



Curriculum Overview for Writing ~ December 2019

Intent

Birkwood Primary School, is in the top 20% of schools nationally for deprivation, and this has determined our approach to the teaching of Writing through a 'topic based creative curriculum'. It is paramount that children's learning is contextualised and meaningful whenever possible, in order to develop their wider understanding and cultural capital.

As Birkwood Primary School recognises writing is greatly important, writing skills development starts as soon as children enter our Foundation Stage Unit in the Nursery and continues throughout school, appropriate to the age, ability and needs of our children. All staff and governors consider the teaching of writing to be a priority and continually strive to improve and develop practice to ensure that the children are neat, passionate and skilled writers by the time they leave our setting.

Developing cultural capital is at the core of all teaching at Birkwood Primary School and children are provided with opportunities to apply their knowledge in a range of ways throughout the school day. Our intent is to link writing to local, national and global contexts through topic-based lessons and to also write about people, places and events outside their own experience. The teaching of spelling (as well as reading) will improve children's vocabulary, leading to more highly-developed language skills and improve the ability to write well.

Implementation

Language-rich environments

Across school, learning environments are organised in an engaging and purposeful way. In EYFS and KS1, there is a bespoke writing area, where children are able to write independently for a range of purposes. The displays in all classes are used to celebrate, scaffold and promote children's independent writing skills. Displayed vocabulary and writing genres are planned carefully, in order to be appropriate to the age of the child and the overarching topic being taught.

Handwriting

Handwriting begins with Gross Motor and Fine Motor Skills Development in EYFS. Children then start using these skills for mark making. They take part in 'Dough Disco' and 'Squiggle while you wiggle' sessions to link their fine motor skills to letter formation. From Year 1 onwards, the school uses 'Help Handwriting Shine', a research based scheme, to develop a neat, cursive style of writing. All staff model the correct style of handwriting when teaching and marking. Handwriting is taught regularly, as part of the literacy lesson, to encourage all children to write with a neat, joined handwriting style. Some classes, particularly in Upper KS2, award pen licences to children who consistently and independently write in a neat, joined, cursive style.

Spelling

The teaching of spelling is introduced during Phase 1 phonics in EYFS. Children are taught to apply sounds to letters, and blend sounds together to produce words. From Year 1 onwards, children are taught the Spelling rules from within the National Curriculum. They follow the Spelling Shed scheme of work, which links to the National Curriculum. Children, from Years 1 to 6, are introduced to a new spelling rule each week and these spellings are

tested to assess knowledge and understanding. All children have access to an online resource (Spelling Shed) to aid their learning of spellings both in school and at home. All children are encouraged to apply their learning in their independent writing. Children have the opportunity to win the 'Speller of the Week' award (presented in Celebration Assembly), by gaining the most points on Spelling Shed.

Punctuation and Grammar

In the Sunflowers and Daffodils the children are taught the basics of syntax: using spaces between words and putting them in the correct order. When children are ready, they will be introduced to basic sentence punctuation: capital letters and full stops. From Year 1 onwards, children are taught new grammar and punctuation, in line with the National Curriculum. It is introduced at first in a disciplinary manner, and then it is applied substantively within a 'Big Write' Cycle. Knowledge of Punctuation and Grammar is assessed formatively during writing lessons, and summatively during assessment weeks.

Independent Writing

Across school, all children have the opportunity to write independently in a wide range of contexts, and all children are given the chance to write each day. In EYFS and KS1, there are themed writing areas where children can write independently at any given opportunity. From Sunflowers/Daffodils up to Year 6, children complete 'Big Writes'. They are taught a range of skills (relating to a specific genre or to grammar and syntax) over a two week period. They have the opportunity to discuss their ideas with a partner or in small groups, following the principles of 'Talk for Writing'. Furthermore, children see writing modelled to aid them in structuring their own pieces. Following teaching, the children write a Big Write, which is marked using a 'Deep Mark'.

Children are also taught the skills to communicate effectively in a modern world, via word processing or through the use of other software on emerging technologies.

For more detail, please see: APPENDIX 1 - An overview of writing provision (including SPaG) at Birkwood Primary School

Impact

Children enter our setting below or well below age related expectations; particularly in language development. As they move through school the gap between National figures is narrowed. As a result of the above actions, children make outstanding progress, considering their starting points, which is sustained throughout all year groups.

In terms of progress, last year's SPaG data shows:

KS1

95% of children achieved at least 3 step progress in SPaG with 41% making 4 steps

95% of Pupil Premium children achieved at least 3 steps progress with 36% making 4 steps

60% of SEND children made 3 steps progress in SPaG with 20% making 4 steps

KS2

93% of children achieved at least 3 steps progress in SPaG with 39% making 4 steps

100% of Pupil Premium children achieved at least 3 steps progress with 36% making 4 steps

100% of SEND children made at least 3 steps progress in SPaG with 71% making 4 steps

In terms of progress, last year's Writing data shows:

KS1

86% of children achieved at least 3 step progress in writing with 27% making 4 steps

82% of Pupil Premium children achieved at least 3 steps progress with 27% making 4 steps
60% of SEND children made 3 steps progress in writing with 20% making 4 steps

KS2

91% of children achieved at least 3 steps progress in writing with 39% making 4 steps
88% of Pupil Premium children achieved at least 3 steps progress with 36% making 4 steps
100% of SEND children made at least 3 steps progress in reading with 71% making 4 steps

In terms of attainment, last year's Writing data shows:

KS1

71% of children achieved the expected standard
14% of children were working at greater depth within the expected standard
59% of Pupil Premium children achieved the expected standard with 9% working at greater depth

KS2

75% of children achieved the expected standard
23% of children were working at greater depth within the expected standard
68% of Pupil Premium children achieved the expected standard with 20% working at greater depth

The impact of our approach to writing is not only evident in the data, but also in the personal development of all children. Children's vocabulary and language skills are enhanced, their cultural capital is increased and, as a result of this, their speaking and listening skills are also developed. Children develop a love of writing at Birkwood Primary School and we feel children who enjoy writing make better progress in other areas; they develop a broader vocabulary, increased general knowledge and a deeper understanding of the world in which they live.

Summary Outcomes

Leaders are determined that every pupil in Birkwood Primary School will learn to write, regardless of their background, needs and abilities.

We aim for all children to leave Year 2 with the ability to spell age-appropriate words correctly, and to include punctuation and grammar from the KS1 English curriculum, so they can access the wider curriculum and develop independent writing skills throughout KS2.

When children leave our school, we want them to be neat, confident writers. We believe that the skill of writing is one of the most important things we teach our children, alongside reading. It is a life skill that enables them to communicate their ideas appropriately, to share information from other areas of learning, and allows the children to develop their imaginations and creative thinking skills.

Therefore, writing is and will continue to be a priority in our school.

Areas for Action

*Please see English Action Plan

Niall Sandwith, December 2019