

Professional Learning project in Writing

Stephen Graham Professional Learning

'Explicitly Teaching Children to Write' Learning Writing, Grammar and Punctuation

A Learning Partnerships program Mid City Motel Ballarat 05/06/14

T. Shaw 2014

How can we explicitly teach children to write including grammar and punctuation?

About literacy teaching in our system (healthy comparisons?)

Our education system teaches literacy well.

Pisa says all education systems are different and have challenges (not so in some of the schools we are told to aspire too) We also have students being taught in very remote areas. Sydney University says we should compare Finland to Canberra. Parents in Finland are more literate. In Australia we spend less per head on primary education than like countries.

Australian teachers reflect on practice. In our system we see significant value added in our reading data but we have a gap between reading and writing. The gap is widening and needs to be addressed.



Writing

Two demands in writing are knowledge of content and then we need the literacy.

In order to teach literacy children need a shared language - grammar

Grammar- works at whole text level, sentence and word level (nouns, verbs etc)

Australian curriculum has simplified word level grammar.

Sentence level grammar requires us to teach children how to write simple, complex (in narratives) and compound sentences.

Text level grammar means we can identify the type of writing we need for a particular audience. (narrative, procedure, persuasive etc)

Grammar cannot be taught generically it has to be taught embedded in text.

Example -Information reports

Start an information report with a macro group and then go into micro by being specific. (classifying)

Think information report consistency. Paragraphing can be used to write the micro aspects of an information report.

A report on spiders could be looking at the macro (what is a spider?) and the micro in preceding sentences could be looking at specific spiders.

Writers should be able to look at a item in different contexts such as describing using different perspectives (size, description, function, color, position) At the end of prep children should be able to describe a 'teddy'- doing sentences, position sentences, function sentences, size and number sentences etc)

Children need to write topic sentences and write micro sentences in descriptive sentences.

No personal pronouns in information texts, no active voice sentences in passive non-judgemental texts. At the sentence level you need short succinct sentences. (grammar embedded in text)

Example with Preps writing information report-

Prep student information report for a student: 'Michael'. Children create sentences for a boy in their class- (write a number sentence - Michael is 5) color sentence - (Michael has blonde hair) position, function etc. done orally and then they write sentences. If all sentences start with 'Michael' they could change the sentences to start some with pronouns but then revert back to the name.

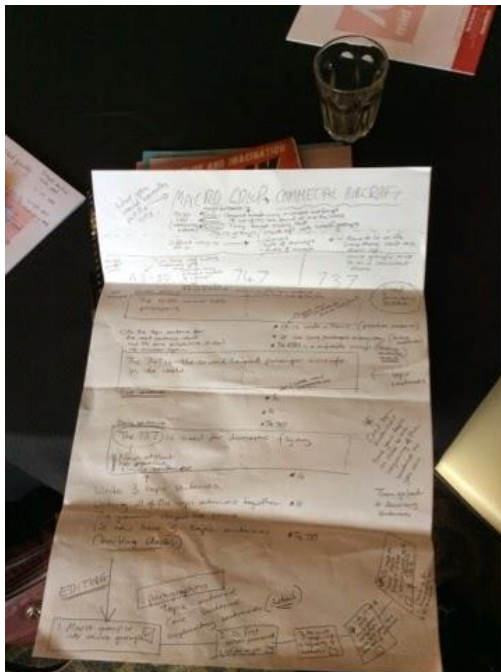
Based on a template presented by Steven Graham 05/06/14

Another example of macro-micro for Preps could be toys as the macro but micro sentences could be about outside toys and inside toys. (Toys inside are soft. Toys outside are hard.)

Consistent tense

Auxiliary verbs like- is, has, was etc helps to determine tense. (was, were and had however are needed for recounts.) These are hard to learn but are essential

Steven showed us explicitly how to write a information report especially writing paragraphs. (refer photo of my notes)



Grammar is shared language - He emphasised that we remember: structure macro into micro, write short sentences, visual literacy such as graphs and diagrams and pictures can be used but ensure they underline a core sentence first so that they get visual literacy to match the sentences not just the first picture they find on Google.

Steven showed us a text written by a high school student showing a good quality text that started with explicit teaching of writing.

Steven 'stunned' the audience by saying that information texts do not need conclusions. You do need a purpose for writing the text and that may require a concluding statement. It needs to be a third person evaluative (role, importance, purpose) comment linked to the purpose of the report.

Show kids about tense with relating verbs. This is very important (is, are, has are present if you have was, were, had then it is past tense.) We do it well with action verbs but not relating.

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There are 9 major text type genre to learn.

We participated in a matching task on our table (matching text types with examples of text)

Steven said that we might find it hard to identify genres that we don't teach particularly well.

In description writing have children describe themselves and objects and then to start describing literary characters. You need to be able to describe a literary object to write narratives. This is at the upper end of writing skills. Little kids need to practice describing sentences (orally) describe your weekend, describe your little sister etc.

He reminded us about the difference between genre and form. Form could be a letter or a poem for example.(for example a haiku is a description but The Man From Snowy River is a narrative.)



Grammar at the sentence level

In English we use 3 levels of sentence- simple (just one verb) , compound (more than 1 verb) and complex (more than 1 verb independent and dependent clause)

Punctuation- using capital letters and full stops. If children have problems putting them in then have them read their own work and look for verbs .He suggested that children have no

more than 2 verbs per sentence and he suggested that we circle verbs in their writing and ask them about where full stops and capitals should be.

The secret of getting complex sentences in narratives is getting them to use conjunctions and joining words such as: and, but, or, nor, yet (used probably too much but good at creating complex sentence. Steven calls them 'friendly joining words') Subordinating conjunctions such as: until, however and since which are looked for by NAPLAN test markers.

Conjunctions can be used at the start of the sentence (We can put 'because' at the start of a sentence) If you do that you need an independent clause.

We spent some time writing different kinds of sentences and completing a grammar quiz.

In the afternoon session we practiced using Steven's scaffold for a persuasive text

While writing our own persuasive texts in groups we used a joint language and edited it. Steven stressed the need to model sentences. Persuasive text should be present tense but examples are usually past tense which can cause confusion. So when writing examples you will need to practice using different tense.

Two most important things to learn:

- Don't believe that in Australia we have literacy teaching wrong. We don't because good teachers in Australia reflect on their practice.
- There are 9 types of writing genre. We can scaffold writing for information and persuasive texts. We need a shared language to use with children with their writing.

This was a very productive professional learning session. I took away a lot of ideas that I can immediately use in class from Prep to grade 6. I will start by using the information text scaffold with the grade 4s to write a report on spiders and a persuasive text scaffold for the grade 6 students on initially topics of their own choice following my example. I will also give the grade 1 and 2 students the chance to try simple information texts rather than narratives and recounts that they normally do with their daily writing. I think these scaffolds if used as Steven demonstrated with us will be very effective at improving the quality of the children's writing.

From the Learning with Literature Blog

<http://learningwithliteraturegpps.blogspot.com.au/>

17/06/14

After several weeks of trialling the information scaffold with my grade 6 and grade 4 students (samples attached) I believe that this is an effective model to use when teaching children how to write information reports. The feedback from them has been very positive and they are very pleased and impressed with the quality of information they have created and more importantly how coherently their information is presented. I have decided not to

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include the editing section I originally attached. I won't include the vocabulary boxes Graham included on his either. Once we have completed more of these together based on themes that we are studying in class I'll let them try using the scaffold by them. I will also look at changing some of the description words. (Possibly adding one or two others)

Information Support Scaffold

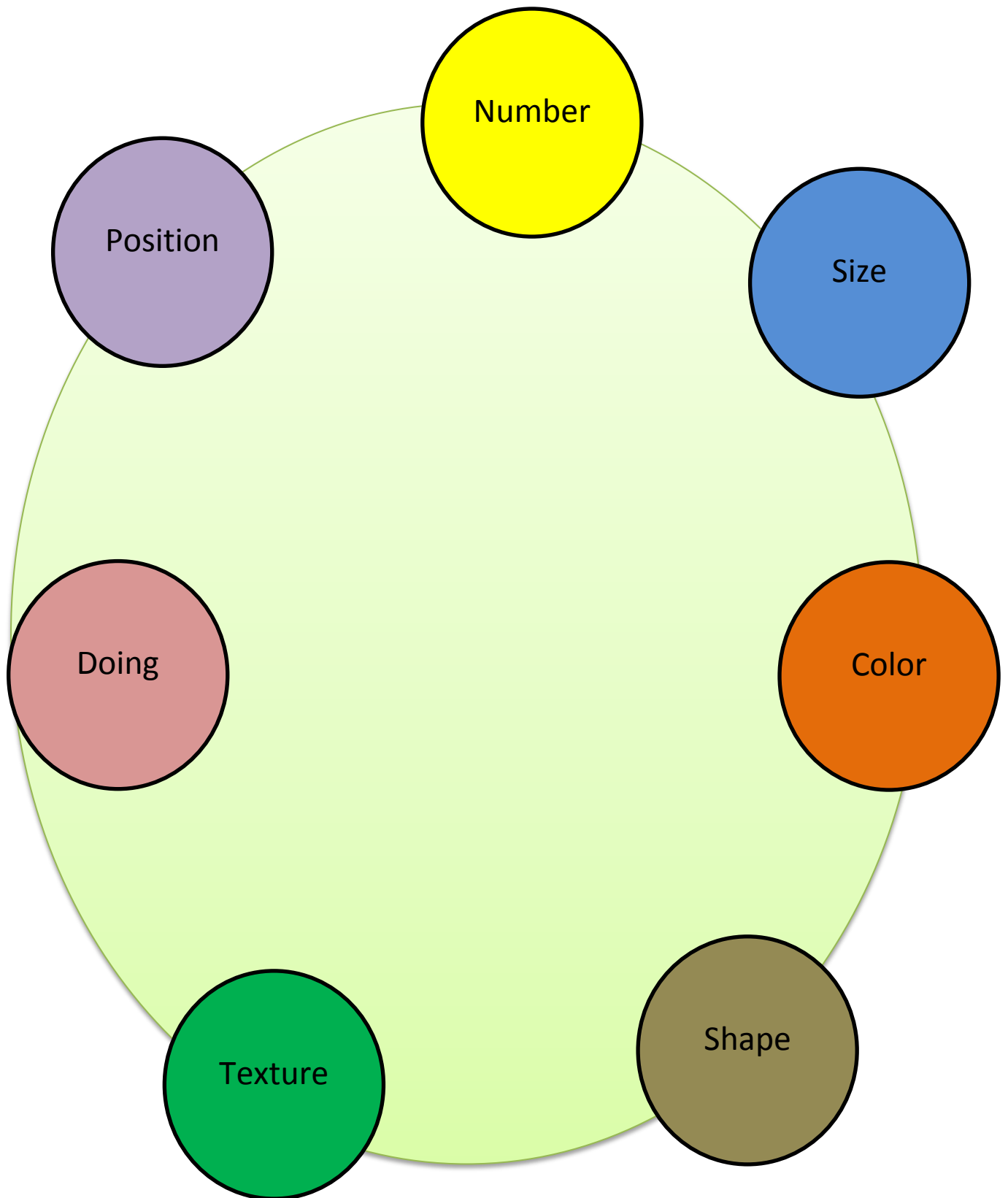
General Statement		
Introduction sentences (macro sentences) * * *		
Micro group boxes		
Linking sentence		
Description (Use describing bubble)		
Conclusion sentences		
Visual Literacy		

Editing (Check-off)

Go back to your macro group and circle relating verbs. Check for consistent tense	Macro group and into micro group	No first person pronouns	Are micro groups close to the beginning of sentences?	Look at one of your micro group paragraphs. Check that you've described 3 sentences
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Information Report

Describing Bubble



Exposition Writing Scaffold (To trial in term 4)

Statement of Position (Macro)

Introduction

*
*
*

Linking sentence

Example

Example

Example

Concluding statement

Editing (Check-off)

3 arguing
sentences




No personal
pro-nouns in
arguing
sentences

Is there a
defining
sentence at the
start?

Check that you
have got a
linking sentence
with mid to high
modal verbs.

Used the same
mid to high
modal verb in
your concluding
sentence.

Information Support Scaffold

General Statement Spiders in Australia		
Introduction sentences (macro sentences) *Spiders are found all over Australia (location) *Spiders come in various colors but are mostly camouflaged with their environment (colors) *Spiders can be quite small and large (size)		
Micro group boxes Red back spiders are poisonous. (doing)	Huntsman spiders can be found in most houses (number)	Funnel web spiders are black (color)
Linking sentence There are many different types of spiders in Australia		
Description (Use describing bubble)		
They can be found under sheets of metal (location) They have a bite that is poisonous (texture) Red back spiders have a red stripe on their backs (color)		
They can be as big as a man's hand (size) They are very hairy (texture) The huntsman spider is brown (color)		
They are found in new South Wales (location) They are black. Funnel Web spider bite is very poisonous to humans (doing)		
Conclusion sentences		
Visual Literacy		
Photo of red back spider show its distinctive red color. 	Close up of huntsman showing how hairy it is. 	Map of location of funnel web spiders. 

Editing (Check-off)

Go back to your macro group and circle relating verbs. Check for consistent tense	Macro group into micro group	No first person pronouns	Are micro groups close to the beginning of sentences?	Look at one of your micro group paragraphs. Check that you've described 3 sentences.
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Spiders in Australia

Spiders are found all over Australia. They come in various colors but are mostly camouflaged with their environment. They can be both small and very large. They can be harmless and very poisonous.

There are many different types of spiders in Australia. These are some well known ones

Red back spiders are poisonous. They can be found under sheets of metal. They have a bite that is poisonous. Red back spiders have a red stripe on their backs.



Huntsman spiders can be found in most houses. They can be as big as a man's hand. They are very hairy. The huntsman spider is brown






Funnel web spiders are black in color. They are found in New South Wales .They are black
Funnel Web spider bite is very poisonous to humans.



By T. Shaw

Information Support Scaffold

General Statement Swans in Australia		
Introduction sentences (macro sentences) *Swans are found all over Australia (location) *Native swans in Australia are black.(colors) *Swans are the largest waterbirds in Australia. (size)		
Micro group boxes Black swans. (doing)	White swans were introduced to Australia in the 1890s (number)	
Linking sentence Black s swans are native to Australia		
Description (Use describing bubble)		
They can be found all over Australia except in Cape York.. (position) They have grey feathers when they are babies.(texture) Black swans eat algae and weeds.(doing)		
They are all black except for their white flight feathers.(color) When not in season, they form large flocks (number) Black swans have long slender necks (shape)		
They were introduced to Western Australia in the 1890s. (location) They are only 80 swans on the Northam River in Western Australia.(number) White swans can weigh as much as 15 kg.(size)		
Conclusion sentences		
Visual Literacy		
Map of where black swans are found. 	Photo of introduced white swans. 	Black swan photo 

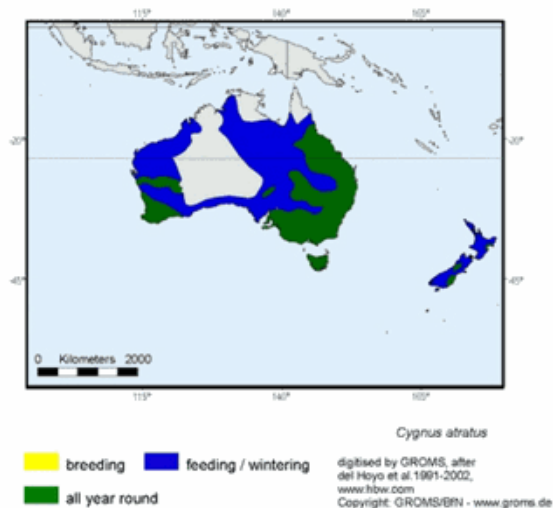
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Swans in Australia

Swans are found all over Australia. Native swans in Australia are black. Swans are the largest waterbirds in Australia.

Black swans are native to Australia. They can be found all over Australia except in Cape York. They have grey feathers when they are babies.



Black swans eat algae and weeds. They are all black except for their white flight feathers. When not in season, they form large flocks. Black swans have long slender necks

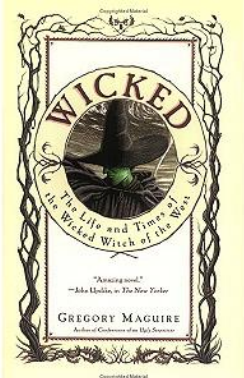



White swans are not native to Australia. They were introduced to Western Australia in the 1890s. They are only 80 swans on the Northam River in Western Australia. White swans can weigh as much as 15 kg.(size)



By Mr. Shaw

Information Support Scaffold

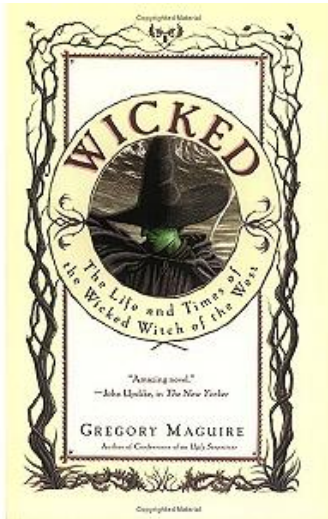
General Statement Wicked the Musical		
Introduction sentences (macro sentences) *Wicked is a musical *It has been very popular *It has received very popular reviews		
Micro group box Wicked is a musical based on the Wizard of Oz characters(doing)	Wicked is being performed in the Regent Theatre in Melbourne (number)	
Linking sentence Wicked is currently performing at the Regent Theatre in Melbourne.		
Description (Use describing bubble)		
Many of the characters from Wizard of Oz are in Wicked.(position) It was written as a book in 1995 and first performed in 2003.(number) The Wicked Witch is a sympathetic character in the musical.(doing)		
It has a cast of 35 main actors and dancers (number) It has won many international awards (texture) Wicked is being performed in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. (location)		
Conclusion sentences		
Visual Literacy		
Photo of the cover of the book. 	A photo of the full cast of Wicked. 	

Wicked the Musical

Wicked is a musical. It has been very popular. It has received very popular reviews.

Wicked is a musical based on the Wizard of Oz characters written in 1900 by LF Baum.

Many of the characters from Wizard of Oz are in Wicked. It was written as a book in 1995 and first performed in 2003. The Wicked Witch is a sympathetic character in the musical.



It has a cast of 35 main actors and dancers. It has won many international awards. Wicked is being performed in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane.



By T. Shaw

Information Support Scaffold

General Statement

Castles through the ages

Introduction sentences (macro sentences)

*Castles were built throughout Europe and other parts of the world.

*Castles were built for protection.

*Castles were built as status symbols

Micro group boxes

Motte and Bailey castles were the earliest form of castles built in England.(number)

Stone and Keep castles replaced Motte and Bailey castles in Norman times. (number)

The Concentric castle was developed in the 12th and 13th Centuries. (number)

Linking sentence

Castles developed over time.

Description (Use describing bubble)

The Motte was a large hill made of earth on which was built a wooden keep or lookout.(size)
The Bailey was the part of the castle where people lived and animals were kept.(doing)
Motte and Bailey castles would be surrounded by a ditch sometimes filled with water. A drawbridge was used for access to the castle.(position)

They offered a better form of defence.(doing)

The first keeps were rectangular in shape but later ones were often circular. (shape)

The Stone Keep castles would be surrounded by a thick stone wall containing turrets for lookouts.

(texture)

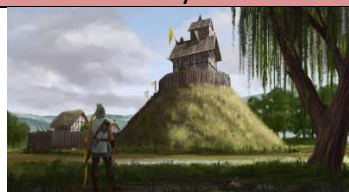
The main feature of the concentric castle is its walls. An inner wall built of thick stone with turrets positioned at intervals. (shape)

The walls are built at different levels so that archers on the inner walls can fire over the archers on the outer walls.(position)

The concentric castle was very large and surrounded with a moat and entry would be across a drawbridge.(size)

Conclusion sentences

Visual Literacy



Editing

Castles through the ages

Castles were built throughout Europe and other parts of the world. Castles were built for protection. Castles were built as status symbols.

Castles developed over time. These were the 3 main types.



Motte and Bailey castles were the earliest form of castles built in England. The Motte was a large hill made of earth on which was built a wooden keep or lookout. The Bailey was the part of the castle where people lived and animals were kept. Motte and Bailey castles would be surrounded by a ditch

sometimes filled with water. A drawbridge was used for access to the castle.



Stone and Keep castles replaced Motte and Bailey castles in Norman times. The Motte was a large hill made of earth on which was built a wooden keep or lookout. The Bailey was the part of the castle where people lived and animals were kept. Motte and Bailey castles would be surrounded by a ditch sometimes filled with water. A drawbridge was used for access to the castle.



The Concentric castle was developed in the 12th and 13th Centuries. The main feature of the concentric castle is its walls. An inner wall built of thick stone with turrets positioned at intervals. The walls are built at different levels so that archers on the inner walls can fire over the archers on the outer walls. The concentric castle was very large and surrounded with a moat and entry would be across a drawbridge.

Based on a template presented by Steven Graham 05/06/14

By Mr Shaw

Examples of children's information reports completed with teacher guidance using the Steven Graham scaffold.

