

Write from the Start



Trafalgar Junior School's

Approach to teaching writing

A help guide for parents



Handwriting

Children are taught handwriting as a weekly part of their extended writing session, where one of their tasks is to write out spelling errors or a dictation sentence in best handwriting. At the beginning of each term, all children are given a handwriting homework. Children who are struggling to use consistently joined and legible writing also have an additional handwriting book and are given additional practice times during the week. All children write in pencil in Year 3, then progress on to pen during Year 4 as soon as the standard of their handwriting is consistently good enough. When doing homework, please ensure children have a **sharp pencil** or suitable **blue ink pen** (eg Berol handwriting pen, not biros or fountain pens). We only use pencil for maths. Mistakes in pen should be corrected using a ~~single ruled line~~.



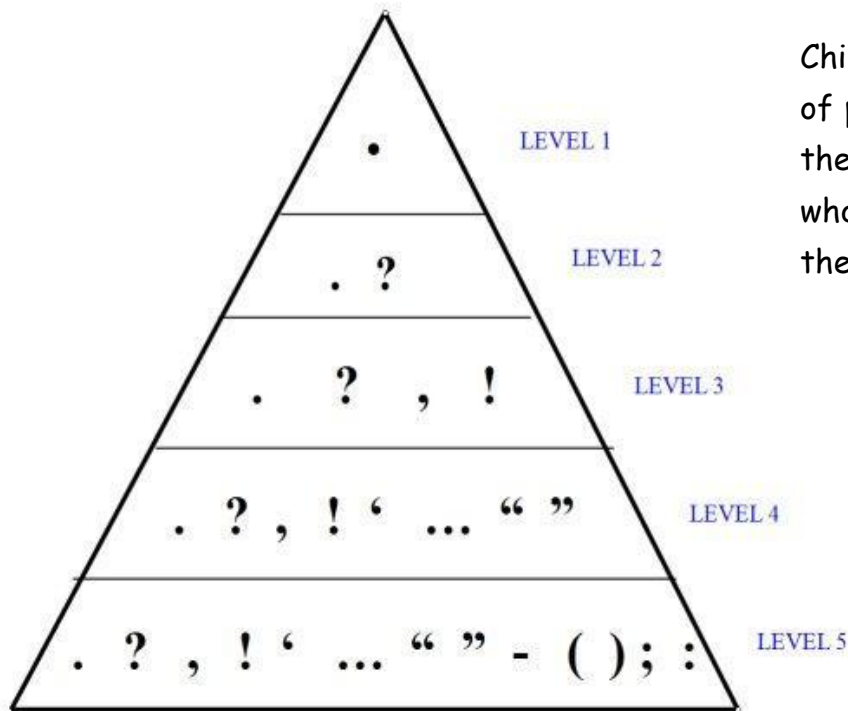
Spelling

Every class has an explicit spelling teaching session each week. In this lesson, words that have been learnt the previous week are assessed and a new spelling rule is taught. Higher ability spellers also do some investigative work on the new spelling rule, eg finding new words in the dictionary with the same letter pattern or exceptions to the rule. New words are given to the children to learn at home. Not every spelling is corrected in written work. Usually the teacher will choose words appropriate to the ability of the child to correct. For example, if a child is struggling to spell *went* or *people*, then these would be corrected instead of their attempts at *disappearance* or *enormous*.



Grammar and Punctuation

We encourage children to understand that developing writers use punctuation in more and more complex ways and we teach specifically the use of different punctuation marks. We use the 'punctuation pyramid' model (on next page) to show this visually:



Children are taught the appropriate use of punctuation. Our most able writers in the school will use in their writing the whole range of punctuation outlined at the base of the pyramid.

Composition



This is the most important aspect in separating a good writer from a brilliant writer. It is not just about having the imaginative ideas, but also the creativity with use of words and language in any writing text. How does the writing create atmosphere? How does the language used create tension or persuade the reader, for example? Have some original and well chosen words or phrases been used, such as technical words, "Wow! Words", similes and metaphors, etc? Has the writing been carefully structures and developed in paragraphs? Most importantly, promote **enjoyment** of writing; have fun with playing with words!



Assessing Writing

Children are given a writing level each term, using writing assessment criteria used throughout the school. This assessment level is given through two explicit writing assessments each term and the teacher also taking into account the writing level they have shown in other extended writing pieces in literacy, their writing across the curriculum and in their homework.

Ways you can Help!



- ✓ Make sure your child sees you writing regularly for a variety of purposes
- ✓ Make sure your child reads - **the best readers are the best writers!**
- ✓ Encourage your children at home to write with you and write for a purpose (eg write the shopping list, write a letter/e-mail) or write about their interests (eg a report about the football results)
- ✓ Encourage an interest in words - talk about words when you see them out and about; do word puzzles together; have words on the fridge door or a message board
- ✓ encourage your child to be inspired by examples of beautiful handwriting in museums, galleries and books
- ✓ older children can develop their writing and social skills together by finding pen-friends through school or clubs, or keeping in touch with friends met on holiday.
- ✓ Encourage the use of a journal or diary, particularly out of term time, eg summer holiday, Christmas

And finally...some literacy homework tips...

- ✓ Respond to your child's writing
- ✓ Praise your child's writing
- ✓ Avoid doing the writing for your child but younger children or those struggling can be helped by writing words and sentences for them to copy
- ✓ Provide your child with spelling help but let them have a go first!
- ✓ Look over the writing to 'edit' it together - does it all make sense? Is punctuation in the right place? Has the child used some "Wow! Words"?