



Where stories lead to learning

An evaluation of the Story Museum Storytelling Schools programme, 2005-2009



"Storytelling is the 'something' I and others have all been looking for, for a long time. It's good because it's cross-cultural and it's accessible; it's about being human and it's deep."

Jill Hudson, Head Teacher, Pegasus Primary School, Blackbird Leys, Oxford

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This report was written by Dick Chamberlain, independent consultant, and Dr Chris Smith of The Story Museum, based on evaluation research conducted by Dick Chamberlain between May and July 2009.

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The Story Museum

Stories are essential for children's intellectual and emotional development. The Story Museum's vision is to create a story-rich society, in which children enjoy sharing and learning through stories and storytelling in many forms.

It works to inspire and educate through:

Persuasion: convincing adults how vital stories are

Example: demonstrating 1001 inspiring ways to learn through stories

Support: sharing the skills and resources to make this possible.

The charity runs outreach programmes in schools and communities, often the most disadvantaged, and is working to create a world centre of stories and storytelling in Oxford.

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On learning through story

"Story is relevant for all children whether in schools where they start out with little language or in schools that feed pupils onto Eton. Stories feed our souls. Life is enriched. Stories bring joy and add to our life experiences."

Sue Mortimer, Head Teacher, Rose Hill Primary School, Oxford

"On this housing estate there is a culture of under-achievement with low expectations about what school can offer. Many adults have low aspirations and think that school opportunities are for other people. In this context just one experience of success and achievement can turn things for a child."

It is important for the Story Museum to keep on going with their sound involvement in disadvantaged areas and schools. They have found and developed a strong way to serve schools. There is a high need, and the prize will be greatest because of this."

Chris Phillips, Head Teacher, Orchard Meadow Primary School, Blackbird Leys

"I strongly endorse the vision of the Story Museum and the excellent work which it is promoting in schools to the immediate and long-term benefit of children and their teachers. The powerful, not to say unique, contribution to virtually all aspects of children's language development from deep engagement with story telling and regular exposure to excellent literature should be seen as an essential rather than optional aspect of primary education and beyond. This tradition should be consistently fostered alongside the high quality, direct teaching of reading and writing skills."

Sir Jim Rose, author of *The Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum*, 2009

Preface

This study offers what we hope will be an important and innovative contribution to the current debate on the future of primary education in this country and beyond, providing persuasive evidence concerning ways that storytelling in the classroom can improve the quality of a child's learning. The main focus of the study is a series of interventions where children are regularly taught to tell stories from memory as a way of accelerating and deepening language learning: the 'Storytelling School'.

In 2005 none of the 19 primary schools in this study were teaching their pupils to tell stories from memory. Stories and story fragments were read to the class, and read by the class. One or two teachers told stories from memory, but systematic retelling from memory by the students was not a core strategy in any of these schools. One or two teachers had attended training courses where they learned a few story-chants such as The Little Red Hen, and taught their class to chant it with them, but none reported taking the approach much further.

Four years on, this study paints a picture of schools where learning has been substantially changed with children regularly learning to tell stories from memory as they progress through the school. It shows schools that have adopted and sustained this model in varied ways to transform themselves into Storytelling Schools. And it provides solid evidence that this approach works, improving standards, confidence and engagement with education in an inspiring and enjoyable way.

All these schools have incorporated this storytelling model into their planning and teaching and the report describes powerful impacts and benefits as well as the lingering challenge of sustaining this approach in the face of curriculum demands and staff changes. But all are determined to continue, believing the approach to be clearly beneficial for the development of the children in their care.

This is particularly true of schools from areas of social deprivation, where the teachers see storytelling as a valuable strategy for addressing 'word poverty' and reducing the risk of social exclusion. In all such schools many children were mentioned for whom it had made a difference, helping them 'turn a corner'.

In the coming period it will be important for the Story Museum to disseminate these findings more widely and link with the many other organisations working in this field to feed into the important national debate on the future of primary education and the place within it for storytelling.

Tish Francis & Kim Pickin
Joint Directors, The Story Museum

Contents

Summary	6
1 Introduction	8
2 The Story Museum schools programme	10
3 Research method	14
4 Findings	17
5 Lessons learned	27
6 Next steps	32
7 Conclusions	35
Appendices	37
A1 Analysis of participating schools	
A2 Sample research questionnaires and letters	
A3 Detailed findings from Storytelling Schools	
A4 Detailed findings from Partner Schools	
A5 Responses to teacher questionnaires	
A6 Sample storytelling matrix and introduction to teachers' storytelling day	

Summary

The Story Museum works to promote a story-rich environment for all children so they can better fulfil their potential. One of the museum's story strands is oral storytelling: learning to tell stories from memory. Since 2005 the museum has been developing a programme to encourage the adoption of storytelling (speaking a story from memory) in primary schools by both teachers and children. This aims to accelerate language learning, engage children with story content and develop their enthusiasm for stories. Over the past 5 years the museum's schools team has learned invaluable lessons through its work with 100 schools and 4 local authorities (Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Devon) and is deeply grateful for their collaboration.

Between May and July 2009 the Story Museum's schools programme was systematically evaluated to review progress and learning by approaching a sample of 30 schools in which the Story Museum had worked for more than one day between 2007 and 2009. These were all state primary schools in a range of areas of greater and lesser social advantage. Of these, 19 responded, many in real depth.

All these schools are now convinced that learning and telling stories throughout the school cycle is an effective and powerful way to help children develop language and engage more broadly with education. They passionately advocate the benefits of this approach, in particular: increased confidence and motivation of both students and teachers; improved language, literacy and creative skills; and increased engagement and cooperation, in particular of some hard-to-motivate pupils. Some could point to improved SATs scores and inspection reports.

In these schools storytelling is providing moments-to-shine for some students who might otherwise enjoy few such moments. Such experiences can be life changing. Engagement with storytelling can then lead to enthusiasm for other aspects of stories – notably reading and writing – where students were previously resistant.

While the systematic use of storytelling was endorsed in schools across the socio-economic spectrum, there was a perception among many interviewed that the level of benefit was likely to be greater in the more underprivileged areas where children start school with underdeveloped language skills.

As well as benefitting students and teachers all the schools emphatically reported more systemic benefits from adopting storytelling practices. These included the adoption of the Story Museum's story learning techniques for any activities involving storytelling and sequenced thinking; the integration of storytelling into literacy and cross-curricular teaching; and the identification of storytelling as a priority within the school's development plan and a driver for improvement and change.

All the schools said they were planning to continue strengthening storytelling in the coming years, through better cross-curricular planning, expanding activities to promote storytelling at home with parents and improving staff skills in moving from storytelling to writing.

The research highlighted 5 key ingredients that help learning through storytelling to succeed:

1. Deep multisensory learning of narratives
2. Embedding stories across the curriculum
3. School-wide commitment to learning through storytelling
4. Structured whole school approach tailored to the needs of the school
5. Regular inspirational input to sustain commitment.

The challenge is to sustain and build on what has been achieved so far, both within these pilot schools, and by extending the reach to others. Many of the teachers and head teachers involved in this study now agree that “storytelling is the building block to address children’s limited language use”, that there is a “high need” for this work, and that “the prize will be greatest because of this”.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Story Museum works to promote a story-rich environment for all children so they can better fulfil their potential. One of the museum's story strands is oral storytelling: learning to tell stories from memory.

Since autumn 2005 the Story Museum has been developing a programme to encourage the adoption of storytelling (speaking a story from memory) in primary schools by both teachers and children. This storytelling approach aims to accelerate language learning, engage children with story content and develop their enthusiasm for stories.

In partnership with Oxfordshire schools the Story Museum has been conducting a series of action-research projects to inform both the development of the Story Museum's outreach programme and the design of its permanent centre.

The Story Museum outreach team is led by Dr Chris Smith, an experienced performance storyteller and trainer, with inputs from Pie Corbett, a leading educationalist who is spearheading the government's Talk for Writing programme, and a group of storytellers, former teachers and resource designers.

1.2 Policy context

The project is timely, coinciding with a new appreciation of the central importance of story – both oral and literary – for children's intellectual and emotional learning.

Sir Jim Rose's *Independent Report on the Primary Curriculum*, published in 2009, stressed the "unique contribution to children's enjoyment and comprehension of language – and to their emotional development" of "deep engagement with storytelling and regular exposure to excellent literature". As a consequence of this and other national strategies, such as the Talk for Writing and Every Child a Talker there is now growing interest in and support for developing creative ways of using story.

At present the policy drive for Oxfordshire County Council's children's services and education is to raise achievement and to narrow the gap between the lowest and highest achievers. It also aims to improve children's writing skills: Oxfordshire scores poorly on this relative to comparable authorities.

1.3 Aims

Between May and July 2009 the Story Museum's schools programme was systematically evaluated to review progress and learning. This evaluation comprised a sample from all the schools in which the Story Museum had worked for more than one day between 2007 and 2009: a total of 30 schools. These were all state primary schools in a range of areas of greater and lesser social advantage (see Appendix 1).

The aims of the evaluation were threefold:

1. to discover what had changed in schools as a result of their partnership with the Story Museum
2. to analyse the impact and effectiveness of the Story Museum's interventions and involvement
3. to assess future needs and learn lessons for future planning.

2 The Story Museum schools programme

2.1 The Story Museum's work in schools

The Story Museum work in schools began in Autumn 2005 with a series of 'storydays' – storytelling performances and multi-sensory exhibitions which visited over 100 Oxfordshire schools, largely state primary schools, and reached some 10,000 children and teachers each year. The storydays created great interest in the idea of teaching through story and schools began requesting additional input in the form of training, advice and learning materials.



Year 2s and 6s during a Story Museum storyday at East Oxford school

By 2007 the outreach programme had evolved through a series of action learning projects into a more developmental approach, with the Story Museum working more closely with head teachers and teachers over a longer period to create a tailored 'package' of interventions that meets the needs and ambitions of their school. The programme has now moved way beyond the one-off storyteller visit.

Interventions include:

- performances which demonstrate storytelling and how it can be used to enrich learning
- multi-sensory exhibitions which allow children to further explore a story they have just heard
- printed and digital learning resources, in particular, stories to suit given curriculum topics
- teacher-training sessions on storytelling skills for the classroom
- in-class demonstrations of storytelling techniques and individual teacher feedback
- whole school and individual teacher support in planning and adopting a storytelling approach.

During this period all the schools have been introduced to an innovative yet very simple method of learning to tell a story, 'the HMSS method'.

1 **Hear the story (H)**

The storyteller or teacher tells a story that they have learned by heart.



2 **Map the Story (M)**

The children make a diagram of the story to help them remember the main events.



3 **Step the Story (S)**

The children stand to retell the story, taking a step for each event.



Taking stepping to a new level: children stepping traditional stories using playground stencils developed by The Story Museum

4 **Say the Story (S)**

The children tell the story to each other. They can then adapt the story to their own version if they wish.



Telling the story of The Monkeys and the Hats

Sometimes the children learn to chant the story, with accompanying actions, alongside the mapping stage. The actions add an additional multi-sensory dimension to the story learning: the more ways in which the story is processed by the mind, the more easily it is remembered. The children use a standard set of hand gestures for common connectives such as 'who', 'next', 'but', 'then', 'suddenly', helping to embed these vital parts of speech that then enable children to understand and express more complex ideas.

Often the children also go onto to write and illustrate their own versions of the story. The story language and structure and the practice of telling a story before writing it down help the children in their own writing.

2.2 School collaborations



Dance partners, Church Cowley St James

Since 2007 the Story Museum has been working more closely with 30 Oxfordshire primary schools on a series of projects. In 2007 Oxfordshire County Council asked the Story Museum to pilot storytelling programmes with 4 selected primary schools Shiplake, Great Milton, Watlington and Bishop Loveday, chosen because of their interest in and potential to incorporate storytelling within their teaching. Resources from the Creative Partnerships programme also enabled intensive work in 2007/8 with Isis Partnership schools (East Oxford and Cowley). This was followed by a further

drive in Excellence Cluster schools (a wider grouping that includes some Isis schools and certain schools in South Oxford and Headington).

The schools received different levels of intervention. The minimum was 2 days (one day in-school storytelling and one training session). The maximum was 10 days over two years which included training, in-class demonstrations, whole school events and curricular planning.

3 Research method

3.1 Participating Schools

30 Oxfordshire schools were contacted to contribute to the project. Of these, 20 responded, many in real depth. A number of schools also either gave, or sent by post, examples of children's work inspired by storytelling.

Storytelling schools

Of the 20 responding schools, 10 were ones who have agreed with the Story Museum to become 'Storytelling Schools', meaning that head teachers had expressed to regular, systematic storytelling by children throughout the school. This systematic use of story in learning had by and large not previously featured but was to be made a core strategy for the whole school.

The Storytelling Schools are:

Pegasus	East Oxford	St Francis
Orchard Meadow	Rose Hill	Our Lady's
St John Fisher	SS Mary & John	Church Cowley St James
Windmill		

All are in Oxford City and in areas with high Indices of Multiple Deprivation (see Appendix 1). All support families from many cultures and with diverse needs.

Partner Schools

For the 9 other contributing schools the level commitment to systematic storytelling was less clear to the researchers. These are called 'Partner Schools' and are located throughout Oxford and Oxfordshire, with one in Bracknell. They represent a wider spectrum of economic advantage.

These Partner Schools are:

Shiplake	Larkrise	Crowmarsh Gifford
Great Milton	St Christopher's	Comper
Watlington	St Nicholas	+ Holly Spring (Bracknell)
Bishop Loveday		

Of this group, four - Shiplake, Great Milton, Watlington and Bishop Loveday - had been selected by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) for a longitudinal assessment of levels of writing ability. This was devised and supported by Nilofer Khan from OCC Educational Effectiveness and the Story Museum interventions sponsored by the local authority.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The schools were invited to participate in the scheme by completing self-administered questionnaires (see Appendix 2). 19 schools responded by providing data in this way.

All Storytelling Schools were sent two types of questionnaire: one for the head teacher and/or literacy coordinator, and one for each individual teacher in the school. The individual teacher questionnaires solicited detailed information about classroom practice and what has been learned so far. In addition in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were held with the head teacher and/or literacy coordinator in 5 of these schools. At some of these schools children were also filmed telling stories.

A single, briefer questionnaire was sent to Partner Schools. In-depth interviews were held with head teachers or literary coordinators from 5 of these schools, either by phone or in person.

The evaluation methodology and questionnaires were designed by independent researcher, Dick Chamberlain, in collaboration with the Story Museum team. Dick then collected all the data and conducted and wrote up the interviews. This report was co-written by Dick Chamberlain and Chris Smith of the Story Museum.

This final report is only one feature of the wider Story Museum evaluation and monitoring project. There is a large file of data (both paper and electronic) which includes questionnaire returns, interview notes and photographs together with examples of writing and artwork from participating schools.



Illustrating The Little Red Hen at Orchard Meadow School

In addition, background statistics and data have been compiled for every school. There are also film clips of children telling stories from all year groups at 4 of the schools. All of this extensive material will be used by the Story Museum in its future work.

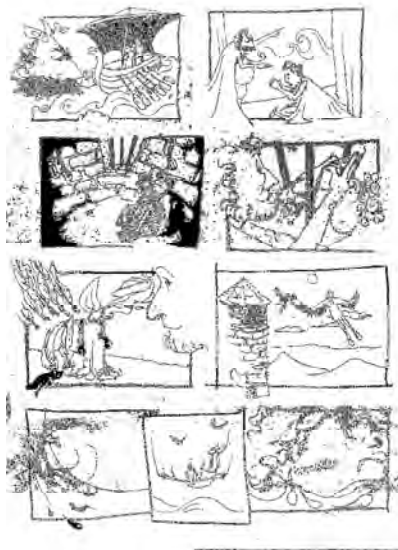
3.3 Observations on the evaluation process

Three aspects of this study were particularly striking.

First, the level of co-operation and goodwill was impressive and encouraging. A 63% response rate is high for a study of this kind, particularly as busy schools were approached at their busiest time of year. Teachers and head teachers went to great lengths to answer questions fully and provide detailed examples of work.

Second, the study confirmed the Story Museum's impression of a growing range of creative story-based initiatives within the schools: a flowering of story activities. Each school was building on the initial ideas in its own way, with some very exciting and enjoyable examples of good practice.

Third, it became clear that this process of reflection and evaluation was valuable to everyone involved. Asking people to think and talk deeply about their practice helped them to evaluate what they were doing, how and why. It also yielded welcome opportunities to exchange notes about progress and ideas.



Storytelling resource: a map of the Icarus story

4 Findings

This section summarises the wealth of evidence collected from 19 primary schools in Oxfordshire and beyond. All are now convinced that learning and telling stories throughout the school cycle is an effective and powerful way to help children develop language and engage more broadly with education. All have many passionate advocates for the benefits of this approach for both teachers and children, most notably:

- Accelerated language learning
- Improved writing
- Increased confidence
- Stronger engagement with learning
- Enjoyment and enthusiasm.

In these schools storytelling is providing moments-to-shine for some students who might otherwise enjoy few such moments. Such experiences can be life changing. Engagement with storytelling can then lead to enthusiasm for other aspects of stories – notably reading and writing – where students were previously resistant.

4.1 Impact

The evaluation study collected information on what schools are doing and on its effect. The findings demonstrate that the storytelling school model is being successfully adopted, and is seen by the head teachers, literacy coordinators and participating teachers as being effective in inspiring and engaging children to learn.

What is most noticeable is the size of the Story Museum's impact over a comparatively short period (2 years) with comparatively little direct intervention (2 to 10 days per school).

"The Story Museum programme has made a huge and dynamic impact over a short time. For example, in terms of national arts education practice it is of real note that one small cultural organisation could produce an outcome as large as the successful establishment of Oxford's Storytelling Schools. Also uncovered was a large amount of storytelling activity that is 'taking off' in schools independently of Story Museum's intervention and with only their indirect influence." Dick Chamberlain

It is the testimony of school staff (taken from interviews and questionnaires) that provides the best evidence of this widespread impact:

"Hear - Map - Step - Re-tell - This works!" Jackie Aspen, Teacher, Windmill

"Storytelling is immensely powerful if it is done well." Megan Carberry, Story coordinator, Rose Hill

"Story is powerful because everybody is on an equal level - learning together is an incredible leveller." Sue Mortimer, Head Teacher, Rose Hill

"The storytelling programme is proving extremely effective in enriching pupils' imaginative powers and in improving writing."

OFSTED report on Orchard Meadow Primary School, February 2009

"The motivation was outstanding; it has a big impact when children talk before writing." Jackie Aspen, Windmill

"It's great for children's confidence - withdrawn children have really come out of themselves." Andy Spooner, Deputy Head, Windmill

"I feel much more confident now about using stories. It was clear that the children had talked a lot at home. They really loved it." Janet Forsaith, Windmill

"When they have been working on story the children are always all 'on task', even those who are normally hard to engage." Lynn Knapp, Head Teacher, Windmill

"The INSET day - offering quality stories to be learnt - was the best! It should have happened for me 37 years ago." Chris Phillips, Head Teacher, Orchard Meadow

4.2 Changes in practice

All responding schools emphatically reported a range of beneficial changes resulting from adopting storytelling practices. Most common changes reported included:

- enthusiastic adoption of HMSS as an effective way of learning storytelling in particular and sequenced thinking in general
- integration of storytelling into literacy and cross-curricular teaching
- identifying storytelling as one of the school priorities in its School Development Plan.

Schools reported the following measures as being adopted to support storytelling in their school:

- ongoing staff training
- fixing daily storytelling times for each class
- providing a written bank of stories matched up to topics for all teachers
- integrating storytelling into long term planning
- storytelling assemblies
- workshops with parents and governors
- story sacks and story clubs.

The teacher's questionnaire provided more detailed data on 37 individual classes giving an indication of the amount of storytelling going on and the views of those teachers concerning its value. The table below summarises the data on amount of storytelling in each class.

Table 4.2: Levels of classroom storytelling activity

	Average	Range
Number of stories/year told by teacher from memory	6.4	2-15
Number of stories/year told by the class from memory	5.5	0-10
Number of storytelling sessions per week	3.3	1-5
Length in minutes of storytelling sessions	32	10-120

This suggests that a typical class might learn and tell one story per mini-term, working on the story about 3 times a week for about 30 minutes or daily for shorter periods.

The teachers echoed the head teachers' praise of storytelling methods and their effect on confidence, engagement and language development. They also described using the method to teach history and science and gave examples of new projects and initiatives that had resulted from their commitment to storytelling and their collaboration with the Story Museum.

Case Studies

Little Red Riding Hood

Pegasus launched the 2008/9 year by having the whole school spending two weeks working predominantly on the Little Red Riding Hood story through storytelling, creative writing, reading, drama and art. During one assembly a wolf rode through the hall on a bicycle chased by the deputy head waving an axe. Two weeks of random appearances by the wolf in classes and the playground brought excitement and memorableness to the event. Pegasus is repeating this for 2009/10 with a chicken theme, including chickens in the school and a chicken story to tell at home.

Storytelling Club

SS Mary and John ran a storytelling club for their year 4/5 children, who met one lunchtime a week for most of one year telling and retelling stories in various ways, facilitated by a class teacher, including a performance to the whole school. These children were all on the special needs register and reportedly benefited greatly in language development and confidence.

Curriculum embedding

Rose Hill and SS Mary and John both introduced a scheme where each class studied one topic per mini-term. Each topic was introduced by teaching the children to tell a suitable story.

Taking story maps home

In SS Mary and John School each class learned to tell a new story every mini-term. The children then took a story map of that story home and were asked to retell the story to their parents who were asked to write back a note on how they found the story. This created an enthusiastic parent response. In the next stage the parents will be asked to tell stories to their children.

4.3 Identified benefits

Schools repeatedly highlighted the following benefits from the programme:

1. increased confidence and motivation of students
2. increased confidence and motivation of teachers
3. improved language and literacy skills
4. improved storymaking and creative skills
5. increased engagement and cooperation, in particular of some hard-to-motivate pupils.

Increased confidence and motivation of students

Motivation, confidence and increased self-esteem were quoted as impacts and outcomes in interviews and questionnaires many times over. These are wonderful

outcomes for school communities and help to explain why there is such heartfelt and general school-wide enthusiasm for the Story Museum's methods.



Children responding to The Tree of Life

"With confidence and poise they (Year 1) told their stories using unbelievable creativity and incorporating rich language." Sue Mortimer, Headteacher, Rose Hill

"The motivation was outstanding; it has a big impact when children talk before writing." Jackie Aspen, Windmill

"It's great for children's confidence - withdrawn children have really come out of themselves." Andy Spooner, Deputy Head, Windmill

"When they have been working on story the children are always all 'on task', even those who are normally hard to engage." Lynn Knapp, Headteacher, Windmill

Increased confidence and motivation for teachers

Teachers reported these same benefits for themselves. Not all teachers felt themselves to be natural storytellers but all enjoyed and could feel the benefits of teaching through stories, several mentioning that this is what they had hoped teaching might be like. One experienced head teacher went so far as to say that storytelling is the missing ingredient that she had been feeling her way towards throughout her teaching career:

"Storytelling is the 'something' I and others have all been looking for, for a long time. It's good because it's cross-cultural and it's accessible; it's about being human and it's deep." Jill Hudson, Headteacher, Pegasus Primary School, Blackbird Leys

Training sessions were key, with teachers being helped to learn and tell simple stories and encouraged to retell them to their classes at the first opportunity. One primary teacher went so far as to email in:

"I was so so so inspired yesterday. I came straight home and rehearsed Little Red Hen to a white wall (that is until my 28-year-old son came – and thought I was completely bonkers) ready for Monday am. I am just off to town to buy fabric to make a flowing (adult size) storytelling cloak and hopefully two smaller ones for the

children. Can't wait for Monday. That's not something you hear teachers say very often."

"I feel much more confident now about using stories. It was clear that the children had talked a lot at home. They really loved it." Janet Forsaith, Windmill

Improved language and literacy skills

"The skill to tell stories is the building block to address children's limited language use. Learning to tell six stories per year is the path to literate children by Year 6." Chris Phillips, Head Teacher, Orchard Meadow

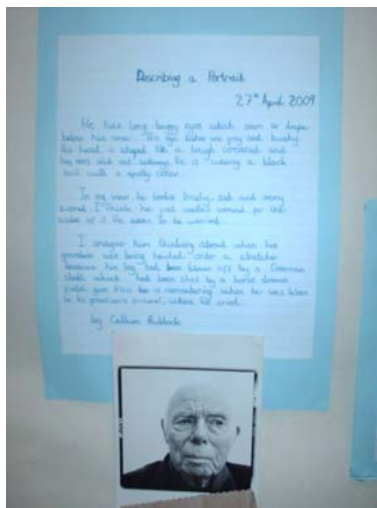
Most schools cited improvements in students' writing as the main measured impact, while improvement in speaking and listening were observed in class, as well as the skills of mapping, stepping and telling themselves, and a greater willingness to speak out.

"After the storytelling sessions we noticed more children using the school library at break times. They had got a taste for stories and suddenly realised there were more to be found in those 'book-things' in our library." Jill Hudson, Head Teacher Pegasus School

Several head teachers at Oxford's Storytelling Schools reported SAT-tested increases in English attainment levels. However, these improvements, of course, could also be attributed to an array of factors - the nature of the cohort, the quality of teaching, more one to one tuition for selected pupils, changes in the school, and wider trends towards the 'creative curriculum' and investigative learning.

What is undeniable is the clear link between storytelling and language and the improved confidence and motivation that result from storytelling activity, all of which help with achievement in English, as well as other subjects.

However, it is possible to say (based on test results) that literacy levels are generally improving in these storytelling schools. The issue is now about how to sustain and improve further on the levels of literacy achieved so far.



(left) Creative writing, Church Cowley St James



(right) Creative writing inspired by The Minotaur, Windmill School, Headington

Comments on long-term story development at St John Fisher

"The stories have captured the children's imagination: this shows up in their writing and talk, even the tiny ones.

Motivation is key – it's third year in for the creative curriculum. The little ones are so, so enthusiastic, they lap it up. They are so responsive! They listen well and are attentive.

Story work provides a rich source of creativity: Story is such fun and exciting and enriches language and thus creativity. The traditional nature of it - to delight and instruct - is particularly good in a multi-cultural school."

Jo Milham, Head Teacher, St John Fisher RC Primary School

Improved storymaking and creative skills

"Stepping helps them remember the story and improves their story telling and story writing skills." Sue Mortimer, Head Teacher, Rose Hill

Inevitably practice with storymaking techniques – such as stepping, making and creative writing – built skills in all these areas. A child who hears and is encouraged to use, vocally, the vocabulary and language patterns for a given subject is inevitably better placed to write about it. 'If you can't say it, you can't write it' has become a cliché, but holds true.

Many teachers have found it helps to concentrate on one story for up to six weeks. This enables children to really understand the points of view of differing characters and opens the way for the use of 'hot seating' and other drama techniques.

Increased engagement and cooperation, in particular of some hard-to-motivate pupils

Teachers and head teachers frequently stress the popularity of storytelling activities with less engaged pupils (of which a higher proportion are often boys) who enjoy and respond well to oral stories and to activities involving objects and movement, commenting that *"The children who normally mess about were totally transfixed – as were the rest of us."* *"Non-writing boys were particularly involved."* *"Even the most reluctant-seeming children were fully engaged."*



What happened next?

4.5 Suitability for many settings

This research suggests that storytelling works for all ages and abilities and in many settings.

“Many children have a natural talent for story-telling; they’re good at things like arguing and arguments and role-play.” Chris Phillips, Head Teacher, Orchard Meadow

While the systematic use of storytelling was endorsed in both areas of advantage and disadvantage, there was a perception among many interviewed that the level of benefit was likely to be greater in the more underprivileged areas where children start school with underdeveloped language skills. In such settings storytelling can be a great way to accelerate language learning and create an engagement with story which is likely to improve interest later in reading and writing. As such it may be considered an intervention to lower risk of social exclusion.

Nevertheless, schools from the top achieving schools in the sample also warmly endorsed the methods as being a valued and important part of the school learning scheme, especially in foundation and key stage one. They particularly valued the contribution storytelling makes to self confidence and playful creativity

“Story is relevant for all children whether in schools where they start out with little language or in schools that feed pupils onto Eton. Stories feed our souls. Life is enriched. Stories bring joy and add to our life experiences.” Sue Mortimer, Head Teacher, Rose Hill Primary School

The findings also show that storytelling is as relevant and exciting for the gifted and talented as it is for reluctant learners, most especially in terms of raising educational achievement. There are two outcomes for children who engage deeply with storytelling, outcomes that are quoted by respondents time and again; confidence and motivation.

Where schools use story to help ‘narrow the gap’ in achievement levels between learners, there is early evidence of success that is very promising. It suggests, for instance, that a serious and well executed storytelling action strategy can enhance the language, literacy, social skills and emotional development of children - in all school settings, but especially for those living in disadvantaged areas.

“On this housing estate there is a culture of under-achievement with low expectations about what school can offer. Many adults have low aspirations and think that school opportunities are for other people. In this context just one experience of success and achievement can turn things for a child.” Chris Phillips, Head Teacher, Orchard Meadow Primary School

4.6 Obstacles to storytelling

A number of obstacles were identified which limited the adoption of storytelling in the classroom. These were (in order of frequency):

- finding the time in the school day to practise telling stories, with other competing priorities
- finding the right stories
- learning how to develop the stories to tell them well
- finding time for teacher to learn the story
- keeping all the class engaged during the learning process
- overcoming some reluctance from boys to re-tell and re-write stories
- finding space for stepping out the story
- giving children the confidence to get into character
- problems with pairs work
- weak concentration
- facing the ‘long haul’ of addressing very basic levels of English language and vocabulary
- gaining consistency across the school
- influencing teachers who find it hard to be free and creative and to leave their comfort zones
- with staff turnover, getting new staff ‘on board’.

4.7 Suggestions of how to overcome them

Teachers also made a number of proposals for ways to overcome constraints and take the project forward including:

- making more topic-linked stories available
- preparing stories and maps for teachers
- each child having a special book for story maps and story work
- sharing ideas between schools
- ongoing staff training and inspiration visits
- more storytelling assemblies
- access to audio stories
- using audio for longer stories
- creating a larger bank of activities to do once the story is learned
- developing formal programme assessment tools
- finding ways to increase storytelling at home.

4.8 The role of the Story Museum

"Without Chris we would not have got as far as we have." Sue Mortimer, Head Teacher, Rose Hill

Many teachers mentioned the impact of comparatively minor inputs from the Story Museum. This is also a testament to their creativity and ingenuity in developing related project work and introducing other stories.

Schools were asked to rate the quality of support provided by the Story Museum. All were positive:

Table 4.7
Teacher/head teacher ratings of quality of Story Museum support

Rating	% of responses
Excellent	30
Very good	30
Great	20
Good	20

(based on words used in free text responses, no pre-set categories)

4.9 Future plans

All schools which had elected to become storytelling schools said they were planning to continue strengthening storytelling in the coming years, through:

- better cross-curricular planning
- expanding activities to promote storytelling at home with parents
- improving staff skills in moving from storytelling to writing.

They also suggested:

- exploring ways to promote storytelling in the home and community
- developing mechanisms for networking and sharing good practice
- creating resources of good storytelling stories matched up with topics and suggested activities, easily accessible to teachers
- exploring a mechanism for long term provision of visiting storytellers in schools
- refining and develop training schemes to include the issues and constraints identified by staff
- developing a more formal research evaluation which can measure impacts and outcomes for children more thoroughly, through direct observation and measurement of changes in attitudes, skills and behaviour.
- creating platforms for disseminating and discussing the findings thus far with educationalists and community leaders in the county and beyond.

5 Lessons learned

Since 2005 the Story Museum team has been learning valuable lessons through its collaborations with 100 schools and 4 local authorities (Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Devon). The action learning partnerships with the 19 primary schools in this study have underlined 5 ingredients that help this storytelling approach succeed:

- 1 Deep multisensory learning of narratives
- 2 Embedding stories across the curriculum
- 3 School-wide commitment to learning through storytelling
- 4 Structured whole school approach tailored to the needs of the school
- 5 Regular inspirational input to sustain commitment.

5.1 Deep multisensory learning of narratives

Hear, Map, Step and Speak

All the schools now use methods of story learning summarised by the initial HMSS, Hear, Map, Step and Speak. This method mixes listening, picturing, speaking and gesture during the learning and retelling of a narrative. This technique has proved particularly robust and received near unanimous welcome as making an invaluable continuation to classroom learning. Schools are now applying it across the curriculum to the learning of any sequenced narrative. HMSS works consistently with students, and their teachers, in schools from both the higher and lower achieving end of the achievement table.



Year 1 listening to a story with Miss Stevens, Watlington

Deepening

For ideas and language patterns to take permanent root in the child's repertoire of active language, students must then continue to work with each story in a wide range of memorable ways so that they have a chance to remember and use its ideas and patterns. Pie Corbett likens this to walking

across a field of wheat. One crossing barely makes a mark. But repeated crossings create a permanent path.

Many teachers wished for guidance on ways to do this, leading to the development of a bank of story-deepening activities for the classroom which were provided in various training sessions for the teachers to draw on as needed. This proved very popular with many teachers who were able to expand their teaching repertoire in new and effective ways.

5.2 Embedding stories across the curriculum

“Stories give the curriculum shape and structure.” Chris Phillips, Head Teacher, Orchard Meadow

Many schools have a topic-based curriculum where there is a lead topic each term for every class, i.e. six topics a year or 36 topics over the 6-year primary cycle. Several of these schools have matched up stories with these topics. At the beginning of each mini-term students first learn to tell their lead topic story as an enjoyable way of launching the topic. In such schools children will learn at least 36 stories by the time they graduate.

It became clear early in the project that it was unrealistic to expect most teachers to individually find stories suitable for oral storytelling. For teachers to adopt the programme it was vital to offer appropriate stories ‘on a plate’, saving time and effort.

Accordingly the Story Museum worked with schools to develop a ‘story matrix’ (a 12-page inventory of stories with sources and references by age, origin and topic types) and a bank of stories, matched up to topics, so that teachers could find the right story for the right topic in a form which was easy to use and learn. See Appendix 7 for an example of a story matrix.

5.3 School-wide commitment to learning through storytelling

Many respondents spoke about the effectiveness of introducing and developing storytelling at whole school level. They said that it provides an important way to help raise achievement. This will only work when it is high on a school’s priority list. In management terms this means:

- senior management to convey the message that storytelling is a priority
- prominent inclusion in the School Development Plan
- storytelling within staff performance management targets, which are then monitored
- involving teaching assistants, parents and governors

- teacher training and confidence building
- whole school assemblies to teach new stories
- displays around school
- stickers to reward children for storytelling
- daily routines including storytelling
- regular inspirational inputs 'to keep it on the boil'

Having a dedicated Storytelling Co-ordinator (in addition to Literacy Co-ordinator, as at Rose Hill) makes a difference.



Staff room story resource at Church Cowley St James

Case study: Rose Hill, Storytelling School

Rose Hill has committed fully to being a Storytelling School. *"Commitment means doing it on a daily basis and making it a habit."* With Megan Carberry this school has a dedicated Storytelling Co-ordinator.

Megan's working 'action plan' reads like this:

- Aim to ensure that each child in Years 1-6 is learning to tell a story that links to the project they are currently working on.
- Aim to develop storytelling in Foundation Stage.
- Aim to standardise the connectives and matching actions that people are using throughout the school (work on photos of common gestures).
- Aim for children to have CDs and story maps for home learning - for practice outside school.
- Aim to continue to have support from the Story Museum to 'problem solve' issues as they arise.

5.4 Structured whole-school approach tailored to the needs of the school

Schools are diverse and varied communities and experience has shown that they adopt the storytelling programme in different ways: it is not a 'one size fits all' model.

Most schools need start-up training and resources to get them going. Above all, the community of educators in a school must be inspired and persuaded that the method will work for them. Typically new initiatives are imposed on schools that increase teachers' workloads. Programmes that are seen to make teachers' lives easier are much more likely to be successful so it is vital for the Story Museum to continue to develop a menu of resources for schools that enable them to make the transition to a Storytelling School, in their own way, without making unrealistic demands on staff time.

Case Study: A structured whole school approach at SS Mary and John

An effective approach is to make storytelling a central part of topic planning and cross-curricular work. SS Mary and John is one school where they have resolved to do this properly. In fact, their advice is to do it properly or not at all.

Radical planning, in partnership with the Story Museum, means they are ready to start with this from September 2009. The idea is to engage and support every teacher with a structured approach beginning with each of them learning six stories that are embedded into the creative curriculum. In future, all topic work will start with a story.

5.5 Regular inspirational inputs to sustain commitment

"The challenge is to get it embedded. This requires 'constant stirring'. Stirring that comes from an external source like the Story Museum is obviously the more inspirational." Sue Widgery, Head Teacher, East Oxford Primary School

For schools to adopt a storytelling approach teachers need to be motivated to adopt new activities and then helped to sustain them. Inspirational events, training and personalised feedback and advice all helped with this.



Marks out of ten. Storyteller Chris Smith asks for a show of hands.

Training events were considered crucial in generating motivation. Two particular training events were credited as critical in launching the idea. Both involved two trainers, educationalist Pie Corbett and storyteller Chris Smith and a large audience of 200+ teachers. In both cases head teachers said that the events succeeded in persuading teachers that this approach made sense: that it would be feasible to adopt it, that it would have the benefits it claimed and that it fitted with the teachers' own sense of how they would like to teach.

Follow-up trainings with individual schools were also deemed essential in many schools as a way of maintaining enthusiasm during the adoption of this new scheme.

All staff valued the visits by professional storytellers for maintaining momentum and enthusiasm, proving storytelling models for both teachers and pupils, supporting teachers in their own storytelling development and reminding everyone how powerful and enjoyable storytelling can be.

Teachers particularly valued storytelling techniques being modelled within the classroom. At Rose Hill, for example, Chris Smith has consistently offered advisory time in classroom settings with teachers, if it has been needed. When this happens the teachers really appreciate being able to watch and copy. In turn, Chris valued the insights this gives him as a visiting storytelling expert.

Previous evaluations, such as that of the Isis Partnership Creative Partnerships programme in 2007-8, have highlighted the 'need to keep the enthusiasm going'. The challenge of how to maintain momentum and develop storytelling practice effectively continues to be the top one.

6 Next steps

Over the past 5 years there has been growing recognition of and evidence for the importance of deep engagement with oral and literary stories for children's enjoyment, language and emotional learning. Experience with this sample of schools suggests that many schools will decide to put storytelling at the heart of topic planning and cross-curricular work. Two challenges for the Story Museum in planning future school outreach programmes will be:

- to build on progress in existing Storytelling Schools
- to offer other schools opportunities to benefit from what has been learned.

Eventually, the Story Museum team wants to extend its work into pre-school settings and secondary schools and to explore ways of linking this progress in oral storytelling with engaging children with reading. However, the immediate focus is to build on what has been achieved in creating Storytelling Schools and follow up on the valuable suggestions that emerged from this research:

- network and share good practice between participating schools
- refine training programmes to meet school requirements
- explore ways of inspiring parents/carers to promote storytelling in the home
- continue to develop story-based learning resources
- explore mechanisms for providing inspirational storyteller visits
- share findings further
- consider more formal research evaluation.

6.1 Network and share good practice between participating schools

Cross-fertilisation of ideas and good practice has always been a great way to raise achievement in schools. The trend for schools to work in partnership clusters helps with this. One priority is to explore and if necessary establish mechanisms for exchanging experiences and ideas between partnerships. As a first step, the Story Museum arranged its first Learning Network Day in January 2010, bringing together Literacy and Storytelling Co-ordinators from Oxfordshire Storytelling Schools. [This was highly successful and a second is scheduled for January 2011.]

Another suggestion has been to establish a team of 'facilitators', led by the Story Museum, which may include key teachers involved with these projects. This would be good for the teachers' Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and has the potential to help over time with the delivery of training events tailored for staff teams in individual schools, as well as specialist training for newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and teaching assistants (TAs).

6.2 Refine training programmes to meet school requirements

A second priority is to continue to develop training programmes and their supporting resources to address the issues and constraints identified by teacher and head teachers. Some of these are purely practical – about the financial and time constraints – facing staff and schools. Others relate to the needs of teachers for help with aspects of the storytelling approach they find most challenging.

6.3 Explore ways of inspiring parents/carers to promote storytelling in the home

Educationalists are keen to see more storytelling and reading within the home, where language is embedded. Schools in this study identified encouraging storytelling in the home as a next-step in the project, in particular for homes with impoverished language. Many already involve parents, for example, by asking them to listen and tell stories at home. Several schools expressed a strong interest in running more storytelling activities for parents, carers and families.

[From September 2009 to March 2010 the Story Museum piloted an adult learning programme, 'The StoryBird Project' in Blackbird Leys and East Oxford with parents and carers of children at Orchard Meadow, Pegasus and SS Mary and John primary schools. Supported by the Transformation Fund this project includes sending children home with story maps to share stories with their parents, and bringing parents into schools for storytelling performances and workshops. Feedback was extremely encouraging and results are summarised in a separate evaluation report, *Evaluation of storytelling groups offered by the StoryBird Project* by Dr Alida Gersie.]

Another potential focus for the future is on Children's Centres and Foundation Units to reach young parents and families with limited language or storytelling experience.

6.4 Continue to develop story-based learning resources

Develop a large range of good storytelling stories matched with topics and suggested activities, easily accessible to teachers, parents and carers.

[As part of The StoryBird Project above, the Story Museum then researched and recorded 100 stories on audio or video with accompanying texts and pictures and made these freely available via the Story Museum website.]

6.5 Explore mechanisms for providing inspirational storyteller visits

Many schools referred to the inspirational effect of storyteller visits. Ensure long-term provision of suitable storytellers to visit schools and offer inspiration, training and advice. This may involve identifying and developing storytellers and linking them to schools.

6.6 Share findings further

There is growing interest in this approach but Story Museum resources are limited. Another challenge is to identify or create platforms for disseminating and discussing what has been learned so far with educationalists and community leaders in the county and beyond. Some times a conversation or brief training, plus access to Story Museum learning resources, is all that is necessary. A single training day of literacy coordinators in Devon led many of the county's schools to embrace the storytelling approach.

6.7 Consider more formal research evaluation

This evaluation provides largely anecdotal evidence for the use of storytelling and learning. There is still a need for a formal longitudinal research study collecting systematic and detailed measurements of impacts and outcomes for children, through direct observation and measurement of changes in attitudes, skills and behaviour. Another priority is for the Story Museum to explore research partnerships and funding for such a study.

Making these next steps will of course depend on the Story Museum obtaining sufficient financial resources - perhaps from pioneering trust funders. This research has uncovered unmet needs as well as innovative and effective methods for addressing them. This is an area in which a comparatively small investment could deliver significant social and educational returns.

7 Conclusions

The findings of this evaluation exercise confirm that storytelling activity is a great way for children everywhere to learn. They suggest that the storytelling school model is being successfully adopted in these pilot schools and that their head teachers, literacy coordinators and teachers regard it an effective way to inspire and engage children to learn. The research also confirms that storytelling is being seriously developed and integrated into the curriculum at many schools in Oxfordshire and beyond.



The sleeper wakes ...

It is still early days to gauge just how much impact sustained storytelling will eventually make in schools, and within the community, over the much longer term. But it is clear that many head teachers and teachers, particularly those serving disadvantaged communities, believe that the model shows great promise. To reiterate the words of Chris Phillips, recently retired as head teacher of Orchard Meadow School in Blackbird Leys, one such community: "storytelling is the building block to address children's limited language use".

The challenge is to sustain and build on what has been achieved so far, both within these pilot schools, and by extending the reach to others. Chris Phillips is not alone in stressing that it is absolutely essential for the Story Museum to continue with its valued and inspirational educational work.

"It is important for the Story Museum to keep on going with their sound involvement in disadvantaged areas and schools. They have found and developed a strong way to serve schools. There is a high need, and the prize will be greatest because of this." Chris Phillips, Head Teacher, Orchard Meadow Primary School, Blackbird Leys

Appendix 1: Deprivation analysis of participating schools

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has release a school based deprivation index based upon the percentage of children living in families in receipt of family credits. This is derived from the data used in the formulation of the Index of Multiple Deprivation. (IMD), Nov 2007. The ten Storytelling Schools in the study are all in school partnerships in areas with high Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). All these schools support families from many cultures and with diverse needs.

Table A1: Oxford School Partnerships ranked by index of deprivation

Oxfordshire School Partnership	% children living in families receiving family credit	Schools participating in this study
Oxford South East (Blackbird Leys & Rose Hill)	67.0	Pegasus, Orchard Meadow, St John Fisher, Rose Hill, Windale
Isis (East Oxford and Cowley)	54.8	East Oxford, SS Mary & John, Our Lady's Catholic, St Christopher's, Church Cowley St James
Headington	52.0	Windmill
Banbury	46.4	Bishop Loveday
Cherwell	34.3	
Abingdon	33.9	
Kidlington	32.9	
Wheatley	32.1	Great Milton
Chipping Norton	31.6	
Witney	31.5	
Didcot	31.1	
Bicester	30.7	
Wantage	30.2	
Carterton	29.6	
Burford	27.8	
Faringdon	27.5	
Warriner	27.1	
West Oxford	26.3	
Woodstock	26.2	
Wallingford	26.1	St Nicholas School, Crowmarsh Gifford
Chiltern Edge/Sonning	25.0	
Thame	24.2	
Eynsham	23.4	
Henley	22.5	Shiplake
Watlington	22.2	Watlington
Woodcote	19.8	

Appendix 2: Questionnaires sent to schools, June 2009



Questions for Head Teacher and Literacy Co-ordinator in Storytelling Schools

Name:

Job title:

Name of School:

1. How has the work of school changed this year as a result of co-operation with The Story Museum?
2. Are you still planning to develop into a Story school where all children learn to tell a bank of stories every year?
3. What has The Story Museum done this year to support the school?
4. How do you rate the quality of this support?
5. What measures have been taken within the school to support adoption of storytelling? How effective has this been, and what can we learn from the experience?
6. What kind of formal planning and management tools have you used to integrate storytelling into the school culture?
7. What are your storytelling plans for next year? What support would you like from The Story Museum?
8. Anything else we can learn from the experience so far?
9. Do you have any evidence of progress we can include in our study? Please attach if necessary.
10. Our prices for schools are currently:
 - £450 for a storyday (performance and exhibition)
 - £230 for a one hour whole school performance
 - £350 for two one hour performances
 - £350 for a two hour twilight training
 - £500 for a full day of in-class demonstrations and advice, reducing to £300 for long term co-operation.

Which of these prices do you think are (a) too high, (b) about right, (c) too low to be affordable from regular schools budgets? Any advice on appropriate pricing?

Teacher Activity Summary for Storytelling Schools

Name of Teacher:

Name of School:

Year Group:

1. How many stories have you told to class from memory?
2. Please name the stories
3. How many stories have the class learned to tell from memory?
4. Please name the stories
5. On average how many storytelling sessions (learning to tell a story then working from the stories) do you run per week?
6. Average time of each session
7. What do you think the storytelling project has achieved so far for you and your class?
8. What are the main obstacles you have encountered?
9. Any suggestions for next year?
10. Can you give us any evidence of progress in children's work over the year?
Please attach if necessary.

Questions for Head Teacher and Literacy Co-ordinator in Partner Schools

This questionnaire is going out to a sample of the schools who have worked with The Story Museum outreach programme over the past three years so we can better understand your needs and the impact of our work. Please can you help us by filling in the questionnaire and sending it back to dick@chamberlaind.freemove.co.uk cc sarah@storymuseum.org.uk

Name:

Job title:

Name of School:

1. What support has The Story Museum provided to your school? How do you rate the effectiveness of these various activities? How can we improve?
2. How has the work of school changed this year as a result of this co-operation?
3. Have any measures been taken within the school to support adoption of storytelling practices (teachers and students telling from memory?). How effective has this been and what can we learn from the experience?
4. If storytelling is happening please estimate the number of stories learned per year in the various classes.
5. What are your storytelling plans for next year? What support would you like from The Story Museum?
6. Anything else we can learn from the experience so far?
7. Do you have any evidence of progress or impacts we can include in our study? Please attach if necessary.
8. Do you have any memorable examples of ways that children have responded? Please attach if necessary.
9. Our prices for schools are currently:
£450 for a storyday (performance and exhibition);
£230 for a one hour whole school performance
£350 for two one hour performances
£350 for two hour twilight training
£500 for a full day of in-class demonstrations and advice, reducing to £300 for long term cooperation.

Which of these prices do you think are (a) too high, (b) about right, (c) too low to be affordable from regular schools budgets? Any advice on appropriate pricing?

Sample Letter to participating schools

Dear Head Teacher

The Story Museum has been delighted to co-operate with you this year in our partnerships to help create storytelling schools, where children learn to tell a bank of stories from memory in their journey through the school.

At this point in the year we need to take stock of what has been achieved, what has been learned and what we need to plan with you for next year. The evaluation will also be important in securing future funding for our work.

To this end we need your help!

- a) Please can you ask whoever is in charge of the project to arrange for the attached **'Teacher Activity Summary for Storytelling Schools (2008/2009 so far)'** to be filled in by, if possible, all of your teachers. They can be filled in directly in to the MS Word document or printed and completed by hand.
- b) Please can you and your literacy co-ordinator separately fill in the **'Questions for Head Teacher and Literacy Co-ordinator in Storytelling Schools'**? Again you can fill in the Word document or write it by hand.

When these are completed please can you send them by post to our independent researcher Dick Chamberlain:

Mr Dick Chamberlain
29 Arnold Way
Thame
Oxon
OX9 2QA

Tel: 01844 214788
Mobile: 07941350573
dick@chamberlaind.freemove.co.uk

or email the answers, if in digital form, to Dick and cc to sarah@storymuseum.org.uk

- c) Finally please can you and your literacy co-ordinator find a half hour spot in your schedule before the end of term to meet Dick Chamberlain, our independent researcher. We have asked him to visit your schools and have a chat with you and your literacy co-ordinator to get your reflections on the project so far.

With thanks and warm appreciation,
Chris Smith
The Story Museum

Appendix 3: Detailed findings from Storytelling Schools

A3.1 Data collected

The table below summarises the data collected from each school. Only one of the designated storytelling schools, John Henry Newman, did not reply. Headteacher/literacy coordinator questionnaires were returned by 10 schools, teacher questionnaires by 4 (30 teacher) and in-depth interviews conducted in 5 schools.

Table A3.1: Data collected from Storytelling Schools

Name	Partnership	Head teacher /Literacy Co-ordinator questionnaire	Teacher questionnaires	In-depth interview
Pegasus	Excellence, Oxford	Y	Y	Y
Orchard Meadow	Excellence, Oxford	Y	Y	Y
St John Fisher	Excellence, Oxford	Y	Y	Y
Rose Hill	Excellence, Oxford	Y	Y	Y
Windale	Excellence, Oxford	Y		
Windmill	Headington, Oxford	Y		
East Oxford	Excellence and ISIS, Oxford	Y		
SS John and Mary	ISIS, Oxford	Y		Y
St Francis	ISIS, Oxford	Y		
Our Ladies Catholic	ISIS, Oxford	Y		

A3.2 Intervention summary

Excellence Cluster Intervention 2008/9

The Excellence cluster schools are in the most socially disadvantaged areas of the city and indeed the country. The Story Museum work with these schools was coordinated at the partnership level.

After preliminary residencies in two of these schools, a series of four one-day training sessions was run by the Story Museum with educationalist Pie Corbett and storyteller Chris Smith. The first session was for all staff in all schools to launch the programme, after which three sessions were run, one for Foundation Stage and Year 1, a second for Years 2, 3 and 4 and the third for Years 5 and 6.

Following these workshops, schools were offered technical support at a subsidized rate, whereby storytellers /trainers visited each school to advise on the adoption of

the storytelling programme. Between 4 and 10 days were implemented in six of these Excellence schools.

ISIS Cluster Intervention

The ISIS schools are based in East Oxford, an area with neither the highest nor the lowest level of social deprivation in the city, many characterised by ethnic and social diversity.

The Story Museum began working with these schools in 2006/7 with a tour of the Minotaur performance and exhibition to all schools plus an afternoon's storytelling training for two teachers from each school.

In 2007/8 two more performances and exhibitions were toured, the Arab *Tree of Life*, and the KS1 show, *Stories to Join in With*, this time launched by a whole cluster twilight session led by Pie Corbett, which powerfully introduced the idea of the Storytelling School. This project combined cluster-level training and whole school sessions in individual schools.

In 2008/9 there were no projects implemented at the cluster level although some with individual schools.

Windmill School

This single school intervention began in 2008/9 with a twilight staff inset, one Minotaur storyday, and a demonstration project with year 4 teachers.

A3.3 Results of head teacher questionnaire

How has the work of school changed as a result of cooperation with the Story Museum?

All respondents reported positive changes as a result of their cooperation with the Story Museum. The most common changes noted were:

- positive impact on language
- increased confidence and enthusiasm of the children
- increased confidence and enthusiasm of the teachers
- reorganising of the curriculum so that storytelling leads topics
- placing storytelling as a priority on the School Development Plan
- introduction of storytelling assemblies.

Are you still intent on becoming story school?

All respondents answered Yes.

How do you rate the quality of support you have received from the Story Museum?

Responses were all positive: excellent (3), very good (3), great (2) and good (1). One respondent noted that one of the visits had been a bit muddled.

What measures have been taken in the school to support storytelling?

Schools reported a variety of measures including:

- briefings of parents, governors and carers
- integration into long-term planning and the School Development Plan
- staff training
- fixing of daily storytelling time in all classes
- provision of a bank of stories for teachers
- story clubs
- story sacks
- story assemblies
- parent workshops.

What was done to integrate storytelling into the curriculum?

Schools reported a variety of strategies including:

- integration in school development plans
- part of teachers formal planning
- incorporation into various topics, projects and subjects.

What storytelling plans do you have for next year?

All schools reported continuing plans of various kinds.

- Most were planning to strengthen cross-curricular and topic-based planning and continue daily storytelling in all classes.
- Several wanted further support in planning and training staff, and providing the right stories to the teachers.
- Several schools wanted to expand into parent workshops and promoting of home storytelling.
- Several schools noted that the continued involvement of the Story Museum was essential for the coming year.

What else have you learned from the experience?

- hard work is needed for success
- senior management needs to be involved in implementation
- storytelling is immensely powerful when linked properly to the curriculum
- training is invaluable
- stories should not be too complex to quickly
- we need new techniques of guided writing after storytelling
- it is important to be consistent across the school
- it is important to match up the Story Museum's ambitions and the teachers' abilities
- it is important to keep momentum and the Story Museum inputs help with this

Do you have evidence of progress?

Schools highlighted improvements with:

- speaking, listening and sequencing ideas (all core storytelling skills)
- the quality of writing
- confidence and enthusiasm.

Which prices were too high/about right/too low?

Opinions varied:

- All fees are high, but worth it
- It is difficult as budgets are tight, but if there is sufficient demand from staff then the money can be found
- One hour whole school performance fee (£230) too high, all others are about right
- £500 for one day is too high. It should buy 2 days
- £450 for a story day is too high
- £450 for story day is about right; £230 for one-hour school performance is too high; £350 for 2-hour twilight may be a little high; £500 for full day is about right.

Appendix 4: Detailed findings from Partner Schools

A4.1 Data collected

Partner questionnaires were sent to 20 schools of which 9 schools responded. In-depth interviews were held in 5 of these schools. Teacher questionnaires were completed by 2 schools (7 teachers).

Table A4.1: Data collected from Partner Schools

Name	Partnership	Head teacher/ Literacy Coordinator questionnaire	Teacher questionnaires	In-depth interview
Shiplake	OCC Pilot South Oxfordshire	Y	Y	Y
Great Milton	OCC Pilot East Oxfordshire	Y		Y
Watlington	OCC Pilot South Oxfordshire	Y	Y	Y
Bishop Loveday	OCC Pilot North Oxfordshire	Y		
St Christopher's	ISIS, Oxford	Y		
Church Cowley St James	ISIS, Oxford	Y		Y
St Nicholas' School	Wallingford Town	Y		
Crowmarsh Gifford	Wallingford Village	Y		
Holly Spring	Bracknell City	Y		Y

A4.2 Interventions summary

The support provided by the Story Museum in these schools was as follows:

Oxfordshire County Council Pilot Schools

This two year project was run over the school years 2007/8 and 2008/9 in four schools around the county, in partnership with Oxfordshire County Council. The schools were selected by the literacy section of the education department, as being schools which they felt could benefit from becoming storytelling schools. In the first year the story museum ran a series of three training course (with educationalist Pie Corbett and storyteller Chris Smith) for two teachers from each school, with follow up visits from the storyteller to demonstrate, run in-school training and observe teacher practice. In the second year the project continued with a series of in-school visits.

These schools provide important variety in the sample as they were selected from some of the higher achieving schools in the county, from areas of relative affluence.

ISIS schools

These two schools have received a series of training and school visits over a period of two years. (See above, ISIS cluster intervention).

Wallingford schools

These schools were part of a partnership that received one training session and one story day visit during 2007/8 year.

Holly Spring Junior School

Received two staff twilight trainings and one story day during 2008/9.

How has work of school changed as a result of partnership with the Story Museum?

- There is a greater emphasis on speaking and listening; Teachers more confident; the role of audience is better appreciated; more stories & poems being learnt than before.
- All children now have storytelling experiences – on average three times/week; pupil's and teachers' confidence has grown; pupils are now using new methods in their written stories.
- We now have a list of 10 stories for each year group with a focus on using stories for interest in cross-curricular areas, especially for history and English as an Additional Language children; Classes now vote on their favourite books for class story.
- Staff enthusiasm really grew as a result of the project; every teacher now has storytelling as a focus for performance management; storytelling is part of the school development plan and all teachers have been observed running a storytelling lesson; there has also been a session for governors and a workshop with parents.
- We have incorporated story mapping and stepping into our literacy teaching
- New curriculum areas are³ being explored using storytelling.

What measures are being taken in school to support storytelling, how effective are they and what can we learn?

- Younger pupils learn a poem/week; new topics which emerge from stories are followed through in class; funding from PTA used for new story resources; we have arranged visits from storytellers and a story week
- The "hear it map it step it tell it" process used now throughout the school. We need to work more on further ways of using the stories
- Storytelling is much more frequently used now than before.
- Three teachers who attended training developed a whole school inset for colleagues. More stories are now learned by heart in foundation to year 3, while older children using storytelling as a way of generating ideas for writing.
- All staff and pupils learn stories by heart and retell; the head teacher led a whole school session on storytelling; a bank of texts and stories has been developed.

- Very effective for KS1. We need more simple stories with story maps for the younger ages.
- Storytelling has become a key part of the school action plan; storytelling is linked to performance management; staff training continues.

How many stories per year are learnt in various classes?

- KS2 learn 8 stories per year; KS1 learn 6; Foundation have experience of many stories
- Teachers have a list of ten stories to draw from for each year, although many tell and teach more.
- Each class learned a minimum of three stories.
- Each class learned about four stories per year.

What are your storytelling plans for next year?

- We will continue as this year, with visits from the Story Museum, until the new curriculum is decided
- We will continue to development as storytelling school and monitor the effect on children's learning and writing; we will develop the area of using stories in various ways more deeply; more entertaining would be helpful.
- We plan to include storytelling in cross-curricular activities for more creative curriculum; have further INSETs for staff; and more visits from the story museum.
- We will continue to use these techniques in the classroom and have more story museum sessions if funds are available
- We will continue our storytelling in classes and organise training in methods by our new teachers
- We plan more in house training to further embed storytelling across the school

Anything else we can learn?

- Storytelling suits younger pupils rather than older, although reading stories is more widely accepted; stories from different cultures are important
- The second training was clearer about how to implement storytelling in the classroom and across the school; we may focus on training a few committed teachers so they can keep momentum
- We found our workshops and storytelling sessions inspirational
- Inter-school storytelling events would be wonderful
- Our children learn and retell stories easily and are using storytelling language to great effect
- Suggest getting more feedback from children, using more local storytellers and local stories, getting schools to recognise storytelling happening outside the school, and more work with preschools
- Story maps have had a huge impact

What evidence do you have of progress?

- We have videos of children telling stories; also our last year 2 pupils got the best ever results for KS1 SATs

- We have writing samples showing improvement after storytelling
- We have tapes of storytelling at the beginning and the end of the year and samples of writing charting progress

Which prices are too high/about right/too low?

- Overall OK, but reduce full day of in-class demos to £450 (500 too high)
- £450 for storyday is too high, other performer David Blake charges 250 for a day
- £450 for storyday: about right; 230 for 1h whole school: a bit high; 350 for 2h twilight: was very good but a bit pricey; this year PTA paid for storyteller, but thought it was a lot of money; "I told them it was worth it !!!!!"
- All about right

Appendix 5: Responses to teacher questionnaires

A total of 37 questionnaires were returned from individual teachers in 6 of the schools. Of these schools 4 are Storytelling Schools and 2 Partner Schools (Shiplake and Watlington).

These give an indication of the level of storytelling in individual classrooms.

Table A5.1
Levels of classroom storytelling activity

	Average	Range
Number of stories/year told by teacher from memory	6.4	2-15
Number of stories/year told by the class from memory	5.5	0-10
Number of storytelling sessions per week	2.3	1-5
Length in minutes of storytelling sessions	42	10-120

Table A5.2
Average amounts (and ranges) of storytelling by school, as reported by teachers

Question/School	Pegasus	Orchard Meadow	St John Fisher	Rose Hill	Shiplake	Watlington
Responses	13	2	4	11	6	1
How many stories have you told from memory?	4.3 (1-7)	8.5 (5-12)	5.1 (3-6)	6.5 (3-10)	7 (2-15)	7
How many stories did the class tell from memory?	4 (0-7)	6.5 (5-8)	4 (4-4)	4.5 (2-8)	4.2 (3-7 plus 'many')	10
How many storytelling sessions per week?	3.1 (2-4)	4 (3-5)	One answer: 1	3.3 (1-5)	No pattern	2
How long was each session? (minutes)	21 (15 – 30)	15 (10-20)	One answer: 90	24.5 (10-45)	58 (20-120)	20-60

Teachers listed the following stories as having been told from memory and taught to the class for retelling:

Table A5.3**Stories used in the classroom, ranked by frequency of reporting by teachers**

Story	Reported tellings
The Little Red Hen	17
Little Red Riding Hood	12
Monkey See Monkey Do	12
Billy Goats Gruff	7
The Blue Coat	7
Goldilocks and the Three Bears	7
Jack and the Beanstalk	7
The Enormous Turnip	6
Gingerbread Man	6
Freedom Bird	5
The Magic Porridge Pot (and variants)	5
Three Little Pigs	5
Little Charlie	4
The Sweetest Song	4
Can't You Sleep Little Bear	3
Stone Soup	3
The Talking Skull	3
Blind Man and Hunter	2
Honey and Trouble	2
The Hungry Caterpillar	2
Peter and the Wolf	2
Baba Yaga	1
The Bad Tempered Ladybird	1
The Bear Hunt	1
Big Bad Wolf	1
Cinderella	1
The Enormous Crocodile	1
The Fire of London	1
Feather Woman and Morning Star	1
Ganesh	1
George and the Dragon	1
Grandmother Spider Gets the Light	1
The Hungry Bear	1
Hansel and Gretel	1
Harvey Slumphamburger	1
Icarus and Daedalus	1

Jack Flies a Kite	1
Lazy Jack	1
Little Hare and the Pine Tree	1
Mister Gumpy's Outing	1
Mister Peabody's Apples	1
The Noisy House	1
Nwangi and the Gorilla	1
One Wish	1
The Papaya that Spoke	1
The Pedlar of Swaffham	1
Peace at Last	1
Perseus and the Gorgon's Head	1
The Princess and the Pea	1
The Prodigal Son	1
Romulus and Remus	1
Skeleton Woman	1
The Shepherd's Dream	1
Sleeping Beauty	1
The Smartest Giant in Town	1
Stomper the Dinosaur	1
Train Ride	1
Treasure Island	1
The Udale Tree	1
The Ugly Duckling	1
Walking in the Jungle	1
The Yellow Thunder Dragon	1

What has your class achieved as a result of the project?

The most common achievements listed were:

- Sequencing skills, mapping and stepping (5)
- Storytelling skills (5)
- Storytelling confidence (4)
- Speaking Confidence (4)
- Excitement about story
- Learning Storytelling Language (5)
- Boosting writing confidence and improved writing (4)
- Enjoyment;
- Growing confidence in written storytelling (3)
- Improved vocabulary (3)
- Use of storytelling to learn historical events
- Sense of achievement
- Particulate needed for children who have no access to home storytelling
- Re-enacting and inventing
- Increased confidence using story language, retelling stories, re-enacting stories and inventing stories
- Improved listening skills
- Teacher has introduced a new range of ways of making story learning more exciting; children have enjoyed stories where action is used;

- phrases and vocabulary have improved greatly for lower and middle ability children
- Helps children think about audience when writing
- Fun and enjoyment
- Appreciation of stories from different cultures

What were the obstacles to adoption of storytelling?

- Finding time
- Access to the right bank of stories
- Not overdoing same story
- Knowing which stories to use
- Knowing how to best develop stories
- Children rushing to tell, reluctant to focus on detail in retelling
- Learning stories for the teacher
- Competing SATs pressure
- Knowing how to adapting stories for re-telling
- Finding room for stepping stories
- How to keeping all children engaged when working with whole class
- How to boosting children's confidence to get into character;
- Class difficulty with pairs work
- Maintaining enthusiasm
- Hard to concentrate; initial need for a script to memorise
- Avoiding embarrassment
- Boys can be reluctant to retell and rewrite stories
- Difficulty with English as an Additional Language children
- Linking with other projects
- Making sure storytelling is in the planning
- Finding stories to link with curriculum topics

Suggestions for the future

- More linking stories to projects/topics
- Consult teachers for input on which stories to tell
- Agree on signs/gestures to represent key phrases and have photograph display
- A story should be given to each year/term, with story maps
- Videos of process as part of continuing professional development
- Share ideas between schools
- Continued linking of stories to literacy, now with a planned set of stories for each year group with key language bank for storytelling
- Special storytelling exercise books for story mapping
- Refresher training for staff
- More family storytelling
- Continued support
- Use storytelling to focus on connective language
- Get a brief from teachers before SM comes in
- More stories for Form 2
- Regular storytelling assemblies
- Smaller group work to accommodate range of abilities
- Audio CDs for longer/harder stories
- Home learning
- Greater inclusion of Year 6

- Develop progress assessment tools
- Provide more stories with joining in element
- More ideas about activities to do with story

What evidence do you have of progress as a result of this project?

- Better use of story language in writing
- Greater confidence in storytelling and writing
- Improved story mapping
- Video evidence of storytelling
- Children's storytelling books
- Children can now re-tell stories to familiar adult/ group of peers
- Improved creation of own stories
- Improved settings and character descriptions using good vocabulary
- Brilliant story writing when using stepping and mapping as base

Appendix 6: Sample storytelling matrix and introduction to teachers' storytelling day

Prepared by Beth Wooldridge, SS Mary and John Primary School, Oxford

	Autumn 1	Autumn 2	Spring 1	Spring 2	Summer 1	Summer 2
Year 1	Humans and Animals	Houses and Homes	Toys	Pushes and Pulls- forces	The world around us- sounds	Eating and growing
	Monkey and Papa God (Haiti) TWW	Sweetest Song (African-American) TWW	The Wooden Baby	B'Whale and B'Elephant (Bahamas) MRTTT	The Noisy House (World) 100WM	Little Red Hen (English) ST
Year 2	History detectives	An island setting	Pakistan	People who help us	Seaside holidays	Minibeasts
	Charles II-how London burned (English History) OIS	Call of the sea (Channel Islands) 100WM	The Birth of the Prophet (Trad Islamic) IY	Sweet and Sour Berries (China) MRTTT	Sedna and King Gull (Canada) AT	Grandmother Spider (Native American) AT/MRTTT
Year 3	Sound	Materials- evaporating & dissolving	Mythical Monsters	Plants	Egypt- past and present	Humans and animals
	How music was fetched from heaven (Aztec) 100WM	First Snow (native American) 100WM	George and the Dragon (Iran) 100WM	John Barleycorn (Traditional American) 100WM	RA the Shining one (ancient Egypt) EM	The Curing Fox (native American) TWW
Year 4	Romans	Hinduism	Winter	Other Cultures- India	Habitats	Oxford Castle
	Cupid and Psyche (ancient Roman) 100WM	Monkey Do Hanuman (India) 100WM	The Piper's revenge (Scotland) MRTT	The Armchair Traveller (India) 100WM	Magic in the Rainforest (Brazil) AT	Matilda (trad oxford) (JS-H)
Year 5	Tudors	People	Carnival	Plants	Rivers	Coasts
	Henry VIII and 6 wives (UK History) OIS	The Blue Coat (Jewish) ST	Anansi and the bag of stories (Caribbean) WIF	Proud Man (Native American) 100WM	Singer above the river (Germany) 100WM	Mary and the Seal (Scotland) MRTTT
Year 6	WWII	Islam	Challenging stereotypes	Africa	Japanese culture	Mountain environment
	The Brave Little Boats of Dunkirk 100GS	Nest and Web (Islam) 100WM	Blind Man and the Hunter (Africa) TWW	The Black Prince (Egypt) RTT	Biggest (Japan) 100TTT	The Unlucky Mountain (British) MRTT

Key to books

100WM- 100 World Myths and legends by Geraldine McCaughrean (Orion)
ST-The Story Tree by Hugh Lupton (Barefoot)
TWW- Tales of Wisdom and Wonder by Hugh Lupton (Barefoot)
AT-Animal Tales from around the world by Naomi Adler (Barefoot)
RTT- Ready to Tell Tales, by David Holt and Bill Mooney (August House)
MRTT- More Ready to Tell Tales, by David Holt and Bill Mooney (August House)
WIF- West Indian Folk Tales, retold by Philip Sherlock (OUP)
100GS- Britannia 100 Great Stories by Geraldine McCaughrean (Dolphin)
OIS- Our Island Story by H. Marshall (Phoenix)
IY- The Islamic Year by Chris Smith (Hawthorn Press)

Introduction to teachers' storytelling day

The focus for this joint day is storytelling: enjoying storytelling and learning stories!

Our vision for storytelling at SS Mary and John: by the end of Year 6, each child will 'own' 36 stories that they can draw on throughout their lives.

The stories that we will explore this joint day are stories taken from our cross-curricular story matrix (above). The idea behind the matrix is that each term (1-6), you will share a new story with your class/year group. The stories have been carefully selected by Chris Smith, and Sarah and I have worked with Chris to fit them with our cross-curricular themes as closely as possible. Where there was not a clear match with a story and a c-c theme, we matched a story to your science topic or RE unit, for example.

For this joint day, one teacher in the year group should take the story for your year group that has been selected for Spring 2. The other teacher in the year group should take the story from Summer 1.

Once the matrix is up and running and, most importantly, you are really confident telling the stories to your class, we envisage that you will share the story selected for the term in your literacy lessons, topic lessons, story time, P4C, assemblies, and wherever else you can fit it in! I will also produce a pamphlet (for September 2009) for parents advising them of the stories that their child will be told over the year so that they can share them at home too!

Hopefully the 'storytelling toolkit' including here will help you to have a really successful joint day. Ana has been thinking of artistic ideas to accompany your storytelling activities on Joint day. I will pass these lovely ideas on to the relevant teacher. Please read your stories, and then please do ask for help or advice if needed.

Storytelling is about having the confidence to tell a story in a way that hooks each child, draws them in and encourages their confidence to fly away.