

Report of Clicker trial in Wensum Junior School, Norwich

This study was carried out at Wensum Junior School. The school currently has 202 children on roll with 25% on the special educational needs register. The school sits in an area of significant social and economic disadvantage - one of the six 'opportunity areas' in the country. 48% of our children receive pupil premium funding. Current government statistics show that nationally by the age of 16, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are on average 20.1 months behind their non-disadvantaged peers. At Wensum this is not the case, provision is well placed and the needs of disadvantaged pupils are being met through a dynamic curriculum and targeted provision. The recent Ofsted (Jan, 2018) reported:

"Leaders identify pupils' needs quickly and precisely and then put in place appropriate support and monitor its impact. As a result, pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make good progress and are developing greater confidence in their learning."

Summary

The study took place across two classes in Year 5. Staff training with the software took place in September 2017 and teachers were confidently using it within 4 weeks of the start of term. Work samples were gathered from 10 children. The positive effect of Clicker was evident in all the samples; this was consistent across gender and ability. Of the 10 children sampled, only 3 had recent experience of using the program. This was not an apparent advantage at the end of the trial; all children had reached a similar level of competency. The writing at the end of the study clearly contained more words, a wider range of technical and topic based vocabulary, an increase in multi-syllabic words and an increase in the level of independent working, demonstrating a higher level of confidence to write without constant prompting. This new-found level of independence has been an incredible success for the children taking part, and has provided a much-needed boost for improved attitudes towards the writing process. Teachers have provided positive comments about the provision and have worked hard to ensure that their training is used to provide a platform for success for the children involved. During monitoring exercises, it was delightful to see the progress that was being made in a relatively short period of time (12 weeks).

Background

Clicker has been used sporadically throughout the school over the past few years. A previous version of Clicker was installed on teachers' laptops, but a site license had not been purchased. Consequently, the usage was varied and generally only those teachers who felt confident with using the software were building the provision into their daily practice. The latest version of Clicker is much easier to use in comparison, and has excellent new features. The staff involved reported significant benefits of using differentiated and easy-to-personalise Word Banks. The mind map tool was excellent for whole class work and for helping those children with working memory problems to make connections and plan their writing.

Purpose

This study was carried out to investigate the significance of using Clicker to support those children who find the writing process challenging. Children with additional needs and those without were included in the study.

Results and conclusions

Time restraints in school have meant that a smaller sample of work has been analysed than I would have ideally wanted. However, it has been possible to look in detail at the work of those children with a greater need for support. In the future I would also like to investigate the work of those children with less additional need. A lack of laptops for running the software was the main obstacle; hence why only one year group was targeted in the study. During pupil progress meetings comments from the teachers were gathered, and parent comments were gathered during EHCP reviews and parent/teacher consultations (pupil voice is to be recorded through an online survey).

Table 1: Averages of all pupils comparing use of Clicker

	No. multi-syllabic words	No. legible sentences	No. grammatical/spelling mistakes	No. words written in one writing session
Average without using Clicker	9.5	5.62	8.11	51
Average using Clicker	27.3	11.27	3.4	123.5
Gains	2.9 times	2 times	-2.39 times	2.41 times

The data above proves that Clicker has had a great impact on those children using it. Twice the number of legible sentences were written, nearly three times the amounts of multi-syllabic words were used, and just under half as many grammatical errors were made.

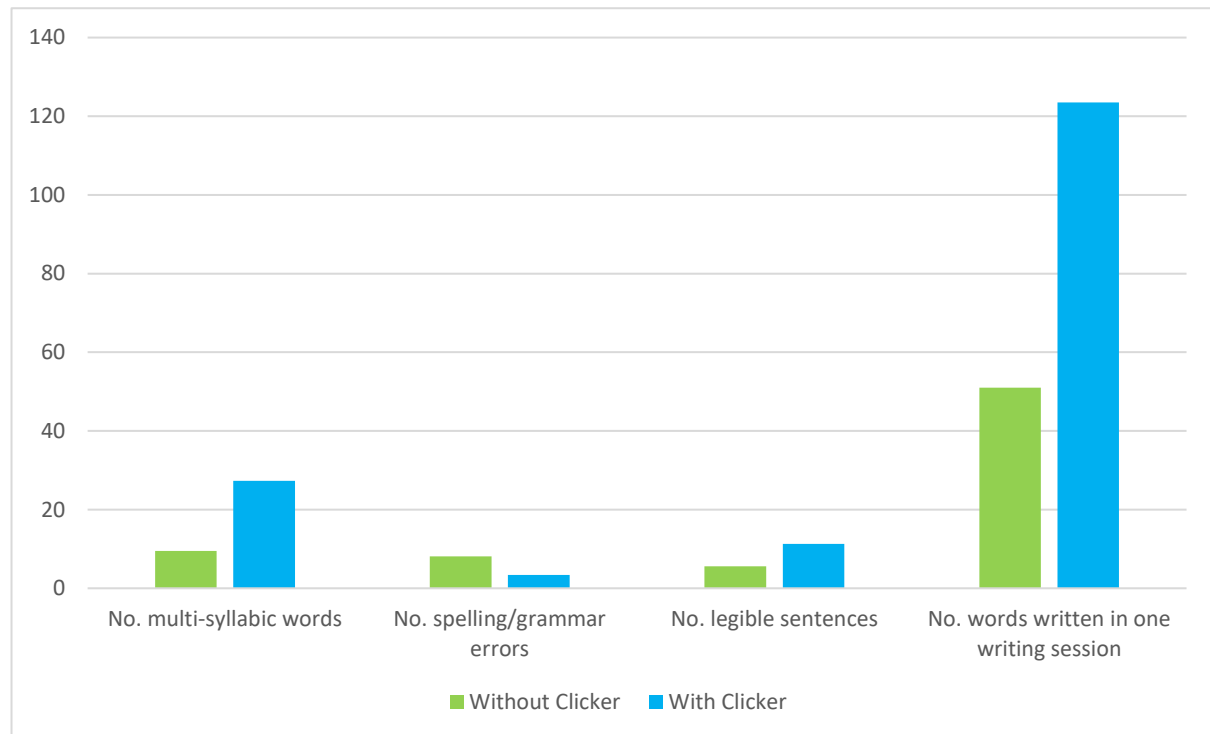
The results however do not quantifiably show the improvement in independence experienced. Teachers reported a significant decline in incidents of help being requested by the children. Pupils also spent longer working alone than previously before the introduction of Clicker. This was documented during monitoring of exercise books; for example, six of the books scrutinised had three times the amount of independent work recorded during the spring term than at the start of the autumn term.

During learning walks it was also very clear to see that children using Clicker had longer concentration time and were on task talking about their work - this is in contrast to the learning behaviour displayed by these children in previous terms. Additionally, the atmosphere in the classroom was calmer, with the teacher being able to access more children. Those using Clicker had greater success independently, and did not overly rely on additional teacher support.

Children who were able writers had more access to teacher support for challenge - which previously was difficult as the less able writers were so reliant on the teacher for guidance and supervision. Instead of waiting for prompts, children could use a Word Bank and other writing support tools to

start creating their own sentences quickly; the volume of work they could produce in the time allowed began to improve, and with it came an extra layer of writing confidence.

Figure 1: Impact of using Clicker



The comments expressed by children were extremely positive:

“I enjoy writing using Clicker, without it I find it too hard.”

“I can write more and it is less stressful.”

“It looks neater.”

“Clicker is good fun because it helps you with words, and I love to listen to what I have written.”

“It doesn’t physically hurt my hand to use Clicker.”

Teachers said:

“The children were able to work more independently.”

“The children are much more enthusiastic about writing.”

“It has made lesson materials easy to differentiate, and with 20% of the class being EAL, the read back facility has made the lesson more accessible for all children.”

“The level of independent work in the classroom now is really inspiring.”

Further work across the school is required to establish differences in using Clicker; we need to resource each year group with this program and repeat the study. However, our initial investigations have been overwhelmingly positive in favour of this intervention supporting an inclusive learning environment.