PLANNING FOR WRITING
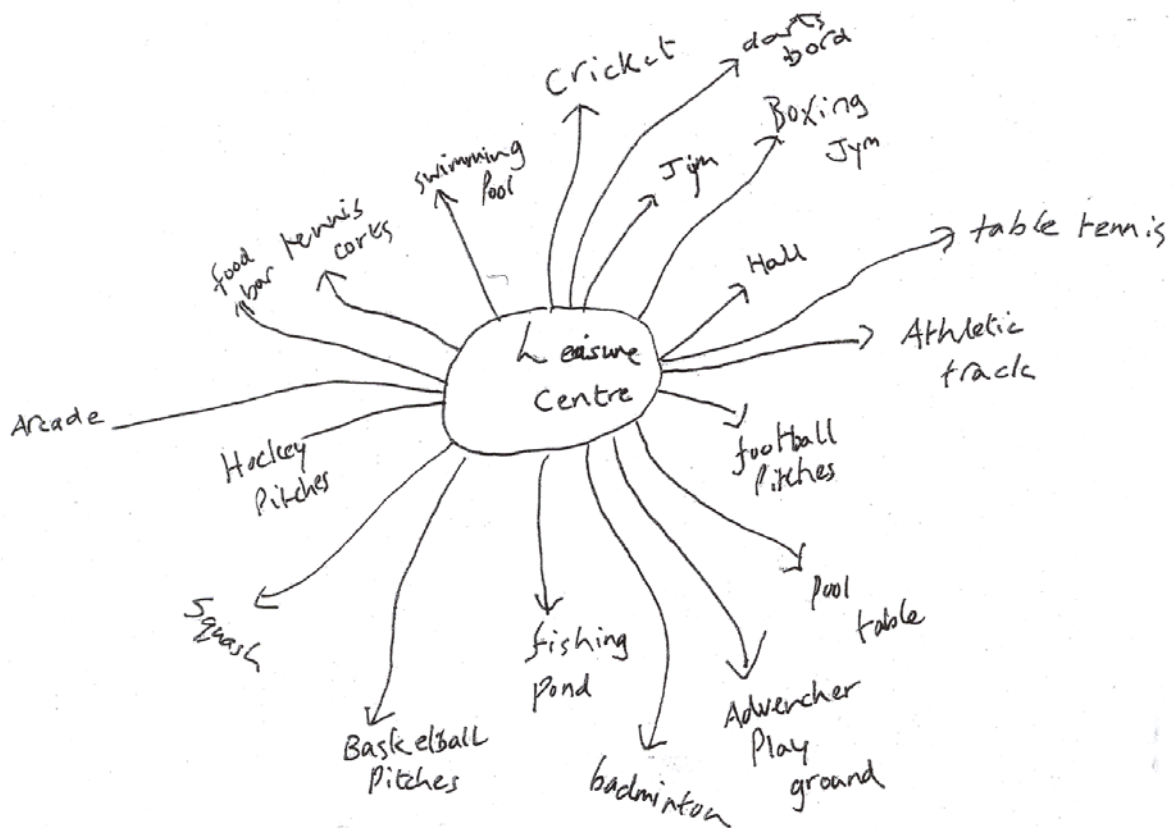
A report of a small scale investigation into Year 6 and Year 9 pupils' planning.

PLANNING FOR WRITING

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

What do writers do before they start writing? Do they need to plan, and if so, what form does this planning take? Composition is a complex activity and preparation for it takes many different forms, some of them internal and unrecorded. This document offers evidence from a small scale survey to the discussion and raises further questions about planning.

The bridge between task and final composition varies with individual writers and at different stages of maturity. How do teachers help their pupils to form this bridge, and at what point of their development as writers? At what stage do more experienced writers become independent, drawing on taught frameworks and then refining individual approaches to the specific task?

This report's findings suggest that all the pupils surveyed believed planning is an important part of the writing process; that there was some evidence of progression towards greater independence between the Year 6 and Year 9 pupils surveyed; and that, in practice, aggregation of ideas for content was more important than the organisation of them, in spite of what both pupils and teachers in the project said about the significance of structure in planning.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

This document explores planning for writing. It can be used as a prompt to and resource for looking at practice in classrooms and consideration of how best to incorporate planning for writing into the composing process. These are some suggestions for activities to support teachers in reviewing this area.

1. This booklet includes examples of planning by pupils in Year 6 and Year 9. Look at the plans and identify how the plans include content, structure, vocabulary, notes on features of the text type and audience. Set pupils a similar activity – to plan a writing task unaided – and see how their plans incorporate these elements. Consider how to improve pupils' use of planning.

2. Review how planning for writing is taught. In many primary schools children are helped with different aspects of writing but are not always taught to take an overview of their writing before they start. In secondary classrooms we found little evidence of scaffolding planning into an independent activity through encouraging a repertoire of techniques.

3. Discuss planning with pupils to discover their views, possibly using the questionnaire in Appendix 2 as a basis.

4. Develop an agreed repertoire of planning techniques which develop different aspects of planning such as content or structure. Teach these explicitly and customise them for different types of writing.

5. Consider how to reinforce pupils' effective use of planning in writing across the curriculum.

BACKGROUND

This report on an initial investigation into planning for writing was designed specifically to answer the following questions:

▪ What are the different forms of planning pupils at Key Stages 2 and 3 might employ to plan for a particular writing task?

▪ What is current practice in the teaching of planning?

Eight schools were approached to provide material, 4 primary (100 Year 6 pupils) and 4 secondary (116 Year 9 pupils). Teachers were asked to present pupils with an appropriate writing task[1] for which they had to produce a plan. Both primary and secondary tasks required the organisation of ideas into a persuasive text. The tasks included all the necessary context, but no explicit written or graphical guidance on the planning process. Teachers were asked to avoid suggesting any particular approaches to planning so that pupils made their own choices. The tasks were not completed as part of the investigation.

An accompanying questionnaire asked pupils to reflect on the planning process, exploring the choices they had made. Teachers in the sample schools were also asked to complete a questionnaire[2] which asked them about the sorts of planning that they taught and their view of the effectiveness of the planning process for their pupils.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF PUPILS' PLANNING

1. In both Key Stages planning was largely determined by task *content* where pupils were reminding themselves of what constituted a good celebration [Year 6] or what a leisure centre typically contained [Year 9]. Lists, bullet points and spider plans as brainstorming devices were common. There were two main differences in approach between the two year groups: much greater detail in the Year 9 plans and the dominance of spider plans; almost twice as many Year 9 pupils (27%) used spider plans as a method for generating content.

2. Some pupils in both year groups shaped the content prompts into logically connected sections with the use of headings and text boxes. Numbered and organised paragraphs were a common feature of the Year 6 plans, though this was much less common at Year 9. The few flow charts seen were all undertaken by Year 6 pupils. *Structure* as the guiding principal was articulated or demonstrated by 17% of the Year 6 pupils and 11% of the Year 9s.

3. A significant number of pupils at both levels included careful prompts for *language features* and these were especially noticeable in the Year 6 work (24%).

4. Although a small proportion of both year groups highlighted purpose and audience, this featured more widely in Year 9 work.

5. Pupils in Year 9 were also particularly concerned with appropriate graphical representation, though this could be attributed partly to the nature of their task (a leaflet).

PUPILS' PLANS

A range of plans have been selected to illustrate the variety of approaches adopted by pupils and are accompanied by commentaries. Wherever appropriate, significant differences between responses at the different key stages have been noted.

The commentaries include reference to the pupil's own response to Question 6 in the questionnaire: *Is there anything you could do to improve your plan? Give one thing.* These self-reflective responses confirm or extend understanding of the pupil's approach to planning for writing.

YEAR 6

Pupil A: Identification of text type and language features

The pupil begins by defining the audience and text type ('*Letter to headmaster, persuasive')* Although the task does not specify a letter to the headmaster, this is a reasonable interpretation which shows the pupil thinking for her/himself and adapting the task.

At this point a decision has clearly been made that the event will be a party and the subsequent three bullet points, although lacking development and detail, show that the party will be described in the final version. There is no hint that the pupil used the planning time to collect and then select a range of ideas for the party.

The next bullet is concerned with sentence variety and there is a reminder that a mixture of '*complex, simple and compound'* sentences should be included. The fact that this bullet is then followed by some details about the party suggests that it is not directly related to the task under consideration, an impression confirmed by the '*Checklist'* below which consists of 6 reminders of things to include or check: '*at least 3 complex sentences* and *punctuation'.* The bullet point that follows '*punctuation'* uses language that suggests a learned framework used by the class to support writing: '*a succession of simple sentences to create effect'.*

Overall there is a sense of this pupil working within a framework rather than generating her/his own ideas for structure, and the response to the improvement question in the questionnaire suggests a further item that has not been included: '*a diagram to show what it looked like'.*

Pupil B: Use of a planning framework

Dear teacher,

intro
I think its a good idea to do something for year six.

idea
I think each yr group should do a little act for the yr 6.

Picture

Picture

idea

reasons

Reasons

yours sincerly

on there side of the argument.
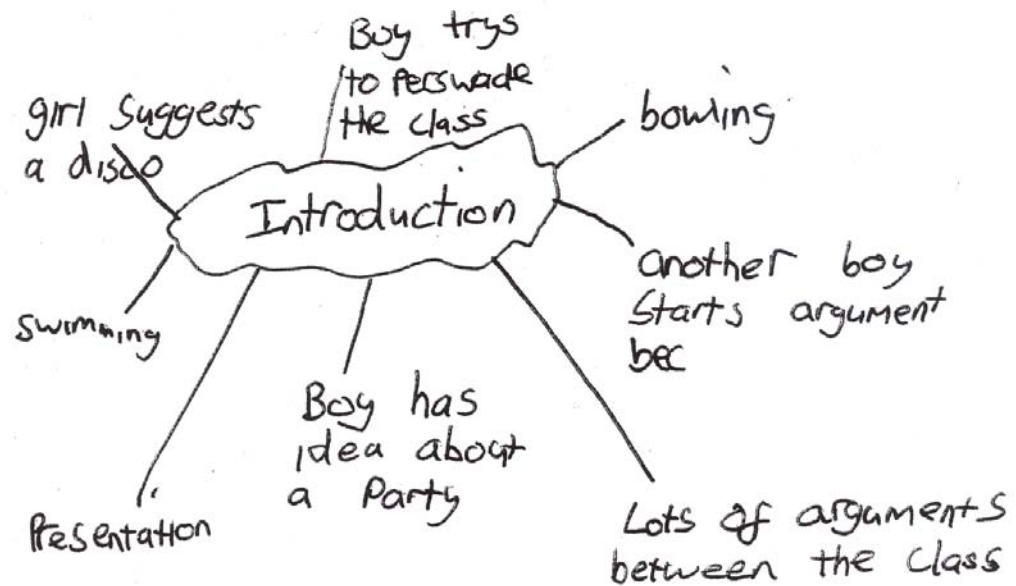
K. Bailey

to 4

back to your side of the arguement.

Yours sincerly

L. Coates

This pupil has foregrounded structure by devising a writing frame to work within. The audience is established at once: '*Dear Teacher*' and then an opening line is rehearsed. Next, content is considered, and although only one idea is noted, an empty box is included to indicate additional material and the use of pictures, if not their details, is incorporated.

The sections that follow suggest the same problem faced by Pupil A. S/he tries to import a framework that doesn't quite fit the task: '*on their side of the argument*' and '*back to your side of the argument*'. This suggests confusion about the text type: the pupil is trying to impose a structure appropriate to developing an argument with two sides onto a task which is clearly persuasive. This was an afterthought perhaps: the closure of the letter is crossed out and the argument boxes added at the end.

Pupil C: Creating a narrative from a persuasive task

Boy trys
to perswade
the class

girl Suggests
a disco

bowling

Introduction

another boy
Starts argument
bec

Swimming

Boy has
idea about
a Party

Presentation

Lots of arguments
between the class

- Key vocabulary
- what it can do for them
- PErSwaysive
- Good things about it.

Pupil C's plan shows confusion between persuasion and narrative. The spider plan has '*Introduction*' at its centre and offers three content suggestions: '*bowling, swimming, presentation*'. Although there is no indication of the order in which the points were thought of, it seems that the suggestions made for activities become personalised and a story form begins to develop: '*girl suggests a disco*', '*boy has idea about a party*'. It is a short step to further events taking place: '*boy tries to persuade the class,' 'lots of arguments between the class*'.

The misunderstanding is confirmed in the pupil's answer to the question '*Is there anything you could do to improve your plan?*' in the questionnaire: '*Yes explain how the story ends*'. It seems likely that a narrative would have resulted had the plan become a fully worked task.

Pupil D: Structure and content

This pupil seems to have a clear sense of what a plan can achieve and what it might contain. The planning falls into two distinct sections: content and then shape. Having decided on the text type - a letter - the content is then listed, albeit with little or no development. In the second part of the plan, the content items are organised, numbered and grouped, adding '*introduction*' and '*conclusion*' as the first and final paragraphs. This suggests an ability to shape the material, considering how it might be organised most effectively.

The pupil felt the plan would be improved by mentioning language features: '*yes, listing persuasive language*', which would have been a new area of focus for the pupil in this task.

Pupil E: Structure: headings and key words

The pupil begins by highlighting what s/he identifies as the key words from the task. The word '*persuade*' on the task page (not shown) is both highlighted and circled, suggesting its particular significance. The heading '*Key Features*' prefaces two precise questions: '*What is this event? Who is it for?*' giving a decisive focus early in the plan.

The next three headings concentrate on vocabulary, and this is one of the few pupils who has used the opportunity to note vocabulary. Some ideas are more successful than others, but there is a clear sense of this pupil using planning as an opportunity to experiment, with words and phrases. The openings of sentences are rehearsed and some quite complex thinking behind the event is suggested: '*to bring optimistic choices for the future*'.

The bullet points listed under the '*event/disco*' heading suggest that the persuasive focus is slipping into descriptive mode with '*sweat slipping sporadically from the dancers*', but there are no other examples of this tendency.

The three suggestions offered at the bottom left of the plan imply that at some point before writing the pupil will decide which of these is most suitable for the final draft. The suggested opening sentence at the end of the plan is typical of a number of pupils in both Year 6 and 9 who left specific ideas for the opening until they had worked through the plan as a whole.

YEAR **9**

The task given to the Year 9 pupils was similarly a plan for a persuasive text.

Pupil 1: Spider plan for content-gathering
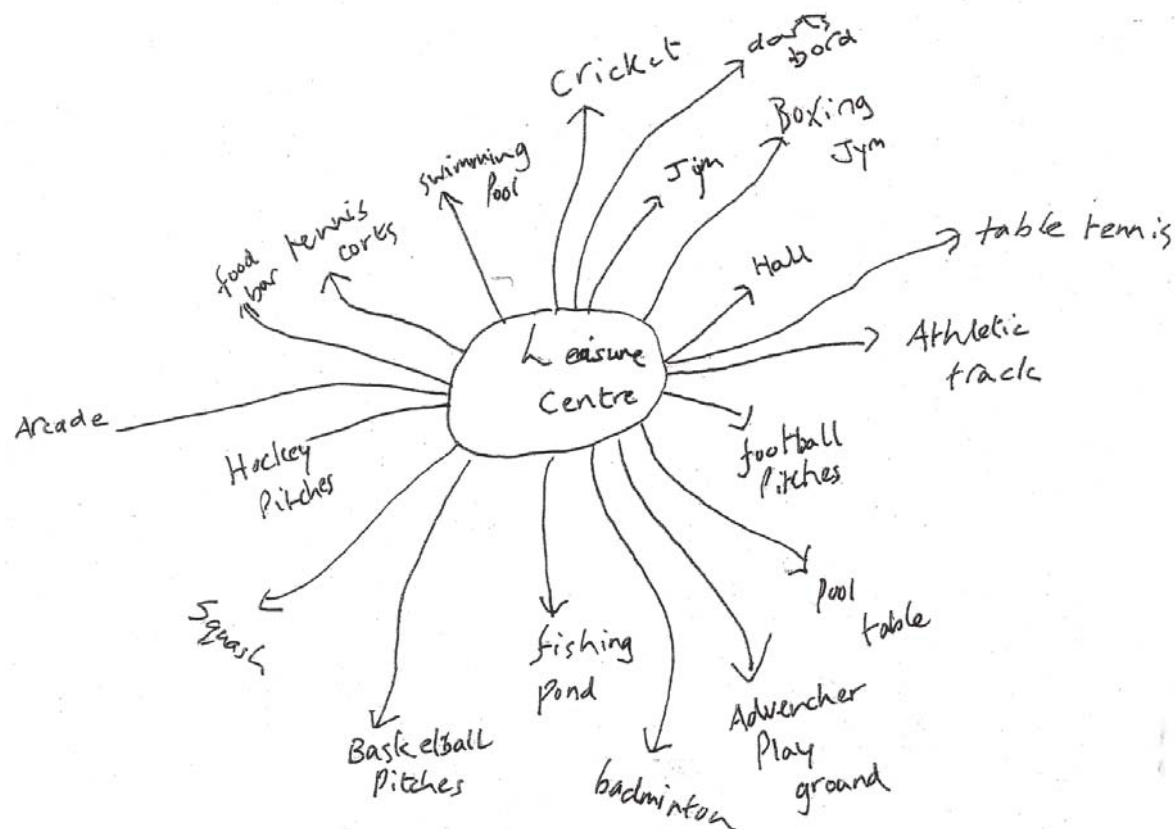
Many pupils in Year 9, including this one, identified a spider plan as the first thing they thought of when they undertook any planning. This is essentially a non-linear list of leisure centre activities, without further organisation. There is a reference to the task in the underlining of *persuasive* on the task page (not shown).

This pupil illustrates clearly that planning is seen as a content-gathering rather than structural tool ('*I'd think of more things*'–when there were already an impressive number).

Pupil 2: Spider plan more fully developed; concern with layout
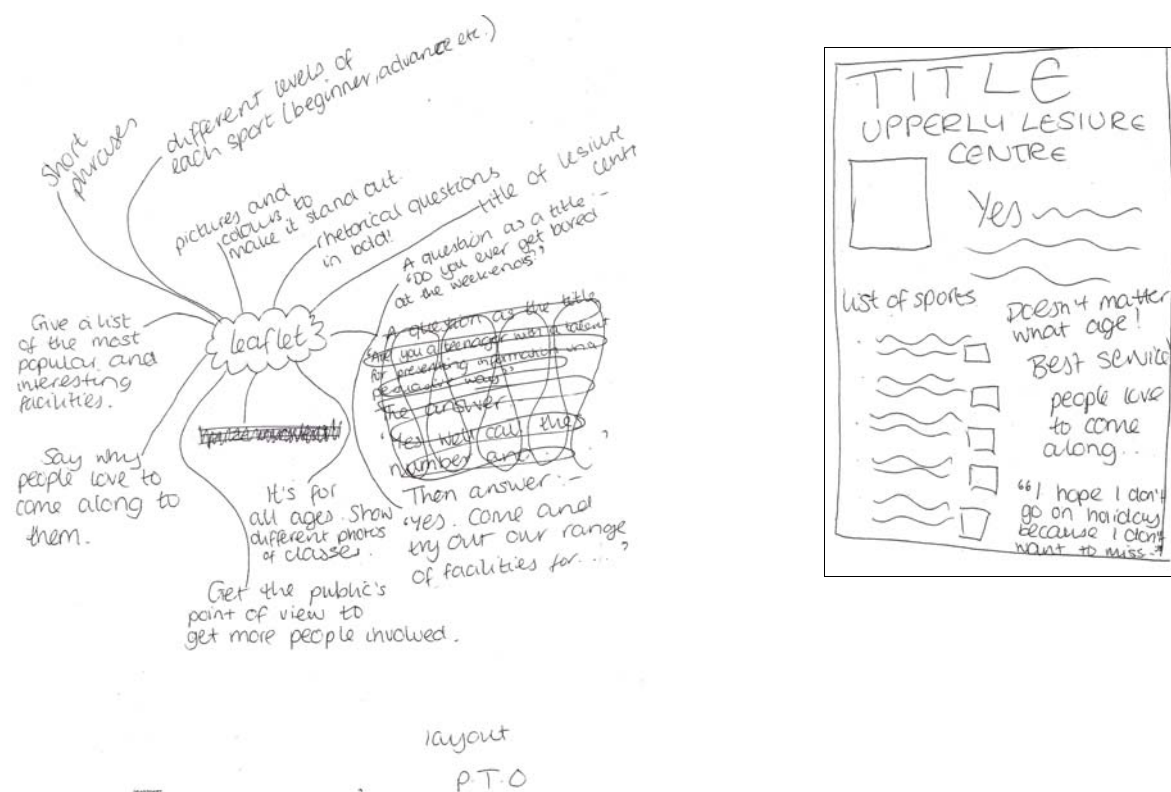
This is an example of a spider plan used in a more complex way and augmented by a diagrammatic representation of the layout of the proposed leaflet.

The leaflet form is taken as the centre of the spider plan notes, which cover ideas for content, language and form. The sketched-out leaflet gives some indication of how the material would be organised on the page and includes quotations from visitors to the leisure centre.

References to content such as '*different levels of each sport'* suggest a broad awareness of audience and there are a number of generalised references to language '*rhetorical questions in bold, short phrases'*, though these are not developed by example, aside from the use of quotation as a persuasive device on the leaflet. The material gives a clear sense of the pupil's awareness of the importance of form, font and graphical techniques in persuasion. In answer to the question *Is there anything you could do to improve your plan?* the pupil wrote '*The layout*'.

The planning activity also gives an opportunity for this pupil to rehearse and refine different openings, but apart from that, the main structuring device is represented by the leaflet itself. There are no other suggestions as to how this material might be organised. The writing describes the leaflet rather than plans for it, a typical approach in Year 9.

Pupil 3: Emphasis on content, moving towards structure; language features

This pupil takes the task as a starting point, underlining text type, content and audience ('*persuasive', 'range of facilities', 'families').* The first action at the top of the planning sheet is to identify the range of content, with no attempt to prioritise at this stage. Later in the plan, however, these sub-headings are numbered and the order stressed. There is a useful reference to the introduction at the bottom right hand corner.

The plan is laid out in columns and makes use of bullet points and dashes, with numbering and brackets to suggest specific examples, but there are few indications other than the numbers to suggest organisation.

Helpful language features are identified, such as '*persuasive language, powerful adjectives and superlatives, powerful words in bold/italics'*, with the examples of '*amazing', 'best'* and '*new'*, '*come and try'*. Throughout the plan there are references to layout ('*bold, italic; bullet points for each separate facility; prices laid out easily').* This writer used the questionnaire to suggest that the plan would be improved by planning '*more on the style of the writing'.*

Whilst the planning sheet gives evidence of different aspects of the task, the framework that might ultimately result is not very clearly foregrounded. It is possible that this writer may be able to select and prioritise effectively on the basis of these mnemonic aids without needing any more structural signposts.

Pupil 4: Structure dominant

Plan!

1. Introduction – explain what the Upperley Leisure Centre is, where and what it can offer you. Persuading the reader to come and visit the Centre.

4. Beginning ~~Middle~~ - What activities there are : Football, netball Swimming, tennis, childrens club, gym, arobics, many more.

5. Middle - why you should visit the Centre, good opportunity for all of your family. keep you healthy and fit, also good entertainment

6. end - rounding the text off by saying, lot to offer you.

2. Purpose - persuade

3. Audience - families with young children

Layout - bold writing, heading, pictures, colour, facts and opinion

This plan is unusual because structure has quite clearly dominated over content. The first four points: introduction, beginning, middle and end indicate a basic framework that the pupil then begins to develop. The use of the word *persuading* in the introductory notes indicates an understanding of the nature and purpose of the task with the use of the second person '*what it can offer you'* suggesting a direct approach to the requirement to consider *audience.*

The section headed '*Beginning'* indicates content by means of a simple undeveloped list; the middle focuses on the persuasive element ('*why you should visit the centre'*) with an awareness of audience ('*for all the family');* and there is a recognition that a definite conclusion is required to complete the task: '*rounding the text off by saying, lot to offer you'.* The lack of specificity in the final section is identified and acknowledged by the pupil in the reply to the improvement question: '*add more to the end'.*

The second section of the plan is an attempt to clarify purpose, audience and layout (though '*facts and opinions'* don't quite belong here). Logically these ought to be considered first, and the numbering of the sections indicates the pupils' awareness of this and attempt to reorganise accordingly, though this was probably an afterthought.

Pupil 5: Purpose, audience, structure, content, language

This pupil begins by clarifying purpose and audience, providing a clear focus for the subsequent plan. A sense of structure is apparent from the start in the rehearsal of the opening line in which the language is appropriately informal and takes account of the audience established at the start. The middle section consists of a bullet-pointed list of facilities although there is no suggestion of how they might be developed. The final paragraph is also drafted in complete sentences though the possibility for change is suggested by '*something like…*'

The plan is punctuated by other ideas which have obviously occurred to the writer as s/he has worked through methodically, for example the catchphrase at the top. It also includes a section headed '*sentence starter ideas*' which could be adapted for use when developing the section on the range of facilities: '*if you want to be the next…*'.

There is no specific reference to design and layout, but this is implicit in the three 'thought-bubbles' dealing with the heading catchphrase, the persuasive secondary catchphrase ('*fun for all the family*') and the prices.

This pupil has approached the planning task systematically, guided by the purpose and audience from the outset. Although the structure is clear, it is not rigid and is flexible enough to allow the introduction of other ideas. Subsets of ideas are grouped and there is a sense in which initial ideas have been shaped. The pupil's response to the improvement question shows concern with organisation: '*organised it better on the page*'.

PUPILS' VIEWS

The pupil questionnaires on planning were designed as an immediate reflection on what the pupils had just completed.

VARIATION IN RESPONSES BETWEEN YEAR 6 AND YEAR 9

1. Year 6 pupils were able to articulate how planning might help their writing more clearly than those in Year 9, whose responses to Question 3 ('What was the first thing you thought of doing?') were less focused. Year 6 pupils were also able to name a wider range of types of planning than their older counterparts.

2. Whilst both cohorts of pupils favoured a content-based rather than a structural plan, the proportion was more marked in Year 9, with twice as many focusing on detail than in Year 6.

3. More Year 6 than Year 9 pupils saw the use of more appropriate vocabulary as a way of improving their plans (19% as opposed to 4% of Year 9 pupils) There was also a more marked use of technical vocabulary by Year 6 pupils – for example key words, key features and the identification of paragraphs that could be used to anchor ideas.

4. Many writers at Key Stage 3 produced a list of content items and that may have been sufficient to trigger a well-structured answer at the point of writing, though this survey did not investigate this. In the Key Stage 2 plans and evaluations there was a stronger sense of pupils drawing on explicit frameworks that they knew they should apply to the task, whether or not they did so in practice.

YEAR 6 PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Question 1: What was the most common reason given for the type of planning chosen? ('I chose to make my plan in this way because…')

- 5%   my teacher has taught me to plan this way
- 44%   this is the way I prefer to plan
- 46%   this seemed a good choice to make for this piece of writing
- 5%   always plan like this

Although 'my teacher has taught me to plan this way' attracted very few affirmative responses, this is contradicted by some of the evidence of the plans themselves, where the 'good choice' made has been prompted by helpful teaching.

Question 2: Did you find this an easy or difficult task?

- The response was almost exactly 50% yes and 50% no. Not all are yet confident about this activity, unlike the Year 9s.

Question 3: What was the first thing you thought of doing?

Perhaps predictably, many responses were quite literal and content-based: typically, 'A firework display'. However, there was an interesting range of other responses which reflected the planning elements identified in the teacher questionnaire.

These included:

- pupils who identified brainstorming, jotting down ideas, listing ideas - ie an initial focus on content;
- pupils who clearly considered larger chunks of text and said they brainstormed for each paragraph or organised ideas into paragraphs '*having subheadings with information underneath*';

- those who used the task as a starting point '*reading through the text one more time just to check what it was all about', 'highlight or underline key words or features in the task'*;
- some pupils who asked themselves about the text type: '*first I thought what genre the text should be*'; '*The first thing I thought of was what are the key features of this piece of writing*';
- the listing of vocabulary or key words, '*I thought of writing words that would persuade people*'; '*The first thing I did was write down my persuasive key words or phrases ready for some sentences';*
- a few pupils who identified writing the opening paragraph as the first thing they did.

Question 5: Did you think this was a good plan?

- 75% of pupils thought they had written a good plan, 25% thought they had not.

Question 6: Is there anything you could do to improve your plan?

- 91% of pupils expressed ideas for improving their plans.
- 24% emphasised '*more ideas'* or '*more detail'*
- A significant number of comments (13%) suggested an awareness of the need to focus on structure: '*show more paragraphs'; 'list everything in order of the events before writing it out'.*
- Layout was the focus for 7% of the pupils.
- 19% cited '*more persuasive vocabulary'* or the improvement of '*key words and phrases'.*
- Two comments suggested that candidates were struggling with the concept of text type: '*think of a better genre'* and '*more description on how I should write my story'.*

Question 7: If you had been asked to write a story, would you have used a different sort of planning?

- The large majority of pupils responding yes to this question (78%) suggests that most pupils are aware that the same form of planning is not necessarily appropriate for different tasks.

YEAR 9 PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Question 1: What was the most common reason given for the sort of planning chosen? ('I chose to make my plan in this way because…')

- 4%   my teacher has taught me to plan this way
- 68% this is the way I prefer to plan
- 22% this seemed a good choice to make for this piece of writing
- 6%   I always plan like this

A much higher proportion of pupils selected their planning on the basis of personal preference than in Year 6. This might indicate they are more confident about the choices they make or their wish to assert their independence about their writing at this stage.

Question 2: When you were asked to write the plan did you think it was easy or difficult?

Almost all pupils felt this was an easy task, which is very different from Year 6 where the responses were evenly split.

Question 3: What was the first thing you thought of doing?

- Almost 40% of the responses to this question focused either on content '*listing what was in the place'* or layout '*a really colourful and exciting leaflet'.*
- Those responses that focused on types of planning referred almost exclusively to spider diagrams. The range of ways to plan was much narrower than in Year 6.
- About 10% said they considered their opening sentence or paragraph first.
- Some 22% of pupils focused explicitly or implicitly on audience '*I thought about what aspects would be important to the reader's family'.*

- A small number considered structural factors first in their planning: '*setting out sub-headings in main points then adding more detail*', but other responses were vaguer: '*planning the structure of the piece*' was rather more typical.
- Some pupils did focus on the task as a starting point for their planning: '*I thought I should pick out the main points of the task to focus myself and begin to write a simple structure*'. Others were more vague, but '*breaking down the question*' does imply an awareness that the task can provide useful starting points.
- A few pupils cited vocabulary as the first thing they considered -'*writing down persuasive language that I would use to influence people to go there*'.

Question 4: Did anything about the task help you write your plan?

- Many pupils picked up on one element of the context of the task, for example the audience- '*it said about it being for the family so it had to be informal and appeal to adults as well as children*' or the word '*persuasive*', - '*yes, the target group let me know who I was persuading*' or said they noticed key words such as '*information*'.
- A few responses suggested that pupils had looked a little further and had begun to interrogate the task in more depth – '*Yes, it said who the audience was, what the purpose was and what the task was*'.
- The information conveyed in the title, the bullets and the instruction text in bold were also cited as helpful.
- A large proportion (more than 30%) said they found nothing in the task that helped them write their plan.

Question 5: Did you think that you had written a good plan?

- The large majority of pupils felt they had written a good plan.

Question 6: Is there anything you could do to improve your plan?

- The great majority answered yes to this question, with only 5% saying they could not do anything to improve their plan.
- Responses reinforced the emphasis on amassing content rather than organising it for structural clarity. Almost three times as many pupils (41% to 14%) cited '*further detail', 'more examples', 'more information*' (and gave examples of it) rather than '*organisation', 'structure', 'writing in order of how important things are', 'sub-headings', 'put it in order*' and similar structural points.
- Two pupils who had constructed successful draft framework plans in boxes suggested that doing 'a spider diagram' might have improved their work.
- Only 4% of pupils suggested language features, such as using *'bigger'* or *'more descriptive'* words.
- 6% featured further design elements such as colour and layout, whilst
- 9% felt their plans would have been better if the writing had been neater: perhaps a reflection of their awareness of the plan being written for someone else to look at, rather than a support for themselves to help organise their ideas.

Question 7: If you had been asked to write a story, would you have used a different form of planning?

- 60% of pupils said they would have used a different form of planning, suggesting that planning is thought to be related to the text type, though this is a smaller number than at Year 6.

TEACHERS' VIEWS

The teachers of these pupils believed that analysis of task type and planning for writing have a positive impact in the work of their pupils, particularly on the organisation of ideas.

Although teachers cited organisation and structure as particularly important, the evidence from most pupils showed that aggregation of ideas rather than organisation of them was their main priority. The difference between planning for structure and for content was a continuing theme throughout all the plans and responses in this investigation.

Question 1 asked teachers what they felt were the three most important elements of planning. The same question was put in two contexts: classwork and tests.

- Overall, teachers at both key stages felt that 'organising ideas for structure' was the most important element of planning, in both contexts. This was confirmed by 'deciding paragraph topics' as the second most significant element
- Collecting ideas for content was also seen as a significant function of planning, although KS3 teachers felt this was much less of a priority in a test situation.
- Few teachers thought that noting prior knowledge of the subject was important
- Planning the opening of the writing in detail was also not perceived as being particularly important. It may be that this is seen as unrealistic given time constraints.

Overall, the patterns of response from primary and secondary teachers were similar here.

Question 2 focused on what forms of planning teachers used most often with pupils.

- A wide range of planning forms was suggested, although the question did not ask teachers to differentiate according to purpose or text type.
- The most common form of planning cited at Key Stage 2 was listing ideas which suggests an emphasis on content (and is in harmony with pupil responses, though not with the answer to Question 1).
- At Key Stage 3 the most common forms were spider diagrams, which again suggest an emphasis on content rather than structure. This was also borne out by the evidence of the pupils' plans.
- Other planning mentioned by teachers included text type specific writing frames, listing in columns to represent both sides of an argument and 'stream of consciousness' technique (the latter point was not elaborated)
- Planning for writing through talk and/or drama activities was not mentioned by any teacher in this investigation, although the survey was too small to draw significant conclusions from this.

Question 3 asked whether teachers encouraged their pupils to develop their own particular forms of planning. Results here are significant in the light of the pupils' responses.

- All the Key Stage 3 teachers said they encouraged pupils to develop their own forms of planning.
- With one exception, all Key Stage 2 teachers said they did not encourage pupils to develop their own planning styles, although a number commented that they taught underlying features of planning which they then encourage pupils to adapt.

Question 4: What did teachers teach pupils about how to plan for the longer writing task in the Key Stage 2/3 tests?

- Reported encouraging their pupils to draw on text type specific frames to support text organisation. Checklists, for example in narrative, included introduction, climax, conclusion, key characters and setting.

- Emphasised paragraphing and organisation of ideas.

- Taught pupils to annotate the task, highlighting key words and identifying text type and audience.

YEAR 9 TEACHERS

- Focused on elements such as structure, paragraphing and opening phrases in preparing pupils for the tests.

- Taught pupils to read the question carefully: for example, by addressing each bullet point, underlining key words, identifying text type, form and audience.

- Talked about how they had stressed the importance of planning, the use of the planning sheets and taking the full amount of time available for planning. 'We felt the planning sheet was the key to paragraphing and structuring of pupils' work - it's a valuable aid and must be used.'

- Referred to 'Point, Example, Explain' a number of times.

These similar responses confirm the care with which teachers approach teaching for planning in a test situation, with an emphasis on identification of text type, form and audience; the use of highlighting and underlining; and the organisation of ideas.

Question 5 asked teachers whether they had any evidence that planning had an impact on the quality of writing.

- Some primary teachers felt that if pupils did not plan it was structure that suffered most, leading, for example, to a lack of an introduction or conclusion.
- One commented that pupils of lower ability benefited least from planning, but did not suggest why this might be.
- Most primary teachers seemed convinced that detailed planning resulted in higher quality written work, particularly in terms of structure and use of vocabulary for effect. Narrative writing was singled out as being better managed and more logical if planned.
- A small number of secondary teachers noted that some pupils undertake planning dutifully but do not find it helpful. One commented: 'Some pupils plan because they think they have to. They don't then actually use the plans very efficiently.' Another said 'it is difficult to convince students that planning is more than doing a rough copy'. [Equal numbers of Year 6 and Year 9 pupils – about 9% - produced a rough copy as their plan.]
- The majority were less sceptical, claiming that class planning, in particular, resulted in work that was more coherent and controlled, with a better flow of ideas.
- One teacher suggested that planning helped boys to structure work more effectively and be more creative.
- Structure was cited by the majority of teacher respondents at both levels as being the key area that improved with planning; without it, they felt, writing tended to be rambling and repetitive.

BACKGROUND READING

In developing this work we found the following studies which address issues of planning explicitly.

Bailey, M, *What does research say about how we should develop written composition?* In Fisher, R, Lewis, M, and Brooks, G, (eds.), Raising Standards of Literacy, London, Routledge, 2002

Beard, R, *Developing Writing 3-13,* Hodder and Stoughton, 2000

DfES, *Year 9 Booster Kit: English 2002/3*, 2003

DfES, *English Consolidation Lessons: Preparing for the Progress Test* (*Targeting Level 4 in Year 7)*, 2003

DfES, *Key Stage 3 National Strategy English Department Training 2003-4 Year 9,* 2003/4

QCA, *Improving Writing at Key Stages 3 and 4,* 1999

Green, S, *A study of the effects of content and structural support in Writing Tasks,* UCLES British Educational Research Association paper, 2001

Green, S and Sutton, P, *An investigation into the factors affecting the writing plans of eleven year olds* UCLES British Educational Research Association paper, 2002

Hillocks, G, *Teaching writing as reflective practice,* New York, Teachers College Press, 1995

Lavelle, E, Smith, J, and O'Ryan, L, *The writing approaches of secondary students,* British Journal of Educational Psychology, 2002

National Center for Educational Statistics, *Can students benefit from process writing?* NCES Washington, 1996

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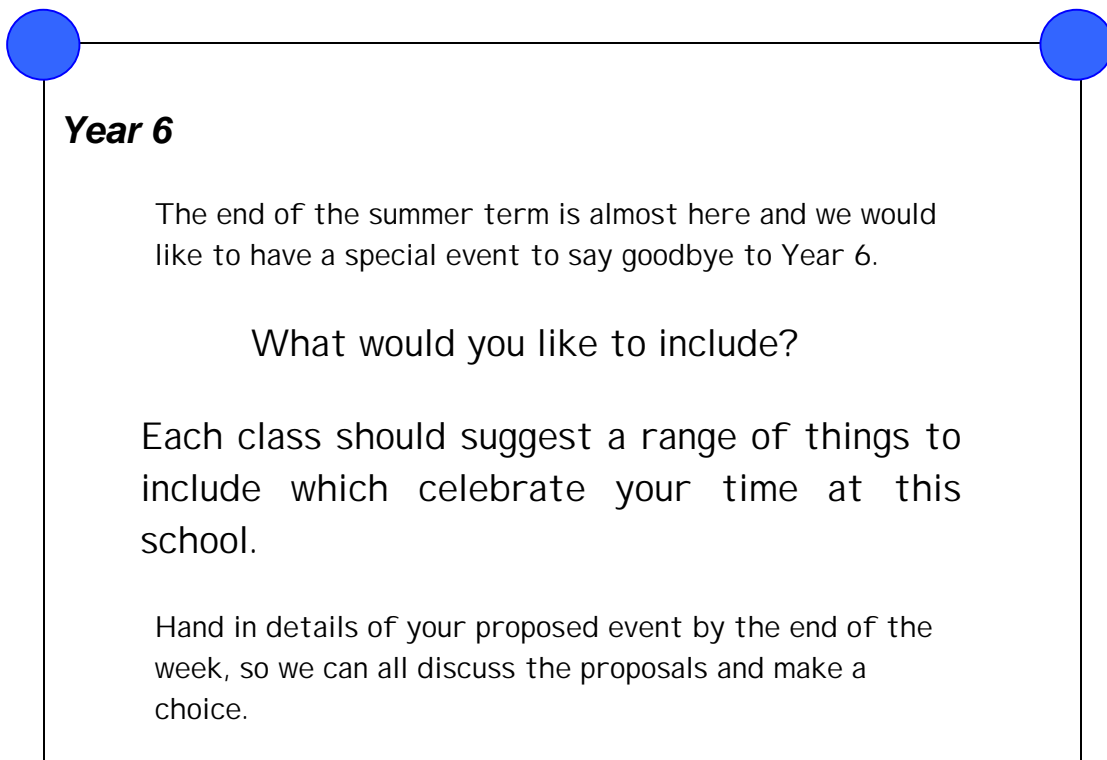
Year 6 task

Planning for Writing

Imagine your teacher has asked you to do this task. Write the plan you would make before you start.

This isn't a test, but we really want you to do it on your own because we are interested in how you plan.

A CELEBRATION FOR YEAR 6

This notice has just been pinned to your school noticeboard:

Year 6

The end of the summer term is almost here and we would like to have a special event to say goodbye to Year 6.

What would you like to include?

Each class should suggest a range of things to include which celebrate your time at this school.

Hand in details of your proposed event by the end of the week, so we can all discuss the proposals and make a choice.

Write the proposal from your class, trying to persuade other pupils and teachers that your proposal is best.

Year 9 task

Planning for Writing

Imagine your teacher has asked you to do this task. Write the plan you would make before you start.

This isn't a test, but we really want you to do it on your own because we are interested in how you plan.

Fun for All the Family

Upperley Leisure Centre

★ Are you a teenager with a talent for presenting information in a persuasive way?

★ We are looking for a brand new leaflet to promote our Leisure Centre to families with children.

★ Write the text for our new leaflet, giving information about the range of facilities available and persuading families to try them out.

You could win an exciting prize!

Chris Denford
Leisure centre Manager

Write the text for the new information leaflet for Upperley Leisure Centre.

Planning for Writing: questionnaire for pupils

Please think about the planning you have just done and answer the questions as fully as you can.

1. Please tick the one statement that completes the following sentence for you:

    I chose to make my plan in this way because…
    - ☐ my teacher has taught me to plan this way
    - ☐ this is the way I prefer to plan
    - ☐ this seemed a good choice to make for this piece of writing
    - ☐ I always plan like this

    Please tick one box

2. When you were asked to write the plan, did you think this was:
    - ☐ Easy?
    - ☐ Difficult?

    Please tick one box

3. What was the first thing you thought of doing?

    _____

    _____

4. Did anything about the task on page 1 help you to write your plan?

    _____

    _____

5. Looking back on your plan now, do you think it was a good one?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

    Please tick one box

6. Is there anything you could do to improve your plan? Give one thing.

    _____

7. If you had been asked to write a story, would you have used a different sort of planning?
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No

    Please tick one box

Thank you for your help

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Planning for Writing in Key Stages 2 and 3: questionnaire for teachers

Name: _____

School:_____

1. Which **three** of the following are the most important when pupils are planning a piece of writing? *Please tick three in each list.*

a) In classwork		b) In a test situation	
collecting ideas for content	☐	collecting ideas for content	☐
noting useful vocabulary	☐	noting useful vocabulary	☐
organising ideas for structure	☐	organising ideas for structure	☐
deciding paragraphs topics	☐	deciding paragraphs topics	☐
using the task and context to identify genre	☐	using the task and context to identify genre	☐
noting prior knowledge of the subject	☐	noting prior knowledge of the subject	☐
planning the opening to the writing in detail	☐	planning the opening to the writing in detail	☐
speed of planning	☐	speed of planning	☐

2. What are the different forms of planning that you use most often with pupils? *Please tick up to three.*

Mind mapping	☐	Flow chart	☐
Spider diagrams	☐	Numbered points	☐
Chronological plans	☐	Other (Please specify)	☐
Listing ideas	☐	

3. Do you encourage pupils to develop their own particular forms of planning?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

4. What did you teach pupils about how to plan for the long writing task in the KS2/KS3 tests?

   _____

   _____

5. Do you have any evidence that planning has an impact on the quality of writing?

   Yes ☐   No ☐

   If yes, please indicate briefly the evidence you have.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

Thank you for your help

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