

The Teaching and Learning of Writing at Valley Road School

Intent

The National Curriculum 2016 states:

All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.

At Valley Road School it is our intent that in their time with us, every child acquires a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for writing. They will be able to write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences. Our pupils will also have had opportunities to use their writing skills to elaborate and clearly explain their understanding and ideas across the wider curriculum as well as developing an appreciation for the rich and varied literacy heritage of our country.

Implementation

Our English curriculum is derived from a planned and progressive sequence of high-quality texts (including diverse fiction, non-fiction and poetry) or visual stimulus such as film clips, paintings or artefacts. We use each stimulus to create opportunities to develop links between reading and writing and as a springboard for teaching the skills essential for writing – transcription and composition. We utilise a range of quality planning materials to support our curriculum delivery including: Literacy Shed Plus, Spelling Shed and Hamilton Trust.

As well as providing opportunities to develop fluency and comprehension of reading, our English planning also ensures that the children develop grammar and punctuation knowledge and understanding to use and apply across the wider curriculum; explore the writing structure and features of different genres, identify the purpose and audience; plan and write an initial piece of writing with a clear context and purpose before evaluating the effectiveness of writing by editing and redrafting.

As the children's vocabulary increases, our curriculum provides the children with opportunities to: understand the relationships between words; understand the nuances in written (and spoken) language; develop their ability to use figurative language to express themselves and their ideas clearly in a range of contexts.

Children are also provided with opportunities to publish their work for a range of audiences through the use of display, using IT, on Teams and in class made books thus providing them with the joy of becoming a 'published author'.

An explanation of the ‘skills of writing’ taught at Valley Road School

Skills of transcription

Writing down ideas fluently depends on effective transcription: that is, on spelling quickly and accurately through knowing the relationship between sounds and letters (phonics) and understanding the morphology (word structure) and orthography (spelling structure) of words.¹

Reception and Year One

At Valley Road school, we believe that all our children can become fluent readers and writers. This is why we teach early reading and phonics through Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised, which is a systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Reception and follow the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised progression, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school.

As a result, all our children are able to tackle any unfamiliar words as they read and learn to apply that knowledge to their writing. We have a strong focus on language development for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

Year Two Onwards

We continue to develop their understanding and knowledge of morphology and orthography through continued teaching of appropriate spelling practices (the rules of spelling; studying the meaning of roots, prefixes, and suffixes; families of related words; the historical development of the English language; and words’ language of origin). We utilise Spelling Shed (an online Spelling Platform) as well as using games (both online and offline), spelling logs and weekly spelling challenges.

Children also need to develop a fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting to allow them to write effectively and so our planning ensures that the skills of ‘handwriting’ are specifically taught throughout the school following a cursive style which is introduced in Year Two.

Skills of composition

Effective composition involves articulating and communicating ideas, and then organising them coherently for a reader. This requires clarity, awareness of the audience, purpose and context, and an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.²

¹ The National Curriculum 2016: English Programmes of Study

² National Curriculum 2016: Programmes of Study for English

At VRS we follow a 'Purpose for Writing' approach. Rather than trying to teach children multiple different genres (text types), our approach focusses on what those different types have in common; this is *the purpose for writing* approach (based on the work of Michael Tidd³).

The four purposes being taught across KS1 and KS2 are:

- to entertain (KS1, LKS2, UKS2)
- to inform (KS1, LKS2, UKS2)
- to persuade (LKS2, UKS2)
- to discuss (UKS2)

At VRS, we also integrate Alan Peat's 'Exciting Sentences' into our planning giving the children opportunities to explore a variety of sentence structures across the key stages. In addition, children and teachers will have the opportunity to explore a range of punctuation in context. For full details, please see our Policy: *Alan Peat's: Writing Exciting Sentences*⁴.

A planned progression of specific grammar and punctuation supports our teaching and ensures that every child develops an understanding of the grammatical conventions of language and can use Standard English in both their written and spoken communication. Please see our Policy: *KS1 and KS2 Grammar progression* for details.

³ Writing for a Purpose: Guidance notes for the four writing purposes in KS1 & 2, Michael Tidds

⁴ <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Writing-Exciting-Sentences-Alan-Peat/dp/0954475534>

Impact: What does the teaching and learning of writing ‘look like’ at Valley Road School?

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)

In Reception, children start to learn how to form letters correctly and begin to understand that they can write for a variety of purposes. They are encouraged to use their knowledge of phonics to write words in ways which match their spoken sounds and are taught to write some irregular (tricky) common words. By the end of the year, they are expected to write simple sentences which can be read by themselves and others.

Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2)

In **Year 1**, children are taught to write sentences by saying out loud what they are going to write about, put several sentences together and re-read their writing to check it makes sense. They are also expected to discuss what they have written and to read it aloud. They are taught to sequence sentences to form a short narrative or piece of information writing. They use basic descriptive language. Children choose to write for a variety of purposes and in a variety of contexts.

They use their phonic knowledge and skills from EYFS and Y1 to spell phonemically regular words correctly and make phonically plausible attempts at others. They can spell many of the Year 1 'tricky' words. Their handwriting continues to develop; they form lower-case letters in the correct direction, starting and finishing in the right place; form capital letters and the digits 0-9 correctly and separate words with spaces.

In **Year 2**, children learn to write for a range of purposes, including stories, information texts and poetry. They can write simple, coherent narratives about personal experiences and those of others (real or fictional); they write about real events, recording these simply and clearly. They are taught to add description and specification through the use of expanded noun phrases (for example: the large, scary monster) and can write different types of sentences – statements, commands, questions and exclamatory sentences. Children are encouraged to plan what they are going to write and to read through their writing to make corrections and improvements.

The children can segment spoken words into phonemes and represent these by graphemes, spelling many of these words correctly and making phonically plausible attempts at others. They spell many 'tricky' words correctly. When writing, they form lower-case letters of the correct size relative to one another in some of their writing and use appropriate spacing between words. A cursive handwriting style is introduced and practised.

Lower Key stage 2 (Years 3 and 4)

In **Year 3**, children are offered opportunities to write for real purposes and audiences, demonstrating understanding of the main features of different forms of writing. They write using an increasingly rich and varied vocabulary and can evaluate the effectiveness of their writing and suggest improvements. In narratives, they create simple settings, characters and plot and begin to use direct speech. When writing information texts, they group ideas together into paragraphs. They routinely proofread their work, checking for spelling and punctuation errors.

The children use and spell correctly many words from the Year 3 / Year 4 spelling list. They also use phonic knowledge and morphology to make plausible attempts at spelling unknown words, spelling some correctly. They use joined up writing consistently and independently.

In **Year 4**, they continue to write for real purposes and audiences, demonstrating understanding of the main features of different forms of writing. They write using a rich and varied vocabulary appropriate to purpose and form. Their narratives have a clear plot and describe settings and characters; they can make effective choices about using direct speech within narratives. In their writing they use paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme, e.g. making use of topic sentence in non-narrative and use pronouns and nouns within and across sentences to aid cohesion and avoid repetition. They continue to evaluate the effectiveness of writing and suggest improvements, focusing on spelling and punctuation.

They can spell correctly words that have been previously taught, including:

- 'Tricky' words from KS1;
- previously taught homophones;
- those with known prefixes and suffixes.

They use and spell correctly most words from the Year 3 / Year 4 spelling list. Handwriting is joined consistently, independently and fluently.

Upper Key Stage Two (Years 5 and 6)

In **Year Five**, the children write for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting language that shows some awareness of the reader (e.g. simplifying vocabulary for a young audience, maintaining impersonal language in a more formal information text). In narratives they describe settings, characters and begin to develop atmosphere ('show not tell'). They use dialogue in narratives to convey character or advance the action.

Children demonstrate that they can effectively link ideas together by using a range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs:

- secure the use of pronouns or nouns within and across sentences to aid cohesion and avoid repetition;
- link ideas using adverbials of time, place and number;
- link ideas using tense choices (e.g. he had seen her before instead of he saw her before).

They make choices in drafting and revising writing, showing understanding of how these enhance meaning and proofread for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors (e.g. subject/verb agreements, tense use).

When writing, the children use and spell correctly many words from the year 5 / year 6 spelling list and make good attempts at, and check the spelling of, some uncommon or more ambitious vocabulary. They are able to maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at speed.

In **Year Six**, the children have plenty of opportunities to write effectively for a range of purposes and audiences, selecting language that shows good awareness of the reader (e.g. the use of the first person in a diary; direct address in instructions and persuasive writing). They compose more formal pieces of writing. In narratives they describe settings, characters and atmosphere and integrate dialogue to convey character and advance the action.

They use a range of devices to build cohesion (e.g. conjunctions, adverbials of time and place, pronouns, synonyms) within and across paragraphs. They make choices in drafting and revising writing, showing understanding of how these enhance meaning. The children routinely proofread for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors (e.g. subject/verb agreements, tense use). They spell correctly most words from the year 5 / year 6 spelling list and use a dictionary to check the spelling of uncommon or more ambitious vocabulary. They maintain legibility in joined handwriting when writing at speed.

How we assess writing in Year R/Year 1

How we assess writing Year Two Onwards:

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

Assessment for learning is used:

- daily within class to identify children's strengths and weaknesses in fluency, content, conventions, syntax, vocabulary and handwriting.
- Weekly using spelling tests and/or Nessy and/or SpellingShed

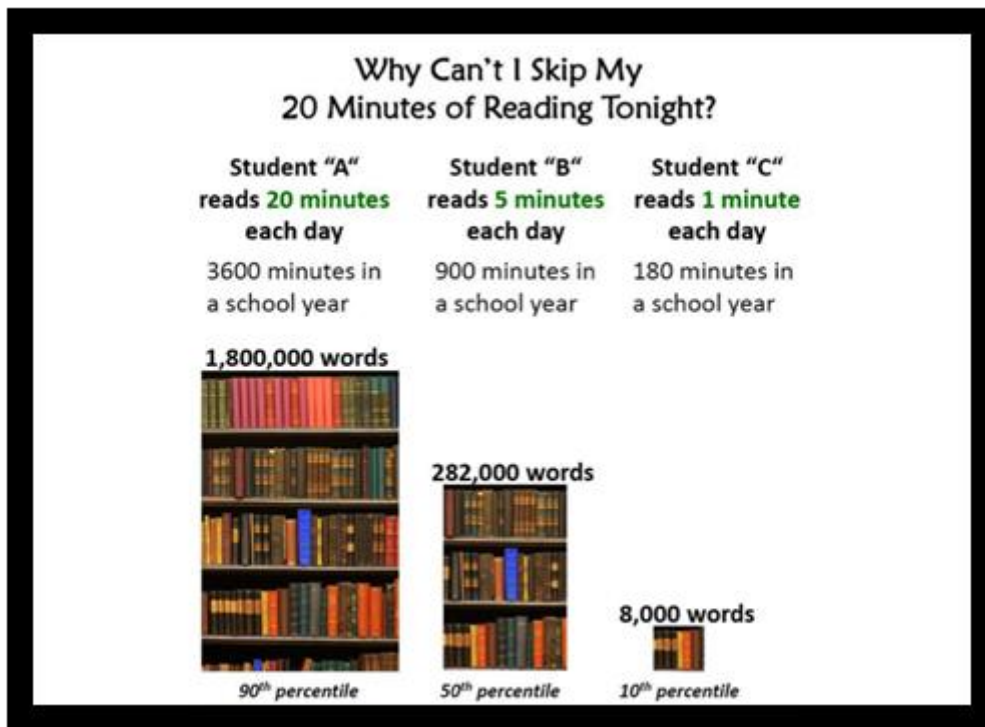
Summative assessment is used:

- o Twice a year (three times in Year 6): *Testbase National Curriculum Test: Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling* informs our understanding of the children's knowledge in this area, identifying strengths and weaknesses (including gaps) and informs our planning;
- o Half-termly (?) Children's *independent* writing is assessed using *Babcock Assessment Grids* to assess against age-related expectations in Composition: Purpose and Audience; Grammar; Punctuation; and Transcription
- o Twice a Year - Spelling key/statutory words are tested to ensure we know what knowledge the children have secured and to identify any gaps in this knowledge.

Summative assessment is also used:

- o At the end of Key Stage One (Year 2) in the form of Teacher Assessment informed by National Curriculum Key Stage 1 Tests to inform progress when transitioning to Key Stage Two;
- o At the end of Key Stage Two (Year 6) when children sit the National Curriculum Key Stage Two Tests and teachers provide Teacher Assessment in writing to inform progress when transitioning to Key Stage Three.

How can parents/carers support their child's writing?



1. Reading with your child

No matter their age, reading regularly to your child, often books that they can't yet read independently, is a great way of supporting their writing. Listening to books being read aloud introduces them to different ideas that they can borrow and adapt for their own writing, as well as hearing different ways of using language that are often from the types of sentences that we use when we speak.

Try to make sure your child gets to hear a range of different types of books, including fiction and non-fiction. This is useful for their writing, as it allows them to encounter a wide variety of different types of language and different purposes for writing.

2. Giving your child opportunities to write

Writing for a real-life purpose can be a great way of practising writing. Writing cards, shopping lists, or letters and emails to relatives can all be motivating real life reasons for writing. Children might also keep a diary or be encouraged to write short stories based on books they have read or toys they enjoy playing with.

Older children could produce their own version of a book for a younger child. Books with a distinctive format are perfect for this. Another idea is for children to write the book of the film (or TV programme). If children have watched something they've really enjoyed, they could try and tell the same story in writing.

While writing using a pen and pencil is useful practice, writing on the computer counts too. You might want to turn the spelling and grammar check off to help children to learn to use their own knowledge. The grammar check can be wrong too, so this can be confusing for children.

3. Helping your child with spelling

While there's obviously much more to good writing than correct spelling, if children are worrying about spelling a particular word or having to stop frequently to think about spelling it can prevent them from concentrating on the other aspects of writing, including communicating their ideas. Help them to learn their weekly sounds/sight words (reception/KS1) or spellings (KS2) as they will have been chosen to ensure that your child builds up a good understanding of spelling over time. Encourage them to learn and practise their spellings in a multi-sensory way: ask them to draw the words in the air or on a tray filled with flour, make the words out of play-doh, write them on the patio using a paint brush and water. Keep copies of the Common Exception Words and Statutory Spelling Lists available at home so your child can routinely look at them and use them when completing homework or writing at home.

4. Helping your child with grammar and punctuation

The curriculum in England puts a lot of emphasis on children learning to use grammar and punctuation. Understanding grammar and punctuation is important because it helps your child understand why sentences make sense and how to link their ideas together so that others will understand them. Listening to you reading aloud gives your child opportunities to hear how sentences sound whilst talking to them using grammatically correct sentences can help them link their spoken ideas to their written ones. If a child uses incorrect grammar when speaking to you, for example they say: I done my homework, model the sentence back to by saying: You have done your homework – well done!

5. Helping your child with handwriting

Different children develop control over their handwriting at different points, and there is certainly a lot more to being a good writer than having neat handwriting. That said, learning to form letters correctly at the very start of school can be very useful for later on, as it is much harder to unlearn habits once they have been formed. Listen to advice from your child's teacher about pencil grip and help support their developing fine motor-skills with lots of games and activities that require them to use their fingers. For example: playing with Play-Doh, threading beads, cutting with scissors, using tweezers to pick up small objects. Fluent, neat and joined handwriting is useful to ensure that a reader can understand what a child is trying to communicate in their writing, as well as helping a child to feel confident about their writing.

