

Writing

Parent Information Guide



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We have put together this information guide so that you will have a clearer understanding about how we approach the teaching of writing at our school.

We hope you find the information helpful.

The Beginning



In order for any child to write meaningfully, he or she must first build up their fine motor skills. Painting, drawing, measuring and pouring sand and water, working with dough, and practising writing are excellent ways to improve fine motor skills. Your child will have picked up many pre writing skills before they come to school. Some of the things we can do to develop these skills are:

We need to encourage children's efforts to write: plenty of materials to write with at home

Making shapes, using stencils, discussing your child's work

Encourage your child to look at and talk about what they have drawn

Develop small muscle control by squeezing activities, e.g. (playing with a sponge in the bath)

Pinching Activities: using tweezers to move beads from one dish to another

Using scissors under supervision: cutting pictures from magazines, cutting up paper, cutting along lines drawn on paper

Lacing and stringing activities: use shoe laces to string beads or macaroni

Tracing activities: draw lines on paper and ask children to draw over them



Finger painting, making patterns in table jelly, shaving foam etc on a work surface

Make drawings of people, objects etc. Celebrate your child's success by hanging their work up or sticking it up on the fridge.

Writing Development

Talking with your child is a very easy and effective way of encouraging good language and writing skills.

Children will begin to recognise letters and identify letters among others. They will recognise their name and be able to find it.



You can help by talking to your child about the letters in their name; remember to start with letter sounds rather than letter names.

(Phonetically) Please ask in school if you need any help with this.

Staff will be more than willing to help you; by having the same approach we can support effective learning.

In School

We develop the children's writing skills from the stage that they are at when they start school. Each child is an individual and they will all develop at different rates.

Children initially learn to write through play and the activities mentioned above. Once they have mastered these skills they are ready to move on to learn writing in a more structured way. This will involve daily phonic sessions, letter formation, looking at and practising writing for a variety of different reasons, letters, imaginative stories, retelling of familiar stories, recalls, instructions, poetry, persuasive writing, reports, and arguments.

VCOP

VCOP are the four core targets we use to teach writing. The letters stand for:

Vocabulary

Connectives

Openers

Punctuation

Vocabulary (see enclosed Vocabulary Pyramid)

In this area we promote the use of "WOW" words in the child's writing. These are words which are ambitious for the children to use. We encourage the children to look for WOW words in their reading texts, (for example, reading books / novels read at home) and we also emphasise the fact that WOW words can be found in conversations (for example, on TV or with friends and family).

For example: at the age of 5/6 words like exciting, interesting, afraid; at the age of 6/7 words like adventure, accident, magic; at the age of 7/8 - gigantic, silently, sadness, baggage, companion; at the age of 8/9 - attractive, patiently, courage, furnishing; at the age of 10/11 - unexpectedly, succulent, disappointment, charisma.

It's really easy to help your child with this!

Read with them and to them. Share WOW words from your own reading and tell them words which you would use in different situations.

Connectives (see enclosed Connectives Pyramid)

Connectives make sentences longer because they join pieces of information together. The children are taught that there are different levels of connectives; therefore they are able to develop their writing appropriately. Children are encouraged to use a wider range of connectives as they progress through the National Curriculum levels. The children can use connectives at the beginning of sentences, so they can be used as sentence openers too.

At Level 1 they will start to join two sentences together using 'and'.

At Level 2 they will start to use 'but', 'so', 'then' and also be introduced to, and begin to experiment with, a wider range of connectives: 'because', 'if', 'when'.

At Level 3 they use a wider range of connectives which might include some of the following: because, before, after, when, if. Children also learn to use connectives to open sentences: Before..., After... When....

At Level 4 children use a range of connectives, usually accurately and consistently. They use connectives appropriate to the genre of writing such as: 'in addition', 'contrary to' for use in argument writing. They experiment in the use of more ambitious connectives to open sentences e.g. Although..., Having..., Despite...

How can you help?

Discuss different connectives with your child. Match connectives together. For example: Which connective could be used instead of 'and'? Talk about making sentences longer and more interesting by using a range of connectives not simply and, but, because.

Openers (see enclosed Openers Pyramid)

Openers do as they say- they open sentences.

There are different ways of opening sentences. Younger children will use words like I/My/The. We want to encourage the children to think of other words to use. Older children will be introduced to "Power Openers". Here the children will use connectives to start sentences. Their skills can be developed by showing them how to use words ending with -ly, -ing, -ed. (for example: Amazingly, John was happy to get on with his work).

At Level 2 they can use openers to show a sequence: First..., Then..., Next...

At Level 3 they start to use more sophisticated openers: Although..., After a while..., The golden sun shone, The little old man.

At Level 4 they use ambitious connectives to open sentences: Having, Despite and phrases such as Due to the lack of..., Before the audience left....

At Level 5 children should use adverbial phrases to open sentences and vary long complex sentences and short dramatic sentences for effect.

Ideas on how to help with Openers

Spend time discussing different ways to start sentences. Give your child examples of Power Openers that you can think of. Use verbs and adjectives and adverbs to describe what people are doing and make up sentences with verb/adjectives at the beginning e.g.

Walking home from school one day, I saw a massive dog.

Huffily he agreed to complete his homework.

Opening words ending in -ly or -ing are called Power Openers.

Punctuation (see enclosed Punctuation Pyramid)

We show the children different forms of punctuation and give them examples of how to use them. Punctuation is differentiated e.g

The Punctuation Pyramid enclosed is a simple and highly effective tool for the development of punctuation. It has immediate impact on the accuracy of punctuation used by children, especially from Level 3 onwards but stimulates experimentation at lower levels.

You Can Help!

Make up fun sentences using different forms of punctuation. Give your child a piece of punctuation and ask them to give you a sentence using it, and you will be amazed at the improvement in their understanding.

Partnership with Parents

Parents, carers and other family members can, and do, make a real difference to children's education. When parents are actively involved in their children's learning, it has a positive effect on attainment and achievement.

One of the keys to becoming a better writer is to read, so encourage your child to READ, READ, READ!



You can further support your child with their writing by providing opportunities for them to write at home; thank you letters, Christmas/birthday cards, shopping lists, supervised emails, writing a few sentences underneath a drawing, letter formation. The more practice a child gets, the quicker they will become a confident and fluent writer.

Within school, your child will have a writing target, that they will be aware of. This will be shared with you at parents' evening along with suggestions of how you can help support your child achieve the next steps in their learning.

Phonics/Spelling

The children will initially have letter sounds to learn (phonics). As they progress they will have spelling patterns/words to learn. Weekly support with these will really help your child become fluent and confident. Spelling lists will be appropriate to their current spelling ability. We encourage pupils to learn these each night using the look, say, cover, write, check strategy. Five minutes practice each night will really help to improve understanding of spelling patterns and ensure good progression.

The internet also has lots of information that can be accessed to support your child with spelling.

Please see the enclosed sheet: "**The National Strategies Support for Spelling a Guide for Parents**".

Little and often is the key to success.

Reminders for your child

Getting ready to write



Are you sitting comfortably with both feet on the floor?



Are you holding your pencil correctly?



Is your paper at the correct angle?

