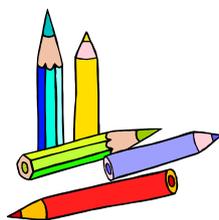


Helping Your Child With Writing



Writing is Fun!



We have put together this leaflet to provide you with information about how we teach writing in school and to give you some ideas about helping with writing skills at home.

We Love Writing!

As teachers, these are the words we most want to hear! If a child loves writing, they are likely to become confident, skilled and independent writers. Our job is to inspire a love of writing, alongside teaching all the technical skills.

An enabling environment is key and we ensure that our classrooms have writing areas with attractive resources. These areas can be accessed independently and children across the school have opportunities to write according to their own interests.

We have a firm emphasis on talk for writing. If a child has nothing to say they will have nothing to write about! We use lots of drama, role-play, discussions and story-telling activities to encourage children's speaking skills.

Emergent Writing

Writing is not just about letter formation. It is a cognitive process and emergent or pretend writing is a really important factor in the early stages. We celebrate any attempts at independent writing. As children progress we encourage them to sound words out independently. A child who is overly reliant on teachers giving them spellings is held back and lacks confidence to write independently. In the early stages we do not correct spelling mistakes but praise children when they use the correct letters or spelling patterns in words. As children's writing develops their spelling becomes more and more accurate as we encourage them to apply their learning from phonics sessions. As children become more competent writers, we encourage them to check their own spellings and encourage to use words banks and dictionaries to make some corrections.

Teaching Writing at St James' Infants

Within the Reception Year, some children will be very keen to experiment with early writing, whereas other children will show less interest. All children in our Reception classes are constantly involved in pre-writing activities which will ensure progress when the children are "ready" to write. Pre-writing activities include:

Large scale movement - outdoor play, balancing, climbing, marching, moving to music.

Using tools, cooking utensils and scissors to develop manipulative skills.

Jigsaws, threading, cutting and manipulating small-world equipment to develop fine motor skills.

These activities will continue into Year 1 and Year 2..

From Reception children are taught phonics in a short session every day, following the 'Letters and Sounds' scheme. Children are encouraged to use their phonic knowledge in all their writing.

Writing can be taught as a whole class session or in small groups. The teacher may model the complete writing process and the children watch, listen and give ideas to include. Writing activities take place in each classroom every day - some are supported by a Teacher or Teaching Assistant and others are designed to encourage independence. In Year 1 we introduce a whole class "Big Write" session where children complete an extended piece of writing, using the skills taught in focus groups. By Year 2 these sessions take place on a regular basis, perhaps once a week or fortnight.

Fun activities to support the writing process at home. Our top 3 tips....

1. Spoken Language

We cannot stress enough the importance of children receiving plenty of opportunities to talk and develop their vocabulary. Please model clear speech with your child and do not "dumb down" your language - children love big words! Try these at home:

- Share and discuss all sorts of different books, maybe join a library. Tunbridge Wells usually has a Summer Reading Scheme which is great for children to take part in over the summer holidays
- Make puppets and use to retell familiar stories - stick ones are good.
- Play games such as "I Spy", "Guess Who?" etc
- Look for letter sounds in the environment.
- Tell your child stories orally and encourage them to make up their own.
- Play games to extend your child's vocabulary, eg Who can think of the most exciting words for nice, scary, etc.



2 Developing Fine and Gross Motor Skills

It is important that the children have access to a range of activities that will develop muscles in their hands and wrist which will make writing easier. Any of these fun activities will help:

- Cutting out - draw wavy lines and cut along them.
- Using modelling materials - clay plasticine, playdough, bread dough.
- Painting and printing.
- Thread beads, pasta, buttons to a timer - can they beat their own score?
- Use water pistols to reach a target, or paint outdoor bricks with water and brushes, paint in the bath.
- Fix lego, screw and unscrew lids, post pennies in a box, sprinkle seeds.
- Fold paper to make shapes, envelopes, use cellotape independently.
- Drawing large scale on a whiteboard, chalkboard, easel.
- Draw shapes and patterns in sand, in the air, use ribbons to make shapes and fly kites.



3. Encourage Writing

- Encourage your child to have a go at writing and praise any attempts at independent writing - writing without adult support is a big achievement.
- Providing lots of attractive writing equipment, eg fancy pens, chalk, crayons and pencils, papers and notebooks. Try to suggest good reasons for writing - postcards, shopping lists, cards and invitations. Encourage them to read back their writing to you. Try to resist giving them spellings or words to copy or trace over. Encourage them to sound words out as much as possible, even if they can only write the initial sound or a couple of sounds in a word.
- Gently correct or show your child letter formation - this is tricky for young children to grasp. Remember to always use lower case letters and introduce upper case only when your child is ready to think about using capitals for names and at the beginning of sentences. Encourage your child to have the right pencil grip.
- As their writing progresses, encourage them to use full stops and capital letters. Ask them to find ways to make their writing more exciting, eg using more exciting words, punctuation such as exclamation marks or using capitals for "loud" words, using connectives such as because, while, etc.
- Above all.... Make writing fun!!!!

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to speak to your class teacher or the literacy coordinator, Miss Cota.

Handwriting

Children are taught to form letters as shown below. When they are secure in forming all letters correctly (usually in Year 2) they will be taught joined up handwriting.

