

Improving reading comprehension using classroom strategies and Inference Training for groups

Professional development materials, class teaching strategies and a group intervention



classroom strategies KS1-3



group intervention – inference training

professional development for staff



Our training helps schools to improve their pupils' understanding and enjoyment in reading. However, it aims to particularly help those pupils in KS2 and KS3 (Y7/8) who decode adequately but fail to get full meaning and enjoyment from their reading.

The training contains three main elements. The **professional development materials** help schools explore ways of improving comprehension and enjoyment in reading; this includes working with at least 20 pupils at each school to gather comprehension profiles. It also provides **best practice comprehension teaching and learning strategies for class teachers** in KS 1/2/3. Finally it offers **a group intervention of 20 lessons** for pupils who need extra support which connect to ongoing teaching so pupils generalise their skills.

Inference training places importance on professional development in reading comprehension so staff have more clarity about reading comprehension issues. For example, studies reveal that pupils with weak comprehension skills read in different ways to effective readers

Weak comprehenders may...



- Focus on individual words/sentences
- Attach most importance to decoding
- Have a passive style of reading
- Have lower expectations of text making sense and fewer comprehension monitoring strategies
- Read fewer books and are less sensitive to story structure
- Fail to activate background knowledge or visualise
- Apply less integration and inference
- Have a less efficient working memory

Effective readers...



- Know that understanding is the goal of reading
- Activate background knowledge and working memory
- Integrate information/ideas and make inferences to get gist
- Have high expectations of text making sense
- Make predictions, ask own questions and watch out for "answers"
- Can visualise when appropriate
- Monitor meaning, notice breakdown and use breakdown strategies
- Read frequently and enjoy reading

Professional development

Improving reading comprehension and Inference training has at its core a range of engaging, professional development materials for school staff. Adults in school are generally expert readers who use comprehension strategies so automatically they are often unaware of how they actually do this. It is therefore often hard for staff to understand the difficulties some pupil's experience. The training aims to improve adult awareness of the challenges some readers face, so that adults feel better equipped to help. It also includes a toolkit to have conversations with sample pupils about texts to gain insight into what strengths and weaknesses pupils' experience. The trainer works together with staff to gather 20 pupil profiles so outcomes can be analysed.

Class teaching and learning strategies

The training draws on a range of current research about what works to outline key classroom and school wide strategies to improve reading comprehension and enjoyment. Separate sections of the training address issues at KS1, KS2 and KS3.

A group intervention of 20 lessons-inference training

The training offers a group intervention for pupils who need extra support to recalibrate how they read. A group session involves a teacher/teaching assistant having "instructional conversations" to help make comprehension strategies explicit. Four pupils work with an adult for 40 minutes, twice a week for 20 lessons. Through reading and interactive discussions, the group:

- Activate and apply prior knowledge to their reading and use title cues to predict
- Identify words/phrases they don't understand and use repair strategies
- Identify key words and elaborate on them to enhance meaning, and develop vocabulary
- As they read, ask their own questions and watch out for answers
- Generate inferences and integrate meaning as they read to build a gist
- Summarise a short text extract using visualisation, quick drawings, picto-words and a 10 word headline
- Retell an extract to emphasise the gist

The materials

The inference training materials include whiteboard discs and DVDs of lessons and a folder with 45 short text extracts for KS2 and KS3 pupils with support notes for adults. Many extracts are from recent award winning titles which have been carefully chosen to contain rich opportunities for pupils to discuss and enjoy. Further readings of the texts are also recommended using multiple copies so that pupils can apply their skills to whole texts.

Impact

Inference training-the group intervention- featured in both the 2007 and 2013 editions of Professor Greg Brook's study *What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties?* Both editions identified inference training as an intervention that offers **significant gains for pupils with weak comprehension skills**. The latest pupil impact data from 326 pupils in KS2 and KS3 shows that during inference training sessions, most pupils make 2 sub-levels progress in reading or an increase in reading comprehension of 12 months over 8-10 weeks.

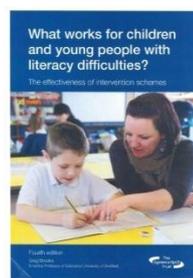


Marriott Primary School in Leicester comments that ... *“it empowers the children and gives them more control and insight in their reading. They understand that there is much more to reading than decoding. For us adults, the training and teaching makes us understand the task of the reader much more. The pupils enjoy the sessions enormously.”*

Millie aged 10 . *“When I read, I never used to picture things in my head before and now I do.”*
George aged 11 . *“It helps to show what you have to do when you read, and I like the talking we do in the group.”*

Y8 students at Sir Jonathan North School enjoy the small group learning context and comment... *“the talking in a group helps us to read with more understanding and enjoyment. You share ideas about how to read so you understand clearly and learn from each other”.*

Training for Schools



Acknowledgements

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Key Information about Inference Training

- Training consists of 3 components-professional development , whole class teaching strategies in KS1-3 and a group intervention which was highly recommended in Professor Greg Brooks' study *What works for children and young people with literacy difficulties*
- Training for accredited trainers is hosted by the Institute of Education in London. Trainers undertake a wide range of work in addition to inference training

- The group intervention is for pupils who decode adequately but experience comprehension difficulties. Four pupils work with an adult (trained Level 2/3 TA or Teacher) for 40 minutes a session, twice a week for 10 weeks. (20 lessons)
- Groups that received 20 lessons made an average of 12 months progress in comprehension age (2/3 sub levels)
- The Inference Folder is only available to schools that access the training.

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