



Eden Park Primary School Academy: How we teach writing at our school and how families can help!

Eden Park Primary School Academy OFSTED 2013:

- *Pupils achieve well across different subjects because teachers ensure that they are constantly enthused by the interesting learning experiences. [They] respond positively to the interesting lessons and to the high expectations of their teachers.....Teachers use the innovative curriculum very well so pupil see how the different aspects of learning fit well together. As a result, [children] are enthusiastic about the tasks they are engaged in and they continually make progress in their basic skills because they are using them in meaningful ways.*

Writing is always purposeful and relevant

Our innovative curriculum has writing at its heart. The essential principle behind our writing is that it is interesting, purposeful and relevant. This means that we work to ensure that the writing we are doing is in collaboration with the community or has a purpose beyond simply writing in an exercise book. For example, rather than teach the children to write persuasively, we ask them to work with advertising agencies such as estate agents; rather than simply write non-chronological reports, our children write reports that will be used by a museum or zoo; rather than simply write stories, our children write novels with authors for display in the public library, or for sharing at a parent event. In this way, the children have their own expectations of their work challenged.

Core Skills

Strong, core skills teaching is central to the success of this approach. The core skill of spelling is addressed through our dedicated phonics programme, Read Write Inc. (a whole-school daily literacy programme for primary schools designed to create fluent readers, confident speakers and willing writers) and is supplemented by the national curriculum.

In addition, the children have a purposeful diet of basic skills sessions, which is a focus on the technical aspects of language, including grammar, vocabulary and punctuation. It concentrates on good sentence construction through an examination of how sentences work.

The teaching of writing in Foundation, including Nurseries

The essential process of becoming a writer starts with the children learning early fine motor skills. There are a whole host of activities that we do in this area to support them in "getting ready for writing":

- threading, peg boards, beads, tweezers with small objects (such as pasta) to encourage thumb and finger grip
- large motor skills, such as manipulating ribbons in the air to encourage muscle control/ using playground chalks
- finger painting/ painting with sticks in the mud/ with cotton buds/ at the easel.
- (Laminated)Pencil control sheets to copy over, including sheets with their names on or with handwriting patterns
- messy/malleable play - shaving foam, play dough, plasticine, corn flour, gloop, clay
- mark making on whiteboards , in sand, on paper, in paint, including drawing.
- large sheets of paper on the carpet with a selection of mark making resources

Talk for Writing

Talk for Writing is a format for teaching writing used effectively throughout our school. The structure is based around a text. Talk for Writing enables children to imitate the key language they need for a particular topic orally before they try reading and analysing it. The children are helped to write through fun activities that help them rehearse the style of the language they need, followed by shared writing to show them how to craft their work.

TAPOW

TAPOW stands for "*teaching at the point of writing*" and is vital to successful writing teaching in our school. Essentially, we try to work with children individually to support the writing process as it is happening as we find this a much more influential way of improving writing than marking once the child has gone home. The adult sits alongside the child, reading and sharing the work, making suggestions for improvements and providing choices for ways to alter what has been written. This supports the child in being more selective in vocabulary, sentence constructs and also teaching the editing process. Both the adult and the child both write on/ annotate the work to create a strong draft that is sometimes turned into a re-draft.

Writing and Special needs

The school invests heavily in the development of speech as all good writing comes from good talking. A number of staff work with an additional programme called "talk boost" to ensure all of the children who are finding talk difficult are fully supported. We also work very closely with speech therapists to ensure a dedicated programme for those few children who need it, as well as use Makaton (a derivative of British Sign Language). Computers also support the teaching of

writing through a whole range of programs including “Clicker”, the use of ipads and the use of a media suite to support spoken language.

Ways that parents and carers can help at home:

- The power of words: visit places and see things with your child, then talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched. The basis of good writing is good talk, and younger children especially grow into stronger control of language when adults share experiences and rich talk about those experiences.
- Modelling: Let children see you write often. Have children see you writing notes to friends, letters to business firms, perhaps stories to share with the children. From time to time, read aloud what you have written and ask your children their opinion of what you've said. Have them help you improve it. Making changes in what you write confirms for the child that revision is a natural part of writing.
- Supporting: be helpful when they write. Talk through their ideas with them; help them discover what they want to say. When they ask for help with spelling, punctuation, and usage, supply that help. Your most effective role is not as a critic but as a helper. Rejoice in effort and delight in their ideas. Praise the child's efforts at writing.
- Mistakes are good: all writers, no matter how accomplished, make mistakes. See them as “improvements” and so crossing out, changing, altering, editing are all part of the process. Resist the tendency to focus on errors of spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical aspects of writing until final versions of writing. Embrace mistakes, rather than fear making them.
- Write for purpose: find times to write that have purpose and that children are interested in communicating. For instance, letters to relatives, shopping lists, recipes, telephone messages, sports reports, factual articles on things that interest such as animals, fantasy stories using computer games or books as the inspiration.
- Send a message: leave notes for your children for them to write back to you. Have a family notice board to communicate with each other, or send emails or use social media if appropriate. Have your children write messages to others, such as school, to tell them about events.
- The Big Write: run a home diary or year book that the family write into, telling the history of the year, to be shared at the end of the year as a memoir. For older children, this could be done in the form of a blog.
- Texting: children see adults writing texts all the time, so never miss the opportunity to send texts to your children if they have a mobile phone so that they can send them back. For many, this will be the main form of writing they do, and always has a purpose.
- Performance: allow children’s imagination to drive performing, such as plays (with scripts) to the family, or talent shows.
- Postcards: send postcards from all places visited to anyone that might be interested! These don’t have to come just from a holiday, but could just as easily be a day trip.
- Writing gifts: Give the child, and encourage others to give, the gifts associated with writing:
 - pens and pencils of several kinds and colours, including highlighters
 - a desk lamp
 - pads of paper, stationery, envelopes, post-it notes, labels, coloured paper
 - a booklet for a diary or daily journal (Make sure that the booklet is the child's private property)
 - a dictionary appropriate to the child's age and needs.
 - a thesaurus for older children. This will help in the search for the "right" word.
 - erasers for correcting errors that the child wants to repair