

A Guide to Writing



How Do We Teach Writing at Parkfield?

At Parkfield, our curriculum is fundamentally based on the EYFS framework and the National Curriculum. We understand the importance of developing and broadening vocabulary, so each text is carefully constructed to meet objectives, expand vocabulary, and enhance sentence construction. We have included elements of both Talk for Writing and Alan Peat sentence types, which ensure the children are fully immersed in the writing process.

Our writing curriculum is progressive. Children are taught genre-specific texts and follow a cycle of imitate, innovate, and invent. We have linear threads within our narrative units, where children learn techniques or “toolkits” for the following: description, characterisation, setting, dialogue and suspense.

The Hook

Each unit begins with a cold write, which enables teachers to adapt the teaching sequence to what the children need. After the initial cold write, the children experience a WOW starter to hook them into the new unit.

Imitate Phase

The imitate phase consists of learning new vocabulary, and children are taught grammar and punctuation lessons linked to the text. This is then rounded off with a reading as a reader lesson, which focuses on their understanding of the text after being immersed in it throughout the week. In Reception and Key Stage 1, there is more emphasis on learning the text by heart, which fully immerses the children in the language and any associated grammar or punctuation.

Innovate Phase

The innovate stage is where the children “have a go” at using and applying their new knowledge and skills through shared, guided, and independent writing opportunities. It begins with boxing up the text so that children understand what happens in each section of a narrative, non-fiction, or poetry text. As a class, they read as a writer and unpick each section, looking at language, grammar, and punctuation used. They discuss what tools are required for it to be a successful piece of writing.

As a school, we have adopted a “Tools not Rules” approach to writing, where children are taught writing skills and techniques based on the genre and purpose for writing. We believe this low-threshold, high-ceiling approach eliminates any ceiling being put on any child and is used to support the writing process, rather than it being a tick list that can inhibit many children’s natural talent.

In addition to “Tools not Rules,” we have non-negotiables linked to each year group’s National Curriculum objectives, so every child knows the minimum expectation. This phase is developmental in nature; every child will have a next step marking comment to respond to in the next lesson. This also provides time to progress the skill of editing and improving.

The Invent

This is where the children get to plan their own narrative, non-fiction, or poetry based on the skills taught and the knowledge they have gained across the curriculum. In both the independent application and invent stage, time to edit and improve their work is developed further through teaching and learning time. Children are given opportunities to publish some pieces of work.

EYFS

Children learn to write in the EYFS through a combination of adult-directed activities and child-initiated play. For example, they might play at going shopping and “write” their own shopping list.

Alongside play, teachers encourage children to begin writing through more formal activities. For example, they might draw a picture of a flower and be asked to label the parts or write their own version of a well-known story like The Three Little Pigs.

Talking is the basis for all writing in the EYFS. Learning to write also involves all the senses, so children become familiar with following story maps, reciting and using actions to immerse themselves in the language and sentence patterns. Learning to write is a gradual process. At first, children's writing is just mark-making, but as time passes and they begin to learn the alphabet, they'll begin to make letter shapes—often starting with the letters in their name. Through adult-directed activities, they also pick up conventions like moving from left to right on the page and from top to bottom.

As children begin to learn about phonics, their writing enters a new phase where they start to write letters. As their phonics learning progresses, they'll write with more accuracy.

By the end of Reception, most children will be writing sentences independently and writing clearly enough that you can read what they've written.

EYFS & Year 1

In EYFS and Year 1, we use a few special tools and techniques to help children develop their writing and grammar skills in a fun and supportive way:

Widget Symbols

These are visual symbols that represent words or ideas. They help children understand and remember vocabulary, especially if they're still learning to read or have additional learning needs. For example, a picture of a dog next to the word "dog" helps link the image to the word.

Colourful Semantics

This method uses colour-coded questions to help children build sentences. Each part of a sentence (like who, what doing, where, etc.) is linked to a colour. It helps children understand sentence structure and encourages them to use full, grammatically correct sentences.

Example:

■ Who? → The boy ■ What doing? → is running ■ Where? → in the park

Dictation

We also use dictation, where children listen to a sentence and write it down. This helps improve their spelling, punctuation and handwriting. It also builds automaticity, meaning they get quicker and more confident with writing over time.

Assessments

The Reception Baseline Assessment (RBA) is a short assessment taken in the first six weeks of a child starting reception. This information is only relevant to reception teachers in school-based provision.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Profile summarises and describes children's attainment at the end of the EYFS. It gives the child's attainment in relation to the early learning goal (ELG) descriptors.

Teachers' assessments are primarily based on observing a child's daily activities and events. In particular, practitioners note the learning that a child demonstrates spontaneously, independently, and consistently in a range of contexts.

Ongoing assessment (also known as formative assessment) is an integral part of the learning and development process. It involves teachers observing children to understand their level of attainment, interests, and learning styles, and then shaping learning experiences for each child reflecting those observations.

Writing Assessment at Parkfield

When compiling the profile, teachers must review the evidence gathered in order to make a judgement for each child and for each ELG.

Each child's level of development must be assessed against the Early Learning Goals. Practitioners must note whether children are meeting expected levels of development, or if they are not yet reaching expected levels ("emerging").

The Early Learning Goal for Writing in EYFS

ELG: Writing

Children at the expected level of development will:

- Write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.
- Spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters.
- Write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

Key Stage 1

At the end of Key Stage 1 (Year 2), the children's writing will be teacher assessed. At Parkfield, we administer the optional KS1 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test and use the results to inform English writing teacher assessment judgments.

Key Stage 2

At the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6), pupils are required to participate in SATs tests during a specified week in May, which include:

- English grammar, punctuation and spelling Paper 1: questions
- English grammar, punctuation and spelling Paper 2: spelling

When assessing writing, teachers will use extended writing pieces both in English and across the curriculum to make an informed judgment.

