



## ST IGNATIUS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

### **Supporting Your Child's Writing at Home**

#### **Guidance for Parents and Carers**

Writing is 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 booklet aims to give lots of suggestions and ideas for making writing fun and meaningful at home whilst supporting and developing the skills they have been learning at school.

Becoming a writer involves mastering skills in several areas. Children need to develop their transcription skills (spelling and handwriting) whilst also developing their composition (articulating ideas and structuring them into speech and writing), grammar and punctuation.

A writer needs to:

- Understand what the writing is for - its purpose e.g. to make someone feel happy, to give information, to explain something, to be able to make something
- Have some sense of who the writing is for - the audience e.g. a friend, parents, a character in a book, people with a specific interest etc
- Gather ideas, thinking about what they want to write
- Draw upon a store of words and ideas
- Have sufficiently well-developed motor control of their arm, wrist, hand and fingers to hold a pencil effectively, controlling its movement and forming letters, or be able to use a keyboard
- Know about the purpose and organisation of print, the alphabetic code and words as units of meaning
- Know about and use letter-sound relationships for writing
- Write a few, then an increasing number of those 'tricky' words which are essential for fluent writing, e.g. my, was, the
- Be able to place an idea, action, or statement within a sentence
- Understand and use punctuation within the piece of writing
- Use the conventional features of different genres e.g. a list, letter, caption, story.

#### **Tips and ideas for supporting your child's writing**

Spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing. The quality and variety of language that your child hears and uses is key to them developing as a writer. From birth you are developing your child's ability to become a writer. By interacting with them (talking; singing; going on visits; engaging in role-play; sharing writing opportunities, sharing books, reading stories etc.), you are providing vital banks of resources into which your child can dip when they are composing.

#### **Ways to help your child develop as a writer:**

- Ask them to explain a game or activity
- Ask them to describe a person, place, picture or thing
- Retell stories together
- Talk about things they have done (encourage detail) e.g. visits, day at school
- Ask them to predict what might happen next in a story or TV programme
- Play word games
- Be a reading model and read regularly to your child (e.g. stories, poems, actual information such as timetables, magazines, newspaper reports, letters, emails, adverts, instructions)
- Discuss the ways authors use words to shape their ideas.
- 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, holiday list, cards for relatives, scrap books of holidays/hobbies/special events, diaries, posters for real events, short stories or poems for family members, menus, texting, house rules.
- Have a selection of writing materials available for them e.g. a range of pencils, pens, coloured crayons, chalks etc
- Praise your child for trying and don't dwell on mistakes. Focus on content and enjoyment of writing for fun and for purpose.

### **Other suggestions for early writers:**

- Try activities that develop their gross motor skills: e.g. use ribbon sticks to make large circular and zig zag movements in the air; swing and hang from climbing frames; paint with large rollers and brushes on a vertical surface (like a wall or easel); march to music; other activities that encourage children to stretch their arms above their heads.
- Try fun activities that strengthen your child's fine motor skills e.g. cutting, painting, squeezing playdough, picking up small things with tweezers and pegs, using a spray bottle to fire water on to a target, popping bubble wrap, opening containers with lids.
- 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 booklet. Take photos and use the pictures in the book.
- 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 letter formation/name writing interesting – practise drawing letters in sand, water, or paint, use white boards, playdough or shaving foam.

### **How can I help my child with a set piece of writing homework?**

- If your child has been asked to produce a piece of writing, discuss the task and share ideas before your child begins to write. (You might like to use a thought shower as a visual prompt.)
- Discuss what writing skills your child has been learning in school so that you can support your child at home and encourage them to include the skills in their piece of writing.
- Praise your child's efforts at writing. Be primarily interested in content. Encourage the use of good vocabulary and varied sentences. Emphasise your child's successes.

- Resist the tendency to focus only on errors of spelling, punctuation, and other mechanical parts of writing.
- Stress the importance of re-reading during composition to check for the flow of ideas. Stopping at times during the writing process and reading their work aloud will enable them to hear whether the writing flows well and whether any words have been omitted/if any parts don't make sense, for example.
- Encourage your child to edit and proof-read their writing once they have finished, making changes to their writing if they wish to.
- Check punctuation whilst proof-reading and add in any that is missing.
- Develop an ethos where risk-taking is actively encouraged, so that even the most reluctant child will be happy to have a go at writing without fear of 'getting it wrong'.

### **Supporting early writers with a set piece of writing**

- Plan the first sentence orally with your child. They might need some help formulating their ideas into one complete sentence. Rehearse the sentence out loud with your child prior to them writing it – repeating the sentence verbally with them can help them to remember what it is they wish to write (they may need to repeat their sentence more than once). It can also help early writers to orally count the number of words in their sentence prior to writing to reinforce the sentence.
- Whilst writing, encourage your child to sound words out as much as possible, even if they can only write the initial sound or a couple of sounds in a word. Sometimes it can help them if you emphasise the sounds out loud that can be heard in a word (e.g. 'cat': c-a-t).
- Do not worry about your child spelling words correctly at this stage – particularly if the word is non-phonetic and therefore cannot be sounded out. (Once children start to learn different spelling rules, and correct spelling of non-phonetic words, encourage children to use these skills. This does not mean your child's teacher is expecting every word to be correctly spelt!)
- Remind your child to use a 'finger space' after every word – encouraging them to place their index finger beside the word they have just written will help them to leave a space before writing the next word.
- Remind your child about a capital letter and full stop to punctuate their sentence.
- If your child is unsure how to form a letter, model the letter formation to your child.
- Encourage your child to keep re-reading their writing aloud whilst they are writing and to then re-read it once they are finished to ensure it makes sense. (Support them with this re-reading if they are struggling to decipher what they have recorded.)

### **Questions you can ask when your child brings writing home:**

#### **About Purpose and Audience:**

- What do you want to write about? Why?
- Who will want or need to read this?
- What do you want your reader to know or do?
- How will you present it to the reader?

#### **About Idea Development/Support:**

- Do your details help the reader understand?
- Are they the best details and examples for the reader and for your purpose?

- Have you explained important ideas?
- Do your examples focus on the main ideas?
- Do your details make the ideas clearer?

### **About Organisation:**

- Did you stick to your plan throughout the piece of writing?
- Does the order of the ideas make sense?
- Does all of your information fit together?
- Do your ideas link together to lead the reader easily from one idea to another?
- Will your reader be able to follow all of your thinking?

### **About Sentences:**

- Do your sentences have different lengths? Different beginnings? Different structures? Or do they sound too much alike?
- Do your sentences express complete thoughts?

### **About Wording:**

- Have you used a variety of words to make your meaning clear?
- Do the words say what you mean?
- Are all of your words used correctly?
- Have you made some good vocabulary choices?

### **About Correctness:**

- Have you made any mistakes in spelling? Could you use a 'Have a go' sheet? (Y2-6) Could you check with a dictionary? Could you use a spelling strategy you have learnt in school?
- Have you punctuated every sentence? Have you used varied punctuation?
- Is your grammar correct? Have you stuck to the same tense?

### **Helpful resources:**

- Phase Two phonic sounds:  
[http://content.twinkl.co.uk/resource/6b/14/T-L-3981-Phase-2-Phonics-Large-Poster\\_ver\\_1.pdf?token=exp=1531818531~acl=%2Fresource%2F6b%2F14%2FT-L-3981-Phase-2-Phonics-Large-Poster\\_ver\\_1.pdf%2A~hmac=a33b7caddfd08cd510a00cf5483308c47c093da6467a21a82135729452eec71d](http://content.twinkl.co.uk/resource/6b/14/T-L-3981-Phase-2-Phonics-Large-Poster_ver_1.pdf?token=exp=1531818531~acl=%2Fresource%2F6b%2F14%2FT-L-3981-Phase-2-Phonics-Large-Poster_ver_1.pdf%2A~hmac=a33b7caddfd08cd510a00cf5483308c47c093da6467a21a82135729452eec71d)
- Phase Three phonic sounds:  
<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/the-willows-primary-school/UploadedDocument/a256151000a042888fbf26334f383cc0/phase-3-phonics-sounds.pdf>
- Phase Five phonic sounds:

<https://primarysite-prod-sorted.s3.amazonaws.com/the-willows-primary-school/UploadedDocument/e73395721ad44ef29bcbe49f3c11e577/phase-5-phonics-sounds.pdf>

- Handwriting templates
- Have a go sheets and Twinkl templates
- High frequency word lists