

National Improving Writing Programme

Wave 1 Evaluation

Executive Summary

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Updated following ACEL publication



Children and
Young People
Improvement
Collaborative



Education
Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Executive Summary

“What a difference a programme like this can make in [our] local authority. The difference it is having on one bairn, one whole class and then a whole school ... it’s fantastic.”

Local authority Director of Children’s Services

The Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative (CYPIC) **National Improving Writing programme** is being delivered in partnership with Education Scotland.

The purpose of the programme is to **improve children’s attainment in writing** during first level Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) by spreading an evidence-based writing change theory, originally developed and tested in a local area, to achieve results at scale.

As well as aiming to improve attainment, the programme is providing valuable learning around how we **spread evidence-based practice** and local innovation to achieve national impact and helping **equip class teachers with Quality Improvement (QI) knowledge** so that they can apply the method more widely to improve outcomes for children. This programme supports the consistent **implementation of good learning and teaching**.



This report outlines the impact and learning from Wave 1, which consisted of two Cohorts. As part of CYPIC’s approach to spread, Cohort 1 was made up of **26 Schools from 5 local authorities** who were supported by the Programme team to build the conditions for change locally and implement the theory of change using tried and tested QI methods. Alongside this, local leads were supported to develop the capability required to deliver the learning to a second cohort – **a further 25 schools** – to help build local capability and reach more classes and children.

The programme is demonstrating **significant impact on attainment**, with **all participating Local Authorities reporting an improvement**. The impact is being measured using both qualitative and quantitative data and a range of wider benefits, including significant improvements in teacher’s confidence in teaching writing and pupil engagement and enjoyment have also been identified.

A risk identified during programme development was that it could broaden the existing “gap”. For instance, children with Additional Support Needs, less able children or reluctant writers would be left behind their peers. However, the opposite has occurred as **able children were pushed to achieve while reluctant writers started writing** and often began to catch-up to expected levels. Teacher feedback also highlighted the positive impact the structured approach is having on children with dyslexia and where English is an additional language as well as some **observing a positive impact on the poverty related attainment gap**, with one Local Authority reporting they had almost halved the gap.

Where children are still to achieve first level, class teachers are noting substantial **evidence of the gap between individuals and their peers narrowing**. The number of children achieving CfE First Level in Wave 1, Cohort 1 was 845. Of this group **171 children attained that were not expected** to (this represents **20% of the cohort**). Cohort 2 figures are held locally.

While data over time has been gathered for each local authority, given the sensitive nature of reporting ACEL figures, changes have been illustrated as two anonymised data points at this time.

Achievement of First Level CfE outcomes for 2022/23 (compared to the previous year):

- Local authority 1: increased 9 percentage points (**15% improvement**)
- Local authority 2: increased 5 percentage points (**8% improvement**)
- Local authority 3: increased 4 percentage points (**5% improvement**)
- Local authority 4: increased 5 percentage points (**7% improvement**)
- Local authority 5: increased 7 percentage points (**11% improvement**)

The spread aim:

By June 2024 the five local authorities participating in Wave 1 will achieve $\geq 70\%$ in first level CfE (Baseline 0 of 5)

This was achieved in **June 2023, with all 5 reporting 70% or more**

Results at school level:

- 20 of 24 schools that completed Cohort 1 reported an improvement on their 2021/22 ACEL figures for First Level writing.
- 18 of 23 schools that completed Cohort 2 reported an improvement on their 2021/22 ACEL figures for First Level writing.
- 25 schools reported an **ACEL figure above 70%** this year (baseline 8 of 49).
- 16 schools reported an increase of more than **20% points** above the previous year.

Once available, virtual comparator data will be used to review participating school improvement compared to typical school improvement. In the meantime, data gathered from process measures and the rich qualitative feedback provided further points to the programme having had a significant impact.

Across Wave 1, Cohort 1
25% more children
attained CfE First Level
than was predicted.

100% of 43 teachers (Cohort 1) agreed or
strongly agreed with the statement:
“Participating in the writing programme
increased attainment for learners.”

Teachers feeling “*extremely*” or “*very*”
confident to teach writing more than
doubled from 32% to 79%

Pupil enjoyment of writing
increased from 25% to 90%

The evaluation identified the following key themes as essential elements in the success of the programme:

- The attention given to making implementation practical and consistent has helped teachers reliably implement the writing change theory (including a bundle of changes focused on high quality learning and teaching).
- Teachers have clarity of what to focus on, are taught ways to gather effective data to see improvement quickly and engage children in the process. The emphasis on implementing the whole Writing Change Bundle and not “cherry picking” increased as the programme progressed.
- Opportunities for peer support and camaraderie helped break down barriers and address reluctance around sharing information with children, specifically run charts.
- Teachers are aware of the impact they are having on a daily basis. Children and teachers are motivated by the success they are experiencing.
- Quality Improvement capability is developed in real time so participants build their capacity to continue improving. Participants see this as a stepping-stone for wider curricular change.
- The programme is structured to engage at the macro, meso and micro levels of the system. With strategic leaders engaged and informed, therefore able to create the conditions for change, while class teachers are empowered to improve and supplied with the tools to help positive change happen.
- National messaging is clear, Education Scotland and CYPIC partnership is visible, and pedagogy is combined with a method to implement improvements.
- The Programme faculty are knowledgeable and approachable, they actively develop a safe space to support learning, and continuous improvement is built into the programme.

“The ease of implementing the bundle to have such a profound impact on writing attainment”.
Class Teacher

“Using the bundle makes sure the evidenced work happens consistently”.
Local Lead

These findings are being used to continuously develop the programme for Wave 2 and upcoming Wave 3. The next phase of the work will further hone how to involve more schools where there is the greatest need for improvement alongside a local leads programme to support sustainable spread.

The programme is providing valuable learning on how to scale up improvement and spread what works, which feels applicable not just in education but in CYPIC’s wider improvement work. Future opportunities to adapt the approach where most needed will be explored with the CYPIC Board.

“The impact of CYPIC upon writing attainment has been remarkable. It has enabled the teachers to transform and enhance their teaching practice within writing and track progress in full partnership with children. It has positively impacted upon the attainment gap in writing within P4 and P5”
Head teacher