

Sentence Level Scaffolding in the writing of English in Year 6

Vanessa Morley

A Research & Development Project

Submitted for the MSc in Learning & Teaching 2022

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Abstract

This research project explored whether the use of sentence-level scaffolding in a mixed ability Year 6 classroom could support the teaching and learning of writing. An understanding of the principles of scaffolding, the use of guided writing by the practitioner, the contextual teaching of grammar and the assessment of writing are discussed. The literature review suggested the need for the inclusion of plenty of independent writing opportunities, the consideration of the effect the inclusion of writing features have on the reader and the need to hear from the students themselves as how they best learn.

Through a mix of phenomenological and quasi-experimental research methods, the integration of regular collaboration points, discussions with adult stakeholders and semi-structured interviews with students, the use of sentence-level scaffolded lessons were trialled and compared with previous teaching methods. The use of these range of tools allowed for the teaching method and the subsequent data to be triangulated and discussed to allow the findings to be robust and plausible.

The findings illustrated the need to utilise explicit teaching strategies, such as sentence-level scaffolding, to support teachers in their delivery of lessons and students in their understanding of the complexities of writing. Additionally, the findings suggested the need for a considered understanding of how successful writers continue to attentively take account for the impact on their reader throughout the process.

Key words: scaffold, writing, grammar, assessment, pupil voice, collaboration

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Sentence-Level Scaffolding in the Writing of English in Year 6

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Rationale

Despite being an English graduate, I found the teaching of writing in the primary class the most challenging subject to deliver. Exploring teaching methods of this pedagogy in more detail, improved my understanding of how complex the writing process is and how much cognitive demand is placed on the writer (Flores, 2013; Mayer, 1996; NATE, 2022). This led me to consider whether my practice was explicit enough to provide a smooth transition from teaching input to enabling a pupil to flourish in writing.

Considine's (2016) 'The Write Stuff' appealed to me as it was a methodical system to the pedagogy of writing. In this approach, writing is explicitly taught sentence by sentence whilst embedding the National Curriculum's spelling, punctuation, and grammar (SPaG) expectations in context (Department for Education [DfE], 2014). This method appeared to encapsulate an explicit small steps approach to the teaching and learning of writing - I felt I had found a bridge which potentially enabled me help children produce their best writing.

This assignment built upon my previous investigative research on identifying Key Stage 2 (KS2) teachers' and students' perspective on the question, '*Does scaffolding writing at sentence-level improve the quality of written work?*' (XXXX,

2021). This research concluded with two questions which required further investigation: *'What happens when you take the scaffold away?'* and *'Are we limiting more able writers by scaffolding the teaching and learning of writing so precisely?'*. These questions were formulated collaboratively with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the teaching team. An apparent improvement both in the enjoyment and quality of writing had been noticeable at our school since utilising this approach so we wanted to develop this work by undertaking an action research project assessing its use.

In addition to the two research questions from my previous investigation, the main aim of this project was to investigate and answer the research question, *'What is the impact of using sentence-level scaffolds for the learning and teaching of writing in English in a mixed ability Year 6 group?'*. There were several benefits of this research: the improvement in understanding the learning and teaching of writing; the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues on the development of writing; the provision of research to inform practitioners; the ability to capture pupil voice on how they learn best; the possibility of an improvement in the writing ability of pupils and results; the potential for children to feel more confident in their ability and to enjoy writing more; and, the opportunity to share the findings with the wider community.

Following this introduction, a brief overview of the school context is provided. Subsequently, the three research questions are explored. Key literature is reviewed to ensure a robust debate is achieved to inform this research. The task design and methodology are outlined explaining the reasoning behind the choices made. Ethics

involved for the project are discussed to ensure sensitive considerations have been applied to all stakeholders. The learning and teaching of writing in a Year 6 classroom using a sentence-level scaffolded approach are examined. A critical analysis of the data is secured before the discussion of the findings considering literary reading. The assignment is summarised, and implications of its potential use discussed.

1.2: School Context

My one-form entry, church primary school of 237 pupils is an academy in the London fringe area in a socially advantaged area. Most of the pupils are White British (71%), with a minority from other ethnic backgrounds (6%). Few speak English as an additional language (4%). The proportion of pupils listed with Special Educational Needs (SEN) is 9% (12.2% nationally) and with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) is 2.1% (3.7% nationally). The school has a very small proportion of students (1%) eligible for a free school meal (Internal School Report (2021-22); DfE, 2021). The expectation for children at this school is that they potentially have few barriers to being successful writers in English.

At a national level, writing is, and has been for some time, the weakest performance subject compared with reading, maths, and science at Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2), (DfE, 2019 & 2021). Using government data, such as KS1 and KS2 SATs (Standard Assessment Test) results, provides a potentially controversial but comparable benchmark for assessing writing nationally and by school across years. The ability to be able to compare data is important to track standards at local, county and national levels. Due to changes in the Teacher Assessment Framework (TAF) in

2018 (Standard Testing Agency, [STA]), data prior to this is not directly comparably with results produced after 2018. Data for 2019 to 2020 was not published due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) see Appendix A.

My school's published data reflected this national picture (DfE, 2019). The final data for 2018/2019, showed our progress score in reading and maths in the 'above average' category (scoring 2.4 and 2.7 respectively) with writing in the 'average' category (scoring 0.9). Results over time for progress in writing show that the school's results were 'average' in 2018 (DfE, 2019). These scores demonstrated the progress made between the end of KS1 and the end of KS2, compared to similar pupils across in England who got similar results at the end of KS1. A score above zero indicates that a pupil made more progress, on average, than pupils across England who got similar results at the end of KS1. Most schools have progress scores between -5 and +5 (Find and compare schools in England, 2022). As the school's results for writing demonstrated less progress than in reading and maths, there had been a focus of improving writing at the school.

In addition, writing achievements may have been further impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in significant school absence (Jeffreys, 2022; National Literacy Trust, 2022) as schools were closed, or only partially open, for extended periods. Malcolm (2003) noted that most teachers believed absenteeism led to underachievement in writing performance; teachers were unable to provide the support required to make up lost time; and, pupils said that, because of absenteeism, they suffered a loss of confidence in their writing ability. Whilst some children turned to writing to process the experience of lockdown, many wrote less because of this

Covid-enforced absenteeism (Clark, Picton & Lant, 2020). In addition, further research in the United States demonstrated a consistent trend which found that the more a student was absent, the lower their scores in English (Spradlin, Cierniak, Shi & Chen, 2012).

Countering the relevance of the end of KS2 SATs results, respected children's author, Michael Rosen (2022) tweeted that 'SATs are examples of how data drives the curriculum. They are devised in such a way that they reduce what is taught to what can be measured. This narrows the curriculum'. Others agree with Rosen's position on this subject (Berliner, 2011; Cho & Chan, 2020; "More Than a Score", 2022). It is therefore important that the teaching of writing should not be confined to these quantitative results. This is the broader motivation behind this research: writing is important. The salience of writing is multifaceted: it is a required life skill, intricately linked with communication, enhances critical thinking and problem-solving skills, helps with organisation, develops children's inquiry skills, aids memory retention, is therapeutic, is a form of self-expression, and encourages creativity and imagination (Education Endowment Fund [EEF], 2017). When reflecting upon the school's context, it is therefore important to consider more than what the government's progress scores indicated – this is a school where most students have English as their first language and those with SEN, an EHCP or who are eligible for free school meals is less than average nationally. As a result, whilst there will always be contextual and personal restraints, this school should be able to enable its students to flourish in writing as there are fewer barriers to overcome.

A range of literature on the methods used to scaffold writing in Considine's Write Stuff (2016) approach has been reviewed. This review established current research and views on the teaching and learning of writing. It enabled the researcher to investigate what had been previously established and identify what remained unknown.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In approaching the literature review my main concern was in finding relevant research for the seemingly innovative approach referred to in the primary research question: *'What is the impact of using sentence-level scaffolds for the learning and teaching of writing in English in a mixed ability Year 6 group?'*. As I was mainly interested in scaffolding writing, the first part of the literature review focused on the use of scaffolds. This then allowed me to explore and examine other aspects fundamental to this approach such as the use of guided writing, the teaching of grammar and the assessment of writing. It transpired that all these elements had been utilised in one form or another for decades, so literature was explored for each area to provide a comprehensive review of current theory and understanding.

This literature review is arranged in four sections. Each investigate and debate the literature regarding the key threads of sentence-level scaffolded teaching and learning: the use of scaffolding, the use of guided writing, the teaching of grammar and the assessment of writing.

2.1: The Use of Scaffolding

This section will review the current literature on the use of scaffolding to support the teaching and learning of writing. The reasons behind why educational practitioners utilise scaffolds are explored and the contested limitations to them are investigated.

The underpinning theory to the sentence-level scaffolded approach is the use of supports to enable eventual independent writing (Bruner, 1986; Gonzalez, 2019; Weaver, 2010). There is a key tension between scaffolding writing and encouraging independence of thought and creativity. My previous research concluded with two questions which required further investigation: *'What happens when you take the scaffold away?'* and *'Are we limiting more able writers by scaffolding the teaching and learning of writing so precisely?'*. This review of literature will debate these questions by comparing views on this topic.

Scaffolded writing has been defined by many (Vygotsky, 1978; Raymond, 2000; Bruner, 1986; Gonzalez, 2019; Weaver, 2010). Based on Vygotskian social constructivist theory, Raymond (2000) defined it as 'the role of teachers and others in supporting the learner's development and providing support structures to get to that next stage or level'.

Scaffolded writing in this assignment is broadly defined using Wood, Bruner, and Ross' sociocultural metaphor (1976) comparing the teaching and learning of writing to building construction. This metaphor likens the use of temporary supports to enable the assembly of a building to provisional educational strategies to enable independent learning (Bruner, 1986; Gonzalez, 2019; Weaver, 2010). This definition has been used as it emphasised the temporary nature of the facilitation as the need for the scaffolding to be appropriately withdrawn is a key finding of this research.

An important element to the temporary support provided by an explicit scaffolded approach is that it helps to build strategies for metacognition: techniques to enable students to consider their individual learning. Research into self-regulated learning suggested its significant potential for all students (Education Endowment Foundation [EEF], 2018).

Scaffolded teaching practices are evident in today's primary classroom which frequently demonstrate a dialogic partnership between teacher and students (Hedegaard, 2012; Elkonin, 2012; McDermott, 1993; Mercer, 2008). The teaching and learning of writing is therefore a social exchange (Dettori, 2009) which should aid metacognition by building purposeful discussion (EEF, 2018). The Bullock Report (1975) stated: 'fundamental is the teacher's ability to create warm and sympathetic relationships with the pupils so that they are encouraged to learn through the stimulus of success' (Department of Education and Science [DES], 1975, p. 271). The classroom is a Vygotskian environment situated within the context of social learning. Vygotsky's (1978) More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) may take the form of the teacher or other students within the class. The sentence-level scaffolded writing lesson is socio-cultural by nature as it has the collaborative exchange between teacher and pupils at its very core to enable impactful teaching and learning. This research project will examine how the relational approach of using an explicitly scaffolded sentence-level method impacted teaching and learning, what happened when it was removed and whether it hindered those students working at greater depth.

Cremin and Myhill (2012) argued that writing needs to be taught as it is a complex and deliberate act. As James Britton (1970) stressed, reading and writing float on a sea of talk and over 40 years later, this principle is reflected in the framework document for the current National Curriculum for England: spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing (DfE, 2013). The partnership between educator and student in the classroom is undoubtedly evident as the use of scaffolds can enable the teacher to support the student to be successful in a considered exchange and the student can demonstrate understanding and, reflect and progress on their learning journey with their peers and the teacher (EEF, 2018).

Prominent social constructionist Jerome Bruner (1966, p. 72) recognised that writing is both 'a product and a process'. This concept was extended by Bearne (2002, p. 72) who challenged teachers to consider the importance of whether writing 'is a noun, a verb, or both' as this understanding is integral to the outcome. The quality of the 'product' is therefore ultimately influenced by the extent to which there has been a shared understanding of the 'process' between the teacher and the children as evolving writers. Sentence-level scaffolding has the potential to enable this 'process' as it has explicit and clear teaching scaffolds which can usefully impact this learning (EEF, 2018) and enable a successful 'product'.

The writing process has been extensively investigated and examined by educational practitioners (Didau, 2014; Considine, 2016; Corbett and Strong, 2017) and many adopted approaches are grounded in cognitive psychology (Berninger, Vaughan, Abbott, Begay, Byrd, Curtin, Minnich, & Graham 2002). As a complex and

cognitively demanding skill, many students struggle with writing (Graham & Harris, 2005) and many teachers (like me) struggle with teaching writing (Graham et al, 2008). To assist students to navigate this cognitively demanding task, many educators have utilised a range of strategies to enable students to become more confident writers (Didau, 2014; Considine, 2016; Corbett and Strong, 2017). Gibbons' (2019) research focused on PGCE trainee teachers whose practice aligned with this need for a scaffold as the observations of their lessons demonstrated a 'dominance of structural and procedural approaches to the teaching of writing' (Gibbons, 2019, p.9). This suggested that practitioners found teaching using scaffolds impactful as the scaffolded process provided them with a framework and more confidence in teaching children of all abilities. One teacher trainee described how her pupils (including those working at greater depth) 'like that they know what they're doing' when using a scaffold (Gibbons, 2019, p.9). This demonstrated the cognitive psychology involving the understanding of the internal mental processes for all pupils. It is not surprising that many teachers have searched for a vehicle to assist in this complicated process to allow children of mixed abilities to write independently with more satisfaction.

Understanding the benefits of using a scaffolded approach, some practitioners have adopted their own scaffolded teaching methods (Didau, 2014; Considine, 2016; Corbett and Strong, 2017). Aisbitt (2017), an English teacher at a Further Education college, discussed his dissatisfaction with the vague teaching strategies he had encountered. He recommended that a precise, consistent, and reliable approach was required to engaged students' metacognition, improve confidence, and translate to a high standard of independent work and ultimately successful English results. He

developed *The Synonym Method* and introduced it to his college encouraging others to adopt it. Initially, Aisbitt's teaching colleagues voiced concerns that students' writing would be homogenised and that an explicit teaching strategy was too formulaic and mechanical – a concern raised at our school and by others (XXXX, 2021; Graff and Birkenstein, 2010). However, once a precise scaffolded approach was implemented, the staff noted that it potentially gave 'the students an anchor' – this appeared to be true for students of all abilities. Meanwhile, a pupil of Aisbitt's compared the use of a scaffold to 'BIDMAS¹ for English studies' (Aisbitt, 2017) which suggested that the formulaic approach supported student understanding and helped to lead to independent thinking. Indeed, English results in the school improved after this teaching style was introduced. However, an important additional positive finding was also achieved: Aisbitt's motivation for introducing a scaffolded writing strategy was from 'a sense of duty to improve students' (and teachers' writing) experience' and the feedback from staff and students suggested this was successful. In addition, Graff and Birkenstein (2010) concluded that with practice, a clear, precise scaffolded method had three key benefits: it provided students with a platform to translate the abstract writing principles into a comprehensible, concrete task; a step-by-step method provided a structure to enable students to be able to produce writing; and, the repetition and practice of tasks became internalised allowing the writer to become more discerning and creative in their choice of vocabulary and structures as they developed independence. Whilst explicit scaffolded methods have been criticised for limiting students' independent thought, some practitioners (Aisbitt, 2017; Graff &

¹ An acronym to complete a calculation in the correct order.

Birkenstein, 2010) have found that their use released the student to produce creative ideas as they are reduced from the cognitive load involved in the writing process enabling them to enter Vygotsky's ZPD (1978) and improve their independent learning strategies.

Conversely, Gilbert (2015) reported how an English teacher (Gibbs) recalled her English teacher 'didn't rely on gimmicks... (but encouraged) talking to think'. Gibbs decried any formulaic teaching approaches such as PEE (Point, Evidence and Explain). Instead, she encouraged independent learning such as Palinscar and Brown's (1984) Reciprocal Teaching (RT) method where children worked in small groups with an appointed student teacher. Students voiced their enthusiasm by saying that the learning was more individually paced, that everyone gave feedback which helped their thinking, that they had more time to gather thoughts and that everyone contributed. Gibbs felt that with time this style of student-led discussion would enable her pupils to acquire improved critical literacy (Freire, 1970). It is important to note that this work focused on the analysis of literature rather than writing and so, it could reasonably be argued that, a different approach to this skill is required. However, it does illustrate the view which is wary of using an explicitly scaffolded approach as results could be bland if not used thoughtfully and crucially as a temporary aid to metacognition and independent writing.

Care needs to be taken with scaffolding lessons so that they are delivered at the appropriate level having considered the students' prior learning so that their learning is challenged, and students are engaged within their ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978).

Gibbons (2019) stated, 'when writing occurs in the classroom, this is heavily prescribed by the teacher in terms of form and content...(with) the apparent hegemonic spread of the PEE paragraph structure - pupils' writing has, with relatively few exceptions, become increasingly constrained and restricted. One of the student teachers Gibbons interviewed in his research likened scaffolding structures to 'stabilisers' that should come off (p. 10). Gibbons was concerned that 'the structured approach to writing was not used as a foundation on which students build to become competent, creative, independent writers,' (p. 7) but as the final focus of the teaching and learning. Gibbons' experience demonstrated the issue if the scaffold is permanent and students are not provided with the opportunity to use support as a platform to creative, independent thought and writing as they learn metacognitive strategies through guided teaching and learning.

Users of a scaffolded approach should also maintain a dialogic approach to build independent learning techniques. Giovanelli (2016) highlighted the potential power imbalance between teacher and students which may be found in the classroom (Summers 1991; Edwards and Westgate, 1994; Fairclough, 2014). The relational exchange between adult and student is crucial for the students to feel heard and trusted so that they are enabled to produce independent writing through guided scaffolding rather than reduced to a passive blank slate (Locke, 1690). Aware of this possible constraint, Giovanelli's (2016) research was concerned with exploring methods which encouraged student-driven independence. Furthermore, he suggested that pupil participation could be 'downplayed and even delegitimised' (2017, p. 27) with the teacher being 'a gatekeeper to meaning' (Xerri, 2013, p. 135). This suggested

a more negative nuance to Vygotsky's MKO – one where the teacher is limiting rather than enabling. This is clearly an important aspect that could restrain teaching (Kress, Jewitt, Bourne, Franks, Hardcastle, Jones, & Reid, 2005) so needs careful consideration. Giovanelli's work demonstrated the enrichment students' individual specific knowledge schemas within a scaffolded lesson can add to the English classroom. Children used their prior understanding of contexts to enhance the collaborative learning of the whole class. Xerri's concern was observed in lessons examining the meaning of poetry. However, Xerri demonstrated the need to be mindful of the role of the adult in the classroom. It portrays the requirement for continued professional development to ensure that teachers feel confident and impactful in their approach to enable students to progress in their independence and in their enjoyment of writing by hearing students' personal experiences and building on their metacognitive strategies by teaching collaboratively through an explicitly scaffolded approach.

In summary, the literature regarding the scaffolding of the teaching and learning of writing acknowledged that a mutually respectful relationship between adult(s) and students needs to be established. Additionally, it is widely recognised that the teaching and learning of writing is complex and many educators feel more confident delivering lessons with the use of clear teaching methods (Graham & Harris, 2005; Needham, 2019). The research suggested that many practitioners felt that explicit methods enabled writers to become more confident writers. However, some were concerned that scaffolding could inhibit freedom so planned independent writing is important to many teachers and students (Gibbons, 2019; Gibbs, cited in

Gilbert, 2015). Also, teachers should recognise, and mediate accordingly for, the potential power imbalance in the classroom ensuring that they encourage students to bring their lived experience into the lessons. By engaging students successfully, their writing will potentially be more relevant, creative and independent as they weave their worlds into their learning. Finally, this review noted that it is important to ensure that scaffolds are used as an aid to metacognition to allow for long-term independence, and that they remain temporary in nature as the Woods, Bruner and Ross (1976) definition stated.

2.2: The Use of Guided Writing

This section will discuss the current literature regarding the use of guided writing within the mixed ability classroom for the teaching and learning of English writing.

A key element of the sentence-level scaffolded approach is guided writing (EEF, 2018; Gibson, 2008; Ningsih, 2016). In *The Write Stuff* (Considine, 2016) writing lessons, once a bank of vocabulary has been collaboratively collected, the teacher demonstrates how they would write a sentence with a specific challenge in mind e.g., using a complex sentence. In this approach, this challenge is further supported with a visual cue card. The students then complete their own sentences with the suggested challenge using words discussed or their own ideas.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families' (DfCSF) (2007) Primary National Strategy (PNS) described guided writing as 'an essential component of a balanced curriculum (by) providing an additional supported step towards independent writing' (2007, p.6). The PNS outlined how a teacher demonstrated the writing process, articulated the choices they were making and described specific teaching points as they did. This helped children understand the decisions the writer made during the process: moving from an abstract writing principle to a comprehensible concrete task. Guided writing provides a running commentary of the choices a writer makes during the process so that pupils can understand why one example is more effective than another. The comprehension of this inner decision-making process is an important element which helps the student understand the nuances of the selections being made.

Kellogg (1988) emphasised how clear guided writing strategies can enhance writing performance and reduce attention overload. However, several researchers indicated, since writing is a complex task requiring the organisation of several abstract ideas (Graham & Harris, 2005; Needham, 2019), instructors usually face tremendous challenges in conveying these elements in the classroom. It is important therefore, to develop a suitable writing strategy to assist students (Keift, Rijlaarsdam, Van Den Bergh, & Galbraith, 2008). Besides, to promote writing performance, the teacher plays an important role in helping students develop viable strategies for getting started, drafting, revising, and editing (EEF, 2018; Silva, 1990).

Writing is a cognitively demanding skill which requires explicit, collaborative teaching where students are guided in their writing journey through discussions between pupils and teacher (Englert, Mariage, & Dunsmore, 2006). Students' writing skills do not improve just because schools and educators require them to (Englert, 1992). The need for an explicit, planned teaching and learning process is key as "children need explicit scaffolding, constructed within expertly delivered instructional conversations that address the language, knowledge, and strategies required for problem solving in writing" (Gibson, 2008, p.324).

Writing lessons should be designed demonstrating clear instruction with modelled examples providing time and space for the students to practise solving challenges (Englert & Dunsmore, 2002). An important component of the guided writing session is that the practitioner 'thinks aloud' as they write, demonstrating to the students the thought processes in the moment (Boustead, 2002). The provision of visual cues (as used in The Write Stuff approach) has been demonstrated to further support students' metacognition for effective writing (Englert et al., 2006).

Explicit guided writing can help students comprehend the complexities of sentence construction. Year 6 students frequently lack the understanding of the complex sentence structures they are required to demonstrate in their writing by the National Curriculum (DfE, 2022) . However, students do learn strategies for writing when taught in a supportive manner (Boocock, McNaughton & Parr 1998; Bradley, 2001; EEF, 2018; Sipe,1998). The importance of a collaborative environment was articulated by the students interviewed in the investigation upon which this research

has evolved: 'I enjoy working with the rest of the class'. Pupils further discussed how their learning was extended by both the teacher and other peers using guided writing in this sentence-level scaffolding approach: 'the teacher writing sentences first to show how is very helpful' and 'with the others we are all adding to a word bank' (XXXX, 2021, p. 54). In-the-moment modelled writing instruction to correct or challenge the student allows the student to progress (Wood, 1998) as it allows students to consider visible aspects (e.g., letter formation) and the invisible aspects (e.g., vocabulary choice) (Gibson, 2008). The Vygotskian principles of learning by the instruction from a MKO, allows students to access their individual Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and an improvement in their writing skills is evident (Gibson, 2008). Mediation from the teacher in the collaborative exchange of the classroom has the potential to extend students learning beyond their independent action (Thompson, 2013).

In addition, the EEF report (2017) on improving literacy skills in KS2 recommended guided writing sessions to improve writing composition. The first evidence-based recommendation from the report suggested that teachers should teach writing composition strategies through modelling and supported practice. The second recommendation highlighted the importance of developing pupils' transcription and sentence construction skills through extensive practice. This research supported the use of guided modelling in the teaching and learning of writing in the primary classroom.

However, despite guided writing's acknowledged beneficial role in helping students to produce written work with confidence, there are some critics to modelled writing (Fisher, 2006; Pullman, 2005; Hidup, n. d.). Fisher (2006) suggested that by employing this focused teaching strategy, the individuality and pleasure of writing may be suppressed. She claimed that learning writing 'to a formula... result(ed in)... correct but lifeless prose' (p. 194). Philip Pullman, respected children's author, agreed that explicitly modelled writing is 'empty, conventional, and worthless' (The Guardian, 22 January 2005).

In addition, Hidup (n. d.) suggested that the guided writing example provided by the educator might be too restrictive. She noted that pupils may replicate the example too closely or write something which is not easy to follow. In addition, Reid (1993), believed that guided writing mirrored the behaviourist hypotheses by limiting students to responding to a cue and not being able to recreate the environment independently, and therefore reduced writing to a stimulus: response behaviour which does not allow for creativity or independent thought.

In summary, there is much evidence to suggest that the use of guided writing allows a student to see the process by understanding the choices the more experienced writer is making. Collaborative discussion within the classroom also often enriched a pupil's choices of vocabulary and provided a framework to work with by exposing students to each other's experiences, vocabulary, and comprehension. However, practitioners should be aware that the students may require repeated practice before they are able to utilise the modelled tools independently. Finally, this

review of literature suggested that opportunities for independent writing should be planned for, regularly utilised, and integrated into lessons to provide space for more creative expression and the metacognitive implementation of the skills taught.

2.3: The Teaching of Grammar

An additional aspect of a sentence-level scaffolded approach to the teaching and learning of writing is the contextual teaching of grammar as recommended by the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014). It is believed that it is key to communicate why that grammatical form has been chosen by the writer and the effect it may have on the reader. Whether grammar should be explicitly taught or not, and how, has been debated for decades. However, as it is a current requirement for Year 6 students to sit a grammar test, it is inevitably evident in the primary landscape (DfE, 2019). It is therefore important to review literature to consider how best it should be taught.

Fries (1945) advocated for a discrete teaching method which focused on the intensive oral drilling of grammar to enable the teaching and learning of individual skills. Carroll (1966) proposed a more meaningful cognitive approach where students were taught language rules first before applying them in context. However, growing discontentment in the traditional pedagogical practice of the teaching of grammar led to a pivotal moment in the history of teaching grammar. The international Dartmouth Conference held in 1966 resulted in the explicit teaching of grammar being removed from the curriculum (Myhill & Watson, 2014). No attendee could provide an evidence base for standalone grammar teaching (Andrews, Torgerson, Beverton, Freeman, Locke, & Low, 2006) and most educators who attended the Conference voiced an

opinion that the learning and teaching of grammar in separate lessons was ‘a waste of time’ (Muller, 1967, p. 68).

Research concurred that the discrete teaching and learning of grammar was mostly ineffective (Myhill & Watson, 2014). A recent study by Wyse, Aarts, Anders, de Gennaro, Dockrell, Manyukhina, Sing & Torgerson (2022) found that the use of an innovative discrete grammar teaching method *Englicious* (2022), had ‘effectively no impact on pupils’ narrative writing’ and recommended further research into other methods of evidence-based strategies. In agreement with this, the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) research review in English (2022) endorsed Graham & Perin’s research (2007), recommending the teaching of grammar embedded in context. However, as indicated by NATE’s response (2022) of the Ofsted Review, it is important to not assume that the learning of grammar follows a linear progression for all students. The teaching of standalone SPaG lessons which practised aspects of grammar, without reference to the writer’s intent or the effect on the reader, would not sufficiently develop the student writer. In addition, these taught skills were not then evident in children’s independent writing (Jones, Myhill & Bailey, 2012; Chamberlain, 2018). Some, such as Elbow (1981) went as far as to say that the discrete teaching and learning of grammar was restrictive, ineffective (Hillocks & Smith, 1991) and maintained it may even be damaging (Braddock, Lloyd-Jones & Schoer, 1963). However, the resulting lack of instruction of grammar after the Dartmouth Conference led to a sizeable concern that the removal of grammar lessons had led to a fall in writing standards (Macdonald, 1995; Truss, 2003; Uttley, 2008). It

was acknowledged that the teaching and learning of grammar in some form was key (Hudson, 2004).

The requirement to teach grammar was evident in the National Literacy Strategy (Department for Education and Employment, [DfEE], 1998) which supported the then National Curriculum with relevant teaching resources for the learning of grammar. This document advocated for a contextualised approach to the re-introduction of the teaching and learning of grammar. In addition, the National Curriculum in England (2013) continued this view, rather ambiguously, by stating that grammar should be, 'integrated within teaching' (DfE, 2013, p. 5). Unfortunately, it is noted that this led to many practitioners misinterpreting the teaching as a lesson and once more the learning objective became focused on the form of a grammatical feature rather than the intended meaning of its use (Myhill & Watson, 2014). Two opposing positions resulted: the sole discrete teaching of grammar as the learning of rules (Benjamin & Jago, 2006; Rose, 1996) and those relating grammar to metalinguistic awareness (Ehrenworth, 2003; Gold, 2006; Hagemann, 2003; Jayman, Doolan, Hoover, Maas, McHugh, Mooney & Zepp; Kolln, 2006).

Rhalmi (2009) maintained that grammar is a distinct language block that should be taught separately. In this approach, it is believed that the key to success is to learn each part distinctly before integrating them (Mohan, 1986). However, Rhalmi's work focused on the learning of an additional language where focused work on grammatical differences and similarities between languages would seemingly be more suitable.

As a result of The Bew Report (DfE, 2011), the decontextualised teaching of grammar was further encouraged by the KS2 grammar test introduced in 2013 (Safford, 1026; Cushing, 2019). However, several research practitioners found that the explicit teaching of grammar within writing yields longer lasting and more successful results in their ability to create a wider range of sentence construction (Andrews, et al., 2006; DiStefano & Killion, 1984; Weaver, 2010). Indeed, there is now a significant opinion that the learning and contextual teaching of grammar enabled the writer to craft their work as they can precisely choose and manipulate language by applying their knowledge of grammar better (Cushing, 2019; Myhill & Watson, 2015). Understanding the grammatical terms allows for teachers to discuss their relevance and effect in context (Myhill, 2021a). This can have a profound impact on students' writing. Conversely, being taught grammar out of context and without discussion as to why the writer is using a particular form, limits pupils understanding (Jones et al., 2012; Chamberlain, 2018; Myhill, 2021b).

Furthermore, Skinner (2019) advocated for the importance of teaching grammar in context rather than relying on students learning from exposure to frequently incorrect examples. Her philosophy, and the resources she has produced for English secondary school teachers, focused on students' understanding of exactly what a main clause is. With this information, she believed writing could be correctly punctuated and extended by using multiple clause formations. Skinner advocated for this approach so that writers could craft their work considering the effect they want to have on their reader. Her work fundamentally has the same belief system as

Considine's (2016) and extended the sentence-level scaffolded approach into the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Interestingly, the National Curriculum (2014) still demonstrates the duality of the teaching and learning of grammar. On one hand, there is the requirement for Year 6 students to select 'appropriate grammar and vocabulary, understanding how such choices can change and enhance meaning' (DfE 2014) in their writing and on the other, students are tested in the KS2 SPaG test which assesses an understanding of grammatical terminology separate from their context (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018).

In summary, the review of current literature acknowledged the view that more researchers and educators currently support the opinion that the contextual teaching and learning of grammar appeared to provide students with a more applied and embedded understanding of grammar use. Importantly, the teaching of grammar within writing activities also provides the opportunity to discuss authorial choice and the impact of those choices on the reader. It is recognised that there are occasions when the discrete teaching of rules may be appropriate and helpful.

2.4: The Assessment of Writing

Chamberlain (2018) stated the wide-reaching aspects of writing. However, for the purpose of this research, it must acknowledge that this is a discussion regarding writing in the primary classroom which is currently and undoubtedly influenced by

government policy. The criteria used to assess primary school writing is set out in the English Writing Framework (Standards and Testing Agency [STA], 2018). Year 6 pupils are assessed in the summer term of the academic year by teacher assessment, which should be moderated internally and, where possible, with other schools. This judgment is subject to the possible scrutiny of an external moderator to ensure the assessment is robust and rigorous. This external moderation is carried out by the local authority in at least 25% of maintained schools, 25% of academies and participating independent schools (DfE, 2018). Writing across the year, and across all subjects, is explored by the teacher and local authority moderator in the moderation process to demonstrate and assess a student's ability.

The KS2 writing results, together with those of reading and mathematics, are published by the DfE and are available publicly on the primary school league tables - an exception to this has been made for 2020/21 due to the disruption caused by the coronavirus (STA, 2020). The publishing of data allowed schools to be ranked and compared with other educational facilities by SATs results data. Progress between KS1 and KS2 is also calculated and published. This makes schools, and ultimately teachers, accountable and the assessment criteria an undeniably key focus for Year 6 practitioners which can encourage out of context teaching (Cushing, 2019; Myhill & Watson, 2014).

Marshall and Gibbons (2018, p. 4) noted that the results-driven culture in the United Kingdom's English classroom naturally influenced teachers' thinking with a 'relentless focus' on assessment criteria. This frequently resulted in potentially too

much emphasis on whether a particular device had been used rather than the effect its use has on the reader. As a result, Marshall and Gibbons found evidence to suggest that when teachers felt the pressure to ensure students reached targets in English, many lessons were too narrowly focused on the criteria being assessed as teacher identity is frequently, consciously or subconsciously, linked to metrics. This often led to a test-driven culture pervasive in many classrooms where the focus was to 'teach to the test' (2018, p.6). Indeed, the requirement to assess any writing is by its very nature inherently restrictive (Cook, Golany, Kress, Penn & Raviv, 2005).

Chamberlain (2018) agreed with this difficulty in the assessment of writing noting a further complexity: one piece of writing may be of an appropriate length, technically correct and score well against a list of criteria; another, may be short, littered with SPaG errors but drew the reader in as the writer understood the reciprocal relationship between the writer and the reader but did not score so well. How we assess the two different pieces should inform our practice but ultimately the writers' work will need a final assessment and will always be subjective to some degree. As a result, guidance for the assessment of primary writing is extensive: the STA provide thorough training of local authority moderators; teachers must use the STA's TA framework and 'pupil can' statements; and refer to exemplification material to secure the judgement (STA, 2022).

While the use of the required TAF may constrain teachers' conceptions of what counts as writing, it is these criteria teachers must be guided by for analysis. If a student's writing has impacted the reader emotionally, this carries little weight if the

success criteria are not evident. Teachers are required to assess individual student's writing by demonstrating in their writing that they are secure in their use of a set of values for children to reach, or exceed, the expected standard (Chamberlain, 2018; STA, 2022). For example, one example criterion to demonstrate working at the expected level is

“using passive verbs to affect how information is presented (and) using modal verbs to suggest degrees of possibility” (STA, 2022).

Teachers are under pressure to ensure that young people achieve the highest possible standards in national writing assessments, and this can (and often does) constrain what counts as writing in the classroom (Cook-Gumperz, 2006; Fisher, 2006). The evidence of the high profile afforded to the apparent ‘basics’ in writing (Cushing, 2019; Myhill & Watson, 2014) have created a considerable degree of compliance and conformity. Yet the schooled version of writing is so persistently repeated and reinforced through curriculum requirements, assessment, training, and teaching materials that it can become the norm - an almost unrecognised norm that is delivered to young writers to help them reach ‘the expected standard’ (Graham, 2019) .

It has been suggested (Gibbons, 2019; Gibbs, 2005) that the use of scaffolding and assessment criteria could adversely affect children's development as writers and restrict their opportunities to engage in meaningful writing in the real world. This may happen as a result of formulaic teaching of classroom English as opposed to skills required for what students will need to write outside of the classroom (Cushing, 2019). A balanced approach is needed to ensure that young writers develop the skills they

require in the future and the desire to write. Students should be supported in taking risks to allow them to explore ideas and use writing to make sense of their lives and their learning (Chamberlain, 2018).

However, for pupils to exceed the expected standard (STA, 2022), the criteria are less clear. The primary statutory guidance provided in the TAF (STA, 2018) stated, that for one aspect of assessment, pupils need to ‘exercise an assured and conscious control over levels of formality, particularly through manipulating grammar and vocabulary to achieve’ (p. 5). Ferrara (n. d.) suggested that the writing should ‘take our breath away’ and to do this the content, vocabulary choice and the effect on the reader must be a notable aspect. The specifications required by the STA to assess writing at this level make this a complex task to assess and to undertake – a student may well be able to communicate with their reader with exceptional flair, but they also need to demonstrate the complexities and the subtleties required (Myhill, 2021a; Rosen, 2022).

There is a clear tension between enabling a student to achieve success against a series of predetermined criteria in a context of an accountability-driven system and the ability to write creatively and independently (Hennessey & McNamara, 2011; Xerri, 2013). Critics of the current education system considered a student’s school experience to be narrowed and confined by the performance-driven culture (Hill, 2007; Dymoke, 2012). A wider political drive for comparable data in a global marketplace has been blamed for numerical scores being used for assessment processes (Gleeson & O’Donnabhàin, 2009). McDermott, Henchy, Meade & Golden (2007) noted that “in a performance-oriented culture, there is a pressure on

individuals, organisations and sectors to engage in work that is visible and measurable, work that can be exteriorised and translated into results, so that one set of results can be measured and compared to another” (p. 248). This tension has led to a challenging environment for the assessment of writing.

In contrast, the DfE (2017) stated that assessment in primary education is vital to prepare every child for the next phase of their education. Assessment is benchmarked against the curricula used in the world’s highest-performing education systems to allow the assessment of writing to be monitored and compared across schools and to encourage an expectation of uniformity across the teaching profession (Chamberlain, 2018). The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER, 2018) agreed that systems of accountability, such as school league tables and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), were required to ensure strong educational results, but their research outcomes questioned the need for schools to be held accountable by having an inspection feature in external evaluation by the local authority on behalf of the STA. Recognition of the pressure external inspections put on to schools, head teachers, teachers and ultimately children must be acknowledged.

Turvey, Yandell and Ali (2012) described the complex assessment process in the English classroom of a trainee teacher. Moreover, their example of the implication of its use on a pupil’s experience demonstrated the restrictive nature of the use of assessment frameworks as a Year 8 pupil grappled with the criteria to improve his work – writing which he had been quite pleased with but had lost the natural flow by striving to implement a complex sentence as required by his assessment framework.

In another example, Turvey et al.'s report (2012) continued to demonstrate how the trainee was able to engage a nonconforming student by aligning a lesson to his interests rather than being constrained by the national curriculum (Turvey et al., 2012). Often, these important aspects may be overlooked when using stringent assessment processes.

Despite these constraints, 'assessments are needed to provide information about the pupils' current level of performance and their future teaching and learning needs' (Saddler & Asaro-Saddler, 2013) and for the purposes of research needed to be measurable (Ingram, 2021). Assessments enabled the classroom practitioner to identify what needs to be taught. Due to the complexities of writing, its assessment has a unique set of problems (Huot, 1990; Dockrell, Connelly, Walter & Critten, 2015). Writing can be assessed using various measures (Dockrell et al., 2015). It can take the form of the summative assessment of a single piece. Alternatively, it could be a formative assessment which would more likely track progress over time (Mansell, James & Advisory Group, 2009) and could provide a more encouraging and creative process for both student and educator.

In summary, the review of literature established that the assessment of writing was a restrictive but required practice. For this project, quantitative data results were used to allow for a direct comparison of writing assessment between groups. However, for the end of KS2 results, the use of the TAF's data results guided the judgement but the teachers' assessment, overrode the quantitative result. In addition, a wide range of a student's writing was assessed and moderated.

2.5: Overall Summary

By exploring the topics of scaffolding, guided writing, the teaching of grammar and the assessment of writing, I have developed a more comprehensive understanding of all the principal aspects of the sentence scaffolded teaching strategy. Furthermore, Ofsted's recent review on English (2022) recommended a scaffolded teaching strategy for writing which worked at sentence level where teachers modelled sentence construction and applied grammar in context. It also highlighted the need to consider the reader and the intended effect they wish to communicate. This appears to advocate for an approach like the sentence-level scaffold discussed.

This literature review suggested that my research needed to be designed considering the importance for developing metacognition, to ensure a collaborative exchange where pupils' experiences were shared and to be aware of possible power imbalances. This demonstrated the need to hear from the students how they felt about the teaching and learning of writing. In addition, each sentence criteria should be taught to show why a particular feature is appropriate and the intended effect it will have on the reader rather than its inclusion solely for assessment purposes. Finally, a compelling finding from my literature review indicated the importance of creating opportunities for independent writing and ensuring that the scaffolding remained 'temporary' allowing for a successful transition to independence.

2.5.1: Three research questions

My readings have further grounded my research in a wider context by allowing me to understand the evolution of current ideas such as the transition to the more contextual teaching of grammar. It has also allowed me to further consider how to demonstrate whether this approach is useful in the Year 6 setting (Ingram, 2021). For this reason, my initial research question has been revised and two additional questions resulting from the previous investigation (XXXX, 2021) explored to provide three research questions.

- *Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?*
- *Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*
- *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

Note that the second research question has been modified for consistency from ‘*Are we limiting more able writers by scaffolding the teaching and learning of writing so precisely?*’.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1: Rationale for Using Phenomenological and Quasi-experimental Research Methods

The original research question, *‘What is the impact of using sentence-level scaffolds for the learning and teaching of writing in English in a mixed ability Year 6 group?’* was amended, as during the literature review, it became clear that this question required more focus (Ingram, 2021). The first research question was revised to *‘Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?’*. In addition, the two further research questions were investigated which arose from my previous research investigation (XXXX, 2021). This resulted in the following three research questions:

- *Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?*
- *Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*
- *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

This project was grounded as an action research project in the practical ideology of professional development within the social situation as advocated by Kurt Lewin (1946) and considered within the educational setting by Stephen Corey (1953) and Lawrence Stenhouse (1975). The task design was highly collaborative, ‘committed to systematic questioning, and provided the opportunity, to test theory in practice’ Stenhouse (1975, p. 44). Whilst Lewin’s approach (1946) was more rigid and prescriptive than familiar in the educational setting today, his community focus and cycle of identification, fact finding, planning, first step action, evaluation, amendment,

and second step action is evident in current action research and was relevant to this project. Lewin's action research framework structured and directed this research.

Figure 1

Flowchart of Lewin's (1945) Action Research Framework (Smith, 2001)

The figure originally presented here cannot be made freely available via ORA because of copyright. The figure was sourced at Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. Journal of social issues, Vol.2

The first stage of the research examined the initial idea considering the context. The original research question was modified which allowed for the fact-finding and planning stages, where the learning and teaching of writing was analysed collaboratively with the staff team. Secondly, there was a cycle of first step action, evaluation and amendment which included assessment of pre-test data with a collaborating teacher. The second action step was undertaken, which analysed post-test data and included conducting semi-structured pupil interviews. Finally, the process was evaluated and refined - predominantly through staff and peer

collaboration. This framework is further discussed in Table 1 below once the rationale has been further considered.

As my research had implications for the learning and teaching of writing within our school, it was essential for the methodology to be both pragmatic (Denscombe, 2008) and collaborative in design. A phenomenological approach was needed to 'fact find' and capture the initial views of my fellow teachers, share results with them and provide an opportunity for response. In addition, quasi-experimental methods were 'planned' for and 'actioned' to provide measurable data to test the research question in context. Furthermore, the literature review had demonstrated the relevance to 'evaluate' and record further phenomenological data in the form of 'second step action' by capturing pupil voice regarding the students' experiences of the two approaches to the learning and teaching of writing (Lewin, 1946). This helped to provide a fuller interpretation of the teaching and learning of writing using the sentence-level scaffolded approach in Year 6 by hearing the perspective of arguably the most important stakeholder: the student.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provided a platform encouraging the inclusion of pupils' voices in decision making processes within schools. It stated that students had 'the right to express (their) views freely in all matters affecting the child' (United Nations, 1989). This report demonstrated a clear cultural shift from the adults in the school context acting on behalf of students and so it was important for pupils to be encouraged to be active agents in this research (James & Prout, 1990; Alanen & Mayall, 2001).

Pupil voice is an overarching term used to describe the capturing, inclusion, and potential influence of students' views on their learning and environment (MacBeath, 2006). Advocates note several benefits from utilising this socio-cultural approach: an improvement in dialogic exchanges and relationships; an increase in pupil engagement; and development of the learning environment for all stakeholders (Mitra, 2001; Rudduck & Demetriou, with Pedder & the Network Project Team, 2003; Swann, Peacock, Hart & Drummond, 2012). It was therefore a significant aspect of the task design of this project.

However, Hart (1992) recognised that schools' utilisation of pupil voice would undoubtedly vary in quality. Research demonstrated that pupil voice may be distorted, or tokenistic (Holdsworth, 2015; BERA, 2016) with any fundamental changes only granted by adults (Kehoe, 2015). Selected students frequently had strong opinions (Whitty and Wisby, 2007) and could 'deliberately imposing their own ideas' (Cox & Robinson-Pant, 2008, p. 519) rather than articulating a collaborative student voice with suggestions which were frequently 'safe' and permissive. They often did not 'question the system itself or consider alternatives' (p. 464). Furthermore, Bragg suggested educators may be reluctant to engage with pupil voice as they were concerned about having their practise criticised by students.

Conversely, it may be a valuable and necessary addition as 'schools cannot learn how to become better places for learning without asking the students' (Crane, 2001, p. 54). It was vital that we ensured the latter. The advantages and disadvantages

regarding pupil voice were considered in the interview design to attempt to ensure students' voices were sensitively and effectively utilised.

My first research question, '*Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?*' was grounded within the primary classroom which is a difficult environment to control (Muijs, 2004). It is naturalistically creative, but also driven by formative assessment data to track progress and identify challenges. I felt this required a pragmatic approach to answer the research question as objectively as possible (Gorard, 2001), as I was their teacher, and I was aware that I may have an unconscious bias. To provide answers to all aspects of this environment, both quantitative and qualitative data collection was designed into the methodology. Constraints to this approach have been acknowledged at each relevant stage.

The project adopted a mixed methodology approach (Menter, Elliot, Hulme, Levin, Lowder & Hall, 2011) to benefit from the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative research. I felt that this combined strategy would use all the practical means and data available to help understand writing at our school (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). I hoped that it would also account for more subtleties within the setting and provide more authentic and reliable answers (Day & Sammons, 2008).

Miles and Huberman (1984) stated that data should be selected, assimilated, and organised carefully. Subsequently, the data was collected in line with the school's assessment cycle of the teacher assessing a student's writing against the year groups' school TAF each half term. This was both practical from a time perspective (as we

could use the assessment for both the research project and the school assessment process) and used the well-established assessment system in school. The data was then assimilated and organised by being categorised anonymously into the two groups by number.

The quasi-experimental quantitative methodology aspect was achieved by the assessment of the independent post-intervention writing against the school's TAF (Considine, 2015) (Appendix B). This provided a numerical score which was used for direct comparison against a pre-intervention writing assessment. It is recognised that different genres of writing were used in the pre- and post-intervention assessments, and one text type may better favour a student's individual style. However, it was felt by my co-worker and myself, that this would be the best approach as any anomalies in writing outcomes would be noted.

The independent writing for both groups was then assessed against the school TAF as was standard practice. This was done within a two-week window of the assessment whilst the understanding of the unit was fresh (Maxwell, 2005). Each student's numerical result was then listed next to their previous assessment data and the difference in scores was calculated.

Parlett and Hamilton (1976) purported for a 'progressive focusing' approach which used the metaphor of using a wide-angle lens to obtain the data and then a narrower view to filter key features of the research as they emerged. The 'wide-angle' raw data was focused by calculating a total of the difference in scores for each group,

the mean and the standard deviation. The mean was used to provide an indication of the change in result across each group. The standard deviation was calculated to measure how variable the results were (Gorard, 2001). A two tailed *t*-test was conducted to calculate the significance of the results and a *z*-test was used to investigate if there were any outliers in the results.

The constructivist qualitative methods of acquiring data from co-workers and pupils acknowledged the human subjectivity of the project (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p.40) and helped to establish how the teaching and learning of writing was experienced by both the teachers and the students. These included regular meetings conducted with the SLT, collaborating teachers and semi-structured interviews with students (Elliott & Adelman, 1976). By using this range of stakeholders' voices collaboratively, the researcher's own beliefs were moderated (Creswell, 2013) and colleagues' feedback influenced the task design so that it would reflect the existing culture and practice. It also provided triangulation of the results which improved the credibility of the project (Tracy, 2010).

It was recognised that the use of a mixed methodology approach would potentially increase time, required the understanding of more skills, and may provide data which would not easily corroborate (Denscombe, 2014). However, by using a mixed-methodological approach, it was hoped that how students and teachers experienced the learning and teaching of writing would be better captured and that these voices would provide depth to the numerical data provided by the quantitative data. The practice-driven methodology was designed to be as rigorous as possible, so

the research findings were shared at staff meetings. Both teachers and students were given numbers to maintain anonymity when reporting findings.

3.2: Overview of Research Including Internal and External Collaboration Points

Having decided upon the overall research methodology, the data collection was planned to ensure the overall aim to understand whether the sentence-level scaffolded approach helped students to improve their assessment scores, was achievable. The timetable reflected Lewin's (1946) cycle and was used to translate the research into four key phases. I felt it was important to utilise as many collaboration points as was appropriate to ensure all voices were heard and to engage others in the research. This provided the opportunity to refine the work following feedback and gave the best opportunity for the use of the intervention, if found successful, to continue beyond the research as it encouraged people to be familiar with it, understand its evidence base and feel invested in it. Table 1 shows the main phases and methods of generating data with the collaboration points:

Table 1*Planned Collaboration Points*

	Fact Finding and Planning Phase	First Step Action Evaluate and Amend Phase	Second Step Action Phase	Evaluating and Refining Phase
Month	October/November	December	January-March	April-June
Focus	Analysis of the learning and teaching of writing	Analysis of pre-test data	Intervention Analysis of post-test data Pupil voice	Evaluation and refinement through feedback.
Methods	Staff meetings with Key Stage 2 team and collaborating teachers.	Moderation of assessment. Meeting with a collaborating teacher.	Intervention Moderation of assessment Semi-structured interviews.	Presentation and discussion with teaching team, collaborating teacher and Head of School.
Collaboration Points	Collaboration with the Key Stage 2 team, in particular the collaborating teacher.	Collaborating teacher.	Collaborating teacher. Collaboration with students.	Peer review at Poster Conference. Presentation to staff team.

In summary, to provide ‘useful, practical, reliable and valid answers’ (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2018, p. 36), a mixture of phenomenological and quasi-experimental research methods was adopted. The use of this approach was discussed with fellow University of Oxford Learning and Teaching MSc students to consider practicalities and rigour. The feedback at the 2022 Poster Conference allowed for further consideration of the findings and recommendations especially considering the transition to secondary education. Additionally, as part of the school-led professional

development on writing, the analysis of the teaching team's experience of teaching writing within the context had a more thorough understanding. The use of this range of collaboration points became a vital component in triangulating the analysis, findings, and evaluation.

3.3: Specific Research Methods

3.3.1: Qualitative Methodology – Initial Discussions with Adult Stakeholders

To understand the established context of writing within the school, an initial staff meeting for all staff was held once the Central University Research Ethics Committee's (CUREC) approval was received (Appendix F & H). This collaborative approach allowed us to explore writing in our context (Hochschild, 2009). During this meeting, the rationale for the project was discussed to ensure it provided the answers to questions the staff had to using this approach. Additionally, the steps to achieve the expected outcome in terms of a viable data set were planned (Laing, 1967).

The requirement to answer the second and third research questions was a result of my previous investigation (XXXX, 2021) and was confirmed by staff at these meetings:

- *Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*
- *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

3.3.2: Quasi-Experimental Quantitative Methods

The project collected relevant data to answer the research question, '*Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?*'. To ensure this process was robust, the data was collected and analysed with the collaborating practitioner. An inductive analysis approach was utilised to interpret the data with an open mind (Cullinane, 2021).

This Year 6 class had two teachers for three one-hour writing lessons per week. For these lessons, it was standard practice for the class to be split into two groups of 15 children and be taught in two separate classrooms. It was the teachers of these two groups: myself and my collaborating partner, who conducted the lessons used for this research project.

The data collection was quasi-experimental to demonstrate the validity of the research in the real-life educational setting (Muijs, 2004) with no researcher input into the sampling. The class of 30 pupils had been previously split into two mixed ability writing groups at the beginning of the academic year by the collaborating teacher and me as our standard practice. It was decided jointly to maintain the established group for this project to maintain consistency and reduce any possible bias.

A key question was what to teach. In school, we mainly used a genre-based approach to the teaching of writing which is frequently linked to a cross-curricular topic. A unit of biographical writing, based on the students' history topic on the Victorians, was decided upon. Both teachers had successfully taught this the previous

year and felt it was appropriate for the children's learning and the project. Throughout this research, the practitioners controlled all variables as much as possible.

Pre-intervention data was available from the children's prior in-school writing assessment carried out in the previous half term. This had been assessed by me and the collaborating teacher and moderated with other KS2 staff. The control group was taught by the collaborating practitioner using previous methods where the lesson was split into two sections. Initially, the teacher shared a model text and described what would usually be evident in each section and some examples of appropriate vocabulary were discussed. In the second section of each lesson, the children wrote their own paragraphs.

The intervention group was taught by me using the sentence-level scaffolded approach. These lessons were split up into three 20-minute (approximately) sections. Each section represented the teaching of one sentence so that a paragraph of three sentences was taught in each lesson. Each 20-minute section was sub-divided into three further components. In the first, the teacher suggested some appropriate vocabulary and then encouraged the children to add their suggestions. In the second, the teacher modelled a sentence using the guided writing principle of 'thinking aloud' and expressed why they had chosen one word over another and discussed the impact of this on the reader. In this component, the teacher completed a set challenge e.g., using a relative clause and discussing the appropriate punctuation required. In the third component, the students wrote their own sentence with the same challenge e.g.,

using a relative clause. Children who worked at a pace quicker than their peers were encouraged to add an additional sentence or detail.

Both groups had an initial lesson where they identified the common features of biographical writing. The same resources were used by both groups. Both teachers used the same model text on Queen Victoria for the teaching inputs of the writing unit. Students were taught how to write a biography, using the previously identified features, and wrote their own version of Queen Victoria's biography during these initial lessons using extra information they had learnt in history to supplement their writing. The post-intervention assessment piece was produced by the children researching another Victorian, who they were interested in, and they wrote an independent biography. This was assessed using the school's TAF (Considine, 2015) to provide measurable and comparable data. In each group, the children were encouraged to plan and consider how they would use the features they had identified within their own independent biography. The same time was used for each group to research, plan, write and edit their work.

3.3.2.1: Quasi-Experimental Quantitative Methods – Data Analysis

The pre-intervention writing assessments, which were letters of complaint, were completed in the second half of the autumn term. Each student's letter was assessed using the school's TAF (Considine, 2015) to achieve a numerical score. This result was used as the first element of quantitative raw data to help answer the first

research question: *'Does a sentence-level scaffolded approach to the teaching and learning of writing in Year 6 improve assessment scores?'*.

In the first half of the spring term, the research intervention occurred. A Victorian biographical writing unit was taught over a three-week period. It was recognised that this was a relatively short period but was felt to be practical to conduct within the setting (Cohen, et. al., 2018). At the end of this, the children had written two biographies: one on Queen Victoria and one on a Victorian of their choice. The control group had been taught the initial Queen Victoria biography using our previous teaching method and the intervention group had used the sentence-level scaffolded approach. Both had written the second biography independently.

Each student's raw score for the post-intervention assessment was compared to their writing assessment result from the previous half term by the individual teacher who taught that respective group and was then moderated by the other practitioner. The difference between the two scores was recorded. The mean was calculated for this difference for each group. In addition, the standard deviation was calculated for each group to measure how dispersed the data was in relation to the mean (Gorard, 2001). Using IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows v. 28, the research question, *'Does sentence-level scaffolding helps students to improve assessment scores?'* was assessed using a two-tailed independent sample *t*-test which compared whether change in assessment score over time between students in the control group and the intervention group was significant. Further investigation of the results was conducted using a second two-tailed independent sample *t*-test removing two criteria

which most of the intervention group had successfully included but the control group had not to see if this had an impact on the significance of the results. In addition, the difference in the results pre- and post-intervention were analysed to investigate consistency in scores.

During this period, the class experienced an outbreak of Covid 19, so any child who was absent for part of this unit did not have their scores included in the project. The results from six children were excluded due to their absence during the teaching period. The difference for the present 24 children was recorded.

The data was further analysed by both teachers with a focus on anonymised students working towards and above the expected class standard. Patterns in similarities or contrasts were explored.

3.3.3: Qualitative Methodology – Individual Semi-Structured Interviews with Students

Understanding that children are ‘the best source of information about themselves (Docherty and Sandelowski, 1999, p. 177), it was felt that it was vital to hear from them what they felt about their experience of the teaching and learning of writing. It was felt their voices were especially key to help answer the second and third research questions:

- *Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*
- *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

Semi-structured interviews were conducted by me – the children’s primary class teacher. The children were chosen in collaboration with my co-practitioner. The sentence-level scaffolded approach had been previously used with this class, so all (including those in the control group) had experience of these lessons. The interviews were carried out with 10 students: five boys and five girls (five pupils were from the control group and five from the intervention group); three students were working ‘at greater depth’ (GDS), three working at the ‘expected’ level (EXS), and four ‘working towards’ the expected level (WTS). Additionally, the group represented the cultural diversity of the class by including seven white and three children from ethnic minority groups. The Year 6 class had six children with a diagnosis of dyslexia and five who had dyslexic tendencies and who were waiting assessment. To represent this profile of learning need within the research, four children formally assessed with dyslexia and two who did not have a diagnosis but had dyslexic tendencies were included in the interview group. We felt that this structure was important to include the voices of those with a known barrier to writing as they represented a large proportion of the class. It was hoped that this selection would help to give an overall voice for the whole class (Edwards, Gandini & Forman, 1998).

Individual interviews, as opposed to a group discussion, were chosen as the voice of the direct experience of individuals was desired (Malinowski, 1922). It was felt that this would help to avoid any potential social conformity within a group (Ritchie & Lewis, 2013). To enable the pupils to feel relaxed, a natural school setting was used to conduct the interviews (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2007).

The interviews were designed using a 'funnel' approach (Kahn & Connell, 1961) using the questions in Appendix C as the starting point. A focus on specific areas was then possible as and when the students' answers allowed. Litosseliti (2003) suggested that this strategy helped the interviewees to feel comfortable and was useful to help alleviate a potential power imbalance (Creswell, 2013). Consideration was made as to how the question design would encourage an honest and more accurate discussion (Litosseliti, 2003) and an open questioning style was used to contribute to this aim (Greig & Taylor, 1999; Wright & Powell, 2006; Powell, 2007).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated the importance of the careful planning of interviews with consideration of all elements – the background, the start, the questions, how to evaluate how the interview is going and the closing aspects. Being aware of the possible balance of power inequality (Fairclough, 2014), an effort was made to put the students at ease and their honesty was encouraged by building rapport from the very start of the meeting. This was achieved by explaining the overarching aims of the research, answering any questions they had and ensuring confidentiality (De Laine, 2000). The key role they played in this research in explaining their experiences was highlighted. My goal was for the interviews to be 'a positive and enjoyable experience for the children' (Morrison, 2013, p. 321).

Each interview was audio-recorded (see ethical considerations below) which provided the opportunity to analyse later. The reasons behind these choices were discussed with the students. The conversations were not filmed as I felt that this would increase the formality of the sessions for the students and potentially inhibit

responses. However, as I would not have the potential non-verbal cues to analyse, I made notes on body language after each interview (Blatch, 2021). This enabled me to visually check how relaxed each pupil was potentially feeling throughout our discussion and adapt accordingly. Participants were encouraged to take their time and answer questions in their own way (Kahn et al., 1961; Kvale, 1996).

Despite the challenges in the analysis of the data provided by the interviews (Cohen et al., 2018), I chose to use semi-structured interviews as I believed it would provide an important perspective on the teaching and learning of writing at our school. The framework of the interviews allowed me to reframe my questions as the conversations developed and provided depth to my other data sources. We decided that the students working 'at greater depth' would be best to answer the second research question, '*Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*'. This was to see whether they felt constrained by the scaffolded approach as it was this group that the teaching staff felt may feel restrained. We believed that the inclusion of an additional student predicted to be 'at greater depth' by the end of the year would be beneficial to further widen the responses.

Further analysis of the research question, '*What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*' were partly answered by the responses of the students working towards the Year 6 writing expectations (Students 5, 7, 8 and 10). I chose to do this as my previous focus on those pupils working at greater depth appeared to demonstrate that they all enjoyed independent writing and seemed to appreciate the use of the

scaffolded lessons to enable the freer opportunities. Additionally, it was the ‘ones who find it hard’ (Teacher 9) who the teaching staff were especially concerned about once the scaffolds were removed.

3.3.3.1: Qualitative Methodology - Data Analysis

The interviews were reported using Kvale’s (1996, pp. 263-266) four-point framework as this provided a relevant and practical structure to follow:

1. An introduction of the main themes was provided at each stage.
2. An outline of the methodology from the design of interviews, the transcription, and the analysis was given.
3. The results were reported verbatim – the data analysed, the interpretation and the verification process were discussed with my collaborating partner.
4. Discussion is provided on the findings.

To answer the question, ‘*What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*’, we focused on the students ‘working towards’ the expected standard as this group had been specifically mentioned by my colleagues as a concern and it was these children who generally find writing independently more challenging.

The audio recordings of the 10 students were transcribed by categorising them into answers for each question (Appendix C) so that all the responses could be seen in relation to each aspect. This allowed me to transition from hearing the overall voice to detecting the salient features by reviewing the audio recordings and revisiting the interviews to deepen my understanding. Patterns were noted and an overall picture emerged for each question. This was repeated the replies had been transcribed

comprehensively. The responses were reported verbatim as the data sample was relatively small and this allowed for a more illustrative portrayal of the students' thoughts (Cohen et al., 2018). The notes made at the end of the interviews on non-linguistic features were referred to but not recorded. This allowed me to make subtle changes during the interview to ensure students felt relaxed but had limited application for the analysis as all pupils appeared to enjoy the exchange. I also concentrated on words and phrases used by other interviewees to provide a broader answer to the latter research question. The transcripts were then examined, and the findings organised into categories relating to each research question. Quotations used from the interviews have been included verbatim. All the relevant answers have been provided unedited to provide a real sense of each response. The transcriptions and analysis were discussed with my collaborating teacher, and the results moderated.

3.4: Collaboration

In addition, it had been important to consider the point of possible researcher bias for all aspects of the project including the interviews as I was aware I may unwittingly influence responses (Maxwell, 2005). I understood that it was my own interest in this approach to writing which was the foundation of this project (Cohen et. al, 2018). To mitigate this, my partner collaborated with me throughout: the quantitative data collection was moderated, the planning for both sets of lessons were jointly written, the interviewees, the interview questions were chosen collaboratively, and the findings were analysed together. In addition, the project was regularly discussed throughout with my accountability partner who held me accountable. For

example, she probed and questioned the choice of students to be interviewed which helped to provide a more accurate profile sample of the whole class. This provided a more solid platform which was as robust and as accurate as possible in this naturalistic environment (Muijs, 2004).

3.5: Ethical Considerations

The British Educational Research Association's (2018) framework for Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research was a vital component to ensure that thoughtful ethical consideration in the planning, undertaking and presentation of this research occurred. In addition, I maintained a clear process of informed consent, confidentiality, and transparency as to how the research would be reported (Cohen et al., 2018).

Once permission from the Head of School to carry out my research project was received and university ethical clearance via CUREC was obtained, all potential participants were informed about my project to give them time to reflect on their involvement and discuss it with their parents. Students were able to consider the ethical issues involved in their participation by discussing why they had been chosen as the research would benefit from having a broad range of writers and the voice of students who were confident in giving their honest opinion. The aims of the project to consider whether the sentence-level scaffolded approach was a suitable teaching and learning strategy for Year 6 and potentially the rest of the school were highlighted so that the children understood the merit of their opinions being heard. All the students

invited to participate in the research agreed to do so and their responses and relaxed body language during the interviews suggested that they were agreeable to being included.

The research activities were undertaken as usual classroom practice and within my *modus operandi*. Whilst the two groups were taught using different approaches, the SLT were satisfied that both pedagogical methods satisfied our quality teaching protocol. It was felt that the theoretical 'cost' to either group was minimal and was required to obtain the 'benefit' of data to help answer the research question (Frankfort- Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992). Consideration regarding whether parental consent was required was also collaboratively discussed with the SLT as this research was being carried out by the class teacher as professional development to inform the best practice of the teaching and learning of writing across the school (Cohen et. al., 2018). However, it was felt to be considerate to inform and provide an opportunity for parents to raise further questions or opt out of the research (see further information below). No parents raised any further questions or opted out of the project.

In addition, ethical issues were discussed with my co-teacher. She was keen to explore and test both methods as she too felt that the sentence-level scaffolded approach appeared to have many benefits and saw this as an opportunity to test them in a planned and robust manner. The methods were discussed objectively as we had both used the teaching approach used for the control method up to this point.

The semi-structured interviews were held during school to ensure that students were not missing their break (Morrison, 2013). Assessed paper samples of the students' independent writing were kept within their individual writing portfolio accompanied by the school's TAF document (Considine, 2015) which catalogues and tracks their writing progress through their school career. Research data was available to the teacher collaborating with this project and the SLT. This is usual practice for writing assessments in our school.

We were aware of the potential issue of the respondents replying with answers which they considered the interviewer wanted to hear – an issue described as 'acquiescence' (Breakwell, 2000, p. 254). As a result, we selected children who we thought were more likely to give a candid reply. The limitation of this as a possibility of introducing a potential bias is noted (Maxwell, 2005).

Audio recordings were taken on a portable school device and stored securely in school in line with the school's policy. Approval was given by the Head of School and a letter was sent to parents before they were interviewed to advise them of both the potential meetings and the audio recording of them. An option for the parents (on behalf of their child) to opt-out of the research was provided (Appendix D). All data recorded for the purpose of this assignment was anonymised (Frankfort- Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992) and notes were kept electronically, and password protected. The data and notes have been and will only be used by me for this research.

In summary, it is hoped that I have maintained ‘a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others’ (Cavan, 1977, p. 810) and demonstrated robust ethical considerations in the planning, execution, and presentation (Morrison, 1996) to answer my three research questions.

- *Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?*
- *Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*
- *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1: Fact Finding and Planning

The 10 teachers present in the initial staff meeting represented Years 1 through to 6 including some job share roles. Representatives of the SLT were also present including the Chief Executive Officer of our Multi Academy Trust and the Head of School. Three other SLT members present were also class teachers. Furthermore, the use of voice has been included in the qualitative findings along with the narrative around it, for both the discussions with staff and the semi-structured interviews with students, as recommended by fellow University of Oxford student (Appiah, 2021).

I was aware that several of the other teachers had seen some of the Considine (2016) sentence-level scaffolded lessons online before as I had investigated this approach previously (XXXX, 2021). In addition, we had several discussions about this method in staff meetings, during our internal writing training and in our writing moderation sessions. The findings of this meeting indicated that two teachers had used this approach and were beginning to implement this method as their usual practice. Two other job-sharing teachers had both experimented with it and liked what they had seen. As the Year 6 teachers, both my colleague and I (who were the researcher practitioners for this project) had also started to embed this approach in our lessons from the beginning of the academic year. All of those who had tried the approach were very positive - detailing how the method appeared to be especially beneficial for the students working towards the expected standard as it appeared to enable them to start their writing activity much more independently.

When the teaching team were asked what they specifically liked about the sentence-level scaffolded approach, they referred to an observed improvement in the comprehension of sentence construction as *'the children are beginning to understand what a sentence is'* (Teacher 3). In addition, they felt that it allowed for an effective and responsive opportunity to provide learning opportunities as *'you can use the gaps in their knowledge and include those features in the next lessons to get them to show them in their writing'* (Teacher 2). They therefore verbalised how this technique provided a platform to teach grammar in context which they felt was improved as it was more focused and situational than discrete teaching strategies (Graham & Perrin, 2007; Ofsted, 2022; Skinner, 2019).

When the staff were asked what they did not like about sentence-level support, the main concern was whether an explicitly scaffolded writing lesson was *'holding the greater depth kids back as they may be sitting waiting for the slower ones'* (Teacher 3). The teachers also raised concerns over the need for them to rewrite existing lesson plans, whether phonics could be embedded into the lessons enough and what would happen when opportunities to free write were provided as *'we have held their hands so much - especially those who find it hard'* (Teacher 9). A SLT member raised the point that *'it is important that teachers pick what they like and choose and teach that'* (Teacher 10). Finally, in contrast with the temporary intention of the use of scaffolding, one volunteered, *'I'll be honest. I don't do hardly any independent writing now'* (Teacher 6).

In summary, at the start of the academic year when this meeting was conducted, three classes (four teachers) had begun to use sentence-level scaffolding consistently within their daily practice and were pleased with the results; one class (two teachers) had trialled it and liked it but had not fully implemented it and the other classes were aware of it and interested in finding out more. Two research questions, which were outlined in my previous investigation (XXXX, 2021), remained important to answer:

- *Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*
- *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

4.2: Findings of First Step Action: ‘Does Sentence-Level Scaffolding Help Students to Improve Their Assessment Scores?’

To answer the first research question, ‘Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?’, the outcomes of both groups were investigated. A two-tailed independent samples *t*-test was conducted to compare differences in assessment scores pre- and post-intervention between students with the new intervention method condition and the old method. This provisionally found that the students who received the intervention teaching improved significantly more than those who were in the control group, $t(22) = -3.98, p < .001$ (see Table 2). These findings would suggest that sentence-level scaffolding helped students to improve their assessment scores. In addition, the standard deviations would suggest that the level of improvement in the intervention group was more consistent than the control group (see Figure 2 for illustration of distribution).

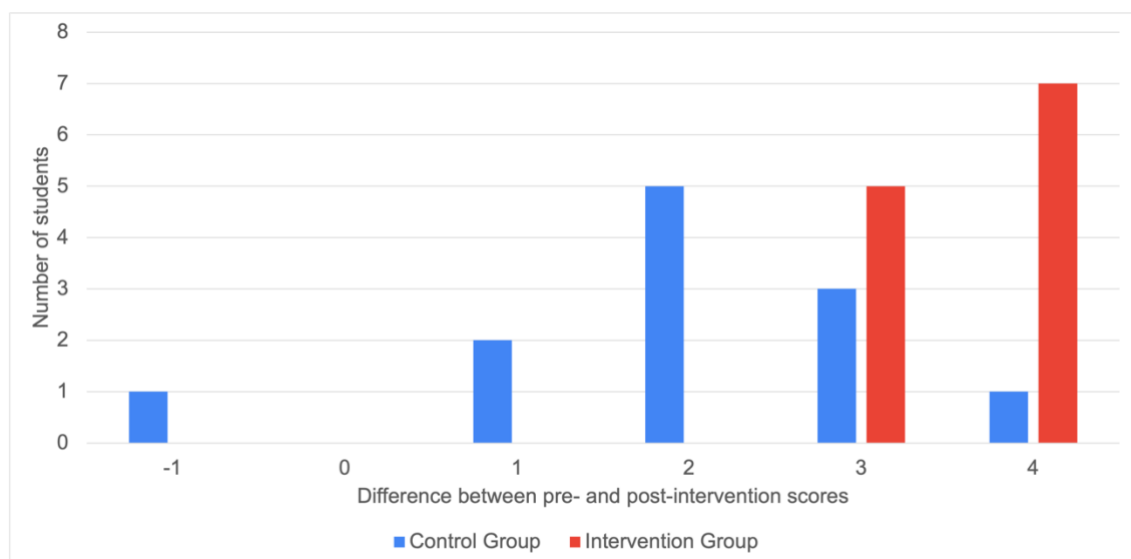
Table 2

Mean individual difference in assessment results before and after intervention

	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Control Group	2	1.28
Intervention Group	3.58	0.51

Figure 2

Profile of the Difference in Scores in the Control Group and the Intervention Group



We calculated the z-scores and determined that there were no outliers, defined as $> \pm 3$ (see Table 3).

Table 3*Calculation of z-scores of the Control Group and the Intervention Group*

Difference from Mean	=/<3	<2	<1	0	>1	>2
Control Group (M = 2)	1	0	2	5	3	1
Intervention Group (M = 3.58)	0	0	5	8	0	0

We were intrigued by the statistically significant findings of the two-tailed independent samples *t*-test and wanted to investigate this further. When my collaborating teacher and I, looked at the criteria on the students' school TAFs, we discovered that there were two areas in which the investigation group had scored well in: 'use passive voice to affect the presentation of information in a sentence' and 'use some ambitious vocabulary' – a list of the appropriate Year 6 vocabulary is provided for students. We discussed this further. It transpired that neither of these criteria had been explored in my colleague's lessons whereas a student had introduced them into the conversation in the intervention group. Despite our best efforts to control the variables, this demonstrated the complexities of the context and how the social and educational world is a messy place (Muijs, 2004; Cohen et. al., 2018).

To investigate the impact of this additional discussion in the intervention group, we conducted a revised two-tailed independent samples *t*-test. This compared the mean differences for the control and intervention groups, with the scores for the two supplementary criteria excluded: 'use passive voice to affect the presentation of

information in a sentence’ and ‘use some ambitious vocabulary’. This revised *t*-test found that there was no significant difference in improvement between the two groups, $t(22) = 0.74$, $p = .470$ (see Table 4).

Table 4

Revised results from individual difference in assessment data before and after intervention

Revised analysis	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Control Group	1.92	1.31
Intervention Group	2.25	0.87

Note. We revised the data by removing scores for the use of passive voice and the inclusion of ambitious vocabulary.

These findings would suggest that the sentence-level scaffolding approach leads to no more improvement in assessment scores than the previous teaching method. This would further suggest that the previously significant finding was due to the additional discussion which naturally arose.

4.2.1: Discussion of First Step Action: ‘Does Sentence-Level Scaffolding Help Students to Improve Their Assessment Scores?’

The findings of the quantitative data collection demonstrated that all students improved their assessment scores except for one child in the control group. However, those who received the sentence-level scaffolding improved their scores more than

those who were in the control group. It was noticed that eight of these students were successful in including two criteria which were not planned for. When these aspects were excluded from the calculation the improvement in scores was not statistically significant.

My collaborating teacher and I discussed this finding further and then considered it with the wider teaching team. We all felt that the potential reason the students in the intervention group were able to include the extra two criteria could be because they had a reduced cognitive load due to the sentence-level scaffolded approach (Aisbitt, 2017; Graff & Birkenstein, 2010). The explicit small steps of teaching using this method could give them the capacity to consider further options in their writing (EEF, 2018). It appeared that the students had been able to regard and use other writing aspects because this strategy provided for an improved, deeper Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Additionally, the student-led recognition of aspects of grammar supported the literature purporting for contextual learning of grammar (Graham & Perin, 2007; Ofsted, 2022; Skinner, 2019) and the importance of the social exchange within the classroom (Dettori, 2009). Due to this, we unanimously believed that the inclusion of these criteria in the analysis was justified.

Three further points also needed consideration: an unexpected progress noticed by both teachers immediately before the project began, the three-week research period and the apparent improved consistency of the results of the intervention group. It was also noted that the change of genre between pre- and post-intervention did not appear to influence the results.

Both groups had been taught using sentence-level scaffolding for the term before the intervention began. During the project, the intervention group continued to be taught using this approach, whereas the control group was taught using the previous method. On the first morning of the intervention, we discovered the naturalistic nature of research in the classroom as my collaborating partner raised a concern (Muijs, 2004). She had noticed that the children in her control group had appeared to demonstrate a much better understanding of sentence construction recently. This she evidenced by recognising a better grasp of the key understanding of a main clause within the group. She felt that this was due to the sentence-level scaffolded approach we had been using and thought this may impact the results of the investigation by not demonstrating a significant improvement in assessment scores. I too had noticed this same progressive shift in my group. We noted this unexpected progress as an observation to reflect upon.

Secondly, once the intervention was completed, we were both surprised by the statistically significant improvement in assessment scores for the students in the intervention group. This was because there was a relatively short (three-week) research period and neither of us has expected such progress in this time scale (Cohen, et. al., 2018) especially considering we had already felt the students' understanding had demonstrated progression.

Thirdly, the consistency of improvement in the assessment scores of students in the intervention group suggested that the sentence-level scaffolding approach supported the learning of children of all abilities (EEF, 2018). This potentially gave

support to answer the second research question, *‘Does the use of an Explicit Sentence-Level Scaffolded Approach Constrain the More Able Writers?’*. The improvement in all results of students in the intervention group and the consistency of results suggested that the sentence-level scaffolded approach did not constrain the more able writers as they made significant progress in their assessment scores. In addition, it also provided answers to the third research question, *‘What Happens When the Scaffolds are Removed?’*. This question related mostly to those pupils working towards the expected level. The results demonstrated that all children made significant progress which suggested that these children also benefited from this sentence-level scaffolded approach of teaching.

4.3: Findings from Second Step Action: Semi-Structured Interviews with Students

Semi-structured interviews with students helped form answers to the second and third research questions:

- *Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?*
- *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

4.3.1: Does the use of an Explicit Sentence-Level Scaffolded Approach Constrain the More Able Writers?

Prior to the project, three out of the 10 students (Students 2, 3 and 4) were assessed as being at the ‘greater depth’ level. One other (Student 1) was expected to reach ‘greater depth’ level by the end of the academic year. All these pupils said they enjoyed writing lessons. Two students appeared to enjoy freer writing: *I like the*

freedom, like you can just write and try and be creative and stuff (Student 1) and I like the independent lessons. Sometimes you can have more freedom to write what you want. I like using descriptive vocabulary (Student 2). Students 3 and 4 seemed to find the more scaffolded lessons helpful, I like when we write stories or emotive ones where sometimes the teacher, she tells us what to do. I like writing stories but sometimes I get a bit carried away (Student 3) and I like the model sentences when we all put words together and change a few. We usually get to do it ourselves and change a few words (Student 4).

When asked if they felt that teaching them sentence by sentence helped them, they were all positive about their experience of these lessons: *I think sentence by sentence is good. It is also good to sometimes change it up and do it a bit more independently. I like the mixture of both (Student 1); it helps me focus on what I need to do in each sentence (Student 2); it helps because when we just wrote, you would forget what you had to write (Student 3) and when I do it sentence by sentence, I am focusing on sentences slowly so I can improve them. Then I can edit in green pen (Student 4).*

Interested in whether the more scaffolded approach helped their metacognition in respect to being able to evaluate their own learning (EEF, 2018), the pupils were asked whether the sentence-level scaffolded lessons helped them to know if their writing was successful. Their answers appeared mostly to suggest it did: *I think it really helps me to understand like semicolons and stuff (Student 1); it makes a difference (Student 2); and, yes sometimes because when we do one sentence I can*

check if there is something wrong before I start my second sentence, so I don't have to go and rub it out (Student 3); yes because if it's a bit too similar to yours, I know I need to improve it. I can look back on the thingy at the front - my pink card to help me. I am trying to use the complex sentences with the different starts - ed starts and the -ly starts (Student 4). The 'pink card' Student 4 refers to is a resource listing Year 6 writing criteria.

The students were then asked if they preferred the more back-and-forth nature to the sentence-level scaffolded lessons or the more traditional lesson where the teacher delivered the input and the pupils had one longer block in which to write. It appears that the dialogue and active input was a key benefit of this teaching and learning approach. All these students preferred the more dialogic approach of the sentence scaffolded lessons: *I think that works (Student 1); I like the independent writing as you can practise what you have been taught but I like the combination of both (Student 2); I prefer one sentence then we write it (Student 3); I like just talking about it more (Student 4).*

Teaching staff were especially concerned that these 'greater depth' writers may be held back. In our staff meeting, Teacher 3 voiced her concern, *I'm worried they may be sitting waiting for the slower ones.* However, this did not appear to be the case. All the pupils' answers suggested that they used their time productively: *It's manageable. I usually just think about it a bit. Sometimes I'm held up but not too much – it's not a problem (Student 1); it gives me more time to think what I'm going to do*

(Student 2); *sometimes, like when I know what I'm doing, I can be waiting for a bit but then I change some of it round. But if I'm not so sure what I'm doing, it can take a while but most of the time I think it's fine* (Student 3); *I like to go through my work after I have done it so when we do it sentence by sentence, I can go through it and when we don't, I just do it afterwards. I'm not hanging around* (Student 4).

My records of the students' non-verbal communication all suggested that students became more comfortable as the interviews progressed. I recalled that Student 1 (a very articulate and confident child) was the pupil who most appeared to want to conduct herself well and began quite formally and my notes seemed to acknowledge this as they recorded that she 'sat upright with clasped hands' but soon 'relaxed and moved hands whilst talking'. Awareness of the children's body language during the interviews, allowed me to nuance the conversation subtly to try to ensure they all felt at ease to allow them to answer the research question effectively.

In summary, the importance of the independent lessons was evident: two students working at greater depth said that they enjoyed the "freedom" (Students 1 and 2) these opportunities provided. However, all the students also appeared to voice the sentiment that they appreciated that the scaffolded lessons might be the vehicle which taught them how to write independently as these allowed them to "focus" (Students 2 and 4), "enjoy the mixture of both" (Student 1) and prevented you from "forget(ing) what you had to write (Student 3).

These discussions appeared to mirror research by Aisbitt (2017) which demonstrated the need for a reliable approach to engage metacognition and to improve confidence. The provision of a strategy which enables students to be appropriately challenged and to plan, monitor and evaluate their writing is an important study aid (EEF, 2021). Additionally, they appeared to provide the 'anchor', which Aisbitt's student referred to, as the scaffolded lessons provide an explicit structure of focus which secures students' understanding of sentence construction. Furthermore, they illustrated in practice Graff and Birkenstein's (2010) three key benefits of using a scaffolded approach: firstly, the use of explicit scaffolds to enable pupils to translate abstract principles to an understandable task; secondly, a step-by-step method to help students produce written work; and, finally, the opportunity for repeated practice to allow them to understand different skills which they could then draw on for their own more independent work.

4.3.2: What Happens when the Scaffolds are Removed?

Before the intervention began, four out of the 10 students (Students 5, 7, 8 and 10) were assessed as being 'working towards' the expected level for Year 6. These children were interviewed to answer the third research question, '*What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*'. The students in this category who were in the intervention group demonstrated a higher mean score in both the initial analysis and the revised two-tailed independent samples *t*-test of the data provided by the quantitative research.

I asked the same four students whether they liked writing and why. They mostly all responded that they enjoyed writing lessons: *I like it when we have a model of it, and we write it up, but we can change it like a lot, but we keep the structure* (Student 5). *When you do the sentence thing, where you write a sentence explaining what we have to do, I understand it a lot then. And when I plan it out and I do 1, 2, 3 – that helps a lot* (Student 8); *I like that you have a choice whether you do it on the computer or you can write it in your book* (Student 10). There was one exception who was not as enthusiastic about writing: *Not that much... I like doing it fast...I'll take a maths lesson any day* (Student 7). This student was diagnosed with dyslexia four years previously and this made writing lessons particularly challenging for him. It appeared that despite being assessed by both my co-teacher and I (and their previous years group teacher) as working towards the expected standard, they mostly enjoyed writing lessons. Two students specifically referred to elements of the explicit sentence-level scaffolding as a potential factor to their enjoyment: *I like it when we have a model... but we keep the structure* (Student 5); *when you do the sentence thing* (Student 8). These responses suggest that the children enjoyed their writing because they felt successful – an important aspect of the scaffolded approach (DES, 1975).

These students were then asked if they felt the sentence-by-sentence lessons helped them in their writing: *Yes, because I know what I'm doing* (Student 5); *I like the independent a bit more and plan it myself a bit more* (Student 7); *If it's free writing, I prefer that and I create more words but the sentence by sentence helps me understand what the sentence is about. The balance is right* (Student 8); *Yeh. I think it makes me more successful in my own way. Like I can use a semicolon or a colon stuff like that. I*

feel like I can understand as you teach it as we go (Student 10). These responses appear to suggest that these children did not feel hindered when writing independently. The students' answers suggested that they felt that the sentence-level scaffolded approach helped them to write independently (Bruner, 1986; Gonzalez, 2019; Weaver, 2010).

Interestingly, when asked which method they preferred, Student 7 (who had previously said he did not like writing lessons) replied: *They (the sentence-level scaffolded lessons) help me to know what I'm doing at the start but after I want to write on my own*. Another child diagnosed with dyslexia several years before, gave his reply to what he felt about the balance between scaffolded and more independent writing lessons: *I think it's like bang on!* (Student 10).

Furthermore, I looked at the comments of students from the other groups to see what they had said specifically about independent writing: *Though sometimes I don't know what to do in the independent lessons* (Student 6 - EXS); *In the modelling sentences, I'm doing a bit more 'show not tell' but in the independent writing, I'm saying what is happening – it's harder* (Student 4 - GDS). These responses acknowledge that independent writing is 'harder' (Student 4) and there are times when one does not 'know what to do' (Student 6). However, when these responses were discussed as a staff team, it was felt that the overall assessment demonstrated that the removal of the scaffolds was not something that teachers should be concerned about as long as these opportunities were frequent and planned for within each writing unit. This finding would be important to feedback to the teaching team,

one of whom had acknowledged that they ‘do hardly any independent writing’ (Teacher 6).

To summarise, it has been acknowledged that the teaching and learning of writing is demanding – many students struggle with it (Graham & Harris, 2005). All the members of the teaching team also agreed that they found the teaching of writing challenging to deliver (Graham, Lee & Barnese, 2008). Several metaphors have been quoted to show how supports can assist in this process – ‘scaffolding’ (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976); ‘an anchor’ (Aisbitt, 2017); and ‘stabilisers’ (Gibbons, 2019). All these comparisons illustrate the ‘temporary’ nature of the use of a scaffold. My previous investigation (XXXX, 2021) demonstrated the need to probe further into what happened in the classroom when the children wrote independently. This concern was echoed in the fact-finding staff meeting: *What happens when they free write? We have held their hands so much, I’m a bit worried about that...especially those who find it hard*’ (Teacher 9).

However, the quantitative data results indicated that the children were able to produce work independently and, importantly, they demonstrated progress in their writing *when we took the scaffolds away*. The semi-structured interviews were analysed with a focus on the children ‘working towards’ the expected level. An overview of these children’s replies demonstrated that they felt that the scaffolded lessons enabled their ability in the more independent work. This appeared to demonstrate that whilst there may be the odd ‘graze’ along the way, it was important to remove the ‘stabilisers’ in a planned and considered way so that children could

indeed write independently (Gibbons, 2019). Our teaching team can now build their confidence in knowing that this gradual removal is part of the process to allow for the evolution of our writers, promote 'the stimulus of success' (The Bullock Report, 1975) and allow for individual voice and creativity (Graff & Birkenstein, 2010). However, it is vital that these opportunities are planned and provided for. Gibbons' (2019) concern that the scaffolded lessons are the final focus do appear to be well founded as one class teacher admitted to doing just this: *I'll be honest. I don't do hardly any independent writing* (Teacher 6).

An important finding from this research is to ensure that teachers understand the importance of these independent opportunities and are not restricted to only providing assessment of the scaffolded lessons to demonstrate the criteria of the National Curriculum (DfE, 2014). The children have articulated that they enjoy expressing themselves within the independent opportunities and the writing assessed at the end of KS2 by class teachers, and possibly by external moderators, should clearly be independent (STA, 2022).

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Implications

5.1: Reflection on methodological practices

In presenting my research at an in-school CPD session on writing, I noted not only the complexities of the writing process for our students, but for teachers too. After all, it was the challenges teaching writing presented for me personally, that first led me to conducting this research. Indeed in 2015, BERA reported that many university lecturers voiced a desire to assist students with their writing but lacked the confidence to do so. With hindsight, it felt somewhat predictable then that the research of writing would also be challenging.

Whilst I had used our standard practices wherever possible and had ensured both the control and the intervention groups had used the same teaching resources, variables arose which made the results difficult to interpret. I had wanted to ensure that the research results were valid and answered the research questions in a way that the reader could rely upon (McNiff, 1988) but the reality of research within an educational setting made this less dependable. Collaboration with my colleagues was an important element which helped to alleviate this and provided a more secure assessment.

5.2: Returning to the three research questions

5.2.1: Does sentence-level scaffolding help students to improve their assessment scores?

The answer to this question was suggested by the quantitative data results of the students' writing assessments when compared with their previously assessed

piece. The findings initially indicated that there was a statistically significant improvement in their assessment scores over one unit of work. Further scrutiny of the data revealed that the intervention group had expanded their writing to include an additional two criteria which accounted for a large increase in their numerical scores. To see the impact of the inclusion of these criteria, they were removed, and the scores revised. Despite this, the students in the intervention group had still improved their assessment scores but not significantly. My collaborating research partner and the teaching team concurred that there was a credible argument to suggest that the scaffolding provided the intervention group with the potential to consider additional Year 6 criteria which could be included in their writing, especially as the additional aspects were arose through student discussion. We therefore felt that sentence-level scaffolding did generally help students to improve their assessment scores.

5.2.2: Does the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach constrain the more able writers?

The assessment data suggested an improvement in the results for those pupils working at a higher level within Year 6. The interview sessions supported the view that these students did not feel more constrained during the scaffolded lessons. While some of these children acknowledged that they may work at a quicker pace than their peers, they felt this gave them more time to consider, check and edit their work. We therefore concluded that generally the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach did not constrain the more able writers.

5.2.3: *What happens when the scaffolds are removed?*

The improvement in assessment scores appeared to demonstrate that the students' results improved when writing without scaffolds. In addition, the Year 6 students who found writing more challenging, suggested that they enjoyed the free writing activities and did not find it difficult to start. They articulated an understanding of how the more structured lessons enabled them to write even when the scaffolds were removed.

The review of literature evidenced the need for independent writing opportunities. It also demonstrated how the results-driven culture of UK primary schools, may encourage teachers to narrow their teaching to help facilitate improved published data. Within our own school, one teacher admitted not doing any independent writing as they felt the pressure of completing the curriculum and demonstrating good results. To this end, teachers may feel the need to use scaffolded writing in place of independent writing when presenting assessment data. As a result of this, we have had several in-house CPD sessions on what independent writing looks like in our school and how we assess it including the opportunity to discuss and moderate each other's work. We have realised how important it is to be as consistent as possible across year groups so that our data is indeed comparable.

5.3: Limitations

It is recognised that the scope of this research project is relatively small. It was undertaken with one Year 6 class of 30 children. The data was then further reduced with several absences due to the coronavirus pandemic. It was also over one genre of

work over a three-week period. The restrictions of working within a setting which is difficult to control are also noted, as is my unintentional bias as my personal position is that of a research practitioner studying a field which I have an interest in.

5.4: Overarching research aim

I believe that through our pragmatic research we have considered various aspects of the use of sentence-level scaffolding in the writing of English in Year 6. Recognising the complexities involved in the writing process, I believe that the explicit use of a sentence-level scaffolded approach as advocated by Considine's (2016) 'The Write Stuff' method is a beneficial strategy in the teaching and learning of the writing of English in the primary classroom. As a result of this research, the intervention has been enthusiastically introduced into other year groups in KS2 and into other curriculum subjects in our school.

5.4.1: Benefits of the project

This research project has resulted in several tangible benefits for both pupils and teachers. For students, this research provided a teaching strategy with explicit small steps to their learning of writing. It allowed some students to explain and discuss how they felt about writing from their perspective.

For us as staff team, it provided the opportunity to candidly reflect on our teaching practice of writing and it promoted collaboration between colleagues, which allowed for the mobilisation of relevant knowledge and connection with research.

Additionally, it allowed adults to understand how teachers can be the gatekeepers to pupil voice and allowed us to realise the responsibility we must listen fairly and impartially.

5.4.2: Implications

This project highlighted implications for me, the teachers and the students. For the teachers and I, it demonstrated the importance to include regular, planned independent writing opportunities frequently throughout the school year. Additionally, it focused our need for improved consistency in how we assess writing across year groups. It provided a higher level of confidence in the teaching writing of English as we now felt more confident as we have a systematic and explicit method available to use and a better understanding of the cognitive complexities of writing. It provided a better understanding of the importance of teaching with an emphasis on the effect of using a particular device on the reader rather than just trying to complete the criteria children are required to demonstrate. Furthermore, it gave us the potential to share our findings with the other school in our Multi Academy Trust and possibly the wider community. For students, the use of this intervention provided a wider opportunity to develop their metacognitive skills as they further understood how to plan, monitor and evaluate their writing and they could apply this to other learning activities.

In summary, there are several main findings from this research: the acknowledgement that the teaching and learning of writing is complex for both teacher and student; the use of an explicit sentence-level scaffolded approach to the

teaching of writing appears to benefit students and teachers; regular use of guided writing allows children to better understand what a writer is considering as they write; having a consistent approach to independent writing and its assessment is key for the data to be relevant and useful; the contextual teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation is helpful; and, the collaborative sharing of our pedagogical practice in school is invaluable.

5.5: Recommendations for future practice and research

Writing is an essential part of primary school life. It is a creative outlet, a means of communication, a fun activity, an essential skill for academic success and so it is vital we enable our students to be competent and confident. As such, it is a key area for development for many primary schools across the UK. Covid-enforced absenteeism has potentially made writing an even more important focus for schools, so it is vital we get it right.

It will be important for us now to monitor the training and implementation of this approach to the teaching of writing in other classes in the school. A longer-term strategy to do this will need to be established to ensure a clear understanding of the main findings are maintained. It is key that we keep a focus on the effect of writing on the reader and the aim to enable our students to become confident and independent writers at the forefront of our vision.

In addition, I hope that this modest account becomes one small piece of a larger body of research which will help us to reach a common understanding of the most enjoyable and effective practices in the teaching and learning of writing for primary schools (McNiff, 1988). As a result of the 2022 Poster Conference, some secondary English teachers have expressed an interest in the teaching approach which could be an exciting development. The research within the educational setting may also inform others and provide useful data (Lomax, 1994) for us all to reflect upon.

And finally

This project would not have come about without my struggles of teaching writing. I am grateful for that challenge and for the opportunities it has provided. This tension between challenge and opportunity is a constant pull for the primary practitioner and one that I hope has helped to improve the teaching and learning for all stakeholders at our school. The chance to develop respectful relationships with both my colleagues and my students which are 'warm and sympathetic' (DES, 1975, p. 271) has been a privilege.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Table of National Attainment in KS2 by Subject

Table 1: Attainment in KS2 by subject (percentage point changes from 2018 shown in brackets³)
England, 2019 (all schools)

	Reaching the expected standard	Achieving a high score
Reading test	73% (-2pp)	27% (-1pp)
Maths test	79% (+3pp)	27% (+3pp)
GPS test	78% (0pp)	36% (+1pp)
Writing teacher assessment	78% (0pp)	20% (0pp)
Science teacher assessment	83% ⁴	Not applicable

Source: National pupil database

Appendix B: School's Teachers' Assessment Framework for Year 6 (Considine, 2015)

Performance of Writing - Expected Standard at end of Year 6						
	Aut 1	Aut 2	Spr 1	Spr 2	Sum 1	Sum 2
In some writing, usually with support.						
Purpose and Impact						
Write whole texts that are interesting, engaging or thoughtful.						
Manipulates reader through the telling of a narrative e.g. Use of humour or controls the direction of non-fiction through a range of strategies e.g. persuasive devices.						
Convey a convincing viewpoint using the point of view of others to support or contrast writers own opinion.						
Produce texts which are appropriate to reader and purpose.						
Choose style/genre features to maintain and challenge the reader's interest e.g. elaborate detail in narrative or succinctness in police report.						
Adapt well known genres to create different effects e.g. fairytales with a twist exploring new viewpoint.						
Structure and Shape						
Organise and present whole texts effectively that sequence and structure information.						
Navigate a reader through a text in a logical, chronological way or subvert this e.g. flash forward, opposing viewpoint.						
Use a range of layout devices e.g. headings, sub-headings, columns, bullets, tables etc.						
Construct a cohesive piece with logical links/ breaks.						
Link ideas across paragraphs using a wider range of cohesive devices e.g. repetition of word or phrase, use of ellipsis as cliffhanger at end of section.						
Apply paragraphs across a whole text to support the 'ease of engagement' for the reader.						
Sentence Structure						
Vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect.						
Write informally or formally appropriate to genre/ text type.						
Vary the types of sentences within a piece across simple, compound and complex constructions.						
Tone						
Use the subjunctive form of the verb to emphasise formality, urgency or importance e.g. The teacher insists that her pupils be on time.						
Passive Voice						
Use passive voice to affect the presentation of information in a sentence e.g. The window in the greenhouse was broken.						
Conjunctions/Complex Sentences						
Use a range of complex construction strategies to build subordinating clauses with verb starts ending in 'ing', 'ed' or adverbs 'ly' followed by verbs, relative clauses and subordinating conjunction starts.						
Writerly Techniques						
Deploy poetic style to engage the reader.						
Use personification to give human attributes to inanimate objects/things.						
Use symbolism as a recurring idea to emphasise a themed motif e.g. ongoing referencing to water.						
Vocabulary						
Select appropriate and effective vocabulary.						
Use varied and precise vocabulary to create particular stylistic effects.						
Use some 'pink' ambitious vocabulary (See Pink Writing Progress Plan)						
Adverbs/adverbial phrases						
Use more complicated adverbial phrases to link ideas e.g. on the other hand, in contrast, as a consequence.						
Use adverbs and adverbial phrases to qualify, intensify or emphasise e.g. 'The dog is so incredibly stupid', '... an exceptional result'.						
Punctuation						
Write with technical accuracy of punctuation.						
Use semi-colon, colon and dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses e.g. It's snowing, I am delighted.						
Use of the colon to introduce a list and use of semi-colons within lists.						
Use bullet points to list information.						
Use hyphens to avoid ambiguity e.g. recover or re-cover.						
Spelling and Word Structure						
Apply spelling rules into writing.						
Use the appropriate words according to formality e.g. 'discover' or 'find out', 'ask for' or 'request' or 'go in' or 'enter'.						
Discover synonyms and antonyms for a word and choose the degree of meaning required for the sentence.						
Broadly this will not influence judgement but this is the year 6 benchmark						
Handwriting and presentation						
Write speedily in a joined, legible style.						
Choose the right handwriting style according to purpose e.g. neat and joined for final version and unjoined for labelling a diagram or data.						

Appendix C: Sample of Interview Questions

Questions for Students

Do you enjoy writing lessons? Can you tell me what it is you like/don't like about them?

We have been teaching our writing lessons sentence by sentence. Does this style of teaching help you in writing?

Does this style of writing help you to decide whether your work is successful?

How do you know if it is successful? Is it about ticking off criteria or the impact of your writing on your reader or both?

Do you like the back-and-forth nature of this type of writing – one sentence at a time or do you prefer writing a block?

Is this pace of the lessons manageable? Are you able to keep up or are you waiting for others?

If the lesson is too fast, do you feel able to say so and ask the teacher to slow down?

Appendix D: Opt-out Letter to Parents and Carers of students chosen for interview with audio recording

Dear Parents and Carers,

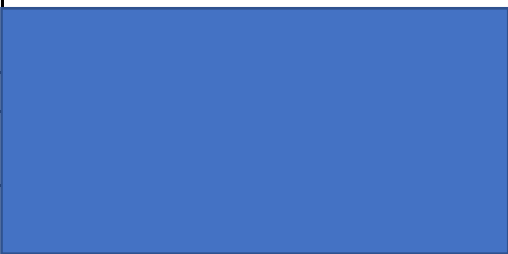
I am currently studying for a MSc in Learning and Teaching at the University of Oxford. As part of my studies, I am conducting a small-scale research project on the learning and teaching of writing with Year 6. One aspect of my research will be to conduct some interviews with the children to capture their thoughts on their learning of writing. Your child has been chosen to be part of this study. I would like to audio record the interviews so that I have an authentic record of what was said. I hope that you are in support of this recording but if for any reason you would prefer to opt-out, please email me by return.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX

Appendix E: CUREC application form

SECTION A: Filter for CUREC 2 application		
This section determines whether the application for ethics review should be made using the this form (CUREC 1A) or the CUREC 2 form (for research with more complex ethical issues).		
Please indicate with an 'X'.	Yes	No
1. Does the research involve the deception of participants?	☐	☒
2. Are the research participants vulnerable in the context of the research, or classed as people whose ability to give free and informed consent is in question ? For example, - Participants aged 16 or under (also answer question A5); - Participants aged 16 – 18 (refer to competent youths for guidance); adults at risk; Note the University's Safeguarding Guidance and Code of Practice and its implications for researchers involving young people or adults at risk.	☐	☒
3. By taking part in the research, will participants be at risk of criminal prosecution or significant harm?	☐	☒
4. Does your research raise issues relevant to the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act (the Prevent Duty), which seeks to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism? Best Practice Guidance 07 on the Prevent Duty provides further guidance.	☐	☒
If you answered 'No' to all the questions above, go to Section B. If you answered 'Yes' to any question above, continue to question 5 below.		
5. Is your project covered by a CUREC Approved Procedure ?	☒	☐
If yes, list the CUREC Approved Procedure(s) you will follow	MLT modus operandi	
If you answered 'Yes' to ANY of questions 1-4, and answered 'No' to question 5, stop completing this form and do not submit it for ethical review. You will instead need to submit a CUREC 2 application form . If you answered 'Yes' to any of questions 1-4, and your project is covered by an Approved Procedure, go on to Section B . If more than one Approved Procedure applies, contact the SSH IDREC or your DREC for advice on whether a CUREC 2 form should be submitted instead.		

SECTION B: Researchers	
1. Name of Principal Investigator or student's supervisor	
2. Department or Institute	
3. University of Oxford telephone number	
4. University of Oxford email address	
Copy and paste the following six rows as necessary to complete for each additional researcher who will be involved in this study, including student(s) and those external to the University.	
5. Name of researcher or student	XXXX

6.	Department or Institute	Department of Education	
7.	University of Oxford telephone number	NA	
8.	University of Oxford email address		
9.	Role in research	MLT student	
10.	Degree programme, if student research	MSc	
The whole research team			
11.	Have the researchers undertaken research ethics and integrity training?	Yes ☒	No ☐
12.	Please provide details of any research ethics and integrity training undertaken, including the dates of the training. Alternatively state relevant research experience.	Research Integrity Training weblearn@oucs.ox.ac.uk 15 October 2022	
13.	State any conflicts of interest and explain how these will be addressed.	None	

SECTION C: The research project	
1.	Title of the research project
Sentence Level Scaffolding in the writing of English in Year 6	
2.	Anticipated start date of the aspect of the research project involving human participants and/ or personal data (dd/mm/yy).
	10.01.22
3.	Anticipated research end date (dd/mm/yy).
	31.08.22
4.	Provide a brief lay summary of the aims and objectives of the research. This should cover the questions it will answer and any potential benefits. (max 300 words)
I am a MLT student, and the study is a small-scale research and development project. The main aim of this proposed research project is to investigate and answer the following research question, 'What is the impact of using sentence-level scaffolds for the teaching and learning of writing in English in a mixed ability Year 6 group?' By conducting this research, it is hoped that a conclusion will be reached to determine whether or not this explicit teaching strategy is effective for the teaching and learning of writing within the Year 6 classroom. There are several potential benefits of this research: the general improvement in understanding the learning and teaching of writing, generally and in context, by conducting focused research on it; the provision of research to inform practitioners as to whether this is a suitable strategy to establish within the Year 6 classroom and our wider school context; the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues on the development of the learning and teaching of writing; the possibility to capture pupil voice on their thoughts on how they learn best; the potential improved writing ability of pupils and published results; the potential for children to enjoy writing more; and, the chance to share the findings with the other school in our Multi Academy Trust and the wider community.	

5. Please indicate the methods to be used (indicate with an 'X'):	
Analysis of existing records	☐
Snowball sampling (recruiting through contacts of existing participants)	☐
Use of casual or local workers e.g. interpreters (refer to guidance in BPG 01: Researcher safety)	☐
Participant observation	☐
Covert observation	☐
Observation of specific organisational practices	☐
Participant completes questionnaire in hard copy	☐
Participant completes online questionnaire or other online task (refer to guidance in BPG 06: Internet-mediated research)	☐
Using social media to recruit or interact with participants (refer to guidance in BPG 06: Internet-mediated research)	☐
Participant performs paper and pencil task	☒
Participant performs verbal or aural task (e.g. for linguistic study)	☐
Focus group	☐
Interview (refer to guidance in BPG 10: Conducting research interviews)	☒
Audio recording of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	☒
Video recording of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	☐
Photography of participant (you will generally need specific consent from participants for this)	☐
Others (please specify below)	☐
6. Provide a brief summary of the research design and methods. What will research participants be asked to do? (max 300 words) Please also submit a copy of the questions participants will be asked, if applicable, or some information about the sorts of topics that will be covered.	
Research design - the current Year 6 class will be split into two mixed ability groups. This grouping will be undertaken by myself and another collaborating teacher to gain impartiality. One group will be taught using current practice and the other will be taught using an explicit sentence-level scaffolding approach. This strategy will take place over a two-to-three-week period while one unit of English is taught. At the end of the schedule, the students will write an independent piece. This assessment will be moderated by the second teaching practitioner to ensure the results are robust. The class data will be analysed as a whole but, in addition, there will be an individual focus on anonymised students working towards and above the expected class level. The data will be compared to another Key Stage 2 class to consider whether there are any similarities or contrasts in trends. The ethical consideration of teaching the class using different methods has been explored with the Head Teacher and CEO who are satisfied that both practices maintain our high teaching standards. Methodology - a mixed-method task design will be employed for this research. The quantitative methodology aspect will be achieved by the assessment of the independent writing against the School's Teacher Assessment Framework. This give a numerical score which will be used for comparison. For the qualitative methodology, interviews	

will be conducted with collaborating teachers involved in the project and with students from the determined groups – see attached copy of questions for participants. By using both methods, it is hoped that the nuances of how students and teachers experience the learning and teaching of writing will be captured and will add colour to the outline provided by the quantitative data.			
7. List the location(s) where the research will be conducted, including any other countries.	The research will be conducted at my school in Hertfordshire, UK.		
8. Clarify which parts of the research will be conducted in-person and which will take place remotely, e.g. online .	All of the research will be conducted in-person.		
9. If your research involves fieldwork or travel and your department requires a travel risk assessment, will you have completed and returned a risk assessment form beforehand? Please indicate with an 'X'. (This must be approved by your department before you travel. If you are travelling overseas, you are advised to take out University travel insurance .) Refer to guidance available from your Department, the Safety Office , the Social Sciences Division , and the Humanities Division , and on travel for University business .	Yes	☐	
	No	☐	
	Not required in this instance	☒	
10. In the case of international or collaborative research, explain how you will address any ethical issues specific to the local context. Please provide details of the local review, approval or permission obtained or required. Refer to the BPG 16: Social science research conducted outside the UK. If there will be no local review, explain why not. Please also address any physical or psychological risks for Oxford researchers and local fieldworkers in Section G.			
For collaborative research, the PI should keep a written record of evidence of whether ethics approval is also required by the collaborating institution(s) or whether the latter is prepared to rely on the ethics approval of the University of Oxford (where Oxford is the lead institution). Where ethics approval is required by the collaborating institution(s), copies of the other ethics applications (and confirmation of approval) should be submitted to the DREC or IDREC.			
11. Name of departmental/ peer reviewer (if applicable)	NA		
12. External organisation funding the research and grant reference (if applicable)	NA		
13. Please refer to the CUREC Best Practice Guidance and list any that have been used to develop your research.	None		

SECTION D: Recruitment of research participants

1. Number of participants	31
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2. How was the number of participants decided?	The number of participants was determined by the class size. It is felt that this should be sufficient to achieve useful results and would be manageable to undertake.	
3. Age range of participants	10-11 years old	
4. Inclusion criteria	Year 6 students	
5. Exclusion criteria	None	
6. Indicate with an 'X' all intended recruitment methods Please submit copies of the recruitment material that will be used, e.g. advertisement text, introductory email text.	Poster advert	☐
	Flyer	☐
	Email circulation	☐
	Social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook)	☐
	Website	☐
	In-person approach	☐
	Snowball sampling	☐
	Recruitment sites (e.g. Mechanical Turk)	☐
	Existing contacts or volunteer database	☒
	Other (please specify):	☐
7. How will potential participants be identified and approached?	This research will take place as modus operandi as part of my usual school day.	
8. Will informed consent be obtained from the research participants or their parents/ guardians? If not, please explain why not.	As these students are my current class, the research will be practiced withing my modus operandi. As such, I will seek approval from my Head Teacher.	
9. For each activity or group of participants, explain how informed consent will be obtained from the participants themselves and/ or their parents/ guardians, if applicable. How will their consent be recorded?	Informed written approval will be re obtained from my Head Teacher – see attached letter.	
10. Provide details of any payments and incentives and the rationale for providing these. Further guidance in Best Practice Guidance: 05 Payments and incentives in research.	None	
11. Describe how participants may withdraw from the study	All of the activities proposed within the task design are considered to be usual classroom practice. However, pupils will be allowed to opt out if any research	

may withdraw any personal information they have provided from the study State any limits to withdrawal, for example once the data has been anonymised or at some other specified stage prior to publication. Make sure participants are aware of any withdrawal limits.	processes go beyond usual practice, for instance, if pupils are asked to be involved in interviews at the end of the school day or over lunch.
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SECTION E: Research data

All information provided by participants is considered research data for the purpose of this form. Any research data from which participants can be identified is known as [personal data](#); any personal data which is sensitive is considered [special category data](#). Management of personal data, either directly or via a third party, must comply with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, as set out in the [University's Guidance on Data Protection and Research](#).

In answering the questions below, please also consider the points raised in the [Data Protection Checklist](#) and [Data Protection Screening Assessment](#) and whether, for higher-risk data processing, a separate [Data Protection Impact Assessment](#) may also be required for the research. Advice on research data management and security is available from [Research Data Oxford](#) and your local IT department. Advice on data protection is available from the [Information Compliance team](#).

For guidance on conducting internet-mediated research, refer to CUREC's [Best Practice Guidance 06: Internet-mediated research](#).

1. What data will be collected? (Indicate with an 'X')			
Screening documents	☐	Task results (e.g. questionnaires, diaries)	☐
Consent records (e.g., written consent forms, audio-recorded consent, assent forms)	☐	IP addresses (refer to Best Practice Guidance 09: Data collection, protection and management for guidance)	☐
Contact details for the purpose of this research only	☐	Field notes	☐
Contact details for future use (guidance)	☐	Photographs	☐
Opt-out forms	☒	Information about the health of the participant (including mental health)	☐
Audio recordings	☒	Previously collected (secondary) data	☐
Video recordings	☐	Data already in the public domain. Specify the source of the data:	☐
Transcript of audio/ video recordings	☐	Other, please specify: children's independent writing will be analysed.	☒

2. During the course of the research, where will each type of research data be stored?	Assessed paper samples of independent writing are kept in school within a child's writing portfolio accompanied by the Teacher's Assessment Framework document which catalogues and tracks their progress. This is our standard practice.		
3. Who will have access to the research data during the project?	Research data will be available to the teacher collaborating with me on my research and my Head Teacher. This is usual practice for writing assessments in our school.		
4. Please complete this section if your research involves the use of secondary (i.e. previously collected) data.	Please indicated with an 'X'.	Yes	No
	Are data access agreements in place for access to and use of this secondary data? (If so, please attach these.)	☐	☐
	Did the individuals agree that their data could be used for this purpose?	☐	☐
	Could anyone (including members of the research team) link the data back to an individual or individuals? If this is a possibility, please explain how the associated ethical issues will be addressed:	☐	☐
5. How do you intend to share the research data at the end of the project?	Depositing in a specialist data centre or archive	☐	
	Submitting to a journal to support a publication	☐	
	Depositing in an institutional repository	☐	
	Dissemination via a project or institutional website	☐	
	No plans to share the data	☐	
	Other (please specify): Verbally presented to staff at a staff meeting.	☒	
6. How do you intend to report and disseminate the results of the research? (Indicate with an 'X')	Thesis publication	☐	
	Publication in a peer reviewed journal	☐	
	Publicly available report	☐	
	Conference presentation	☐	
	Publication on a website	☐	
	Report to a research funder	☐	
	Providing participants with a lay summary of the results	☐	

	Submission for academic assessment	☒
	Other (please specify):	☐
7. Explain what will happen to the data at the end of the research project. This question must be answered for each type of data, including completed consent forms.		
All data for academic assessment submission will be anonymised. Raw data will be kept securely in school in line with usual practice.		

SECTION F: Protection of research participants and their personal data		
1. How identifiable will the participants be from the research outputs? (Indicate with an 'X')	Directly identifiable from the information included	☐
	Pseudonymised / indirectly identifiable	☐
	Not identifiable – data is anonymous	☒
	Other, please specify:	☐
2. To what extent will the data be de-identified? How identifiable will any individuals be from the research data? Describe any measures you will take towards assuring confidentiality, potential risks to confidentiality.	All data will be anonymous. There are multiple children in each category so it will not be possible to identify individuals.	
3. How will you ensure that third parties (e.g., interpreters and transcribers) are aware of and adhere to the measures described in this form?	NA	

SECTION G: Risks and benefits of the research	
1.	Will the research involve topics that could be considered sensitive ? If so:

a. Please provide more detail or supporting information (such as the interview questions) to show the range of questions; b. Explain what steps will be taken to reduce risk of distress; c. Consider seeking advice from within your Department or from the ethics committee including whether the application might benefit from additional ethics review (e.g., via a CUREC 2 application).
No
2. Describe any additional burden or risks to the participants and the steps you will take to address these.
None
3. Describe any physical or psychological risks to the researcher(s) (including local fieldworkers or research assistants) and the steps you will take to address these.
None
4. Describe any benefits of the research, both to participants and to others.
There are several potential benefits of this research: the general improvement in understanding the learning and teaching of writing, generally and in context, by conducting focused research on it; the provision of research to inform practitioners as to whether this is a suitable strategy to establish within the Year 6 classroom and our school context; the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues on the development of the learning and teaching of writing; the possibility to capture pupil voice on their thoughts on how they learn best; the potential improved writing ability of pupils and published results; and, the chance to share the findings with the other school in our Multi Academy Trust and the wider community. To the participants – there will be the added benefit of contributing their voice to the project and to the way writing in English is taught in our school.
5. Give details of any other ethical issues or relevant information.
None

SECTION H: Professional guidelines		
Please indicate with an 'X' at least one set of professional guidelines you will follow.		
Research specialism/ methodology	Association and guidance	
Anthropology	Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK	☐

Computer Science	ACM Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct	☐
Criminology	British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethics	☐
Education	British Educational Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research	☒
Geography	American Association of Geographers Statement on Professional Ethics	☐
History	Oral History Society of the UK Ethical Guidelines	☐
Internet-mediated research	Association of Internet Researchers Ethical Guidelines British Psychological Society: Ethics Guidelines for internet-mediated research Association for Computing Machinery Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct	☐
Management	Academy of Management Code of Ethics	☐
Political Science	American Political Science Association (APSA) Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science	☐
Politics	Political Studies Association. Guidelines for Good Professional Conduct	☐
Psychology	British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct	☐
Social research	Social Research Association: Ethical Guidelines	☐
Socio-legal studies	Socio-Legal Studies Association: Statement of Principles of Ethical Research Practice	☐
Sociology	The British Sociological Association: Statement of Ethical Practice	☐
Visual research	ESRC National Centre for Research Methods Review Paper: Visual Ethics: Ethical Issues in Visual Research	☐
Other professional guidelines	List any other guidelines used here.	☐

SECTION I: Endorsements and signatures

Please ensure this form is endorsed by the [Principal Investigator](#) (or student's supervisor), the Head of Department (or nominee) and, if student research, by the student themselves.

The SSH IDREC Secretariat accepts either option below. If you have a [DREC](#), check which signature option it prefers.

- **Option 1: direct email endorsements**

Each of the signatories should submit an email from a University of Oxford email address, indicating their acceptance of the responsibilities listed below.

- **Option 2: signatures**

Please scan the signed form and email it to us as a PDF. Pasted images of signatures cannot be accepted.

Endorsement by the Principal Investigator/ student supervisor and student, if applicable

I/ we the researchers understand my/ our responsibilities as Principal Investigator (and student, if applicable) as outlined in the guidance on the CUREC website. I/ we declare that the answers above accurately describe the research as presently designed, and that the ethics committee will be informed of any changes to the project which affect the answers to this form.

I/ we will inform the relevant IDREC if the Principal Investigator changes.	
Name of Principal Investigator	
Principal Investigator's signature	Instead of a signature, endorsement may be provided by an email confirming the points above.
Date	
Name of student (if applicable)	
Student's signature	Instead of a signature, endorsement may be provided by an email confirming the points above.
Date	

Departmental endorsement – from the Head of Department or nominee (Another senior member of the department may sign where the head of department is the Principal Investigator, or where the Head of Department has appointed a nominee. Example nominees include Deputy Head of Department, Director of Research, or Director of Graduate/ Undergraduate Studies.)	
I have read the research project application named above. On the basis of the information available to me, I: • consider the PI and student researcher (if applicable) to be aware of their ethical responsibilities in regard to the ethical issues associated with this research; • am satisfied that the proposed design and methodology are sound; the research has been subject to appropriate peer review and is likely to contribute to existing knowledge and/ or to the education and training of the researcher(s) and that it is in the public interest.	
Signature	Instead of a signature, endorsement may be provided by an email confirming the points above.
Name	
Role	
Date	

Appendix F: CUREC approval email from Departmental Research Ethics Committee

'Sentence Level Scaffolding in the writing of English in Year 6'

The above application has been considered on behalf of the Departmental Research Ethics Committee (DREC) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the University for ethical approval of all research involving human participants.

I am pleased to inform you that, based on the information provided to DREC, the proposed research has been judged as meeting appropriate ethical standards, and accordingly, approval has been granted. I would like to remind you that you will be required to update us on any amendments to your study should you need to change your research methods and may need to complete a data protection impact assessment if you use online platforms to conduct and record interviews. There is an application for this, and it is kept separate from the ethics committee. Please see the link below for more information.
<https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/policy/data/checklist>

Please continue to follow all current guidance issued by CUREC during the pandemic, notably COVID-19: CUREC guidance on research involving human participants, <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/coronavirus>

If needed, please follow the guidance on online data collection and research methods issued by the University,

(1) <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/covid-19/data#collapse2299911>

(2) <https://infosec.web.ox.ac.uk/article/guidelines-for-using-zoom>

If relevant, please also check the CUREC website for their best practice research guides, <https://researchsupport.admin.ox.ac.uk/governance/ethics/resources/bpg>

Yours sincerely,





Appendix G: CUREC application request to Head Teacher

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Tel: +44(0)1865 274024 Fax: +44(0)1865 274027
general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk

Director Professor Jo-Anne Baird



20th December 2021

Dear [REDACTED]

I am writing to enquire about conducting research in school this academic year. As you know, I am studying for the Master's in Learning and Teaching at Oxford University, supervised by Nicole Dingwall. In my final research project, "To explore the impact of sentence scaffolding in the writing of English in Year 6", I will investigate and assess the teaching and learning of the writing of Year 6 children with and without the sentence-level scaffolded approach.

The research will take place with the current Year 6 class over a 2- to 3--week period. Working with a colleague, we will divide the class into two mixed ability groups. One will be taught using focused sentence-level scaffolds; the other using our previous standard practice method. The students' work will then be collaboratively assessed using our current Teacher Assessment Framework. I will also look at the results from those children working towards the expected Y6 level and those working at greater depth. The results will be contrasted with writing using this approach in Year 4. Kerry Dench and Jessica Bailey have agreed to collaborate with me on this research project.

By participating in the research, the school would be contributing to a project that will deepen our understanding of the learning and teaching of writing for students, and so contribute towards developing ways of improving attainment for similar students in the school in the future. It will also contribute to English education more widely. I hope to conduct this research during the first of the Spring term. I would also take notes and photocopy some students' written work.

Oxford University has strict ethical procedures on conducting ethical research, consistent with current British Educational Research Association guidelines. The University also recognises, however, that my study is a piece of practitioner research, and that schools already operate with the highest ethical standards. Therefore only **your** formal consent as headteacher is necessary, and not that of individual parents or staff. However, throughout the research, students and other teachers will be able to refuse to participate in any research activities at any time.

All participants, including students, teacher and the school, would be made anonymous in all research reports. The data collected would be kept strictly confidential, available only to my supervisor (Nicole Dingwall – nicole.dingwall@education.ox.ac.uk) and me, and only used for academic purposes. It will be kept for as long as it has academic value.

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

15 Norham Gardens, Oxford OX2 6PY
Tel: +44(0)1865 274024 Fax: +44(0)1865 274027
general.enquiries@education.ox.ac.uk www.education.ox.ac.uk

Director Professor Jo-Anne Baird

If you are happy for me to proceed with this study, please confirm that using the attached reply form. If you have any concerns or need more information about what is involved, please contact me or my supervisor. Further, if you have any questions about this ethics process at any time, please contact the chair of the department's research ethics committee, though: research.office@education.ox.ac.uk

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

XXXX

Appendix H: CUREC approval form from Head Teacher

“Sentence Level Scaffolding in the writing of English in Year 6”



University of Oxford, Department of Education



☐ ~~We do not wish to participate in this project.~~

X We would like to find out more about this project.

X We would like to take part in this project.



Head teacher's signature