

English - Writing

Writing

How we approach the teaching of our writing curriculum

Our writing curriculum follows the objectives of the National Curriculum. We use high-quality texts through the Devon BookWrites Writing sequences with a 'Talk for Writing' approach as a basis for the delivery of Literacy throughout the school. **This follows three distinct stages: Exploring, Building, and Inventing.** We use these texts to generate 'buzz and excitement' in lessons by learning the text and its structure, practising the text, and then independently applying the themes and knowledge within the chosen text. We aim to develop grammar and punctuation knowledge and understanding so children can use and apply a greater range of skills across the wider curriculum, explore the writing structure and features of different genres, and identify the purpose and audience. Children plan and write an initial piece of writing with a clear context and purpose before evaluating the effectiveness of writing by editing and redrafting. Writing is seen as a crafting process. We believe it is highly important to give children feedback on their writing that is rich and meaningful so that they are aware of their strengths and those areas that they need to be focussing on to improve the quality of their writing further.

Elicitation Task

Before the start of a writing sequence, children will undertake an elicitation task. The purpose of the elicitation task is to provide a starting point for the sequence and, therefore, a baseline measure to compare with the outcome. This will ensure that progress across the sequence can be made explicit for pupils. Teachers know their pupils well, so this is not about whether a pupil uses capital letters and full stops but more about what the pupil knows and can do about this type of text.

Through elicitation tasks, we guide the pupils with what they might write about, but we do not support how they write it. Teachers will use the outcomes of the elicitation task, to go through the sequence and adapt it by taking out those things that are not relevant for the class and adding in any other activities required to meet the pupils' and curriculum needs.

Writerly Knowledge Chart

Prior to delivering a writing sequence and across the Exploring phase of the sequence, we aim to create a writer's toolkit: initially, we do this as teachers to familiarise ourselves fully with the text, and then we create a similar chart with the pupils. This will be used to formulate the success criteria for the unit outcome.

There are three main purposes:

1. To enable us to engage more deeply with the text.
2. To create a chart with the pupils that they can use to support their writing.

3. To use as a basis for discussion when evaluating the effectiveness of the writing.

The Writerly Knowledge Chart consists of four boxes. The first is our 'Purpose and Reader', and the second is 'Effects on the reader?'. The third box, 'ingredients', contains examples of the devices used by the author so that we do not have to go back through the book to find them. The fourth box collects vocabulary examples.

We construct a version of this chart with the class as we move through the 'Exploring' phase. Each activity in this part of the sequence will reveal something about the text, such as a response to a part of it and how the response was created. During the 'Building' phase, the Writerly Knowledge Chart will be completed.

Exploring Phase

During this stage, children are immersed in the text, familiarising themselves with the language and features of the genre. **This is where pupils may learn by heart a section of the text or the whole of the text through key events.**

A variety of activities are used in the exploring phase of the unit and include the following.

- Reading for Meaning activities
- Oracy activities
- Role play and storytelling
- Vocabulary games
- Understanding key vocabulary
- Story and text mapping
- Exploring common features of the genre/text type

'The Building Phase'

This is the phase in the sequence where, working as a class, we collect ideas to write and recreate elements of the core text in our own writing and practise using these skills in context. Once the children are familiar with the text, they are taught the key skills for that unit of writing. Planning identifies the grammar skills that will be taught during this phase. As they unpick the writing process to prepare them for independent writing, a toolkit is built of features required upon the ingredients collected through the writerly knowledge chart.

The building stage includes a range of activities:

- Grammar lessons linked to the outcome of the final write
- Punctuation needed to control the writing and impact upon the reader
- Oracy to rehearse sentence structures
- Paired writing activities
- Shared and modelled writing

Through this phase, teachers model the collection of ideas and how to organise them into coherent plans using story maps or boxing up grids, depending upon the age of the children.

A model plan is produced by the class teacher, which demonstrates how the original text has been innovated and changed to create an alternative version.

A model text is then produced, often over several days, depending upon the year group. The key focus here is on quality rather than quantity. The chart will be referred to frequently during this phase to encourage pupils to use the ideas collected on the Writerly Knowledge Chart through analysis of the text type. Although the teacher and the class will all be writing about very similar content, it is important that pupils do this in their own way. This practising writing helps them to apply what they have learnt in their final independent write.

Practising writing could be undertaken through several approaches as outlined below:

Demonstration	Joint construction	Supported composition
Teacher writes a text at the front of the class, 'thinking aloud' to explain the intended effect of the choices he/she makes (and demonstrate, for example, spelling strategies to use at the point of writing, use of the passive voice to create mystery and suspense, how to use planning to guide and organise, oral rehearsal...).	Teacher takes contributions from the children (and might record them to draw upon later). He/She considers the merits of these ideas, filters them for use in the shared text, explains choices made - what will be included and why.	Teacher prompts pupils to think of and explore some ideas. He/She demonstrates how a small part of the text may be written and then hands over to pupils to have a go at their own. This is repeated with the next small section, then the next, etc.

Another key feature of this part of the sequence is a focus on editing and improving writing so that pupils really explore applying the ideas taught to their writing.

'The Inventing Phase'

Now that the children have developed these skills, they are equipped to transfer them into an independent piece of writing to demonstrate their newly learned knowledge of the language features, grammar skills, and style of writing they have been working on.

Children are given opportunities to plan their invented writing and explore sentence structures through the boxing-up process or modifying story/text maps. Boxing up grids will be used to support the planning process. These will outline the structure of the original text and the modelled class version to support the children in developing their own version of the text for independent writing.

Modelled Writing	Guided Writing	Independent Writing
Child Control	Child Control	Child Control
Teacher Support	Teacher Support	Teacher Support
Writing for children	Writing with children	Writing by children

The children have access to the writer's toolkit as a guide for their independent work and to remind them of the key features that they need to evidence.

Children edit their own work prior to their final independent draft. (The expectation for the writing is that is independent.) The length of the task is planned to reflect accuracy rather than quantity; children need to write enough to show cohesion across paragraphs in upper Key Stage 2, but younger children would be expected to maintain accuracy across a single paragraph or a series of sentences. As they write, children are encouraged to follow their plan and use their toolkit checklist. Teachers and TAs encourage children to draw upon models and sentence structures to show what they can do.

Writing walls

At Ermington Primary School, we have a consistent approach to supporting the writing process in classrooms. Working walls display the Writerly Knowledge Charts, and outcomes of children's work can be seen in books and in other display areas in the school.