Hearing the Voice of Gifted and Talented Pupils Through the Use of Learning Logs in Order to Improve Teaching Provision

Dr Keith Watson
Portswood Primary, Southampton
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Introduction

The years since the beginning of the Labour Government of 1997 came to power have seen an increasing focus on Gifted and Talented (G & T) pupils (Eyre, 2005) and following the review of practice by the House of Commons Select Committee (1999) there has been growing calls for high quality provision for these pupils. Indeed, from 2007 the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) will require primary schools to indicate their G & T pupils for the first time in order to “ensure that information is transferred from year to year and learning pathways are logged” (DFES:2006:14). This also reflects the categorisation of G & T pupils as a vulnerable group alongside Special Educational Needs and ‘Looked after children’ and hence worthy of special consideration and a possible focus for inspection. Also, the establishment of the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) is another indicator of the growing importance placed on the education of G & T pupils as is the Challenge Award that is organised by the National Able Child Education Association and sets the standards for G & T provision. (NACE).

Along with the growing emphasis on G & T provision the rise in importance of ‘Pupil Voice’ has also been significant in recent years (DFES:2006). OfSted, with its pupil questionnaire and letter to pupils reflects this emergence as does the growing use of pupil interviews as a method for data collection for inspection. This also relates to the DFES call to “make children partners in their learning” (DFES:2006:8) in “pacy, purposeful classrooms where teaching is personalised, aspirational and fun” (DFES:2006:8).

So given that there is an increasing focus on G & T pupils what methods are being used to improve provision for them? And is ‘pupil voice’ being considered when teaching this group of pupils? It is against this dual background that this research project is rooted. Indeed, it is aimed at harnessing the G & T pupil voice in order to shape the learning experiences of the children.

This study is centred on a city primary school that has received an award for G & T provision (NACE, 2006) but wanted further develop by looking to “explore imaginative contexts or devise creative challenges” (Ofsted, 2005:26) for our pupils to experience. In order to achieve this we wanted to capture the views, thoughts and ideas of the pupils about their work.

In order to capture these ideas this action research project aimed to use learning logs as a way to hear the voice of G & T. It dealt with real situations and aimed to avoid the problem whereby:

Between the classroom and the staffroom teachers destroy their most valuable property, the knowledge borne from their experience

Adapted from Gurge 1979:46

This study aimed to harness that knowledge for the improvement of G. & T. teaching. The intention was that by listening to the pupils the teachers could adapt their method of delivery to produce teaching that:

Challenges, stretches and excites them on a daily basis, in an environment that celebrates excellence and is supportive of those who may, in years to come, break
the boundaries of what we know and understand today

But would the views of pupils really improve their learning experience?

**Literature review**

In carrying out this project it is important to locate the work in the research background in which it takes place. The notion of ‘Gifted’ here relates to “those pupils who are capable of excelling in academic subjects” while ‘Talented’ refers to those pupils who “excel in areas of the curriculum requiring visio-spatial skills or practical abilities” (DFES:2006:4). The project aimed to modify the curriculum and teaching methods at an individual school and in this sense involved what has been termed ‘Structured Tinkering’ (Eyre, 2005:1). This is understood to mean:

A systematic approach to the modification of the basic school curriculum to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils. The approach builds on curriculum planning techniques and classroom differentiation techniques, and encourages individual teachers to determine the areas and methodologies for curriculum improvement

(Eyre, 2005:1).

This way of working with G & T pupils, where the main focus for their provision was within the mainstream class, is seen as preferable because of the “limitation of pulling-out students into specialised enrichment programmes” because it has been suggested more beneficial “…provision should focus on more in-class practises” (OC5). The key to in-class provision is differentiation (Marquez & Sawyer, 1994, q. in OC 5:20) although research has shown that practices of differentiation via acceleration, enrichment and homogenous grouping lead to more successful learning that any one approach employed alone (OC5:20). The need for this is premised on the assertion that “gifted students may already have acquired knowledge of between 40-50% of their lessons before they are taught” (OC 5) and therefore should spend additional time on enrichment and acceleration activities. There are clear dangers of pupils who are being asked to do work on things they already know. The issue of a lack of challenge and hence boredom is also an issue for G & T pupils (Ofsted, 2005:2). Similar to this is the issue of what Freeman called the ‘Three-time Problem’ where:

Pupils who absorb the information the first time develop a technique of mentally switching-off for the second and the third, then switching on again for the next new point involving considerable mental skill

(Ofsted, 2005:3).

While the project could not address all of these issues some of them were likely to arise. The main thrust of the project would therefore centre upon the notion of providing for G & T pupils within the normal classroom environment by ‘tinkering’ with provision in order to improve the educational experience. It was with this background that the methodologies for the study needed to be established.

**Methodology**

The research methods in this study are essentially qualitative although quantitative methods are used on a few occasions. The methods are primarily qualitative because they deal with the thoughts, attitudes, opinions and beliefs of both the pupils and the teachers. The aim was
to explore the experience of the pupils and given that there were twelve different pupils involved then clearly their perceptions would be subjective.

The research centred upon five Year 4 and seven Year 5 G & T pupils and their two teachers from a high performing city primary school located on the south coast. The school was in the process of being only the fifth primary school in the country to be accredited with the NACE Challenge award at the time of the research and therefore the Gifted and Talented agenda was high on the list of priorities for the school. The research involved twelve pupils because it was not the intention to be merely “just the infant Mozart or child Einstein, but rather …the upper end of the ability range in most classes” (DFES: 2006:4). The pupils, five boys and seven girls, were chosen because they were all on the G & T register for a variety of subjects and also three pupils with English as an Additional Language which is a key feature of the school. The pupils kept learning diaries (here called learning logs) over an eight month period in which they recorded their thoughts and opinions about their work. These computer logs were written at times as a response to questions put to them and at times were self generated with the pupils free to write about what they wanted related to their schooling. Questionnaires and semi-structured group interviews were also carried out that further explored issues that had emerged from the logs. The entries themselves were colour coded according to whether the entries related to teaching methods, curriculum issues or general issues. This allowed for the categorisation of responses and made the frequency of responses easier to cross check.

The responses were considered by myself, acting as both researcher but also as mentor in my role as G & T co-coordinator, and by the class teachers. As a group we discussed the entries and picked out the common themes and discussed how the teaching and curriculum could be adapted in response to the pupil voice. In this way the judgements on what the important issues were was triangulated. These two teachers, one in her second year of teaching and one an experienced teacher, also kept logs throughout the course of the research in which they reflected upon their teaching and the adaptations to their work that were made. The responses were then used as a basis to decide upon modifications that could be made to teaching methods and the taught curriculum. In this way the aim was for the voice of the G & T pupils to be heard and impact upon teaching so that the pupils were more active in determining their own learning.

The research was an action research project where a “small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention” (Halsey, A.H. q. in Cohen & Manion, 1995:186) was sought. The diary responses of the pupils were to be used as a basis for modification to teaching and in this sense the aim was that the “ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustments, directional changes, redefinitions” so as to improve provision (Cohen & Manion, 1995:) Clearly the research is a small-scale project that is concerned with precise knowledge of my situation and therefore grand claims of generalisation are inappropriate. However, the hope was that the study would be “illuminating the general by looking at the particular” (Dunscombe, 1998, p30) and therefore the research might strike a chord with other teachers struggling with the challenges of effectively teaching G & T pupils.

One issue that needed consideration was my dual role as both researcher and part subject (BERA, 2004:6). I realise that there is a danger that my ‘participant’ observations” could be “subjective, biased, unrepresentative, idiosyncratic” (Cohen & Manion, 1995, p100). However, it is because I am aware of those dangers that I endeavoured to guard against them and separate what was my experience from the other results of the study. I could not, as any researcher cannot, eliminate myself totally from my research but nevertheless, through the use of the Triangulation methods such as the use of logs, questionnaires, interviews and the thoughts and opinions of the teachers it was hoped that any bias would be guarded against as much as is ever possible in such situations.
During this study the ethical considerations were all addressed with reference to the BERA guidelines (BERA, 2004) into ethics of educational research. This included seeking parental permission for the children’s involvement and maintaining anonymity in the presentation of the data.

Findings and Analysis

The project produced vast amounts of data in the form of thousands of words of diary entries, questionnaire responses and interviews. This detailed data can be seen in the appendices. This section will focus on the implications of that data and how it addressed the key research question relating to how the curriculum and teaching methods might be modified in light of the G & T pupil voice and is primarily concerned with learning log entries because subsequent interviews tended to further probe areas raised in the logs. These key themes reflect the key issues that were identified as emerging from the logs by myself and the class teachers. Therefore, the key findings of this research in terms of our practice were:

1. ‘Cutting away earlier’ – this involves only keeping the G & T pupils on the carpet in a whole class session for a short period of time. In this way the pupils can begin their independent work more quickly and can avoid being ‘bored’ by the work they find to easy. The teacher can then call the group back once the rest of the class has begun their work and then can either consolidate the independent work or extend the group further.

Although not a new method in teaching at the school the research confirmed the importance of this way of working more and more. The teachers in the study began to examine all of their lessons to see when they needed the G & T pupils with the whole class and when they did not. They realised that by keeping them too long the pace was inappropriate and the length of time available to work at a high level was being minimised. Far better to bring the G & T pupils together for an extra input at their level once the class had begun work. The Year 5 teacher had identified this issue at the outset of the research when she wrote:

   Sometimes during shared work on the carpet, when revising work from previous lessons to check the understanding of other pupils, I feel aware of the able children wanting to move on straight away and find it difficult to balance the needs of all the children within the class

   Year 5 teacher diary

Similarly the Year 4 teacher observed:

   One of the things I (and the Year 5 teacher) find hard is at the beginning of the lesson when we are recapping the previous lesson’s work for the benefit mainly of the lower and middle ability and it is not necessary for the more able. I am getting into the habit more often of sending the top group away from the carpet early to start a task

   Year 4 teacher diary.

This area provided the greatest challenge for the teachers and saw them ‘cutting away’ more and more often. The log responses showed the pupils viewed the change positively. The method was used most often in maths and was commented upon favourably during a HMI inspection the school received in November 2005.

2. More extended tasks – many of the logs of initially called for more time to complete tasks such as in the literacy hour where often the pupils would only have twenty minutes to complete a task. In Year 5 in particular the teacher introduced more
extended tasks including a week long narrative writing task. A brief was given that included the learning objective for the exercise but the pupils then had six and a half hours to plan, draft, edit and publish a story.

On this extended writing task there were mixed feelings. For Pupil A it was positive to start with but then some reservations emerged when she wrote “Last week I thought that it would really be the best literacy week ever. Now I am not so sure!” She also had a clear idea of why it would be good, “I am looking forward to writing something that is entirely me and not being told what to do. Just me!” She also showed that time management is a new skill to learn when she reflected afterwards that “I also think that I could have improved the plot of the story if I wasn’t afraid that I would lose writing time!”

The motivation provided by working independently with more control over their work was evident in subsequent diary entries such as:

   I am writing an adventure spy story… I am borrowing ideas from “The Falcon’s Malteaser” and “The Blurred Man”, because I really enjoyed those books, and I hope that I am able to write a story like that, that will cause tension and really get the reader hooked in.

   Pupil F

Here is a G & T pupil inspired to be creative and feeling a real sense of ownership in their work. The fact that the establishing of the task had been negotiated with the teacher seems to have been empowering.

The extended tasks also emphasised the importance of purpose for the work. One pupil wrote:

   I like writing stories, but usually I write them, and then we don’t do anything with them, and I think this is good, because we don’t just do a draft and then forget about it, because we publish it and make it look all nice and ready to show other people

   Pupil G

The teacher herself felt that although the work produced was of a high standard it was not markedly better then the normal standard of work. However she felt the real learning was about being independent and the pupils organising their time. The pupils concurred with this such as the pupil who felt great frustration at not finishing and wrote, “I am disappointed. I did not finish. I think that I would have got nearer the end and even possibly finish if I had not spent so long on the planning stage.

3. **Greater independence** - Continuing the theme of learning about learning it emerged throughout the research project that dialogue on all levels was promoted with the pupils. The importance of “giving earlier attention to the skills of independent learning” has been called for (Ofsted 2005:5) and in this project pupils were given that opportunity. The teachers increasingly discussed all aspects of the work and put more and more emphasis on the pupils making decisions for themselves. This included questions such as ‘who do you want to work with?’; ‘where will you sit?’ and ‘how will you present the work?’ All of this promoted independence and the pupils thrived on it. The hope was that freed from teacher expectation all of the time pupils would feel able to “take the kinds of intellectual risks that lead to exceptional levels of performance” (DFES:2006:8).
There were other examples of pupils appreciating the independence. For instance one girl wrote that:

I really enjoy D.T. because you can use your imagination and nobody is telling you, you have to make this you have to make that. You have a choice. Sometimes it can be really hard because you have to solve your own problems and figure out where to put things. You have a wonderful idea but when it comes to making it, it is really quite hard. But I like finding the answer.

Pupil G

This desire for more freedom was echoed by the pupil who wrote about sometimes being constrained when working because “In your book there are certain rules about what you write like not starting with ‘and’”. The logs often asked for the chance to be more independent.

4. **Negotiated curriculum** - In many ways the concept of a negotiated curriculum is a form of greater independence. One method widely used was to allow the G & T pupils to plan their own science experiments in a group while the whole class planned their experiment together. Having planned the experiment independently the teacher then clarified their method through questioning.

This was taken a stage further by the Year 5 pupils. One of them had written that “Sometimes we do experiments and we know what will happen”. In response to this they were challenged to create their own investigation. The pupils then wrote to the science subject leader to request a meeting to put forward their proposals. They met with him and presented a plan to test the quality of crisps. They tested the crisps for taste (of course!), weight and sugar and fat content and presented their findings in the form of a PowerPoint presentation.

This science work was addressing the issue of enrichment where the aim was “to relate learning to other areas and play with ideas so as to come up with new ones” (Ofsted, 2005:1), in this case the idea of designing their own enquiries. The negotiation they had gone through ensured they were motivated by the task because they felt ownership and this was empowering for them. The learning log entry had led to clear curriculum modification although the cases were not numerous. Whether this was because they were generally happy with the received curriculum or because they were not really aware of other possibilities was unclear and would need further research.

5. **Avoiding the plenary** – just as the ‘cut away’ at the start of a lesson was used to ensure G & T pupils were not bored on the carpet similarly at times the G & T pupils were not called over for the plenary. The plenary would often confirm the learning objective and check understanding but where was the need to do that if the A & G pupils could already achieve the main objective before the lesson started?

Therefore at times the G & T pupils merely carried on their work for an extra ten minutes while the class went over the main objectives in a plenary. This reinforces the notion that “Gifted students are more likely to absorb the information in the first instance, and do not require the repeated exposure to information” (OC5 :29). One year 4 pupil regularly discussed with the teacher whether they needed to be in the plenary.

6. **Pupil idiosyncrasies** – Whilst it is true that all pupils will have their own idiosyncrasies the use of logs allowed some of them to come to the fore and two examples emerged that were easily catered for and did assist the learning.
Firstly, one pupil seemed to always take longer with his maths. He always wrote out the questions in detail in his book even when the teacher did not request that he do so. This meant he often took longer than the others and this frustrated him, particularly if he got stuck but the others were way ahead and therefore unlikely to work with him on the problem. The answer came in the simple form of sticking a mini-version of the worksheets into his book so that he could work on it and therefore not waste time copying questions out. His speed improved and his confidence with it. Another example of the diary throwing up an idiosyncrasy was the issue of fiddling while the teacher talked. One pupil claimed he concentrated better if he could fiddle and yet the teacher would tell him not to fiddle. The compromise was that he be allowed to fiddle with a small piece of blu-tac but sit at the back of the class when sitting on the carpet so that he did not distract the class. The pupil had good discussions about whether it was rude to fiddle when someone talked and he agreed that if the teacher asked him to stop he would do so although generally it was not a problem. This does raise questions about balancing the whims of the class with the need to teach a group of 30. What if all of the pupils want to indulge their own foibles? Would there be 30 individuals all doing 'odd' things while the teacher tried to concentrate on lesson delivery? This could be where personalised learning could become chaos!

Other Findings

The ability of the pupils to be both self-critical and reflective when writing in their logs was striking. For instance one child wrote, "I am really enjoying my maths more because I have got much more confident with my numbers and have found a method I'm comfortable with, the column method". The logs also allowed pupils to reflect on their own feelings. For instance Pupil F was very honest when she wrote "the design had been changed and I had to put up with another design. I told them that they had changed it and I got a bit stroppy with them"

The teachers felt a growing deeper understanding of their pupils through the use of logs such as the change in relationship between the experienced teacher and one of her pupils as this quote illustrates:

The maturities of his answers have surprised me and his ability to empathise with me as his teacher. He now seems to value my advice and will ask for it when he requires it and act on it, which he did not seem willing to do before

Year 5 teacher log.

One outcome of the research was the professional development of the teachers. This certainly was the case with the more experienced Year 5 teacher concluding that:

The project overall has increased my awareness of able pupils but has also made me more self critical of my teaching as I seem to be thinking of ideas retrospectively

Experienced Teacher log.

In her logs what came through was the image of a very good teacher who still questions her methods and is seeking to improve. For instance, she reflected upon the dangers of being in a rut when she commented that "At times I feel that I do things the way I feel comfortable rather than focusing on the impact on the children". And in a further entry she reflected that:

I do worry that I am not offering them enough occasions to work more independently or enough challenge. I think this could be because I am used to teaching in a style I have evolved over time and now need to change my methods of teaching and
therefore give it more conscious thought than I currently do

Experienced Teacher log.

The image of an outstanding NQT who was desperate to improve in her second year emerged in the inexperienced teacher’s diary. For her the learning was rapid as shown by the comment that she was “...getting into the habit more often of sending the top group away from the carpet early to start a task and concentrating on the lower and middle groups”. She also reflected on the desire for pupils to share their work by writing:

Several of the able group wrote in their diary entries that they enjoyed sharing their work at the end of the lesson with a partner. Some said this was because they got a chance to share their work, another said it was ‘to give her good ideas in case they did something similar again’. Another said they liked the fact that they could read others’ work and tell each other how they could make it better.

The growing understanding was also seen by the remark that:

Something that the AGT manager pointed out to me that I hadn’t really thought about before, is that often the extension activities set for the able children often extend them in other subjects than the one being taught (e.g. in PSHE work, extension is more literacy based, rather than in the subject being taught).”

This was an area she decided to focus on, such as in geography where she endeavoured to make the extension activities clearly geographical rather than literacy based.

There were so many issues that emerged it is impossible to cover them all here but what are the main conclusions that can be drawn from the project?

Conclusions

In terms of the impact upon teaching and the curriculum the key areas identified were shown in the findings section such as ‘Cutting away’ earlier, more extended tasks, etc. All of these support the notion of ‘Structured Tinkering’ which “foregrounds the role of the teacher and provides them with the skills to engage in critical reflection and systematic data collection so as to make informed choices on behalf of their class” (Eyre, 2005:1). The teachers in this study were ‘tinkering’ daily based upon the responses of the pupils through their learning logs. There was unlikely to be major change in the school given that the provision was already outstanding (NACE Challenge Award, 2006). However, feedback from the pupils challenged the teachers to “lift their teaching to the next level through planning more creatively, using more demanding resources and teaching pupils deliberately how to engage fully with the subject” (Ofsted 2005: 25) In this sense the research was extremely productive. The challenge was:

For teachers to design a more demanding programme for the pupils to achieve high levels, delivered through imaginative and sometimes new approaches planned to engage them

Ofsted 2005:25.

Of course this was not fully achieved. Indeed the ‘programme’ itself was not greatly changed; rather certain teaching methods were used more extensively to improve learning further.

The sense of belonging to the group was also motivating for the pupils. They wrote about feeling special which supports the notion that “Enrichment thrives when highly able students
to be surrounded with like-minded individuals" (OC5:22). The entries also confirmed the view that teachers should not see gifted and talented as a homogenous cohort but rather as individual learners" (DFES:2006:9). Attitudes to initiatives did vary and in this sense the research touched upon personalised learning not just through the idiosyncratic foibles of the pupils but also by tapping into areas the pupils wanted to investigate and the ways in which they wanted to work. There is also a clear link to the assessment for learning agenda here. Interestingly, when asked if it would work for all pupils to keep a diary they said some would not be able to do it, particularly the hard questions like ‘why’. They thought you have to be special to do this and you ‘really have to know things’ and be confident.

Implications for the school

The outcomes of the research were constantly being shared with the staff and the practices are now integrated into the teaching of all staff. A key decision will be the extent to which the logs might be used for all G & T pupils, for the whole school or other particular groups. One of the difficulties that emerged in the research was the length of time the pupils took to type their thoughts. Handwritten logs would have been far more productive and it is probably true to say that although the use of the computer seemed appealing to the pupils to begin with the main advantage was for the researcher who was able to cut and paste their thoughts rather than re-type if they had been in written form. There are also questions about the manageability of running 30 learning logs continuously.

Implications for the teaching of A, G & T pupils

The use of learning logs in this study enabled the teachers to hear the G & T pupil voice in order to make modifications to both the curriculum and teaching methods. The changes were not wholesale because much that the school was doing was already outstanding but ‘tinkering’ did occur. Further research in contrasting schools would be interesting to pursue because other modifications would be needed in different settings. The work here needed the teachers themselves to be brave - after all they were exposing their teaching to the direct comment of their pupils. Work such as this on pupil voice is premised on the notion of the school having the culture of openness and a desire to seek improvement. If that culture does exist then listening to the voice of G & T pupils through learning logs has the potential to improve provision and contribute to the growing agenda related to teaching our most able pupils. In this sense it appears a worthwhile avenue to further explore.
Bibliography


BERA, (2004), “Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research,


Eyre, D. (2005) “Structured Tinkering; Improving Provision For the Gifted In Ordinary Schools: NAGTY


What is it like being in the group?
They sometimes got annoyed if they were ‘whipped out of class’ when something was good but sometimes it was good to get out. E said “the hardest question on earth is ‘why’”. Generally they enjoyed the group.

When asked if it would work for all pupils to keep a diary they said some would not be able to do it, particularly the hard questions like ‘why’. They thought you have to be special to do this and you ‘really have to know things’ and be confident.

Does it help your work? Explain
Two of them said it helps them get better at thinking about things and they can share ideas. R felt she had the chance to say if her work was ‘rubbish’ and by doing so she felt better.

What is it like having someone else to talk to about your work?
The response was positive and they made the point that one teacher can’t know everything and the other teacher might know different things’. “Miss Gibbs is good at music for instance but you know other things’ said Z. R & E said “you have been teaching for longer so it helps. Something like 35 years”. J said he would ask me about everyday problems as did Z but she made the point she would ask her mum really serious things.

Does music help you be a better learner?
They felt it did help but were unsure how. They linked it to help with maths and fractions because of all the numbers and things like demi-quavers. Z reflected that sometimes she was a bit fed up but then an oboe lesson would cheer her up and send her back to class happier.

What would make you work even better next term?
E - Shorter introductions to lessons because teachers go over things again and again.

R – Not working with two confident people together because they can’t decide which idea to use.

Z – Because everyone chats too much the chance to sit alone would be good.

B – Working more with other people

J – Shorter introductions

General
1. ‘Cutting’ the group away earlier
2. A chance to sit alone if they want to
What is it like being in the group?

The pupils enjoy being in the group with it being described as ‘cool’ and ‘fun’. Emily said she liked writing about ‘things I do’. L said it was good that they all knew each other so well and for such a long time so they don’t mind saying things to each other. Kate liked coming out of some lessons although it depended on the lesson. T said he liked coming out of lessons where you had to do ‘normal work but in lessons when you have more freedom then I don’t want to come out’.

Does it help your work? Explain

The pupils struggled to make a connection to how it helped them. L liked that she could say things to other people and Alan joked that he could type more quickly now but otherwise the link was not made.

What is it like having someone else to talk to about your work?

They were positive about this although T made the point it depends on who the person is and how well you know them. They have known me for three years which they say makes it easier and also because I am not serious all of the time and make them laugh.

Does music help you be a better learner?

The answers centred on the work attitudes like needing to practise when you don’t want to and the need to have patience. E said it helps you to learn to make decisions.

What would make you work even better next term?

K – Less time on the carpet
T – Time to think before he starts his work
EL – Less time on the carpet/ changing who she sits next to
E – Working on some paired and group activities
A – Response partner used more. Being able to fiddle!
S – Less time on the carpet/ more group work
L – Response partner used more

Main areas to focus on:

1. ‘Cutting’ away able group more often
2. Creating a key extended group task from one subject area
3. Increased use of response partners
## Excerpts from Teacher Logs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experienced</th>
<th>Inexperienced</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At times I feel that I do things the way I feel comfortable rather than focusing on the impact on the children</td>
<td>I am extremely keen to improve my teaching in every way possible and feel that one of my teaching weaknesses at the present time is the inability to be able to extend, stretch and motivate the able children as much as I would like. I feel that this project will enable me to develop these skills and give me further insight into the minds and needs of able children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since the start of the project I have become much more aware of the needs of the able pupils within the class, but do worry that I am not offering them enough occasions to work more independently or enough challenge. I think this could be because I am used to teaching in a style I have evolved over time and now need to change my methods of teaching and therefore give it more conscious thought than I currently do. Sometimes during shared work on the carpet, when revising work from previous lessons to check the understanding of other pupils, I feel aware of the able children wanting to move on straight away and find it difficult to balance the needs of all the children within the class. Teaching able children is an aspect of my teaching that I would like to improve, so that ideas come quickly and I am confident about the challenge they will provide.</td>
<td>I am looking forward to using this to further my teaching skills, whether it be through differentiating work more effectively, motivating AGT pupils to learn or using the findings of the research to help my teaching of all pupils in my class, not just the able children. Have just stopped typing to discuss this with the Year 5 teacher doing this research. She totally agrees. It is hard to find the line between supporting and recapping for the SEN and the majority of the class without the able ones getting bored, and extending the able children but without totally losing and confusing the rest of the class. One of the things I (and the Year 5 teacher) find hard is at the beginning of the lesson when we are recapping the previous lesson / day’s work for the benefit mainly of the less / middle able and it is not necessary for the more able. I am getting into the habit more often of sending the top group away from the carpet early to start a task and concentrating on the lower and middle groups but I’m not sure how to extend or satisfy the needs of the top group during the beginning ‘recapping’ stage or during lessons when they are already comfortable with the concept being taught, e.g. adverbs</td>
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### Excerpt from Pupil Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22.11.05</td>
<td>We did maths before break and we did 2D shape tree diagrams. I found this a little boring because it was quite easy. Then we did literacy. I enjoyed writing poems about other people. I like writing poems but looking for different words to describe things in the thesaurus I thought was boring. We are doing art in the afternoon and I am looking forward to that. We are also doing extended writing and I am looking forward to that as well. I hope that we are writing stories or poetry because I enjoy it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/11/05</td>
<td>It is the first day of our extended story today and I have just finished planning. I am doing ideas for the opening but I am only halfway through the first idea but I have it in my mind. Last week I thought that it would really be the best literacy week ever. Now I am not so sure! It is beginning to become a bit more of a challenge than I expected!!! I hope to finish the opening by today and to finish writing the whole thing by at least Thursday. Then I can edit it! I was the one that was looking forward to it the most. I am looking forward to writing something that is entirely me and not being told what to do. Just me! I feel weird about working on my own a lot because usually you are on your own. You don't have to talk about everything with your partner.</td>
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<td>30/1105</td>
<td>I am pleased with my story and I have finished it!!!!!!!!!!! Now I only have to edit it and publish it now!!! HOORAY!!!!!!!!!!! I was looking forward to writing the story but it has become a bit annoying because everyone else is doing a talk and I like doing talks! I hope to have finished my editing by tomorrow and I will have two days to publish.</td>
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<td>2.12.05</td>
<td>I am happy with my story and I think that it was fun after all!! I also think that I could have improved the plot of the story if I wasn’t afraid that I would lose writing time!</td>
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<td>6.12.05</td>
<td>I think that tests can be boring, but some are interesting. I enjoy reading tests where the answer is in the text. I think that other tests are boring because either I think that the question is obvious or I think that it is easy. We have tests to see what we understand about all of the lessons in the term. I know that this is important but I think that we should have a recount of everything we are tested on before the test, as it may be a case of not remembering, rather than misunderstanding. I have enjoyed making my imaginary insect – it hasn’t got a name – with Rachel. I enjoy doing arts and crafts, but don’t often get the chance to do it. This is something that I am really enjoying.</td>
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<td>14.12.05</td>
<td>Yesterday we made our DT cams – a moving toy. I made one with Lisa which was of a bird in a winter garden. I really enjoyed making it, especially sawing the wood for the frame. Making the robin was hard as we had to make it out of scrunched up newspaper. I am very happy with the finished product and I think that Lisa is happy with it too!</td>
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