

A Different Sort of Badge

CLPE (The Centre for Literacy in Primary Education) has been working with a number of schools across the country to develop the idea of becoming a Power of Reading Associate School. Rather than this being a badge you acquire by ticking a number of boxes and going through a validation process the aspiration of the scheme is that

“Every Power of Reading Associate School will be teaching English through the CLPE teaching sequences with quality texts. English Leads will have developed a thorough understanding of how to implement the Power of Reading throughout their school as well as being able to demonstrate the impact on pupils’ engagement and achievement in language, reading and writing.”

The great news is that one of the 11 schools to be identified and badged as an Associate School is **Harrow Gate Primary Academy**. An affirmation of the inspiring curriculum they have created and the fantastic progress their children make in Reading and Writing. And a great way to let the wider world know what a great place Harrow Gate is for children to learn.



Directed Exploration

The Early Years Lead and one of her colleagues at **Easterside Academy** had a fantastic opportunity to visit Kindergarten settings in Finland. One of the things Lucy noticed was how focused children in the settings were upon their tasks. They had strikingly good independent, communication and attention and listening skills, even at the age of 3 years. And equally apparent was how the settings she visited had considerably less resourcing than we provide in our Early Years settings. **Which posed the question; are we in fact giving our children too much choice?**

Responding to this thought **sessions were created within the day when resources were stripped back, and choices limited**. Children’s key workers spent time with their individual group and focused on specific activities. These sessions included intense modelling and scaffolding, then gave the children time to practise and develop these skills. An Enquiry into this new approach was conducted late in the Summer Term. All adults were leading focused groups matched appropriately to specific areas in the Early Years curriculum. These linked with the current topic of “going on a holiday”.

The children showed concentration and focus, and independence improved over time. Less choice had enabled the children to revisit skills and practise their learning in a directed and focused way. Staff at Easterside have highlighted how this approach has not only reinforced learning and impacted positively on concentration and focus, but communication and relationships in the setting have developed and improved both with adults and peers, due to increased opportunities with their key worker groups. This was particularly reflected in Easterside’s profile data at the end of the year. What is immensely powerful is that the outcomes of this intense modelling and scaffolding is also being transferred into the way children learn in independent group activities. The phrase **directed exploration** was used to describe the process which has been developed

AND..... A Book Promise

The focus in **Manchester Road Academy** upon improving reading across the school has led to two fascinating outcomes. The first is an early afternoon session, each day in every classroom, focused upon deep analysis of a text. This complements the other work children do on reading and writing in the mornings. Teachers pick engaging and relevant texts from a variety of sources and across the week a school wide routine based upon a Reciprocal Reading approach is followed as that text is unpicked. Those consistent daily routines mean children are becoming really skilful at taking deep meaning from a wide range of different text types

Equally fascinating is the Manchester Road **Book Promise**. A range of books has been identified for each age group and a promise has been made that in the course of the year children will have those books read to them. Some have been chosen by the adults, but others are books children have identified.



Class Reads

On display in every classroom in **Moorside Primary Academy** is a display of multiple copies of the highest quality children’s literature, appropriate to each age group in the school. The challenge presented to the children is to read and respond to every one of those books before they move on to the next class. Books they can read in class but also take home. Talking to the children, there is huge enthusiasm. And there are animated conversations as they explore their responses to books which other members of the class have also read.

AIC Enquiries

They are really hectic days when there are three schools to visit in the course of an AIC Enquiry day. They were designed as part of the induction process for the New Academy Improvement Committees. Created with the aspiration that members of those committees would be quickly able to gain an insight into the schools they had not previously been a governor of. After some communication glitches around their new Enquire Learning Trust email addresses the Principals and myself have been joined by some great people. People who have given up a whole day, often taking a day of leave from work, to get to know the schools in their cluster.

The conversations have been fantastic. We've had the opportunity to share some of the great things that go on in our schools. They have had the opportunity to get a both an understanding of what goes on in classrooms and some insight into the complexities of ensuring every child in each classroom gets a great opportunity to learn. A recurring theme has been around the similarities and differences between each of the schools. At the end of one day Lorraine Wright, an AIC member in Manchester, shared the thought that;

"They are all great places for children to learn, but they are all really different"

We've talked on numerous occasions about 'enquireness' and about the idea that each school in the Trust should have its own culture and identity. Quality and high expectations pervade our schools, the richness and the opportunity to learn from one another's practice lies in the differences between them.



A Classroom Door in Roseberry Academy

Reading Acumen

Lacey Acres Academy consistently produces extraordinarily good results in end of KS2 Assessments. Results which, by and large, defy the inevitable cohort variations in a one form entry school. Those results are underpinned by a particular approach to learning developed by Debbie Lamb, first in her own classroom and then across the school. This approach has been developed across the teaching of Reading, Writing and Mathematics, however at the root of the approach is Debbie thinking around the teaching of reading. It starts from her personal approach to reading;

"What I do... is think consciously about what I'm reading. This means that I question anything on the page: vocabulary, punctuation, authorial intent, the content and wider context. I knew that this could be taught to children and that these thought processes could be learned."

The approach involves intense modelling of these processes. What develops from that are mixed ability groups of 3 children working together at a 'station'. Gathered around their own group flip chart. Employing the techniques which have been modelled to them to explore a text. What you see are;

"Children who are actively smart, clever readers, creating their own pathway through the text."

The conversation with Debbie and Sharon Clapson, the Principal at Lacey Acres, is how do we bottle what Debbie has developed so it can be shared more widely? That process is underway and in the process a name has been found to describe what those actively smart, clever readers are acquiring; **Reading Acumen**. When the materials which support the process are ready the intention is to share them as widely as possible. **Watch this Space!!**

THE LEARNING EXCHANGE

We are working with Schudio on the creation of a new section on the Trust website. In the past we have put any classroom resources shared as a result of Trust wide developments in an area of the website which can only be accessed with a Trust Log in. The **LEARNING EXCHANGE** will have a link on the front page of the website and those materials will be publicly accessible. On there we can share, classroom resources, the findings from practitioners' research end enquiry and the outcomes of trust wide development programmes. The challenge will be to populate it with a rich and diverse array of content.

Physically Ready to Write

Three Enquire Learning Trust Schools were invited to join an Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) project based at the Centre for Life in Newcastle. The brief of the EEF is to find ways to narrow the gap between the education achievement of the least and most privileged children in England. Teachers from Easterside, Harrow Gate and Hardwick Green participated in an eight-day programme across 2 years led by CLPE. As well as the 8 days, tasks were set between each session. One of those tasks was to write a case study about a child, or a group of children in your class. Looking closely at an aspect of their literacy development.

Leigh Iles, from **Hardwick Green**, chose to focus upon two of her Y1 boys who really struggle with writing. Developing early writing is always a challenge, especially for boys. Leigh interviewed the two boys about how they felt about writing. Their responses to whether they liked writing were trenchant;

"No, it's hard and it's boring."

Was one response, and the other child said;

"No, because it hurts me all the way up to here." (Points to his arm)

Leigh recalled a piece of research she had read which asked the question; **are your children physically ready to write?** It suggested writing can be physically painful for some children. Knowing what she did about the boys, both about their dexterity and their gross motor skills, Leigh decided to develop a programme for them. Starting, as the research suggested, with their gross motor skills as a precursor to developing their dexterity and readiness to write.

Reading Leigh's Case Study Report you can feel her excitement as the programme develops, the boys and others in her class she has involved in the programme begin to take pleasure in the act of writing and pride in what they are creating. She then moves on to describe how she has engaged with her colleagues in Early Years. Together they have developed a programme focused upon ensuring every child enters KS1 physically ready to write.