

Middlefield Community Primary School



Long Term Case Study 2: How does Middlefield Chatterboxes (a bespoke reading and writing programme) raise standards in reading & writing?



Karen Crichton

Literacy Manager / Assistant Head Teacher



Long Term Case Study 2: How does 'Middlefield Chatterboxes' (a bespoke reading and writing programme) raise standards in reading and writing?

Name of School:	Middlefield Community Primary School
Case Study Title:	Chatterboxes
Summary:	How does 'Middlefield Chatterboxes' raise standards in reading and writing?
Contact name and job title:	Karen Crichton Literacy Manager/Curriculum Manager Assistant Head Teacher
Contact email:	karenchatterbox@hotmail.co.uk
Date submitted:	

Background:

In 2007 the school embraced the Big Writing Programme and started to see substantial success in both reading and writing results. Significantly, the children's motivation to read and write increased dramatically, particularly the boys.

In 2009, acknowledging these achievements and recognising the need to continue this success further, I decided to develop a bespoke reading and writing programme for Middlefield. I was extremely fortunate to have the complete support and financial backing of the Head Teacher, Paula Judd.

Middlefield Chatterboxes was underpinned by the following beliefs:

- Understanding that effective writers have an on-going internal dialogue which shapes their writing and that children need this process made explicit through talk.
- That planning should allow for the appropriate balance of Read, Analyse, Plan, Write and Review throughout each unit.
- Understanding that reading a wide range of quality texts is a vital part of the process along with drama and role-play.
- Lessons should provide a consistent structure across the school, of teacher modelling, supported talk and independent talk within whole class and guided sessions.

This case study shows the 'journey' that Middlefield children and staff have undertaken together.

Before: How were reading and writing taught before?

Reading:

- Reading was often seen as separate from writing, rather than as an integral part of the teaching and learning sequence, by both children and staff.
- Wider opportunities for themed reading were not consistently recognised or provided for.
- Quality books were not available consistently across school.
- The focus was on basic reading skills rather than reading for pleasure and learning.
- There was no consistency in the use of a range of reading material across the wider curriculum.

Writing:

- The focus was on trying to improve children's imagination and lacked overall structure.
- By the time children were entering Y5 their handwriting was well below national expectations.
- The children were not able to apply their range of spelling strategies in their writing.
- There was no consistency on the delivery of extended writing.
- Pace of lessons was often slow and often only two or three part lesson

Reading & Writing:

- No dedicated working wall to support children's learning, with the focus being on celebrating children's work rather than supporting reading & writing.

Detail: What was done? Who was involved? When?

2009

- Starting in January 2009, 10 Year 6 children, all boys, attended my afternoon Writing Booster class. They were all working **within level 3** at the time and their target was to achieve **Level 4** in their Reading and Writing SAT's in May. (They'd all achieved Level 2c in YR2 and, by January, were not on track.)
- I initially trialled my ideas for a **Pirate Chatterbox** with the children, who helped me develop it during the following months: adding joke books, poetry books & a greater selection of fiction and non-fiction texts. They also asked me to add more equipment such as cutlasses and daggers and enough costumes so we could all dress up and get into role together.
- As the boys came straight to the lesson from lunchtime play, we decided that each session should start with 'quiet time' during which we would all sit together at a central table and read from a range of high quality 'pirate themed' books.
- These boys helped to shape and mould the programme according to their learning styles and needs.
- **100%** of children attending this booster group achieved their **target level**, with over **50%** achieving **Level 5 in both Reading and Writing**.

2009/10

- Following the great success of the programme with the Year 6 booster group the HT and I decided to roll it across **Year 5 & 6** to see if it would have the same impact with whole class teaching.
- Using the original **Pirate Chatterbox** as a starting point, I added more quality, theme related texts, costumes, artefacts and material.
- I invited UKS2 staff to join me in my Chatterbox lessons, then followed up with regular Inset training.
- I frequently visited their lessons to offer advice and gain ideas on how to develop the programme further.
- After consulting with the Music Co-ordinator, we purchased 'related' music to play at key points during the lesson to add to the atmosphere and engage the children's interest. This was saved to staffshare so it could be accessible by all.
- End of year data indicated that both boys and girls had made **accelerated progress** in both reading and writing.

Classroom Organisation and Session Structure **Appendix 1**

Warm-up

- Each lesson starts with the classroom environment set up to create a magical space prior to the children entering the classroom. To achieve this each class has a scented Yankee Candle and themed music is played as the children enter, a range of **high quality texts, non-fiction, fiction, poetry** are placed, one per child around a central table/space. In the centre of this area is a large piece of themed (coloured) material, outlining the central creative space. The children are expected to investigate the texts independently. Costumes/artefacts are also displayed to complete the experience.
- After approximately 5 minutes, the music is lowered and discussion about the texts takes place. This includes identification & recording of key words and phrases collected from their reading. Each child shares their findings, whilst others listen. These key words and phrases are then put onto the class **Working Wall** to support children's learning.

Lessons

- During the 3 week programme children take part in a variety of role-play and drama activities to help immerse them in the text type.
- Lessons are clearly structured, ensuring a balance of Read, Analyse, Plan, Write and Review throughout the unit. Examples / work at all stages are shown on the **Working Wall** to support children's learning. **Appendix 2**
- Each lesson provides a consistent structure of teacher modelling, supported talk and independent talk within whole class and guided sessions.

Plenary

- Each lesson closes with the children returning to the central table and reading books, with accompanying music.

2010/11

- Following the great success of the programme with the Year 5 & 6, Chatterboxes was then introduced to **key staff** across the school.
- With continued support and financial backing from the Head Teacher and School Governors, further Chatterboxes were created:
 - UKS2 Space
 - LKS2 Knights & Castles
 - KS1 Magic
- The same rigorous process of observations and training followed, to ensure high expectations and consistency of structure and approach.
- Participating classes data was carefully tracked by the assessment co-coordinator and showed the similar accelerated progress to the original trial group, UKS2.

2011/12

- The Chatterbox reading and writing programme was then taken across the whole school, involving all classes from Year 1 to Year 6.
- Again with on-going support and financial backing from the Head Teacher and School Governors, the final Chatterboxes were created. **Appendix 3**
- Each term begins with a 3 week Chatterbox programme. The programme starts with a drama workshop from an external expert (Chris Ball) and also includes a related school trip.

	KS1	LKS2	UKS2
Autumn Term	Magic	Knights & Castles	Pirates
Spring Term	Animal Tales	Bones	Space
Summer Term	Holidays	Wild Things	Superheroes

- Children's narrative writing is assessed using APP materials pre Chatterboxes, which provides a baseline for the unit and allows teachers to pitch learning to the identified targets. This process is repeated at the end of the unit and the children's accelerated progress analysed.
- The same rigorous process of observations and training followed, to ensure high expectations and consistency of structure and approach.
- Planning and work scrutiny also took place regularly.
- Individual teacher support / whole school Inset took place regularly throughout the year.

Middlefield Creative Curriculum

- During this school year I developed a **whole school creative curriculum**, using the Chatterbox themes as a starting point for each term.
- The scaffold created allowed for greater cross curricular reading and writing opportunities and related research.
- All staff across the school were involved in checking coverage across all subject areas.

Evaluation and Impact: How was success measured?

Pupil Voice **Appendix 4**

Ofsted comments

March 2014

'One of the school leaders has developed the 'Chatterbox' reading and writing resource. Equal priority is given to fiction and non-fiction reading and writing and pupils know that they have to read, analyse the text, use the features to plan their own piece of writing and then evaluate everything they have produced. This being introduced into the Reception class is helping to improve progress in reading and writing across the school.'

'Year 5 and Year 6 pupils wrote exceptionally high quality 'space' stories in one of the themes used across the curriculum. They published their stories in the hard-backed booklets they designed and illustrated and then read them to younger pupils. When pupils evaluated their work, one boy felt that he had given the younger listeners a head start by reading his thrilling story to them. Younger pupils aspired to writing such 'brilliant stories. This is typical of teaching offering real-life opportunities which add interest and promote enthusiasm for learning.'

Letter from Colette O'Brien

Director

Children and Young Peoples Services

I am writing to congratulate all of you on your recent Ofsted report.

'The contribution of your Chatterbox programme to the quality of language, reading and writing across the school is clear ...'

Reading & Writing Data

Average point scores, 2011 – 2015 for reading

In 2011 Middlefield was significantly below national **-4.9**

In 2015 Middlefield was significantly above national **2.1**

Average point scores, 2011 – 2015 for writing

In 2011 Middlefield was below national -1.8

In 2015 Middlefield was above national 0.3

Key Stage 2 SAT;s Results 2015

Reading L4+ 97.5% Reading L5 72.5%

Writing L4+ 90% Writing L5 37.5%

Lead school for English

For the past 3 years Middlefield has been a lead school for English with Liverpool Hope University

Key factors for success:

- Support of the **School Governors & Head Teacher**
- Use of **key staff**, before rolling it out to the whole school allowing for any issues to be addressed.
- Presented to remaining staff as a **non-negotiable** programme.
- Regular training, observations and book and planning scrutiny.
- Integral part of the **schools assessment** system.
- Children helped to shape and mould the programme, initially.

Challenges:

- Selecting appropriate high quality resources
- Supporting a few 'reluctant' members of staff.
- Time needed for observations and monitoring.

Next Steps:

Ongoing

- Middlefield Chatterboxes is now an integral part of our English Curriculum. To ensure its continued impact on reading and writing, it is regularly reviewed and improved to keep in line with key educational findings and any changes in the National Curriculum.
- Books are regularly checked and replaced when they begin to look 'shabby'. New texts are added each year to ensure excitement and interest is maintained.
- The programme continues to start with the drama expert, Chris Ball and related trips/events continue to take place.
- Children's writing is now assessed post Chatterbox and is part of the whole school effective assessment system designed by the Head Teacher David Potter.
- Teaching of all writing units follow the Chatterbox process and beliefs.
- The History co-ordinator is currently working on taking the Chatterbox idea further and developing History Chatterboxes - with related artefacts and high quality texts.

Appendix 1

Classroom Organisation and Session Structure



Each lesson starts with the classroom environment set up to create a magical space prior to the children entering the classroom.



Appendix 2: Working Walls

Stories with flashbacks

This collage features several educational activities and resources:

- Drama**: A sign at the top left.
- Hot-seating**: A pink box with an image of a person in a costume.
- Babble Gabble**: A green box with an image of a person speaking into a microphone.
- Immerse in a text**: A green box with a book cover.
- Analyse**: A green box with a diagram of a person.
- Role on the wall**: A yellow box with a person's silhouette.
- Descriptive words & phrases**: A yellow box with pink sticky notes.
- Plan**: A green box at the bottom left.
- Read**: A yellow box at the top right.
- Storyboards**: A green box with a storyboard image.
- Phone conversation**: An orange box with a phone handset.
- Use signs, symbols + abbreviations**: A green box with a document.
- Plan**: A green box with a document.
- Make notes**: A green box with a document.

This collage features several educational activities and resources:

- Write**: A grey box at the top left.
- Flashback**: A white box with a book cover.
- Dialogue**: A white box with a book cover.
- Chapters**: A white box with a book cover.
- Expanded noun phrases**: A blue box with a book cover.
- Review**: A grey box at the bottom right.
- How effective is your writing?**: A blue box with a cartoon character reading a book.
- Do you need to make any changes to the grammar, punctuation or vocabulary to make your writing more effective?**: A blue box with a cartoon character reading a book.
- Three colored pencils**: A small illustration of three pencils.

Pirate Chatterbox

A photograph of a classroom working wall titled 'Pirate Chatterbox'. The wall is covered with various educational materials, including a pirate ship cutout, a mannequin in a white sheet, and numerous colorful sticky notes and papers. The wall is decorated with string lights and other pirate-themed items.

Lessons are clearly structured, ensuring a balance of Read, Analyse, Plan, Write and Review throughout the unit. Examples / work at all stages are shown on the Working Wall to support children's learning.

Appendix 3

Pirate Chatterbox Contents



Chatterboxes:

Pirates
Years 5 & 6

Contents:

- **Table material: brown**
- **Pod material – stars / spotty**
- **Netting x 4**

- **5 Pirate Ships**
- **2 wooden treasure chests**
- **5 telescopes**
- **3 goblets**
- **3 loot bags**
- **1 blow – up parrot**
- **Metal keys + lock**
- **Plastic keys**
- **15 small flags**
- **Bag of corks**
- **2 skulls**

- **2 screaming pirate heads**
- **2 large skeletons**
- **Davy Jones skeleton**
- **2 small hanging skeletons**
- **3 glow-in the dark hanging skeletons**
- **46 pirate figures**

- 10 cutlasses
- 2 swords
- 13 flintlock pistols

Costumes:

- 6 pairs of trousers
- 5 skirts
- 14 tops (3 red captain tops)
- 2 waistcoats
- 8 belts (5 skull / 3 black)
- 2 cloaks
- 11 eye-patches
- 3 pairs of boots
- 2 hooks
- Bag of bandanas

Non-Fiction

1. 1001 Pirate Things to Spot
2. 1001 Pirate Things to Spot
3. 100 facts Pirates
4. 100 facts Pirates
5. 100 facts Pirates
6. Pirates
7. Secret World Pirates
8. Secret World Pirates
9. Look inside a Pirate Ship
10. Look inside a Pirate Ship
11. How to be a Pirate in 7 days or less
12. How to be a Pirate in 7 days or less
13. Perilous Pirates
14. Discovering Pirates
15. See inside Pirate Ships
16. Pirate – DK Eye Wonder
17. *Inside Access* Pirates
18. *Horrible Histories* Pirates Handbook
19. *Horrible Histories* Pirates Handbook
20. *The Usborne Official* Pirates Handbook
21. *The Usborne Official* Pirates Handbook

22. *The Usborne Official Pirates Handbook*
23. *The short and Bloody History of Pirates*
24. **Pirateology**
25. **Pirateology**
26. **Pirateology Handbook**
27. **Pirateology Handbook**
28. **Pirateology Guide to Life on Board a Pirate Ship**
29. **Pirateology Guide to Life on Board a Pirate Ship**
30. *Pirates and their Caribbean Capers*
31. **Pirates & Robbers**
32. **The World of Pirates**
33. **Pirate Attack!**
34. *Discovery Pirates*
35. **Search for Pirate Treasure**
36. **Shipwreck Detective**
37. **Oceanology**
38. **Pirate-o-pedia**
39. **The Amazing World of Pirates**
40. **Pirates & Smugglers**
41. *Where's Wally Fun Fact Book Plundering Pirates*
42. *Pirates Rogues Gallery*
43. **The Great Big Book of Pirates**
44. **My Best Book of Pirates**
45. *Tell me About Explorers & Faraway Places*
46. **Explorers Questions and Answers**

Fiction

1. **Pirates of the Caribbean**
2. **Pirates of the Caribbean**
3. **Pirates of the Caribbean**
4. **Pirates of the Caribbean** *At World's End*
5. **Pirates of the Caribbean** *Dead Man's Chest*
6. **Pirate Pete**
7. **Pirate Treasure Map** – *A Fairy Tale Adventure*
8. **Pirate Ship Adventure**
9. **Pirate Stories**
10. **Pirate Stories**
11. **Pirate Brother**
12. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs**
13. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs**
14. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs**
15. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs**
16. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs**
17. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs** – *The Magic Cutlass*
18. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs: Missing Treasure**
19. **Captain Flinn and the Pirate Dinosaurs** – *Smugglers Bay*
20. **The Night Pirates**
21. **Treasure Island** *Classic Starts*
22. **Treasure Island** *Graphic Novel*

23. **Treasure Island**
24. **The Pirate Cruncher**
25. **The Pirate Cruncher**
26. **The Jolley – Rogers and the Ghostly Galleon**
27. **The Jolley – Rogers and the Ghostly Galleon**
28. **The Jolley - Rogers and the Cave of Doom**
29. **The Jolley - Rogers and the Cave of Doom**

Poetry

1. **Pirate Poems**
2. **Pirate Poems**

Joke Books

1. **The Essential Pirate Joke Book**
2. **The Essential Pirate Joke Book**

Usborne Puzzles

1. **Puzzle Pirates**

Pirate Activities

1. **Pirate Word-Doku**
- 2 **Pirates Doodles! Puzzles! Silly Stuff!**

Appendix 4: Pupil Voice

Daisy Year 3

There's a book I really like with a skeleton in the cupboard.

Can I go and get it and show you?

I like fiction and non-fiction and I like reading them in our book corner.

Domantas Year 3

I liked the Chatterbox books because they were about castles and we went to one on our trip.

I like the skeleton one. I like all the books really.

I love non-fiction books for explanation. Actually, I'm reading one right now!

Vanessa Year 2

I enjoyed looking at the pictures of horses and now I know a lot of facts about animals.

I love reading the fiction books.

Steven Year 2

I liked reading the books and looking at the pages.

My favourite animal is a bat.

I really like non-fiction.

Milly Year 1

I read lots of animal books and I learnt a lot about snakes.

I loved looking at the pictures.

Harry Year 1

I learnt facts about animals from all over the world and I learnt all different animals I didn't know about.