The Lost Lending Library: A Case Study of Punchdrunk Enrichment's Practice and Impact

A Creativeworks London Researcher-In-Residence Report

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Contents

Executive Summary

1. The *Lost Lending Library (LLL)* offered huge motivation for writing at school and at home amongst the pupils who experienced it. With the support of a sympathetic and skilled teacher, this could result in excellent writing. 92% of teacher respondents from the case study of Grange Primary School reported increased motivation for writing amongst their pupils.

2. The library offers rich opportunities and motivation for pupil talk. Communication and language skills have been identified as key to children's learning and progress. As Jean Gross argues, this is particularly salient to the early years, since 'vocabulary at age five is one of the most significant predictors of the qualifications pupils achieve when they leave school' (2013, p. 1). At Grange Primary, *The LLL* had such an impact on some nursery pupils that they were heard to speak for the first time, whilst the three case study focus teachers all reported their classes engaging in more talk involving more ambitious vocabulary.

3. *The LLL* encourages engagement with stories, with 84% of teacher respondents reporting this as an outcome of the project. Peter Baldock (2006) has written on the importance of teaching that focuses on stories, rather than simply using them as a springboard for other learning, in order to develop what he calls children's 'narrative competence'.

4. The performative and scenographic aspects of *The LLL* as a theatrical experience were highly engaging, whilst the spaces for interpretation left in *The LLL* narrative allowed for pupils to engage their own imaginations in extending the story.

5. Teachers' feedback, alongside observations of the diverse ways that pupils engaged with the library, suggest that *The LLL* could be used across the wider school curriculum, particularly surrounding drama, artwork and storytelling. It is a statutory requirement of the curriculum that children take part in performances, reading aloud, role plays and improvisations during their primary schooling.

6. The affective and imaginative engagement with the library provided scope for collaborative play and creativity amongst children and adults, whilst prompting a relational awareness. This aligns with writing on pedagogies which emphasise the sensory, affective and responsive, as well as current government concern with pupils' moral and character development.

7. The library is inclusive, affecting children across genders, backgrounds and ability ranges, as well as having the capacity to adapt to include children with specific learning needs. That said, teachers at Grange Primary noted the particular engagement of boys. This is a key impact of *The LLL* considering the current gender gap in writing achievement.

8. Teachers' suggestions, in corroboration with my own observations, lead to the recommendation that more information or CPD time could be provided for teachers before the project arrives, allowing them to be prepared for their essential role in the success of the project. This could include examples of good practice from previous schools as well as an emphasis on writing *about* the experience, and should happen in time for incorporation into their curriculum and lesson plans.

9. Although longer term study into the curriculum centred legacy of *The LLL* could be beneficial to the company, this should not go to weaken the argument for *The LLL* as a beautiful educational experience, whose theatrical ephemerality is crucial to its affective and relational pedagogy.

Research Context

This report arose out of Creativeworks London's Researcher-In-Residence scheme, which matches PhD and early career researchers with arts, cultural or creative industries companies on short-term research projects. The scheme has provided £5,000 of funding for a part time collaboration over six months between myself, a postgraduate researcher from Royal Holloway, University of London, and Punchdrunk Enrichment. Punchdrunk Enrichment are the education and outreach department of the company, extending the legacy of the worlds that Punchdrunk creates through projects that focus on creativity and imagination (more information on this can be found in Appendix One on p. 33). As a PhD student in the second year of my research into the pedagogy and dramaturgy of theatre for very young audiences, with a background in primary school teaching, Punchdrunk Enrichment felt my profile matched their wish to evaluate the impact of their immersive practice in educational settings. Punchdrunk Enrichment were particularly interested in an exploration of *The Lost Lending Library*, a primary schools project which had first been developed with two schools in Lewisham in 2013 then extended to schools in Hackney in the previous academic year, and was about to continue in four schools in Newham for the summer term of 2015. *The Lost Lending Library* (abbreviated in this report to *LLL*) is an immersive performance and installation which facilitates the participation of every child in the schools that it visits. I hope that the description below can go some way towards offering a sense of the energy and excitement that the experience precipitates, offering a context by which to understand the findings of my research into its educational outcomes.

The project begins with the arrival of a local librarian, Petra (or Peter, if the performer is male), who is interested in discussing her own and the children's favourite books and supporting them with developing the school's library. The children discover that Petra shares a love for a picture book that has recently been introduced to each class by their teachers, *How To Live Forever* by Colin Thompson. This book tells the story of a library alive with people, homes and communities, and a boy's search for, and eventual rejection of, immortality. This meeting is low-key, with just a glimmer of the mystery that surrounds *The LLL* emerging as Petra reveals her unexplained possession of a book that simply will not open, no matter what she tries. Following each class's initial meeting with Petra, a Punchdrunk design team spend a weekend converting the room Petra has based herself in, alongside the books she has borrowed, into *The Lost Lending Library*. This installation is reminiscent of the world of *How To Live Forever*, where books are not just books, but also houses, woodland, skate parks, and myriad other places, together forming the landscape for the characters from traditional and popular culture who inhabit its world. As Peter Higgin, Director of Punchdrunk Enrichment, explained to me, the installation 'becomes the worlds which the books contain'.

An example image of The Lost Lending Library, taken by Paul Cochrane at Nightingale Primary.

Arriving at school on Monday morning, all that the children discover is that the door to this room has been replaced by a book shelf. An 'emergency assembly' requires all members of staff to perform complicity with the narrative, offering their shock at this mysterious change in the school's architecture, and encouraging the children to share any information they may have on what has happened. From this moment, Petra begins visiting the classes in a state of secrecy and excitement. There, she is met by the children's discovery of an unusual book in their classroom, containing a lending ticket with the insignia of *The Lost Lending Library*. Petra tells them that this is an invitation to visit this mysterious library, asking teachers if she can take ten children at a time, selected seemingly randomly by a teacher feigning bewilderment, to help her with an important job. Once in front of the bookshelf, Petra reveals that the locked book is in fact a key, and the children help to discover the exact placement which will cause the shelf to swing open and reveal the library within. From here, the children venture inside without an adult (unless their specific needs make adult accompaniment a necessity) exploring a winding corridor that leads to a chamber inhabited by a character named Peabody. Peabody introduces her of himself (in this case study, both Petra and Peabody were female, but the characters can be either gender) as a guardian of the library, whose job it is to watch over the 'miscellaneous' section, and tells them all about the library, including the fact that it reaches up over 300 floors and contains every book ever written. She tells the children how the library jumps from place to place, drawn by pockets of imagination as it searches for more stories and new 'apprentices' to write them. Whilst in there, the children hear a story written by one of these apprentices, told by Peabody with the aid of multi-sensory props, lights and sounds that reveal new aspects of the library's magic. As they are about to leave, Peabody's friend Gillian from another floor calls to inform them of an empty shelf in their section of the library, and the news that they are to become apprentices, their task to write stories for the library. A fax arrives with specific instructions to write on topics related to their current classroom learning, and each child is given a personalised library card dated to expire within the following few weeks,

but which will allow them to visit with an adult in the meantime. Through a trick of the library design, the children leave the space through a tunnel that seems to appear out of nowhere, returning them to a changed version of the entrance through which they found the library. The children are collected by a teaching assistant (TA) and taken to what Punchdrunk Enrichment call the 'decompression room', where they can share their experiences with two TAs via talk, drawing, writing, or any other form of communication that the school chooses to put in place. They return to their classes, where later that day Petra returns to speak to them about a memory of visiting the library as a child that has resurfaced for her, during which she was given the mission of inspiring people to read. Since she fulfilled this quest by becoming a librarian, she was issued with a gold, everlasting library card; Petra suggests that, in writing their stories, the children might achieve the same.

Once each class has experienced the library with Petra and Peabody, it remains in school for another week, and schools have the opportunity to schedule extra visits for teachers and their classes. The story writing is left to the prerogative of the teachers, with Petra coming in for one post-performance workshop with each class. In this, she uses an object that has been 'teleported' by the library to support them, using oral narrative and drama techniques, in gathering ideas for their stories. Her emphasis is on spontaneity in creativity, leading to the collaborative development of a fantastical story that echoes the emphasis on imagination that the children experienced with Peabody. The following Monday, the children arrive at school to find that the library has disappeared without trace, although a little later - once all have had the chance to finish their stories - their own gold library cards arrive at school to be distributed. The teachers also have a subsequent professional development session with a member of Punchdrunk Enrichment, which encourages them to consider ways of using imaginative role play events in their future practice.

I visited three out of the four schools who experienced *The Lost Lending Library* in the summer term of 2015, although my time was predominantly concentrated on a more detailed case study of Grange Primary School[1] where I followed three classes (reception, year two and year five) through each aspect of their encounter with the library, as well as much of the work that they did with their teachers surrounding the project. Alongside this detailed consideration of *The LLL*, I also had the opportunity to visit *Against Captain's Orders (ACO)* at The National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. *ACO* is an immersive theatrical experience for children aged six to twelve and their families, involving an adventure to secure lost artefacts amongst the imagined archives and stores of the museum. Although this report is principally concerned with *The Lost Lending Library*, it touches on some illuminating parallels I perceived in family and school visitors' experiences of *Against Captain's Orders*.

[1] All school names have been changed in this report.

Research Aims

In agreement with Punchdrunk Enrichment, the following research questions were designed to guide the research:

1. **How does The Lost Lending Library support curriculum aims in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Key Stage One (KS1) and Key Stage Two (KS2)?**

2. **What alternative pedagogical role might Punchdrunk Enrichment's work play in a school community?**

The aim of these were to provide scope for offering concrete links to curriculum and learning as prescribed by governmental education policy and current research, as well as remaining open to wider theories of the pedagogies of engagement with narrative and performance.

Research Methods

My methodological approach drew on the principles of ethnography in searching for an understanding of the holism of the case study of Grange Primary School. Writing to advise on the use of ethnographic methods, Karen O'Reilly believes 'we should try to talk with anyone and everyone, or all types and personalities, of all roles, in all settings possible' (2009, p. 22). In taking this approach to this case study method, I hoped to offer what educational researcher Robert Stake calls 'thick description' (1995), or deep understandings of a specific case.

Grange Primary is a large, four form entry school, and it would have been impossible for me to follow the experiences of each year group through *The LLL*. I therefore, with the support and advice of the deputy head teacher, decided to follow a class from each of the three key stages as defined by the National Curriculum. To gain insights into *The LLL* in relation to the Early Years and Foundation Stage, I was put in contact with one of the Reception classes; for Key Stage One, with a Year Two class; and for Key Stage Two, with a Year Five class. For each of these, I spent time in the class before the library arrived, with my intention being both to get the know the children and also to present myself as a researcher interested in their learning in general, thus hoping to avoid breaking the mystery and narrative of the library by being explicitly linked to it. I was still able to be overt with the children about my intentions to observe and speak with them, follow their learning, and to write a report about it afterwards, but I responded to the library with the same naivety that the teachers presented. As it turned out, and as I will discuss in more detail later, the coherence of the library narrative, and the excitement of the children in response to it, made this very easy to do. Within each class, I asked the teacher for their help in deciding upon three focus children that I could really get to know over my time there, and who covered a spread of the range of abilities in the classroom. I carried out focus interviews with these children before, during and after the project, as well as observing and joining in with their play, drawing pictures and acting as an informal teaching assistant during their lessons connected to the library. Although the intention had been to focus my interviews with teachers around these individuals, I found that following teachers' lines of thought and enquiry through semi-structured interviews often meant discussing other individuals or ideas surrounding the project. In speaking of collaborative methods, Kathleen Gallagher writes to identify the advantages of what she calls a 'porous methodology' driven by 'the explicit and immediate needs in the field' (2008, p.72). As such, although guided by the broad research questions, I concentrated on making the research 'a conversation, a relationship' and allowing 'interviewees to set the agenda and the outcome' (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 129).

I collected documents such as mission statements, plans, and evaluations from teachers and pupils in schools across Newham and Hackney over the course of the time spent with Punchdrunk Enrichment, with the hope of adding to the 'thick description' (Stake, 1995) of the case, as well as providing means of triangulating the experiences as described by the pupils and teachers at Grange Primary. I also managed to talk with three actors who had been involved in the project over a longer term, including an actor who was key to its inception and one who was new to the project. This spread of experiences from people who were meeting each class within a school allowed insights into the project that I could not have gained alone. Interviews with other teachers and TAs who showed an interest in speaking to me about *The LLL* also gave me insights into wider experiences across the school than those that I could follow myself.

The time I spent in two schools prior to Grange Primary provided me with a chance to become familiar with the project in order to most effectively plan my time, to gain some preliminary feedback from pupils, teachers and parents, and to meet other actors who could share with me their experience of the project. The findings I discuss here are weighted towards the case study of Grange Primary, but may be triangulated by findings from other schools in Newham and Hackney. Triangulation of data is very much in fitting with the case study's aim of understanding not broadly, but deeply, and from different perspectives or 'multiple realities' (Stake, 1995, p. 63). In his book advising on the case study method, Gary Thomas summarises that:

> viewing from several points is better than viewing from one…another viewpoint or another analytical method may make us decide to reject initial explanations (2011, p.68).

I approached the various data collected - photographs, recorded interviews, field notes, documents, the children's writing and pictures - through a repetitive process of reading, transcribing, and making additional notes and comments. Michael Patton recommends allowing 'an opportunity to get immersed in the data' (2002, p. 441), building up a knowledge of the case. Following a principle of inductive analysis (Patton, 2002), I searched for patterns or themes in the data, reading and re-reading, making notes in the margin, highlighting, and gradually building up 'open codes' (Patton, 2002, p. 453) which were eventually refined to form the sections featured in the findings section of this report.

Research Ethics

After discussion of the project my academic supervisor granted Ethical Approval through Royal Holloway, University of London's Simplified Ethics Approval Form. Royal Holloway's policy on ethical conduct can be found at:
www.royalholloway.ac.uk/iquad/collegepolicies/documents/pdf/research/codeofgoodresearchpractice.pdf

Although it was impossible to organise full information and consent forms for everyone with whom I had contact, I was sure to let people know of my role in conversation, and to ask for verbal consent if I they had shared information or ideas that might be included in the project. This included assurances of their rights to confidentiality and to withdraw at any time. For the staff with whom I conducted longer interviews, we discussed the ethical implications of the work and they signed consent forms. Although names have been anonymised in this report, these conversations also involved discussions of how a handful of potential readers with knowledge of the case may be able to identify individuals through the context of the report. All participants gave their consent that this possibility did not cause them concern.

With regards to consent from children, I initially explained to them the purpose of this study to observe their learning in school, and, as *The LLL* arrived, explained that I had become very interested in this and would be moving to centre my questions and observations around it. At the same time, letters were sent home to the parents of the children in the classes I was observing, explaining my research and giving the

opportunity to contact me for more details or to opt out of the research. During observations of performances and decompression time with other classes, I interacted informally with the children, asking any whose comments or actions I might include in this research write-up if they would be happy for this to happen. All names of schools, adults and children have been changed to protect anonymity in this report.

Findings

Out of the data set emerged some broad themes surrounding the impact of Punchdrunk Enrichment's *Lost Lending Library*, as well as ideas about how this impact may be channelled and negotiated by the schools with whom they work. In the text box below, I offer a bullet point summary separating these findings into the two initial research questions. However, since I perceive far more overlap and integration across these two questions than I perhaps first anticipated, I have laid out a narrative and theoretical engagement that follows instead the key themes that I drew out of data analysis. I want to emphasise here, and will return to this in the conclusion, that *The Lost Lending Library* has a holistic pedagogy of its own; the constituting elements that I have drawn out below are for ease of communication, but in this I am acutely aware of the ways that many of these themes could integrate together.

Of these six categories, I suggest three main broader themes that can be extrapolated as the pedagogical impact of *The Lost Lending Library*:

- **Literacy:** 1. Writing, 2. Talk and 3. Narrative
- **Creativity:** 4. The Performative and 5. The Imaginative
- **Moral and character development:** 6. The Affective/Relational

It is the six subsections of these three categories that I use to structure the exploration below.

How does Punchdrunk's enrichment work support curriculum aims in EYFS, KS1 and KS2?

1. *The LLL* offers powerful motivation to write, both at school and independently.
2. *The LLL's* experiential richness, both narrative and sensorial, offers inspiration for composition of story narratives, settings and characters.
3. *The LLL* encourages and extends pupil talk as they search for the vocabulary to communicate their experiences. Oracy skills are not only an important developmental necessity in their own right but, as the National curriculum identifies: 'spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing.'
4. *The LLL* has a positive and adaptable approach to inclusion, engaging pupils across learning needs, abilities, genders, backgrounds and ages.
5. *The LLL* may also inspire teachers in developing their learning environments, as well as in using pedagogical approaches that invoke imaginative engagement.
6. The workshops that accompany the library go some way towards fulfilling the statutory requirement of the curriculum that children take part in performances, role plays and improvisations. Experiencing the library offers engagement with excellent models of performance and oral storytelling.

What alternative pedagogical role might Punchdrunk's enrichment work play in a school community?

1. To draw on Josephine Machon's use of the term *communitas* (2013) in relation to Punchdrunk's work, *The LLL* offers a chance to surpass classes' notions of ability setting and hierarchy, as well as opportunities for them to support each other, play and collaborate imaginatively.
2. There is a significant affective element to *The LLL* that, in turn, invokes the relational; many of the children care for Petra and Peabody, for the effects of the library on their school communities, for their teachers, and for each other. Not only is this awareness of themselves as what Elizabeth Ellsworth calls 'in relation with the world' (2005, p. 4) an important orientation for learning, but it may contribute to what current governmental policy agenda terms 'moral and character development'.
3. The ambiguities in *The LLL* experience allows pupils to create their own myths, imaginative connections and suggestions, which in turn may feed into their composition for writing.
4. *The LLL* may encourage pupils to make connections between the 'real' and the imagined, allowing them to channel their creativity. These skills of creative and critical thinking may be the foundation that allows the exploration of possibilities, innovations and new social realities.
5. The library may be seen to connect with the work of Joe Winston, who has championed the importance of experiences of beauty in education (2010). He argues that beauty, grounded as it is in experience, makes links between our emotional and cognitive faculties, as well as offering an orientation towards both 'hope and uncertainty' (2010, p. 138) that can support how we approach others and our experiences in the world.

Recommendations

1. Teachers play an essential role in the translation of *The LLL* experience to high quality writing. Teachers identified the breadth of writing that may emerge from the library, including how effective responding to the experiential richness of the library itself can be. It may be that examples of previous writing from other schools, or a more detailed discussion of how to plan to include the library in teachers' planning, may support them in preparing to make the most of its arrival. This could be extended to include ideas on how to use the library space when performances have finished, how to extend the story, how to show the children that their stories have been sent or placed in the library, and how to best organise and run the decompression space.
2. The above might include identifying how the library could influence other subject areas. If disengaged writers respond to the library but not the writing task, it may be helpful to find other ways for them to record a story for the library, for example through drama or oral storytelling.
3. It was noted that, in some cases, the decompression room was not used to its full potential. Fuller briefing of schools on this aspect, as well as fully harnessing the important role of the production manager (who was observed modelling the role of teaching assistants in this room) could be of benefit.

Writing

'Miss, I don't want to go to flute lessons, I want to stay here and write.' **Year Five pupil.**

Providing inspiration for writing is a principle aim of *The LLL*, and was clearly a principle concern of Grange Primary in commissioning the project. The deputy head teacher's introduction to the project for the staff in the initial meeting was to present: 'Punchdrunk Theatre company, coming in to inspire the children to do some really exciting writing', although he added that he found the project to be 'a cross between Hogwarts and The British Library,' a reference to its beauty and imaginative qualities which I will explore further below. Across the classes that I followed, the children and teachers confirmed for me that the project did just that; the experience of visiting the library was exciting, with every child that I encountered believing in the 'in world' experience (even if this wasn't immediately, as I will discuss later). The writing task set by the library therefore felt highly significant, with the children invested with the trust of the library's magical ability to travel to places where imaginations were prime for producing stories. In this, there is something reminiscent of Dorothy Heathcote's *Mantle of the Expert* approach to teaching and learning, albeit a passing resemblance in light of the comprehensive set of criteria she sets out in collaboration with Gavin Bolton in their book *Drama for Learning*. Within this framework, Heathcote and Bolton outline how children should gain a belief in their 'power to function' (1995, p. 27) as experts in the world created by their role play. Although *The LLL* project does not involve this happening obliquely over time and through the learning of new skills as in *Mantle of the Expert* work, the children exposed to *The LLL* are endowed with a belief in themselves as apprentice story writers. Similarly, these authors describe how in pupils during *Mantle of the Expert* work:

> The feeling of *caring* about what they are doing and the values they stand for are not simulated, as in some kinds of drama, but are allowed to accrue naturally. (1995, p. 24)

It is this investment that they argue leads to motivated learning, an essential element to success that is also highlighted by Ken Robinson in his volume *Creative Schools (*2015). Of the thirteen teacher feedback forms collected from Grange Primary, twelve (92%) reported that children's engagement with writing had been raised by their experiences in the library, as, in fact, did the 10 teacher feedback forms I looked at from other schools involved in the Newham wave of the project. As one teacher from Reach Primary said, 'The LLL was inspirational for the children and adults and a great starting point to engagement for writing'. Parents, too, commented on the motivation to write at home created by the project. The parents that I had contact with were mainly those who had chosen to participate in the parent sessions organised by Punchdrunk Enrichment. Of these, most had their curiosity piqued by their children's enthusiastic recounts of their library experience, as well as their insistence that they needed to write stories for the library. One mother told me of her twins, who had been writing and making small books at home by stapling paper together, whilst a pupil from Year Two told me that she, too, had been writing at home. Similarly, a parent from the school trip to *Against Captain's Orders* recalled her daughter's engagement with *The LLL* from the previous term, telling me how at the time she had become a prolific writer of stories at home. It is clear that the motivational quality of *The LLL* is highly significant if it can engender such an abundance of writing not just at school, but also at home.

As I will cover in more detail in the final section of these findings, teachers' attribution of the motivational effects was different across different classes, with different teachers noting particular achievements from boys, girls, the higher and lower attaining, and many identifying that all were affected. As the Reception Teacher put it:

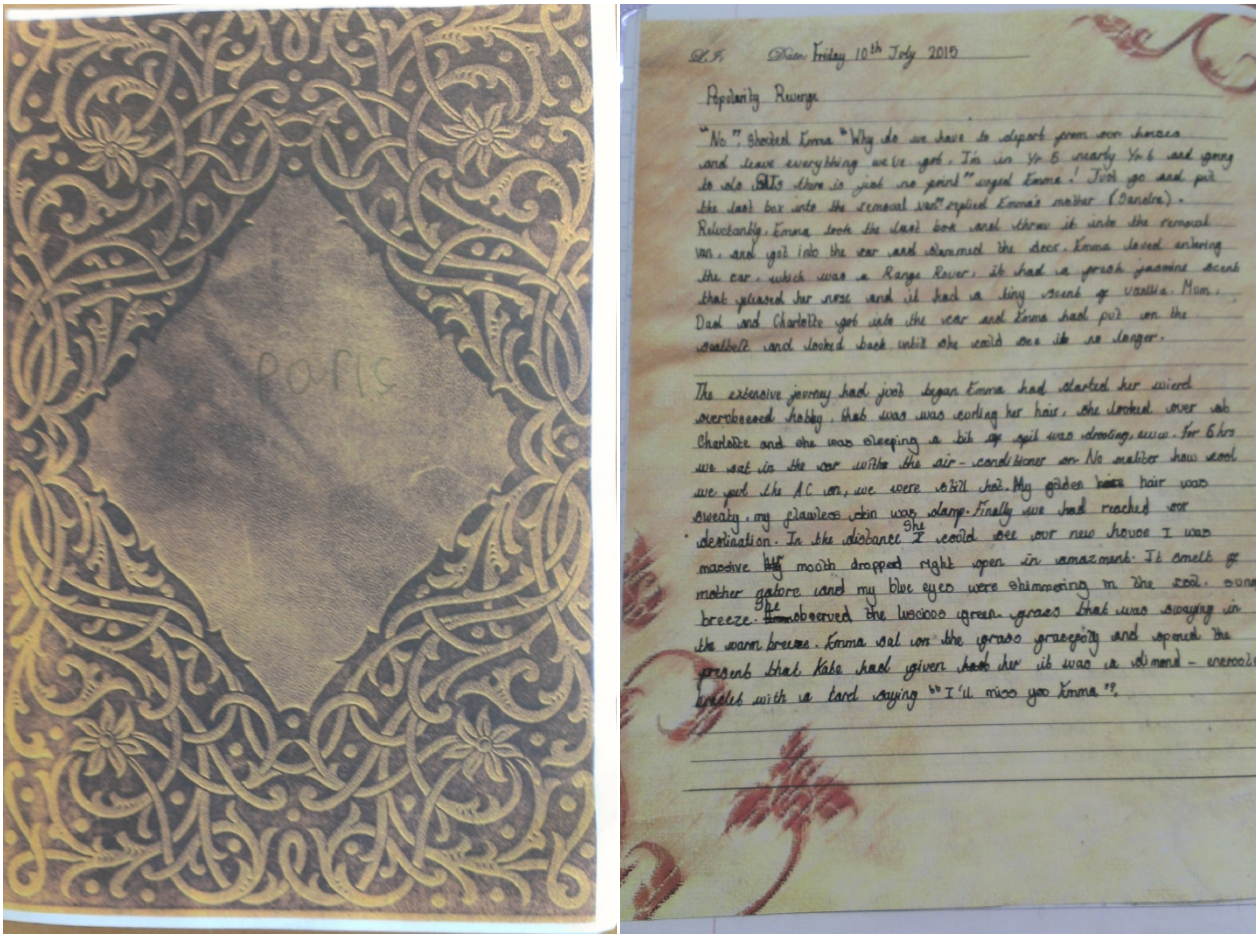
> In terms of getting them motivated to write, I'd say every single child had a moment of being desperate to write.

That said, of the feedback forms from Grange Primary, nine of the thirteen (69%) marked boys as a group that they felt had been particularly impacted by the project. The year two teacher similarly emphasised how pleased she was that boys had been similarly affected to girls:

> And it's not just a third of the class or half of the class (who have been motivated to write), I would say it's most of them, and even boys who do find sometimes storytelling a bit difficult have been talking more, writing, making predictions about what's going to happen.

The gap in primary level writing achievement between boys and girls has been noted through several studies (for example Younger and Warrington, 2005), as well as in national data results (Department for Education, 2012); a project thus able to target boys as much as girls in writing is extremely noteworthy in the current educational climate.

Significantly, Punchdrunk Enrichment leaves open to each school and teacher's discretion the ways in which they will use the inspiration of the library to feed into writing. Apart from the library's stipulation that they should write on their in-classroom topics, they are encouraged that 'stunning stories, amazing articles and illuminous illustrations' are 'all accepted'. In the Reception class that I followed, the teacher used the energy of the afternoon immediately after the library session to talk lots about the library and give some children chance to get this experience down on paper. In the following days, she introduced them to story writing, the concept of beginnings, middles and ends that she perceived they would need in order to compose their stories, and shared an example of an imaginary story set in Brazil. These stories were written in special books (see picture below), marking their importance and allowing her to take these stories to the library with the class and place them directly onto the shelf. This session resulted in a climactic moment in the imaginary worlds being collaboratively created amongst the class, resulting in more talk and writing inspired by the library upon their return (see section on 'The Imaginative' for more detail on this). In these, the class discussed what might have happened to Peabody and invented the adventures she could be having in her absence from the library. Similarly in Year Two, several pieces of writing emerged from the library experience, including an article reporting on their experiences for which they gathered quotes from other children, as well as the story about Brazil that the library had asked of them. In Year Five, their writing began a week after their library experience with an adventure story that the children were encouraged to compose with complete freedom. Although this resulted in some needing reassurance that the library would not object if this did not involve their topic 'Greece' as had been stipulated, I felt a real buzz of excitement around the room from children gathering inspiration from a variety of places, with complete agency over their choices. These stories were later written up on special paper for the library, with their teacher telling me that she intended to package them ready for posting to the library after it had left. When I went in to interview the Year Five focus children in the final week, they were mid-way through a second library-inspired piece of writing, this time about what might happen if they ventured to the 25th floor of the library.



An example of the books written by Reception (left) and the paper used in Year Five (right).

My discussions with the teachers and children surrounding this writing threw up some interesting considerations for the writing practices which spring from *The LLL*. Some children were acutely aware of the value and potential rewards of the stories that the library had specifically requested. As Sam from Year Five explained to me, 'I wanted to have a golden library card', with his classmate Rachel concurring, 'Petra had a gold membership card, it was inspiring, the idea of getting one'. Meanwhile, two of the four Year Two focus children remembered this aspect, whilst it seemed slightly less significant to Reception's experience of the project. It is notable that the library is employing a combination of intrinsic rewards (knowing that your story is contributing to the library) and extrinsic rewards (the golden card) in motivating children to write. Research in psychology and education has questioned whether the use of extrinsic rewards might undermine the power of intrinsic motivation (for example, Lepper, Greene and Nisbett, 1973). However, a recent meta analysis published by psychologists Cerasoli, Nicklin and Ford have questioned this, suggesting instead that

> with respect to performance, incentives and intrinsic motivation are not necessarily antagonistic and are best considered simultaneously (2014, p. 980)

Certainly, this combination of intrinsic and extrinsic reward seemed to work together in this case, with children speaking both in terms of the library's need and their own desire to gain their permanent library cards. Significantly, both of these elements seemed to add credence to the library and the consistency of its narrative, and worked together in creating a believability that had the children hooked.

What is clear is that the library inspires the desire to write and, with input from a skilled teacher, this has the potential to be of a high quality. Ten of the thirteen teacher responses at Grange Primary reported a

higher writing quality amongst their pupils in connection to *The LLL* experience (77%). Although structural and grammar input for writing remain the reserve of the classroom teacher during the project, *The LLL* project includes several facets which may add to children's ideas and skills for composition. Katie Pahl (1999) has written on the dual skills of composition and grammar knowledge that are required in order to produce effective writing, and this a clear distinction used by the National Curriculum in defining the skills that children should be learning in their literacy lessons. The Year Five teacher emphasised how the children's experience in the library had contributed to their skills of composition:

> The ideas were better, they still need work on their grammar, the ideas were deeper and the descriptions were good.

Meanwhile the Year Two teacher, in a comment which combines praise for the experiential nature of the project with that for the imaginative fuel it provides for composition, said how,

> in literacy, they've been working hard, lots of talking, lots of sharing and exchanging ideas, and it's helped them to be imaginative - it's not abstract, it's been a real life experience.

As well as the library itself providing inspiration for composition, the follow-up workshop targeted this area through games aimed at stimulating ideas and lowering inhibition. The Year Five teacher specifically commented on this:

> And even the workshop helped, that game, her saying 'just say anything', gave them the opportunity to hear different ideas and they used those.

The best composition I saw during these workshops was where Petra was able to support and extend the children's ideas to produce a genuinely captivating story.

Although the improvement in children's ideas for composition was emphasised by teachers, I wonder if the motivation it provides might equally stretch to spelling and grammar if the right resources are provided for children to make improvements. I am reminded of Marie Clay, an expert reading and writing teacher, who said that motivation was the key to gaining the problem solving skills required to solve the complex task of reading and writing. Her emphasis on the importance of wanting to learn new technical skills in literacy as being key to learning and retaining was clearly evidenced during my observations of this project. One notable example was a younger member of the Reception class, Silai, who had been lower achieving in terms of writing during the year. After Silai's class had been talking about where Peabody might be, she came to the writing table independently during the children's free choice of activity, an occurrence which the teacher later told me was unusual. There, she began writing about Peabody buying herself some new clothes and accessories, using the graphemes for some key sounds but writing without finger spaces. The teacher noticed her motivation and suggested they try it again, this time using finger spaces. With expert intervention on behalf of the teacher, Silai wrote for the first time with the sounds and spaces that allowed her work to be read by others; her pleasure and pride at this achievement was palpable, and it was a remarkable moment of a teacher's knowledge of early learning and the library's power to motivate a learner working in tandem.

In terms of the effectiveness of the different writing tasks that I saw emerge from the library experience, it is notable that when I asked Rachel from Year Five which writing she preferred doing (the story for the library or the story about the library), she said to me:

> I enjoyed them both...I like this more (the story about the library) because it's interesting creativity. We don't normally get to write about that kind of thing...

Similarly, the Year Two teacher felt that she had the highest quality of work from the children in the articles they wrote reporting their experiences in the library. My informal interview with three teachers from West Lane Primary, who had been a part of the earlier Hackney group of schools, revealed similar feedback, with them suggesting that it is the experiential richness of the event that is most inspiring. West Lane in fact requested that the library would ask for 'adventure stories', rather than work related to in class topics, for this very reason. Baldwin and John, in their book *Inspiring Writing Through Drama* (2012), suggest the power of lived experience to translate into writing, arguing that children will find it much easier to write about an event that they have participated in. Of course, the idea of producing a story for the library is an essential part of the narrative, and the method through which children become the imaginative experts; I do not suggest that this motivating request by the library should be changed. Rather, it should perhaps be made more explicit that the library is full of potential for writing, particularly due to the experiential nature of the project, and that the library's secrets and tantalising suggestions are prime for building upon through children's imaginative engagement. Writing *about* the library has as much, if not more, potential for excellence as writing *for* the library.

As is inevitable with a project that can only be experienced once, there was a certain amount of trial and error involved in teachers' pedagogical approaches to weaving the library into their literacy teaching. Although the benefits of hindsight will always offer potential improvements to ideas and organisational structures, several teachers mentioned to me that more time to reflect in advance on how to incorporate the library could have been beneficial. In this, they were particularly interested in examples and ideas of some of the work that had been done in other schools, suggesting that sharing good practice might be helpful to making the most of the experience. Of course, to be overly prescriptive with explicit lesson plans would be to deny teachers the chance to be child-directed and responsive to their classes in their day to day work. However, *The LLL* has the potential to inspire so much more than one piece of writing, and, without being prescriptive or allowing this to laboriously dampen children's imaginative engagement, the huge potential of the longevity of the project's written work should be fully encouraged. One of the schools in Newham, for example, made a post-box that children could keep using to send stories to the library, whilst teachers at Grange Primary talked about dedicating shelves of their book corners to the library, perhaps even making their own installations to emulate what they had seen there. By collecting such ideas, lesson plans and evaluations surrounding the library, there could be the chance to feed the insights of other teachers' hindsight into future incarnations of the project.

Talk

***'This is the best day I ever had, I'm going to tell my gran and grandad all about it. I hope we can go again soon.'* Reception pupil in the decompression room.**

It became clear in my discussions with teachers and observations in school that *The LLL* provided as much motivation to talk as it did to write. All three teachers with whom I had in-depth interviews commented on the impact upon children's desire to talk and their vocabularies, whilst the Year Two teacher even noted how a child who had recently arrived from Bangladesh with little English had become more motivated to communicate after the experience, either through language or drawing. In this, it seems important to mention the key role of the 'decompression room', the place where children are really given their first opportunity to discuss what they have experienced, and an essential space in giving priority and time to pupil talk. A skilled EYFS TA worked with the children of this age group in Grange Primary's decompression room, and was careful to continue the good practice of the classroom in noting down children's utterances to show to their teachers and include in their learning logs. It was in this space that several children from nursery either spoke for the first time at school, or spoke for far longer and with more passion and detail than is habitual for them. In this, it becomes very clear how crucial the role and understanding of skilled TAs are to the success of the decompression room. As one Reception child told Petra when asked what she had enjoyed about the library, 'My favourite bit was going to do writing with Miss Sally'; clearly, being listened to, and to have a chance to express the wonder of the experience, was key to this child's experience of the library. I saw a less successful decompression room session in one of the schools where the TA was not ready to fully 'buy in' to the experience, and who was more prescriptive with the tasks the children did, thus shutting down their talk and their own preferences for self-expression. I noticed in Grange Primary how the School Liaison Officer came in several times to support TAs who seemed unsure about what their role was in the decompression room, and this ability to model good practice greatly facilitated it reaching a fuller potential. On the other hand, the deputy head teacher wondered if more could be gotten out of the decompression room. A concerted effort by the school to harness and use the room as a springboard for later writing would not be in discordance with allowing children the freedom to talk, drawing on the depths of their language knowledge and encouraging the search for new words and sentence structures. Indeed, the joy and significance of these utterances as children sought to describe this new and wonderful experience spread throughout the school, with the deputy head naming speech and language developments as a major outcome of the project. The Reception teacher, too, commented on how one of her lower attaining male pupils was explaining his experiences more fully and comprehensibly after *The LLL*. Speaking and language development is a key part of the EYFS learning goals, and an area that this teacher felt was hugely evidenced during the project. 'Spoken language' development also forms a key part of the National Curriculum guidance for KS1 and KS2, which includes references to this aspect in the overview for language and literacy learning (2014, p. 11), as well as giving specific details of what should be taught and expected within the stipulations for each year group. Punchdrunk Enrichment have designed a project that has huge potential for learning in this area.

As the National Curriculum emphasises, the skills of composition in speaking and writing are crucially interlinked. Jean Gross in his book *Time to Talk*, cites examples such as The Cambridge Primary Review (Alexander, 2009), the EPPSI Report (Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2011) and Ofsted thematic national reports as all influencing current national policy. This, he suggests, is 'beginning to place a much greater emphasis on oral language than it did in the past two decades' (Gross, 2014, p. 2). Gross points out that, amongst many other factors highlighting how essential language development is to learning, that

> vocabulary age five is one of the most significant predictors of the qualifications pupils achieve when they leave school (2014, p. 1)

Although there were a handful of examples of children that remained unmotivated in face of the writing task, every child that I asked about their experiences of *The LLL* had lots to explain to me, leading often to sustained and engaged conversations. In the subsequent sections of this report, I'd like to unpick a little more what it was about the library that led to this depth of engagement. Each element discussed below is key to why the children wanted to talk, and often wanted to write, whilst also illustrating other pedagogical implications that emerge alongside the concerns of literacy. I begin below with a deeper look at the narrative of *The LLL*, both in terms of the stories that the children experience during the project, and what this engagement may mean for their wider learning.

Narrative

'There were loads of books in there, old books and a shelf for new books, but no books on it.'
Year Two pupil.

A passion for stories, to read and hear as well as to write, is intrinsic to *The LLL*. Petra, a character who has dedicated herself to reading and encouraging others to read, embodies this throughout the project. Her initial conversation with the children, sharing her favourite books and finding out about theirs, is full of genuine warmth, and she takes their suggestions of good books so seriously that she asks to borrow them. Eleven of the thirteen (84%) teacher feedback forms from Grange Primary reported an increase in engagement with reading as an outcome of the project and it was clear from children's, staff and parents' comments that the concept of libraries had taken on a new magic. One parent told me how her daughter kept asking to go to their local library after the project, whilst one of the actors who had played Petra in many schools reported how 'lots of the children come out wanting to be librarians'. If this comment held a hint of wry concern for how the children may have been misled regarding the real-world content of this job, it nonetheless reveals a significant impact on their feelings about libraries as positive places. Grange Primary have their own full-time librarian, and her response was hugely positive, having had the chance to see almost every child go in and out of *The LLL* from her desk right beside it.

The narrative world of the library, albeit not presented as fictional narrative but as an experience to live out, is a very definite story arc, and is one that Punchdrunk Enrichment have been developing as a trademark of their work (indeed, a similar format features in *ACO*). It is this adventure story arc (what they call a 'problem/mission') that is currently shared with teachers in the CPD session after the library has left, encouraging them to think of other projects that could bring this lived narrative to their the school. *The LLL's* world is one full of detail, an example being the inscription of Latin on the back of the library cards, a language puzzle which led to some excellent problem solving by a group of Year Five pupils, pooling their shared knowledge of languages to try to work out what it might be. It is this detail that makes an imagined world believable, and which seems to work in combination with what Machon, Stammers and Thompson identified in their preliminary report on Punchdrunk Enrichment's work:

> the durational presence and interaction of the practitioner/s in role around the school throughout the timescale of the project supports the world that has been created and validates the pupils' belief in that world. (2014, p. 14)

Alongside this durational quality and attention to detail, *The LLL* also contains lots of ambiguity, or interpretative gaps that do not betray holes in the integrity of the narrative, but instead leave space for children to fill in with their own imaginations. I will explore more on this later when I discuss the

imaginative impact of the library, but first turn to some explicit curriculum links. The National Curriculum stipulates that children use their powers of inference and predication to engage in a meaningful way with the story that has been created, stating, for example, that pupils in Year Five and Six should be 'drawing inferences such as inferring characters' feelings, thoughts and motives from their actions' and 'predicting what might happen from details stated and implied' (2014, p. 45). They must do this during their reading at school and beyond, and the library offers an exciting and valuable opportunity for these skills to be learnt and exercised.

It is interesting to note the mirror between *The LLL* and the stories told within; in much the same way that discovering *The LLL* involves mystery and courage from the children, so do the discoveries of the protagonists in the stories told by Peabody. Like the children, these protagonists also discover a world that they didn't know existed before, thus lending a consistency to the narrative themes and aesthetic throughout the project. Peter Baldock in his book *The Place of Narrative in the Early Years Curriculum*, discusses children's development of what he calls 'narrative competence', a term he develops his own understanding of following its original use by Carol Fox (1993). His argument is that the ability to understand and communicate narrative does not unfold naturally, but must be developed through careful engagement with stories and texts that place them as the subject of learning, rather than 'springboards' into other activities. As well as emphasising how important it is for children to be inducted into narrative conventions that they can use and recognise, such as beginning and ending markers, he argues that the use of what he himself calls 'theatrical' props and performance elements will greatly aid children's understanding (2006, p. 71). In line with this argument, it becomes clear how the use of such techniques by Peabody make the stories accessible and interesting for children across the primary age range. Baldock is also careful to point out that full understanding of stories is not necessary to engagement and learning, arguing that allowing for the excitement which unfolds in recognising certain aspects or in aesthetic enjoyment 'is part of the business of establishing their (the children's) confidence in the narrative task' (2006, p. 84). Baldock's argument later develops to emphasise the significance of narrative for cognitive engagement as well emotional. He uses the work of the psychologist Bruner to extend this to suggest that we should not separate the ability to understand narrative from more paradigmatic thought, warning that

> Any attempt to make a rigid separation between our ability to see abiding patterns, construct stories or use imagination always leads to disaster. (2006, p. 101)

What is significant about this project, as I suggested earlier, is that children do not just have the opportunity to hear stories involving this adventure story arc, but they live it, too. They engage fully with a narrative world in a lived, embodied way that adds a deep, visceral knowledge of how this plays out. *The LLL* puts children in touch with stories and provides motivation for writing, but it is first and foremost a performance. In this next section, I will consider how the performative aspects of this project may have an impact within an educational context.

The Performative

'She made it fun to write stories. She made the story come to life; she didn't have a book, she just knew it and she made a real toy train come along the track.' **Year Five pupil.**

As would be expected from the Education and Outreach department of a highly acclaimed theatre company, the theatrical and performance quality that schools experience through *The LLL* is extremely high. The Year Five teacher began introducing her class's writing for the library by asking them what made the story in the library so effective. This was not an emphasis on stories in the written form, but on oral and performative storytelling. Although the class were fully involved in the fiction of the piece, with all doubts as to whether or not it was 'real' cast aside, it was interesting to note that they could simultaneously use this experience to deepen their understanding of how good story*telling* works. They could comment on what they called the 'sound effects' in the library, the lighting, or Peabody's ability to use her voice and body to tell the story in an engaging way, as well as mentioning the narrative conceit of a twist at the end. In other words, they were learning about the potential performative aspect of stories as well as the written. Matthew Reason in his book *Theatre for Children*, based on his research into primary aged children's experience of theatre, found that the older the children were, the more the worlds of theatrical representation and the stories created ran in parallel in their minds. In other words, an understanding of techniques and styles in performance does not equate to a disruptive sense of artifice; as the Year Five pupil above told me, Peabody *made* a real toy train enhance her story. It doesn't matter that he knows what the object was, for the magic lay in its performative use. Helen Nicholson, in her book *Theatre, Education and Performance,* talks about how

> Learning environments that challenge and support young people artistically, emotionally, culturally and intellectually will invite their responses to theatre that are not only discursive and political, but also aesthetic and poetic. (2011, p. 204)

In this case, it is clear that the children were able to engage with the library on an aesthetic and artistic level, from which their teacher could tap in to what Nicholson calls a 'plurality of audience perspectives' (2011, p. 205) beyond a single meaning or single mode of engagement. From what the children reported in this lesson, as well as from their talk in the decompression room, it became evident that a major part of what made this experience theatrically engaging lay outside of the narrative, or rather could be found in the multi-sensorial elements of the library that enhanced the performed narrative. This emphasis on the richness of the sensory world was first introduced by Petra, who encouraged the children to smell and feel the books she brought to show them in her initial meeting, attuning and preparing them for their later experiences. The library is a bombardment of visual detail and intricacy, combined with lighting, sound, and even its own smell. Being able to return to the library, to spend time there without the narrative of the performance, to look, touch and take in its sensory richness, was mentioned as a huge positive by the Reception teacher. She visited twice with the children, noting how, as their overwhelming excitement at the library passed from bubble to simmer, each time they were able to take in more details. These opportunities to revisit the library are clearly invaluable to building a layered experience of this rich and scenographically detailed environment. As Machon, Stammers and Thompson have already identified, 'The tactile, interactive world established inspires curiosity and advanced imaginative interaction' (2014, p. 11), having a vital part to play in the children's excitement, motivation for learning, and belief in the world of the library.

The provision of teacher and parent sessions by Punchdrunk Enrichment means that adults have the opportunity to engage with the library without encroaching on children's independent experiences. Not

only did this give adults an experience of the feelings and ideas that the children expressed, thus better allowing them to engage with and enhance these, but they could also engage with it on their own pedagogical terms. Several teachers commented that they felt inspired to develop their own learning environments after experiencing the library, whilst 92% of feedback form respondents said that they would think about more ways to enhance their learning environments (as I mentioned above, the deputy head told me that several had already begun to explore ways of recreating a section of the library in their own classrooms). It is also notable that 85% of respondents felt the library had impacted on their consideration of storytelling and creative approaches to planning, showing that the learning experience of the library is thus multi-layered, affecting the learning of both children and adults. This is a notable achievement amongst a literature on partnerships between artists and schools that emphasises some of the tensions that can arise when conceptualisations of pedagogies or project aims are different. Educational researcher Maurice Galton, for example, in his report on the pedagogy of Creative Partners in schools, highlighted potential frustrations for both teachers and artists, even to the extent that artists have felt the need to censor their planned work to fit in with teacher expectations (Galton, 2008). Clashes between the intentions of Punchdrunk Enrichment and those of teachers was a potential pitfall of their diverse work as identified by Machon, Stammers and Thompson in their report, with the suggestion being that more might need to be done to align understandings between Punchdrunk staff and teachers. Perhaps because of the huge emphasis placed on teachers to be complicit with the imagined world in Punchdrunk's introduction to *The LLL* at Grange Primary, it seemed that having to 'play along' made teachers become almost members of the team, whilst the clear demarcation between responsibilities for performance and writing prevented any clashes or confusion of roles and intention. Teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with *The LLL* at Grange Primary, indicating a good rapport and level of communication between teachers and Punchdrunk staff. The deputy head teacher told me that he felt that having a School Liaison Officer in place to support the organisation of the performance weeks was essential to this.

To return to pupils' experience of the performative in *The LLL*, several teachers commented on children being keen to read aloud the stories that they had written, whilst the Reception teacher noted a real flourishing of the children's desire to perform to the rest of the class. The workshop that Petra offers following the library experience involves the use of some drama and improvisation techniques, such as an imagined 'stepping in' to a story world or the game 'yes and' which builds on others' ideas. I followed a sometimes disengaged and disruptive pupil from Year Two as a case study through the experience. He was captivated by library and keen to tell me all about his experience, as well as being perceptive enough to notice my link with the library and see my arrival as a hopeful sign that Petra might be nearby ('Are you Petra's sister, miss?' he once asked me on my arrival in the classroom, looking behind me to see if she was coming). It is interesting to note that the first elements he remembered when I interviewed him a week or so after the performance were 'the teenage mutant hero turtles and skateboards', perhaps stereotypically male features of children's popular culture that he evidently identified with. These scenographic touches could be a part of the reason that, as I identified earlier, so many teachers noted the impact of the library upon the boys in their class. However, in the case of this particular boy, when it came to the writing he was as disengaged as ever, asking me in a later interview, 'Why does it always have to be writing?' Although, as was discussed in the initial section, the library has potential to be a hugely effective vehicle towards writing, perhaps its equally inspiring performative and aesthetic sides could be further harnessed to engage learners. Ken Robinson has long argued for 'personalisation to the real abilities of every student' (2015, p. 82) as well as suggesting that 'the real driver of creativity is an appetite for discovery and passion for the work itself' (2014, p.120). I wonder how this young boy's passion for the library could have taken form in a medium other than writing (I noted, for example, how he was both extremely eloquent and enjoyed drawing), and would suggest that raising schools' awareness of other possible means of engaging with the

library might be key to this. As one teacher noted in evaluation, *The LLL* led them to re-engage with approaches to pedagogy from the 'creative curriculum', whilst the Year Five teacher also noted that she felt, with more preparation and awareness of the scope of the library, she could have used it to enhance teaching in other subjects. As I mentioned before, it would be important not to dampen the imaginative captivation of the library through over or inappropriate use, but it could be that those disaffected with writing, or indeed those who could express their understanding of *The LLL* via other mediums, might find the opportunities to do so.

The sensory richness of the library environment lends itself to an inclusive approach to the needs of children in school environments. Grange Primary have a specialised unit for children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), and these children engaged with the library in specifically adapted sessions which emphasised sensory engagement with touch and sounds. I will write more about the inclusive element of *The LLL* later, but suffice to say here that this is a hugely positive aspect of its aesthetic and pedagogy, showing a commitment by the company to truly engaging every child that they meet. Elizabeth Ellsworth, in her book *Places of Learning,* writes of pedagogical process that are at once inclusive and emphasise sensory engagement with experience. She talks of processes that are

> noncognitive, nonrepresentational processes and events such as movement, sensation, intensity, rhythm, passage, and self-augmenting change. They seem to aim their designs at involving their users in ways that exceed psychical mechanisms such as memory, recognition or cognition. (2005, p.6)

In this book, Ellsworth examines the pedagogy of what she terms 'anomalous' places of learning (2005, p. 26), describing these sites as those outside of 'dominant educational discourses', such as museums, architecture and places of performance, which have the force to invoke what she calls 'the experience of a learning self in the making' (2005, p. 5). Her conceptualisation of pedagogy is of unpredictable, 'as yet unmade' knowings (2005, p. 6) that lie 'beyond language' (2005, p. 156) in somatic and sensational experience. She discusses museum exhibitions that are

> concentrated in an address to visitors as bodies whose movements and sensations are crucial to their understandings of the exhibitions. (2005, p. 42)

arguing that ideas can be expressed through sensory experience that may in turn merge with cognition. One of these ideas constituted by sensory engagement with *The LLL*, I would argue, is that of imagination.

The Imaginative

'It's like we went into* How To Live Forever' *Year Two Pupil

Early into the initial workshop, before *The LLL* has arrived, Petra encourages the children to close their eyes and imagine their dream library. In each class, I watched smiles spread underneath eyes squeezed shut, and a palpable delight amongst the children as they shared their outlandish, imaginative ideas, from clouds that float you from place to place, to shelves made out of sweets, to books guarded by ninjas. From the moment that the children realised that this work would be about engaging their imaginations, the majority were captivated, and 'imagination' was a phenomena that Petra and Peabody mentioned again and again in their work with the children. As Peabody says to them after telling a story, 'I love it because it doesn't just come alive out here, it comes alive in here (indicating her head).' In all of the children's talk, and in their play in the EYFS and in KS1, I saw the library's power to capture their imaginations. They asked questions about Petra and Peabody; searched for books and items from the library; made a tunnel emerge from their own classroom library; wondered where the other floors of the library were, where Peabody slept at night, and formed a whole number of other creative ideas arising from what they had experienced.

It was particularly in the Reception class that I witnessed the potential of *The LLL* as a work of collective creativity and flight of imagination. Their teacher was keen to give the children space to talk, to share experiences and ideas, and to honour their suggestions. When, on a class visit to the library, one child suggested that the model bathroom inside a stack of books could be Peabody's bathroom, the teacher built on this to suggest that Peabody might magically shrink in order to use this room. This was in turn built on by another child, who found a small bed amongst two books propped together like a gable roof, and suggested that this could be where Peabody slept at night. On their third visit to the library, a particularly imaginative girl immediately walked over to Peabody's desk. In response to hearing her peers call out for the absent library guardian, she held up a piece of paper and told them it was a letter from Peabody telling them she'd gone on holiday to China. The Reception teacher immediately accepted this improvised suggestion, and, on their return to the classroom, the children discussed other places that Peabody might have travelled to. It was this imaginative co-construction that led to one of the library-related writing sessions I discussed earlier, during which one usually unmotivated boy was particularly keen to write about his experiences in Paris after suggesting that might be where Peabody was. As I mentioned earlier, the ambiguities and mysteries of the narrative seem to be key to this imaginative appropriation by the children and teachers. Peabody, in particular, as a character they meet for twenty minutes with their senses and emotions sharply attuned, but who then disappears without trace, offers lots of scope for imaginative engagement. Umberto Eco refers to the potential of 'open' texts (1989), in which the scope for interpretation becomes enormous' (1989, p. xi) to engage imaginations. Eco's work is something which theatre scholar Josephone Machon also refers to in her wider analysis of immersive theatre work, a significant part of which she has based on Punchdrunk's practice (2013). The educationalist Bruner argues that great stories offer an element of 'subjunctivity', or ambiguities and possibilities that require readers (or viewers, in this case) to construct 'a virtual text of their own' (1990, p. 36). Drama and education specialist Joe Winston, too, in his book *Drama, Narrative and Moral Education,* talks about non-prescriptive texts and their potential to offer space for engagement, active participation, and deeper considerations (1998). The Year Five teacher said that she felt the best things about the project was how 'it opened their minds a little bit more, and going to explore, and the awe and wonder'. She also made connections with the Philosophy

for Children[2] initiative, suggesting the potential the project could hold for accessing deeper levels of thought, particularly for the gifted and talented children in her class.

As I have already mentioned, what is significant in separating Punchdrunk Enrichment's work from that of Dorothy Heathcote in *Mantle of the Expert* is the removal of the explicit 'if' framework for role play (1995, p. 26); instead, *The LLL* presents its imagined world as existing within the real, with everyone involved engaging as themselves (the actors are even often introduced to staff by their character names in order to minimise the chance of role playing becoming evident). Even the initially sceptical Year Fives and Sixes, who after the initial assembly introducing the arrival of the bookcase told me they thought it was a 'lie', were eventually convinced of the reality of the fiction created. Yet, despite this, many of their actions and words showed that the line between reality and imagination is a fine one. As I discussed with the Reception teacher, the Reception pupil who made up the letter from Peabody must have known she had done so, and yet simultaneously sat proudly when the teacher followed this up with a postcard from China, saying to herself 'I was right'. A Year Five pupil was able to name this state between belief and disbelief, telling me how young children would love the library because they would believe it, whilst older children would not. Referring to these two states she said, 'I'm a mix, but I think it's real'. Ellsworth identifies learning as happening somewhere between

> knowing and not knowing, in the space and time of learning as a lived experience with an open, unforeseeable future. (2005, p. 17)

She sees the 'learning self' as in suspension and animation between the person one has been and the person we are to become. Perhaps this imaginative state, poised as it is on the acceptance of possibilities beyond the concrete and confirmable, is an example of this 'learning self in motion' (2005, p. 118) described by Ellsworth. It is here that I see the potential for this practice to be connected to the concerns of critical pedagogy, or of a pedagogy that encourages the imagination of alternate realities. Maxine Greene, in her book *Releasing the Imagination*, responds to a quote from the novelist Ursula Le Guin who describes 'the freedom open to those minds who can accept unreality' (Le Guin, 1989, p. 45 as cited in Greene, 2000, p. 187). Greene extends this to suggest how,

> Having accepted "unreality", we can turn back to the variegated social realities we share and, perhaps, find them enhanced, expanded, corrigible. (2000, p. 187)

This sort of thinking is, of course, perhaps more politically orientated than would usually be associated with children of primary school age. However, this ability to approach ideas through the possibilities of imagination, a practice which, as Ken Robinson has argued, is the foundation of creative and critical thinking, is one that begins with celebrating the powers of that imagination from when it first begins to manifest.

I will end this section by returning to the explicit purpose of this project to link these imaginative faculties with the reading and writing of fictional narratives. In this, it seems important to mention the book *How To Live Forever.* By giving children access to the book that inspired the library, Peter Higgin identifies parallels with Punchdrunk's wider work, where 'audience familiarity (with a text or story) allows us to dive deeper into an imagined world'. For the children involved in this project, I wondered also if the sharing of the book made explicit the link between imagination and its channelling into a shared output. All of the classes that I followed, including Reception, had children that made this connection between *The LLL* experience and the book. As the writing process went on, the Reception teacher reported to me that children were increasingly

[2] More information on this can be found at www.p4c.com

asking questions about their 'imaginations', wondering where they were found and what they could do. She told me that, after explaining that anything can happen in your imagination, many of the children were truly amazed by this possibility, with one girl particularly finding this idea 'joyful'. This teacher felt like this marked the beginning of members of her class making connections between their imaginative play, in which she sees them as 'experts', and the more controlled version of this that we use in creating stories. This is an aspect of composition then, to refer back to the initial section, that goes beyond knowing how to create a clear structure, into a realm of true imaginative play. What this teacher facilitated, using the library as inspiration and example, was what Ken Robinson might describe as the transition from imagination to innovation. He explains this:

> imagination...is the ability to bring to mind things that aren't present to our senses...innovation is putting new ideas into practice (2015, p. 118)

Here were the beginnings of a translation from the private imagination to practices that can be shared with others. It is to this relational connection with others that I turn my attention in this final section.

The Affectual/Relational

> ***'I was scared.'***
>
> ***'So I rubbed her back.'***
>
> **An exchange between Reception pupils in the decompression room.**

As this quotation illustrates, a lot of care taking, concern, and personal bravery emerged from *The LLL* experience. Listening in from outside, you could hear the children drawing on their relationships with each other for comfort and support. For it would seem that, if the library is exciting and engaging, a large part of this seems to emerge from the excitement of fear. The children enter a new and mysterious place, usually without a known adult to accompany them, meet someone new, and are then asked to leave through a tunnel that seems to appear out of nowhere. Lots of the children reported their fear of this unknown in the decompression room afterwards, whilst others were proud to declare that they had not been afraid, or that they had overcome their fears to be the first to step through the door or crawl into the tunnel. It was also notable how many children reported the more macabre scenographic details from the library, which included a skull and a gargoyle-esque mask, expressing fascination with these features. *Against Captain's Orders* notably produced a similar effect, as children ran urgently from room to room to the sound effects of alarms, encountering spaces that were dimly lit, the possibility of a ghostly presence in one room, and eventually the fear that they may be locked in if they didn't hurry. Penny Holland writes on the importance of not censoring themes in children's play. Although she is specifically talking about themes of violence, I wonder if her argument could also be extended to other emotions often perceived as 'negative':

> Given that as adults such mysteries of life, death and evil continue to exercise us throughout life, we should not minimize the human weight of such issues when they arise in children's play. Perhaps in order to explore fragility safely children need to sense the possibility of resilience. (2003, p. 85)

Being nervous or afraid is a key element of the range of affective experience, and one that indeed may expose children to fragility. The Reception teacher commented on how 'later that day (after the performance) they (the children) were quite fragile, it was like a really strong experience'. The library offers a chance to be exposed to these emotions in a way that allows successful resilience, promoting an independence beyond that which is perhaps familiar within the classroom walls. Of course, the

counterbalance to fear, and the emotion the children showed in coming from the library into the decompression room, was one of delight and relief, both at the wonder of what had been seen and at the successful emergence from this realm of nervous energy. James Thompson has argued for the important consideration of affect in performance studies, arguing that it is in our feelings and affection for others that we can recognise outcomes beyond the conceptual. He quotes Ehrenreich arguing that we should,

> speak seriously of the largely ignored and perhaps incommunicable thrill of the group deliberately united in joy and exaltation' (Ehrenreich, 2007, p. 16 as cited in Thompson, 2011, p.115)

Josephine Machon has used the term 'communitas' to identify the feeling of 'community engagement and experience' that seems to go along with immersive work such as Punchdrunk's (2013, p. 38). This, she argues, has the potential to

> defamiliarise the familiar to transcend experience and empower the individual participants within these events. (2013, p. 38)

As well as bringing a sense of community, this empowerment of participants evident in the experience of *The LLL* also involved a degree of subversion of the status quo, with the children being the first to experience the library and returning with a secret that teachers didn't know about. Anthropologist Victor Turner, in his original development of the concept, identified how a sense of communitas offers an alternative to the hierarchical structures of the everyday (2007, p. 90). However, as the children shared their expertise with their teachers and were later given time to visit the library alongside them, classes and their teachers were once again united in their discoveries. The Year Two teacher told me, with evident joy at the memory, about her class spontaneously coming together to chant Peabody's name when they discovered her absent from the library, a moment that sounds like a true instance of communitas. Hers is a difficult class to manage, and it was clear that this moment had stayed in her memory as one of spontaneity and group cohesion. It would seem to me that these glimpses of the spirit of 'communitas' within a school have the potential to break down the barriers that may be built up in an environment that concentrates so much on academic ability. At Grange Primary, as in many primary schools, streaming begins in phonics lessons from the earliest years and is continued through to distinct working groups by later ages. Although I went into this research with a view to looking at how *The LLL* may impact upon different ability ranges, I found that what it inspired was a sense of inclusion, operating as it does outside of these notions of academic attainment**.** Across the teacher evaluation sheets that I saw from the four schools in Newham, teachers chose different groups[3] that they perceived to be impacted by the library, with many ticking 'all' or several group boxes. Even with the clear pattern of noting a particular impact on boys as previously discussed, *The LLL* was evidently perceived as inclusive in its impact. There has been considerable debate within education scholarship surrounding the effects of ability groupings, some of which indicates that this may be positive for higher achieving pupils (for example, Parsons and Hallam, 2014) and others which indicate children can become entrenched within certain views of their ability, both in their own eyes and teachers' (for example, Hallam & Ireson, 2005 or Hallam et al., 2004). There has also been some discussion around the negative effects of ability grouping and awareness on social cohesion within a classroom (for example Green, Preston, & Janmaat, 2006 as cited in Parsons and Hallam, 2014). What it would seem is that *The Lost Lending Library* offers is a chance to engage pupils outside of ability groupings as a united class, or as the Reception teacher put it:

[3] The options available on the form are: Boys, Girls, SEN, Behaviour Challenges, High Attainment, Average Attainment, Low Attainment and Other.

> I think they've enjoyed it as like a bonding experience, as like a social experience as well. Actually, they're not necessarily always united - obviously they're children and there's loads of them so they're not necessarily always kind to each other...

As such, the project can offer alternative paradigms, the chance for children to break their own and others' perceptions of their abilities and interests, and - as was discussed in the previous sections - to explore alternative ways of engaging with the world and their learning than the purely academic. Even within the academic frame, the expectations of story writing did not differentiate or suggest any difference in children's capabilities at completing the task. It is within this paradigm that I experienced the young Reception girl come forward to write her first story, with the teacher expertly supporting her to use spaces between her words for the first time. The library offered her the motivation to step outside of her previous expectations of her own abilities, whilst the teacher was able to respond with the openness and scaffolding which allowed this young girl to make a leap forward in her learning.

Similarly, it is clear that children's engagement with the library occurs significantly in relation to the people it brings along with it - even more so, perhaps, than in response to the installation itself. Petra seemed to become a celebrity within the schools I visited, swamped by shouts of her name, suggestions and questions wherever she went, whilst Peabody was a figure that they continued to search for and hope to meet again. Even I experienced a touch of this relational concern, as a Year Two pupil responded to my amazement at her recount of the library experience by spending her break time looking for a book that might contain an invitation for me to visit, too. The staff at West Lane reported how several pupils reacted with real sympathy and concern when the music teacher, whose room had been used to house the library, was convincingly distraught about the fate of his musical instruments. All of these emotional and relational reactions have implications for children as learners and members of social networks. Certainly for the Reception children quoted at the start of this section, this was clear evidence of their abilities to display some of the characteristics highlighted by the 'Personal, social and emotional development' area of learning in the EYFS framework, which asks that they can self-regulate and also empathise (2014, p.11). Denham argues that 'emotional competence', or the ability to express and self-regulate emotions, as well as recognising these in others, is essential 'in the development of pathways to mental health and risk, as well as social and academic success' (2002, p. 1). Development in these areas cannot, of course, be 'achieved' or completed by the end of the foundation stage, and the government have attended to this through their recent policy move to include a drive towards promoting 'character development' in schools. At the start of 2015, the Department for Education announced a funding initiative

> committed to helping schools ensure that more children develop a set of character traits, attributes and behaviours that underpin success in education and work. (2015)

Examples that are listed include: perseverance, resilience and grit; confidence and optimism; neighbourliness and community spirit; tolerance and respect; honesty, integrity and dignity; and conscientiousness, curiosity and focus. Many of these are values not only directly referenced through the stories of *The LLL* project, but are actively lived out by the children during their engagement with it. It is this lived experience in relation to the world and those that inhabit it that Ellsworth talks about as the crux of her formulation of pedagogy. She says that,

> All of this is an attempt to think relationally - an attempt to understand and talk about the nature of reality in a way that acknowledges that to be alive and to inhabit a body is to be continuously and radically in relation with the world, with others, and with what we make of them. (2005, p. 4)

The LLL is an essentially relational project, encouraging children to consider themselves in relation to imagined narrative, the characters with in it, and to their school community. As an affectively rich, lived experience, it holds the potential for deep social and emotional learning.

Conclusion

The LLL, in combination with a teacher who is attuned to the children's experiences and can teach the technical requirements for grammar and composition, can lead to inspiration that in many cases results in excellent writing. Simultaneously, the library has huge scope for inclusion within the wide curriculum of schools, from oral storytelling and drama through to art and science. Crucially, it engages with children's affective and imaginative capacities, an outcome of which may be to channel such creativity into pupils' skills of narrative composition. It would take longer term research to ascertain the extent to which such engagement with written composition continues on as a legacy of the library, but, whatever the results of this might be, this should not go to discount the power of the aesthetic and affective experience of *The LLL* within its own temporal space. The educationalist John Dewey, in his work *Art as Experience,* identified a difference between the general stream of experience that simply ceases, in contrast to *an* experience whose quality of absorption leads instead to a sense of consummation (1958). Gadamer identifies a similar phenomena in his ontological exploration of the concept of *Erlebnis*, which he uses to represent, the separation of some moments from the everyday flow, transforming these into unities which speak to the experience of life as a whole (1989, p. 70). Both of these theorists are referenced by Joe Winston in his book *Beauty and Education.* In this, Winston argues for the ubiquitous importance of beauty in our lives and as a facet of educational experience. He argues that,

> emotion and cognition are inseparably bound together...the one cannot be dislocated from the other and taught separately and...neither can be learned outside of experience. (2010, p. 134)

The importance of projects such as *The LLL* as lived experience should not be underestimated. Winston perceives in beauty an 'energising potential' full of 'hopefulness and future orientation' (2010, p. 57). All of the stories told in the library suggest that hope, belief and bravery in the face of adversity or fear can lead to rewards. However, Winston discusses hope not just for its potential to soothe or protect, but because of its fragility, suggesting that the poignancy of beauty lies in the possibility of its loss. *The LLL* itself is fragile; it is there and then it is gone, along with Petra and Peabody. I perceived beauty, both aesthetic and emotional, in the children's experience of the library, which reaches its fullest potential when it's capacity for imaginative collaboration, as well as its call for written work, is acknowledged by schools and teachers. Where this happens in an open, child-centred approach to the learning, perhaps drawing once again on Deweyian principles of learning, there is a true sense of ownership of the project and children as agents in their own learning. Elizabeth Ellsworth argues that pedagogy does not lie in an object or approach, but is a quality of learning. In her words,

> The educational qualities or value of a pedagogical effort...exists only in our responses to it. The educational component of a pedagogy is knowable to us only in our response. (2008, p. 23)

The pedagogy of *The LLL* seems to me to fall within this paradigm of responsive pedagogy; it's outcomes are affectual, evoking states of mind and feeling that can leave people (adults and children) to reconfigure old skills, form new knowledge, and use their faculties to communicate this with others. James Thompson questions the notion of ephemerality in regards to applied theatre. He argues that,

> Performance is...only ephemeral if you believe that bodies on stage are radically separate from those watching: once they have gone, they have gone (2011, p. 157)

In line with Thompson, I would argue that the experience of the library is one that is appropriated and given continued existence through children's engagement with it, or, as the philosopher Gadamer puts it

> The work of art transforms our fleeting experience into the stable and lasting form of an independent and internally coherent creation (1986, p. 153)

Through this conceptualisation, the potential of the beauty found in *The LLL* experience thus goes beyond the momentary aesthetic, and may indeed have a deeper and longer resonance in a renewed, or perhaps dawning, sense of creative possibility and relation to the world.

Recommendations for future research

Following from this report, I would recommend further research into the classroom practice that arises from Punchdrunk's work, with the aim of further supporting teachers to use *The LLL* to its greatest potential. In-depth discussions with teachers proved to be a major source of insight during this research, and could be of great benefit to Punchdrunk Enrichment in both their future research and evaluation strategies. Longer term research may also be of great benefit to a deeper understanding of the legacy that the project can have within a school, for instance by returning to a school several times in the year following the project and continuing discussions with pupils and teachers. The inclusive nature of the project, and the ability of *The LLL* team to adapt to the needs of pupils in the SEN unit at Grange Primary, was a notable outcome of this research. Further research might continue to develop this potential of the work, resulting in a model of specifically adapted practice for children with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) or Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).

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Appendix One: Information on Punchdrunk Enrichment

Punchdrunk Enrichment

Since its formation in 2000, Punchdrunk has established an international reputation as a ground-breaking theatre company, creating epic worlds and immersive theatrical experiences that have won the company awards and a popular following - their most recent London production *The Drowned Man: A Hollywood Fable* has been seen by over 200,000 people.

Since 2008, Punchdrunk's Enrichment team has taken this immersive practice into communities, creating performances with and for children, young people and the wider community. Punchdrunk Enrichment has enjoyed widespread success, working with over 40,000 young people and community members since its inception. Punchdrunk Enrichment has worked with over 200 schools, creating ground-breaking educational projects which place pupils and teachers at the heart of the experience and provide a real catalyst for learning. Examples of their numerous successes to date include *Under the Eiderdown*, a special installation-based storytelling project for primary age children and *Prospero's Island,* an installation in secondary schools inspired by *The Tempest.* In spring 2016, Punchdrunk Enrichment will partner with intergenerational arts company Magic Me and Anchor care homes. The collaboration will see staff and artists from Punchdrunk working alongside residents, families and staff at Greenhive care home to create a project that will offer bespoke and tailor made theatrical experiences for residents.

Appendix Two: Letter to parents at Grange Primary

Dear parents/carers,

I am writing to let you know that I will be based in Grange Primary School for the next few weeks, where I am conducted research surrounding literacy teaching and learning in primary schools. This will involve observing your child's class and conducting some interviews with children. Some of these interviews may be recorded on a Dictaphone for my own records, but will be immediately deleted after the research is complete. All names of children will be changed for my final write up, which will be shared only with the school and my supervisors/research sponsors. I am a fully qualified teacher, having previously worked as a classroom teacher in year one and reception, and am supervised for my PhD research by Professor Helen Nicholson at Royal Holloway, University of London. I am particularly interested in The Lost Lending Library, which has mysteriously appeared in school over the weekend, so would also be very interested if you have any feedback or perspectives on this.

Please do let your child's class teacher know if you have any questions and would like me to be in touch with you to discuss this further, or if for any reason you would not like your child to be included in this research.

Many thanks,

Emma Miles