

# Little Paxton School Governor Visit

Name of Governor: Richard Fairbairn

Date of visit: Monday 3 December 2018

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## Focus of visit

To understand the use of core texts in raising the standard of writing across the school.

## Summary of activities

I met with the literacy lead teachers, Mrs Jenkins and Mrs Neal, who explained the use of core texts. I also met with a group of Year 2 children who answered some questions about their engagement with the texts.

## What I have learned as a result of my visit?

Core texts which are always quality texts are selected to be a centre of gravity for the teaching of writing. The aim seems to be to get all the children engaged with a particular text (immersed in the text) and then use the text, and the engaged children, as a basis for learning various aspects of writing. The class will begin with an often dramatic encounter with the text to hook the children in. Examples of using the text (I saw this in a number of children's work books) include:

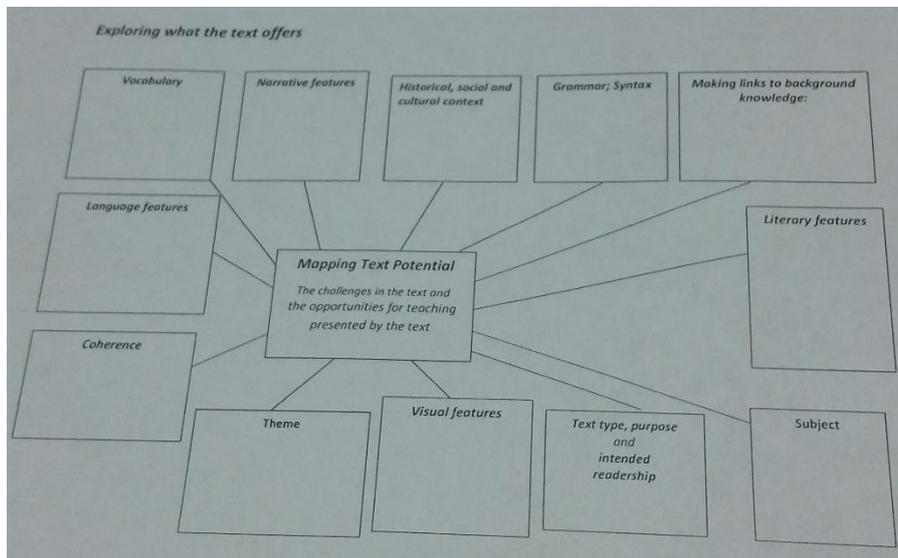
- Learning the shape of the narrative and then replicating with the child's own story,
- Replicating a style of writing used in the core text,
- Using the characters within the core text as a basis for learning other types of writing (e.g. writing a newspaper report based on the character),
- Etc.

The use of core texts at Little Paxton followed the identification of poor quality of writing. The school identified a need for teachers to develop their own convictions in their planning, rather than lifting plans 'off-the-shelf'. Therefore, over the last academic year the use of core texts was given a trial across the school. The literacy lead teachers have been on a number of training courses and sought to follow these with staff meetings where they can pass on the ideas. The year groups have been developing a reading spine of texts (or core spine, i.e. texts that the children should read / hear); this is developed with ideas from the lead teachers but with each year group taking ownership for the choice of texts. The feedback from the staff at the end of the year has been positive. During the year teachers within the school have observed good practice in other classes, and have had the lead teachers take their classes so the teacher can see some of the ideas in practice.

The take up of the use of core texts across the school seems to be that the staff are on board with the benefits, but there is a need to grow in being empowered, feeling able to take this on.

There were some lovely examples of children's work shown. The impact on standards of writing are more clearly seen in key stage one, although within key stage two there is a greater engagement from the children with the texts which is expected to gradually work into better results in writing. Both teachers were enthused to give examples of how reluctant readers were growing in excitement to work with the texts. The hope is to see more mastery in writing across the school.

This picture is a snapshot of how teachers could analyse how to use a core text. Ideally each teacher would be confident to produce such an analysis and use it as a basis for their planning.



The children from Year 2 all spoke very enthusiastically about the texts they'd been working with and were able to answer a number of questions about what they were doing.

### **Aspects I would like clarified/questions that I have**

It would be interesting to speak directly to other teachers about how they feel the use of core texts is working within their classes and any concerns they might have.

### **Actions for the governing board to consider**

The following points are worth bearing in mind:

- As the use of core texts is embedded across the school the expectation is that the standard of writing will increase for all children. If this is not the case, then it would be worth re-evaluating this strategy.
- Along with other areas of the curriculum, standards in writing are noted to dip in the transition from key stage one to two. The literacy leads are hoping to work on this.
- The phase of implementing the use of core texts is currently focused on empowering the staff. Future governor visits might consider how to look at this.
- The two literacy leads are struggling to find time to work together, but they feel more time between the two of them would be beneficial.

Signed

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