

Writing at Laurel Lane Primary School

This document provides a brief overview of how writing is taught at Laurel Lane. Weekly lesson plans provide greater detail, as do medium and long term plans for English and other curriculum subjects.

At Laurel Lane Primary School, our strategy for developing and improving daily writing is simple and clear and it is an approach agreed, understood and shared by all staff.

What do we believe about teaching writing?

We believe that the love of writing and the ability to write well in a range of genres (fiction, non-fiction and poetry) is underpinned by highly engaging and supportive talk, in pairs and groups and as part of wider class discussions and debates. There is always a key focus on rich vocabulary and vocabulary choices which caters well for our multilingual cohort.

Further, we believe that writing should, in the first instance, be a task shared by children and teachers and modelled effectively using key features of particular genres, using aspirational vocabulary and grammatical features.

Finally, we believe that 'fixing' and editing is the 'icing on the cake' before a piece of written work is complete and that this requires purposeful feedback for improvement that children can act upon.

What is our strategy?

Our approach is simple and clear:

Talk – model and share – write – check and improve

What does this strategy look like in practice?

Talk comes first.

Before any writing begins, we discuss the text – fiction, non-fiction or poetry – and highlight key vocabulary, effective features that engage the reader, key structures that define a particular genre and we encourage children to give opinions and ideas about the text.

Talk partners are used and oral rehearsal underpins the teaching sequence.

A range of talking tasks may be undertaken such as 'hot-seating', 'freeze-framing' and 'think – feel – say' so that children are immersed in the characters, setting and genre of the text.

Modelling is the next step.

Once children are confident that they are familiar with the text and genre, we write together. The writing process is followed logically from word, to sentence and then text level.

Modelling might be with the teacher taking the lead and modelling how a writer writes or it might be with the children, as shared writing, using their ideas and thoughts.

During this process, children are questioned, asked for their opinions, vocabulary choices are challenged and sentence structure is used in a variety of ways. Key features such as awareness of audience, alliteration, use of similes and metaphors and subject specific vocabulary will be highlighted.

All work produced is displayed on a working wall so that children can follow their writing journey across a unit.

Children are encouraged to read back what has been shaped by the whole class or the teacher and, again, children are invited to give opinions, ask questions, to agree, to challenge or to develop what has been created.

Next, children write independently.

When teachers' assessment and judgement indicates that children are ready to write, they write independently.

The co-created piece of work may be used to support some writers and this would also be on the Working Wall. Additionally, a range of appropriate scaffolds, visual supports and resources are provided for specific individuals and groups to assist writing. Again, effective AfL enables teachers to decide which supports and scaffolds are required for which children and groups.

Finally, children check and improve their work.

Children assess what they and their teachers feel they have done well and what could be improved. This is achieved through in the moment verbal feedback to which children respond immediately with their purple pen.

To 'close the loop' teachers are highly aware of the quality of the children's responses.

Particularly at text level, teachers provide clear feedback for improvement so that vocabulary, sentence structure and punctuation can be extended and considered before a final piece of work is produced.

All learning through writing is carefully considered and children are given the choice of activities and lead the learning in terms of genres and key questions about texts.

EYFS and Year 1

In EYFS, story books are used to underpin oral rehearsal and the highlighting of key vocabulary and phrases.

Underpinning all early writing, is the effective development of fine motor skills. These are developed through activities such as: cutting skills, pincer grip activities and regular use of pegs and tweezers.

In order to embed language patterns and rhythms of language, children in EYFS regularly hear stories with repeated phrases, rhymes and songs and talk underpins all activities (including outdoor play). Mark making is valued highly and there are daily opportunities to develop them, with daily writing.

Alongside these rich opportunities for talk and early writing, RWI is used to support phonics, phonics into writing and reading.

In Year 1, children's exit points from EYFS are carefully considered and, broadly, RWI continues as the key focus for reading, writing and SPAG. Additionally, children also have English lessons.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar

Grammar and punctuation skills are taught within our units, where pupils are given the opportunity to apply them within their current text type. Each group has a set of key skills to work towards over the course of the academic year. Spelling words and rules are taught each week. This is balanced between a particular spelling pattern and also the National Curriculum's common exception words. Handwriting is taught every week, where pupils have the opportunity to practice in specially lined handwriting books. All pupils across the school work towards using a cursive looped font in a neat and consistent style. Once successful, they will be presented with a pen license. Our pupils are given regular opportunities to apply and develop their writing skills across the breadth of the curriculum, including opportunities to write for both purpose and pleasure.

What else do we consider?

We aim to model writing in some form in every lesson, whether that is one sentence, a paragraph or a longer piece of writing.

We aim to develop and use this model for writing in all lessons, not only writing lessons in English but lessons across the 'broader curriculum'.

We provide aspirational models for writing so that children at WTS can be supported to achieve well, so that children at EXS can consolidate and extend their writing skills and so that children writing at GDS can focus on developing a strong sense of author's intent and engagement of their reader.

How do we teach writing at Laurel Lane?

In every lesson, you will see in the oracy at the core, immediate feedback and evidence of immediate response.

We follow a two-week cycle and every half term, each 'big piece' will be linked to a high-quality text. There is a focus on handwriting, spelling, grammar through the cycle. The cycle includes:

- Spelling lesson- teaching spelling rules and focusing on word lists
- Hook lesson- introduction to genre, focusing on purpose and audience
- Focus on SPAG skills
- Shared writing: Talk – model and share – write – check and improve
- Independent writing
- Showcase Day- children share their writing with each other and celebrate their successes
- Creative writing