

The First Federation Trust

Writing strategy

Rationale:

Developing children as writers is so much more than asking them to remember grammatical constructions or tricky spellings. It is a complicated and intricate process – and if we enable a child to become a writer we have given them a voice, supported them to communicate and provided them with a skill that is vital for all of their schooling and to their life beyond.

Learning to write is every child's entitlement. Taking possession of the written word can open up a world in which children can cultivate identity, an understanding of the world and their place in it in relation to others.

Aims:

Our aim, in the First Federation Trust, is that we will develop writers who:

- enjoy writing and find the process creative, enriching and fulfilling;
- read widely, recognise 'good' writing and understand what makes it so;
- are aware of the key features of different genres and text types;
- learn about the skills of writing from their reading and draw (consciously or unconsciously) upon its models in their own work;
- have 'something to say' (a purpose and audience);
- know how to develop their ideas;
- know how to plan and prepare for writing;
- make informed choices about what they are writing, as they write (for example, about vocabulary, grammar, text structure, etc.);
- understand how to reflect upon, refine and improve their own work;
- can respond to the constructive criticism of others.

Our aims will be achieved when children are taught deliberate and explicit lessons as writers, where skills in composition and transcription, vocabulary development, grammar, spellings, handwriting and oracy are all taught well.

Early Writing

Writing is a challenging activity for young children as it combines the expression of meaning (composition) with the physical skills of handwriting (transcription) and spelling. Children also need to learn about features of writing, which includes concepts about print (See Appendix A) through to more advanced ideas about different types of writing.

Purposeful talk and speaking and listening are of central importance in their own right as well as paving the way for children to make a good start on reading and writing. Opportunities for both can be provided in EYFS for children through storytelling and story-making. For younger children, stories told or heard can help them understand the world in which they live and allow them to transmit that understanding to others. Furthermore, the 'internalisation' of stories and understanding of their structures, allows children to build confidence through oral retelling. An example of this approach is outlined in Appendix B.

Phonics for spelling

Accurate spelling is a key component of writing fluency and should be explicitly taught rather than simply tested. The teaching of spelling is likely to work best when the spellings are related to the current content being studied in school and when teachers encourage active use of any new spellings in pupils' writing.

There is some evidence to suggest that teaching word patterns may help with spelling. Pupils could learn about morphemes (prefixes, suffixes, and root words) and show how they recur in different words. It may be that by being able to, for example, understand that the 'un-' prefix in 'unlike' has the same spelling and meaning as in 'unusual', 'unhappy' and 'unpleasant', pupils can see that they can break words into smaller parts, many of which they already know from other words. (See FFT Vocabulary Strategy)

Teachers should be aware of strategies that good spellers appear to use, and consider teaching these strategies directly.

These include:

- a phonic approach—sounding out the word, and spelling it the way it sounds;
- analogy—spelling it like other known words (for example 'call' and 'fall');
- the identification of the 'tricky' parts of words so that these can be learned (such as 'separate' and 'miniature')—many of the most common words in English are 'tricky' (now known as 'common exception words' in the National Curriculum); and
- a visual approach—writing the word in two or three different ways and deciding which looks right.

Writing progression

The curriculum for writing, for all schools in the First Federation Trust, follows the national curriculum (September 2014).

Dependence to independence

Learning to write, like learning to read, is a journey from dependence to independence. Attainment in writing is intrinsically linked to the reading culture of the classroom and school. (See FFT Reading strategy) A programme of reading high quality texts aloud and the opportunity to explore a wide variety of texts and genres will enable children to become increasingly aware of purpose, audience, form, voice, written language structures and rhythms, generic markers, language registers and conventions. These form the foundations of a child's later understanding of written language systems.

Spoken language is the first and most important resource that young writers have. Children need to have a wide experience of story, knowledge of written language and how this works and knowledge of how print works as a means of communication. Young children can compose long before they can transcribe and many teaching approaches at this stage focus on easing the burden of transcription and enabling children to compose more freely. Therefore, initially a child needs the help and support of another person, usually an adult, in order to write conventionally. This support can be gradually withdrawn as transcription becomes easier and the child increases in independence, finding their voice as a writer.

Progress and development will be multi-dimensional. Some kinds of progress will be in the area of composition, and other kinds will relate mainly to transcription. Inexperienced writers who are still struggling with transcription may also need support with developing spelling skills – moving from the phonetic stage to gaining increasing control of standard spelling – and gaining better control of handwriting.

As children become more experienced writers, adults will need to use approaches which encourage children's independence as writers; exploring form, voice, awareness of audience and the needs of the reader. Children will need to explore a wide variety of forms and styles, as well as having ample time to work on their writing – thus increasing their ability and stamina to manage extended texts. Adults should model and demonstrate how written language works as a means of communication. Children need to explore different ways and means of composing and publishing writing, including digital and multi-modal texts, related to purpose and audience.

Spelling and grammar, linked to language and form, should be taught, modelled and explored as an integral part of the writing curriculum.

Practice

In the Early Years, children engage in writing or mark making activities for their own satisfaction, generally without an intended audience. As writing develops, children may write purely for themselves, before becoming more confident to write for others. When children are given time and space to use writing as a tool for thinking, and opportunities to share ideas and preferences, they take ownership over their choices and develop the confidence to play around with language features, writing conventions and form.

Writing is a physical task as well as an intellectual one. 'Transcription' refers to the physical skills involved in writing and the skill of spelling words correctly. Pupils must

learn to form letters and spell words correctly, write in joined-up handwriting, and use a keyboard.

Accurate letter formation is an essential early skill that forms the basis of a fluent handwriting style. However, it is also important to focus on the speed of pupils' writing as well as the accuracy. Slow or effortful transcription hinders writing composition as pupils have to concentrate on monitoring their handwriting and spelling and are less able to think about the content of their writing.

There is no quick way to develop these essential skills other than through regular and substantial practice.

Practice should be:

- Extensive—a large amount of regular practice is required for pupils to achieve fluency in these skills. Achieving the necessary quantity of practice requires pupils to be motivated and fully engaged in improving their writing
- Supported by effective feedback—teachers can support children to practise effectively by providing opportunities for effective feedback.

Effective writers need strong editing and proof-reading skills

It is important to note the difference between editing and proof-reading.

- Editing requires pupils and their peers to propose changes to vocabulary and grammar in order to make their writing more interesting to read. Pupils might also need to check that they have used the correct tense throughout their work.
- Proof-reading involves pupils checking their work for punctuation and spelling errors only. The spelling rules they use while proofreading should focus on the patterns they are studying as a year group; this enables pupils to explore challenging vocabulary.

In order to develop children's ability to edit and proof read, the following is a suggestion:

- Break down editing and proof-reading success criteria into 'stations' which enable the children to focus really deeply on one feature of their writing. The idea is that editing and proof-reading 'stations' are set up around the room. The children then visit each 'station' for a given amount of time and read through their work, looking at the given feature in detail and ensuring it is present and correct. If it is not, the children must improve it or insert it.
- In KS1 classrooms, it might be more effective to give an allocated amount of time for the whole class to look at one particular feature of their writing (e.g. capital letters and full stops) before all moving on to the next feature at the same time.

Depth and Breadth of coverage

From the earliest stages, it is important that children understand that writing is a means of expression and a communication tool. We know a culture of book talk deepens reader response and allows children to explore the effect that the author of a text has created on the reader. We need to give children opportunities to

reflect on their own texts in the same way. The teaching of writing is effective when children see the use in it; when there is real, authentic purpose; when there is an audience that authenticates their voice, whether themselves or another reader.

Teachers plan for opportunities for writing inspired by meaningful events and experiences in texts and real life. This provides the children with ways to talk and write about their own feelings, experiences and interests and, with purpose in mind, begin to think about their audience and adapt their tone accordingly. Children take pleasure in a reader's feedback and begin to link writing with communication. It is important for teachers to validate children's writing with appropriate response, focusing first on the effect that the writing has on the reader.

Children draw on their experience of reading when shaping their own writing. When children have explored a range of texts across genres, they form an understanding and appreciation of how language functions and how best to use this when writing themselves.

Teachers should plan to share rich examples of writing, both on and off the page including texts that allow children to absorb the rhythms and patterns of language, reflecting the cultural, social and linguistic diversity of the children, as well as introducing a world beyond the familiar. Children should have opportunities to hear the written word as well as understand how meaning is conveyed in other forms such as film, illustration, digital texts and performance. When exposed to a range of texts that demonstrate expressive, informational and imaginative writing, children begin to understand how to control and manipulate the conventions of writing for a range of purposes throughout a variety of forms across narrative, non-fiction and poetry.

Delivery of lessons

Writing can be thought of as a process made up of seven components.

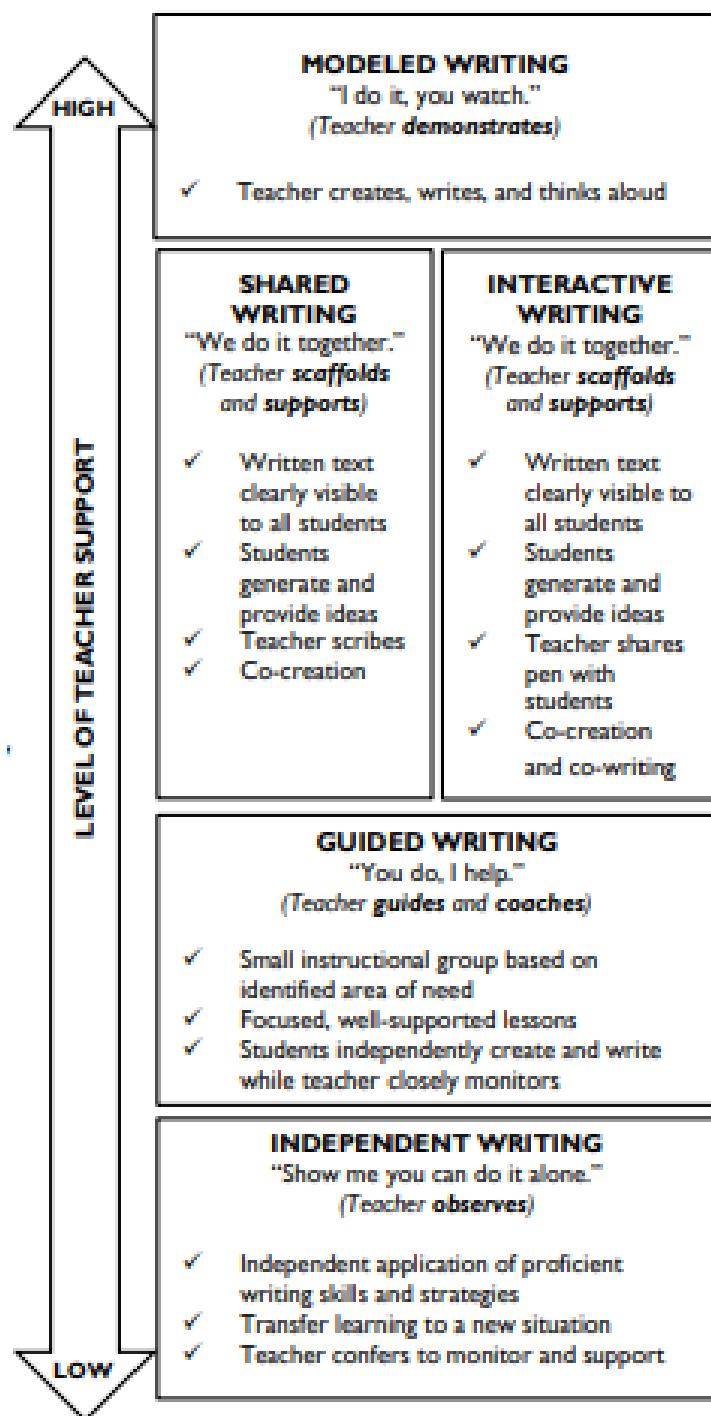
Pupils should be taught each of these components and underlying strategies. A strategy is a series of actions that writers use to achieve their goals and may support one or more components of the writing process. Strategies should be carefully modelled and practised. Over time, pupils should take increasing responsibility for selecting and using strategies.

Component	Definition	Example strategies
Planning	Setting goals and generating ideas before pupils begin writing. Pupils could write down goals so that they can refer back to them as they write	Goal setting, activating prior knowledge, graphic organisers, and discussion
Drafting	Focusing on noting down key ideas. Pupils should set out their writing in a logical order. Although accurate spelling, grammar and handwriting are important, at this stage they are not the main focus.	Making lists, graphic organisers, and writing frames.

Sharing	Sharing ideas or drafts throughout the writing process gives pupils feedback.	In pairs, listen and read along as the author reads aloud.
Evaluating	Checking that the writing goals are being achieved throughout the process. This can be done by pupils as they re-read their writing or through feedback from adults or peers.	Self-monitoring and evaluation by asking questions like, 'Have I met my goals?' and 'Have I used appropriate vocabulary?'.
Revising	Making changes to the content of writing in light of feedback and self-evaluation.	Peers placing a question mark next to things they do not understand and pupils thinking of synonyms for repeated words.
Editing	Making changes to ensure the text is accurate and coherent.	Proof-reading and editing stations (see below)
Publishing	Presenting the work so that others can read it. This may not be the outcome for all pieces of writing, but when used appropriately it can provide a strong incentive for pupils to produce high-quality writing and encourage them in particular to carefully revise and edit.	Displaying work, presenting to other classes, and sending copies to parents and carers.

Writing strategies should be explicitly taught using the 'gradual release of responsibility' model (See Appendix C). This can be repeated for each strategy. However, pupils will inevitably learn the strategies at different rates so it is important to recognise that the model is not a linear process. For example, based on observations of pupils' guided practice it may be beneficial to provide repeated modelling emphasising different aspects of the strategy.

Teachers should introduce each strategy by describing how and when to use it. Then strategies should be modelled. Shared writing allows teachers to 'think-aloud' and share their thought process for each strategy with pupils. For example, teachers can model the revising process by posing questions to themselves: As a teacher, it is important that you are able to model writing 'live', sharing the frustrations and successes involved.



Teachers will often use a strong model or 'WAGOLL' (What a good one looks like) to support children in developing an understanding of specific language features and composition of the text type being studied.

Developing a whole school writing culture

We know that children who explore and hear a range of high quality texts read aloud and have opportunity for critical discussion are better able to reflect on

effects on the reader created by the writer. Reading authentic texts aloud will help children to hear the patterns and types of language used for different forms and purposes and understand levels of formality appropriate to the intended audience. This teaches them much about the language and grammar structures appropriate for different audiences, purposes and forms of writing.

Our classrooms and schools should be language rich environments, focusing on enriching vocabulary, understanding what words mean and how and why they are used and ways language is used effectively for impact on a reader.

Publishing their work for an audience gives children a purpose for their writing. Showcase a range of authentic types of publication in class/school reading environments, such as picture books, short stories, graphic novels, collections of poetry, newspapers, leaflets, notices, information booklets and instructions.

Where possible, teacher should plan opportunities for bookmaking, publishing or final performance that brings the children's writing to a wider audience and creates pride in finished pieces.

Writing interventions

Schools should focus first on developing core classroom teaching strategies that improve the literacy capabilities of the whole class. Nevertheless, it is likely that a small number of pupils will require additional support—in the form of high-quality, structured, targeted interventions—to make progress.

High quality initial teaching is supplemented by small group support and individualised support as necessary. Where staff identify that a child is falling behind with either their phonics or comprehension skills, there will be rapid intervention.

Targeted interventions involve a teacher, teaching assistant or other adult providing intensive individual or small-group support. This may take place outside of normal lessons as additional teaching, or as a replacement for other lessons. If pupils are withdrawn from normal classroom activity it is important that the alternative support is more effective than the teaching they would normally receive.

Appendix A

Concepts about print

Young children may need to be taught about concepts about print.

These include:

- Print has meaning
- Print can have different purposes
- Text is read from left to right
- The different parts of a book
- Text is read from top to bottom
- Page sequencing

Appendix B

To support the learning of a bank of well-known stories and other repetitive narrative structures, teachers and practitioners should begin by choosing an enjoyable story that can be told and retold many times. A story map or storyboard that records the plot in a simple series of images or symbols provides a visual prompt to guide the children. The storytelling could also include gestures or actions. Over the course of the re-tellings of the story, children should be encouraged to join in with the aim of learning the story for themselves. As they become more confident in the re-telling, the teacher/practitioner should take a step back to allow the story to be 'carried' by the children.

When children have acquired a confident familiarity with the story, the teacher/practitioner can demonstrate how it can be varied through, for example, substituting a different character or setting. Children can be encouraged to make substitutions of their own and could record these in their own story map to support them as they tell their own variation of the story to other children. They could then add a different element to the story.

Many of these storytelling techniques can be adapted to support the oral rehearsal of other forms of writing. Another starting point for storytelling could be the exploration of timeline or journey stories through the use of props or story bags. For example, bringing in the fruits that Handa collected for Akeyo in 'Handa's Surprise' and placing them in the correct sequence, or ordering the animals collected on a broomstick in 'Winnie the Witch'. The first-hand experience of a bear hunt or environment walk could be recorded by fastening various objects or pictures onto a story stick. Crucially, such techniques support children in recounting orally a story or experience they have shared, in the correct order.

Accompanied by drama and discussion these multi-sensory approaches can scaffold children's understanding through into their writing. The use of visual prompts, real objects and other props will allow all children to access the story or recount more readily. Regular re-telling and oral rehearsal will extend their familiarity with the structures of spoken English as well as developing their vocabulary.

Appendix C

Gradual release of responsibility model

The gradual release of responsibility model describes how greater responsibility for using these strategies can be transferred to the pupil:

1. an explicit description of the strategy and when and how it should be used;
2. modelling of the strategy in action by teachers and/ or pupils;
3. collaborative use of the strategy in action;
4. guided practice using the strategy with gradual release of responsibility; and
5. independent use of the strategy.