



**CARE**

*Care, Aspire, Respect, Excel*

**Writing**

*at*

*Winscombe Primary School*



## Writing at Winscombe

Getting the basics right matters a lot at Winscombe. We believe that ensuring all children make the best progress in reading, writing, maths and speaking and listening allows them to make the most of all the opportunities that our curriculum and life in our school has on offer. This information explains how we approach teaching children these basics. We hope it helps you understand the key ways in which we work as a school, and how you as parent can best support your child's learning within these essential areas. We also hope that by reading this information you will understand how ambitious we are for your child, how we want to see them achieve in all areas during their time at Winscombe, and how we want them to fully enjoy all aspects of their learning

## What writing looks like at Winscombe





## How we teach writing

At Winscombe we believe writing is both an essential skill for success in the wider world and an art form. Therefore, we make our teaching of writing as creative as possible, as well as rigorously teaching the rules of spelling, punctuation and grammar. The school's approach to English, as a broader subject, is based on the guidelines set out in Early Years Foundation Stage and the new 2014 National Curriculum.

English is taught through the following strands:

- Writing transcription (spelling and handwriting)
- Writing composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)
- Writing (vocabulary, grammar and punctuation)
- Spoken language
- Reading (word reading and comprehension)

Our cross curricular approach means that our curriculum planning exposes our learners to English as a subject that spans all subjects and is not seen in isolation, but as a key tool in unlocking all aspects of learning. We deliver English lessons, that focus on the core features of the National Curriculum, that allow us to teach the more technical aspects of writing. We deliver an adapted version of the Talk4Writing process, which is detailed below.

Our learners are taught their English skills in a contextualised environment, which gives further meaning and purpose to

their learning. This planning allows multiple opportunities to practise writing skills across the curriculum; a requirement needed to demonstrate learners are able to work at a Greater Depth. For example, the children may write: letters to a local supermarket asking them about the plastic they use; postcards home describing the climate of a country they are 'visiting' in geography; accurate and well-labelled posters in science, reasoning in maths and prayers in religious education. We also try to create as many real-life situations for the children to practise writing skills. For instance, application letters for class or school monitor roles, thank you cards to visitors, letters to pre-school children just about to start in Red Class. We are also developing the use of writing competitions to further develop a love of writing.

### **Our Approach to Writing**

Using the Talk 4 Writing approach, which we have modified and adapted to meet the needs of our learners, we have created an effective delivery of English Writing skills that can be applied to all areas of writing, across all year groups. We focus on the process of deconstruction, imitation, innovation and invention in our teaching of writing – with an emphasis on 'shorter writing cycles' of two to three weeks.

Careful planning and consideration of the text is of extreme importance at this stage. Each core text is carefully selected to

ensure it is of the highest quality and pitched at the correct level for the children.

### **Analysis**

The core text (book) or a model text (based on the core text and written by the teacher) is read and analysed. Language, sentence and layout features of the genre of writing are identified and discussed. A toolkit of features is co-constructed during and after this process. These are displayed prominently in the classroom, accessible to all learners.

### **Imitation**

Children are provided with speaking and listening, and drama activities so they can rehearse using the key language and sentence features of the text orally. These activities are also designed to deepen their understanding of the text. The use of 'talk scaffolds' (lists of words, phrases and sentence starters relating to the writing they are learning about) support their work and embed new vocabulary and sentence structures.

Teachers then 'share write' with the children, taking ideas and modelling key teaching points. Within this process, there are opportunities for children to rehearse key points, correct misconceptions, and work in pairs and groups using mini-whiteboards to practise their writing. With the use of a word mat (a list of high-quality words, phrases and sentence starters relating to the writing they are imitating), children are given independent opportunities to apply their learning.



Teachers work with small groups or individuals to move the learning on further or to address misconceptions. A process of self, peer and/or teacher assessment is used to support editing and redrafting.

### **Innovation**

Once the children are more secure with a genre of writing, and familiar with a story (or section of a story) they begin to innovate. A similar teaching process to 'Imitation' is used, but elements of the original core text are changed. For example, the characters, setting or a key event may be altered; the story may be retold from a different viewpoint; additions may be made and new events or characters introduced.

### **Invention**

We also feel it is important to give children time to experiment with their own ideas, drawing upon their learning from reading, life experiences and other subjects. Some lessons therefore provide opportunities for children to apply learnt writing skills more freely. For instance, if they have been learning to write in a journalistic style, they are given a more open task to write a newspaper article. These also provide good opportunities for teachers to assess the child's writing when less support is given. Writing outcomes are regularly published, often alongside art work, in order to celebrate the children's work. These are displayed in class books or around the school.

## **Grammar**

Grammar is taught as part of our English lessons and games and follow up sessions are delivered as early morning work. Regular grammar sessions allow our learners the opportunity to develop their punctuation and Grammar skills, within the context of the current learning. These sessions involve dictated sentences, handwriting and grammar rules, delivered at an age-appropriate standard.

## **Handwriting**

At Winscombe we believe it is important to support children to develop neat, well-formed and consistent handwriting. The development of an efficient, legible style assists pupils in all forms of written recording. We want to help children with layout, presentation and the way they organise themselves on paper. If success is achieved here, they have pride in their written work, tend to be better at spelling and are more motivated to write. Handwriting and good presentation has a high focus and high status in our school. In Year 6, children will earn a 'Pen License' when they demonstrate a neat, consistent and legible style. We follow the Pen Pals Handwriting Scheme which is taught in a discrete lesson once a week and also taught through daily phonics, grammar sessions and modelled by teachers in all aspects of work

## **Spelling**

Spelling is taught daily in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 as part of phonics lessons. It continues to be taught frequently in Key Stage 2. Spelling rules and patterns are investigated, taught and practised alongside 'common exception words' (words which are exceptions to a specific rule or pattern). A range of strategies that can be used to practise spellings are also taught. Alongside spellings, all children from Year 1 onwards undertake dictated sentences as part of their spelling provision.

Lists of words are sent home each week for children to learn. These are either: lists of very common words in the English language; lists relating to the class' theme; lists of words that fit a particular pattern or rule learnt in class that week. In addition to this, all children in Year 2 have a 'personal dictionary'. In these they collect words, which they have spelt incorrectly in their writing or words with spelling patterns that they haven't yet encountered. They continue to use these dictionaries in Key Stage 2.

We have a number of spelling interventions in place to support children who find spelling challenging. These are planned and directed by either the Special Educational Needs Coordinator



or the English Subject Leader. For more information on Spelling, please refer to the 'English Policy'.



## Writing in the Early Years and Key Stage One

Throughout the Early Years and Key Stage 1, children are taught the key principles of writing through Talk 4 Writing, in order to lay a solid foundation for developing their skills later on. Children are taught to apply their knowledge of phonics to help them spell accurately, and to structure their work, whether it be fiction or non-fiction writing. Talk 4 Writing teaches the children to use actions and focus on oracy, with reading at the heart of all of this. We believe that effective storytellers become effective story writers. This is all underpinned by rigorous and daily teaching of phonics, as previously noted.

Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 follow the Talk for Writing approach. This generally consists of 2 to 3 weeks on one book. During each sequence, children will typically:

- Read the book (making predictions, discussing story type and unfamiliar vocabulary)
- Learn their own version of the story (using a story map and actions)
- Innovate their story
- Share with partner
- Write innovated story

In addition, specific skills appropriate to their year group will be taught explicitly. (For example, in Year 1, children will also learn about what a letter, word and sentence are, capital letters, question marks, past tense and adjectives.) By the end of Key Stage 1, children will have been taught the fundamentals of punctuation and grammar. This structural and technical knowledge is then developed further in KS2, whereby they undertake more grammar focussed sessions.



## Writing in Key Stage Two

As children enter KS2, they continue to follow the National Curriculum and the school's Talk 4 Writing approach.

Opportunities to continue developing phonic knowledge are catered for, but many children are now focussing on enhancing their knowledge of spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Within our English sessions, grammar is taught explicitly using the key objectives from the National Curriculum. These skills are applied in short burst writing activities and longer writes at the end of the cycle. The class teacher continually monitors and reviews the skills that need developing or revisiting.

Children will continue to be exposed to the same high-quality texts and are expected to work through the Talk 4 Writing cycle with greater skill and fluency, allowing them greater opportunities to innovate and invent on the chosen text type.



## How we make writing exciting and motivating for our children

The range of strategies, resources and staff's enthusiasm has ensured the profile of English within our school is a positive and fun experience. Every child's needs are at the forefront of what we do and tailoring the curriculum to suit all needs has ensured every child's learning journey in English is a positive one. Our aim is to make English, in all its forms, as exciting and inspiring as we can in order to allow children to produce well-structured and creative work that they are proud of.

High quality texts are at the forefront of the English writing curriculum. The English writing lead supports staff in identifying core texts that will provide the right possibilities for children to engage with and enjoy their writing. We use up to date texts, as well as the classics, giving our learners a broad and balanced exposure to texts.

The marking policy is designed to reinforce positive experiences for our learners, giving them easily identifiable and manageable next steps in their learning, as well as celebrating their steps in progress they have made.

We ensure children are able to contextualise their learning, in English this includes visits from authors, poets and time-travelling historical characters, to give meaning and purpose to their written tasks.



## How we assess writing

We place a heavy emphasis on the use of verbal feedback as a key tool in our formative assessment of children's writing. Teachers will identify children who may need more support, those who are making suitable progress and those who may be able to take their learning deeper. For each of these stages, children would receive verbal feedback that allows them to develop their understanding and application of learning. This is achievable through careful planning and quality verbal feedback, at the point of 'action'; this is all underpinned by the work of Shirley Clarke on formative assessment. These day-to-day assessments allow children to make the best possible progress in their writing, with adaptations to planning and next steps for learning based on these.

Alongside this, self and peer assessment also form part of the cycle of assessment for our learners, with these processes allowing our learners to greater responsibility for their learning, as well as reflecting on their own learning and engaging with success criteria.

Children in Year 2 and Year 6 undertake SATs and moderation of work by the teachers of that year; this is a robust and nationally recognised process that helps contribute to the overall teacher assessments that use the benchmarks set out through the national curriculum. (Language of P Scales,

Well Below, Below, Working Towards, Working At and Greater Depth).

More broadly, we use summative assessments through our data tracking system, Insight: We input data at the end of each term. There are objectives for each area of English to assess the children against. We grade them using the aforementioned levels.



### How we help children who find writing difficult

Most children will access different levels of support during their time at school, which, when put into place at the right time and with the right response, will allow them to continue to make progress in their learning. When children encounter difficulties in writing, there are multiple 'graduated responses' that we would employ which help ensure progress is made.

Examples of these include:

- Quality First Teaching – small group or individual support
- Coloured overlays to help with reading and decoding / Pink printed card  
to support dyslexic children
- Pre-topic word mats – to build confidence and expose to topic language.
- Handwriting pencil grips



- Differentiated outcomes / work
- Additional time to complete work
- Physical copies of texts for children to work from
- Consideration of classroom layout and proximity to the teacher/screen.

If, after two cycles of intervention taking place and progress not being made, then the class teacher and SENDCO would work together to identify the next layer of support needed from the school's graduated response. An example of this could be a 'Rapid Phonics' group

### **Provision for left-handed children**

At least 10% of the population are left-handed, the majority of whom are boys. All teachers are aware of the specific needs of left-handed pupils and make appropriate provision for them:

- paper should be positioned to the left for right handed pupils and to the right for left handed pupils and slanted to suit the individual in either case
- pencils should not be held too close to the point as this can interrupt pupils' line of vision
  - pupils should be positioned so that they can place their paper to their left side
- left-handed pupils should sit to the left of a right-handed child so that they are not competing for space

- extra practice with left-to-right exercises may well be necessary before pupils write left-to right automatically.



## How parents and carers can help

A child's life outside of school can have a huge impact on their ability to retain the knowledge they learn in school. As parents and carers, you are in the best position to encourage our children's natural interest in all aspects of writing. Practically, some of the best ways to support your child with their writing and English work is to work alongside them, show enthusiasm and to explore with them. Be active in their learning. Take time to explore areas of interest. Make use of the resources you have available to you. This could look different for different ages of children, but could take the form of: - Firstly, probably the best thing you can do as a parent is read regularly to your child. Reading will help to stimulate their imagination and improve their vocabulary. The characters they'll meet in books can also be a springboard for their own ideas. - Writing shopping lists together - Mark making in sand / mud - Write instructions to complete a simple task - Encourage your child to be creative and always praise them for their efforts. - Buy a notebook for taking notes or writing down ideas - Can I write a daily diary? - Visit the local library and share a love of books / authors/ styles.



## How we celebrate writing

At Winscombe we celebrate all aspects of writing in many different ways, here are just some of these:

- At the beginning of the academic year, a whole school poetry theme is identified and delivered across all year groups. Each class learns their chosen poem by heart, ready to perform to the parents in a whole school poetry performance. The children also write their own poems as part of this celebration
- English/Topic displays in every classroom to celebrate the children's learning
- In celebration assemblies the staff comment on the children's achievements in writing
- Writing competitions and whole school displays to celebrate these
- Opportunities to publish work for different purposes, such as making a book about 'African Animals' or creating a leaflet persuading people to eat healthily
- On occasion, teachers will also feel certain pieces of work or a child's English skills or attitude deserve special recognition, with a headteacher's certificate being presented for this. This is always in recognition of effort and endeavour, alongside the application of the school's learning powers.