

The Federation of St John's & St Paul's Whitechapel CE Primary Schools

WRITING POLICY

Intent

We believe that English has a pre-eminent place in education and in society. A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and in turn so others can communicate with them. Through our progressive English writing curriculum, St Paul's pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually.

Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Literature at St Paul's Primary School has been chosen carefully to reflect age-related expectations whilst providing a breadth of themes, writing styles and information that provide our children with a diet that enriches their understanding of themselves and the world around them. Indeed, we want our writing curriculum to stimulate ideas and form instincts that support our pupils' decision-making as young writers.

Our progressive writing curriculum enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils who do not learn to speak and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.

Implementation

Writing at St Paul's is driven by a range of core texts selected for each year group. The 'diet' of the curriculum has been designed and therefore driven through engaging and carefully-chosen narrative, non-fiction texts and poetry that inspire and motivate the pupils. Years 1- 6 follow a three-phase sequence (see Appendix 1) of learning which lead to meaningful and strong writing outcomes.

Phase 1 - Writing units begin with an entry assessment* which allow children to display their existing knowledge of a genre and allow teachers to make formative assessments of individual pupils and collective observations. These assessments influence the content that goes into the unit. We then encourage our pupils to immerse themselves in the genre by providing 'hook' lessons and then 'reading as a reader'. This provides rich exposure to the said genre to allow the pupils to recognise the key features and nuances contained within.

*Entry assessments are not always appropriate for KS1 pupils where they do not have an existing knowledge of a given genre

Phase 2 - Children will deconstruct the genre and identify 'what makes a good?'. Teachers will then ensure that the pupils learn and practise context-based grammar and punctuation skills (linked to our progression of grammar and punctuation document) that are appropriate to the genre itself. These are then threaded into shared writing and teacher modelling which helps to consolidate the individual components in a meaningful and purposeful way. Pupils get to 'play' with language and grammatical features that enhance their composition skills. Shared construction of the writing genre gives each pupil a scaffold that leads to the next phase.

Phase 3 – Following joint-construction and high-quality modelling, pupils are then given the opportunity to plan their own piece of writing in that given genre, now with the framework to

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provide structure and the immersion to motivate them to work independently. Planning may take the form of visual maps, 'boxing clever' and always includes vocabulary acquisition – all preparing the children to create a final exit assessment that showcases their existing and acquired skills from the start of the unit. Children are provided ample time to independently write and, importantly, time to review, reflect on and edit their writing. Teachers give meaningful feedback through conferencing and deep marking – identifying barriers to learning and encouraging children to improve their work. Peer marking is also an important way for pupils to learn from their peers, in addition to the precise teacher feedback that pupils receive.

Ultimately, this three-phase approach is about acquiring new knowledge and skills, honing existing ones and producing high-quality written outcomes that exemplify the learning journey of the unit.

Non-fiction is often cross-curricular and, where appropriate, linked to the class whole-class reading text, the Topic curriculum and/or other curriculum areas. This meaningful 'sticky' learning is pedagogically evidenced to improve long-term learning. Planning of non-fiction is also supported by the 2014 National Curriculum planning documentation. Poetry is therefore also included and mandatory for all year groups – featuring selected poetry on a theme, rhyme, shape and narrative poems (e.g. The Highwayman in Year 5).

The grammar, punctuation and spelling progression document contains related knowledge and skills that are required to be taught and practiced in each year group. Nonetheless, in light of reflective teaching that uses frequent formative assessment and awareness of the impact of Covid-19, teachers may need to go backwards to previous year group GPS objectives to ensure that children's needs are being met and knowledge/skills are consolidated before moving forwards.

Planning must be meticulous enough that meaningful learning sequences are clearly developed, GPS expectations are embedded within the teaching/learning and that appropriate language structures are planned for and taught/applied. The half-termly monitoring process ensures that age-related expectations and our high-standards of our pupils are being met.

Spelling: Years 3-6 use the 'Headstart Spelling Scheme' that has a clear progression structure and can be easily tailored to meet the needs of pupils and the whole class.

Handwriting: 'Nelson Handwriting' provides a clear, practical framework for implementing and developing a whole-school handwriting policy. Pupils are actively encouraged to explore different styles of handwriting and develop their own style. Please see the 'Handwriting Policy' for more information, including clear links to the progression of skills.

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Impact

Our writing curriculum phase-planning and delivery has been a successful approach – tailored, with close consultation with borough expertise, for our pupils. Our curriculum is also aimed at engaging some of the underachieving groups in the school by contextualising the unit through one main text that allows the pupils to immerse themselves in the language and themes of the said text. Time is given to promote depth of learning. As a result, most narrative and non-fiction units are 3 -5 weeks in length.

Feedback

Feedback and marking must follow the school feedback policy and this involves acknowledging all children's work. This sometimes may involve light marking and/or detailed verbal feedback and indicate the level of teacher support. For longer writing, it is the expectation that the teacher marks and/or provides verbal feedback more deeply and provides diagnostic feedback with required tasks (editing, rewriting) and corrections to be followed up the individual pupil 'in the moment' or in the near future.

For consistency in the school, teachers are asked to mark in a green pen and children respond in a blue pen.

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Three-phase planning model teaching sequence for writing

