

“The first Deadeye lesson went really well and was observed by an Education Officer you in West Lothian Council and is a former head teacher as part of the VSE last week. She loved it! She said the lesson/teaching & learning was “very good” with elements of “excellence”. She emphasised the importance of how children need to have experiences to write about rather than just thinking up a story.

The Over to You lessons are great for non-specialist teachers like me. They are so easy to follow. Having worked with Louise for a couple of years I’m confident that I know what good drama lessons look like and I know the benefits for the children.

Where I struggle is actually coming up with the ideas. Part of that struggle is also time constraints to actually write a script or storyline. The Over to You lessons are perfect as I have you and Louise in the room. I get to do all the supporting teacher bits like demonstrating techniques in role and really getting into the nitty gritty with groups/pairs. The stressful teaching part is already taken care of. The lessons are progressive and it’s clear to see which skills are being covered. The children also love them and I can’t stress this enough.

I think I’ve told you before but my P6s consist of 21 boys and 7 girls. I have 2 boys identified with autism and another 3 going through the diagnosis process at the moment. I also have 3 different boys identified as having dyslexia and a girl who has global learning difficulties (she works at around a P2 level for literacy and maths). They are a tough class who are very active, loud and there’s a lot of reluctant writers. They’d just rather be outside kicking a football than sitting down with paper and a pencil.

The class hadn’t had specific drama lessons until January this year. Previous teachers covered the outcomes through some games, class assemblies and nativities. As we know this isn’t actually enough but again this highlights a lack of confidence, time and support to teach drama. The difference in my class over these 2.5 months is incredible. They are so confident now and are eager to get into role and give things a go. In the beginning they were very shy when performing, voices were too quiet to hear and some just didn’t want to showcase what they had done. Now every child performs with growing confidence. They have been giving each other feedback such as making sure they face the audience, use a louder voice etc. They came up with the success criteria for our Deadeye lesson after brainstorming what was meant by “improvisation”. (This was another tick from the Education Officer).

Using drama really levels the playing field for the children with additional support needs, particularly in the follow up writing lessons. I have found myself redundant at times because every child is “in flow” and I haven’t wanted to disturb them.

My dyslexic children have written more than they ever have before and their confidence is through the roof. We’ve been able to focus on specific writing skills such as building suspense, the correct punctuation for direct speech and spelling. Usually children spend so long trying to come up with something to write that there’s no time to actually teach in depth! I just can’t rate the lessons highly enough.”

Natalie Marnie

