Teaching Writing at Dove Bank

Subject Statement

Writing, like reading, is an important lifelong skill. It's impossible to think of a job where there is no element of writing, so supporting pupils to become confident and able writers is an important part of primary school. (OFSTED)

At Dove Bank we understand the importance of our children being able to communicate written language accurately, clearly and concisely - for a range of different purposes and audiences - to prepare them for success in later life.

To ensure this, we work extremely hard to support and challenge all individuals in becoming confident, motivated and able writers, regardless of ability or background.

At Dove Bank, we have a wealth of knowledge and skills within our teaching team, who are dedicated to realising our vision. We achieve this through the implementation of a thoroughly considered and carefully planned writing curriculum which explicitly teaches pupils the necessary skills in order for them to become competent writers. Our commitment extends to instilling a motivation for children to write from the Early Years up to Year 6; our ultimate goal is for each child to leave our school identifying as writers and authors.

Subject Leader & Expert Teachers

Within school we have a wealth of experience in the teaching of writing. Details of staff are detailed below:

- Alicia McLaren is our writing lead. She has worked at Dove Bank as a Key Stage 2 teacher for 10 years. She has always had a passion for the English language, which she majored in at university, and is currently working on her NPQ Leading Literacy qualification.
- Katie Halliwell has successfully led English and phonics in previous schools and was the Trust English Lead for The Learning Partnership. She has previously worked as an English consultant across schools in the North West and as a Key Stage 2 moderator for Derby City Local Authority.
- Sally Dakin is an experienced English subject leader who has successfully led English across two schools. She has worked for Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority as a Key Stage 2 moderator and was an SLE for English within this authority.
- Joanne Woodward is an experienced teacher who has worked as part of a local authority moderation team and is also an experienced English subject leader.
- All staff are expert teachers of writing and have received extensive, accredited training and support from The Literacy Company.

Curriculum Organisation

Early Language Development

In the Early Years, the teaching of early writing is a multifaceted endeavour aimed at laying strong foundations for literacy development. Employing a holistic approach, our Early Years team foster an environment rich in language and communication, encouraging children to express themselves creatively and meaningfully. Utilising a combination of structured activities, play-based learning, and interactive experiences, teachers guide pupils through the stages of emergent writing, nurturing

their phonemic awareness, letter formation skills, and understanding of basic writing conventions. Drawing upon a diverse range of resources, including storybooks, interactive technologies, and hands-on materials, the curriculum is designed to engage and motivate young learners while progressively building their confidence and competence in writing. Through purposeful and scaffolded experiences, children are empowered to explore and experiment with language, laying the groundwork for their future literacy journey.

In the Early Years, a variety of mark – making opportunities are provided using a range of media. In addition to this, carefully planned activities which further develop fine motor skills are offered and encouraged.

Phonics

Children use the skills taught during Little Wandle phonics sessions to make phonetically plausible attempts at spelling. Teachers and pupils make explicit connections between phonics and writing sessions and encourage a 'phonics first' approach to spelling. Children are encouraged to use speed sound mats (from Little Wandle) to aid them with spelling across both Key Stage 1 and 2.

Pathways to Write

From Reception to Year 6, writing is taught through a scheme called *Pathways to Write* which assumes a thematic approach: each half-termly unit is based around a specific, carefully chosen book or text. The high-quality texts used in writing lessons link seamlessly with our corresponding reading units linking to a similar text, genre or theme.

Teachers carefully and thoroughly adapt this planning to suit the needs of their current cohort. This takes the form of a series of transcription skills-based lessons and varied, incidental short-burst writing opportunities that precede a final, end of unit writing piece. To aid the composition of pupils' writing, children are able to discuss their ideas, practise their sentences aloud and plan the content. Lessons sometimes incorporate drama to aid the development of children's ideas for writing.

At the core of our writing lies the development of vocabulary, which we explicitly teach at the beginning of, and throughout, each writing unit and across all subjects. We also understand the importance of verbal expression and oracy practice as a stepping stone to written language, so this is embedded into our everyday pedagogy.

From Year 1 to Year 6, Pathways to Poetry is taught as a stand-alone unit.

Transcription Skills

Transcription skills are the foundational skills from which our children become confident, competent writers. These skills continuously practised and developed as our students progress through school and pupils are given the opportunity to revise and embed previously taught spelling, punctuation and grammar rules.

At Dove Bank, we prioritise the development of these skills, beginning in Reception. Children are taught the correct letter formation using the Little Wandle letter rhymes and are given time to practise these daily in our phonics sessions. We also have a dedicated time outside of phonics sessions to focus on handwriting, and each writing lesson starts with an opportunity for children to practise a focus letter.

From Year 1 – Year 6, we use Letter Join as our handwriting scheme. All children are provided with a dedicated handwriting book which is used in our daily handwriting lessons. As children progress

through Key Stage 2, those identified with handwriting needs are given A4 handwriting lined books, rather than regular 8mm lined books, for their writing books to provide continued structure to support their developing handwriting. All teachers assess their children's writing using the Letter Join assessment document and monitor their progress in handwriting, with a particular focus on pencil grip.

All classrooms display our 'Ready to Write Routine'. This is referenced during all opportunities to write and designed to encourage children to use the correct pencil grip, paper position and body posture to write successfully.

Subject Specific Information

From Year 1 to Year 6, writing is taught for a minimum of one hour every day. This may be exceeded if children are carrying out a longer writing piece, and teachers have used their professional judgement to recognise that extended writing time is required.

All units are based upon high-quality texts; these have been purchased in the recommended quantities and are stored in class teacher storage cupboards. Planning, lesson PowerPoints, assessment and progression resources for these half-termly writing units are saved centrally on OneDrive and on Teams in the 'Curriculum' file. Mastery and feature keys documents are used to adapt the planning to fit the needs of the cohort. Also, teachers use these to create scaffolds to support the learning and boost progress of lower ability pupils.

Writing (Pathways) is completed in red A4 writing books: Key Stage 1 have wide lined books and Key Stage 2 have narrower lines. Evidence of cross-curricular writing can also be found in science and non-core subject books.

From Year 2 onwards, spelling patterns and rules are taught every day using the No Nonsense Spelling scheme book and this is completed in the children's writing books. Spelling errors and misconceptions in writing are addressed through the marking policy.

Daily handwriting takes place in purple handwriting books which is in line with the Letter Join programme. In Key Stage 1, there is a focus on correct letter formation. When transitioning into Key Stage 2 however, children are taught how to write in a continuous cursive style; displays in classrooms and around school model this expectation. Teachers follow the LetterJoin planning to deliver handwriting sessions.

All classrooms have a writing wall with consistent features: model writing, mastery keys, feature keys and vocabulary which is updated regularly. Modelled writing is delivered to a high standard in every lesson and displayed clearly for children to see.

Children begin writing in pencil and then move on to blue handwriting pen, although children can choose which writing implement best showcases their handwriting once they are able to write in a consistent and legible style.

Assessment

It is expected that all writing in books is marked in line with the school's marking policy.

Class teachers assess the pupils' writing using the work completed in class on a termly basis; incidental, short-burst writing can also be used as assessment evidence.

Teachers have paper copies of the assessment grids that group children working at a similar level. The skills they have mastered that half term are highlighted and the grids are annotated to note any gaps

that need to be addressed with particular children. Once this is completed, the teacher records their summative assessment judgement on Insight.

Vulnerable pupils, agreed upon within pupil progress meetings, are assessed at the half term point and a brief meeting to discuss provision and progress takes place.

Writing Across the Curriculum

Due to the freedom of flexible time-tabling, teachers can decide to complete writing lessons linked to non-core subjects during the hour in the mornings allocated to writing. There is an expectation shared among staff and pupils that the quality and presentation of writing found in writing books should match the quality seen in other books.

Vocabulary and oracy are embedded across the curriculum. Pupils are taught key vocabulary throughout units of work across all subjects, and are given the opportunity to orally rehearse new vocabulary in context.

Writing for Pleasure

On occasion, children are given the time to complete a 'free write' where they can write a story or text type of their choice. Not only is this an enjoyable and creative experience for the children, it also provides teachers with additional assessment opportunities. In classrooms, where continuous provision is provided (Early Years and Year 1), children are encouraged to write independently, in context, in the moment, and for a particular purpose. These writing opportunities are modelled by the teacher.