



## **Whole School Initiatives: Writing** **By Kate Garratt**

Engaging all staff in whole school initiatives and maintaining engagement is a challenge faced by many schools. Our challenge was writing. Firstly, I would like to state that this is not a 'fits all' answer to improving writing within schools. It is, however, an insight into a way of improving practice through whole school work.

### **Identifying the challenge**

Identifying the challenge is the first step towards making improvements. As a staff, we identified writing as an area for development within our school, particularly writing at length across the curriculum.

### **A whole school team approach**

To be effective, all stakeholders need to be involved, see the value in an idea or process and how it will impact their work. Our first step was to introduce the 'Benhurst Sentence Types' in line with Alan Peat's work. A range of different sentence types across all year groups were introduced to staff. At the beginning of the process, the staff were asked to edit and adapt (within reason!) the sentence types. This allowed them to take ownership of the initiative and their opinions and thoughts to be valued.

### **Building on skills over time**

Giving staff the opportunity to take part in the decision making process ensures that there is increased and ongoing engagement with initiative. After asking staff to lead the development of the sentence types, they were asked to organise and allocate the sentence types to Year Groups. Rather than being 'done to' them, they were making the decisions, giving reasons and looking at how the initiative would fit the curriculum for their year group. After an academic year, this process was repeated in light of successes and any issues that arose, including adding new sentence types some children had developed. This ensured that the initiative became part of the development of our practice.

### **Keeping the profile high**

To ensure that the profile of initiative remained high, we incorporated sentence types into our planning, teaching and assessment cycle. This linked the whole process together for children and staff, ensuring that the use of sentence types underpinned success criteria in writing opportunities. Ways of keeping sentence types fresh included displays around classrooms and the school, writing opportunities in Foundation subjects, examples shared in homework planners, examples shared in parents' meetings, celebration sunshine badges and photographs on Twitter to name but a few. Linking sentence types to the learning and teaching process reinforced that all staff had a part to play in developing this initiative and promoting its success. This also meant that the initiative didn't disappear from people's agenda. It remained part of current thinking across the school.



## **Impact**





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Of course, when we introduce something we believe will improve learning and teaching for our school, we look for the impact on our children. The vast majority of children across the school are very positive about the sentence types, sharing statements aloud such as 'I used a A,A sentence,' when writing at length. As the sentence types refer to punctuation and grammar, children are more aware of correct terminology in a time when the SPaG test must be completed. In terms of impact on results, KS1 writing results are consistently above national average over the past 2 years, showing a 6% increase in 2016. KS2 writing results show that, for 2016, our results were 14% above national average with RAISE online demonstrating we were within the 15<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally.

## **What did we learn**

Two years later, what have we learnt?

An effective initiative can and should have impact on data. Giving staff a degree of ownership within an initiative ensures everyone feels their contribution is wanted and valued. Doing it 'with' rather than 'to' staff means they are more likely to support the process. Ensuring that the staff can see how the initiative impacts on their work means that people see the purpose and value in promoting the initiative. Discussing next steps within the initiative you are trying to put in place means that it remains alive and developing, ensuring that staff are regularly thinking about and adapting their practice in light of changes.

