

Writing at Widmer End CC School and Pre-school



Intent

'One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.' (Malala Yousafzai)

English is an integral part of our curriculum at Widmer End. We deliver a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum, teaching children to speak, read and write fluently and enabling them to communicate their ideas and emotions. We have an appreciation of our rich and varied literary heritage and a habit of reading widely and often. We create a culture where children take pride in their writing, writing clearly, imaginatively and accurately and adapt their language and style for a range of contexts.

At Widmer End, our writing curriculum is planned sequentially, allowing children to build on prior skills and knowledge, which will prepare them for future success. As a school, we have written our curriculum to incorporate the following National Curriculum statements:

The aims of our curriculum are to:

- read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate

We teach writing to all children, whatever their ability. Teachers provide learning opportunities matched to the needs of the children in their class. They support pupils with barriers to their learning, taking into account the targets set for individual children from their Support Plans. Children who are more able are given work to challenge them.

Implementation

Speaking and listening for writing

Speaking and listening are skills children are expected to practise daily at Widmer End CC School. Teachers regularly engage the children in class discussions through carefully targeted questions across all subjects. All children are encouraged to participate and they are taught how to speak confidently, clearly and expressively when it is their turn. Children are expected to listen to their teachers and peers throughout the day so they can understand what is being taught; respond and engage with the views of others; develop their own arguments and allow their own minds to be challenged and changed.

Drama is often used as a vehicle in English lessons and across the curriculum to support children's understanding of themes and concepts. We know it helps them to empathise with others and gives all children the confidence to speak in front of others by playing a character. In addition, drama gives children the chance to rehearse sentences before transferring them to the written form which leads to more effective pieces of writing.

Speaking is also practised using tools on the iPads to record the children's voices in a range of tasks.

Quality texts - essential for quality writing!

Reading nurtures creativity, fuels curiosity and sparks imagination. Children are inspired by what they read so we ensure that children have read books covering a range of themes and authors by the time they leave us. Every term, children read a different whole class quality text with the intention of developing their fluency and comprehension skills, widening their vocabulary and developing their understanding of the structure and conventions of a range of text types. It may also become a stimulus for writing, taking away the time spent gathering ideas for writing when there is already a huge amount of information ready to be used in children's minds!

The process of writing

Before writing, children at Widmer End are given exciting and interesting stimuli to help support their ideas and boost vocabulary ready for writing. These could include a colourful picture book, a video clip, a trip outside or a visiting author during World Book Week. Armed with creative ideas and information, children are taught to write for a range of purposes and audiences across the school. As well as writing different types of stories and poems, children are asked to produce non-fiction texts such as instructions, persuasion, discussion and recounts.

Teachers know how important effective modelling is when teaching writing. They use their own ideas alongside carefully chosen examples from known authors to show children what effective writing looks like. Children explore key features of the chosen texts including what the purpose of the text is and who their audience (reader) might be. All writing is then planned beforehand to help children to structure their text correctly and make sure they have included everything.

Next, using a wide range of vocabulary with the support of dictionaries and thesauri, children learn to replicate the text type, constructing quality sentences and manipulating grammar and vocabulary to add detail and interest for the reader. More able children are challenged with greater choice in the task set and are often encouraged to write by changing the main character's perspective or break away from the standard model provided.

Throughout this process, children are frequently asked to edit or proof-read their work, checking for missing or incorrect punctuation and spelling errors. We also value redrafting as another skill crucial to the writing process. Redrafting and editing is completed in purple pen and children are encouraged to share their writing with their peers to help them to identify successes and targets for improvement.

Becoming a competent writer means being able to change and adapt our writing to suit a specific purpose. Therefore, we believe that giving children opportunities to write across our curriculum is essential to give them time to practise and develop the skills they have learnt in English lessons. This might be writing an explanation text in Science or a report in a History lesson, for example.

Handwriting

Children are asked to join their letters using the Letterjoin font. Teachers have access to a range of resources from this programme to teach the children the letter formations, including tracing sheets and handwriting paper. Children are supported with:

- Daily letter writing practice (Read Write Inc) in EYFS
- Daily handwriting in Years 1 and 2
- Three weekly sessions of handwriting practice in Years 3 and 4 in their English books. Children are taught handwriting explicitly during English lessons and linked to phonics and spelling where possible.
- Weekly handwriting practice in Years 5 and 6 in English books during English lessons. Cursive script is reinforced alongside other types such as printing for labels and a fast script for notes. Experimentation with personalised styles is encouraged with the aim of increasing speed whilst maintaining legibility.
- Teachers model handwriting using neat, joined-up cursive writing for all handwritten tasks including writing on the boards and marking in books.

Spelling and grammar

Spellings are given out weekly and are taken from the lists in the National Curriculum document. Spelling Shed provides a programme for children to use to practise their spellings, including games and other spelling activities. In addition, children write sentences which include spellings so the children also learn the words in context.

It is our intention to cover the teaching of grammar and punctuation within our English lessons as part of the writing process as explained above. However, often extra practice is needed and teachers can teach explicit grammar lessons or give

children short tasks at the beginning of an English lesson to give them more confidence and a better understanding of grammatical terms and different types of punctuation.

Impact

At our school, we use the assessment for learning cycle to determine how much progress children are making in writing over time.

Regular marking takes place to inform weekly and daily planning of writing, enabling flexible grouping and targeting of children dependent on their progress in learning that day. Children also peer and self-assess their work to support their understanding of what they have achieved and what they need to work on next.

For writing, our school uses Arbor to assess against the National Curriculum objectives. Teacher assessments are made by collecting evidence of children achieving objectives through looking at work in books, holding pupil interviews, reflecting on class discussions and considering the data from termly Rising Stars tests. In Year 2 and Year 6, teachers use the Teacher Assessment Framework for writing to assess the children's attainment. Teachers in Years 1, 3, 4 & 5 are also given regular training to consider the TAF and how their work and planning contribute and build towards the children achieving this standard by Year 6. All teachers understand the hierarchy of statements and that children recognising the purpose and audience of their writing is essential; this should be considered first when assessing writing rather than the technical skills, which simply contribute to the overall effectiveness of the piece of writing. Teachers moderate writing termly within school but also with other local schools to ensure judgements are robust.