

To: All Primary Staff

From: IPJ

Date: 20th September 2017

Re: Writing Improvement Strategy 2017/18

While good progress has been made with children's learning and progress in Maths over the past 2-3 years, we are all very much aware of the need now to achieve a similar boost with writing. We need a consistent approach, adopted by all. The notes below identify some of the key elements to a strategy that will be further developed and shaped as the monitoring process kicks in from Monday 2nd October and each teacher receives individual feedback and actions for implementation.

- A. **Teacher Planning:** If we carry on as we have been for the past few years we are not going to make the progress that we want to see. We all need to make a conscious effort to plan for improvement. Think about:
- ❖ ***Raising your own expectations:*** our children are not writing well enough; the single most important factor in improving things will likely be every teacher demanding more from each and every child in terms of the regularity of written activities and their presentation, quality and quantity.
 - ❖ ***Always providing quality stimulus:*** quality children's texts; extracts from classics; film; online resources such as Literacy Shed; poetry; pictures; experiences (both within and beyond school); drama etc. Talk for Writing, the discussions that go with the resources you present and activities such as Word Gathering are crucial to milking everything that you can from stimuli.
 - ❖ ***Increasing the opportunities children have to write each day:*** By the time children reach Years 4-6 they should be writing for up to 90 minutes each day. This may include handwriting activities, spelling tests and activities as well as jotting down ideas and planning individually or in pairs / groups. But a good 20-30 minutes each day, in either one or two sessions, should be spent on individual and focused writing activity in a very quiet classroom. Just like the really successful Ten-a-Day maths initiative, children need daily writing practice as well as the chance to go back through what they have written to check on spelling, punctuation and grammar and to think about how else it might be improved.
- B. **Books:** We have had lots of different books in previous years. This year we are honing it down.
- ❖ ***Writing Books:*** the home for the vast majority of writing done across the curriculum. Children's work should initially be completed on the right hand side of each double page. This provides plenty of space for teacher comments in pink pen and follow up work in purple pen. Presentation of work in these books needs to be good and this includes the shorter tasks taking place before a longer piece, drafting, mind maps, plans etc. Some of this planning work might be done on plain paper and stuck in.
 - ❖ ***Spelling Investigation Books:*** Specific skills (nuts and bolts of writing) such as word identification in a sentence can be written in investigation books. Presentation rules apply.
 - ❖ ***Maths Books:*** it is essential that the work in these books is presented well; we also expect to see plenty of purple pen corrections, follow up work and extension.
 - ❖ ***Science Books:*** again, it is essential that the work in these books is presented well; we also expect to see plenty of purple pen corrections, follow up work and extension.
 - ❖ ***TAD Books:*** every ten a day entry should be dated and set out neatly.
 - ❖ ***Big Books:*** A new development this year, these are used to showcase the content of what has been covered in class projects and investigations. Pupils' ideas, conclusions, reactions and thoughts on each topic are stuck in alongside headings and pictures. Longer pieces of work deriving from this activity are to be completed in the Literacy books.
- C. **Assessment & Follow Up:** The dialogue that you have with each one of your pupils about their work and how to correct / improve it is absolutely crucial to raising standards more quickly.
- ❖ ***Writing on one side of the double page:*** it is essential that we all follow this practice for children in Year 2 and above. Space is needed for your comments and for children to complete purple pen activities.
 - ❖ ***Feedback and follow up:*** please use a pink pen for all marking / feedback. Remember, the follow-up tasks that you give each child will likely have the biggest positive impact on their learning and progress of any of the interventions that you deploy. You must also give children quality time to act upon your feedback as

soon as possible after it is given. Mistakes common across the class / group will need additional input before the children tackle the follow up tasks.

❖ ***Focused editing and spelling corrections:***

- Make sure children know what they are to do and how to do it so that they can work their way through your marking effectively. (E.g. What should I do if there is a pink wobbly line under a word in my book?)
- Dictionaries/word mats on table during editing. Children are taught specifically how to use them; younger children can pair up to use if appropriate. Thesauruses also on tables for older children.
- If children are peer marking/self-evaluating, marking criteria against a given list e.g. list of features that have been taught for a particular genre

❖ ***Acknowledging purple pen work:*** do not forget that you must 'mark' all follow up work. This might mean a simple thank you for the completion of an additional task, but in depth marking and further tasks set might also be appropriate.

D. **Development of Skills:**

❖ ***Dictionaries and Thesauri:*** as children progress to Years 4-6 they should be well-used to having a dictionary and thesaurus to hand and be making regular use of them each day. Such resources must be age and stage appropriate.

❖ ***Handwriting and fully cursive script:***

- Regular (short) sessions specifically teaching handwriting in a context of spellings being focussed on – making link between spelling and handwriting explicit
- Fully cursive introduced in KS1. Joined handwriting becomes the expectation as children become more fluent writers
- Modelled by staff –displays and in class writing

E. **Parental Involvement:** we need to keep on encouraging parents to play their part in all aspects of their children's learning. This is to be done through class teachers who have already written to families to explain what is to be taught in the coming weeks and how parents can support things. Ian will back this up with his own half termly letters that summarise the key things that parents can do to help.

F. **INSET:** This will be provided in a variety of ways:

- ❖ Feedback from monitoring (see below)
- ❖ Half termly moderation activity across our two schools, possibly involving 'the Birtwistles'. The first session will take place at the staff meeting on Wednesday 11th October.
- ❖ CASPA links: Sally Timmons is now linking with the Carlisle primary schools. She will make sure that we attend their moderation sessions but will also organise more in depth moderation with a particular school as required.
- ❖ The INSET Day on Wednesday 3rd January will include a session where we learn the lessons of our work this term and reshape our strategy for the rest of the year.

G. **Monitoring and Feedback:**

❖ Writing will be a focus of each of this year's five monitoring weeks:

- Week 5: 25th – 29th Sept.
- Week 13: 27th Nov – 1st Dec.
- Week 19: 22nd–26th Jan
- Week 26: 19th–23rd Mar
- Week 37: 25th–29th June

❖ Teachers can expect detailed feedback and action points from the observations carried out at these times. Progress against the issues identified will be measured at the next monitoring week and through Headteacher learning walks.

❖ LA monitoring visits will undoubtedly focus on our progress in this area as well. It is crucial that we achieve a major shift.