

Alexandra Park Research School

Maximising the 'Editing' stage of the writing process

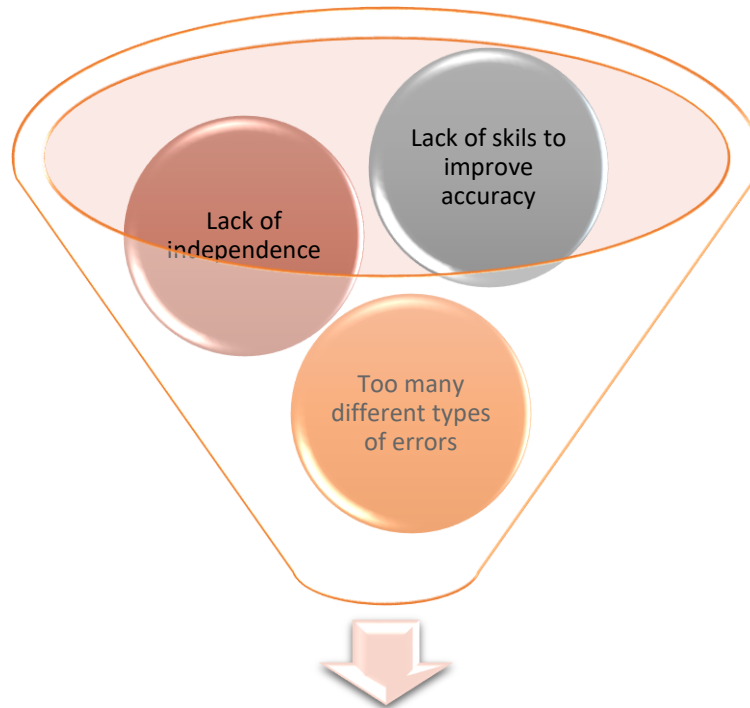
The writing process, according to the EEF's 'Improving Literacy in Key Stage 2' guidance report, can be broken down into 7 stages: Planning, Drafting, Sharing, Evaluating, Revising, Editing and Publishing. Here at Alexandra Park, we have had a focus on the 'editing' stage for the last year, as this is an area our children found challenging. An important thing for teachers and children to understand at this stage is that it is totally different to revising. The EEF's guidance report summarises revising as 'making changes to the content of writing in light of feedback and self-evaluation' whereas editing is 'making changes to ensure the text is accurate and coherent'. The report clarifies editing by saying that 'at this stage, spelling and grammar assume greater importance and pupils will need to recognise that their work will need to be accurate if readers are to engage with it and extract the intended information from it.'

Defining the problem...

The editing process we were using was ineffective and having minimal impact on the children's writing. Children were being given time to 'edit and improve' their work, both independently and with their peers following teacher modelling. However, edited pieces of writing looked very similar to original drafts and we had a large group of children who would not meet the expected standard of writing for Year 6 as their writing contained too many errors.

Looking deeper...

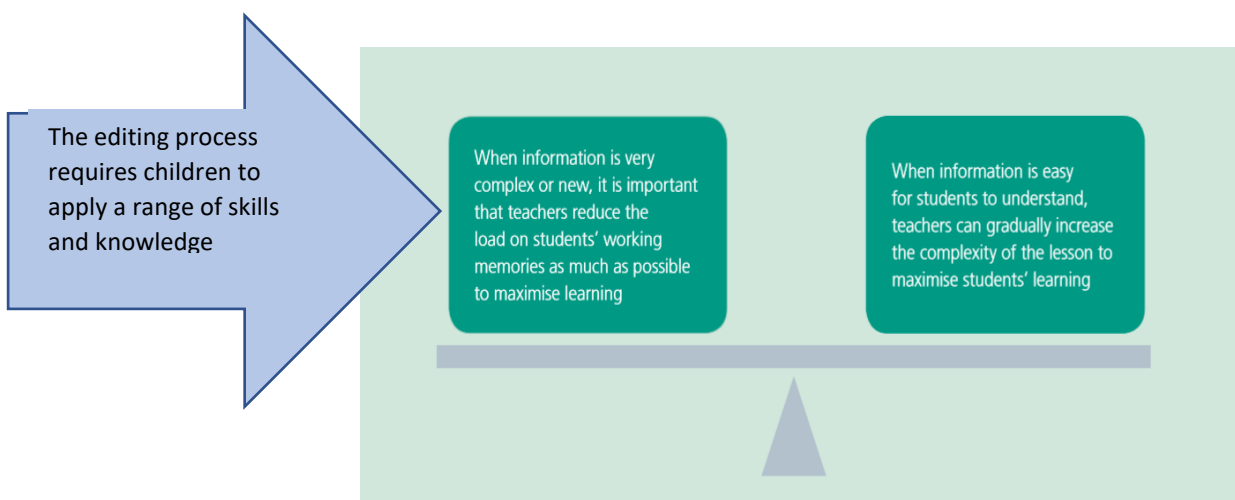
Too often we expect children to become independent in tasks without showing them how to become independent. The EEF guidance report advocates a gradual release of responsibility which can be applied to each stage of the writing process, including editing. Following recommendation 4 of the 'Improving Literacy in KS2' guidance report, we had been explicitly teaching and modelling the editing process. However, some children were still finding the task of editing too challenging and there were still only minimal improvements to writing. After observing the children, it became clear that despite the modelling, there was too much information for them to process. For some children, their work contained a number of different types of errors and they were facing cognitive overload.



Cognitive Overload

Summary of evidence

We decided to look further at what the evidence told us about cognitive overload and its impact on learning. Our working memory can only deal with a limited amount of information at one time. Cognitive load theory indicates that learning can be slowed down, or even stopped, if our working memory is overloaded, such as when we must process too much information at once.



If cognitive load exceeds our processing capacity, we will struggle to complete an activity successfully. Further observations highlighted that the children who were struggling to edit

and improve their work had several different types of errors. For example, there could be a punctuation error, a spelling error and a grammatical error within the same sentence and this was too much for children to process. Further research identified that to reduce cognitive load the key messages were as follows:

- Break down learning into smaller steps
- Use lots of worked examples
- Gradually reduce scaffolding and increase independent problem solving as students become more proficient

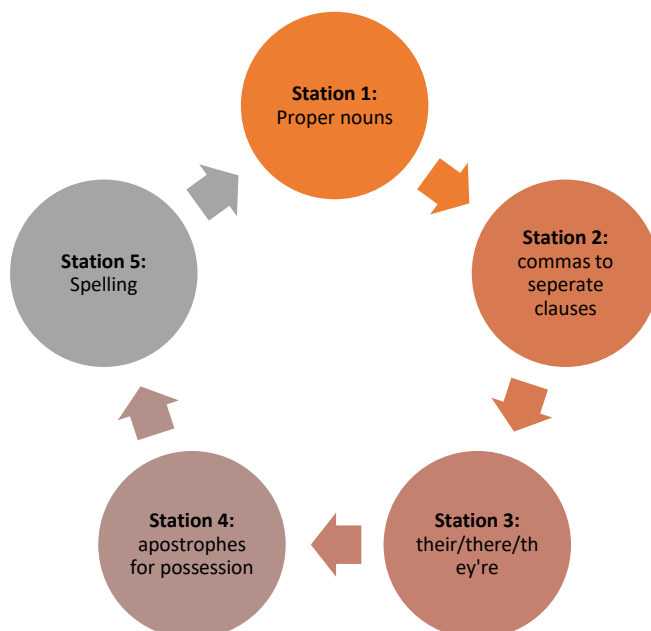
Translating the evidence into practice

We first had to decide the fit and feasibility of the recommendations:

- What did we want to achieve?
- Which strategies would be effective in our setting?
- How would we know if we were successful?

It was clear that we had to break the learning down into smaller steps and reduce the amount of information that the children had to process. However, what did that ‘look like?’ After trialling different models, we decided on ‘Editing Stations’.

Editing stations and how they work



The focus of each ‘station’ was determined from children’s work and the common errors they were making.

Each ‘station’ was modelled using worked examples and children were given the chance to practise.

Children would then edit their writing for the focused area only.

This was then repeated for each ‘station’ with materials provided to support the children at each station.

As children became more confident, modelling was gradually reduced and only used for new 'stations' that were introduced.

Impact

As a result, we could see that the children enjoyed the editing process more. Pupil voice suggested that this was mostly due to the children being able to visibly see improvements in their writing. Comments also included children being proud of a completed piece of independent writing.

The editing process led to children's final drafts being much more accurate grammatically, as well as displaying a marked improvement in spellings. These combined led to a direct impact on our results at the end of Key Stage 2:

KS2 Writing 2018-19

	EXS	GDS	Progress	Progress banding
All pupils	89%	30%	+3.4	Well above average
Disadvantaged	88%	24%	+3.3	Well above average
FSM	86%	14%	+2.5	Above average
SEN	60%	10%	+5.2	Well above average
EHCP	0%	0%	+5.9	Well above average

Moving forward

Using the 'Metacognition and Self-Regulated learning' guidance report, we have been working to develop children's independence and develop them as self-regulated learners. We have introduced 'checkpoints' to our writing cycle. This provides children the opportunity to edit continuously throughout all stages of the writing process and we will be monitoring the impact of these throughout this year.

By Hayley Wood.



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