



## Buckland CE Primary School



### Supporting Your Child's Writing at Home

Writing and reading are part of every aspect of your child's life and while children do lots of literacy based activities at school (e.g. writing, reading, handwriting, phonics), there are lots of ways that you can support your child at home. This information aims to give lots of suggestions and ideas for making writing fun and meaningful at home and improving achievement levels at school.

#### General Tips and Ideas

- The basis of all good writing is good **talk**. Writing depends on knowing lots of words and being able to join them together in interesting ways. Encourage your child to: - explain a game or activity describe a person, place, picture or thing retell stories talk about things they have done e.g. visits, day at school - encourage detail predict what might happen next in a story, TV programme or sequel to a film play word games
- Reading has a huge impact on writing so be a reading model and read to your child (e.g. stories, poems, factual information such as timetables, magazines, newspaper reports, letters, emails, adverts, and instructions) – discuss the ways authors use words to shape their ideas. Children who read quality texts at any level will develop good vocabulary , absorb how words can be arranged for good effects and learn that words can take them into a new world whether it is one made by themselves or someone else.
- Be a writing model and encourage your child to write alongside you for real purposes e.g. shopping lists, birthday/Christmas lists, labels, invitations, thank you letters, emails to friends, postcards, cards for relatives, scrap books of holidays/hobbies/special events, diaries, posters for real events, short stories or poems for family members, menus, texting, bedroom or house rules.



- Don't underestimate the power of the gel sparkly pen. Having an exciting selection of writing materials available (e.g. a range of pencils, pens, coloured crayons, writing icing and writing soaps for bath time) encourages children to write as well as draw.
- Lastly and most importantly, praise your child for trying and don't dwell on mistakes. Focus on content and enjoyment of writing for fun and for purpose.

## **Early Writing**

Children are surrounded by writing all the time but very often don't notice it. Help them to notice it by:

- Encouraging young children to look at print on road signs, food packets, in books, magazines and catalogues.
- Go to the library and read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy them.
- Try fun activities that strengthen your child's hand e.g. cutting, painting, squeezing play dough, picking up small things with tweezers and pegs. Use magnetic letters and make small words together.
- Leave a message on the fridge door and encourage your child to reply.
- Praise play writing – early squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing.
- Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write the story as they say the words.
- Make up a little holiday book. Take photos, pick up leaflets and use them in the book along with a sentence about their day.
- Let your child write their own Christmas cards, thank you letters, cards or emails to friends or relatives, invitations to a party, or a list of things they need to take on holiday.
- Cut up letters from magazines for children to make their names and short sentences.
- Make handwriting interesting – practise drawing letters in sand, water, or paint, use white boards, play dough, pastry or shaving foam.

## Developing Writers



It is very important to developing writers to continue talking about experiences. This remains the key to good writing. Talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched with as many details as possible to widen their vocabulary.

Encourage your child to rehearse their sentence out loud before they write it down. We talk about holding the sentence in their hand before they start to write. Also encourage children to punctuate their sentences with a full-stop and capital letter. Celebrate what the writing says first of all rather than focusing on errors. If a tricky word has been used in an interesting way, this should be praised even if it is spelled wrongly. Remember, it is difficult to get everything right when you are learning! Try some of these ideas.

- Play word-building games to develop descriptive vocabulary such as Boggle, Scrabble, Guess Who, 'What am I?' (one person thinks of something to describe. They give clues by describing it, without saying its name. Other players have to guess what it is with as few clues as possible.)
- Create silly sentences or tongue twisters using alliteration (a group of words that all begin with the same sound) e.g. Sad Sid slipped on Sam's salad sandwich.
- Let children write part of shopping lists and then let them be responsible for carrying the list and finding certain items.
- After making a cake, doing a craft activity or playing a game, challenge children to write instructions for someone else to follow.
- Make up fun ways to remember how to spell difficult words e.g. Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants = because, what has a hat, when has a hen. Play 'I Spy' and 'Hangman' which encourage use of sounds and spellings. Encourage your child to learn weekly spellings and phonic group spellings. Write the spelling in sentences with accurate punctuation and practise high frequency words and handwriting. Also ensure your child completes homework on time, take an interest in what they are doing, and praise effort.

## Confident Writers



- Confident writers are also children who enjoy writing so provide your child with a comfortable place to work and exciting writing materials. Coloured pens and pencils especially the purple polishing pens are exciting to use. A dictionary or spell check on a computer would also be useful. Let your child see you being a model writer but also let them see that you are not perfect! As your child gets older they will have an increased knowledge of sentence structure and grammar. Ask them to notice how they have started and arranged sentences and try to challenge them to have an increased variety in this as well as in the punctuation that they use . Try counting how many different types they can use in one piece. Checking, making changes and editing what you write are a natural part of writing. After your child has produced written homework ask them to proof read their work for accuracy. After they have done this, have a look at the piece yourself. Ask your child what his/her writing targets are from time to time and help them work specifically on these.
- Help your child write a letter to their favourite author. Details can be found on the internet. As with early writers be aware of occasions when children can be involved in writing – shopping lists, cards, phone messages, notes to friends, invitations to family occasions, emailing friends, blogging, texting (be aware of e-safety).
- Write information pages or booklets about a hobby or something they find interesting e.g. dinosaurs, class topics, sport’s stars etc. Illustrate and label. Encourage use of paragraphs for blocks of information.
- Write postcards from holidays and record holiday events in a diary that can be shared with friends or family.
- Read books to, and with, them that are at a higher level than their own reading to expose them to ambitious vocabulary and complex sentence structure.

## **Encouraging Reluctant Writers**

If your child has barriers towards writing, or low self esteem as a writer, praising and valuing your child's writing is very important. Your child may need support when they write and will need you to talk through their ideas first and help with composing and structure. Young children often need help with ideas to write first and then when they have a structure they feel happy with can write independently from then on. Copying a structure may also help these children as we do with Talk for Writing work in school.

Help your child go over problem spellings especially those that are very commonly used. It is extremely frustrating for children to have to battle with spelling and handwriting when they want to get their ideas down on paper. Knowing high frequency spellings will aid the flow of writing and enable the use of a vocabulary rich language. (Consider being trapped into writing 'big' when you really wanted to write 'enormous'). Encourage children to sound out and have a go at more tricky words or give them the spellings. Remember that writing does not have to be lengthy or boring!

Writing for real purposes is more meaningful and rewarding for children and creates a fun and interesting way for children to develop their writing skills. Have fun learning together!