

**Building Bridges Project  
Case Study**



**Developing Functional  
Writing**

**Kirkwall Grammar School**

[www.kgs.orkney.sch.org.uk](http://www.kgs.orkney.sch.org.uk)

**Papdale Primary School**

[www.papdale.sch.org.uk](http://www.papdale.sch.org.uk)

**Sanday Junior High School**

[www.sanday.sch.org.uk](http://www.sanday.sch.org.uk)



**ORKNEY**  
ISLANDS COUNCIL

# Context

### • **Building Bridges and Orkney**

There are 24 schools in Orkney comprising 2 Secondary, 4 Junior high schools and 18 Primary. Ten of these are island schools. The Building Bridges project in Literacy is one of many National Developments being developed in Orkney schools. The authority has invited schools to be involved in projects in formative assessment, gathering and interpreting evidence, moderation, new national assessments, flexibility in the curriculum and the 'improving science' initiative.

### • **Getting Started**

There was initial enthusiasm for involvement by a number of primary schools and secondary departments and following discussion, clarification and attendance at the regional seminar it emerged that the two main schools would be Kirkwall Grammar School [www.kgs.orkney.school.org.uk](http://www.kgs.orkney.school.org.uk) and Papdale Primary School [www.papdale.orkney.school.org.uk](http://www.papdale.orkney.school.org.uk) . These are neighbouring schools in Kirkwall on the Orkney mainland.

### • **School Contexts**

Kirkwall Grammar School is the largest secondary school in Orkney and has a roll of approximately 930 and a staff of approximately 90FTE. Similarly Papdale Primary is the largest primary school in Orkney with a roll of 511 and a teaching staff of 30

The involvement of the largest secondary school and its main associated primary school in the Building Bridges project meant that regular liaison could be established and sustained in future years with a view to further developments which could be shared with cluster groups.

### • **Direction**

In order to decide the way forward an audit of current practice in each school was undertaken by the key players in both schools, John Devine PT English and Fiona MacDonald P6 class teacher. The audit revealed some similarities in need and resulted in the aims of the project being defined and subsequently adjusted as the project emerged, developed and evolved.

### • **Undertaking the development**

As the development progressed others became involved: the Science department in Kirkwall Grammar school; the librarian, Harry Curran; and John Dayus, English teacher at Sanday Junior High School. Sanday School was a late addition to the project and became involved due to the staff's enthusiasm for formative assessment, the principles of which are embedded in the Building Bridges project.

### • **Presentation of the case study**

In the true spirit of Building Bridges, the case study from Kirkwall Grammar school and Padale Primary is presented as one. Given the late addition in the programme of Sanday Community, work there is treated as a discrete segment of the case study. There are, nevertheless, clearly similarities in both parts of the case study, but given that Sanday school is a junior high school (3-16), continuity, progression and liaison between sectors was less likely to be challenging.

## Case Study

### 1. Project Aims

Papdale Primary had already begun to implement a new writing programme at the time the Building Bridges project was first conceived. Kirkwall Grammar School was also seeking to develop literacy across the curriculum. As the overall aim of the project was to raise and sustain achievement and attainment in literacy P6-S2, the chance to develop each school's programme and to work with colleagues in another sector was welcomed. Many possibilities for liaison and development were apparent, but initial discussions revealed a desire from both sectors to develop functional writing as a narrow focus area because of the size and nature of the schools.

It was felt necessary to keep this tight focus because of the difficulties of dissemination across three classes at each of the two primary levels and the many subject departments in the secondary sector. It was also an area which had not recently been developed in the primary, unlike the secondary where a Writing Across the Curriculum working group already existed whose work was part of the school's priorities for the year. However, other broader aims were also highlighted. The main aims of the project were outlined as being:

- *to develop shared approaches towards the teaching of concepts/purpose in functional writing*
- *to develop shared approaches towards providing success criteria in 5-14 writing*
- *to develop progression in personal reading*
- *to develop efficient systems for the electronic transfer of information on pupil attainment between primary and secondary.*

### 2. Writing in the Primary and Secondary

#### 2.1. Before Building Bridges

Early discussions and exchange visits between the two schools revealed many similarities in the approach to the teaching of writing. Papdale Primary was introducing a new programme for Personal and Imaginative Writing and staff were being encouraged to use the 'process approach' to teaching writing outlined below:

##### *Phase 1 - Pre-writing*

Establishing clear aims  
Providing examples  
Exploring the features of the text  
Defining the conventions  
Modelling  
Composing together

##### *Phase 2 - Creating an initial draft*

Scaffolding the first attempts  
Independent writing

##### *Phase 3 - Checking, reviewing and redrafting*

Conferencing  
Peer assessment  
Self assessment  
Redrafting/reorganising

##### *Phase 4 -Presenting and publishing*

Not all these stages would necessarily occur in a linear manner, as some might overlap. In addition to the teaching of this 'process', a genre-based approach to functional writing was based on past development work with a focus on imaginative and personal writing in the School Development Plan.

Kirkwall Grammar School's English Department had three years previously introduced a 'First Days' writing booklet and support pack to aid transition to the secondary. This covered both Functional and Personal Writing and also - quite coincidentally - outlined a very clear genre-based approach like that being developed in the primary. The writing process was broken down for the pupils into five clear steps:

Planning; Drafting; Revising; Proof-reading; Presentation

Target setting was also common in both sectors, but needed some development. In short, it soon became apparent that although there was much commonality of practice between both sectors, a smoother and more coherent approach needed to be developed. As a consequence, exchange visits and meetings led to the sharing of good practice and, over the course of the project, the developments delineated below.

As a result of the existence of the secondary school Writing across the Curriculum working group, the idea of a structured approach to the teaching of functional writing across the curriculum was already being developed. The formation of the Functional Writing Group in the secondary school was based on the need to address issues of literacy in S1/2. These had become apparent, in part, as increased number of pupils with specific learning difficulties or special educational needs were included in mainstream classes and the attainment gap was beginning to widen.

The primary aims of the group were to raise attainment in S1/2 through a focussed approach to functional writing across the curriculum, and to develop the skills and increase the confidence of non-specialist staff in the teaching of communication skills, in particular those of functional writing. The Functional Writing Group had sought to develop the skills of staff in the use of tools to enhance functional writing in the above subjects and year groups.

## **2.2 Writing Developments**

- *to develop shared approaches towards the teaching of concepts/purpose in functional writing*
- *to develop shared approaches towards providing success criteria in 5-14 writing*

### **2.2.1 Audience, Purpose and Genre**

It was soon recognised that the twin concepts of 'purpose' and 'audience' were at the core of the teaching of the writing process in both sectors, with the pupils being encouraged to arrive at these for themselves where possible. These ideas allowed pupils a conceptual framework which, it was hoped, could migrate with them from primary to secondary. In both schools, therefore, the aims of each writing lesson were increasingly shared with pupils, and learning intentions explained.

Although the ostensibly watertight boundaries between genres as outlined by David Wray *et al.* proved frustratingly porous at times, the team - drawing upon the expertise of the secondary specialists - was able largely to agree on specific genres in functional writing, along with their specific conventions. These were used to develop 'success criteria' for pupils in functional writing (see appendix 1) and a wall display in the primary 6 classroom was created to exemplify the six genres. As a result sharing learning intentions became much more explicit as pupil comments were to be based on each lesson's targets.

In order to allow pupils to see how they could apply this conceptual framework to all non-fiction texts - and in so doing develop a coherent approach to tackling the reading of such texts - exemplars materials were also created by the secondary librarian, based on non-fiction texts from both schools (see section 2.2.4) Such exemplars enabled the conventions of each genre to be explored with the pupils in the very 'real' context of the school library.

### **2.2.2. Writing Buddies/ peer assessment/target-setting/marking codes**

In the primary, pupils were assigned 'writing buddies': someone who was working at the same level as them, with whom they could share their writing. There was some element of choice in partners as trust was felt to be an important issue. During all stages of the writing process buddies were used. This 'pair and share' technique allowed pupils to develop their ideas, challenge each other (sometimes easier than challenging the teacher!), act as 'critical friends', become involved in peer assessment, and celebrate each other's successes. 'Two stars and a wish' as a general guide to writing comments for each other, ensured the process was a positive and safe experience for all pupils. A follow-up questionnaire revealed the pupils were almost all happy with their partner and felt the peer assessment helped to improve their work (see appendix 2). Support was given to those who found it hard to work with others.

The 'two stars and a wish' approach was also piloted in the secondary, as was peer assessment, though the term 'writing buddies' was not explicitly used as it was thought that pupils may consider it rather patronising.

Pupils needed to know exactly what was being taught and what was expected of them if they were to be able to assess each other's, or their own, work. Each lesson began with 'W.A.L.T' (we are learning to...) and the success criteria related directly to this enabling children to focus their comments. The problem of pupils focusing on spelling or handwriting had a danger of being overlooked by this focus, but it was also felt that these elements could not be ignored, particularly in the secondary where teachers only saw first and second year pupils for a very small amount of time each week, and each piece of marked work provided a good opportunity for remediation all areas of writing.

As a result 'secretarial' target sheets were developed in the primary to enable pupils to edit each others' work in a two stage process (see appendix 3). These related directly to 5-14 levels. A quick 'secretarial check' was sometimes, although not always, done first, as pupils tended to focus on capital letters, spelling etc. initially. Target-setting sheets in the secondary mirrored this primary development, but these sheets were used also for broader targets, as well as those that might be described as 'secretarial'.

This approach was supported by a common marking code which was trailed in the primary and secondary. In the primary, this check was followed at separate time with a 'Lesson Target Check' when the success criteria outlined above was followed. This double check not only helped the writer to improve but also the 'marker' to understand the learning that was being undertaken.

### **2.2.3 Functional Writing across the Secondary Curriculum**

The Functional Writing Group in the secondary was set up as a medium term working group, in parallel to the Building Bridges development, to address the issue of perceived lack of literacy skills in S1/2 pupils. Interestingly, the group only had one English teacher as a member, and he was there more in his capacity as a member of the senior management team. The remit for the Functional Writing Group was initially wide open, but through discussion it was decided that it would be wise to build on the staff awareness of literacy issues previously begun by the Writing across the Curriculum working group. As all pupils now spent the first few weeks of S1 studying the concept of genre writing in their English lessons, using the English Department's 'First Days' writing booklet, it was considered worthwhile to extend this approach to functional writing into other subject areas.

There was evidence (see Appendix 4) to suggest that it was not so much literacy skills but *organisational* skills that many pupils lacked. A great many pupils knew what they wanted to communicate but lacked the conceptual framework and presentational skills to produce coherently organised and presented work. There were many references in the educational press and in the media that suggest pupils are not as literate as they could be. Teachers and others expect pupils in upper primary and early secondary to be able to communicate their ideas in writing with clarity and confidence; however, few are able to do so. Across Scotland in 2002/3 around half of S2 pupils were working at or exceeding level E. Without these skills, a pupil's ability to access other areas of the curriculum is curtailed; this can in turn lead to disengagement with learning, de-motivation and ultimately disaffection with school. Behaviour and quality of social interaction with peers and adults may then deviate from the normal boundaries. Literacy is the key to communication and communication the key to learning. Furthermore secure literacy skills can serve as a major bulwark against social exclusion.

The cross curricular nature of the work of the Group was soon narrowed down to Environmental Studies 5-14 i.e. Science, Technical Subjects and Social Subjects. (Due to staffing difficulties, the Home Economics department was not able to be involved at this early stage.) In particular, there was a focus on inclusion of extended writing skills as part of the new *Exploring Science* course being introduced in S1/2 over Session 2003/4 and 2004/5.

The working life of the Functional Writing Group has the same lifespan as the Building Bridges project. This was planned to give us a focus of 18 months over two school years and meant that anyone committing time and effort to membership of the FWG was assured that they would not be there for life!

The principal output of the work of the FWG in collaboration with Building Bridges project was the draft of the 'Developing Functional Writing' Pack. It is planned that this will be the basis for the pack of materials and information which will be distributed to all subject departments in Kirkwall Grammar School in November 2004. The timetable for the Autumn Term includes the distribution of the Functional Writing Pack to PTs by the end of November, the presentation to all staff in December 2004, monitoring and evaluation questionnaires to all staff by end January 2005, in the light of which alterations and amendments will be made. The expectation is that explicit teaching of functional writing will be planned for S1/2 courses beginning in June 2005. As literacy is a priority in the School Development Plan and a and also a 'National Priority', we not anticipate overt resistance from subject departments to these developments. After all, PTs

are being handed all the necessary background information and materials to enable them to develop literacy skills of pupils within their own subject.

In addition, iBooks computers have been trialled with pupils in junior Science to allow them to access spell check software, choose their own font and its size, and produce graphics if desired. This has increased the pride they have in their work, and as a result of this approach, pupils produced far more coherent and attractive pieces of writing, and several such pieces of extended writing on the subject of planets, produced in S1/2 Science classes, were celebrated through display on classroom walls and in the school foyer on a parents' evening.

A major advantages of the overlap between the three school working groups is the cross-fertilisation of ideas between primary and secondary sectors and across the secondary curriculum. Working with the P6 teacher in the largest associate primary school has enabled the group to access literacy tools with which the pupils were already familiar. These have been discussed and distributed within the Functional Writing Group and are now being piloted in Science, Technical and Social Subjects. The evidence of the effect of literacy tools such as writing frames on the presentation of pupils' work, and on their ability to articulate their ideas, is found in Appendices 5 and 6.

Furthermore, the notion of 'buddy' comments on a pupil's writing is one which it is intended will be used more widely in the secondary context. Furthermore, the access to funding for literacy initiatives, through the 'Building Bridges' Project, has enabled staff to have development time and has purchased literacy tools for use across departments.

#### **2.2.4 The School Library as a Literacy Resource**

The secondary school librarian's involvement with the Building Bridges project began in December 2003. After it was decided that the focus would be on functional writing, he was given the task of producing exemplar materials based on sources held in Kirkwall Grammar School Library and Papdale Primary School. After some discussion, it was agreed that he would produce 126 sheets, 21 for each genre (Argue/Discuss, Explain, Instruct, Persuade, Recount, Report). There would be one sheet highlighting the typical conventions of each genre and twenty annotated examples, five each for P6-S2.

The first stage was to identify suitable examples. The aim was to find extracts which would illustrate the conventions highlighted, cover a wide range of reading abilities, include a diversity of subject matter, and be written in a variety of forms. The librarian was given access to the resources of Papdale Primary School during the holidays and he also searched his own stock.

Once he had identified the requisite number, he scanned them, created templates for each genre, and then inserted the scanned images into these for individualised treatment. Each genre was colour coded and the sheets within each year group set ranked in approximate order of reading difficulty. The sheets were then printed, laminated and placed in box files. (see appendices 7 and 8)

These sheets have been trialled once in the secondary with an S1 class, in conjunction both with the English Department's First Days unit, and the librarian's own induction course. Pupils were first given the genre conventions sheet along with an annotated example, drawn from a text in the school library. After this they were asked to identify similar features on an unannotated text, also drawn from the school library. Finally, pupils were directed to the recipe book section in the library and to complete a similar task on a worksheet for a book chosen at random. The lesson turned out well and all pupils were able to apply to real texts the conceptual framework that they had developed. Such a conceptual framework should serve pupils well both in the production of writing and the decoding of reading. It is planned that this resources will be made available to both the primary school and secondary departments in October, and that it can be used as starting point for the production of writing in a variety of subject contexts in both sectors.

#### **2.2.5 Writing in Sanday Junior High School**

At Sanday Junior High, there were particular strengths and particular challenges that it was necessary to take account of when planning for the 'Building Bridges' project. On the one hand, the staff at Sanday is quite small and close-knit. Being a junior high school provided excellent potential for development across the junior and secondary school, as both phases are on a single site. There are only three full time secondary teachers, though these teachers teach English, Maths, Science, History, Geography and French. This meant that development work was more likely to take place across different subject areas than would perhaps normally be the case in more 'conventional' schools. On the other hand, subjects such as Technology, Music and Home Economics are delivered by peripatetic teachers, Art and IT by a part time teacher, and these members of staff are therefore unable to be present for our staff development sessions. We needed, therefore, to find a way of 'touching' them, too, in our development work.

Also, the gathering of evidence of progress, by necessity, will tend to be via teachers' evaluative judgements, as there are not have sufficient numbers to yield statistically valid data.

The main focus of work at Sanday was with staff. Most teachers used a variety of strategies for developing literacy, but there was not necessarily a *commonality* of approaches adopted throughout the school. This could lead to pupils perhaps being faced with different expectations as they moved through junior school and into secondary, and when moving from subject to subject in secondary school. For instance, methods of assessing work and feeding back to pupils differed; all subjects made reading demands upon pupils, but use of active reading strategies varied; staff did not necessarily have a 'bank' of clearly established strategies to call upon to help to develop, structure or scaffold pupils' writing.

Therefore, we aimed to:

- Review and model a range of *active* reading strategies that teachers could use in the classroom: cloze procedure, sequencing, labelling, underlining, predicting, tabulating, sorting, segmenting, etc. (Examples of workshop activities in appendix 9)

- Model a teaching sequence which builds a *bridge between reading and writing*:

- Establish clear aims
- Provide examples
- Explore the features of the text
- Define the conventions
- **Demonstrate how it is written**
- **Compose together**
- **Short burst writing**
- Scaffold the first attempts
- Independent writing
- Draw out key learning

- Explore the different non fiction writing genres that pupils will encounter, and how to support pupils' writing **within and across** different genres of writing.

- To model the **effect** of a variety of speaking and listening strategies on reading and writing development

- To explore different strategies for formative assessment.

- **Methodology**

Delivery was via a series of five after-school workshops, each workshop lasting an hour and a half. Each workshop was separated by a period of two to three weeks, during which time teachers were able to explore any strategies modelled during to workshop.

The workshop sessions were supported by a weekly publication: 'Literacy Butterflies' (appendix 9), which focussed on a different literacy strategy every week. This was displayed in the staffroom as well as being delivered into the pigeon hole of every member of staff. In this way, peripatetic teachers gained access to some of the ongoing work of the project.

- **What happened?**

The workshop sessions were very well received by all staff. One of the most interesting and positive aspects was that the workshops provided a sharply focused agenda for staff discussion, and there were significant benefits gained from cross-phase and cross-subject groups working together. This growing awareness of commonalities and differences was commented upon in several evaluations.

- **Classroom Developments**

The project has contributed to the adoption of the 'Cornerstones' material across the whole of the primary school. It was felt after discussion among staff, and following a visit to Papdale Primary School as part of the project, that this material offered great potential in its presentation of active reading strategies such as cloze and sequencing, and in the use made of shared writing and short burst writing. While 'Cornerstones' had previously been in use in some classrooms, it is only from August that all pupils have been involved in the scheme, so it is not possible as yet to assess the effectiveness of a more common approach to language development.

Different active reading strategies have been tried out in different secondary classes. For instance, appendix 10 shows use of labelling and tabulation in Science, sequencing in English and cloze in Geography. None of these are new in themselves to the subject areas, but an awareness that such activities need to be underpinned by pair or group work if they are to significantly contribute to pupils' developing literacy has been commented on by more than one teacher.

'Investigating Narratives' demonstrates the adoption of the 'bridging sequence' outlined earlier in a scheme of work undertaken by last year's S2. Built into the scheme are opportunities for shared writing and short burst writing as well as structured opportunities to analyse the conventions of different examples of narrative writing.

Two 'genre placemats' have been included. These have been laminated for pupils' use to provide scaffolds for different types of writing (appendix 11)

An example of work by a pupil in current the current S2 on genre transformation shows the development of a piece of writing through shared writing and short burst writing. (Appendix 12) Most importantly here, one can see that the pupil recognizes writing as a *process*, rather than a *product*.

### • What is happening now?

The final part of the original project: 'Assessment', has now been developed in some detail as the school moves into a new session. Another series of five workshops has been planned, and work on assessment using 'The Learning Set' materials, and Glasgow Education Service's 'Raising Standards through Classroom Assessment' is now being developed. So far, there have been two workshop sessions, and once more, staff are gradually trying out and evaluating different strategies in the classroom in between each workshop session.

Most significant developments so far are attempts to explore 'comment only marking', which is being tried out in different subject areas. Appendix 13 shows this in action in History, and in French for an end of unit assessment. 'Traffic Lighting' was another strategy that teachers were keen to try out, and this is also used in the French example. (Appendix 14) One thing worth noting at this stage, is that work on assessment has highlighted the need for teachers to note the difference between *recording* and *reporting* attainments. What we record for our own analysis will, by necessity, differ from what we feed back to pupils to help them in the next stage of their development.

### 3. Personal Reading

- to develop progression in personal reading

All staff involved were excited by the possibilities that the Building Bridges project presented in terms of collaboration between primary and secondary teachers. In both primary and secondary we had become frustrated by the lack of 'system' to our approach towards personal reading, with the concomitant effect that typically pupils tended to 'plateau' in terms of the difficulty of text that they would take on through choice. Both schools had independently heard of an innovative software product, designed to develop personal reading, called *Accelerated Reader*, and both were interested in it. However, as was suggested earlier, it was important to match such aspirations to the reality of what could be achieved in such a relatively short timespan, and as a result the development of a coherent approach towards personal reading was put on the 'back burner' - at least for the initial phases of the project. In addition, the regulations of disbursement of funds for the project, as delineated by Learning and Teaching Scotland, militated against large-scale expenditure on capital items, laying emphasis instead on funding staff time for development. Ironically, perhaps, our appetite for this programme was further whetted by the opportunity provided by such Building Bridges conferences to meet with practitioners from other education authorities as when we spoke to colleagues from Shetland who had already purchased this programme, and used it as a bridge between their primary and secondary sector.

However, notwithstanding a sense of proportion in what we could do during the timespan of the project, and the expenditure strictures placed on us by LTS, both project schools independently sought other funding for the Accelerated Reader programme, and both were successful in finding it. As a result, we hope, over the next few months, to introduce the software in both schools, and thereafter to ensure that there is a common approach to its use between both.

It is hoped that in the next phase of the project more emphasis will be placed on personal reading. Both KGS and Papdale Primary are currently considering purchasing Accelerated Reader software and we will be

looking at ways of using it to provide continuity and progression between the schools. In addition, further links, such as extending the 'Reading Trail' programme - an incentive based scheme for the encouragement of personal reading - used in S1 and S2 into the primary, and involvement of the KGS Librarian in developing the Papdale Primary Library, will be investigated.

#### **4. Improving Transfer of information**

- *to develop efficient systems for the electronic transfer of information on pupil attainment between primary and secondary.*

This is an area that the project team had little involvement in, but one in which some significant progress was made during the time of the project. One of the most salient themes of initial discussions between staff from the primary and secondary sectors was the very limited degree to which structures currently existed for transfer - whether this be of ideas or information - between the sectors. There were existing structures for exchange between the two schools in question, but these were almost exclusively of a pastoral nature and aimed at easing the transition for pupils moving from primary up to secondary.

One of the first conclusions of our meetings was, not surprisingly, that such contact should be embedded, and not just organised on an *ad hoc* basis for the furtherance of limited lifespan projects such as Building Bridges.

Another realisation was that there was not much in the way of a coherent mechanisms for the transfer of vital information on pupil attainment. Whilst P7 reports were passed on to the secondary as a part of pupils' personal records, these were not always passed on to classroom teachers. When this did happen it was the result of the efforts of the Maths and English departments. There was not, in short, a whole school approach to such transfer of information on attainment. The project team saw this as a serious weakness, albeit one that was probably quite easily remedied.

After discussion with staff in charge of pupil transition from both schools, and authority ICT specialists, it was arranged for all teaching staff in the secondary school to be given the details of 5-14 levels achieved in reading, writing and maths for pupils from all associate primaries. This happened at the beginning of session 2004/05 with the result that all secondary staff now have basic information on pupil prior attainment.

However, there is much still to be done. It has proved relatively easy to provide this information for secondary staff, but the greater challenge will involve educating secondary staff to a level at which they can interpret such data and take it into account when planning courses and creating suitable learning materials. Although the concept of the 'fresh start' has long been discredited, there are still staff in secondaries who maintain a nostalgic attachment to it. It is planned in the near future to offer workshop sessions for all staff to provide training in the interpretation of what the 5-14 levels represent in the practical terms of learning and teaching. Furthermore, it is planned that new software will allow primaries to transfer longitudinal data on attainment beginning with pupils earliest achievement of 5-14 levels in primary. With such focussed data, both schools should be better able to measure rates of progress and 'value added'.

#### **5. Implications**

##### **• Writing**

- *to develop shared approaches towards the teaching of concepts/purpose in functional writing*
- *to develop shared approaches towards providing success criteria in 5-14 writing*

As a result of the project, a greater understanding of the work done in both sectors has been achieved. Critical friendships and sharing good practice have led to developments which will support the process of learning and teaching. More commonality in approach in the teaching of writing has also been achieved, as a result of the same focus on audience and purpose. The pupils feel they have achieved a higher level of success than they would have normally and are recognising the benefits of peer and self-evaluation. In a recent interview with a TES journalist, primary pupils were able to talk confidently and knowledgeably about formative assessment strategies in writing and how this has helped them. Writing has definitely improved: in the primary six class, seven pupils, who it was not felt would be ready for testing, passed the next national level during the course of the project, four at level B, two at level C and three at level D. Some of this may be due to the increased focus in the area of writing but the perception amongst the pupils is increasingly that

functional writing is not a mystery, that there are conventions which can be followed to enable success, and that pupils at all levels can achieve success using the structure and guidance provided. Formative strategies are becoming embedded across the sectors and pupils in both are becoming more able to see how they can improve their writing.

However, the approach taken now needs to be disseminated across in both sectors, both across year levels, and across departments in the secondary school, in order for the benefits to be maintained and for real continuity to be embedded between P6 and S2. It is planned that this aim will be addressed by staff meetings in both sectors in the near future. The next step would be to roll out the developments across associated primary schools so that all primary children experience a common approach to functional writing from P6 to S2. It is hoped that a more uniform approach will help to address the dip in attainment across these year levels.

#### • **Reading**

- *to develop progression in personal reading*

Despite the fact that work on developments in personal reading was formally deferred by the project, much, nevertheless, took place. As the two main schools involved in the project have now invested in the *Accelerated Reader* programme, it is hoped that this will become a key aspect of strategies towards progression between primary and secondary. By providing detailed information of primary pupils personal reading levels, the programme should assist secondary English teachers in pointing pupils towards texts that provide a suitable level of challenge for pupils entering the secondary, and in so doing allow them to address the dip in enthusiasm for personal reading that has been identified in S1/2 pupils.

#### • **Transfer of Information**

- *to develop efficient systems for the electronic transfer of information on pupil attainment between primary and secondary.*

The provision of information of primary pupils' attainment in reading, writing and maths, to all teachers of S1 pupils should work as an effective bulwark against the idea of the fresh start, as well as encouraging all staff to take a leaf out of their primary colleagues' books and see the issues as literacy and numeracy development as whole school responsibilities, rather than the sole preserve of the English and Maths departments.

#### • **Teamwork**

Despite the obvious practical advances of the project, perhaps the most important implication of the Building Bridges project has been the shared affirmation between sectors that primary and secondary should be not viewed by pupils or teachers as discrete educational spheres, but rather as a seamless educational experience. There is clearly a long way to go in achieving this aspiration, but the project has brought together the sectors in a productive collaboration that if maintained will continue to build bridges between the sectors long after this particular project has passed into history.