

Impact on attainment

“The overall evidence from an analysis of the data from all of the schools indicates that Everybody Writes projects are highly successful in:

- Raising the confidence of pupils in relation to writing
- Enhancing pupils’ attitudes towards writing
- Raising attainment in writing
- Providing pupils with opportunities to engage in authentic purposes for writing”

Everybody Writes Evaluation, University of Sheffield (2009)

Everybody Writes projects have shown a real and measurable impact on attainment in writing, both from the point of view of teachers and pupils. Evidence from the University of Sheffield’s 2009 evaluation of Everybody Writes confirms that the project has had a positive impact on attitudes to writing and attainment in writing.

Local authorities

We can see a clear impact on attainment and attitudes to writing in the work of Southampton local authority, who, over three years, has introduced Everybody Writes to all the primary schools in the authority and have worked to embed Everybody Writes as a self-sustaining ethos and approach to writing within the creative practice of their teachers.

“All of the schools in the project were able to demonstrate ways in which progress and attainment in writing, within the groups of children that they were working with, have increased: some schools by an astonishing amount. We have one school where over 37 per cent of children made a whole level of progress in two terms. So in terms of the standards agenda, we’ve absolutely achieved that.”

(Senior Inspector, Southampton local authority)

In Southampton’s case, achievements in attainment have been amply demonstrated. As the 2009 evaluation indicates:

“Everybody Writes has been very successful in Southampton. A range of innovative and creative projects has been undertaken in schools, which are now showcased on the Everybody Writes website. The authority has been monitoring the impact of the project on writing attainment because this is an area that has needed development within the

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authority. The authority are delighted with the impact the project has had on standards of writing in the schools taking part.”

Everybody Writes Evaluation, University of Sheffield (2009)

The Everybody Writes project encourages teachers to reflect on their own practice and teachers and schools to evaluate the impact their projects have had. Schools might choose to conduct a questionnaire with students before and after a project that measures children’s changes in attitudes to writing; they might opt for a lighter touch and get children to invent a simile about writing before and after the project. One boy, before a writing project, gave the example of feeling writing was like Birmingham City but he supported Aston Villa. Another child, after an Everybody Writes project, exclaimed that writing was like “golden time”. Other schools might ask children to interview each other with recordable microphones about how they feel about writing before and after a project. These evaluations can be powerful and provide real insights into what works well when developing writing activities for children.

Many schools conduct more formal evaluations following Everybody Writes projects, measuring changes in writing levels and integrating Everybody Writes into assessment structures.

“I would definitely recommend it. It’s great fun and it introduces you to new styles of writing. It also encourages you to write and allows you to be more creative with writing, and it helps you get higher levels.” (Primary pupil)

Case study: impact on attainment in writing

“Overall, I was extremely pleased with the outcomes of the Everybody Writes day. Students were engaged, focused and inspired by the activities I had organised and were able to view English in a different light. Several students who were initially reluctant to be involved were brimming with enthusiasm by the end of the project!

Everybody Writes has had an extremely positive impact on the students involved at The Norton School Humanities College. Students have been able to experiment with different ways of writing and been able to showcase their work in a new and innovative way.

Taking part in this Everybody Writes project with this particular group has given me a chance to work with a group of students who weren’t massively confident about their writing. The impact on each and every one of these students is that they’re engaging more with English.”

Josh Hukin, Class Teacher, The Norton School Humanities College

The Norton Humanities College’s ‘Homelessness: A real issue’ project saw demonstrable rises in writing levels after the project had taken place. Giving students a relevant social issue as a ‘real’ focus for writing and the responsibility for creating their own website, the project aimed to increase enthusiasm for writing and raise standards. While involving the whole of Year 9, it particularly focused on the attainment of a small group of reluctant writers. The lead teacher on the project chose to evaluate the achievement of that targeted group in measuring writing levels before and after the project, and we can see from this data that most of these students experienced a rise in their attainment levels for writing and literacy:

Student	NC Level pre-project	NC Level post-project
Jade	4a	5b
Lee	4b	4a
Josh	4a	5c
Alex	4a	5c
Reece	4a	5b
Jayden	4b	5b
Rhys	4a	4a

The project’s accompanying film tracks the increasing enthusiasm for writing in three boys that have been identified by the teacher as having particularly negative attitudes towards writing, and low levels of confidence in their writing ability. Taking part in the filmed aspect of the project, and even being chosen at all, was also a significant factor leading to a rise in their self esteem. For these boys, a combination of writing about real issues, writing inspired by interviewing an actor in role as a homeless person, taking part in a film documentary of the project and creating an online wikispace inspired greater enjoyment of writing and a real engagement in being able to express creative ideas.

“It’s good – interesting. We all joined in and people came in to make it better.”

“It’s better than the normal work we do – just writing. We did more describing, writing in more detail.”

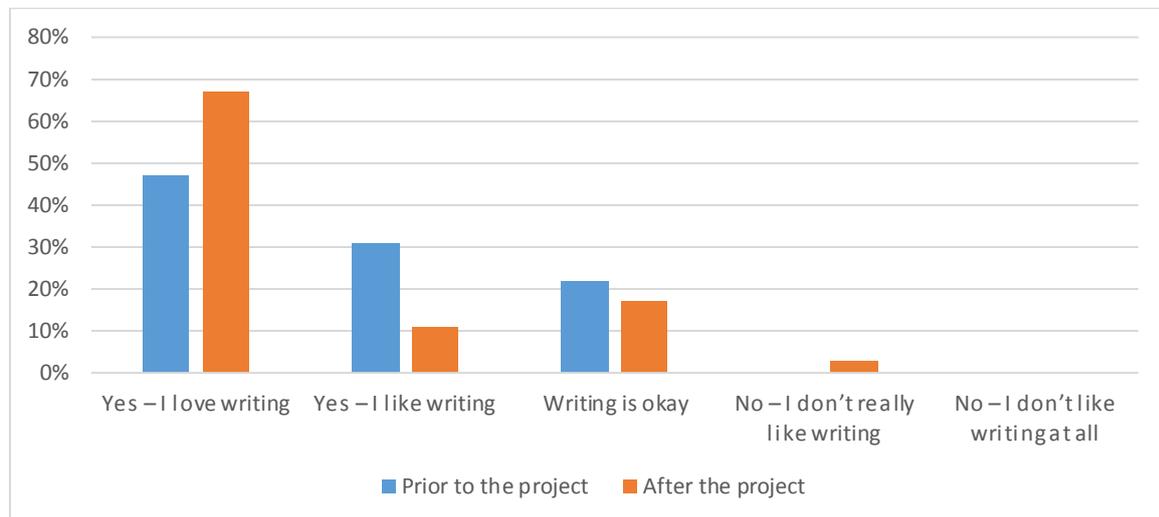
(Disengaged writers at the Norton School Humanities College)

Case study: impact on attitudes to writing

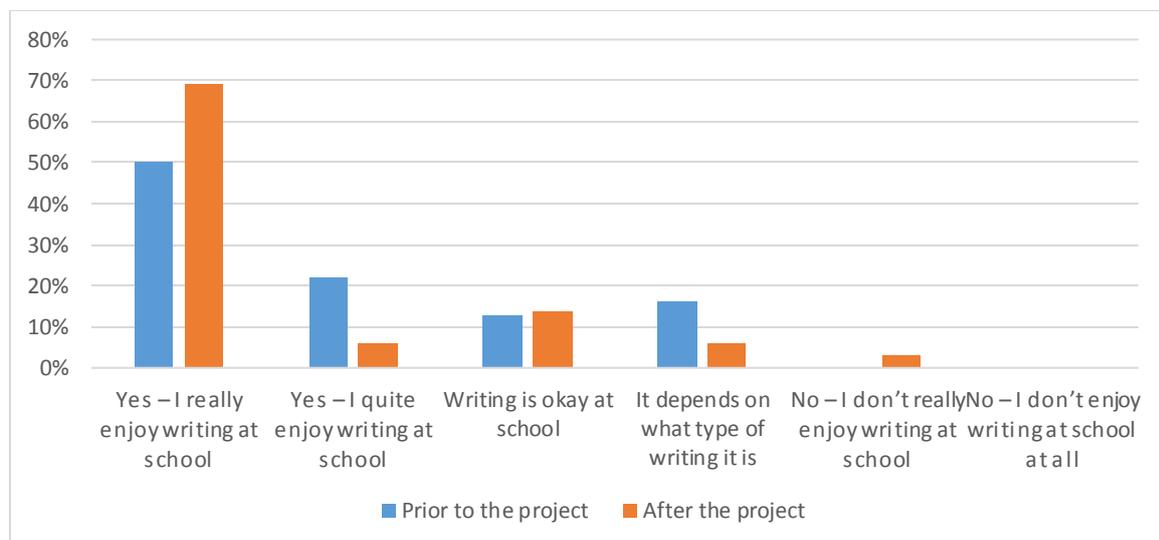
Yenton Primary School in Birmingham evaluated the effectiveness of their 'Words and Music' project on attitudes to writing by completing an online survey before and after the project. The project focused on the cross-curricular combination of writing and music and aimed to develop and support staff to use more cross-curricular approaches to teaching and learning in their day-to-day practice as well as using music to inspire writing and storytelling throughout the whole school. Each class had a different piece of instrumental music which they listened to and were asked to respond to in writing. Throughout the week the children built on their responses to the music and produced a wide variety of visual and written work. Stories, poems, pieces of music, drama scripts and cartoon strips were created alongside models, paintings, drawings and installations.

The following results are based on the responses of 22 pupils from Years 3 to 6 to the 'before' and 'after' surveys.

Do you like writing?



Do you enjoy writing at school?



Do you think your writing has improved since you did the project about Words and Music?

Yes – my writing has improved a lot	44%
Yes – my writing has improved a bit	36%
Don't know	6%
No –there hasn't been any change in my writing	11%

Has the Words and Music project changed how you feel about writing?

Yes – I like writing a lot more now	61%
Yes – I like writing a bit more now	22%
It hasn't changed how I feel about writing	14%
I like writing even less now than I did before	0%

In these results, children are reporting significant rises in their enjoyment of writing, and this can inform new writing projects and approaches within the school. This data, shared with peers via local network meetings and nationally on the Everybody Writes website, provides other teachers with evidence that Everybody Writes projects can have a real impact on attitudes and attainment in writing.

Who did it help?

In its 2009 evaluation of Everybody Writes, the University of Sheffield concluded that, as a universal project with the aim of inspiring all children to enjoy writing, Everybody Writes was extremely successful. The evaluation also concludes that Everybody Writes was particularly successful in inspiring and motivating boys and disengaged writers in hard-to-reach groups to write.

Boys

The hands-on nature of the Everybody Writes approach, as well as its cross-curricular emphasis and the creation of real experiences that students could be directly involved in seemed to appeal to boys. Whether it was a project writing about football on a weblog, a week fusing Design and Technology and writing to create provocative messages around the school, space writing or interviewing an actor in role as a homeless person, boys showed significantly higher engagement in writing, and enjoyed what they were doing – even choosing to write at home as a result.

“Poet Mike Garry came in for a whole day to work with Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6. He took each class for one session and then held a celebration of their writing at the end of the day. The children were all enthused by Mike, particularly our target group of boys. He enthused them so much that many of the children went home and wrote that night.

A parent came in especially to say how she had experienced goose bumps when her son, who is not shy about making it known that he does not enjoy writing, went home and raved about the poet they had seen that day. Later on that evening the child was having the usual argument with his younger brother, but rather than lashing out he went upstairs and wrote a poem about his anger. His mum then helped him to publish it and he has now begun a file of poems.”

Jo Fyans, Class Teacher, Orrishmere Primary School

Pardes House Primary School in Barnet’s ‘Space Week 2010 – Journey of Discovery’ writing project – including the arrival of a Russian cosmonaut, the entrance to the hall being transformed into a space shuttle and work with Lego robotics - was particularly aimed at exciting boys about writing. Quotes taken from the boys before Space Week regarding what they thought about writing included:

“Writing is boring,” (Year 5 boy)

“I don’t particularly like writing,” (Year 6 boy)

However, comments from the same boys after Space Week became more complex and far more enthusiastic:

“What we saw helped us to write, for example, the spaceman, the launch assembly, space facts and questions on the wall and the rocket mice experiment,” (Year 6 boy)

“When I saw the rocket, satellites and the Hubble at the IMAX, they all made me understand ‘space’ and what goes on in the outer world. These gave me ideas for writing,” (Year 5 boy)

SEN and EAL

Everybody Writes has also been successful in supporting pupils with special educational needs – either as a whole school project that involved SEN registered children alongside all members of the school in a variety of inclusive and differentiated writing, or at special schools that chose Everybody Writes as a fun and practical way to address writing and mark-making.

Collaborating with the disability arts organisation SHAPE, the Bridge Special School in London held a series of Everybody Writes activities for a targeted group of autistic teenagers. Many of these students found reading and writing extremely challenging. Everybody Writes provided a way of approaching writing that was motivating and relevant, using collage, mark making, sound recording and visual display to make writing accessible and enjoyable. In deciding to create word boxes about themselves, the school aimed to engage the students in a writing activity that would enable them to create meaning and to connect with one another.

“On each side of the box they would create something that represented an aspect of themselves. So, for example, on one side they made a collage and wrote about people and things that they liked. On another side they used symbols and writing to describe their personalities. Another side had their favourite colour. They were each given a device to record a sound on (e.g. them talking/a favourite song) and then stuck this device onto the box. At the end of the day they took the boxes down to the whole school assembly where they turned off the lights to show all the staff and students the glowing boxes which represented their personalities – which had been made into a wall, representing the unity of the group. The response of the pupils was very positive. They felt real ownership of the activity and the boxes and were very proud to share them with the whole school.”

Anna Hewitt, the Bridge School

Everybody Writes was also successful in encouraging writing projects involving EAL children, celebrating cultural diversity and the many languages spoken within a school. This can be seen in a Diwali-themed day of writing or in Mansfield Green's 'Recipe for Success' project which used the idea of creating a school recipe book as an enjoyable focus for writing, with the added aims of engaging families in writing and celebrating the cultural diversity and heritage of the school.

"My class is a mixed ability group and it was pleasing to see how well our SEN and EAL children responded to the project. One child, who is not particularly fluent in reading or writing, really enjoyed getting involved in the project especially when he was interviewed by one of his peers about the dishes he eats at home, who does the family shopping and what he likes and doesn't like to eat,"

Paula Henry, Mansfield Green Community School, East Midlands

Additional needs

Everybody Writes also addresses techniques for engaging dyslexic and dyspraxic children in writing, pointing to resources on the website including oral storytelling techniques, role play and drama activities, creating comic strips, using multimedia and using authentic experiences to inspire writing.

Families and communities

"What a fab event in Manchester on Wednesday. I was very enthused by it - very enjoyable and has given me lots to think about. I particularly like the idea of lots of bits of writing around the school, especially where the parents wait in the playground and I'd like to get the children redesigning the headteacher's missives to parents." (Parent)

Schools are often keen to involve parents and families in writing as part of Everybody Writes projects, and evidence shows that children having fun with writing at school can often inspire enthusiasm for writing at home, both in parents and children.

Establishing a culture of writing through the wider school community in this way, and involving members of the local community in a project as well as family members raises the status of writing for children, providing vital parental role models for writing.

Moorfield Primary School's 'The Nest' project centred on a mysterious nest structure that appeared in the school grounds, inspiring a week of writing, the creation of an outside writing space, films and booklets featuring children's writing as well as an online 'Roving Reporter' feature on the school website. These activities so enthused parents that they

asked to be involved, and the school capitalised on the family engagement by collating their work into a booklet which was displayed in a local bookshop.

“Due to the enormous amount of interest from the children, our school was approached by parents and grandparents about the mystery of the pond. To capture this enthusiasm we wrote to parents, carers and grandparents inviting them to use their imagination and complete some ‘homework’ for us – to write creatively about the giant nest and the pond area. We were inundated with the response in a huge variety of forms of writing. Newspaper items, stories, poems, pictures and collages came flooding in. We made four parent, carer and grandparent booklets to show off their work. We also photocopied their work and displayed it on Open Evening in and around the pond area. A compilation of work was sent to our local bookshop where it was displayed and read by customers.”

Jean Tolley, Moorfield Primary School, Stockport

Having family members take part in the same writing project as them at school gave status and importance to the writing children were creating:

“I liked the blue eggs. They made me happy. My mummy loved doing the homework. She did ‘The Mystery of the Pond’ report,” (Pupil)

It was very exciting! We explored the pond area. My daddy did a ‘Ptlearnadon’ for his homework! My daddy thought it was good,” (Pupil)

St Mary the Virgin CE VA Primary School, Gillingham recorded the success they had with engaging members of the local community with a similar project:

“The giant egg project was a whole-school, two-day project. Having been inspired by case studies about mysterious occurrences such as alien crash landings and giant nests on the Everybody Writes website, the school decided they wanted to run something similar to engage all children at the school with writing, as well as parents. The school also had lots of help from the local community, including the local police (via contact with the local PCSO), with a police support incident unit, local CID, a navy helicopter, the police helicopter and a local chicken farmer. The police units attended the day and told children they were investigating the event and that they needed the childrens’ help. Four Year 13 students from a local secondary school also played the role of ‘eggspert’ scientists in white coats who came to investigate the rare find. The local press also reported on the project.”

(Class Teacher, St Mary the Virgin CE VA Primary School, Gillingham)

The involvement of a variety of community members in the project made the children feel it was important and that their writing was worthwhile.

In the Everybody Writes project within Stockport local authority, one consultant noted that schools understood that parental involvement was just as important in affluent areas as in socially deprived areas – and Everybody Writes has been as effective in increasing an enjoyment of writing in ‘coasting’, high achieving schools as in schools facing more challenges. However, it should be noted that the approach is not particularly appropriate for schools in special measures, as this does not tend to be a time when a school is looking to take risks with creative pedagogy.

“Everybody Writes is about the wider community and that’s one of the reasons why we really liked it – we’re all aware that parental involvement isn’t just about reading books, spelling tests, times tables and PTA meetings. For some of our schools it’s not about deprivation, lack of finances and economic situations. It can also be about ‘affluent neglect’. It can be about people working and not having time in the same way with children. As one child said, he doesn’t see his parents as writers, who are an accountant and a solicitor. “They help me with my maths homework but not my English.”

(Literacy consultant, Stockport local authority)