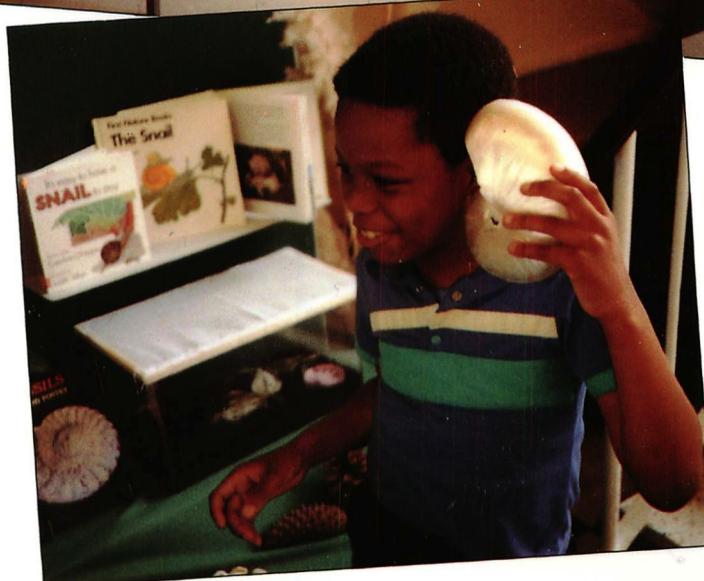


Aspects of Primary Education

THE
TEACHING
AND
LEARNING
OF
LANGUAGE
AND
LITERACY



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PREFACE

This publication is one of a series of inspection reviews of teaching and learning in a subject of the primary curriculum. The series reports and comments upon trends and issues which have influenced the standards of work in primary schools since the publication of the National Primary Survey in 1978.

Particular attention is given to exemplifying good practice in the teaching of language and literacy and to the implications for primary schools of the implementation of the National Curriculum.

We hope that the series will be of interest and assistance to those who are responsible for the organisation and application of teaching in primary schools, to teacher trainers and those concerned with providing for primary education.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE 1970s

THE NATIONAL PRIMARY SURVEY

1 The National Primary Survey¹, conducted between 1975 and 1977, provides a convenient baseline from which subsequent developments in language and literacy may be traced. The survey showed that in the 1970s much emphasis was being placed on teaching children the skills involved in reading and writing. However, these skills tended to be taught in isolation from a genuine need to apply them, and consequently were less developed and refined than they might have been.

Spoken language

2 The survey found that most children, particularly those in rural schools, had substantial experience of talking and listening to their teachers and to one another, both formally and informally. However, more concentrated and sustained listening could have been expected of many of the older children. Discussion involving parents and adults other than the children's own class teachers had an increasingly prominent place in the work of primary classes at all levels. Whereas in the infant classes, with their commonly less formal arrangements, about two-thirds of the 7-year-olds had sufficient opportunity to discuss aspects of their work with their teachers, the proportion had fallen to rather less than half in the case of the 9-year-olds. Effective vocabulary-building took place in most lessons but there were relatively few instances of children being helped to formulate pertinent questions or to select the most appropriate forms of expression to convey their meaning. Moreover the potential of role play and drama for extending children's spoken language was rarely recognised.

Reading

3 The teaching of reading was often heavily dependent on reading schemes and their supplementary books and materials. This dependence often

extended throughout the primary years, with the consequence that basic reading skills were thoroughly taught and practised, but often at the expense of the range and quality of the books read. Reading stories and poetry to children was a well-established and valuable practice in most primary classes and the use of schools broadcasts as a support for reading, as well as for other language activities, was widespread. But, despite the availability of well-chosen books in most of the schools, in about three-fifths of the classes the children had too few opportunities to use them either for recreational purposes or for information. In the case of a substantial majority of older, able children, too superficial a level of understanding and too narrow a range of skills were required of them in their reading.

Writing

4 In the course of their day-to-day work children devoted much time to writing, the bulk of which was set by teachers. Narrative and descriptive writing in prose were almost universal, with the children's own experience within or outside the school frequently used as a common starting-point. Some of the best writing was a direct and sincere response to personal experience. In just under half the classes visited the children were writing for a wider readership than the teacher alone, and much of their work was displayed or presented in book, folder or other form. Writing associated with topic work often entailed excessive copying from reference books, the incidence being highest with the 11-year-old children. Although the older, abler children were capable of using writing to argue a case, to express opinions, or to draw conclusions, most of them had little experience of those kinds of writing. With junior-age children the teaching of language skills, such as grammar and punctuation, relied heavily on written exercises from course books which had little perceptible relation to the children's needs as evidenced in their own writing.

¹ *Primary Education in England: A Survey* by HM Inspectors of Schools, DES, September 1978.

5 The way in which children were grouped for language teaching depended largely on the nature of the activity. Most regrouping occurred in reading, where grouping by ability took place in nearly two-thirds of the 7-year-old and over half of the 9- and 11-year-old classes. Additionally, small groups or individual children read to parent helpers or, in the case of those experiencing difficulty in reading, were taught by peripatetic teachers. These arrangements reflected the need felt by teachers to relate reading tasks to the children's differing abilities. For writing, ability groups were used in about half of the 7-year-old and about one-third of the 9- and 11-year-old classes. For oral work special grouping rarely occurred.

Staffing

6 In half the schools in the survey a named teacher had a special responsibility for language. Only a minority of these effectively influenced the work of the school, mainly because they lacked the time to act as consultants and to work alongside other teachers. In the schools where the named teacher with responsibility for language was able to function effectively there was a consistency of approach and a good match of work to the ability of the children, particularly so in the case of more able children.

2 LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN THE 1980s

MAIN FINDINGS

7 This chapter comments on developments that have taken place since the National Primary Survey. Evidence has been drawn from roughly 3,000 school visits and 300 full inspections carried out from 1983 to 1988. In judging standards, account has been taken of the quality of work observed, the results of objective tests which were available in most schools and, where appropriate, evidence drawn from the results of monitoring by the Assessment of Performance Unit (APU).¹

8 The basic skills of reading and writing continue to receive a great deal of time and attention. The standards achieved are generally good and continue to improve, more so in reading for girls than boys. In writing the children are reasonably proficient spellers and constructors of sentences; narrative and descriptive writing are both fluent and clearly benefit from preparatory discussion and planning. Overall there is evidence from the APU of an improvement in writing that is more marked for boys than for girls.

The basic skills of reading and writing continue to receive attention.

9 In schools where the basic skills of reading and writing are given an undue prominence, in isolation from the children's wider linguistic experience, standards may be good but on a very narrow front. Important aspects that are overlooked in such situations are: the range and purposes of writing; writing for different audiences; enjoying and engaging with literature of quality; using talk and listening skills purposefully in developing and sustaining argument and in problem-solving.

10 The work of the most effective schools is characterised by well-managed, varied and flexible teaching and learning styles; purposeful topic work; changing groupings of pupils to suit different teaching and learning intentions and needs; and a well-planned and deliberate use of first-hand experience wherever possible and appropriate.

11 Despite the considerable time and energy devoted to language and literacy in one way or another, there is a widespread uncertainty among primary school teachers about what children should learn about language itself, how it works and how they should learn about it.

12 Most teachers keep records of the books children have read and many schools retain samples of children's writing. Checklists are commonly used to record basic skills in reading and writing and the majority of children are given standardised reading tests at one or more points in their school careers. Often, such tests are part of the screening policy of the local education authority (LEA).



1. *Language Performance in Schools: Review of APU Language Monitoring 1979-1983*, DES, HMSO, 1988.

13 The lack of assessment of a balanced range of language work, however, is a weakness in the majority of schools, reflecting a general uncertainty about criteria for progression and achievement and an absence of effective strategies for assessment.

14 While much language work is reasonably well matched to the abilities of the children, teachers commonly expect too little of the more able children in the first two junior years and of older children across the whole ability range.

15 As the numbers of pupils born in this country into minority ethnic families have increased in primary schools it has become necessary to provide different forms of language teaching from those designed for immigrants who speak no English. The more effective schools strike a good balance between language support in the classroom in the context of the mainstream curriculum and carefully focused teaching in withdrawal groups. However, there are schools where the time spent on work in withdrawal groups is excessive, and in effect narrows the curriculum, thus limiting the opportunities for these children to learn and use English well. In some schools there is also a need to distinguish more carefully between the requirements of those children who have difficulties with reading and those who are learning English as a second language (ESL). Sometimes these children are placed in the same withdrawal group for 'remedial reading' and for ESL, where their markedly different needs are insufficiently understood and poorly met.

16 Although competence in the use of standard English is clearly expected of the children in all the schools, teachers are generally sensitive to differences in children's patterns of speech. The children's confidence in using standard English could be improved in many classes by giving

them more opportunities for communicating with real audiences. Some children whose first language is not English are very fluent speakers of English in everyday contexts but often need to learn how to use the more formal conventions, particularly in writing.

Spoken language

17 In most schools children are given ample opportunity to recount personal experiences, take part in discussion and to talk with their class teacher and other adults. They are taught to listen attentively and, when drawing on first-hand experience, can express themselves clearly and confidently. For other purposes and in other contexts spoken language is less well served. For example, by the end of the junior stage, only about half the children can argue a point of view convincingly. Drama and role play are much more common in infant than in junior classes.



In most schools children are given opportunities to take part in discussion.

18 In a small minority of schools, which differed little from many others in matters of intake and catchment area, standards in oral work across a wide range of activities were noticeably in advance of the majority. Many of these were involved in local and national curriculum development schemes such as Education Support Grant projects and the National Oracy Project¹; their successes point the way for the majority to follow. This finding may be

1. National Oracy Project, 1987 to 1993.

taken to reflect both the widespread recognition by the schools of the importance of spoken language, and equally the widespread uncertainty about how to develop it comprehensively and systematically.



Children are taught to express themselves confidently.

Reading

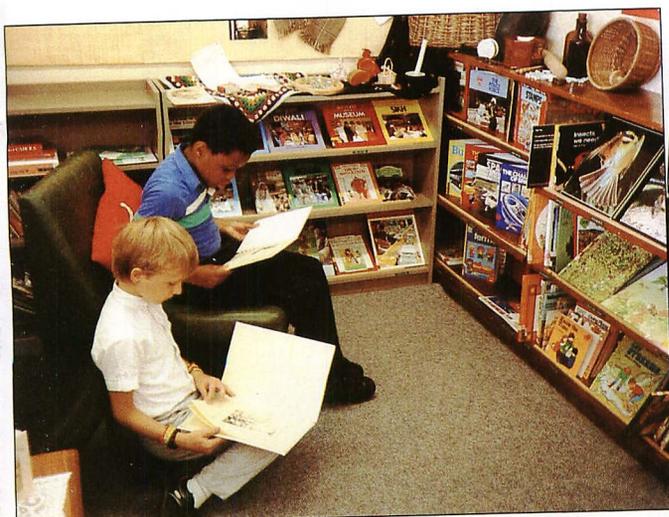
Reading for pleasure is widely encouraged. Unsurprisingly greater success is achieved where books are well chosen and the children have time and opportunity to read and discuss them. With younger children, positive attitudes towards reading are strengthened by various forms of partnership between home and school, some of which stem from the initiative of individual schools, and some from LEA projects. A further incentive to read is provided by the book shops and clubs run by many schools.

Reading for pleasure is widely encouraged.

20 Although published reading schemes continue to be widely used throughout the primary age range, with some tailing off in Years 5 and 6, the selection and use of such schemes tend to be more discriminating than at the time of the National Primary Survey. Children's attitudes towards books are adversely affected where their reading is largely confined to one or two reading schemes. As children become less dependent on the schemes, they read more widely from good-quality fiction and make wider use of non-fiction material. However, most junior children need more experience in referring to different sources and to learn how to select and use information, for example, in science, history and geography. Although they are often able to comprehend literally what is stated, many older children find it difficult to grasp an implied meaning, or to modify an earlier interpretation in the light of further evidence. These shortcomings are largely attributable to reading policies which are too narrow and insufficiently demanding.

21 During their primary years most children have good literature presented to them by their teachers, sometimes with great sensitivity and skill, but the prominence given to literature varies widely, particularly in the junior years. Few schools have consistent policies which ensure that children receive a suitably broad and balanced experience of good literature, including poetry, from year to year. Where literature

Most children have good literature presented to them by their teachers.



is well taught there are often noticeable gains in the children's oral and written work.



Where literature is well taught there are often noticeable gains in oral and written work.

Writing

22 Throughout the primary age range the majority of children write about personal experiences confidently and competently, especially when their ability to narrate or to describe is called into play. By the age of 11 about half are reasonably proficient in adopting style and form for particular purposes and readers. It has become evident in schools participating in or influenced by the National Writing Pro-

The majority of children write about personal experiences confidently and competently.

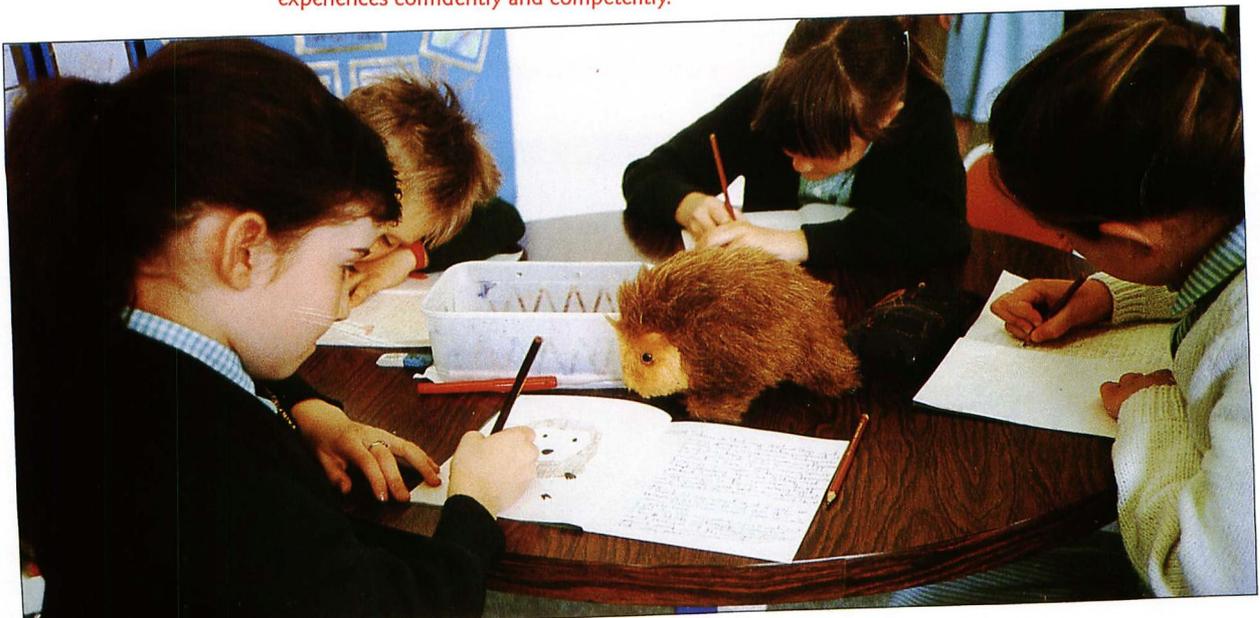
ject¹ that a considerable improvement in the range and quality of children's writing is possible.

23 In poetry-writing the children's competence increased with age, but only about a half in Years 5 and 6 composed poems of reasonable quality. A similar proportion of children in this age range organise and paragraph their writing effectively but few children in the upper junior years reach an adequate standard in arguing a case in writing.

24 Children in most schools have access to information technology (IT) though the extent and quality of the work varies greatly. There are good examples of word-processing for composition, collaborative writing, revision and editing, and for the presentation or publication of work in a variety of forms. In many schools the availability of IT is too limited for the children to have sufficient experience to work confidently. Often, the computer functions only as a sophisticated worksheet or printing machine.

25 In most schools, sufficient time is devoted to the teaching of grammar, spelling and punctuation and most children reach adequate standards in their use of these conventions. However, only a small proportion – under one-fifth – perform really well.

1. National Writing Project, 1985 to 1988.



26 The presentation of written work and of handwriting is generally good, particularly when the work is prepared for display or for a responsive reader.

Staffing
27 Growing recognition of the value of a teacher responsible for co-ordinating work in language is reflected in the increasing number of schools with such appointments. However, the influence of these teachers on the work of the school has not increased significantly. This is largely because they still have too little timetabled time for such important functions as working alongside colleagues, but also because the perceptions of their function remain underdeveloped. Only about a half the language co-ordinators take a lead in preparing guidelines and even fewer are able to act effectively in the role of consultant to their colleagues. Almost all the schools have guidelines for language, but their quality varies considerably. The positive influence of guidelines is only apparent in well under half of the schools.



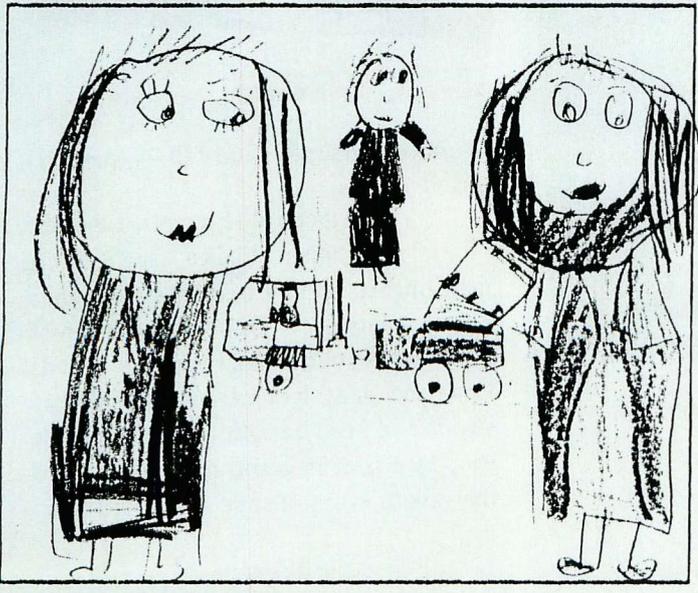
Children in most schools have access to information technology.

Information technology enables young children to publish work of quality.

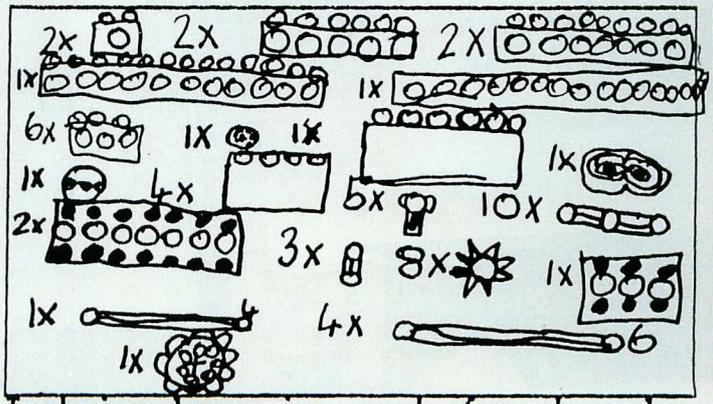
ROBERT MAY NEWS

SPRING EDITION

SCIENCE NEWS
HAVE A GO WITH
TECHNIC LEGO



I made a crane with technic lego. This is how I made it.



Technic lego is good fun to play with. You can make all sorts of things. You can make a crane, buggy, windmill and a drill and other things.

BY JOANNA MATTHEWS

3 GOOD PRACTICE OBSERVED

28 This chapter describes and comments on some examples of good work in language and literacy observed in recent visits to a variety of primary schools. There is no attempt to be comprehensive, but the sample illustrates the generalised comments made in chapter 2.

THE EARLY YEARS

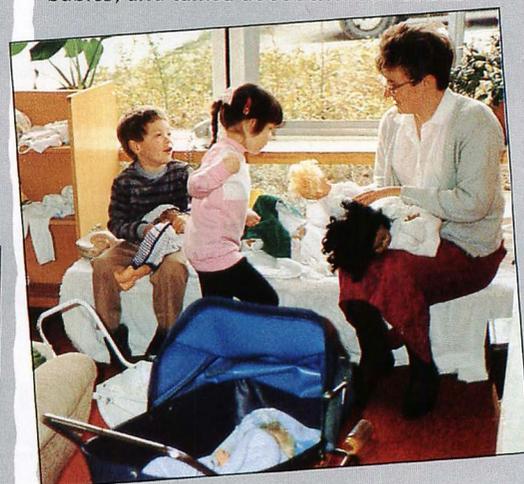
Work with under-fives

29 Three- and 4-year-olds in a nursery class were busily engaged in writing letters, addressing envelopes and posting them to other children and adults in the class. In the classroom a post office and a writing area had been set up in connection with a topic on aspects of communication. The children knew that what they were doing in their classroom was an important adult activity in the world outside. They were able to put into practice what they had noticed about letter formation, how English writing moves from left to right, and the structures and shapes of writing. They were able to experience the satisfaction of using writing to draw a response from others.

30 In the same urban nursery school, the 4–5-year-olds took a special interest in babies. Photographs of themselves as babies were attractively displayed. Many items of baby-care equipment were exhibited in the classroom and made available for play activities, which stimulated much talk about various aspects of baby care. Two mothers then brought their babies into the school to bath them with the children's help. The talk accompanying this activity, in which the children, the mothers and the teacher all participated, drew on known vocabulary and introduced new words to describe the various processes involved. Hair washing, testing water temperature, the relative size of the babies' and the children's hands, and the water absorption of sponges stimulated much language activity. Later in the day the teacher prompted the children to reflect upon this experience. They looked at a collection of books about babies, and talked about them to adults.



Realistic contexts for writing are provided through play.



Participation of adults in play provides an important context for language development.

Work with Years R, 1 and 2 (5–7-year-olds)

31 A group of 15 reception and Year 1 infant children, taught in the mathematics activity base in a city centre school, contained a majority of children of Asian background. Footwear of various kinds and sizes, foot-measures and display stands had been brought from a local shoe shop by a sales assistant. The pupils named the various types of shoe and placed them

into labelled sets with the assistance, where necessary, of their teacher and the sales assistant. Looking closely at the design of the shoes, the materials used, and the types of sole, they talked about which kind of shoe was suitable for which purpose, and why. They made comparisons with their own shoes and made comments drawing on their own experiences. When given the task of setting up their own shop, they listened carefully and made use of the expert advice available on the most effective ways of grouping and presenting shoes. Surplus stock was placed in an orderly fashion in the 'stockroom' under the table.

32

Throughout the lesson, language activity involving the children, the teacher and the sales assistant was intense. As the children's interest grew, they used vocabulary aptly when answering questions, describing, making comparisons and offering explanations. They were able to experiment further with the language of shoes when the 'shop' was used for imaginative play. The success of this session derived from the teacher's careful planning and management of the activities, and from her judgement about when direct teaching or questioning were needed.

33

Many schools showed great skill and sensitivity in introducing the children to reading. In one school, it was the policy for some favourite books to be displayed in nursery and reception-class areas alike. This encouraged familiarity with certain incidents and characters, increased the children's confidence in role play associated with the stories and in commenting on parts of the story. Three children, all 4-year olds, dressed up as the three bears in the Goldilocks story, and the rest of the class, grouped informally on the floor, asked them questions.

Child: 'What did you think when you went in and found somebody had been in your house?'

Baby Bear: 'I found that Goldilocks pinched my breakfast.'

Child: 'What did you think of that?'

Another child: 'Did you cry?'

Another child: 'If she ate my share I would be upset and tell my mummy and my daddy.'

The teacher's skill lay in setting up a situation which would stimulate the children to think more deeply about the story and to ask pertinent questions. As one of the audience, she provided questions which served as examples and also helped keep the dialogue moving. However, when a misconception arose she stepped in to correct it:

Child: 'Did you ring the police up?'

Father Bear: 'Yes, they took the girl away and threw her in the bin.'

Mother Bear: 'They put her in jail.'



Many schools show great skill and sensitivity in introducing children to reading.



Children learn to read using a range of material.

The teacher then pointed out that the 'crime' Goldilocks had committed was hardly serious enough for her to be treated so severely. The children agreed.

Involving parents

34 Realising the importance of the early stages of reading, many schools work hard to create the conditions that make reading interesting and satisfying.

In one urban primary school the two parallel classes of 5–6-year-olds spend the first hour of each day from Monday to Wednesday, and one hour on Thursday afternoons, on reading activities. These sessions are carefully planned to involve parents. Parent helpers are all thoroughly briefed through workshop activities and by working alongside the teachers. It was evident that parents and children knew clearly what was expected of them. The time was broken up into various activities, some individual, some with groups of varying sizes: sharing a book with a group; choosing and changing books to be taken home; discussing books that had been returned; listening to taped stories; reading individually; making their own books. These flexible arrangements enabled the teacher to spend sustained amounts of time with children individually or in small groups. Using 'Jiggory', a story written in rhyme, the teacher talked to a group of children about what was happening. She then asked them to make predictions from the pictures and to comment on any points of connection with their own experiences. The children, obviously familiar with the story, responded with interest and enthusiasm. Through this kind of approach, used sometimes with a pair of children and sometimes with a larger group, the teacher was developing the children's confidence as readers and deepening their interest and enjoyment in books. The calm atmosphere in the classroom, the presentation of books, and the well-managed partnership of teachers and parents in promoting reading all contributed towards ensuring that the children made a good start as readers.

35 At the heart of successful home–school partnerships lies understanding by the parents of the school's policy on the teaching of reading and how it is put into practice. Like many others, this school encourages the involvement of parents with their children's reading, at home as well as at school. Booklets are produced offering advice. Meetings and workshops provide opportunities to go into more detail about the work and to resolve problems. Diaries and contact sheets are devised so that parents and teachers can talk about the children's progress in reading. These approaches help to build up a comprehensive and accurate reading profile for each child, which is accessible to the child's parents and teachers alike.

36 Sometimes such partnerships extend beyond reading to the preparation of books. Books written for the youngest children show parents and their children engaged in familiar, home-based activities. Where the schools have children for whom English is their second language the help of parents in writing bilingual texts is important not only as a resource for learning but also for recognising the value of the children's first language. The rich assortment of contents in these collaborative productions was illustrated in the 'home activity' books written by children, parents and teachers in an inner-city infants' school. The books contained recollections of starting school in this country, and of school in India, Pakistan and Germany, an account of life in Kingston, Jamaica, descriptions of celebrations associated with Easter, Divali and Eid, football match reports and miscellaneous stories, letters, puzzles and photographs. Such enterprises demand of the teacher patience, tact and organisational skill, but the benefits to the children can be immense. When the children were writing about their visits to local shops, fire stations, hospitals and other places of interest, they did so in the knowledge that they were contributing to books that would be carefully illustrated and pre-

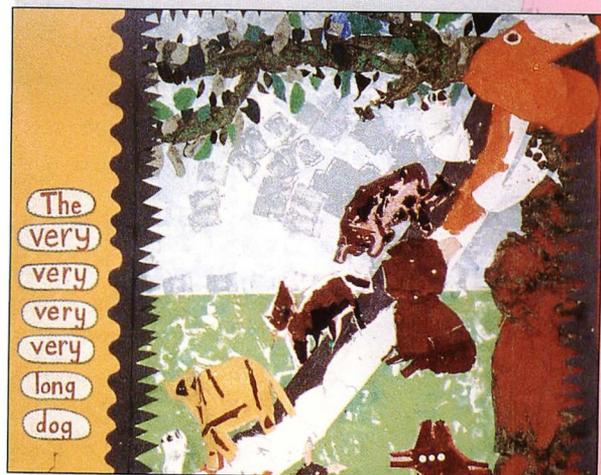
sented for others to read and talk about. Using such material for further language activities helps children to encounter a wide range of vocabulary and non-narrative sentence patterns, in contexts that have a personal meaning for them.

The effective use of language resources

37 Teaching children to become successful readers and writers and sustaining their progress depends to a large extent upon good resources, sound planning and effective organisation.

These features were all evident in a particularly successful infants' school. The school is well provided with books. There are attractive library areas servicing pairs of classrooms, and several modern reading schemes are available. These are supplemented by an expanding range of good-quality fiction and by reference books chosen primarily for their quality, relevance to the work planned and to the children's interests. Additionally, there are various non-book resources for supporting language development, some commercially produced and some home-made. All these resources are readily accessible and carefully organised to support the teaching methods agreed by the staff and clearly set out in the school guidelines.

Sustaining progress depends to a large extent upon good resources.



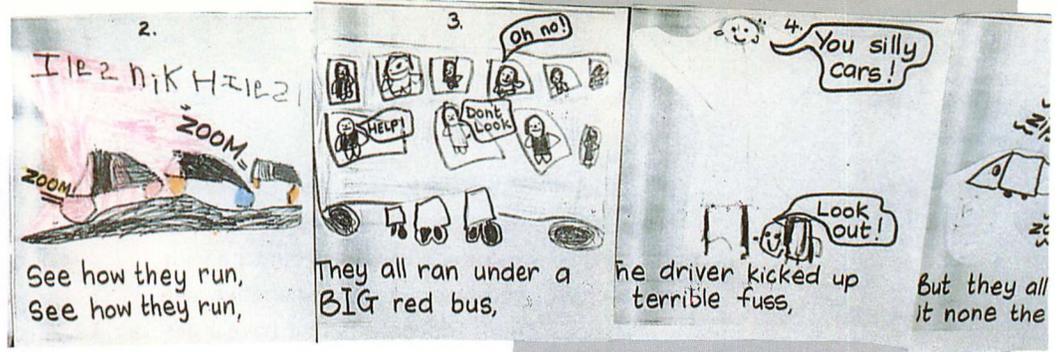
Children produce art and craftwork related to reading.

38 A class of middle and top infants in that school had read the story of *The Dark, Dark Wood* and had obviously enjoyed the mounting tension in it. They retold the story in various ways: acting it out in the hall, taping it, and making a group book. These different treatments of the story required a high level of organisation and co-operation. In preparing the group book, for instance, the children decided how to divide the story into sections. Then, working in pairs or singly, they wrote out their first drafts. With the help of a word processor they produced an improved version which was printed out; each page was then suitably illustrated. There was much animated talk as the children went about these tasks. Besides discussing and reaching decisions about practical details, they clearly enjoyed re-telling the story and talking about their illustrations. It was noticeable that the weaker readers were confident and successful in carrying out the tasks assigned to them, and played a full part in the follow-up activities.

The use of stories and poetry

39 Lessons using literature are more effective when they occur regularly and contribute to a planned development of literary experience. In the best work, poems and stories are used with large and small groups and at any suitable time of the

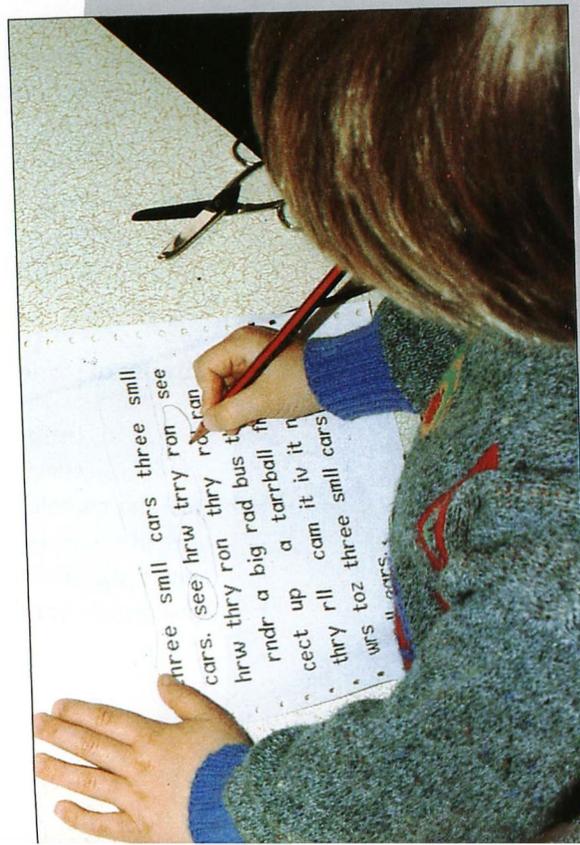




day. Sometimes they are read to the children by the teacher; sometimes the children read them independently or listen to recorded readings.

The imaginative impact on a class of 4–5-year-olds of *The Great Big Enormous Turnip* was evident from the large wall frieze with the children's pictures and captions, and from the group books for which illustrations had been produced and appropriate text discussed and written. In another school the theme of an infant assembly was the weather and the need for rain to make plants grow. The head read the story *The Sunflower that went Flop*. This aptly illustrated the point and created an opportunity for the children to enjoy the story and to participate in its presentation by predicting the text. Top infants in the same school were thoroughly at home with books. They made reasoned judgements about which books they liked or disliked. They noticed that some books which had a similar structure had been written by the same author. They

Editing a story based on the 'Three Blind Mice' format.



Collaborative story-making using a familiar recurrent theme.

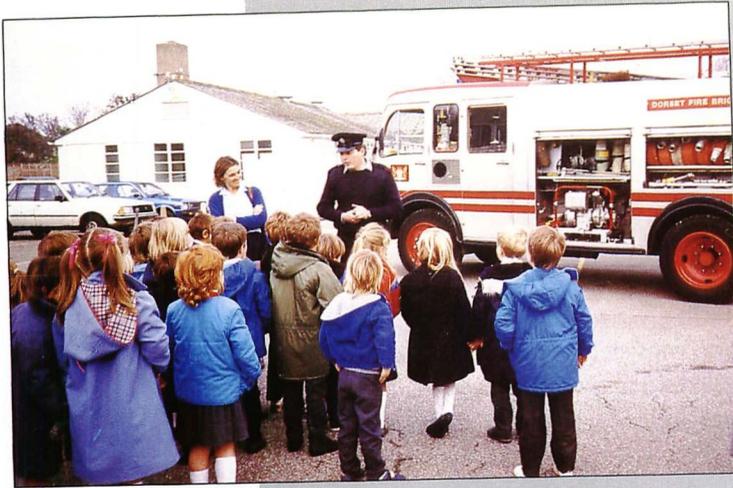
were aware of rhyme, alliteration and other distinctive features of the language of the poems they had read.

Using stimuli outside the classroom

40 When a class of top infants returned to school after visiting a museum of rural life, the follow-up activities led to the use of many different kinds of language use. One group used notes, sketches and photographs to help them with the detail and overall shape of the buildings they were modelling from scrap materials. Another group used a map of the area to write down routes from one point to another. Another group completed a word search which had been prepared by the teacher. The fourth group made a board game based on rural life in the nineteenth century. This group listed, in discussion with the teacher, a variety of farm activities which might occur through a day. The children worked together to produce a game with safety hazards, forfeits and rewards as the player moved from square to square on the roll of the dice. Much discussion took place on matters such as the organisation of the writing, diagrams and the layout of the page. Supporting all this work was a wide range of good reference books.

First-hand experience provides a context for talking and writing about other times and places.





Learning about the wider world promotes language development

exhibitions of building materials, photographs and 'word banks' related to buildings and farming activities.

The use of drama

41 Well-chosen literature serves to extend the children's experience far beyond the local and familiar, and introduces them to language organised in new and often intriguing ways. Effective work in drama often uses literature to enrich children's first-hand experience in imaginary situations, the immediacy of which stimulates them to adapt their language to their roles. Through drama, the children's language repertoire and their understanding can be extended in a unique way, as is illustrated in the following examples.

42 The combined entrance hall and activities area in the infant department of a primary school had been converted into a 'hospital'. The general hospital in a nearby city provided a box of accessories; there was a wide range of instruments,

Dramatic play helps children to reflect upon and understand their personal experience.



utensils and other equipment for the children to use, including stethoscopes, reflex hammers, bed pans, kidney-shaped bowls, x-ray plates and life-size rag dolls on which operations could be performed. Uniforms for nurses, surgeons, radiographers and so on had been adapted for the children. Anatomical charts and health and safety posters were displayed and there was a collection of suitable books as supporting material. These resources were distributed about the various areas into which the 'hospital' was divided.

43 The children, whose ages ranged from 4 to 7, were taken from the reception area to various departments where they were examined, given forms of 'treatment', 'cured' and discharged. The children's involvement in the role play was total and sustained. The closeness of their identification with the roles was evident from the way they adapted their language, manner and facial expression and from the distinctive atmosphere in the various 'wards'. Sometimes tact was called for, as when sympathetic questions received aggrieved replies. The participation of the non-teaching assistant was particularly effective. In her adopted role as a doctor-tutor, she was able to advise the young doctors, nurses and physiotherapists how to care for their patients, thereby introducing accurate vocabulary in the context of the activities taking place. Such was the variety of these activities that a wealth of language was generated.

44 This work was developed through visits by groups of children to a local clinic and the hospital. Talks given by the school nurse and an ambulance driver contributed substantially to the children's knowledge, understanding and use of language.

At the same time the work introduced ideas about health education and the roles of adults in the medical services.

YEARS 3 TO 6: THE JUNIOR YEARS

Continuity and progression

45 Effective work often benefited from consistency in the language policies within and between the primary schools through which the children progressed. Good practice through the junior years was not only a matter of continuing that established earlier, but was concerned with matching the work to the increasing language abilities of the children.

Children benefit from well-matched language activities.



46 A lesson with a class of Year 3 children in their first term after transfer to junior school showed what can be achieved as children grow in confidence.

47 The children were in groups of three or four, explaining to one another the rules of certain games and how toys worked. The thoroughness with which these tasks were carried out with minimal supervision was impressive, as were the children's confidence and competence when explaining, for example, mechanical processes. Some of the girls were conspicuously fluent in giving detailed and lucid accounts.

48

The teacher, who had worked with each group listening to and contributing to the discussions, then introduced a new situation. A grateful toyshop owner had offered the children their favourite game or toy at half price in recognition of their helpfulness in the past. The children's task was to persuade their parents to provide the other half of the cost. The class regrouped into twos or threes: three groups with a boy and a girl as parents, two with a single parent and a boy or girl as the child. In briefing the groups, the teacher emphasised the role of parents – what they might say to their child and to each other, and how they might say it. The 'children' were briefed separately and asked to think about persuasive arguments and how to express them.

Various arguments and strategies emerged:

- dislike of toys bought by parents;
- persistent begging, designed to weary the 'parents' into submission;
- offers to contribute pocket money in repayment;
- offer of services in lieu, e.g. washing up;
- lost opportunity – the toy would be sold by the next day.

49

The teacher identified these various approaches in a short, evaluative discussion in which the validity, morality and likely effectiveness of each were analysed. This was followed by the teacher's recounting of the Aesop fable of the fox and the crow. Just before telling the story, the teacher asked the children to listen for and identify the various kinds of persuasion used. They listened with careful attention to an excellent narration marked by a careful control of tempo, intonation, and gesture. Afterwards they identified three kinds of persuasion (threat, pleading, flattery), and made connections with their own role play. Finally, they reached the conclusion that 'making a deal', as one child put it, was the best strategy to use.

50

This was an outstanding lesson. It had a clear line of development which enabled the children to practise and think about the language of persuasion, and to consider what was revealed about the user in the kind of language chosen. The use of the Aesop fable not only sharpened the focus on the different kinds of argument used but also illustrated how the meaning of the words could be reinforced by the expressive use of voice and gesture. The discussion of the morality of various kinds of persuasion introduced a further dimension. The children's success had much to do with the teacher's use of language, the effective structure of the lesson, and the quality of the relationships created.

Using information technology

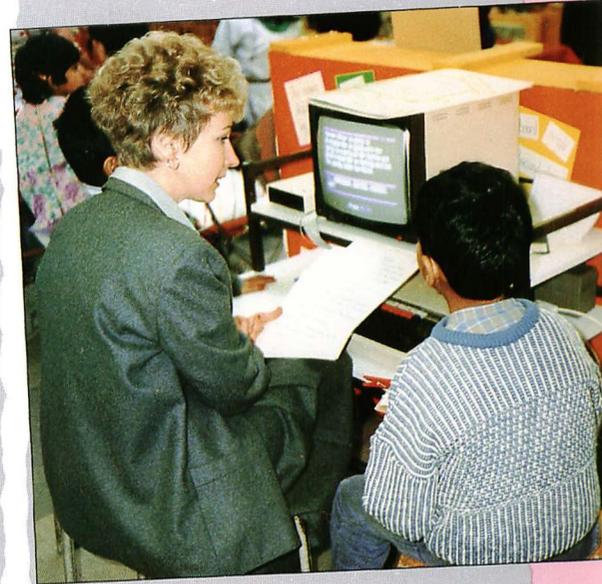
51

In another class, Year 3 children worked on 'Homes' as a topic. They made a series of local visits and studied their own homes and the process of house-building. They made a careful study of a number of books on building. Many of the children had limited writing skills but were helped by the teacher to read the books, talk through the text, and make some notes about the various stages of house-building. The children were then paired in such a way that each less confident child had a capable companion. Drawing on the notes they had made, each pair used the computer to edit, sequence and correct their description of the processes involved, from the purchase of the land to completion of the building.

52

This well-planned piece of work was based on an accurate appraisal of the children's language needs. Discussion was often focused on the structure and organisation of the writing. Being quite adept at using the keyboard, the pairs of pupils concentrated on arriving at the best order of words and sentences. They discussed the spelling of words and frequently re-read the texts in the process of editing them. Use of the computer encouraged col-

laboration and confidence in both partners; since turns were taken in dictating or typing, neither child was a passenger. An additional benefit was that because the children had already prepared a first draft, they were able to focus their attention on re-drafting, using clearly understood criteria. When the text was finished, each was printed in the format preferred by pupils before it was entered into their topic books with appropriate illustrations. When completed, these topic books were kept in sequence in a 'profile book' which each child built up in the course of a term.



Using computers encourages collaboration and confidence.

Work with children whose first language is not English

53

The need for careful planning and for finding ways of supporting children is the greater when their first language is not English.

A Year 4 class, with children from many communities, had, in pairs, been designing and making a variety of objects based on a simple box structure, including a mechanical money-box, a lantern, cars and lorries and robotic animals of various kinds. One boy of Turkish origin collaborated with a fluent English-speaking child in making an elabo-

rate lorry with a cab, seats, back-opening doors, axle-mounted wheels, and battery-operated lights. Similarly a girl of Bangladeshi origin, paired with a friend whose English was fluent, constructed a mechanical money-box. The close association between practical activity and talking, and the way the pairing was organised, helped the less fluent children to listen to, understand, and speak English with growing confidence.

54 The same close association of language with activities was evident in an ethnically mixed group of juniors aged 8 and 9. Their task was to make pancakes. First they listened to their teacher who talked to them about what they were going to do. Each child had a recipe sheet, written by the teacher in clear script and with carefully-chosen vocabulary. The teacher and the children read the recipe sheet in stages, pausing to discuss particular operations and items of equipment.

55 One member of each group was chosen by the children to read the instructions to the rest, who followed the text and helped if necessary. While the pancakes were being prepared, the teacher helped and questioned the groups where appropriate. The children were so fascinated by some of the words they thought of to describe the appearance and texture of the mixture – ‘lumpy’, ‘stodgy’, ‘creamy’, ‘pale yellow’, ‘smooth’, ‘bubbly’ – that they repeated them and played with them for some time afterwards when talking informally among themselves. At one point they talked their way towards an accurate statement of the difference between whisking and stirring. After further reading of the instructions, using the same procedure as earlier, they fried their pancakes. The teacher used this opportunity to talk about health and safety measures in the kitchen. When one child volunteered that her baby brother had been burned by hot water, they talked about ‘burn’ and ‘scald’ and established the difference between them. They were asked to

listen carefully to the sounds made by the batter when poured into the pan, and to describe them: ‘sizzling’, ‘spluttering’, and ‘like a cat hissing’ were some of their responses. Their attention was then focused on changes taking place as the batter was cooking and they described these too. All sorts of other topics were raised by the children incidentally, such as who did the cooking at home, what they liked to eat, where they did their shopping, and what they did with left-overs. After the pancakes had been made and eaten the children arranged in correct sequence a series of outline pictures, prepared by the teacher, about cooking a pancake.

56 This lesson was particularly well planned and taught so as to meet the widely varying language needs of the children in the group. It moved at a brisk pace and provided the children with interesting and worthwhile first-hand experiences. Varied linguistic demands were made of the children – informal personal talk, careful reading, attentive listening, description. The teacher’s interventions were always purposeful: to introduce new ideas, to focus on detail, to increase knowledge and understanding.

Differentiating work to match children’s abilities

57 The children in most primary classes vary widely in attainment and are often taught in mixed age groups. To meet these needs, teachers sometimes make individual or group-related provision, for example with reading books. Often, however, the work is matched by enabling the children to contribute in different ways to a common task, as in the earlier examples of work with children whose first language is not English.

58 A mixed age junior class in a small rural primary school was finding out about life in the eighteenth century in a project on the Georgians. Following

a visit to Killerton House in Exeter and No 1 Royal Crescent in Bath, the children used the notes they had made, photographs, guidebooks and other relevant resources, together with their own recollections, to make a straightforward record of the visit. After groups of children had researched chosen aspects of eighteenth century life in depth, the class decided to find out more about the Acland family, of Killerton House. Using information they had gleaned from the family tree they chose family or household characters for detailed attention. The older children wrote pen portraits and the younger ones stories incorporating their chosen characters, with careful attention to historical authenticity in both cases. This work led to the collaborative writing of a journal of the family's visit to Bath and a story set in the Pump Room, involving their chosen characters. Part of the preparation for this story included the reading and discussion of extracts from *Northanger Abbey*.

59 These various writing tasks were not only closely interwoven with talking, listening and reading, but also involved art and craft, science, mathematics, history and geography. By negotiation with the teacher and exercise of choice by the children, tasks were differentiated to match the varying abilities and interests of the children, but without sacrifice of the cohesiveness of the project as a whole. Moreover, the knowledge that their work would be seen and enjoyed by others, whether children, parents or visitors, was a powerful incentive for the children to pay careful attention to the quality of content and presentation.

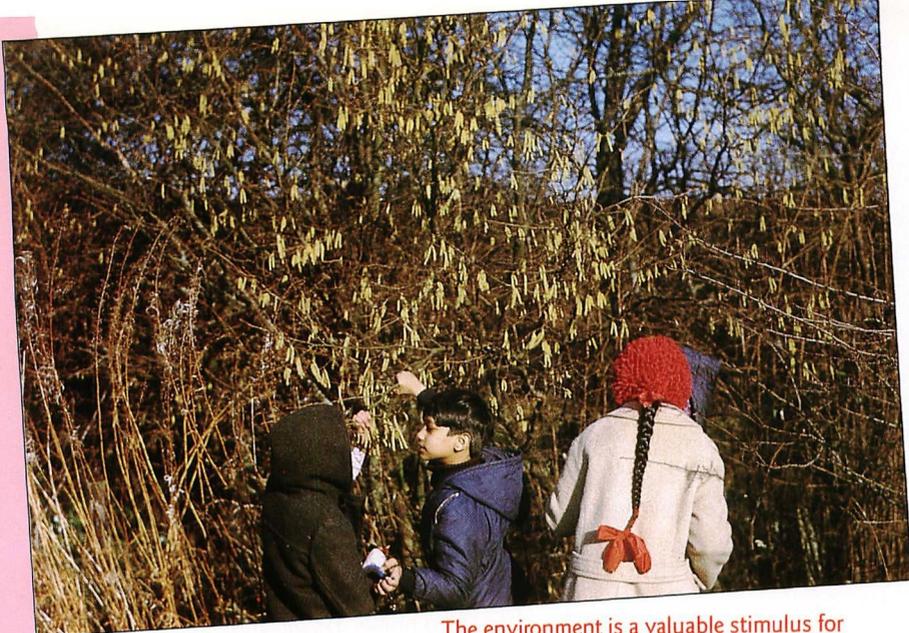
Writing for specific readerships

60 When children have the opportunity to write for known readerships, and perhaps to research their 'markets', they often produce impressive

work. A 9-year-old pupil wrote 'The Adventure of Brian the Dog', a story book specifically for infants. The story was composed in episodic form; each page contained a separate adventure faced with an attractively drawn illustration. The opening provided a good basis for future episodes. 'One day as he was playing in the garden he noticed the gate was open...' and the conclusion was similarly effective in rounding off the story. 'Brian shook himself and felt good. It was time to go home.' However, there was a price to pay for his adventures: 'They put him in the bath and scrubbed him.' The book ends with a delightful authorial speculation: 'He thought he would not run away again but I expect he did.'

61 The 10-year-old author of 'Amanda Jane Starts School' not only knew well the infants for whom it was written. She also understood that the actions of characters in stories are more credible if the reader is given insight into their feelings. Her story is not dominated by events; its essence is Amanda Jane's change of attitude towards school. It starts with a happy account of Amanda Jane's fifth birthday party, but soon introduces an element of apprehension: 'When her mummy put her to bed that night she told her that the satchel would be very useful as she would be starting school soon. Amanda Jane was not sure she liked that idea.' The apprehension eventually leads to tears at the prospect of school; but the reality turns out to be agreeable, and Amanda Jane's change of attitude brings the story towards its end.

62 The 10-year-olds in a middle school worked with parents in the writing and production of story books. Each book was written specifically for the parent's pre-school child. At the heart of this enterprise was a high level of collaboration of children, parents and teachers throughout the whole process, from preliminary meetings to the final products.



The environment is a valuable stimulus for writing.

A child's story composed and edited with the use of a word processor.

The big plant

There was a good boy and a poor mum. One day the mum was so poor that she said to the boy "Go and take Daisy the cow and sell her." "Yes then we will have some money." So the boy went to the market. On the way to the market the boy saw a man. The man said to the boy "Can I buy that cow?" "What will you give me?" said the boy. "I will give you some magic beans." said the man. "OK" said the boy. So the boy went home. When his mum saw the beans the boy's mum told the boy to go to his room without tea. The boy was sad. He said to his mum "I am very sorry." "It's all right." said his mum. The boy said "Where did you put the bean?" His mum said "Out of the window." "Oh no. Look out of the window." said the boy. There is a big flower." "Oh no! What have I done?" "Mummy I am going to climb the big flower." "No do not climb the big flower." said his mum." By then the boy got to the top. He did not like it. So the boy went down and never came up the big big flower again. The end and if you want to know, the boy and his mum lived happily ever after.

63

Not all writing by older children for younger readers is, or needs to be, in narrative form. There are examples of children making illustrated brochures for prospective new entrants to read before they join the school, and of letters exchanged between juniors and infants, often in connection with the juniors undertaking some reading or writing for the infants. The next example, from a guide to a local wood written by a 10-year-old for younger children, shows how carefully the reader is borne in mind, in the selection and organisation of detail and in the pleasant tone, fluency and lucidity of the writing:

Come to Worm Wood

If you go down the valley and turn left at the footpath sign it shows you where to find Worm Wood. The first things you see are the pine trees, the old dark oak trees and the stile that leads into the wood. It's quite dark inside. You can hear the leaves crunch when you stand on them. The long grass tickles your legs ...

64

Writing for younger children is valuable not only for the motivation it provides but also for the demands it makes on writers to adapt material and style to suit readers' needs. It also serves as a stimulus for the recipients. They are almost invariably excited by receiving something written specifically for them and are anxious to write back themselves. Both sets of writers appreciate the need to give of their best, and readily devote much care to the quality of their work.

Using television broadcasts and other media

65

Following a suggestion made in a schools television broadcast dealing with winter festivals, a primary school in a northern industrial town made a link with a small school in Finland. After an initial exchange of letters between the teachers and the children in the two schools, parcels were exchanged containing a miscellaneous collection of items designed to give insight into life in the senders' country

and into their school in particular. The children in the northern primary school were full of enthusiasm about this exchange and went on to make a video tape for the Finnish school, depicting school life and the surrounding area, and including an account of a visit to the area by Princess Anne. Besides widening their horizons by these activities, the children were fastidious about the quality of the work they sent, because it was important to them that the Finnish children should be interested in and enjoy what they had prepared for them. They were therefore concerned that the content should be suitable and the text free from errors of punctuation, grammar and spelling.

66 Enterprising work in a similar vein was undertaken by the upper junior classes in another school, using video films, newspapers and magazines to recognise bias and the underlying intentions of advertisers. A Year 5 junior class studied a nearby village and compared census data collected between 1881 and 1981. Using this material and other sources, such as property inventories, they drew inferences and made some evaluative judgements. One group which was working on a chandler's inventory dated 1913 had formed a clear, well-documented impression of how prosperous and what sort of a man he was. As part of this work the children also noted and discussed words no longer in use, changes in word meaning and spellings. In other schools, data systems like Ceefax and Oracle were used as sources for topic work. Data provided by the local fire station enabled one class to use a microcomputer to determine the number of calls made, the busiest months and how one year compared with another. It was remarkable how skilled the children became in assimilating quite complex and varied information, some requiring sustained concentration.

67 Planning for progression was an important prerequisite for the children's successful acquisition of data-processing skills. It was a process that began in

the infant years. Successful schools devised situations which entailed drawing on various resources, and the skills required in making effective use of those resources were taught as the need arose.

Making first-hand experience relevant

68 When Robert, aged 7+, wrote his poem about snow, he was in familiar territory, in that he was drawing on first-hand experience and using the first person to recount it.

Snow

In the snow we know we can get lost.
But if we get lost in the snow
Can we get out?
Wheels spin round and round
Engine roars with all its might.
Windows are frozen tight.
Here we are for the night.
Toes and fingers frozen white.
Breath steams.

A light glows
Voices come near.
Down my face rolls a tear.

69 This is no dispassionate, objective account of events. Rather it gives insight into what the experience of being trapped in a sudden snowfall meant for the writer. Using simple, direct language and selecting telling detail, he recreates vividly his feelings of helplessness and of relief.

70 Equally familiar territory for Robert is literature, for since his infant years he has read, listened to and talked about many stories and poems. This experience and the teaching which mediated it have given him an ear for language and have helped him to select a form for his writing.

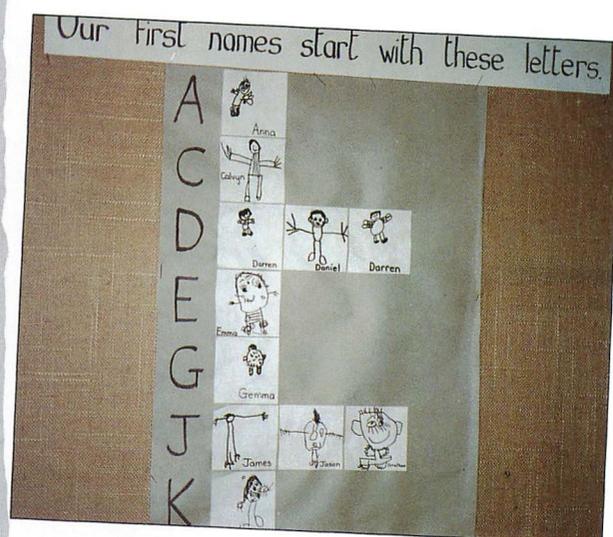
71 In a different part of the country, but probably at about the same time, the children in a small West Midlands primary school had also experienced a snowfall. The teacher of the mixed-age junior class read to them *The Kitten in the Falling*

Snow and they talked at first about the snow that had fallen over the weekend and their feelings about it, before focusing more sharply on the nature of snow, and how it could be described. They enjoyed the opportunity to play with words and create images: 'Snow is falling silence, sparkling diamonds, the enemy of sun and heat.' While the children, in small groups, were occupied in this way the teacher moved among them, talking to them about their imagery and its appropriateness. This kind of constructive intervention provided the model for the later discussion, in which the children asked questions and commented on the work of the various groups. Careful listening was required, and the authors were stoutly defended when wrongly challenged. When one child remarked: 'You didn't say what it did when it landed on the ground', another child – not the author – retorted: 'He did though. He said that it melted into the mountain and the earth.' The teacher continued to encourage constructive comment. When a child, commenting on the expression 'a shooting star that falls on my head', said, 'She didn't say how big they are', the teacher remarked, 'It depends how you think about it. If you look at a star you might think of it as small, soft and gentle.' In a similar situation, the teacher showed that repetition could be deliberate and effective, contributing to the pattern of a poem. Using their ideas and taking account of the discussion, the children went on to write their own poems about snow. First drafts were discussed and further refined within the groups before a version that satisfied them was produced.

Children's knowledge of language

72 The report of the Kingman Committee¹ emphasised the importance of children's knowledge of language. Although this kind of reflection is seldom promoted sufficiently in schools, there are many examples of teachers drawing attention to the structure and patterning of language, particularly where there is a tradition of drafting and revising writing. Critical

discussion of their work leads children to explore and understand nuance, metaphor, logic, grammar, figures of speech and conventions appropriate to varying contexts. Attention to the beginnings of literacy has also made teachers aware of the need to help the children to understand an appropriate 'meta-language' for reading and writing. Through their early experience with books and other print, the children build up their knowledge of terms like 'word', 'sentence', 'letter', 'writing', 'picture', 'beginning', 'page'. This knowledge, often taken for granted by adults, is essential to progress in the early stages, especially for those pupils entering school with limited experience of the printed word.



Children begin to recognise individual words or letters through early experience of books and other print.

73 A broad and balanced experience of poetry, writing, drama, word play, humour, investigations into the media and persuasive language, logical argument and debate helps pupils to think about how language works and its effects on meaning and communication.

74 Besides helping children to understand personal experience, literature sometimes sparks off interests which rapidly gather momentum.

1. *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Teaching of English Language*, DES, HMSO, 1988.

A teacher read 'The Phantom Tollbooth' to his class of Years 5 and 6 pupils. The children were fascinated by the 'word market' described in the book, and used the opportunity created by 'Word Week', an event involving the whole school, to invent a word game for the rest of the school to play. They produced a stock of cut-out letters for sale from small stalls set up in the classroom. In order to determine the values of the letters, they chose a paragraph from their reading books and analysed letter frequency. On the basis of that analysis they priced their letters. Groups of children visited the stalls to spend their £60 'vouchers', the vendors being responsible for keeping a running tally of the amount left on each voucher. After making their purchases, the children took them away to make as many words as possible from the letters bought. They searched dictionaries, reading books, classroom captions and many other sources in their quest for words, all of which had to be correctly spelt. At the end of 'Word Week', they returned their lists to the host class for checking and adjudication.

75 Much interesting discussion took place at the stalls and in the classrooms about letter frequency, letter combinations, ways in which words can be built up, and many other detailed features of language. This work occurred in the wider context of other activities focused on words such as a 'word snake' stretched along the corridors. A group of slower learners of mixed ages completed sections of the 'snake' by starting a new word with the last two letters of the previous word, e.g. 'lemonade', 'deputy', 'tyre'. Helped by parents, they used a wide variety of sources to find words and, where necessary, discovered their meanings. Elsewhere children followed clues to find words on a 'word tree', a task which required the careful following of instructions and inventive responses when the words had been found. Other groups solved anagrams incorporated in a wall story, or found and classified the meaning of names of people, occupations and places.

76 Two Year 5 classes came together for a story-telling session with a visiting member of a theatre group. After creating a rapport with the children by asking some riddles and receiving solutions – some being conceded as better than his – the story-teller told a folk story in which the turning point was a practical dilemma. Once again the children were invited to suggest solutions. In the final story the children were again presented with a dilemma, but this time it was more profound and involved a conflict between honour and expediency. The tale was left unfinished, and various children asked to adopt the role of story-teller and provide their own conclusions. The children were enthralled by the whole session, especially by being asked to help solve problems. The story-teller provided much for them to learn too about the art of story-telling – the relaxed style, the use of familiar language, the subtle mix of direct and rhetorical questions.

77 The activities built into 'Word Week' contributed to a thoroughly worthwhile experience for the children. The week was organised and resourced so as to sustain the children's interest and give them appropriately demanding tasks. In other schools occasional events, such as 'Book Week', are similarly successful.

Encounters with writers and books

78 Sometimes 'Book Weeks' have provided an opportunity to invite professional writers to the school to read from their books and discuss them with the children. Other links are made through the Writers in Residence scheme, or informally. Such contacts with 'real-life' authors can have a galvanising effect on the children's interest in books and writing.

The Year 5 children in one North Midlands school, after meeting a local author, read her books with great attention to detail and were able to pinpoint precise locations in some of the stories. When a small village primary

school had a writer in residence, the writer and the children collaborated in writing a novel about a boy evacuated to the village in the 1940s. From this work interest grew in the way of life at the time, the personal and social consequences of evacuation, and many other aspects.

Children who have been able to work in close contact with authors have often gained valuable insights. They have also learned about the writer's craft and standards, and occasionally derived comfort: 'It was nice to know that she sometimes finds it hard to write, just like I do,' one 9-year-old observed, with some feeling, after meeting an author.

79

Where literature is thoughtfully selected and sensitively used, children can imaginatively experience new ideas and feelings. When the juniors in a small village school read, discussed and wrote about *Village by the Sea*, they gained insights into an environment and culture very different from their own. The young juniors who read *Charlotte's Web* were led towards an understanding of the cycle of life and death in the natural world.

80

By the time the children in one school reached the top junior stage, their literature had included good stories of many different kinds – fantasy, myths and legends, contemporary fiction, stories reflecting other ways of life, historical novels. In the course of work on these stories they identified and assimilated some of the techniques and stylistic features typical of stories of particular kinds, sometimes to the point of echoing the rhythms, tone and constructions. When Lucy, aged 10, was writing an imaginary story about being evacuated from London to Cornwall in the second world war, she started with a paragraph in which description of the rush and scurry of making preparations was interwoven with depiction of her own imagined emotional turmoil, culminating in: 'I was suddenly overwhelmed with home-sickness and wanted to cry. I fought back the tears, saying

to myself over and over again, "I'm not a baby. I won't cry. I'm eleven. Eleven year olds don't cry."' The next paragraph, after a description of the train's departure, passed on to a detailed account of what she imagined lay ahead of her:

I shut my eyes and tried to picture the place I was being sent to. It would be enormous, very dominant, probably bleak. There would be hundreds of rooms, cold, bare, unused. My bedroom would probably be in the attic. The lady would be old, tall, angular, very strict. She would have iron-grey hair and would wear a black dress, probably one that used to belong to her mother. I hated her, detested her. She was the most horrible person in the whole wide world. All I wanted was to go back to London. Was that too much to ask? I stared out of the window, seeing myself running, running away from Cornwall, back to London, hungry, thirsty, cold, but triumphant. What if I did? Then would mother be sorry she ever sent me away? What if ... But the rest of my thoughts were drowned in a wave of sleep.

Work with children with special educational needs

81

The use of drama to examine aspects of behaviour and attitudes was one element in the work of a group of 8-year-old children with behavioural difficulties. An improvisation based on a fairy story they knew well engaged the children in roles as powerful wizards. The two teachers were king and queen. The essence of the first scene was the presentation of gifts to the king and queen for their baby. This situation placed on the 'wizards' the onus of answering questions and explaining the special powers of their gifts. The 'king' and 'queen' skilfully accepted and built on what the 'wizards' had said and involved them, where possible, in a three-way conversation.

82

The children were then taken out of role to discuss the next section of the story. There was much lively speculation about the whereabouts and activities of the wicked fairy:

Pupil: 'She liked cutting children's hair off.'

Teacher: 'Why?'

Pupil: 'She likes making spells with it.'

Teacher: 'I heard she pushed a child in a well.'

Another pupil: 'Yes, I heard that. We had to pull her out and she had a rotten cold.'

Another pupil: 'Here she comes, what are we going to do? Hide?'

Teacher: 'Let's all make up spells to scare her away.'

Together they composed and performed a choral incantation, holding hands with one another 'to make the spell stronger'. Not surprisingly this incantation was effective in driving away the witch. It was interesting to observe how sensitively they controlled volume, rhythm and tempo when reciting the 'spell'.

83

The next stage in the lesson was a group activity: the children were left with the suggestion that they should construct something, for instance a dragon, that would frighten the witch off whenever she came. They practised making the shape of a dragon, and then re-making it quickly in an emergency.

84

The final stage represented an important transition: it was agreed that to keep making dragon shapes was inconvenient. A better solution was to change the witch herself into a better person. To help the children think about behaviour, the teachers drew attention to their behaviour as children in the playground and elsewhere. This discussion generated a momentum of its own. The children talked freely about their own behaviour, and then increasingly about the witch's.

Pupil: 'The witch is wicked because no one was nice to her or played with her.'

Another pupil: 'The witch is really a roboten controlled by a person whose mother and father died.'

It was decided that a good strategy would be for them to invite the witch's brother over to

make friends with him because he might help them to make friends with the witch. This decision meant writing a letter of invitation when the group next met.

85

The whole lesson was impressive for the sustained involvement of the children both in the role play and in the discussions. They showed increasing skill and adaptability in using language appropriate to role and situation. The teachers' ability to enter into role, to keep dialogue moving and to select suitable topics on which to concentrate in discussion were major influences on the quality of the work.

4

FACTORS INFLUENCING GOOD PRACTICE

86

From the examples of successful work in the previous chapter certain generalisations may be made about the optimum conditions for the teaching and learning of language and literacy. The effective school will have considered and acted upon the following:

- Policy
- Resources
- Staffing
- Organisation and planning
- Assessment and record-keeping
- The modes of language:
 - talking and listening
 - reading
 - writing

Policy

87

The school has a language policy, which is, ideally, agreed by the whole staff, and which addresses all four modes of language – talking, listening, reading and writing. The policy takes into account:

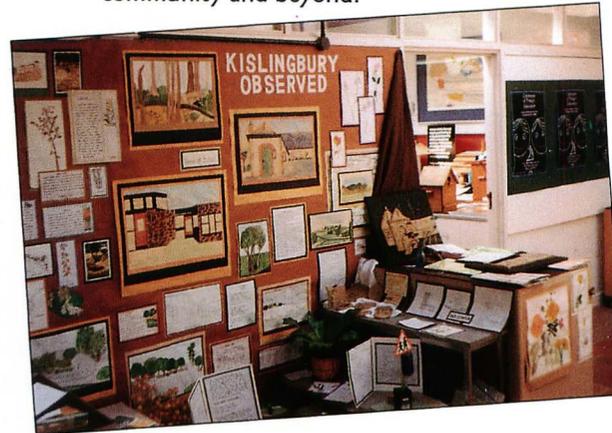
- the importance of literature;
- the need to take a 'longitudinal' view, i.e. attending to pupils' language needs from infancy to adulthood and to translate this view into expectations and practices that ensure clear lines of progression for all pupils;
- the need to provide a wide variety of contexts in which language can be used purposefully and successfully, in order to further children's understanding of language and their ability to use it;
- the closeness of children's language to their individuality and self-esteem. That recognition must take into account children's personal experiences, including their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Resources

88

Readily accessible resources are provided which are adequate and appropriate for:

- a full range of language activities;
- flexibility of teaching, to allow for individual work, group work, and class work;
- the acquisition of language skills;
- the promotion of reading for a wide variety of purposes; the display of work accomplished; the needs of current learning in English and across the curriculum; the stimulation of new ideas and activities;
- obtaining access to support from outside the school, e.g. visitors, visits to places of relevant interest, contact with people and organisations in the local community and beyond.



Thoughtful presentation shows respect for children's work.

Staffing

89

The school has:

- a teacher with overall responsibility for language and literacy, and appropriate status for the exercising of that responsibility, for example as a 'language consultant';
- provided sufficient opportunity for the language consultant to keep in touch with the day-to-day practice within the school and relevant developments in teaching and learning of language and literacy;
- regular staff meetings for the discussion of aspects of policy and practice, with the aim of developing and improving the work at all levels;

- devised a structure for harmonising the work of class teachers with 'support teaching', whether for English as a second language (ESL), reading or other special educational needs.

Organisation and planning

90

The school ensures that:

- its curriculum is organised so that language activities, in all modes, are spread throughout the year, and not fragmented;
- within classes, the organisation permits whole-class learning, group activities and individual work, with appropriate support for children with specific learning difficulties;
- in the school's language work, a balance is achieved among and within the language modes of talking and listening, reading and writing;
- adequate time is set aside for silent reading by all the children;
- assessment of performance is an integral part of the language policy and systematic records are kept;
- throughout the primary years, there is a well-established partnership between the home and the school;
- progression and continuity are maintained, through meetings of teachers in infant and junior schools, exchange of pupils' work, joint discussions of work, and similarly with the secondary schools to which the children transfer.

Assessment and record-keeping

91

Successful development will depend upon:

- a clear agreement about the criteria for progression and the expectations of standards in language work throughout the school;
- an agreed policy on the *reasons* for assessing and recording progress: e.g. when is it to be done? by whom? what is it to be used for? what are the consequences for children?

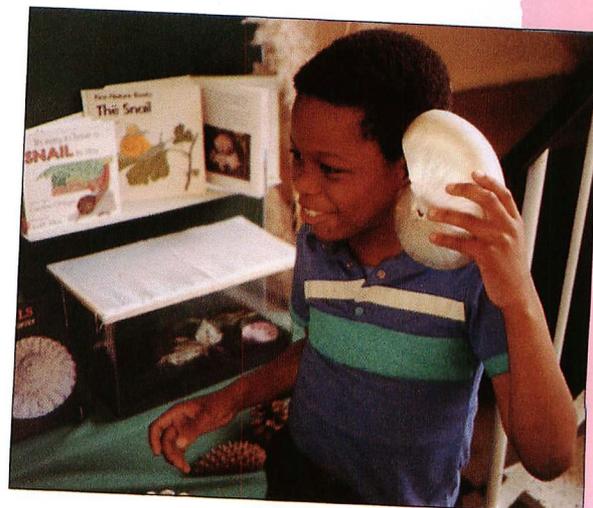
- assessment strategies which complement rather than interrupt normal teaching;
- the part to be played by parents;
- a reasonable degree of objectivity/comparability;
- a support and management strategy in the school to ensure that the work is carried out.

Talking and listening

92

The school ensures that:

- children appreciate the centrality of speech in learning across the whole curriculum;
- children have abundant and varied experiences of speaking and listening for a wide variety of purposes;
- children have the opportunity, through drama or role play, to express their feelings about matters which concern them;
- teachers provide and make explicit consistently good exemplars of the spoken word;
- girls as well as boys participate fully in the range of speech activities provided, and appreciate linguistic variety;
- the size and nature of teaching groups are modified to cater for the most able, for the least able and for different activities;



Children need a range of experiences of speaking and listening.

- progress and achievement in oral work is assessed and recorded.

Reading

93

The school's integrated policy for language development will include an agreed plan for reading development, containing aims, methods of achieving them, and procedures for assessing and recording progress. The plan will be capable of modification in the light of experience. More specifically, it will ensure that:

- early reading is both carefully structured and enjoyable, accompanied by encouragement for pupils to think and talk about what they read and what is read to them;

- from the earliest stages children read for meaning and read a large variety of material including picture books, stories, poems, books of information etc;
- in the course of their reading pupils meet examples which can be related to their own writing and, as an aid to that, discuss and evaluate the organisation, form and style of what they read;
- no one particular reading scheme is used exclusively and where scheme books are used, they are supplemented by good quality fiction and non-fiction.
- good literature of many different kinds is read to pupils throughout the primary years and presented to them through broadcasts, professional writers, recordings, and so on;
- pupils become increasingly self-reliant in finding information, for example, through dictionaries and library skills;
- reading is contextualised so that, for example, children learn to recognise bias, distinguish fact from opinion, skim, scan and interpret graphs, maps and tables;
- a useful and cumulative assessment system is incorporated into the reading policy.

Reading schemes are supplemented by good-quality fiction.

Pupils become increasingly self-reliant in finding information.

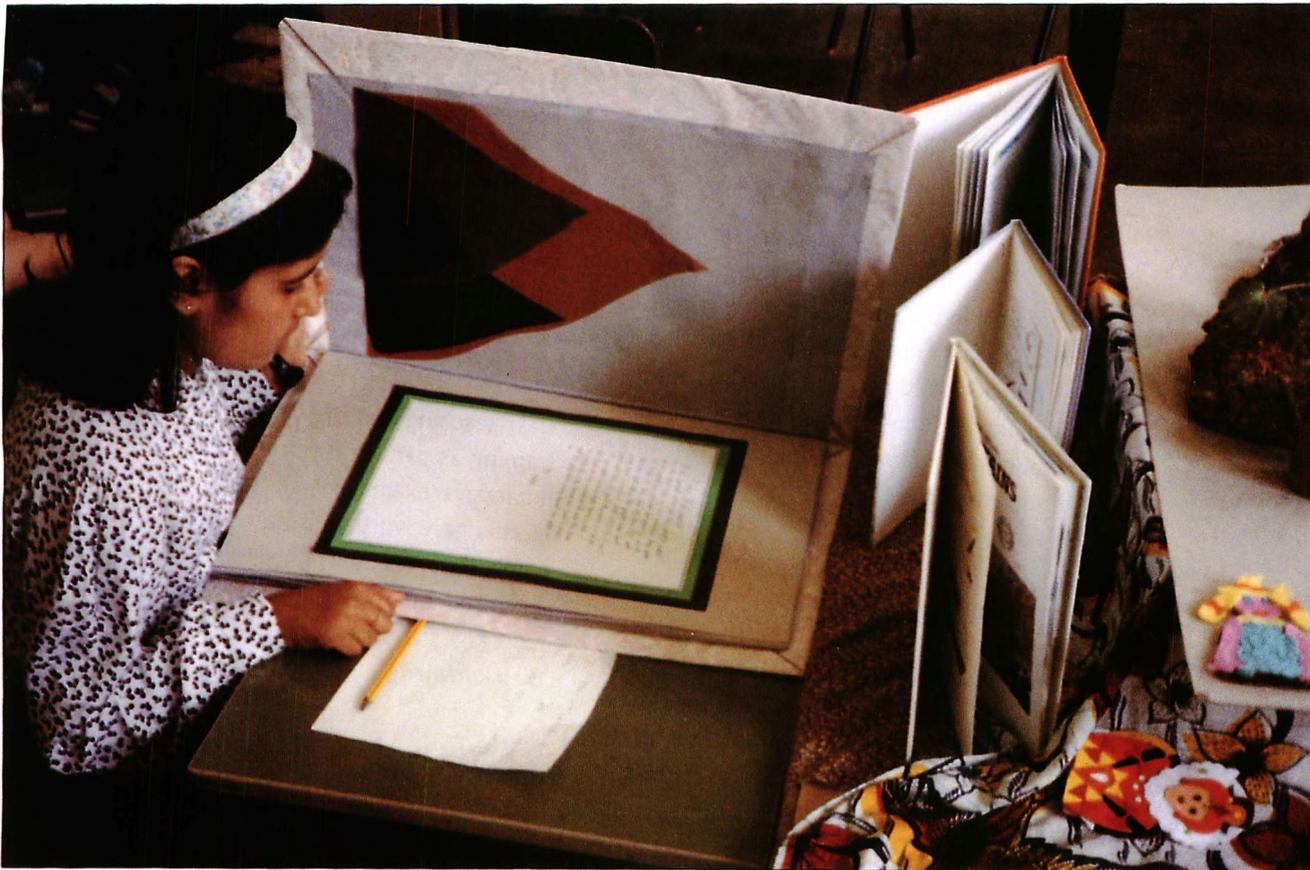


Writing

94

The school ensures that:

- throughout the age range, children have understood the purposes of writing, the range of their writing is broad and relevant, and they write both for themselves and for others to read what they have written;
- first-hand experience motivates writing from the earliest to the latest stages, with a defined and increasing competence in achievement;
- the partnership between parents and the school extends to writing as well as reading. Similarly, there is frequently collaboration within the school, sometimes across the whole age range. This is particularly valuable where the school is ethnically and culturally diverse;
- children become increasingly aware of the formal and functional differences between speech and writing;
- children learn about the features of different genres of writing through appropriate literature which also helps them to develop an 'ear for language';
- the variety of writing is increased by enlarging the intended readership;
- children come to understand the value of making notes for later expansion;
- teachers' responses to children's writing are positive, building on strengths and remedying weaknesses;
- progress and achievement in writing are assessed and recorded.



Children write both for themselves and for others.

5 LOOKING AHEAD

95

The majority of primary schools teach the basic skills of reading and writing thoroughly and successfully, but good practice shows that primary children are capable of achieving far more than that. Furthermore, the language demands of our complex and rapidly changing society require far more than basic literacy, important though that will continue to be.

96

The examples of good practice in the previous chapters provide glimpses into classrooms where language is vibrant and the children use and learn English with increasing confidence and competence. All too often, however, the good practice that is the norm in one class occurs only intermittently or rarely in other classes elsewhere in the school. Where good practice is consistently achieved throughout the school, the teachers share a common view of language development and of how the teaching and learning of English contribute to, and are extended by, work in other subjects.

97

While good work in English invariably gives the children an active role in their own learning, this calls for more teaching not less. For the vast majority of primary children it is their class teacher who provides most of the immediate opportunities for communicating with an adult during the school day. Therefore much depends upon how well the teacher uses English in his or her exchanges with the children. Examples of effective work made it abundantly clear that successful teaching, whether with the whole class, smaller groups or individuals, depends on certain essential factors. These include the quality of the teacher's explanations, clarity and structure of speech, the skilled construction and use of questions, and the ability to engage children in intensive discussion of increasingly complex ideas. These are all crucial not only for the development of language but also for helping the children to understand and to think in all areas of the curriculum.

98

It is also clear that the methods of teaching and organising the work of the class influence strongly the range and quality of the language used by the children. Although some language activities are properly individual, the vast majority require some interaction between children, and between children and adults. For this reason, effective group work, with the opportunities it affords for purposeful discussion, is a particularly valuable activity.

99

In many schools the composition of the teaching groups needs to be more carefully considered. The nature of the task is an important factor in deciding the size and composition of the group. If children are to learn how to respond well to different language demands, they will need different experiences of working with others, for example, in pairs and larger groups, with children of their own age, with older and with younger children. Where the teaching and learning of English are flourishing the schools see language development in terms of broadening the purposes for which the children use language and the social contexts in which they use it.

100

Good practice also recognises the place and purpose of whole class teaching and the value to children of learning as part of a wider audience. Many impressive examples were seen where the teacher gave worthwhile information to the whole class, read good literature and poetry, and used question-and-answer techniques to engage the children's interest and increase their knowledge.

101

From the broad sweep of work seen it is clear that the majority of primary schools already devote a reasonable amount of time to the teaching of English. In nearly all, the amount of time should enable the requirements of the National Curriculum for teaching English as a core subject to be met. The interdependence of reading,

writing, talking and listening is widely acknowledged and it is characteristic of good practice that each mode reinforces the others in the development of the children's ability to think, to learn and to communicate. In some schools, however, a better balance of work is needed to ensure that each mode of language receives appropriate attention within the time devoted to English. Where the work is less effective than it should be, it is the development of oracy that is often impoverished and given too little time.

102 There is a welcome trend in some schools toward helping children reach a fuller understanding of how language works. This emphasis is strongly supported by the report of the Kingman Committee and the Statutory Orders for teaching English in the National Curriculum. Unless they have that knowledge of language the children lack the tools to evaluate and refine their own performance. This trend is evident in schools where there is much discussion about language in use, with examples drawn from a variety of sources – children's work, tapes, books and non-book material – and ranging over many aspects of language from the sounds and rhythms of poems to matters of organisation, grammatical construction and style. The way children use language shows what they have learned and where any misconceptions or uncertainties lie; sometimes it shows that they understand, but lack the vocabulary or command over sentence structures to express their understanding effectively.

103 Children learn how language is used and how circumstances affect its use through discussion with their teacher of examples where they, or others, have succeeded or failed in conveying the meaning intended. These wider considerations provide the context in which correctness may be properly placed and understood. If children are to be helped to make appropriate choices in language and adapt to the varied circumstances in which they use it, they need to be fully accustomed

to talking about language matters throughout their primary years. Children's knowledge of language seldom features as an aspect of school language policies and schemes of work and most schools will need to give this more attention in responding to the new requirements.

104 Though by no means new activities in primary schools, much of the existing assessment, recording and reporting of children's progress are carried out on too narrow a front. They often contribute little to the planning of children's work within the class and fail to influence the policy for the teaching and learning of language and literacy throughout the school. In future there will be a demand for far greater attention in many schools to be paid to assessing, recording and reporting children's progress in language and literacy. The information yielded from these assessments will be crucial for the purposes of planning, monitoring progress in the work, and communicating children's progress to parents and others.

105 Over recent years the APU publications and the National Oracy and Writing Projects have done much to focus more sharply teachers' thinking about language. The opportunities teachers have had for examining closely and discussing children's work in detail, among themselves and with the children, have greatly increased their confidence in assessing aspects of language performance, particularly in reading and writing. There are obvious benefits where that practice is extended to spoken language. The insights gained can provide a sound basis for the assessment of past work and planning for the future. Those schools which have opened the process of assessment to discussion between teachers about the strengths and weaknesses evident in children's work are on the way towards using the kinds of moderation processes which will be needed to assess levels of attainment in the future. Assessment needs to be an integral aspect of curricular planning and of

teachers' thinking about language wherever it occurs in the curriculum.

106 The 1987 DES Primary Staffing Survey showed that English ranks highest among the subjects of the National Curriculum in terms of levels of qualifications held by full-time teachers. Of the core subjects nearly 42 per cent of primary teachers have a main or subsidiary qualification in English compared with 22 per cent for science and 15 per cent for mathematics¹. This pattern is reflected in the proportions of designated posts for curriculum leadership; about 60 per cent of primary schools have designated a post for co-ordinating work in English. The availability of this level of expertise should offer considerable advantages for curricular leadership, the in-service training of teachers and the effective teaching of English as a core subject of the National Curriculum. However, as mentioned in chapter 2, not all schools always use designated posts for English to best advantage and many should consider how to improve their procedures.

107 What has been identified as good practice in this publication is consistent with the Statutory Orders for Key Stage 1 and the Secretary of State's proposals for attainment targets and programmes of study for Key Stage 2. Whereas in the past much of this high-quality work has existed in isolated pockets, the existence of a National Curriculum promotes its wider permeation throughout the school system. In this process the role of a language consultant, whether in a single school or in a cluster of small schools, can be of vital importance. LEA pilot schemes and individual school initiatives show that language consultants can be highly effective in influencing practice in the classroom and in co-ordinating the work across the school. To fulfil such a role they need scope to develop and practise management skills, as well as providing advice in relevant language matters, to act as exemplars of good teaching

¹. *Primary Schools Staffing Survey, 1988/89, DES.*

and to help other teachers to assess their work. They need to consult with heads and deputies on the broader language issues, and with class teachers on agreed principles and their translation into practice. Consultation about language policy and children's progress between infant and junior schools or between the corresponding departments in a 5-11 primary school will become increasingly necessary, as will similar consultations between primary and secondary schools. With these points in mind, a review of functions and duties might lead, in some cases, to a more effective role for language consultants.

108 There have been, and will continue to be, major developments in the teaching of language in the primary school. It will be a considerable task for all teachers, including head teachers and language consultants, to keep themselves and their colleagues up-to-date and well informed about these developments and their implications for this fundamentally important area of the curriculum.

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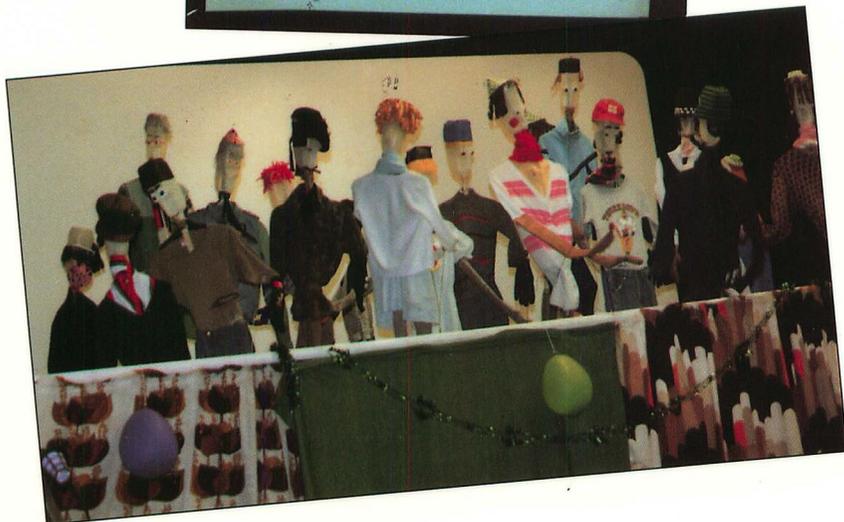
Puppet profile

Name	Cherry Fizz
Age	25
Birthday	12th March
Height	5 Foot 2
Weight	8 Stone 5
Address	72 Bottle Ave
Hospital	Bottle town Genral
Date of birth	12.3.62
Colour of eyes	Blue
Colour of hair	Blond
Hobby	Tennis
Collect	Bangles
Favourite Meal	Beef in Guinness
Favourite Drink	Martini and lemonade



About me

My name is Cherry Fizz. I am 25 years old and 5ft 2. I weigh 8 stone 5. I was born in bottle town genral. My date of birth is 12.3.62. My birthday is on the 12th of March. My eyes are blue and my hair is blond. And my favourite meal is Beef in.



Flowing quite near, right next to us is the River Trent that runs through Newark to the coast. In the summer it has river trips, so if you want to explore further down the river then there's your chance. But now we cross this road and visit one of Newark main attractions, the castle. Many peculiar events have occurred in these grounds, like the death of King John in the South-West tower now named after him, and the siege of Newark, when we proudly defended the road to York. Now sadly the castle is falling down in places, but experts of this matter are doing their utmost best to preserve the castle back to its previous way of living. But now we continue our tour down Castle Gate again and on our right you can take a look as we go past at the Gilstrap Library, where of course you can find many interesting books of your choice.



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