



English: Writing Policy

Subject Leaders: Kaj Hall, Kyla Solinger, Dan Murphy and Harriet Hope

The importance of English

More than any other subject, English gives pupils access to the rest of the curriculum and is fundamental to their educational success. This is why the introduction to the national curriculum says: *'Fluency in the English language is an essential foundation for success in all subjects.'*

But English is so much more than the gateway to success in other curriculum subjects. Through studying literature, pupils' eyes are opened to the human experience; they explore meaning and ambiguity as well as the beauty and power of language. English also has a strong creative and expressive dimension.

Intent: What is our curriculum aspiring to achieve?

The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written language, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment. Andy Tharby states the essentials of an ambitious English curriculum to be: an understanding that the subject is an interconnected body of knowledge; teaching is always supported by ambitious text choices; it places great literature at the heart of every lesson, it hinges on subtle and sensitive modelling, places a great value on words and gives students lots and lots of writing practice. These are values which underpin our bespoke writing curriculum for the pupils of Walkley.

At Walkley Primary School, we aim to offer opportunities for children to:

- Foster an understanding and enjoyment of writing through exposure to our ambitious curriculum and exemplar texts and models
- Have experience of and deep engagement with a broad and balanced range of texts, including fiction, non-fiction and poetry, and show progression within these experiences
- Develop their ability to innovate from and respond to a range of authors, writers, genres, written forms and media
- Promote opportunities within writing, as in other areas of our curriculum, that promote diversity and respond to a range of themes that encourage our pupils to think critically
- Develop their use of a broad and rich vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling within a wide range of opportunities to produce writing for different purposes, across the curriculum
- Become confident and competent at planning, drafting, evaluating and editing in order to leave primary school with the skills to flourish as writers moving through the next phase of their education and into adulthood so that they have every opportunity to succeed
- Engage in rich speaking, listening and reading activities as an integral priority, which enables writing, as James Britton said, to float on a sea of talk.

Teachers hold high and secure expectations of writing across the curriculum. Exposure to a variety of curricular areas encourages a range of writers and writing styles. Writing is a crucial skill that is embedded across all year groups; consolidation of fine motor skills and phonic strategies are implemented in EYFS and KS1 and building confidence and stamina with a range of extended pieces is developed in KS1 and further developed in KS2. We are intent on our pupils leaving Walkley with a certainty that they are able to communicate effectively in writing – and to enjoy being able to express themselves in this way.

Implementation: What do we do to deliver our intent?

In line with the National Curriculum (2014), we ensure that children in each year group are taught the explicit grammar, punctuation and spelling objectives required for their key stage. All children write daily, in an English lesson, and across the curriculum. Teachers plan writing units based on a two-week sequence following the '*Walkley Writing Journey*' which include planned opportunities for talk, appropriate drama opportunities and speaking and listening activities to develop creativity and a greater depth of understanding of viewpoint and purpose. Often, writing in English lessons responds to the high-quality text being studied, but occasionally other purposes and reasons for writing are planned for, including visits out of school. The high-quality texts used ensure not only clear progression through the different year groups, but act as high-quality language models to immerse children in rich vocabulary and to exemplify how authors use grammar to have an intended impact on readers. Each year group has a yearly overview of the writing outcomes, including narrative, non-fiction and poetry. These have been planned to ensure coverage of a wide range of genres as well as build on skills from year to year. The outcome of each sequence is an independent piece of writing which will be used to assess pupils' skills against the PiTA statements for their year, as well as checking that pupils are still applying the grammar and punctuation taught previously.

The Walkley Writing Journey

Immerse:

During this phase, pupils are given the opportunity to explore the text while also developing their spoken language and expanding their vocabulary. Drama techniques are used as a method of developing an understanding of the text and its key features. Pupils explore the meaning of new vocabulary using the word aware approach, where children are immersed in the meaning of each word through photos and videos, objects and real-life experiences.



Analyse:

This phase focusses on developing an understanding of the genre that is being studied by looking closely at the purpose of the text and the impact on the reader. Pupils extract the meaning, investigate language features, structural features and clarify any new vocabulary. During this phase, pupils look at how writers write and any common themes that run through the text type. Pupils may use Pie Corbett's method to internalise the text where appropriate.



Practise:

During this phase, pupils focus on developing their spelling, punctuation and grammar. Pupils explore grammatical structures within high-quality texts, and they have the opportunity to learn and practise skills that will be required for the piece of writing that they will be producing.



Plan:

During this phase pupils, develop their initial ideas and begin taking notes which will then help them to write. During the planning stage it is important to identify and discuss the purpose of the writing, the audience of the writing and the impact the writing will have on the reader. To develop initial ideas, it may be appropriate to allow for innovation of a known text. In some units of work, the planning stage is where research may be required, and drama may also be used to help develop initial ideas. Planning can be recorded using notes or an appropriate graphic organiser. It is important to think about themes, ideas, research, key vocabulary and grammar whilst planning. Planning is an opportunity for pupils to think out loud; teachers may want pupils to orally rehearse their plan and discuss their ideas to help further understand their plan.

**Draft:**

Writing begins with audience and purpose in mind. Teachers draft writing using plans, their working wall, vocabulary and language models. They use appropriate success criteria to guide pupils of the key expectations and develop effective composition of writing through collaborative writing. As part of our teaching and learning approach, teachers model writing using the appropriate structure, and they model the thought process of writing by thinking out loud.

**Edit:**

Teachers also ensure that during the writing stage pupils have enough opportunities to reflect and check their work and that of their peers. The writing produced should be the appropriate quantity for age and stage as well high quality. Within this phase, pupils should have opportunities to re-draft and edit in response to whole-class feedback. Editing and re-drafting should be done alongside the writing lessons as this allows opportunities to make changes as they write. Pupils should have an opportunity to support their peers during the process of editing.

**Publish:**

At Walkley Primary School, we want pupils to celebrate their writing through authentic publication and presentation of their work. We believe that publishing work for an audience gives children a real purpose to write and creates a sense of pride. This can be done in a variety of ways from sharing their work online, to collecting poems to create a class.

**Learning Environments**

Teachers use English working walls to provide an engaging and language rich environment to promote successful and confident independent writers. These include the genre, key vocabulary and the relevant SPaG knowledge for the unit of work. When writing, children are further supported through the use of word mats, substitution grids, talking tins and RWI phonics resources. Pupils also have access to a range of age- appropriate dictionaries and thesauruses

Grammar, Punctuation and Vocabulary

Research by Debra Myhill and the University of Exeter shows that teaching grammar meaningfully to the text type of writing being taught has a significant effect on attainment in writing. At Walkley, we want children to be able to make links between the grammar they are taught and the grammatical choices they make in their writing so punctuation and grammar knowledge and skills are taught contextually through our English lessons. Children are able to make links between the grammatical choices they are making and the intended impact within the piece of writing. Key pedagogical principles that underpin our writing curriculum incorporate the LEAD model:

Links: Make a link between the grammar focus and how it works in the writing being taught;

Examples: Explain the grammar through examples, not lengthy explanations;

Authenticity: Use examples from texts to link writers to the broader community of writers;

Discussion: Build in high-quality discussion about grammar and its effects. Language play, experimentation, risk-taking and games are actively encouraged.

To underpin this approach, our curriculum overview has been created to match the most appropriate skills with the genres being taught, in line with the National Curriculum. This allows teachers to focus on how to teach, rather than what to teach. It demonstrates our coherently sequenced curriculum, with frequent opportunities to revisit, apply and embed taught skills. Teachers use the curriculum maps to teach the required skills through the purpose of writing that they are teaching to make them more connected with the intended writing outcome. Children are exposed to exemplar models containing rich vocabulary as well as the grammar being taught, in line with the text-led contextualised approach taken in school. Teachers write model texts (WAGOLLS) and worked examples that children analyse and refer back to in order to ensure modelling supports the teaching of the outlined grammar and punctuation being taught.

Vocabulary development is interwoven within each sequence and across subjects, using scaffolds such as Frayer models and zones of relevance to help children understand and use new and ambitious vocabulary; word class walls and the English working wall in each classroom further support this approach. Retrieval practice opportunities are used regularly at the beginning of lessons to allow children many opportunities to recall, link and build on prior knowledge. This is particularly important at Walkley to support children who are learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, particularly those receiving support for speech and language.

Transcription

At Walkley, we recognise that children need sufficient capacity in their working memory to plan, compose and review effectively. This requires transcription skills to be secure. Our curriculum encourages the development of fluent transcription skills through the effective teaching of Spelling and Handwriting.

Spelling



Spellings at Walkley are taught according to the rules and words contained in Appendix 1 of the English National Curriculum following the *Spelling Shed* scheme. Spelling Shed's approach to spelling involves the relationship between sounds and written symbols as well as using morphology to help spell through meaning. The carefully selected word lists and engaging activities provide opportunities to incorporate phonics and meaning to strengthen spelling skills and build vocabulary acquisition.

The lessons within the scheme are sequenced to systematically build upon acquired knowledge and ensure each rule or group of words has sufficient teaching and practise time. Each lesson follows the sequence:

Revise: Children will revisit sounds and spelling patterns from earlier weeks in the scheme.

Teach: Children will then be introduced to the words of the week. There will be an explanation of how the words are linked. The lists are organised by spelling patterns, sounds or affixes.

Practise: Children are then given the opportunity to further explore the set of spellings through independent activities which include sorting words, orthographic mapping, segmenting, sound buttons and exploration of morphology and etymology.

Assess: These words are tested formally once per week but it is expected that improvements will be seen in their independent writing across the curriculum.

Handwriting

At Walkley, we follow the *Penpals for handwriting* scheme. Handwriting is taught explicitly in lessons and in context, when the teacher models correct letter formation.



In EYFS and Year 1, children are taught to sit properly in order to have the correct posture for writing, hold a pencil in the correct position and use a printed letter formation which provides a secure foundation as they move to a cursive style during KS1. During the initial stages of handwriting, children in the Foundation Stage will make marks on plain paper. Lines will be introduced in KS1 and handwriting books in KS2 will give greater scaffold to ensure correct sizing of letters. The *Penpals* scheme builds on children's prior knowledge of letter formation taught through the RWI phonics program in EYFS and Year 1.

Progression and Sequence:

FS1: Uses art, music, pattern and play to introduce the language and movement of letter shapes, prior to writing.

FS2: Prepares children for handwriting, developing fine motor control and introducing letter shapes through the Read Write Inc. scheme.

Year 1: Consolidates letter formation and begins a systematic introduction to joining.

Year 2: Continues the joining progression from Year 1, revising and developing joins.

Year 3: Provides valuable revision of more complex joins, reinforcing links with spelling and supporting the move towards fluency.

Year 4: Reinforces joins within a word, introduces sloped writing and investigates size, proportion and space, emphasising the need for speed and fluency.

Years 5 & 6 Explores an independent approach to writing through project work and self-assessment - developing appropriate styles for speed and fluency.

We recognise that for many of our children English is not the only language whose script they are learning to write. Whilst the development and use of fine motor skills are common to all scripts, there may be factors which influence the child's ability to form letters i.e., scripts which are written from right to left. At Walkley, we are sensitive in allowing extra time and support for children who are learning other scripts as well as English.

Assessment

Teachers will use ongoing formative assessment to determine whether a child is working within age-related expectations, above or below. They will base their judgements on the quality of the independent write that pupils produce at the end of each unit. Assessments are recorded on the PiTA assessment grids and moderated internally and at local authority moderation meetings. Previous SAT papers are used in Y2 and Y6 as assessment points throughout the year to feed into ongoing teacher assessment.

Writing in the Early Years Curriculum

Literacy and communication and language are at the heart of our EYFS curriculum. We value these key skills as without them, children would not be able to access other areas of the curriculum. Children learn to write in the EYFS through a combination of adult-directed activities and child-initiated play. Continuous provision and specific focus areas promote development at an individual level.

Spoken Language

At Walkley, we know how important it is to expose children to high-quality story books. The core stories are carefully chosen to ensure that they support the development of language and vocabulary as well as being engaging and exciting stories to promote a love of reading. These stories are used in teaching and read repetitively so that children have memorable knowledge of quality stories. Although these stories are core to our curriculum, children are also immersed in a wider range of books and stories through, daily stories, recommended reads, character visits and dress-up day. Teachers read stories to children from high quality age-appropriate texts at every available opportunity. These books are then used to enhance the learning environment and reading area.

Transcription

At Walkley, we follow a systematic approach to phonics teaching based on the Read Write Inc. phonics scheme which includes the teaching of reading and writing. Through the scheme, children learn accurate letter formation linked to their phonics learning. This gives children the skills to write words using the graphemes they have been taught. Activities are also planned to develop children's fine motor skills to enable them to hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing.

Composition

At Walkley, we feel it is important for children to develop their understanding of composition before and during the teaching of spelling and letter formation. This is implemented through oral retelling of stories and repeating the words in a sentence they want to write. Once children have developed fluency in spelling and handwriting, their working memory is freed to focus on the compositional aspects of their writing. Early writing activities are carefully planned to engineer success by allowing children to write using the phonic knowledge already acquired. Pupils who 'choose' to write independently are given the opportunity to do so and some incidental teaching may occur for these children as it comes up naturally (e.g. unusual GPCs in their name).

Impact: How do we ensure that children are learning?

The impact of our Writing curriculum, including spelling, grammar and punctuation and handwriting, will be shown through:

- Summative assessment of grammatical knowledge and spelling. End of key stage assessments will demonstrate progress and attainment in line with, or exceeding, children's starting points and national standards.
- Teacher assessment of writing using independently written pieces to provide evidence of national curriculum skills and understanding – recorded on class PiTa grids.
- Termly moderation of writing with individual year groups, cross phase and externally, providing robust judgements.
- Monitoring of progress from year to year and key stage to key stage, ensuring pupils remain 'on track' from their starting points. If a pupil is identified as not on track, they have appropriate support and/or intervention to catch up.
- In-year monitoring of books, alongside pupil voice, show clear evidence of the use of vocabulary, spelling, grammatical understanding, punctuation understanding and text-type knowledge.
- Improvement in handwriting and presentation impacts positively on self-esteem, as indicated in pupil voice activities, which in turn supports our school's ambitious personal development curriculum.

The impact on our children is that they have the knowledge and skills to be able to write successfully for a range of purposes and audiences. With the implementation of the writing sequence being established and taught in both key stages, children are becoming more confident writers and have the ability to plan, draft, edit and publish their own writing. By the end of key stage 2, children have developed a writer's craft; they enjoy sustained writing and can manipulate language, grammar and punctuation to create effect. As such frequent opportunities to write are built into the curriculum at Walkley, consolidation of skills and a deeper understanding of how and when to use specific language, grammar and punctuation is enabled, meaning that children leave school ready to access the written demands of the secondary curriculum and beyond.

Responsibilities

- Teaching staff have a responsibility to ensure English sessions are planned, delivered and assessed as outlined in the policy.
- Teaching assistants have a responsibility to deliver planned sessions and provide feedback to teachers regarding the progress, engagement, misconceptions and achievements of the children
- All staff have a responsibility to model spoken Standard English
- Supply teachers have a responsibility to ensure English lessons are delivered and assessed as instructed by teachers in line with the Writing policy.
- Subject leaders and SLT have a responsibility to monitor whole school implementation of the policy and ensure observed practice is effective. They will also deliver CPD when required.

Monitoring and review

The teaching of English is monitored by SLT and English subject leaders through a robust programme of: lesson observations, work book scrutiny, pupil voice and pupil improvement meetings linked to assessment analysis to ensure:

- The policy is applied by all staff.
- Sessions are pitched at the level appropriate for the group.
- Sessions are delivered in line with the agreed lesson sequence.
- Accurate assessments of children's attainment.
- Assessment information is used to inform future planning.