## Project summary

A whole-school audit of pupil attitudes towards writing, (autumn 2006), highlighted that many children experienced difficulty in knowing how to actually start their compositions. A combination of strategies and research over the next two terms (including INSET on the use of drama as a teaching tool and a visit to a leading school in role-play), led us to introduce role-play areas and drama as prominent and engaging tools in all our classrooms.

Many role-play areas are supported by visits within the community in order that the children can experience their role-play in 'real-life' settings. Role-play is met with a huge amount of enthusiasm from pupils across the school, whilst teacher monitoring continues to report significant improvement in speaking and listening, co-operation amongst peers, use of vocabulary and the boosting of self-esteem - particularly amongst quieter and less able pupils.

Areas are often linked to other subjects in order to create more opportunities for cross-curricular writing. In daily Literacy lessons, teachers now employ a range of drama strategies including role-on-the-wall, freeze frames, thought tunnels, writing-in-role etc. Drama continues to thrive in school and KS2 writing SAT results showed great improvement: 92% L4 & above, 44% L5.

Our initiative has shown us that drama and role-play allow children first-hand experience, empowering them as 'the expert' and nurturing them into more confident, motivated and imaginative writers.

## Specific aspect of practice to be accredited?

Raising standards in writing across the school through the use of drama and role-play in everyday practice.
Aspect of Every Child Matters addressed:
- Be healthy
- Stay Safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being

What were you hoping to achieve?
- to improve standards in writing as measured by optional and statutory SATs.
- to boost confidence of less able writers by creating new and innovative writing environments, in which they play an active role;
- to equip writers with suitable starting points/experiences to aid their compositions.

How did you identify the need for this practice?
- Y6 writing SAT results from previous two years (2006 and 2007) highlighted general underachievement/under attainment in writing in comparison with high achievement/attainment in reading, particularly at the higher levels - 26% L5 at the end of KS2.
- Pupil audit of attitudes towards writing (autumn 2006) showed that many children experience difficulty in 'getting started', i.e. the blank page syndrome!
- Staff audit of strengths/areas of development in using drama as a teaching tool in Literacy (Autumn 2006), suggested minimal use of drama as teaching aid at that point in time.

What did you do?
A high level of on-going liaison between the Literacy subject leader and Writing and Drama subject leader has taken place over the last two years to facilitate the following actions in development;
- Internal INSET provided by Writing and Drama subject leader - 'Using Drama in Daily Literacy Teaching' (Autumn 2006);
- external INSET for teaching and support staff;
  - Teaching Word, Sentence and Text Level Work through Drama'
  - Glen Swindlehurst (Spring 2007);
- teaching and support staff visit to a leading school in role-play ('Eatoch Primary School', Spring 2007);
- role-play areas introduced into every classroom in school, Reception to Year 6 inclusive, (Spring 2007 - ongoing); re-organisation of classroom and in some cases, timetable to facilitate this;
- whole school writing week to utilise and experiment with new drama strategies in the teaching of Literacy (Spring 2007);
- Previous Chair of Governors (Head of Drama at Lancashire High School) worked with classes of children on 'Mantle of the Expert' - extremely successful.
- Writing and Drama subject leader attends course on Speaking, Listening and Drama within the new framework (Summer 2007);
- external INSET on the transition from reading to writing, focusing particularly
on Phase 2 within the new Literacy Framework.

- twilight INSET attended by teaching and support staff - 'WOW up your words!' (Primrose Hill Primary School, March 2008)
- 3+2 new Literacy Framework training attended by Writing and Drama subject leader (January - April 2008)
- internal INSET and resources provided by Writing and Drama subject leader on the aforementioned and how the school's ongoing commitment to the development of drama as a teaching tool supports the new framework (April 2008);
- new assessment procedures put in place following x2 staff attendance to Ros Wilson writing course; children now to receive individual targets to aid their progression;
- extra-curricular drama club (set up in Sept. 2004) continues to thrive providing opportunity to further develop drama skills;
- a 'Writing Wall' was set up in the school hall to display and celebrate samples of children's work in writing with children, staff and parents. Since its setting up in January 2008, work samples and accompanying success criteria are regularly changed in order to maintain audience interest.

The 2-year timescale of this initiative enabled us to support staff for whom this was a new area of skill, and to develop their talents in this area. All staff now confident with techniques, which are used, cross-curricularly.

- September 2008 - presentation to full Governing Body on progress and success of initiative.

Which members of the establishment and/or wider community have been involved and what was their role?

- All teaching staff have been involved in the development of the project and regular feedback has been distributed following training;
- support staff have attended numerous INSET events and take an active role in the planning and setting up of class role-play areas;
- many of the role-play areas are supported by visits from professionals or trips to businesses within the local community in order that children can experience their role-play in a 'real-life' setting;
- parents are often asked to provide/loan suitable props and/or costumes to use in class role-play areas;
- Governors have been kept up-to-date on the development of the project through the school improvement plan and a recent report to them from the Writing and Drama subject leader (October 2008).

How has the practice been modified or improved during development?

Since their introduction in Spring 2007, ongoing evaluation of role-play areas and teacher liaison has brought about the following developments;

- more opportunities are now actively built into role-play areas for incidental and emergent writing;
- The theme of role-play areas are now more explicitly linked to foundation
subject areas or topics being covered in class. Utilising this link was found to support the opportunity for more cross-curricular writing whilst also providing children with a range of different audiences and purposes;

- Role-play areas now display clear WALT and WILF (learning objectives and success criteria) shared with the children.

**What has been the impact of the project on pupils’ learning, achievement or enjoyment and how has this been measured?**

The challenging Year 6 SATs writing target of 40% L5 was exceeded with 44% in summer 2008.

On-going teacher monitoring and liaison has reported that where drama strategies have been used in the teaching of writing;
- less able writers are often more engaged and for longer periods;
- all children are provided with a starting point, eliminating the 'blank page' syndrome;
- visual and kinaesthetic learners are more involved and committed to the writing process.
- Role-play areas are met with a huge amount of enthusiasm from children across the school. They can't wait for their 'turn' and relish the opportunity to 'dress-up!'

Daily teacher observation of children in role-play reports;
- boosting of self-esteem, particularly amongst quieter and less able pupils;
- use of a broader range of vocabulary and more willingness to experiment with topical and new vocabulary;
- examples of great team-work and co-operation between peers.
- teachers enjoy teaching writing more, and find these techniques fit in very well with the new framework. They have found it excellent professional development.
- Writing is far more embedded across the curriculum.

Feedback from pupil surveys about the effects of the introduction of the drama techniques shows enhanced pupil enjoyment, understanding, and a willingness to 'have a go' when asked to write in any genre.

**What are the next stages in the development process?**

- Improving writing through the use of drama and role-play remains a target on the School Development Plan (2008/2009).
- The idea of 'role-play/drama theme weeks' are currently being planned with staff, whereby at the end of each term, children re-visit genres covered in Literacy that term under a creative guise/set of imaginary circumstances that runs throughout the week. From this, pieces of work will be assessed and new individual writing targets identified (Ros Wilson).
- Team planning and teaching is currently taking place between the Writing and Drama subject leader and Year 2 class teacher.
What aspects of this practice may be useful for other establishments to consider?

Research and ask pupils what they think!