

Ocker Hill Academy



Aim High ● Aim Higher

Writing Policy

To be reviewed in line with Ocker Hill Academy Policy Guidelines

Introduction

At Ocker Hill Academy we believe that the ability to communicate effectively in written form is a fundamental life skill necessary for human interaction. From history, we have access to the thoughts, beliefs, knowledge and anxieties of generations of mankind, dating back to the ancient civilizations, through the words they set down in writing.

Advances in information technology and in particular, the internet will mean that human beings are going to depend on communicating via the written word for many years into the future.

Aims and Objectives

We understand that children learn in many ways with different learning preferences and styles. Within the academy, staff provide a rich and varied learning environment in order to meet the needs of all children and to develop their writing skills to their full potential.

We aim to:

- To develop enthusiastic, confident writers.
- To enable children to communicate articulately.
- To enable children to select a variety of genres for purpose and effect.
- To enable children to form and respond to opinions.

Teaching and Learning

Writing at Ocker Hill Academy is taught on a very regular basis in literacy sessions. It is expected that in a standard teaching week, that there be at least one opportunity per week for extended writing. The objectives, as outlined in the Primary Framework 2016, are distributed between year groups on the Ocker Hill Academy Formative Assessment Grids. Staff use the grids to select the objectives and differentiate these to meet the needs of the children. Writing is taught in a genre based manner with each year group covering a range of genres both fiction and non-fiction. Coverage of this, across the whole academy, is overseen by the literacy co-ordinator to ensure the range is varied and to avoid repetition.

Objectives when selected, are skills based and can be broken down into steps of success criteria in order for the children to have a clear understanding of how to meet the learning intention. This success criteria is quite often used for differentiation to vary challenge within the same lesson. Other differentiation occurs through using a range of texts, writing frames and adult support. Certain skills may be taught explicitly. These build up over the course of a week or unit and are assessed and consolidated in the end of unit assessed writing assessment.

Often, in literacy, films and visual stimuli are used as inspiration for writing in addition to or in place of the written word. This reaches a wider audience in class, as children who find reading challenging can attain the same understanding and those with limited imaginations have the description displayed in pictures or film as well as in words. Use of AFL techniques

also ensure that children have a firm understanding of a text or visual before the children attempt to innovate or invent their own versions.

Modelling and shared writing.

Writing is regularly modelled in class to demonstrate ‘what a good one looks like.’ It is a common belief that exposure to well written, quality texts can improve and support children’s writing. This is used in a variety of ways. Children may be shown an effective version of a piece to exhibit key skills and literary features in context. This is generally done on a whole class basis and utilised for discussion. Other methods include using an ineffective text (which the children discuss, analyse and improve in order to make it more suited to purpose) and ‘live’ modelling. This entails the member of staff demonstrating the writing of a text with the children sharing his/ her thinking and asks the children to volunteer ideas. This works well to scaffold the structure of the text but also inspires imaginations.

Punctuation and Grammar

Syntax and morphology is a key foundation to successful writing. Without it, sentences would make no sense and the overall impact of the writing would be limited. At Ocker Hill Academy, grammar and punctuation is taught implicitly within writing lessons. The elements are demonstrated in shared texts, analysed and explained. Many of the objectives taken from the formative assessment grids are SPAG (spelling, punctuation and grammar) based and therefore these form the basis of most writing undertaken. Where specific gaps in assessment are noted, teaching staff are able to plan sessions to meet the needs of the children and plug areas of weakness.

Spelling

Spelling is taught both explicitly and implicitly at Ocker Hill Academy. Non assembly time one per week is used to teach spelling rules and investigate words that meet the rule. This spelling rule is then revised by the children and a selection of words that follow the rule are tested the following week to assess the children’s understanding. In addition, as spelling is also assessed on the academy’s formative assessment grids, spelling objectives are taught in literacy sessions. It is expected that the staff cover a minimum of two spelling objectives explicitly in literacy lessons each half term to ensure that there is the necessary coverage. This is usually within a unit of writing and pupils learn and apply the rule within the genre that they are covering.

Children are assessed using spelling age testing biannually in December and July. This allows us to identify those children below their chronological ages who require extra support to be put into intervention groups.

Cross Curricular and Writing outside of Literacy Sessions

‘Engage Writing’ is a tool that all staff are familiar with and can be used where necessary to build and support the imagination of children. It tends to be used during non-assembly times where necessary to promote independent writing for a range of purposes.

In science, two piece of extended writing must be carried out each term. This can be anything from detailed investigation write-ups to non- chronological reports or poems using scientific knowledge. The cross curricular link means that children can exhibit their skills in a much more independent way without the literacy structure. This is also the case in the thematic curriculum. Children carry out a minimum of two pieces of writing per term which can be used towards their overall writing assessment. This is often based on a thematic stimulus depending on the topic being covered in class at that time.

Interventions

Children awarded pupil premium are regularly taken out of class by Pupil Premium literacy lead to work on areas of weakness in one to one or small group situations. This allows dedicated time to be given over to the children to close gaps in their learning and knowledge.

Spelling interventions are used for those children who do not meet their chronological ages on the bi-annual spelling age tests. These include sound discovery and synthetic phonics.

Assessment

To reflect the changes in the primary curriculum, writing is assessed using a formative method. Teaching staff use their year group's formative assessment grids to identify gaps in children's learning and plan to meet these requirements. This is done as frequently as is seen necessary but must be done at least half termly. In addition, children are assessed at the end of each year in year's three to five using Rising Stars optional SPAG test and Key Stage 2 SATs in year six. This information is teamed with the formative assessment grids to give an overall picture of the child's progress in writing. Spelling is assessed both within the SPAG tests and through the use of spelling age testing.

Monitoring and Review

The standard of teaching and learning and quality of writing in the academy is regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure that it remains effective. Regular learning walks with differing priorities and core lesson observations check on the standard of teaching throughout the academy. Planning for literacy is collected each Friday and matched to the formative assessment grids for coverage, differentiation and pitch. Additionally, each class' literacy books are scrutinized bi-weekly and coupled with planning to verify that the children are getting a broad yet tailored curriculum to meet their needs.

Regular writing moderations within the academy and in the local authority take place guaranteeing accurate judgements on the levelling of writing and that all staff are in agreeance with 'what a level looks like.' An academy portfolio of levelled children's work is available to ensure that staff have a constant reference for checking their judgments.