



Writing Policy

September 2021

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1. Introduction

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.

2. 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.
- Write for a least an hour a day – this could be in English or topic work, or a combination of the two

4. Organisation of Writing and Planning in the Early Years 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:

- Shared writing

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

5. Organisation of Writing and Planning in 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 poetry units, six narrative units and six non-fiction units. On average, the teaching of narrative and non-fiction units should last 3 – 4 weeks. A poetry unit should take 1-2 weeks. All writing lessons should be taught within the context of the text type being studied.

The structure of a teaching unit is as follows:

Initial Assessment (Cold Write):

The children should complete a piece of writing in the genre which is to be taught (or, for older children it may be more appropriate to write a section of a text based on the focus of the unit e.g. a character description). 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 (e.g. for a New to English group it may be that the teacher already knows the child have no prior knowledge of the text type to be taught).

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 (or for longer texts, learn sections relevant to the focus e.g. the setting description) 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):

During 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. Children should be frequently reminded to orally rehearse what they will write, write it as they are saying it and then check it – this should be modelled during teacher demonstration.

At this 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:

- A text map of the model text
- Activities related to annotating or picking out key features of the model text
- An innovation on the teacher's modelled written example with a plan (on same subject – you write about foxes, they write about foxes)
- An independent (invention) piece of work to show the children have applied what they have learnt.
- 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.

6. 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.

7. Support in writing

English Lessons

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.

Topic Lessons

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 understanding in different subject areas.

8. 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 childrens' 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.

9. Handwriting

We teach handwriting using the '[Improvement in School through Handwriting and Art](#)' (ISHA—Martin Harvey) handwriting scheme. This is based on the Nelson handwriting scheme. However, we appreciate that many of pupils who start the school (particularly in Key Stage 2) have different prior schooling experiences and

may arrive at Firs Primary having already learned to use a different style of cursive writing. **If children are proficient in another handwriting style, we believe it is counterproductive to their progress in writing to change this.**

However, should number formation in another handwriting style potentially disadvantage a student during formal maths assessment, this will be addressed on an individual basis.

Consistency is a key word.

Consistency in terms of the handwriting style and letter shapes being taught

Consistency in terms of how handwriting lessons are taught

Consistency in terms of the way teaching materials and writing tools are used

Consistency in terms of the teaching language which is used

Consistency in terms of all members of staff supporting and believing in this drive for excellence in handwriting at Firs. It has to be seen that this is what **we** are doing as a staff. It has to be seen that this is something that is happening in every class. It has to be seen that this is something **we** all believe in. The more that teachers give strong messages to pupils, showing they are really passionate about high quality presentation of work, the greater the likelihood of high standards being achieved.

FREQUENCY OF HANDWRITING LESSONS

At the start of every term, here at Firs we drive up standards of presentation. Handwriting has to be taught intensively for a sustained period, if the initiative is to have the required impact.

'Do a little and do it often' is a key phrase. *Doing a little* means lessons of 15/20

minutes. *Doing it often* means doing at least four handwriting lessons per week, using the programme of lessons we provide. From this, a rise in standards will be seen very rapidly, not just in handwriting lessons, but in the way children present their work across the curriculum.

What happens after the above?

At this point the classes would be able to reduce the frequency of lessons; one lesson per fortnight in upper KS2 and one lesson per week in lower KS2 at minimum, but with a big emphasis on applying skills from handwriting lessons in writing tasks of varying length, across the curriculum. The class teacher will decide.

In Y1 and Y2, lessons to be reduced to two per week. In Foundation stage, activities are taking place every day to develop gross motor skills, finger strength, fine motor skills and pencil control.

When children return from the longer holidays there needs to be a 'topping up' in order to re-establish good habits and good attitudes which are required for excellent handwriting. After a summer holiday, it is important that strong foundations are laid for the year ahead. Following a staff session led by a SLT member in which reasons why the school really values good presentation of work are stated, every class should do a handwriting lesson every day for the first three weeks in order to set the standards which are to be maintained throughout the year. Year one classes will need to continue teaching handwriting intensively during the first half of the autumn term. Other classes will be able to scale back on lesson frequency.

After Christmas and Easter holidays, there should be a week where handwriting is taught daily in each class, in order to re-establish high standards (as stated above).

Within the framework above, there should be a degree of flexibility. A teacher who recognises that handwriting standards have slipped in their own class, they have the

freedom use their own professional judgement to re-establish high standards by having a week of daily handwriting lessons.

NEW MEMBERS OF STAFF

Newcomers need a comprehensive, thorough period of induction to the teaching of handwriting. This will consist of the following:

1. Observing colleagues teach handwriting lessons, followed by paired discussion on teaching strategies modelled and how the lesson was structured.
2. Team teaching with more experienced colleagues, if needed.
3. Meeting with the leaders of the English team, focusing on the principles behind the whole school ethos of good presentation of work.
4. The new member of staff being provided with the *Excellence In Handwriting* booklet and all teaching materials, with clear explanation of how to use them.

In some cases, a whole school inset day refresher may be arranged.

THREE LEVELS OF PRESENTATION FOR CHILDREN

There are occasions when writing tasks or handwritten recording of work in different curriculum areas should be presented beautifully and times where presentation is less important. This is best explained by the three levels of presentation shown below.

1. ***Highest level of presentation***. For example, where the teacher says to the class, *“With the Science investigation we have just finished, we are going to write it up beautifully with written explanations in your finest handwriting, with well constructed tables of results and carefully drawn diagrams. We are going to use plain paper of various sizes and line guides. I want you to feel really*

proud of your completed work and I want you to make your teacher very proud. I have a big, empty display board waiting for your work.” Work in purple books will show this best.

2. Lowest level of presentation.

eg. Children are working in small groups with large sheets of sugar paper and marker pens. Teacher says, “ *You have two minutes to write a superb sentence about the way the bare tree across the playground is moving in the January breeze.*” Children are writing at speed, inserting extra words to improve their sentence and perhaps crossing out. Presentation does not matter at all in this type of task.

3. Middle level of presentation. This is where children work in exercise books.

eg. Skills work in a literacy lesson; exercises on prefixes, suffixes, comprehension work, how to write extended sentences. There should be clear evidence of the school's handwriting style, with finger spaces and correct joins where they have been taught. With this type of task, the high quality of the top level of presentation should not be expected or demanded, but the lowest level of presentation would be totally unacceptable.

ADULT HANDWRITING

As with the three levels of presentation for children, there are times when adults in

Firs must produce their finest handwriting and times when good handwriting matters less.

Top level of handwriting. During handwriting lessons or when producing handwritten labels to go with displays of children's work.

Middle level of handwriting. Handwritten comments in children's exercise books at Firs. These should be neatly written, using the school's handwriting style. If they are written untidily, they can be inaccessible to the children, making the written comment worthless. Badly written comments give children mixed and contradictory messages. Due to the time required to write perhaps thirty handwritten comments, it is unrealistic for these to be written to the **top level** standards. The same principles as the middle level of presentation for children's writing should apply here.

Bottom level of handwriting. This is where the quality of adult handwriting does not matter at all. eg. *A guided writing activity.* If a class or group of children are offering adjectives and adverbs in rapid succession to enhance a sentence, it would be counter productive for the adult to write slowly and meticulously in their most beautiful handwriting. Guided writing should be short, sharp and pacy. In this bottom level of handwriting, with crossings out, insertion of extra words and arrows to move sections of language within the sentence, the only criteria should be that the children are able to read what the adult has written.

TRANSFERRING SKILLS FROM HANDWRITING LESSONS TO OTHER WRITING TASKS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Staff and children at Firs do not pursue an initiative to achieve excellence in handwriting just so that it looks great in handwriting lessons; this would be teaching skills for the sake of teaching skills and totally worthless. The whole idea is for

children to use the handwriting skills they have been taught in order to present work across the curriculum in an attractive way that develops feelings of personal pride.

How to achieve this. The three key words are: *insist motivate expect*

Insist on correct posture and correct sitting position throughout the school day BBC, TNT, six feet two hands, pencil hold.

Insist on correct letter formation and correct letter joins in cross curricular writing

Insist on children producing their very best whenever it is required

Motivate children by giving copious amounts of praise when it is merited in line with the behaviour policy at Firs.

Motivate children by *telling* them exactly what you are looking for.

Motivate children by *showing* them exactly what you are looking for

Motivate children by celebrating their efforts and achievements with displays of their written work, showing it is really valued.

Make it clear to children that what you *expect* from them is their very best at all times.

Make it clear to children that nothing less than their own best is acceptable.

In some classes, we use the same lines for writing tasks in books as the ones used in handwriting lessons. This plays an enormous part in helping children to transfer handwriting skills to written work across the curriculum when they are beginning to learn to write. If the children are well established in letter formation and presentation, the handwriting lines will be normal ruled in books.

CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

- Ensure that all children have good viewing of teacher modelling during handwriting lessons. Children must be either facing the board or sideways on to it. No children should have their backs to the board. *In a First classroom, seating arrangements will be organised according to the nature of the task children are engaged in. School furniture is not set in concrete.*
- Children need to have enough desk space when they are writing. Ensure that desks are as uncluttered as possible.
- Take left-handed children into consideration. Where children are sitting in pairs, the left- hander should be sitting to the left. *This ensures that both left and right- handed children have sufficient space to work comfortably.*
- Ensure that there is sufficient light in the classroom.
- Ensure that children's writing is clearly visible in the classroom.

CELEBRATE CELEBRATE CELEBRATE

DISPLAY DISPLAY DISPLAY

Short term displays of children's handwriting practice can be seen around school. These act as a reward, motivation and examples of quality. Displaying children's written work shows that writing is high priority and really valued by the teacher.

HANDWRITING TOOLS

In order to produce excellent handwriting, children must have good quality tools.

Pencils

- Pencils must always be sharp. *A pencil is not a pencil unless it has a point.*
- Pencils must never be sharpened at both ends. *This is dangerous and also shows complete disrespect for the writing tool.*
- Pencils must not be too small for the child's hand.
- Pencils do not go in children's mouths!

It is good to give children responsibility for keeping their pencils sharp, but adults need to monitor this.

Pens

The pen has to be seen as a very special, delicate tool. The pen has to be seen by pupils as the most important tool they will use in school. The pen has to be seen as very precious. *If the child looks after the pen, the pen will look after the child!* Positive attitudes to the pen will only come if adults constantly reinforce these positive messages.

The class teacher will decide when a child will use a pen.

DEVELOP A STRONG SENSE OF PRIDE IN HOW WORK IS PRESENTED

Adults across Firs constantly and consistently giving powerful, motivational messages - *'Not a mark on this page apart from straight lines and letters. No creases or curled up corners. No finger marks or ugly crossing out. Be proud of how your work looks. Make me proud of how your work looks.'*

*Rubbers are not part of handwriting equipment. Foster the mindset of, 'When you make a mistake in handwriting lessons, look at the mistake, learn from the mistake, leave it and carry on'.

ESSENTIAL HABITS FOR DEVELOPING EXCELLENT HANDWRITING

1. **Two hands.** Insist on children always using two hands when writing. *One hand to hold the paper and one hand to write with.*
2. **Six feet.** Children must always keep six feet on the floor. *Their own two feet and the chair's four feet.* This means that the child does not kneel or sit cross legged on the chair. Neither do they rock backwards or forwards on the chair.
3. **BBC.** Ensure that children always sit in the BBC position – *Bottom Back in Chair.* This means that they never sit with the chair sticking out and their bottom on the front edge of the chair.
4. **TNT.** *Tummy Near Table.* This ensures that the child is sitting with the body close to their work, instead of having to stretch forward to write.
5. **Paper position.** *The paper should be upright when the child is writing or at an angle not greater than 45 degrees.* When children turn their paper to an angle greater than this, it is often because the pencil is being held with the thumb in a position which blocks the child's view of the pencil point.

Good posture and correct seating position are vital components of developing good handwriting. The habits above must *not* be seen just as *good habits for handwriting*. They must be insisted upon in all subject areas, throughout the school day, otherwise their impact is reduced. It has to be seen as the correct way, indeed the only way, rather than what is expected merely in handwriting lessons.

NB: At Firs primary, we do not teach joining the letters g and y to other letters. Although, as mentioned previously, you may see some children joining these if they are already proficient in a handwriting style from a previous educational setting.

10. Assessment and Marking

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

Marking should provide 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 **appropriate** identified grammatical and spelling mistakes should be picked up on, depending on the age and developmental stage of the child. These may not be all the spellings/grammatical errors in the piece of writing, as this could feel 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: '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?'

11. Spelling, Punctuation and 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.'

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar are also taught for those children working above the Read, Write Inc levels in discreet sessions. These sessions are planned from the half termly GAPs formative assessments to determine their starting point. Lessons will be planned from this information in order to meet the children's needs.

As our children have varied starting points throughout the year within their SPaG learning, a set scheme would not be best suited to our school. Our SPaG teaching is based on an AFL approach to ensure our children make quicker progress in their learning from their individual starting points.

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 In 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.

The teaching of spelling is based upon the study of letter families and spelling patterns.

12. 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.

13. 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

14. Continuing Professional Development

Teachers and Teaching Assistants have received a number of Talk for Writing INSETs and evening PDMs annually since 2019, as part of an intensive Talk for Writing training schedule. Further training will be arranged as and when deemed necessary by the English coordinator in response to subject monitoring. In addition to training from external providers CPD may include; signposting to online resources to support subject knowledge, modelling lessons, 1:1 staff coaching.

Teacher subject knowledge is additionally supported by the Progression and Coverage in Writing document, which makes clear the key vocabulary, punctuation, grammar and skills to be taught in each genre of writing within each year group.

15. Review and Adoption

This policy will be reviewed annually, and was last reviewed by the English Coordinator in September 2021.