

Writing Curriculum, Intent Implementation and Impact

Our approach to writing at Thirsk Community Primary School

At Thirsk Community Primary our vision is to promote the individual growth of every child; to inspire confident learners, who believe in themselves as they aspire to achieve their full potential within our school, into the High School years and beyond into the work place.

The **intent** behind our approach is that our children will:

- Meet National Curriculum expectations and beyond across every year group; stimulating children's creativity through a variety of 'real' writing opportunities.
- Have the ability to write fluently and with interesting detail on a number of topics throughout the curriculum - fostering a love for writing and an appreciation of its educational, cultural and entertainment values;
- A highly developed vocabulary input to ensure that they can apply high level word choices to their own work;
- Have a well-organised structure to writing with genre knowledge and by using a variety of sentence structures;
- Have excellent transcription skills that ensures writing is well-presented, punctuated and spelled correctly.

Implementation

On entry to EYFS, writing skills are assessed as part of the school baseline assessment. Pencil grip is assessed using the Physical Development section of the EYFS Framework. Staff ensure that provision in EYFS reinforces gross motor and fine motor opportunities; development in the shoulder, elbow, wrist and fingers. Activity examples include digging pit, mud kitchen, giant construction and adult directed activities to target agility, balance and co-ordination. Tracking early physical development is vital to support the development of writing skills. On a daily basis there are numerous different mark making opportunities with a purpose.

Where physical development is not at age related expectation, intervention strategies from the NHS Occupational Therapy for fine motor skills are introduced. The programmes have been developed to cover typical fine motor and handwriting difficulties experienced by primary school children. There are 6 programmes to choose from, arranged in a developmental sequence, starting with foundation skills in movement and body awareness, moving on to more complex fine motor and pre-writing skills, all the way up to handwriting fluency. Each programme is designed to run for a half term (6 weeks), with 3 short sessions (approximately 20-30 minutes) per week.

The children learn to write their name during a daily 'sign in' session. Name Cards are also available in all areas and the children are encouraged to label their work. Additionally, Reception children are taught writing in teacher led 'bite-sized' chunks which are built on at the end of their phonic lesson when developmentally appropriate. These sessions increase in length over the year as phonological and physical skill increases. Children are taught the writing position and correct pencil grip, with daily writing taking place using pencil and paper.

Children are expected to answer oral questions in full sentences. This is scaffolded by staff providing sentence stems. Children become proficient at this and progress seamlessly onto answering written questions in the same way as they move up through the school

In EYFS children learn to:

- Write and form the letters/letter groups which represent the 44 sounds with the help of rhymes and phrases.
- Segment (sound out) and to spell using phoneme fingers and encouraged to 'split it up'.
- Build sentences by orally rehearsing sentences before they write.

Talking:

Children work in pairs to:

- Answer questions
- Practise activities with their partner
- Take turns to read and write together
- Develop ambitious vocabulary

Handwriting:

From October half term, handwriting is embedded within the daily phonics session but it is also practised during other teacher led sessions - for example 'sign in' and through core provision based writing links. When introducing new graphemes, the teachers build a strong connection between the letters that represent that sound.

As well as being taught to recognise the grapheme, children learn to recite the letter formation rhyme to help embed the correct formation in the long-term memory. They practise the formation in the air, on their partner's backs and then finally in their books. The expectation is that they recite the rhyme every time they practise forming the letter. Partners check each other's work and are taught how to give feedback.

In every teacher led session every child has access to the alphabet prompt. They are encouraged to use the alphabet prompt to support their recognition of letters as well as their independent letter formation. Constant attention is paid to formation to prevent bad habits developing. For example marking is used to identify any poor formation with the children being expected to correct and practise. Use of the alphabet prompt is also greatly encouraged during independent learning time and is available throughout the provision areas. In Reception children use lined paper and are taught to orientate their letters correctly on the line.

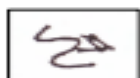
In Reception the teacher models strategies that will help children become confident writers, for example, referring to a sound mat for the correct grapheme needed and rereading what has been written so far. Children then have a turn at writing after they have secured the ability to recall the sentence they have been asked to write. Children can then add their own sentences and share their writing in the author's chair. Children are rewarded with 'Teach and Support' points for using the strategies that the teacher models. Progression in early writing in EYFS is tracked using the stages of writing below.

Stages of Writing Development

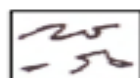
As children connections between spoken and written language, they extend their understanding to include symbolic forms that are used to capture speech. Preschool-age children typically engage in reading and writing activities in casual and playful ways. Sulzby, Teale, and Kamberelis (1989, p. 77) note that children who have had frequent opportunities to write and read at home are more likely to enter conventional literacy as confident, risk-taking readers and writers. For almost all children in a literate society, learning to write and read begins early in life. Early writing develops concurrently and interrelatedly with literacy in young children who actively engage in understanding how written language works (Schickedanz 1999).

The following illustrations were developed from the works of Temple, Nathan, Temple and Burris, (1992) and D. H. Graves (1989) and from drawings compiled by Helen Faul of the California Kindergarten Association. They show the broad milestones that children achieve in art, literacy, spelling, and writing. (These stages are interrelated in young children, who make no distinction between these subject areas.)

Prephonemic Stage



Random scribbling - The starting point is any place on the page.



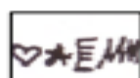
Controlled scribbling - Progression is from left to right.



Circular scribbling - Circles or ovals flow on the page.



Drawing - Pictures tell a story or convey a message.



Mock letters - These can be personal or conventional symbols, such as a heart, star, or letters with extra lines.



Phrase writing develops (*rabbit in the sun*).



Whole-sentence writing develops (*This pumpkin is mine*).

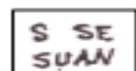
Conventional Writing Stage



Transitional stage spelling (or invented spelling) is replaced by full, correct spelling of words.



Letter strings - These move from left to right and progress down the page of actual letters. They have no separations and no correlation with words or sounds.

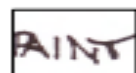


Separated words-Groups of letters have space in between to resemble words.

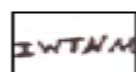
Early Phonemic Stage



Picture labeling - A picture's beginning sound is matched to a letter (*Dog*).



Awareness of environmental print - Environmental print, such as names on cubbies, is copied.



Transitional stage spelling or invented spelling - First letter of a word is used to represent the word (*I went to the nature museum*).

Letter-Name Stage



Beginning and ending letters are used to represent a word (*cat*).

Transitional Stage



Medial sound is a consonant (*grass*).



Medial sound is in correct position, but the vowel is wrong (*grass*).



A child hears beginning, medial, and ending letters (*I like to pick flowers*).

Some teachers assess using sequences to make developmental checklists or portfolio inventory sheets. During choice time, the teacher observes and notes any writing behavior. These notes are later entered onto an inventory sheet in a child's portfolio. This compilation of records for each child shows growth over time and is a valuable tool for lesson planning, parent conferences, and statistics on student achievement. More information can be found in *The Beginnings of Writing and More Than the ABCs: The Early Stages of Reading and Writing*.

Spelling:

Children are taught to segment words using their phoneme fingers, they count the sounds in a word using a finger to represent each sound. To spell tricky words they are taught to 'say-clap-say', this means they say the word, clap each letter using the letter names, then say the word again.

As children at the end of EYFS move into Power Steps in Year One, reading comprehension skills progress from being a daily oral activity to being a written task. In Partner Paired reading children read a phonically decodable text together and then answer questions in full sentences recorded in their books. In Text Detectives children listen to the teacher read a challenging text which is beyond the level at which the children can read. The children then answer questions about this text in full sentences in their books. The questions include retrieval, inference and deduction.

On Thursdays and Fridays the children complete extended writing pieces linked to the weekly text detective book.

Thursday's extended writing includes modelling from the teacher of ambitious and challenging sentences, guided practice where sentences are formed together as a class and some independent sentences.

Friday's extended writing includes an independent task using the book as a stimulus and following the National Curriculum expectations.

Once children leave Steps, they move into our Power Literacy groups. All children in these groups follow the McKie structure that is stipulated. Children progress through these groups by ability and not age.

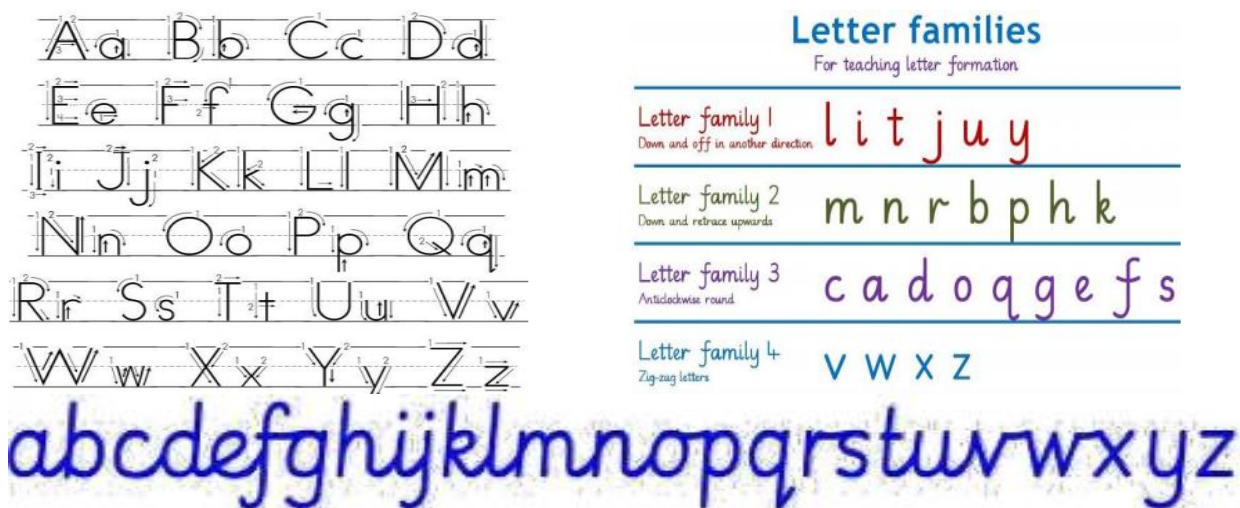
Power Literacy groups

Spellings:

Children in Power Literacy groups complete three sessions of spelling a week with their class teacher. The spelling pattern and the vocabulary and meaning of the words are discussed on the first day. The spellings are then sent home to learn. On the next day, children will have a first go at writing them independently. On the third day, children will have another go at writing them independently. Parents are then kept informed of spellings that the children need to learn within the Home School Diary.

Handwriting:

Handwriting follows the Nelson Scheme with print being refined if necessary but then quickly moving to joined expectations. Ten minutes of daily practise for handwriting is expected.



In their Power Literacy Groups they are taught reading and comprehension skills for the first three days of the week. During these sessions, the meaning and the context of challenging vocabulary is discussed and displayed. This is to enable children to understand and use these words within their own writing.

The writing responses within these reading sessions are expected to be answered in a full sentence or more. If responses are not up to this standard, the teacher will provide a sentence stem to enable the child to rephrase their answer in full. Children complete an independent session every Wednesday which allows them to build stamina in answering questions and respond with speed in an allocated time. Pupils

On Thursday and Friday the writing objective is linked directly with the reading objective so that children can see the link between the two. Grammar teaching is incorporated into the writing sessions, giving pupils an opportunity to apply the skills to their work. National Curriculum writing expectations help the staff to select a focus for the writing task and pupils learn to identify and edit their work with this objective in mind.

'A strong writer has the mechanics.'

- *The ability to transfer speech to into writing.*
- *The ability to apply knowledge of basic SPAG*
- *The ability to spot and rectify any mistakes, independent of any adults first.*
- *The confidence to take risks and test 'my' mechanics.'* (C McKie 2016)

The children then redraft their work on the final day. Peer assessment is used to understand the strengths of their work and what the next steps will be.

Our topic based creative curriculum in the afternoon links with work from McKie sessions and inspires and engages the pupils in every aspect of writing. Children write across a variety of different genres, with the opportunity to apply their skills in many different contexts and for a real purpose.

Behaviour and rewards

Using the McKie system, rewards are encouraged for positive behaviour. This includes all aspects of work within all lessons.

Presentation of books is expected to be of a high standard

The impact

The expectation is that all pupils will make good or better progress. To ensure that this is the case we have stringent systems of monitoring. The teacher will regularly assess the progress made against National Curriculum expectations to identify gaps still to be taught and mastered in independent work. SLT complete book scrutinies, lesson observations and assessment of input by the teacher via their slides and to ensure a constant drive for improvement in the pupil's work.

Our Literacy teaching is split into 8 week cycles with the subsequent Enrichment Week being spent discussing the achievements of individual pupils. Gaps are then identified in content or attainment which will then be addressed during the next cycle. If it is felt that a pupil would benefit from an increased challenge they are moved into a higher Power Literacy group. Similarly, if gaps are identified in the pupil's phonics or understanding they can be moved to a lower group to give them the precise support for this need for that cycle. A child can move between groups to address their exact need and no group is fixed. Inter school moderation takes place with cluster schools with LEA moderators being in attendance.