



Writing at Spire Junior School

Curriculum Statement



Intent of the Writing Curriculum

The central aim of our school curriculum is to develop the whole child and shape their minds for positive learning experiences about the world around them. We strongly believe in encouraging curiosity, exploration and developing a strong sense of self-identity.

In our writing lessons, we aim to encourage creativity, independence and fluency in writing whilst developing the key skills needed to become a competent writer. To do this, we plan and teach sequential units of learning that allow the children to develop upon the skills they have already learnt. This gives them the best opportunity to grow as learners and build their confidence in stages.

We aim to develop the children's ability to produce well structured, detailed writing in which the meaning is made clear and which engages the interest of the reader. Attention is paid throughout the school to the formal structures of English, grammatical detail, punctuation and spelling. Our approach to teaching writing covers the 'transcription' and 'composition' requirements of The National Curriculum (2013). To support our teaching of writing, staff link texts and genres to the wider curriculum to fully immerse the children and develop an ownership and understanding of the context to which they are being asked to write about. The teaching of writing is flexible and class teachers apply their own creativity to cover the objectives stated in the National Curriculum.

Our spelling teaching (following Spelling Shed's progressive scheme) is sequential and focussed on learning the spelling rules, whilst giving children the opportunity to regularly practise set lists of words. Within this, the children are also taught the spelling rules and concepts behind the Y3/4 and Y5/6 word lists as appropriate. The teaching and learning of spelling is designed to follow on from our phonics delivery of Letters and Sounds (see Phonics curriculum statement). In Year 3 daily phonics sessions are taught by the teachers and teaching assistants, Children are taught in accordance to their level of ability.

To be able to spell correctly is an essential life skill. When spelling becomes automatic, pupils are able to concentrate on the content of their writing and the making of meaning. Whilst we note that spelling is not the most important aspect of writing, confidence in spelling can have a profound effect on the writer's creativity. We aim to use explicit, interactive teaching which draws children's attention to the origins, structure and meaning of words. As a school, we follow the spelling patterns set out in the National Curriculum.



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Our handwriting system is designed to develop neat, cursive handwriting an automatic process that does not interfere with creative of cognitive thinking. We aim to give all the children the tools they need in order to produce neat and carefully-presented work. It is important to provide extra, dedicated practise time to those who do not immediately grasp the letter formations and sizes required.

By the end of KS2, pupils will understand the importance of neat presentation as well as the need for different letter forms (cursive, printed, capital letters for emphasis) to help communicate meaning clearly.

Implementation of the Writing Curriculum

Our curriculum at Spire is carefully planned and organised so as to promote a deep understanding of the projects and concepts that we cover through quality first teaching. We do this by equipping our pupils with the skills and qualities they need to thrive both within the curriculum and within the wider-world. Teachers plan sequences of lessons to build towards a longer writing outcome that is linked to reading, drama and other shorter writing tasks.

In the first, third and fifth term, children will base their writing about real-life experiences, activities they have completed in school, poetry or topical events and news. In the second, fourth and sixth term, children will base their writing, which will mainly be narrative writing at this point, on their class text. This means they will have had a term's worth of exposure to the text and a deeper understanding of the genre necessary before applying the writing.

Teachers model writing skills and the use of phonics and spelling strategies in shared writing sessions. Guided/specific writing sessions are used to target specific needs of both groups and individuals. Children have opportunities to write at length in extended independent writing sessions at the end of a unit; applying their taught skills to an unsupported piece of writing.

To do this, we regularly embed the core skills needed within writing by implementing a progressive Punctuation and Grammar curriculum. Alongside dedicated grammar lessons when appropriate, children will complete a '6 in 6' SPAG warm up daily, to embed and recap skills appropriate for the year group. This provides practise at a spelling, word,



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phrase and sentence level in order to best prepare the children for their application at whole-text level.

Children across school are introduced to new vocabulary lists each week in their Writing lessons, known as their Top Ten Power Up words. These words are taught, defined and applied within these lessons to give the children the best chance of using and applying them in their independent writing.

Throughout school, a spelling rule or new letter sounds are introduced weekly and relevant spellings are taught, e.g. through mnemonics, word sorting and spelling games. Every child has a spelling test at the end of each week on ten words which follow the spelling rule. Key word banks, high frequency words, dictionaries and word pattern visuals scaffold children as necessary. Where additional spelling support is needed, children work in small groups with an adult to reinforce spelling patterns, alongside their whole-class word lists or phonetic needs.

Handwriting is taught alongside spelling work at least once a week in all classes. Where needed, children are offered additional handwriting interventions and booster sessions to develop their understanding of letter formation. All staff in school are encouraged to use neat, joined-up cursive handwriting for all handwriting tasks, including marking and comments. Handwritten work on our working walls is encouraged to support this also. Please see the handwriting policy for information regarding the letter styles and progression in handwriting.

Impact of the Writing Curriculum

We are confident our curriculum is successful in the teaching and learning of Writing through a variety of monitoring and feedback activities which have taken place through school.

Recent cross-moderation for writing, based on a fiction extract the children produced, has shown consistencies in marking and assessment for writing within year groups. Staff and leadership teams were satisfied with the accuracy of marking using the samples given. This includes the use of the recently-devised SEND assessment documentation for writing which is in use for the first time across school. Upcoming moderation will be focussed on cross-year group moderations to develop these skills and consistencies further.



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The introduction of the Alan Peat sentences has begun within school, and there is evidence of them being included within the children's extended writing in order to improve sentence structure. This is having a positive impact on the sentences and therefore texts being produced by the children.

During a pupil voice interview conducted alongside our School Improvement Partner, children could speak confidently about aspects of their learning and why they were important, including the use of 6 in 6 activities to improve their Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar knowledge, and the implementation of the Top Ten Power Up words within their lessons. The children could explain their activities and learning intentions from within their lessons - further work is being implemented to ensure the children can readily distinguish between their activities and the learning which is taking place.

The same external moderation, conducted jointly with the English lead and other members of staff, found that Writing was taught consistently across school, and that the structure and routines expected within the subject were in place across school.

Writing lessons were also found to be purposeful and relevant under current social climates and issues, allowing children to explore issues about the world around them. For example, children in one class were researching Black History Month in order to complete their report writing and other classes have based their writing about climate change and deforestation.

The introduction of the Power Up words is having a positive impact within the children's writing books - there is evidence in all year groups that the children are including this newly-introduced vocabulary into their writing on a weekly / biweekly basis.

Staff questionnaires conducted about the spelling scheme have all been positive. Staff feel the scheme is well resourced and targets the spelling rules appropriately for the children's ages. Weekly spelling scores within school reflect the learning taking place within classes for spelling.

Target children for writing are receiving SPAG, spelling, phonics and / or writing boosters across school to develop their technical understanding and skills needed in order to become the successful writers they are capable of becoming.