

Raising achievement through developing skills to help understand comprehension questions.

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Introduction

This inquiry investigated how a reading intervention could help raise achievement of pupils in a Year 8 Learning Support classroom through developing skills to help pupils better understand comprehension questions.

For the purpose of the inquiry I developed key research questions that helped with the focus for my inquiry.:

- What problems do pupils experience when identifying relevant information in a piece of text?
- Do pupils find it difficult to construct meaning from texts?
- How can we support pupils in identifying relevant information from text and how can we help them to find meaning from the text?

The aim of my project was to develop a toolkit driven by the viewpoint of pupils and colleagues that could be implemented across the school.

Literature

A recent Future Skills Wales Survey (2013, p3) highlighted Literacy skills as a priority for development, in addition to this Estyn have reinforced that a high proportion of pupils in Wales do not have good enough reading skills to interpret information. Despite the introduction of the LNF there is still an absence of fundamental skills such as comprehension being taught across the curriculum.

I have drawn on key literature, in particular Coleman (2014) and strategies implemented by the Education Endowment Foundation to help understand the strategies needed to teach comprehension skills to pupils at KS3 to help prepare them for KS4 and life after.

Inquiry Design

My intervention was carried out over 6 lessons with a small group of pupils in Year 8 Learning Support. The intervention consisted of Pre intervention testing, the teaching of 8 key prompt words through a card sort activity, implementation of a reading toolkit for pupils to use whilst reflecting on what they have read and post intervention testing.

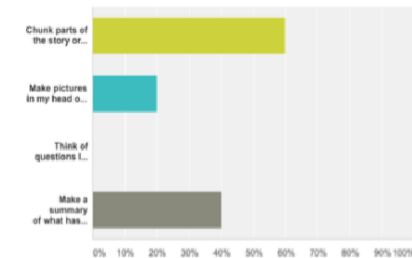


Denscombe (2014, p122) in his book 'The Good Research Guide' describes a type of research that sets out to alter and understand problems that arise in every day practice; this is referred to as 'Action Research'. It was decided that this was the best way to conduct my inquiry using a range of data collection methods such as semi- structured interviews, questionnaires, classroom observation and a reflective journal

Inquiry Findings

- Questionnaires and interviews indicated pupils enjoyed using strategies such as chunking of the text to make it more accessible and easier to understand.
- Illustrations and sentence starters was a positive strategy used in the toolkit as identified in the semi- structured interview, this supported the pupils in helping understand what was happening.
- Working collaboratively with peers helped pupils engage with the activity and supported them with their learning.

I like to use the following methods to help me understand the story/information I am reading.



Impact of Inquiry

The Reading toolkit is now being used across KS3 within the Learning Support department to help effectively teach Reading comprehension skills.

To ensure pupils within KS4 are also supported the toolkit is currently under consultation where it will be modified so it can be used to benefit pupils across the curriculum with their GCSE's. The toolkit has had a positive response from all learners that have used it.

Key References

- Kispal, A. 2008. *Effective teaching of inference skills for reading*. England: National Foundation for Educational Research
- Denscombe, M, 2014. *The Good research guide. For small-scale social research projects*. 5th ed. England: Open University press
- Coleman, R. 2014. *Switch-On Reading Evaluation Report And Executive Summary*. London: The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)