own ability in writing in October 2012 and July 2013***
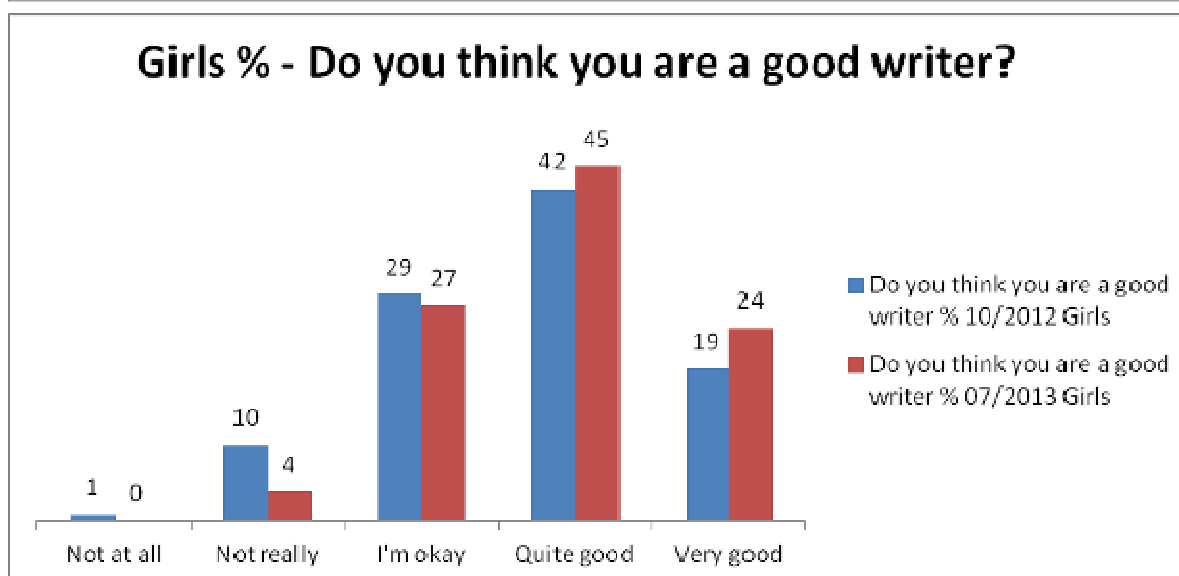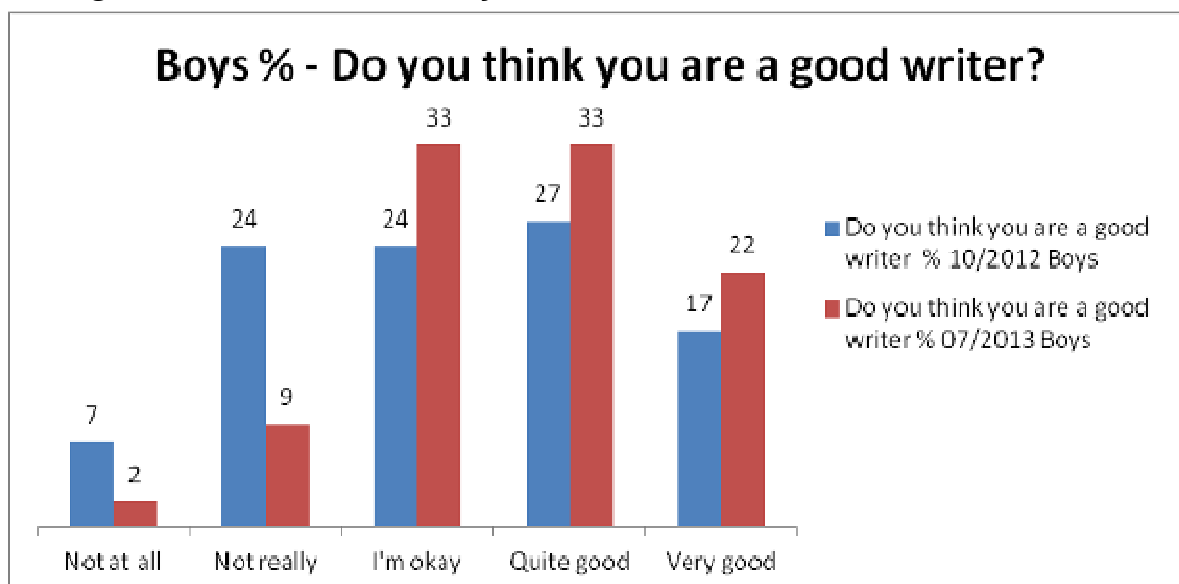


The pupil evidence collected shows there is a significant reduction in the proportion of boys who thought they were "Not at all" or "Not really" good writers, from 31% to 11%. The proportion of girls who said they thought they were "Not at all" or "Not really" good writers decreased by 7 percentage points. The proportion of boys who thought they were "Quite good" or "Very good" writers increased by 11 percentage points from 44% to 55% while the proportion of girls who thought they were "Quite good" or "Very good" writers increased by 8 percentage points. This suggests Transforming Writing practices contributed positively to the confidence of both boys and girls but had a greater impact on boys. Again, the girls started with greater confidence in their ability to write.
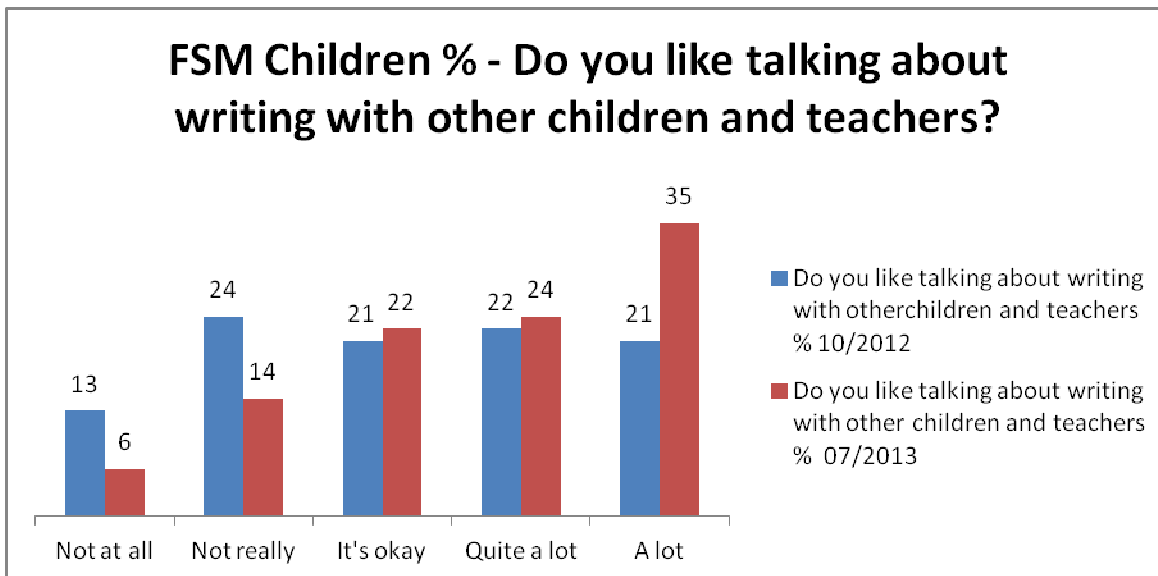
## Do you like talking about writing?

*Figure 29: This chart shows how children for whom English is an additional language perceive their own enjoyment of talking about writing in October 2012 and July 2013*
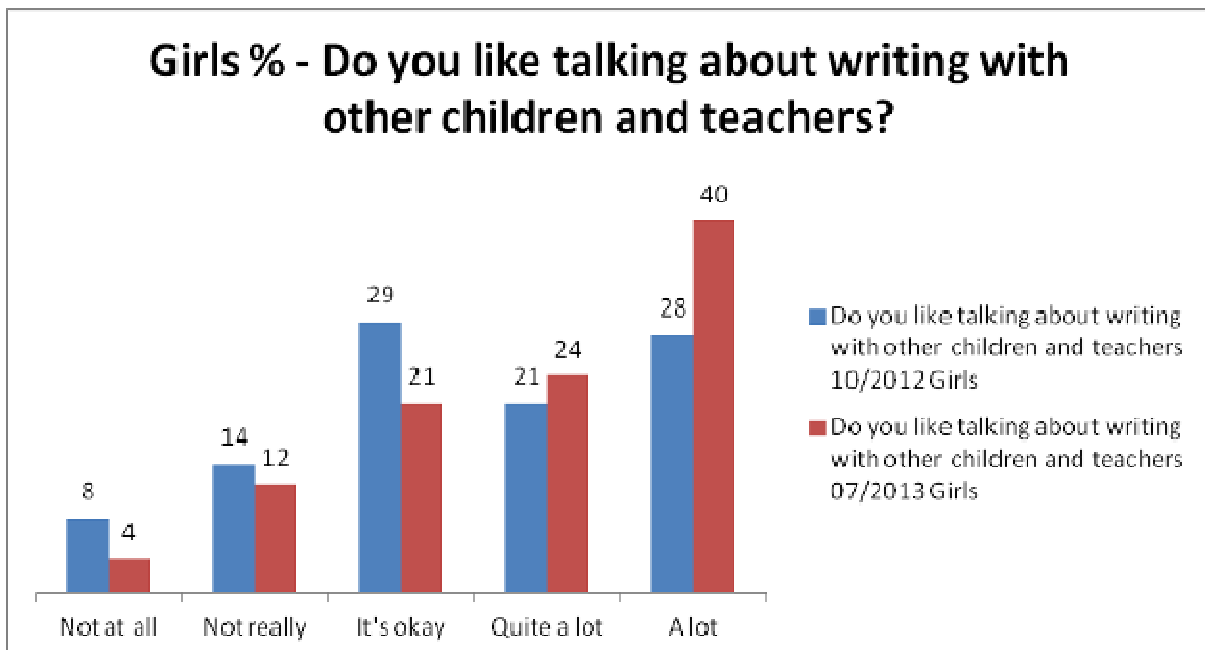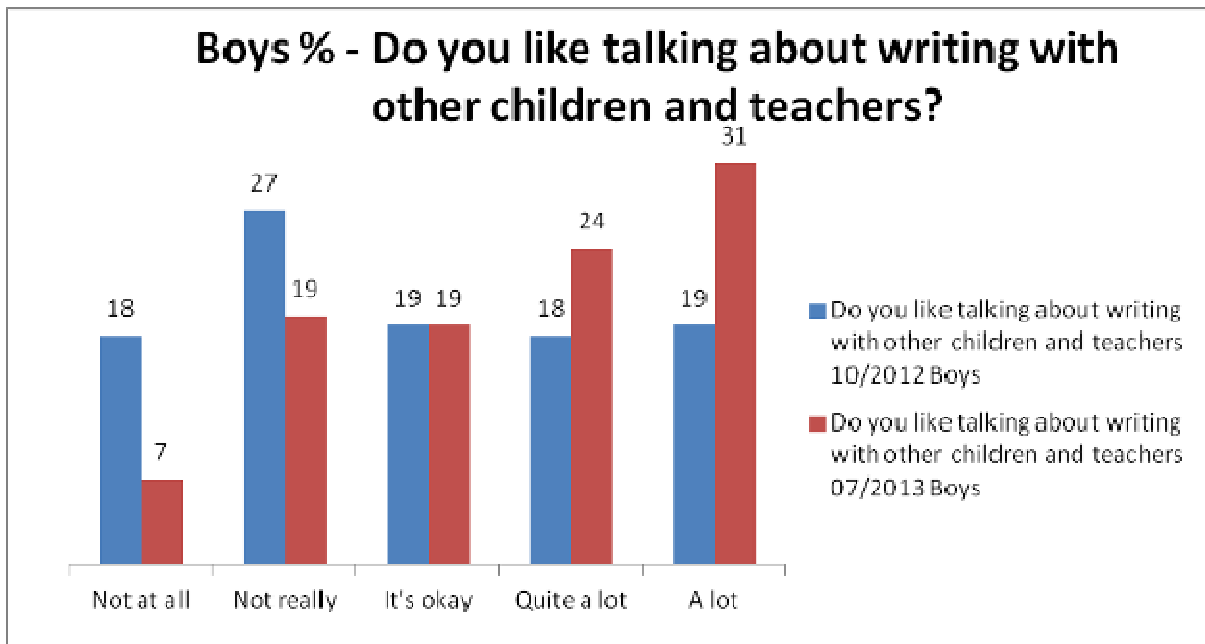


The pupil evidence collected shows that the proportion of EAL children who said they liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased from 44% to 53% between October 2012 and July 2013. The proportion of EAL children who said they liked talking about writing "Not at all" or "Not really" reduced from 27% to 21%.

*Figure 30: This chart shows how children who receive FSM perceive their own enjoyment of talking about writing in October 2012 and July 2013*



The pupil evidence collected shows there is a reduction in the proportion of children receiving FSM who said they liked talking about writing "Not at all" or "Not really", from 37% to 20%. The proportion who liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 16 percentage points from 43% to 59%. This suggests Transforming Writing had a beneficial impact on the engagement of FSM children.

*Figure 31: These charts show how boys and girls perceived their own enjoyment of talking about writing in October 2012 and July 2013*

## Boys % - Do you like talking about writing with other children and teachers?



| | Not at all | Not really | It's okay | Quite a lot | A lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you like talking about writing with other children and teachers 10/2012 Boys | 18 | 27 | 19 | 18 | 19 |
| Do you like talking about writing with other children and teachers 07/2013 Boys | 7 | 19 | 19 | 24 | 31 |

## Girls % - Do you like talking about writing with other children and teachers?



| | Not at all | Not really | It's okay | Quite a lot | A lot |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do you like talking about writing with other children and teachers 10/2012 Girls | 8 | 14 | 29 | 21 | 28 |
| Do you like talking about writing with other children and teachers 07/2013 Girls | 4 | 12 | 21 | 24 | 40 |

The pupil evidence collected shows there is a reduction in the proportion of boys who said they like talking about writing "Not at all" or "Not really", from 45% to 26%. The proportion of girls who said they enjoyed talking about writing "Not at all" or "Not really" decreased by 6 percentage points. The proportion of boys who said they liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 18 percentage points. The proportion of girls who said they liked talking about writing "Quite a lot" or "A lot" increased by 15 percentage points. This suggest Transforming Writing practices contributed positively to the engagement of both boys and girls but more positively to boys who started with less engagement.

The statistics in the charts in Appendix 4 have been rounded to the nearest whole number.