

Raising reading attainment through quality speaking and listening in Years 3 & 4

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Key Points

Reading, speaking and listening are inextricably linked. We noticed comprehension was limited by poor speaking and listening skills.

Purpose

What were your reasons for doing this development work?

Despite relatively good attainment and progress in Reading 2014/15*, class teachers felt Guided Reading in KS2 had become stale. Heavily teacher-led, children were grouped by ability. The quality of discussion was often poor as sessions tended to follow a question-answer format. Some children were active participants, but many were not; the teacher-led structure of sessions meant that they could opt out. Motivation to talk about reading was low.

* 48% met or depth in Year 2 in 2014/2015

* 77% met or depth in Year 3 in 2014/15 (it is worth noting this class benefited from a previous case study, trialling Reciprocal Reading in the same year)

Who were the identified target learners?

All children in years 3 & 4 in particular target tracker children (EAL).

What specific curriculum area did you intend to have impact on?

Reading

How were you intending to improve pupil learning?

We intended to raise attainment in reading by improving children's speaking and listening skills. We noticed that some children's reading comprehension was restricted by their inability to participate in guided reading sessions. Either they had great ideas but were unable to express and justify their understanding clearly, or they didn't and lacked the speaking and listening skills to use group discussion as a learning tool.

We aimed to:

- Teach effective strategies for reading comprehension
- Increase children's active participation in reading sessions
- Improve speaking and listening skills to enable children to participate in effective group

and paired book talk

- Improve speaking and listening skills to enable children to demonstrate their reading comprehension

What were your success criteria?

We looked for improved speaking and listening and increased participation from all children in reading sessions. We believed quality book talk would result in better reading comprehension. This would be measured by:

- 75% attainment at expected or depth in years 3 & 4
- Good or excellent progress in all target tracker children
- Qualitative pupil feedback and teacher assessment

Methodology

What did you do - what teaching approaches did you use?

The year 3 and 4 class teachers followed a lesson-study approach; thus sessions were jointly planned, filmed using IRIS and next steps identified through peer reflection. A new guided reading carousel was launched in September 2016. This incorporated the key elements of reciprocal reading: four core strategies, high-quality teacher modelling and child-led group discussions (children rotated the role of group leader every two weeks). High-quality paired and group talk was explicitly modelled. Specific speaking and listening sessions were developed alongside reading sessions. Sentence stems and visual resources were developed to support children.

As the year progressed, the challenge increased; for example we initially focused on expressing one's ideas clearly in paired talk (I think...because), but eventually moved onto justifying ideas in group discussion (I agree with...because it says here...). Best practice from our whole school growth-mindset approach supported everything we did. Children were put in mixed-ability groups. This was all set in a positive reading environment: daily story time using high-quality texts, 'Spot light on...' classroom displays to introduce new authors and well-managed 1:1 weekly book change.

What specific teaching resources did you use?

'Reciprocal Teaching at Work' by Lori Oczkuz and 'Tell Me: Children, Reading and Talk' by Aidan Chambers were particularly useful. The Cambridge University Thinking Together website had some applicable activities.

What CPD experiences, materials, research and expertise have you drawn on?

The work of Carol Dweck on Growth mindsets radically shifted our approach to grouping and resulted in mixed-ability reading groups.

In order to develop effective speaking stems, we also drew on pedagogy developed in our Language Resource base. For example, all visual resources incorporated Boardmaker symbols and were introduced with explicit teaching of vocabulary.

Outcomes and Impact

What has been the impact on pupil learning?

Children's ability to speak in whole sentences, express their own ideas and build on the ideas of others tangibly improved. They are clearly able to take turns and listen to others, as well as 'justify their views about what they have read' (National Curriculum 2014). Reading comprehension was particularly affected by mixed-ability grouping. Thus lower and middle attaining children were exposed to the quality language models, better comprehension and positive reading attitudes of their higher attaining peers. We have noticed:

- Increased participation and motivation from all children (sessions much more child-led and less teacher driven)
- Better reading comprehension (children are able to generate and answer their own questions using evidence from the text)
- Improved paired and group discussion (children are far more able to express their ideas clearly and build on the ideas of others)
- Children are demonstrating positive attitudes to reading sessions and putting in more effort

Evidence of impact on pupil learning

These outcomes are supported by excellent Reading progress and attainment in both year groups: 78 % met (41% greater depth) in Year 3 2015/16 and 89% met (33% greater depth) in Year 4 2015/16. This success was consistent in the target EAL group: 80% met or depth in Year 3 and 72% met or depth in Year 4.

What has been the impact on teaching?

Reciprocal reading has helped to focus teaching on specific strategies for effective reading comprehension. The quality of the teacher model and timely use of 'think-alouds' to make the reading process explicit is essential to success. Speaking and listening will now be built into

the reading learning journey. The shift towards more child-led sessions enables the teacher to observe far more. This provides rich opportunities to assess learning.

Evidence of impact on teaching

Observations of teaching in year 3 and 4 were judged good or outstanding in Autumn 2015.

What has been the impact on school organisation and leadership?

This work has contributed to a wider-school focus on developing speaking and listening.

Evidence of impact on school organisation and leadership

The role of Speaking and Listening lead has been implemented for 2016/17.

What is the crucial thing that made the difference?

It was vital that teachers were willing to embrace a new approach, reflect on the journey and work together to share best practice. Mixed-ability grouping and explicit speaking and listening modelling was crucial. Also it was important to embed high-quality speaking and listening across the school day; for example, specific praise for effective partner talk and expecting all children to speak in full sentences on the carpet.

What would your next steps be?

Extend this approach across KS2. Develop age-appropriate speaking stems to ensure progression. Embed the approach through further training of TAs. Ensure all classrooms are a 'reading rich' environment.

Sharing Practice

If another individual or school was attempting to replicate this work, where should they start?

Visit our school to see mixed-ability reading groups in action. Undertake reading and research. Use a lesson-study approach to trial reciprocal reading in one class, then trial more widely.

What would be the essential elements to include?

- A growth mindset approach to learning

- Mixed-ability groups
- Quality teaching of reading comprehension strategies
- Quality teaching of speaking and listening skills (in context of paired and group discussion)
- High quality texts