



Magic dust that lasts

Writers in schools – sustaining the momentum

Sue Horner

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Introduction

This reports aims to summarise what we have learned about writers in schools projects, what makes them effective and the challenges which are being tackled. The report identifies the main trends from the written evidence and suggests ways to strengthen this important contribution to children and young people's learning and creativity.

Writers working with children and young people in schools offer them experiences that can inspire and unlock their creative expression, regardless of age, gender, home background or attitudes. These experiences can be very varied and involve many different writers such as poets, novelists, journalists, non-fiction writers, playwrights, storytellers, digital authors and many others. The focus of projects may be equally varied, from writing based on personal experience to reporting an event in the community. Many schools agree there are benefits that make a significant contribution to how children learn about the excitement and power of language and the imagination, and working with writers is part of children's entitlement in the national curriculum.

Arts Council England has a track record of supporting writers working with young people in schools and in other contexts. The Arts Council no longer directly funds individual writers to work in schools but it funds many of the agencies that have initiated and managed these projects and it has funded residencies directly through Grants for the arts and other earlier programmes. In the light of this investment, the Arts Council decided to look at the impact of these projects and, in the context of its 10-year plan, *Achieving great art for everyone*, to identify important points of learning. The intention was to initiate discussion across the arts and education sectors about developing good practice for involving young people in writing in ways that would be sustainable in the future.

This report is based on a review of published and informal evaluations of writing projects over the last four years. The evaluations have tended to relate to larger projects, many with external funding. These sources have been supplemented by various other reports, written information about writers' work and material on the

roles and work of literature organisations and agencies that support writing projects in schools. These contributions have been supplied by Arts Council England, by writing projects and from responses to a request sent to literature and writing organisations. Some academic material has been included in the evidence base, together with some individual comments. This report seeks to draw out and synthesise what these sources reveal about current practice and areas for future development. A list of sources is included at the end.

Findings

- 1 Writers visiting schools can make a significant difference to children and young people's attitudes to and enjoyment of writing, offering new perspectives on writing and what it can do.
- 2 Where work with pupils is sustained over a period of time, there can be a rise in standards achieved in national educational measures such as tests and examinations. But this rise will not be maintained if the subsequent teaching does not encourage the new approaches that pupils have learned.
- 3 The majority of visits by writers are for a single day. Longer residencies allow time for pupils to work on writing more intensively and reinforce the opportunities and approaches and so are more likely to result in lasting learning. The purpose and nature of evaluation is often not well understood and evaluation then is inadequate and precise impact rarely identified.
- 4 The majority of visits are arranged for children in Key Stage 2, for ages 7–11. Primary teachers, who all teach English, recognise the importance of creativity in writing and their timetables are more flexible. In secondary schools, responsibility for encouraging creative writing rests largely with English departments – and issues such as which pupils can participate and how to manage the timetable loom larger and tend to inhibit the integration of residencies into the curriculum. There is little evidence of writing projects across the curriculum in secondary schools.
- 5 There are probably around 1,000 writers who see working in schools as part of what they do. Many have received little or no training for work in schools. They are probably not geographically spread throughout the country, though there are teachers of creative writing in all universities.
- 6 Literature and writing organisations can be influential in promoting and developing residencies and are able to be inventive in looking at new ways

forward. The local service is important for maintaining partnerships with writers, schools and other partners such as those in museums, libraries and art galleries. This work offers a basis for longer-term and sustainable partnerships.

- 7 Funding comes from diverse sources and this pattern needs to continue. Imaginative efforts are needed to make provision for the benefit of all children and young people.
- 8 There are many interesting, diverse and memorable projects, but they are too few and insufficiently spread throughout schools across the country.

Recommendations

Schools and teachers:

- invest in writers' residencies to improve pupils' enthusiasm, confidence and standards of writing
- take seriously the need to help pupils see writing as enjoyable and creative, and recognise that this, in itself, contributes to raising standards of achievement in the curriculum, particularly for reluctant, less advanced or marginalised learners. Make writing part of bigger, exciting events or tasks to help pupils see the point and power of writing. Celebrations of their writing are important to help pupils see why it matters and what success means
- develop ways of working with writers and others so that aims are agreed, there is mutual support and evaluation is taken seriously, including contributions from writers and pupils. Have clear expectations of what can be achieved by different types of visits, including ones focusing on literature written for children
- have coherent and systematic plans for provision throughout the year that build writers into the teaching of writing in English and other subjects. Examples of such plans are needed as practical encouragement

- disseminate to all teachers in school the pedagogical approaches that are needed to sustain the benefits of residencies and improve the teaching of writing across the school
- provide training where teachers themselves write; this is one of the most effective ways of improving understanding of the teaching of writing
- embed the work of a writer residency into the curriculum by preparing pupils for a visit and continuing the work afterwards, as evidence shows this is essential for consolidating learning

Writers:

- involve teachers in plans for a residency to ensure joint ownership and teacher buy-in to the approaches and shared goals. Where possible, look in advance at examples of pupils' work to gauge what they can already do. Contribute to teacher sessions before the residency, so teachers appreciate what is happening and support it
- always be involved in debriefs and evaluations, and try to secure the legacy of a residency
- make use of opportunities for continuing professional development in order to stay up to date with what is happening in schools and to add to your repertoire of ways of working with children
- consider ways of working with teachers, such as mentoring or team teaching, to enable schools to continue to teach in ways that encourage creativity in writing to flourish
- contribute to the development and promotion of effective ways of working in secondary schools – for example, ways of tackling the problems of logistics, commitment and sustainability
- participate in and enhance training and support for writers in schools

Literature organisations and writing agencies:

- play a leading role, with national support and through developing local networks, in efforts to involve more schools in writing projects
- collaborate with others to develop guidelines for time-efficient and cost-effective ways of preparing and evaluating residencies, and ensure that guidance is available, readily accessible and useful
- provide a range of training and development opportunities for writers to enable them to be up to date and flexible in their work
- build on existing arrangements to formalise a network of agencies and organisations to share practice, identify trends and difficulties, and find solutions to problems and new ways of moving forward. Such groups should seek to liaise with national bodies to promote writers in schools
- make links with partners in the wider community to develop opportunities for writing creatively in different contexts and for different purposes

Policy makers in arts and education:

- promote the importance of creative and imaginative writing, as well as the need to be technically accurate. The opportunities to enhance creativity and improve all children's writing skills and attitudes need to be extended so that all young people have these experiences and many more schools habitually participate in such projects
- when reviewing current provision, provide a national picture of the range of agencies that can provide effective ways of linking writers with schools and develop innovative residencies and sustainable partnerships. Look at the geographical spread of agencies and support in order to identify areas that are not supported and then develop such provision
- encourage exploitation of new opportunities that are not yet fully integrated into provision, for example, literature festivals

- promote writers as equal partners in broader arts projects, particularly in schools, including through the use of schemes such as arts awards and Artsmark
- provide leadership, in collaboration with others, to support the continuing development of writers in schools. This includes dissemination of good practice, encouragement of initiatives and, where possible, discussing future directions with funding bodies
- provide support for teachers and writers through coordination of advice and resources, databases and case studies, and a network that can take new ideas and initiatives forward

1 The context – writing and young people

Reading and writing skills are fundamental to young people's futures, to enable them to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. To achieve this they need not only to have basic levels of literacy but also to feel confident in their critical understanding of what they read and to be able to express their ideas and opinions effectively to different audiences, in both speech and writing. Writing is also fundamental to success in subjects across the curriculum.

The National Literacy Trust (NLT) surveys reveal that most young people (88 per cent) see writing as an important life skill, but only just over half see themselves as good writers who value the opportunity to use their imagination in their writing. The other half did not think they were good at writing and cited their inability to write neatly, spell or punctuate. These young people had clearly not gained the confidence to use writing for their own purposes and expressed a lack of confidence in terms of technical competence rather than in the messages they might need to convey. The attitudes were most negative in 11–14-year-olds. The issue for them is that they don't really see the point of writing, either to communicate to others or to express their imagination and feelings. In one secondary school, pupil attendance at writing workshops was erratic, as the workshops were 'associated with writing, which is regarded by less-able pupils as being uncool and swotty'.

Most young people do not encounter people whose main job is writing and who earn their living that way; meeting a writer in school and learning something of their craft can make a difference to these views. One project for older pupils explicitly aimed to 'provide students with an introduction to a wide range of careers and professional roles', in this particular case in the theatre. The NLT research showed that young people have rather limited views of what a writer writes: 'Most young people believed that they write short stories, poems or plays/screenplays' and the majority believed 'Writers are creative, intelligent and will do well in life', although a minority thought that writers 'don't have any friends and are boring'.

It may be that young people's disconnection from writing applies specifically to writing in school. Many more children and young people than ever before write at

home and for social purposes. In networking via computers, children are frequently writing, although the nature of that writing is fundamentally different from that required at school and in public life. Indeed, this writing is frequently seen by teachers and the media as a hindrance to 'proper' writing, since, for example, texting may involve inaccurate spelling. That these young people have a clear idea of some of the communicative purposes of writing is usually ignored in school, although the NLT found that young people who do social networking and write to friends and family are more likely to enjoy writing in general.

The evaluations of projects show that there is a need to bring school writing closer to the social world and give a range of real purposes to help young people, particularly those who are disaffected, see the point of writing. A project that brought young people from disadvantaged areas to a football club, where they worked with a writer on different assignments, attributes success to 'a mixture of the location, the responsibility of being away from home and being treated like an adult and all the football-related events that take place ... Once they'd got over their fear of writing they were hooked and appreciative of how much confidence the writing gave them.'

The teaching of writing in schools

Government commitment to raising standards of literacy has been focused on the numbers achieving acceptable results in national tests and using the outcomes in school accountability measures. This has meant that some schools have concentrated on what is thought to be the safest ways to ensure positive outcomes in national tests and this has, in some cases, led to a focus on technical accuracy at the expense of the potential and excitement of getting the right words in the right order to say something important. Teachers interviewed in the evaluations said they found this difficult, as they are 'simultaneously asked to develop creative etc thinking and writing whilst preparing them for a testing system that is not compatible – it's getting better through Assessing Pupils' Progress but it is like there's a recipe and the children need to follow it, with a checklist for level 5.'

This issue of how teachers perceive and teach writing goes beyond conflicting ideas about test preparation. Many teachers, particularly in primary schools, are not

confident about teaching writing. Indeed, children can perceive that teachers dislike writing and are anxious about writing in front of the class. So when teachers have been asked to model writing they carefully prepare the model beforehand, which may mean the text illustrates the intended point but does not help children see the process of composition, the need to revisit the words and the struggle for how best to say things. These are experiences that all writers know and children need to learn – how to find the freedom to both experiment and persist with their writing.

This lack of teacher confidence manifests itself most obviously in the teaching of poetry, which seems to be particularly challenging. Students beginning postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) courses arrive with a limited and often negative view of poetry. The United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) survey (2007) found that primary teachers could name very few poets, with 58 per cent able to remember one, two or no poets. The total number of poets mentioned in the entire survey was limited to nine. The *English 21 Playback* (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2005) reported that poetry was often seen as ‘a linguistic training ground’ rather than a communication of thought and feeling. The Ofsted report on the teaching of poetry (2007) was very critical, suggesting that poetry is frequently neglected, its treatment is inadequate and superficial, and that opportunities to write were inhibited by the examination syllabuses. The weaknesses in subject knowledge had the effect of reducing the quality of feedback to pupils’ poems, which in turn reinforces the plight of poetry in the classroom. This is compounded by the perceptions of some teachers who expressed the view that poetry has less value as it is less tested.

Support and initiative could come through the interaction between the teachers of creative writing in universities and in schools. The evidence shows only pockets of active engagement with writers who work in universities despite the issues they have in common, such as pedagogy, responding to writing or the imagination versus form debate.

Creative and cultural experiences

In both education and arts policies in the last few years, there has been an emphasis on creativity as a vital skill and on the significance of cultural experiences for young

people. The central tenets of creativity – supporting imaginative activity based on exploring alternatives, taking risks, developing original ideas and solving problems – fit well with what writers in schools offer.

Creativity is important for learning and for life skills. The ability to write, for example, is about the functional, technical skills and also about problem solving, thinking of new ways of saying and doing things and making connections across aspects of learning. Writers in schools can help to show how the basic skill of writing can be linked to creative thinking.

This emphasis on creativity leads teachers to consider the implications for their classrooms. They need to experiment and try things out for themselves and develop pedagogies that encourage the same qualities in their pupils. If creativity is to flourish, then a different set of classroom pedagogies is needed. One teacher observed, ‘it is a change of mindset and how you want learning to take place in the classroom. It is teaching in a creative way that is crucial.’

Cultural experiences, whether reading or contact with other artforms, often provoke new ideas and feelings, which may then be captured in writing. Often schools see cultural production as an outcome of creative endeavour and value the festivals, performances, presentations and communications that are produced and which, incidentally, usually involve some aspects of writing. Writing and reading are significant in offering understanding of culture as part of identity and belonging, and also in enacting and interacting with cultural diversity, both globally and locally.

Joint working between schools and cultural organisations is not without its problems, as noted in a Culture and Learning Consortium report (2009). It is prone to a lack of common purpose and a degree of mutual misunderstanding stemming from different priorities and expectations. Where schools work effectively with creative and cultural partners, these alliances can be powerful in helping a school develop its vision of culture and creativity.

2 What works

The variety of writing projects that have been documented is impressive. The imaginative use of time, people, locations, digital resources, finance, events and social interaction all contribute to a menu of possibilities that is inspiring and infinite. These occasions, by their very nature, benefit from being special, in that they are not part of the everyday pattern of lessons, they often disrupt the timetable, they deploy different ideas and resources from the usual, and they start with a different set of expectations. The introduction of an artist, who has a different relationship with the pupils from their teachers, opens up possibilities for a form of authority based on expertise in an artform rather than institutional authority. This means the writer responds differently to children and helpfully dislocates the learned patterns of classroom interaction.

Funding is clearly an issue and schools are aware of the expense of these projects. However, many schools actively identify opportunities that do not necessarily involve a lot of money, or they find a pot of money that can be put towards the projects, often through links with the local community and businesses, through sharing costs with other schools or through fundraising. Often, value for money and success is more easily achieved through longer-term partnerships, where those involved know each other and know what to expect. In these cases, there is a shared language, an understanding of best practice in school and of how to make partnerships work.

Activities

Writers who work in schools are extraordinarily varied and talented. Some of our most acclaimed poets and novelists still see the value of visiting schools to meet young people. They are also aware of the potential influence that a writer can have in helping children see writing as exciting and worthwhile. There are many writers who have experience of writing in different forms and have a large repertoire of ways to engage children in using their imaginations to write. These include script writers, animators, performance poets, journalists, scientists, archivists and screen writers.

Gallery and museum staff, librarians, producers, film makers and many other professionals are also valuable contributors to work on writing in schools.

There are some common aspects to writers' ways of working in and outside the classroom. They have many techniques to engage children with new ways of imagining things and these techniques are often appropriate for all children regardless of ability or attitude. They do not involve right or wrong answers but focus on words and experience. Poems are often excellent for working sessions, as they are short, do not need too much elaboration and emphasise word choice rather than accurately formed sentences.

Words to describe a location, paragraphs to start a novel, surprising anecdotes from life, use of the senses to animate vocabulary and fun with rhymes have all appeared as 'top tips' from writers in the National Association of Writers in Education (NAWE) magazine. To set the verbal juices flowing, writers use role play, drama, objects, music and pictures, and there are also activities that can be used to liven up a mid-residency moment. The use of digital technologies can also engage children and offer possibilities for other pupils with technological know-how to be involved – for example, A-level media studies students being experts and mentors to younger children.

Pupils value the inclusion of 'real world' writing. Projects that move beyond the classroom and connect with things in the world outside demand that pupils use words in new ways for new purposes. Given the general unpopularity of school writing, the inclusion of letters, articles, journalistic accounts, screen writing and other forms from the world beyond school can motivate some pupils. That many writers are using these forms in their work outside schools adds to the authenticity of the activity. To have an outside person read and respond to the writing gives a significant message about writing as an effective form of communication.

Places

Another dimension that makes a difference to young people's attitudes is the use of different localities. Writers can help children look afresh at locations such as a local park, historical site, sporting venue or business premises. Some residencies have started in museums, art galleries, literary houses, libraries or other cultural facilities. These venues are effective in promoting creative writing for a number of reasons. Any venue beyond school is good for breaking up previous assumptions, liberating thinking, opening new possibilities and getting out of habitual ways of behaving. The venue itself acts as a focus and inspiration for new thoughts and ideas, creating a strong memory to stimulate creative work. People who work at the venues are also a resource. Evidence suggests that connections made with local communities and facilities can be the beginning of fruitful, continuing partnerships for all concerned.

Such visits can be built into a project and provide material for continuing work. Three examples suggest the fertile ground that visits provide, which writers can use creatively:

- a visit to a literary house at the start of a three-day residency provided various aspects for investigation, including the physical place, the atmosphere and the narrative connections of the site. In the next session, pupils created journals addressing a historical character of their own imagining, and on the third day they explored the names on gravestones in order to create a character from the past
- in another part of the country, teachers visited the local records office for a session on how local archives can be used to inspire curriculum work. The projects, which involved a group of schools, then used local museums and libraries for investigating objects, using books and resources, and as venues for author visits. The museums were keen to build relationships with schools and develop audiences, and the schools found the contact accessible and inspirational

- one ambitious project took pupils to a slavery museum, where a writer of African origin introduced pupils to African culture through handling artefacts. Back at school the pupils wrote poems describing conditions below deck on a slave ship, using a framework for their writing. They followed this by writing about a slave market based on their experiences at the museum. Other activities included poems around the theme of griots, using a given structure. This was followed by writing poetry based on Yoruba themes and using characteristics of Yoruba poetry, including metaphor and verbal dexterity

Finales

Celebrations and publications of pupils' writing are integral to residencies and often are a marker of how much progress pupils make in terms of polished work and confidence to share it with others. Work in progress can be seen on 'writing walls' in classrooms and corridors; some schools have developed writing spaces alongside reading spaces in the playground. There are many ways to showcase achievements – for example, competitions, performances, writer of the month awards, display on the school's plasma screens, readings on the school radio station and performances in assemblies. Evenings for parents are an important way to communicate the importance of writing and possibly involve parents and carers in writing themselves.

One headteacher noted the benefits of a project with a performance at the end. 'Any project like this will have a benefit to the school in terms of raising its profile in the community and showing what can be achieved by our students. It also builds on the "can do" culture in the school – role modelling for other students who will aspire to get involved in similar work in the future.' Another way of achieving recognition is through the use of arts awards and literary competitions.

There are many ways to organise writing projects and to achieve those moments of revelation where children and young people realise they can do and have done things they never realised were possible in their writing. The generating of excitement and a feeling that new things are happening is all part of what leads pupils, writers and teachers to agree it was all worthwhile.

3 Models of writers in residence

Over time, many different ways of setting up work with writers in schools have evolved. The most established pattern is single visits, where the writer comes in for a day, talks about their writing, perhaps does a workshop with pupils and maybe a session with staff. These are the most familiar visits to writers and teachers.

In addition, there has been a range of other ways of organising projects, often piloted by organisations or agencies. These have shown initiative in developing new practices, and a number of new patterns are emerging. The evaluations revealed how the recent projects have sought to respond to the issues raised by the simpler models of writer visits.

Single/multiple visits by one writer

These can take a number of forms:

- published authors who have written texts appropriate for the age of the pupils may visit schools to give readings. This can provoke interest in the books and encourage children to see the satisfaction that writing gives. These visits may be more focused on reading than writing. The authors may be writers of different types of texts, including journalistic or scientific writing. This can help children understand that expertise in writing can be a gateway to a number of careers. In such visits, it is best if the teacher has introduced pupils to the work of the writer in advance and the focus is on the author and their work, rather than on pupils writing
- a writer works with a group for a whole day, perhaps to make something like a newspaper or a film, in contexts where there are different purposes for writing and where the pupils are asked to write and shape their work for particular audiences

- a writer works with a particular group of children, chosen by the school for specific reasons, for example, a gifted and talented group, to develop their skills and enthusiasm in writing. This may be sustained over a number of visits to increase and consolidate the learning. The focus is on improving the creativity and writing skills of these pupils
- developments of this model are now possible through the use of online facilities. Sometimes the visiting writer follows up a visit by responding to children's writing electronically. This means the children have a real reader and may learn about developing their writing over time rather than just on a single day. Newer developments, such as those piloted by lf:book, now use a virtual environment to support interaction between writers and pupils through contexts where pupils read and write for an online correspondent who can send messages on a daily basis (or to an agreed timescale) to keep children interested and excited about the development and online publication of their work

The impetus for such events is usually related more to opportunities that present themselves to schools rather than as part of the normal yearly planned routine for the curriculum. The one-off nature of these visits means they are more like a special occasion rather than fitting into an ongoing curriculum purpose. The administration associated with such visits can be burdensome and the practicalities of finding a suitable writer and arranging the visit can be time consuming. Where the project is digitally based, there are challenges over IT access and efficiency.

Some local authorities have supported a programme of visits to schools, while in other cases a teachers' course may have suggested such projects or a teacher may have heard of a good experience from another school. An informal survey of local authorities by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in 2008 suggested that only about 10 per cent of schools may have a writer in any year, and most of these are likely to be one off-events that are not necessarily replicated in subsequent years. This lack of forward planning means the curriculum enhancement that any

writer brings may only be experienced by a small number of pupils during their time in school.

Recently, other ideas of residencies have developed that try to increase the impact and scope of the experience for pupils. These projects are often on a slightly bigger scale than a single school and involve intermediaries and external funding, so have been subject to more formal evaluations. This has provided more extensive evidence about what is possible, what works and why, and what the outcomes and impact might be. The projects raise new questions about the effects of writers' work, and are perhaps looking for more than the increased interest that may result from a short, one-off visit. It is important to ensure that all pupils, not just one small group, benefit from these kinds of experiences. This clearly requires careful planning and thought so that more pupils can be included over time.

Integrating writing into big events

Another form of writing project that focuses on a single event is promoted by Everybody Writes. Here, a big event is planned, perhaps involving all pupils in a primary school or an entire year group in a secondary school. This makes it possible to reach many pupils and to generate an excitement across the school and with many different teachers. The main aim is to integrate writing into a range of activities across the curriculum, so a theme, issue or problem is posed and different groups contribute to distinctive parts of the day's activities.

The day is planned to include events, visitors (often including a writer) and activities beyond the classroom. The writing produced is used for a published report or performance, or is communicated in other ways. The size of the event and the involvement of outsiders, together with teachers and pupils from different classes and subjects working alongside each other, generate a sense of enthusiasm and purpose. This helps pupils understand that writing means being able to say something worthwhile and interest others in what they are thinking and doing. The projects undertaken under the Everybody Writes banner have been different from projects involving individual writer visits, but they have shown that the job of

increasing the profile of and commitment to writing can be done in many ways. One of the looked-for results is more commitment to the teaching of writing from teachers of different subjects.

A programme of visits by a range of writers

One project, evolving from Writing Together, has provided a three-year programme of writers working in schools every term. This project was devised partly to see if it was possible to substantiate the claims often made about improvements in the standards of pupils' writing following writers' visits. The project has raised a number of issues that have not surfaced quite so strongly before. The continuing input from novelists, poets, storytellers, film makers and others has provided a rich range of activities and the groups of pupils involved have found the experiences worthwhile. The range of activities means that all pupils, with different interests, can find things to engage them. In one primary school, all the pupils leaving to go to secondary school nominated one of the writers' visits as their most memorable experience. Reports bear out the significance of a higher number of writers visiting – it 'ensured that pupils covered a wide range of writing skills from writing poetry to performing a play'. This challenging programme raised, more clearly than a single visit might do, issues of integration into the curriculum of such activities and how they can be planned as a coherent programme, as well as questions about which pupils receive intensive sessions and why.

Integrating writers into planned curriculum units

Another project, by The Write Team, has developed a different way of working to try to maximise the integration of writers and their work into the curriculum. It involves agreed schemes of work, prepared by the writers and teachers, which last longer than a single visit and where visitors teach some of the lessons and teachers others. The resources and sequence of lessons are shared and the plans are clear to all. This means that, in due course, the teachers can learn from the writers' approaches and develop their pedagogy to include more creative approaches to teaching writing.

The resources continue to be available to the schools so they can teach the units at other times to more pupils.

A different role for writers

Another project, Even Better Writers, has been developing a different relationship between writers and teachers. Here the writers meet and train the teachers, and by collaborating, planning and reflecting together they mentor the teachers as they try to implement in the classroom what they have learned. The project is based on the principle that the ways writers approach their work are likely to be effective and engaging for pupils too. It requires teachers to be open to changing the way they think about writing and how it is taught, but also requires writers to take time to understand the things the teachers need to cover. One effect of this is that teachers understand much more what a writer can offer and know how to make the most of writers' skills when planning further projects.

In this project, the teachers began to find other roles for writers, such as working with English teachers on a creative writing module, setting up a library club working on editing pupils' work, working with teachers of other subjects on approaches to writing and mentoring teachers in their own writing. This significantly expands the role of writers in schools.

Writers can influence the way teachers teach writing by focusing on teachers as writers. This can happen on courses for teachers so they begin to appreciate the challenges of 'writing to order' and of trying to be creative too. Writers can also offer workshops to school staff.

These writing projects tackle some difficult issues, such as sustaining the impetus and approaches when the writer has gone. They suggest new ways that writers can interact with teachers and schools, which can have an impact on how writing happens in the classroom.

4 Writer–teacher relationships

At the centre of successful projects is the relationship between the teacher and the writer. There are numerous stories about how *not* to achieve positive arrangements. These stories are often about the logistics of the visits but they do reveal some more deep-seated issues about what is hoped for and the mismatch of expectations between writers and schools. On the other hand, a teacher acting as a champion or ambassador for writing in the school can generate a lot of enthusiasm for exciting work with pupils. The days when a writer was left to get on with it while the teacher had a coffee in the staffroom are probably over, but there are still mismatches to be resolved.

Before

Much advice about writer visits focuses on the practical arrangements that are needed and how to negotiate the logistics of who, what, when and where. Advice is available from a number of sources, including the Writing Together book *Our thoughts are bees* (Coe and Sprackland 2005) and some literature organisations' websites. Many writers tell stories of finding that what has been agreed is altered on the day they arrive at school. It is important that the teachers working with a writer are committed to the project and remain so for its duration. School management teams need to understand that these are not the kinds of projects where another member of staff can be drafted in to cover.

However, much more fundamental is that school and writer agree on the aims and objectives of visits and residencies. Teachers have duties related to literacy and standards of reading and writing in tests; writers do not generally see those duties as part of their job and are sometimes opposed to such requirements. It is therefore important to find common ground over what a writer may achieve, especially on a short visit. This is not necessarily easy, as often teachers and writers do not use the same language to describe objectives. In one example, the teacher hoped the writer

would 'help children visualise their stories and develop planning and drafting skills'. The writer aimed 'to develop the children's confidence when creating new characters and settings and to show them how to use a historical/cultural site/house as stimulus for creative writing'. Clearly, both of these are possible, but agreeing priorities would focus the writer's, teacher's and children's interactions during the project.

Time needs to be set aside for collaborative planning and for dialogue among staff and at staff meetings to look at how a project fits into the curriculum and how pupils' participation in the project could help them progress. A writer who asserts that they 'sprinkle magic dust' is not offering an adequate account of what can be achieved. Even where there is overarching agreement about the emphasis on creativity and children developing new confidence in the power of writing, there may still be anxieties about the need for children to have learned some craft that they can take with them to the next piece of writing.

In addition to agreeing aims and objectives, there are other conversations that would help teachers and writers to agree on expectations, given that any writing initiative seeks to encourage progression in both skills and confidence. There could be discussions about what the pupils are good at and what they might need help with. This would enable the writer to suggest ways of adapting what is planned according to pupils' needs. This should lead to the project progressing smoothly and having a greater impact – although it should still allow for those times when pupils surprise their teachers with what they can do. This kind of discussion is even more important when there is a sequence of work or residencies. There is a danger that similar kinds of activities may be used by successive writers and that there is no coherence or development of skills over time.

Teachers can improve the chances of success by preparing pupils. This, of course, includes sharing information about the writer and what they have written, but could also include classroom activities that accustom pupils to open-ended tasks or get them used to writing down ideas without worrying about accuracy initially.

During

A recurring issue for writers is that of classroom behaviour and discipline. There are documents that say 'relax, you're not their regular teacher', which, while true, suggests some idea of opposition between what a writer does and what a teacher does. It is, of course, important for the writer to be able to take up a different role from a teacher and to establish more of an 'expert/apprentice' relationship. The writer treats children as fellow writers and the focus is on the business of learning how to make new meanings with words and put words together to create effects, rather than on technical accuracy or passing a test. One writer suggests bringing in materials related to being an author and doing an introductory few minutes about 'me and my work' in order to establish a different world.

One distinctive way in which a writer can help children learn writing is to give feedback that focuses on 'the technical aspects of writing, rather than whether it was good or not. For example, "Your writing has a sense of flow, you have identified who wants what and why they can't get it".' In contrast to normal lessons, where pupils can be 'wrong', the predominant mode with a writer is provisionality – it's not about making a mistake, it's about working until it's 'right'. As one pupil put it, 'Editing goes over the rough bits and makes it better.'

Writers model different forms of talking and ways of teaching writing, encouraging more risk taking and adapting the lesson to what happens as the workshop proceeds. Teachers do not always find it easy to work alongside writers, especially if they are not confident in their own skills. Teachers need to support the writer rather than interrupt activities to assert their habitual classroom discipline. One secondary teacher said, 'I found his high expectations of the pupils a particularly enlightening aspect of his time in school – indeed, I feel it has extended my own targets of what Year 7 pupils can produce or what level of thought they can operate on.' The writer's view was, 'There were many golden moments throughout the last six or seven weeks: William and Tim (the teachers) have been really supportive and have really put me at ease; impossible to do it without them really.'

One writer spoke of the complementary skills of the teacher: ‘I could have been seriously embarrassed here, but one of the staff had useful techniques for moving this process on.’ Another writer at the same school said, ‘I think this was a co-learning experience and much of this is down to the willingness of the staff to participate fully in sessions and also discuss ideas. Because of the “team teaching” that was devised for the project, I was able to learn from such very able classroom practitioners.’

There are plenty of accounts of activities in the classroom and what children do, but the range of writers’ and teachers’ roles in the classroom is not well articulated and there do not seem to be established expectations upon which teachers can readily draw. For example, teachers are often reluctant to undertake writing alongside pupils and yet this could be very valuable, both as an experience and in showing a readiness to be involved in creative writing, taking risks and discussing choices of words with others in the classroom.

During the residencies, teachers have opportunities to observe how a writer inspires and encourages children and young people to extend themselves and craft a piece of writing. There are plenty of accounts of how teachers are surprised and delighted by what their pupils achieve. The issue, then, for the teacher and the school is how to maintain any new ways of working and sustain achievements in other circumstances, without the writer’s continuing presence.

After

Evaluation is essential in order to identify what progress pupils have made, yet most records largely document increased enthusiasm and some pupils’ hitherto undiscovered talents. The effects of residencies can be longer term as well as immediate, so monitoring a term or two later is sensible, though it rarely happens. Evaluation may also yield evidence that will support continued investment in writers, as the impact may be seen not only in pupils’ progress but also in new pedagogical routines in the classroom and wider school provision.

Pupil evaluation can make a significant contribution to the picture. Teachers can build on what has changed when a pupil writes, 'The work gets you thinking about making big pieces of work. It helped open up our repertoire.' Mandy Coe suggests some other measures that might contribute to an evaluation, including the number of pupils who become regular library users and how far extra writing activities are voluntarily undertaken, for example, contributing to the school newspaper or writing a school play.

Many teachers try to follow up a writer's visit and consolidate the learning, but there are too many occasions where, when the writer walks out of school, everyone is very pleased with what was achieved and then everything reverts to how it was before. If writers could be more explicit about the skills and processes the pupils have been through and why they matter, it may be easier for teachers to follow up the experiences and change their routines to continue the creative approaches they have seen in action. There are examples of teachers replicating the activities that writers have undertaken, but teachers need to have a deep enough understanding in order to devise further activities themselves. This is where writers in a mentoring role can make a difference – by giving teachers the confidence to be more open and willing to take risks.

Evaluation is likely to be anecdotal and insufficiently clear or rigorous when the objectives were not clear or agreed in the first place. Discussion between writer and teacher about what was learned (as opposed to experienced) would seem to be fundamental to future success, and would aid teachers in being able to take it on and consolidate learning. Such evaluations are also important for schools to use in future planning to demonstrate the value of financial investment in writer visits.

It seems that the lack of focused evaluation may be common in arts projects. The issue of a language in which to discuss outcomes is significant. One report noted that, 'Teachers tend to equate critique with being negative so the post-production stage of projects was neglected in favour of events centred exclusively on children receiving praise. The assessment processes in the final stage of projects yielded relatively little summative information that could be used formatively in future work with individuals or groups.'

Evaluation should not be onerous if it is built in from the start and includes the writer as well as pupils and teachers. An evaluation toolkit that included a range of tools would be a useful development which could be promoted as a way of enhancing schools' and writers' reviews of projects. It is important to look also at the pupils' perspectives and experiences to see what makes a difference. The evidence of improved standards is a longer-term evaluation but an important one. Where writers make a series of visits, the evaluation needs to look at development over time to allow for plans to be adapted to children's developing needs.

The dissemination of the experiences and the evaluation is a vital way of broadening the impact across a school. The commitment of a single teacher is crucial, but other staff, including the headteacher, need to be involved and understand what is happening. If the experience is limited to individuals and there is no team involvement, then learning does not spread to other staff, and that does not bode well for sustained improvement.

5 Changing pedagogy and embedding practice

One of the more fundamental questions about the impact of residencies relates to how far teachers understand the significance of the teaching done by writers and how they can build on it. For many teachers, this means changing their pedagogy. Teachers who take up this challenge say such things as, 'I've learnt leaving room for them. Trust them' and 'I have changed the way I teach and am more prepared to let the children lead.' The excitement and insights generated by projects may be quickly dissipated, however, if teachers do not value the experience. There are many anecdotes about teachers undermining the visit's impact by telling pupils to settle down to the usual discipline and routines, by reinstating the importance of spelling and punctuation and other matters such as handwriting, and by failing to celebrate successes.

Some teachers have tried, with encouragement, to take on some of the writers' techniques. This is not necessarily easy to do and certainly difficult to sustain as the timetable settles in again. Teachers are accustomed to having to have the answers, so adopting a writer's method of encouraging pupils to take risks and find answers for themselves is not their habitual way of working. So a teacher who says 'you've got to let yourself let them be' and not jump in with comments is starting on a journey to an extended repertoire of teaching styles, which may take a while to embed. 'I've made myself think, this is a creative writing session, and what is more important, that the children see me controlling noise levels or bits of behaviour, or that they see me joining in? So I've been writing too and I've been reading my work out with them at the end.'

A frequently perceived opposition is that between creativity and technique. The best work with writers brings these together by asking for creative responses to the challenges posed by form and presentation as well as imaginative expression. Many writers use forms and frameworks as a support for children's writing, as well as challenging them to participate in the discipline of writing. Nevertheless, writers are frequently impatient with demands for accuracy and teachers' anxiety that pupils might think being creative means accuracy is unimportant. It is likely that longer

residencies can begin to resolve these dilemmas, as pupils bring their writing to publication after a process of polishing and proofing.

A further issue of sustainability is related to cross-curriculum work. In primary schools it is easier for teachers to make the connections: 'I can see that you can have these creative approaches to different sorts of writing, and actually do much more writing through topic work. It's changed the ways I think about how we can get writing into all different areas, for example in their art...'

In a secondary school, where a project has brought different forms of writing into subjects other than English, for example, science or geographic enquiry or cross-curricular topics, maintaining the impetus is often even harder. Teachers of these other subjects do not feel confident about teaching creative writing and secondary schools are rarely organised in ways that promote such links. Some schools work hard to ensure a legacy is embedded in writing across the curriculum, but it is difficult, especially when the next new initiatives come along.

Many evaluations focus on the school dimensions of projects and identify the characteristics that seem to ensure success. In common with most school-based projects, factors that matter most are organisation and management, staff commitment and follow-up. In *Writing is Primary*, a number of essential ways of sustaining improvements in writing at a structural and organisational level in schools are identified. These include the importance of commitment by teachers at all levels and the need for sustained, collaborative effort to ensure long-lasting changes in teaching.

There is a long way to go before all children encounter writers during their school careers. This makes it all the more important that teachers learn how to support and build on the work of the writers that do come into school. Effectiveness is less about the logistical and administrative arrangements than about the deeper dimensions of teaching and learning. Examples of coherent school policies would be helpful to show what can be done in a systematic way to integrate creative writing into the whole curriculum.

Training and development for teachers

Two priorities for teachers recur in many of the evaluations.

The first priority is the need for **teachers to be writers** themselves. Only in this way do they learn empathy with their pupils, which enables them to give more space to pupils when they are writing and respond more appropriately to their work. They are also then able to model writing 'live' rather than repeat what has been rehearsed. In other arts in school – for example, music, art, dance, drama – teachers are often practitioners themselves and committed to the art. Yet the majority of those teaching writing have rarely written for themselves since they started teaching, if at all. Many of the projects report that encouraging teachers to write means they overcome their trepidation and fear of exposure and are able to see the benefits and difficulties that composition involves for everyone, whatever their age.

Learning from the writer in staff sessions can influence classroom practice: 'The staff meeting on creative writing was inspirational because by putting Roy's ideas into practice teachers were able to see the practical implications for their work with children.' There are resources to support in-school sessions where teachers can try out some of the ideas for themselves, which they can then use in the classroom. UKLA has produced a DVD, *Writers in Schools*, that offers ideas and workshops. It provides a rational, practical starting points, and ideas for sessions which centre round a workshop where staff write.

The second priority is the need for **a change in the way teachers teach writing**.

The new-found confidence and enthusiasm that results from residencies can dissipate if it is not embedded in the weeks to follow. This is not a short-term enterprise, as new demands crowd in and make it difficult for teachers to sustain new ways of teaching unless there is a longer-term commitment from the school, including from senior management. Galton (2008) suggests it is probably a two-year process to secure changes and it requires strong leadership, a school strategy for writing and whole-school involvement in new pedagogical styles. Jonathan Rooke at Winchester University, has been developing a set of workshops in which teachers and teaching assistants can write and experience the writing process, reflect on what

is effective and also have a partner in their school so they can support each other in developing a robust pedagogy focusing on children's composition.

6 Outcomes and impact

Pupils' attitudes

'We've done a lot of writing but it hasn't felt like it because you've been enjoying it' (Year 5 pupil). Young people's increased enjoyment of and engagement with both the topic and the process of writing is universally observed when writers are working with groups to inspire and enliven their work. Given that writing is not a very popular activity in school, this is worth celebrating. Pupils learn to appreciate that writing is more about ideas and what they want to say and that they can develop processes and techniques that result in something they are proud of. They dig deeper into themselves and surprise themselves with what they can do. So there is often a big gain in confidence and this can have a lasting effect on their writing and sometimes on their learning more generally. Changes observed by teachers often relate to pupils' confidence: 'They are often bursting with ideas which they are more than happy to share' and 'The boys found a voice to discuss "love" within the context of poetry, without having to conform to social stereotypes.'

It is important to identify what activities in the classroom contribute to a project's positive impact. One project noted that, 'role play and enactment help underachievers imagine and enter the text and in the process acquire the language of authors, narrators and characters. The more time spent in a pre-writing phase (developing ideas, making notes and drawings, collecting ideas, collaborating, reflecting) the greater was the positive impact on their writing.' Not all reflection is as analytical, so teachers can sometimes be enthusiastic but not specific: 'Overall it was a fantastic process that enabled all children to access and develop their writing abilities and nurture their imagination.'

Several projects point to an increase in pupil wellbeing as a result of participating in a project. Work with vulnerable young people can be effective in helping them think

about ways of coping with their problems and expressing their feelings. One project, working with pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aimed for a range of outcomes, many of which related to the pupils and their behaviour, encouraging them to explore their responses to negative attitudes from other students and adults. At the end, there was a systematic look at each pupil, what they had learned and what could now be followed up.

Writing techniques

Where writers' visits focused on skills and techniques and where sufficient time was given to the residency, pupils themselves identified useful learning. 'I learnt that when you're writing you don't always have to start at the beginning but you can start at the bottom and work your way up to the top.' A primary pupil recorded, 'I learnt quite a lot – different types of writing, punctuation, how to make a story.' Another thought it was important 'knowing we are able to make mistakes and adjust them'. This kind of learning can then be applied to the next writing tasks they are given. Teachers too can learn from the writer: 'Sometimes he's [the writer] brought in a text and I've thought, okay, this is going to be difficult for them, let's see. But actually, he has chosen the right bit of text, introduced it in the right way and the children have enjoyed it, they've got it. It's made me think that they can go further than maybe I thought they would.'

Standards of writing

Class Writing, a three-year project run by the National Association of Writers in Education, has collected national curriculum data from participating schools. It tried to include data from control groups to compare the progress made by pupils who worked with the writers with roughly equivalent pupils who did not. There were many differences between the schools and how they worked with the project, so attributing progress to the project is difficult. However, the results seem to show that where the school worked well with the project, the pupils involved made more progress than

comparable groups. This improvement was maintained where the contact with writers continued over one, two or three years. The improvement was apparent for about a term after the pupils left the project, but then dwindled unless the teachers continued some of the ways of working in the classroom after the writers had gone. This project suggests that a programme of visits by writers working with children can, with positive school cooperation, raise standards of writing and so is a worthwhile investment, especially given the concomitant increase in pupils' enjoyment and enthusiasm.

This rise in achievement is found not only in the projects where writers work directly with children and young people. The evaluation of Even Better Writers (the project where the focus was on teachers' pedagogy and the writers mentoring them), showed that pupils made better than anticipated progress; out of 83 pupils in Key Stage 2:

- 4 per cent did not reach their anticipated level
- 14 per cent reached their anticipated level
- 80 per cent exceeded their anticipated levels

Therefore, it seems that exciting and innovative teaching is likely to raise standards of achievement and inspiration does not have to be at the expense of standards.

A similar effect is noted by Jonathan Rooke in his work with teachers and teaching assistants, which focuses on writing workshops for the staff, followed by teaching back in school. Teacher assessments in writing show children making faster than expected progress in the majority of schools.

7 Writers into schools

Writers often see writing as a catalyst for self-discovery and self-awareness, which can be supported through writing exercises and developing poems and other forms of the written word. Writers are particularly aware of the effect that creative writing can have on some children with personal difficulties, as it can offer a form of creative

release. The effect of writers' work on emotions and attitudes is described in many of the evaluations.

However, an emphasis on personal development could lead to an underplaying of the craft of writing and the techniques and procedures children can use when tackling tasks subsequently. To be effective in helping young people develop their skills, writers need to articulate aspects of the writing process and the working lives of writers. Writers represent writing as a career, offering creative writing as a life skill and a professional skill, and they are also role models. But to have this kind of authority, the writer needs to have done writing 'for real' – through publication, employment or experience. One teacher noted that pupils 'realised that the theatre (playwright residency) and the outside world is a competitive environment'

Some writers see their work in schools as part of their development as a writer and as complementary to their writing, while others see such work as a necessary distraction from their creative work. Some are concerned that too much work in schools could drain them of their own creativity. Others see work in schools and with children as inspiring and a chance to inhabit the 'real world'. These writers enjoy working with children and young people and having this audience in mind when they write. The financial motive is also important, as this work may provide a regular income as well as new ideas. Different writers offer different skills and opportunities and these need to be made explicit to schools. The provision of development opportunities for writers can help them remain fresh and able to commit themselves to their work with children.

The job of a visiting writer is not necessarily an easy one. Time is limited and much is expected. The writer needs to establish a presence very quickly and many have good techniques for doing this. But these techniques will be more effective if there has been joint planning with teachers, if pupils have been prepared and if the writer has thought out a sequence that moves through a development rather than using a set of exercises that are not particularly well linked. If the residency lasts for several sessions there are different challenges for writers, as they need to sustain momentum while moving away from themselves as visiting writers to focus on the pupils as they become the writers.

The link between writers' work and the curriculum is not always straightforward. Indeed, writers have sometimes dissociated themselves from the curriculum rather than seeing themselves as an important part of it. In some projects, teachers and writers can become more like partners, talking about the curriculum or where the writers mentor the teachers in approaches, which the teachers then implement. This can be challenging for writers, as they may be more used to pupils' writing as the tangible product of their work; but influencing the ways a teacher teaches could, in the longer term, be very important in the teaching of writing.

Training and development for writers

There are a number of areas in which training and development are needed for writers. The first is **general induction and information on working in schools**. This should include refresher courses to keep up to date and pick up new ideas. The National Association of Writers in Education and some of the regional agencies offer training, mentoring and support to writers who choose to take up the offer. Of course, experienced writers who have worked effectively in schools for some time and continue to develop their work may never have received any formal training. The growth of creative writing courses at universities means more people than ever before have qualifications in this area, but few of these courses include an element of learning about working in schools and with young people in formal or informal settings. Given some of the difficulties in agreeing aims and objectives, it would be helpful for writers to understand a little more of the language of schooling and education. At present, training for working in schools is not seen as essential and there needs to be clarity about what is needed, who can offer it and how widely it is available. There is an opportunity now to develop a larger group of writers who are skilled in their craft and also able to hand it on to children and young people.

There are challenges for writers in **developing residencies**. For example, how do they adapt activities to succeed in a longer-term residency rather than a short visit or for different groups of pupils of different ages. The majority of writers seem to be most active with 7–11-year-olds but there are fewer writers who work with younger

children. Those whose work is listed in examination syllabuses are in demand but the logistics of secondary schools make residencies harder to manage. Models for working in secondary schools need to be more explicit and publicised.

Training in **preparation and evaluation techniques** could enhance the success of residencies. Writers and teachers would then be able to discuss, in advance, the nature of the pupils' needs and their areas for development. Guidelines for this preparation and also for evaluation would be useful.

In some recent projects, **new roles for writers** have been emerging in partnering teachers and mentoring them. This is rather different from other work and requires different skills, but it could be a significant, new kind of offer to schools.

8 The roles of agencies

The work of writing agencies and literature organisations in acting as brokers between writers and schools is invaluable. In those areas of England where they have been established for some time, such agencies and organisations support a professional network that includes writers, providers such as museums and galleries, teachers and schools, together with those providing infrastructure and sometimes funding. Agencies can have an overview of trends, what schools want, what writers in the area can offer and what kind of projects work best. These agencies have local knowledge and relationships, they can place writers appropriately and they can promote good practice.

There are up to 20 organisations providing this support in different parts of the country, and some have a national reach. They provide different types of services from different bases, for example, small local charities, universities or national membership organisations of different sizes. Colleagues in some local authorities have also provided these kinds of support. However, coverage is patchy and there are some parts of the country that do not have ready access to such a service.

Writing agencies and literature organisations are potentially very influential. They can **influence teachers and schools**, providing a framework within which they can

work. One group described what the agency did as, 'setting up the collaborative planning process, showing how the project can support agendas (e.g. narrowing the gap), INSET, arranging and paying artists and activities, and ongoing support as needed'. Agencies take a lot of the legwork out of finding a writer, negotiating the arrangements and setting protocols for how things should proceed. They can encourage schools to think about what they need and perhaps get them to work with other schools. They can find the right writer, secure the partnerships to make the projects happen and lead the management of them. Thus, they can be a guarantor of quality to the schools and such partnerships are likely to encourage schools to continue to include residencies in their curriculum.

Literature organisations and writing agencies are also **influential with writers**. They draw on networks of writers with different skills who can be identified for specific projects and this means success for everyone is more likely. Writers often work alone and can feel isolated, so a project manager can be a useful support and the agency can also help with administration, paperwork and financial arrangements. Their knowledge of the schools and how they operate is useful to writers, especially if the agency is managing the project. The agency can encourage risk taking, which helps writers to develop, and can support writers if things go wrong. They may also help to ensure appropriate remuneration.

Writing agencies have the potential to be **influential in innovation and finding new possibilities** for joint work. They are well placed to develop relationships with local groups and venues, which can be useful for organisations such as museums, galleries and libraries, for organisers of festivals and community events, and for participating schools and writers. Agencies could also develop relationships with business people and others who use writing in their work and who could offer work on other dimensions of writing in schools. These relationships can be sustainable and mutually beneficial.

There is another way in which literature organisations and writing agencies can be influential. Through their networks, they can **publicise good practice and link local and national initiatives**. Agencies could become the natural route through which writing projects of many different kinds are developed and publicised. Networks of

teachers, local agencies and writers, with local venues and resources, could be a powerful way to build momentum locally and draw others in. Agencies are possibly best placed to spread ideas and involve more schools in writers' residencies. Teachers' recommendations to colleagues are often a fruitful way of spreading ideas. Also, some schools, such as arts colleges, offer models of how to invest in collaboration with writers. Agencies could significantly help more schools to realise the value of such projects. There are some areas of the country where there is no agency to help writers and schools; consideration needs to be given to find ways of providing support across the country.

There are now some very experienced people working in these agencies and it is time to develop existing relationships further. A mechanism for formal networking is needed so that agencies and other groups can learn from each other and be proactive. Such a group could maintain dialogue with national bodies and policy makers.

Literature organisations and writing agencies tend to be local or regional. While that offers a secure base, the opportunities for networking between them, and hence nationally, are perhaps less well developed. Agencies can try to influence policy and practice at a national level through their reports and profiles, but this is an area that needs to be developed.

At present there are different sizes and types of agencies and further work is needed to establish the most useful models for agencies' work, including any financial implications. Agencies can be cost effective. Working on their own, schools have to invest time and money in fixing up the right writers and negotiating the briefs. Agencies can do this and add value while keeping costs down. Schools find that working with an agency as a partner is likely to be cost effective and offers the possibility of sustainable relationships and quality guarantees.

9 Moving ahead through partnerships

This is potentially an exciting time for writing and writers in schools. There is a lot of experience of what works well and evidence to support the role that writing projects can play in the lives and learning of children and young people. Many writers are skilled in working with schools – and many more could be. Writing agencies and literature organisations support these initiatives by contributing their knowledge of the field and the necessary administrative arrangements to make projects happen and be successful. Many schools have participated in these projects and understand their power, but this is not sufficiently widespread across the country.

There are resources to support the further development of this work. Approaches to teacher development are being provided, including ideas for staff sessions, particularly in encouraging teachers to write and in using writers to model different pedagogical approaches and mentor teachers in using them. The use of venues other than schools has been shown to have positive effects, for both pupils and venues. Databases of writers are useful, and the support provided by literature organisations is probably the best way for schools to organise successful residencies. These resources could be more useful and effective if coordinated and nationally available, perhaps through the internet, which would also serve as a national base for sharing good practice and moving thinking on.

Funding comes from diverse sources and this pattern needs to continue. Schools find that relatively small amounts of money can achieve a lasting impact on pupils and teachers. Some schools conduct their own fundraising to finance activities. Some slightly larger projects have attracted external funding, often through the coordination of an agency. Small grants locally provided can strengthen community partnerships. Recent projects, often put together by agency and university partnerships with schools and local authorities, have developed innovative residencies and ways of working. These have attracted larger sums from foundations and trusts, and this is an excellent basis for investing in new ideas for the future.

In those parts of the country where writing agencies and literature organisations work with writers and schools, partnerships are formed that provide possibilities for

sustainable developments and mutual support. This infrastructure needs to be extended to those parts of the country not yet covered and in this way more schools may be supported to provide exciting opportunities for children to develop as creative and expressive writers.

The picture in this report of writers working in schools is one of a potentially powerful contribution to young people's curriculum that has been developing well over the last few years. However, the take-up of these opportunities is too patchy and limited and many pupils never have the chance to work with a writer. The unique potential of such projects needs to be promoted to schools and policy makers, and attention given to ensure there are enough writers and adequate support for writing projects to reach all children and young people. These developments are essential to secure the place of creative writing in schools as a fundamental part of the curriculum. They can only be achieved by all those involved working together in partnerships to enable many more children and young people to be inspired and engaged in writing with purpose and pleasure.

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Individuals who contributed evidence and ideas

Judith Chernaik	Poems on the Underground
Angel Dahouk	Poetry Society
Jonathan Davidson	Writing West Midlands
Anna Disley	New Writing North
Anna Jefferson	New Writing South
Emma Johnson	Arvon
Anna Loudon	Booktrust/Everybody Writes

Lisa Mead	Apples and Snakes
Debra Myhill	Exeter University
Paul Munden	NAWE
David Parker	Creativity, Culture, Education
Nick Owen	Aspire
Jacob Sam-la Rose	Writer
Peter Rumney	Writer
Anthony Wilson	Exeter University