

# Helping with Writing at Home

**Whilst children do lots of literacy-based activities at school (writing, reading, handwriting, phonics), there are also lots of ways that you can support your child at home. There are lots of ways to make writing fun and meaningful and it doesn't have to be writing pages and pages!**

Here are a few ideas to help you:

## Early Years and KS1

The basis of good writing is good talk. When you visit places encourage your child to talk about what has been seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched. Encourage children to share their experiences verbally in as much detail as possible.

Let children see you being a writer, using writing for day to day purposes. This could be for writing notes or cards to friends or relatives, a shopping list, adding reminder notes to the calendar. Show the children it's okay to make mistakes and that we often make mistakes and correct them as we write. Making changes and improving what we write is a natural part of the writing process.

Let your child write their own Christmas cards, thank you letters or e-mails to friends or relatives, invitations to a party or a list of things they need to take on holiday. Play word-building games like Scrabble or Boggle. Games like 'Guess Who' can also help to develop their descriptive vocabulary. Create silly sentences or tongue twisters using alliteration (a group of words that all begin with the same sound). For example, *Tall Ted tickled the tiger's tail.*

Encourage your child to rehearse their sentence out loud before they write it down. Always encourage children to punctuate their sentences with a full-stop and capital letter.

Handwriting does not have to be boring! Let children practise writing letters in sand, water, rice or paint, or use white boards or blackboards. Praise 'mark making' young children do. Children can also make letters using playdough, pastry or shaving foam. Let children write a small part of your shopping list. Let them be responsible for carrying their list and finding those items when you go to the supermarket.

Use magnetic letters on the fridge to spell out a message. Encourage your child to write their name, spell words and organise the letters into alphabetical order. Help them to organise and sequence their writing by asking them to talk about their ideas or to draw a sequence of simple pictures to show how the main events in a story might be organised.

## **KS1 and KS2**

Help your child write a letter to their favourite author. Correspondence can often be sent to an author's publisher (details can often be found on the internet).

When you go on holiday, encourage children to write postcards to friends or relatives. They could record things that you do in a holiday diary which they can share with friends or relatives when they get home. Write an information page or booklet about something they find interesting e.g. spiders, dinosaurs etc. Draw a picture and label it or write a caption to go with it.

Encourage your child to learn weekly spellings and practise phonic sounds. Write some of the spellings in sentences with accurate punctuation and practise Year Group spellings and handwriting. Older children will find a dictionary and thesaurus useful. Talk through their ideas with them before they start to write, for example, prompt them to think about how they intend to tackle a subject.

If your child enjoys story writing, help them to reflect on their writing, particularly the effect they hoped to have on the reader. For example, is the reader sufficiently prepared for the ending? Have they introduced all the characters? Encourage them to read through their work, shaping their sentences for clarity and impact and checking their accuracy.

## **All ages:**

Share letters and cards from friends and treat their arrival as special events. Show children that you value something that has been written especially for you.

Read books to, and with, them that are at a higher level than their own reading to expose them to ambitious vocabulary and complex sentence structure. Read the beginning of a story and make up the ending together, verbally or in writing.

*Praise your child's efforts at writing – it's not an easy skill! Focus on a word they have spelt correctly, neat handwriting, a good describing word or good use of punctuation. Remember, it is difficult to get everything right when you are learning!*