



Our English (Writing) Curriculum

Intent

Sacred Heart's curriculum is closely designed around our school's mission and value statements and to support the development and needs of the pupils and families we serve. Our curriculum is designed to allow children to **endeavour, enrich and enjoy** their learning.

Due to the context of our school and the diverse social and economic backgrounds of our families, we have designed a curriculum that includes a wealth of enrichment opportunities. We place a high focus on acquiring and understanding vocabulary through high quality texts, which drive most aspects of learning. Writing is central to children's learning and, from the Foundation Stage, communication and language skills are given highest priority. **As active 'Witnesses' to our Faith, we aim to develop communication skills necessary for learning and life, promoting enjoyment, high expectations and standards in writing across all subject areas.** We achieve this by defining a distinct, **Sacred Heart Way/** approach to writing that begins with **rigorous, strategic mapping**:

- Opportunities to write in response to **high quality texts**.
- Weekly opportunities to write at length, including cross curricular application of writing skills.
- Audiences for writing.
- Purposes for writing.
- **'Opening Doors'** units to apply lessons learned from the study of Heritage Texts.
- Tools and techniques for writing (within **Medium Term Planning**).



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Implementation

EYFS: Pre-Writing, Story Scribing & Tales Toolkit

Across the Foundation Stage a range of **pre-writing techniques** increase the children's fine and gross motor skills, developing the body and arms so that children are 'ready to write'. Through **Story Scribing**, children are next encouraged to tell their own stories which are scribed, modelled, shared and finally, self-written. **Tales Toolkit** is also applied with the children in whole class and small group contexts. By the end of the EYFS, teacher-led sessions progress from mainly **shared writing activities** to increasingly **guided writing sessions**, usually inspired by a book.

The Write Stuff

For National Curriculum classes at Sacred Heart RC, we have adopted "**The Write Stuff**" by Jane Considine as our main approach to teaching writing. 'The Write Stuff' follows a method called '**Sentence Stacking**' which refers to the fact that sentences are stacked together and organised to engage children with short, intensive moments of learning that they can then immediately apply to their own writing. This approach makes sure that all of our children are exposed to high quality texts that stimulate quality responses to reading, high quality writing and purposeful speaking and listening opportunities. Our curriculum ensures that all children have plenty of opportunities to write for different purposes. We encourage writing through

all curriculum areas and use quality reading texts to model examples of good writing. Writing is taught through a number of different strategies. We believe that children need lots of rich speaking and drama activities to give them the imagination and the experiences that will equip them to become good writers.

The Write Stuff is based on two guiding principles; teaching sequences that slide between **experience days** and **sentence stacking** lessons. With modelling at the heart of them, the sentence stacking lessons are broken into bite-sized chunks and taught under the structural framework of The Writing Rainbow. Teachers prepare children for writing by modelling the ideas, grammar or techniques of writing.

An individual lesson is based on a sentence model, broken in to three chunks:

Initiate section – a stimulus to capture the children’s imagination and set up a sentence.

Model section – the teacher models a sentence that outlines clear writing features and techniques.

Enable section – the children write their sentence, following the model.

“The Write Stuff” also reinforces grammar through the use of:

- The **FANTASTICs** which are an acronym that summarise the ideas of writing
- The **GRAMMARISTIC** - a classroom tool that enables the teacher to drive key grammar messages.
- The **BOOMTASTICs** which helps children capture 10 ways of adding drama and poetic devices to their writing, making it more vivid and visual for their reader.

After a model for writing has been shared and rehearsed, children innovate within the same genre: they plan and write an independent piece e.g. if they have shared Goldilocks and the Three Bears, they may write Josh and the Three Lions. To support their compositions, children use the **Audience-Purpose-Effect Diagram** to generate their own success criteria for the genre of writing.

When teaching non-fiction, teachers draw out the **shape of the text**. This involves using shapes to draw out the genre’s features and content. Children then sentence stack through these shapes and use them to plan and write their own innovative writing.

Opening Doors

Acknowledging the heavily scaffolded approach within the ‘write stuff’ and to *challenge all children*, year groups from Y2+ complete a number of ‘**Opening Doors**’ units (originally written by Bob Cox). Within these units, all learners are provided access strategies, but the More Able are particularly challenged by heritage texts which resist meaning-making. Opening ended tasks characterise writing in these sessions.

Application of Skill

The wider curriculum at Sacred Heart has been carefully designed to ensure that children are given a variety of opportunities across a range of subjects to apply the skills learnt in writing lessons independently and to write at length developing stamina and a personal style.

Transcriptional Skills

Teachers are aware of the importance of fluency in the transcriptional elements of writing. For those learners who are working below the level of their peers, intervention focusses on the skills below, in order to free up working memory for more complex writing tasks.

Handwriting

After pre-writing tasks handwriting is taught discretely using the Nelson Handwriting scheme. Discrete handwriting lessons from the end of Year 2 focus on joined handwriting.

Spelling and Grammar

Spellings are taught daily using Little Wandle materials in the Foundation Stage/ KS1. In Year 2 upwards, the Jane Considine Spelling Book follows on from Letters and Sounds. This scheme emphasises an investigatory approach to spelling. Children regularly investigate spelling strategies and rules as well as identify common spellings strings across multiple words. Spelling checks are completed each week, which inform further teaching and learning activities in spelling. One half hour slot is used to teach grammar discretely using Scholastic materials.

Disadvantaged Pupils

As a school, we have decided that implementing one strategy well (linked to **Quality First teaching** as opposed to intervention) is more effective in helping **improve the outcomes of our disadvantaged and lower attaining pupils**. The Write Stuff uses effective approaches for tackling disadvantage which is heavily supported by the EEF. Wider research shows us that disadvantaged children have lower self-esteem and feel less successful; they have a reduced vocabulary; less or different life experiences and we know relationships really matter to these pupils. We need to make it our job to help these children with these particular areas so that they become confident and independent writers.

Impact

Consistent application of the Write Stuff has a range of key benefits:

- Support for teachers so that they have a deeper and more flexible knowledge of sentence structure.
- Pupils understand how to apply sentence scaffolds to their independent writing as they develop their expertise.
- Standards improve because many worked examples are provided over the year that extend understanding through a wide range of genres and non-fiction text types.
- Children have a clear view of what high quality writing looks like and their learning is structured clearly and misconceptions dealt with.
- Pupils know how to improve their writing and make it more focussed. Actionable feedback is provided to guide their learning.
- Children have a concept of how to build, plan and complete a piece of writing due to narrative maps and non-fiction shapes.
- Teachers have clear pathways of how to guide pupils in weak areas such as cohesion and paragraphs.

By the end of their time at Sacred Heart, children develop a love of writing. The majority of our children are able to write clearly and accurately and adapt their language and style for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences. Children make good progress relative to their starting points.