

Firs Primary School Writing Policy

December 2020

Philosophy

Our approach to writing is based on Talk for Writing which supports children to explore, through talk and guided practice, the thinking and creative processes involved in being a writer. It is embedded at every phase of the teaching sequence which is structured to include teacher talk, supported pupil talk and independent pupil talk. We believe that Talk for Writing is an approach that goes beyond the development of children's general speaking and listening skills – it allows children to explore the processes involved in being a writer, and extends oral rehearsal so that it becomes a draft for their written pieces. The approach supports the children to move from talk into writing.

Aims

By the end of Key Stage 2 we aim for a child to be able to:

- Write with confidence, fluency and understanding, orchestrating a range of independent strategies to self-monitor and correct.
- Have an interest in words and their meanings, developing a growing vocabulary in spoken and written forms.
- Understand a range of text types and genres and to be able to write in a variety of styles and forms appropriate to the situation.
- Develop the powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness.
- Children must write for an hour a day – this could be in English or topic work and could be split.

Organisation of Writing/Planning Foundation Stage

In the Early Years, children are encouraged to attempt their own emergent writing and their efforts are valued and praised. As their phonic knowledge increases, this will be reflected in their writing. At the same time, their knowledge of key words is supported through reading and writing activities, including shared reading and writing. A wide variety of opportunities are provided for children to engage in writing activities. Amongst these are:

- o Shared writing
- o Role-play (e.g. an office or restaurant)
- o Labels
- o Recipes
- o Lists
- o Making books
- o Writing letters

o Menus

Through engaging in these activities, children become aware that writing is used for a range of purposes. They distinguish it from drawing, and learn the left to right convention of writing in English. A variety of resources are used to encourage the development of fine motor control which is essential for good handwriting. These include manipulating play dough, cutting, threading and tracing. Fine motor skills are also a focus in motor skills groups targeted at specific children. Gross motor skills are also developed through these groups (as well as in PE), as upper body strength is recognised as being vital to good fine motor skills.

The Talk for Writing Approach is introduced in the Early Years, with an emphasis on providing children with the vocabulary and understanding of story structures through oral rehearsal of simple tales. This enables children to tell their own stories orally and then, as their phonics skills develop, begin to record them with support or independently once they are developmentally ready.

Key Stage One and Two

We follow the Pie Corbett Talk for Writing model to teach a text type whilst also meeting national curriculum objectives. We believe that if children can't say it, they can't write it. All writing lessons should be about teaching a genre and a yearly programme includes at least two narrative units and a poetry unit. On average, the teaching of a text type should last 3 – 4 weeks. All writing lessons must be taught within the context of the text type being studied. Discussion/discursive writing is only taught in Y5 and Y6.

The structure of teaching a genre is as follows:

Initial Assessment (Cold Write):

The children should complete a piece of writing in the genre which is to be taught. Teachers may provide a stimulus, but no explicit guidance. A toolkit should be constructed with the children – but with little to no input from the teacher. This allows the teacher to establish what the children already know about the genre, and which skills should be a focus for the teaching unit. However, if a teacher deems a cold task unnecessary to inform future planning for the children, it does not have to be completed.

Imitation:

- Introduce a model text (an example of the text type to be written) so the children internalise the language structures of the genre – learn it as a class. Vary the teaching of it by doing activities such as covering up key words, paired and group work.

- Learn the model text off by heart and map it as pictures. When rehearsing the oral model, the children will put actions to words (these can be linked to Makaton actions where possible). In addition to this, classes will box up the text (this can be seen progressively throughout the school and altered to meet the needs of the class) to support internalising the structure further.

Innovation (Warm Write):

- In the innovation stage, the teacher should model planning another example of the text type which the children can innovate on in order to produce their own plan. Constant encouragement must be given to ask the children to say what they want to write, write it as they are saying it and then check it – this should be modelled during teacher demonstration.

- In every stage, tool kits should be provided for the children. Toolkits should be co-constructed with the children, but teachers should also ensure that they include features of writing appropriate to the year group (or developmental stage). The English coordinator has created a 'Progression in Writing' document, adapted from Pie Corbett planning materials, to support teachers.

Invention (Hot Write):

Children now apply what they have learnt to another example of the text. During this stage, the teacher can model a different example text (e.g. you write about lions, they write about tigers), show them how the key features have been used in the previous model text, or you could choose to embed Alan Peat sentence types within some contextualised grammar teaching. They do their own plan and while they should still be supported with a tool kit – this piece is to show what they have learnt from the previous weeks about the genre and must be as independent as possible.

Invention Stage in Year Two and Year Six:

In year two and year six, the invention stage should be completely independent so that it can be used as evidence for teacher assessment, if the teacher requires. If a child is not able to write independently, they are given appropriate support. Any support should be noted in their writing book to show that is a supported piece of writing.

For most units of works there should therefore be evidence of:

- o A text map of the model text
- o Activities related to annotating or picking out key features of the model text
- o An innovation on the teacher's modelled written example with a plan (on same subject – you write about foxes, they write about foxes)
- o An independent (invention) piece of work to show the children have applied what they have learnt.
- o For story writing, more time may be spent focussing on contextualised skills required to write an independent piece.

Poetry week activities do not always follow this pattern.

Peer/Self-Assessment

We encourage our learners to use peer and self-assessment orally across the curriculum, and this may be recorded where appropriate, in line with the curriculum recommendations.

Support in writing

Writing

- During warm-up writing activities children should be given, where possible/appropriate, differing levels of prompts. These consist of general prompts for the Greater Depth, more directed questions for the middle attaining, sentence starters and questions for the children with specific learning needs and questions with simplified language and communicate in print for new arrivals or children with SEND needs.

- During the planning of the innovation stage, support is given as appropriate. At times no support, other than seeing a plan modelled, may be appropriate for Greater Depth pupils.
- During the planning and writing of the independent stage, the scaffolding should be removed. No question prompts or sentence starters should be used as this piece is a reflection of what the children can produce independently. In some cases, scaffolding may remain.

Topic

As in English lessons, any writing activities in topic should also be supported by differing levels of prompts (unless they are an assessed independent piece for Y2 or Y6 moderation).

Where a non-fiction genre of writing is linked to topic work, the final independent piece of writing will be in the children's green topic books.

At times it may be appropriate for new arrivals to have a simpler task in order to express their geographical and historical understanding.

Presentation

Most writing for English should be done in yellow writing books. Although independent pieces of writing linked to topic will be written in green topic books. In Key Stage 1 yellow writing books have line guides. Children in Key Stage 2 may also require books with line guides if they have SEND or if they are New Arrivals with limited school experience. Children must be encouraged to keep these books neat.

Each half term one piece of a child's best writing will be added to their purple 'Writing Portfolio'. This helps children to feel proud of their achievements in writing, and their Writing Portfolio follows the child up through the school. Best pieces of writing may be copied directly into the portfolio or it can be a photocopied piece.

If a child is not applying what they have learnt in handwriting and not joining letters at the level at which they are capable, they should be helped towards achieving this through encouragement, verbal feedback and/or interventions.

An adult's handwriting must be neat and model what we expect from children. Expectations should be appropriate to the children's ages and development, so if children are not at an age or level of development where joined handwriting is expected, then teachers and other adults in the classroom should model neat, but un-joined handwriting. The English coordinator has developed a handwriting assessment, based on NHS guidance, to support teacher judgement in relation to whether or not children are developmentally able to use joined handwriting.

Assessment and Marking

- Pieces of writing must be marked using the agreed symbols to give children continual feedback (see marking policy).

- Marking should give scaffolded comments throughout the writing process, on a daily basis, to enable the child to improve their work. E.g. add an adverb here, use a causal conjunction, change this sentence opener.
- Every child has an individual tracker on FFT Aspire Tracking. This is the class teacher's method for tracking the progress of each child over time.
- Moderation will take place termly within Key Stage teams to ensure that assessment judgements are consistent across the school.
- All **relevant** identified grammatical and spelling mistakes should be picked up on, depending on the age and developmental stage of the child. This may not be all the spellings/grammatical errors in the piece of writing, as this could look intimidating for some children, particularly those who are 'New to English' or at an early stage in their writing development.
- We believe that the most effective form of assessment for learning results in instant verbal feedback for children. During lessons, teachers and other adults should have an orange pen and point out corrections which children can make on the spot. This is excellent formative feedback and should be accompanied with scaffolded comments to make the children think such as: 'Think which word is missing here.' 'What's wrong with the punctuation here?' 'Can you change that so it makes sense?' 'What's wrong with the tense there?'

Grammar

Grammar is taught contextually and the grammar which is suitable for a genre is identified on the 'Progression in Writing' grid. In years one to six, this takes place between two to three times a week and is directly linked to the writing which is taking place in that genre. During modelled writing, use of correct grammar must be continually modelled e.g. 'Let's see if I can use a more powerful verb here.' 'Let's think of an adverb sentence opener to make the writing more interesting.' 'I am using a past tense verb because recounts are generally written in the past tense.'

For younger pupils in Key Stage 1, or those at an early stage of writing due to limited prior schooling in English, grammar, punctuation and spelling are also taught through the 'Get Writing' part of their daily Read, Write Inc lesson. Children are assessed at least half termly to ensure that they are placed in a Read, Write Inc group appropriate to their developmental level and therefore learn the spellings, punctuation and grammar appropriate to their needs. Talk for Writing lessons ensure that these pupils are also exposed to age appropriate spellings, punctuation and grammar through the provision of high-quality model texts.

Inclusion

We aim to provide for all children so that they achieve as highly as they can in writing tasks according to their individual abilities. SEND children and New Arrivals Children who are new to English are given a variety of scaffolds to support their writing including:

- sentence starters
- vocabulary mats
- key visuals
- Colourful Semantics
- extra oral rehearsal
- whiteboards

- substitution tables

Adaptation of the task should be made when the whole class task is inappropriate for new arrivals.

Gifted children are challenged to extend their writing as far as possible through targeted feedback.

Monitoring

Teaching and learning in writing is monitored by the SLT and MLT through:

- Half termly English book monitoring
- Half termly Topic book monitoring
- Lesson visits and observations
- Pupil voice