



Chadsmead Primary Academy Big Write Policy

Introduction

Chadsmead Primary Academy has undertaken to improve standards of children's writing as a main priority within the school improvement plan. The school has decided to adopt the Big Write approach to proactively teaching writing skills and producing written outcomes. Each year group has a copy of the Purple Book (Strategies for Immediate Impact on Writing Standards by Roz Wilson) and there is a copy of the Gold Book (Write on target) in Key Stage 1. The Senior Leadership team and the staff have met to discuss how to implement the Big Write at Chadsmead Primary Academy so there is a consistent and clear message to all children. This resulting policy sets out how the Big Write will be delivered. Any queries or questions arising from reading this policy should be addressed to Barbara Parker.

Two 'Whats' and two 'Hows'

Roz Wilson identifies that there are two 'Whats' and two 'Hows' that are central to the writing challenges that children face. The 'Whats' are thoroughly covered by the literacy curriculum and children are exposed to many text types through their reading. The 'Hows' are critical to providing the child with tools and strategies to enable them to become confident writers able to write in different genre and to a range of stimulus. The Big Write centres on proactively teaching children the strategies and steps they need to develop from embryonic writers into emerging writers and finally confident mature writers who can apply their skills.

The Whats:

- 1) Text type and characteristics
- 2) Purpose of writing / stimulus

The Hows:

- 1) Skills – grammar, handwriting, spelling and punctuation
- 2) The writing voice and use of VCOP

VCOP – Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers, Punctuation

By proactively teaching VCOP (Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation) this will equip the children with the understanding and skills to write increasingly sophisticated text. The 6 model lesson plans in the Purple Book (KS2) and the Gold Book (KS1) provide a model for teaching VCOP. Each teacher can choose how they wish to teach and deliver these four generic targets of Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation but they should be taught systematically and in lively fun ways. Proactive teaching of these tools will enable children to have the tools to grow into confident writers with a range of strategies at their disposal.

Key VCOP Aspects for Chadsmead.

Vocabulary – Children's vocabulary constantly needs to be extended and reinforced through patterning (repeated use of spoken language to enable a child to use it in their writing). WOW words (interesting and ambitious vocabulary) should be avidly collected – stolen from texts, from authors and from each other. At Chadsmead each class will build a collection of WOW words. Each WOW word will be written on a sentence strip card and the contributing child's name added to the card. A large collection should build up which is consistently added to. Old WOW words can be stored and revisited as a 5 minute recap. A WOW word collection should be an evolving and changing display – not a set of words, which become part of the classroom wall paper.

WOW words are age related and the teacher's definition of ambitious is crucial – A WOW word should not usually be used by a child of this age or stage of development prior to proactive teaching. For example age 5/6 – exciting, interesting, age 6/7 – enormous, fierce, age 7/8 – silently, happiness, age 8/9 – patiently, courage, age 9/10 – aggressively, anxiety, age 10/11 – formidable, speculation (See pages 30 /31 of the Purple Book for more examples.

Connectives – Every class should have a display of possible connectives to support the children in their writing. The Roz Wilson purple book provides suggestions for a range of 'stocking filler word games' which help teach the use of connectives.

Openers – The use of openers helps children to construct interesting and complex sentences. Each class should have a range of opener words on display and make reference to them regularly in shared and guided writing.

Punctuation – The Big Write uses the punctuation pyramid, which explains simply to children the level of punctuation required to hit each national curriculum level. The punctuation pyramid should be displayed in each classroom and referred to regularly in lessons. (See Roz Wilson purple book for ways to encourage children to engage with the punctuation pyramid).

Expectations

All staff should have high expectations for all children's writing. Roz Wilson's mantras to be adopted by all at Chadsmead are:

"Write less but write best!"

"No sloppy writing"

If children are allowed to write using bad or 'sloppy' habits, then this is the writing style, which will become a habit. All writing in all lessons should provide opportunity for children to apply their writing skills.

Basic Skills

All children will practice basic skills each day during the 15 minute Keys to English sessions.

The Big Write session

At Chadsmead all children should have the opportunity to engage in a Big Write session most weeks. This will be up to each individual teacher to plan and decide when the sessions are appropriate.

In KS2 the session should be long enough to allow a talk and planning session (Section H of the Purple Book has a range of suggestions for forms of planning), a short break and then a timed writing session.

Arrangements for the Big Write:

Resources:

At Chadsmead all Big Write pieces of work will be in their Big Write books with the Learning Objective on the first page.

Environment:

A positive writing environment should be created for the children. This should involve the use of a focus candle or nightlights on tables (see attached risk assessment in Appendix!). The children should not talk to each other and music can be played to enhance concentration – Roz Wilson advocates Mozart!

Ethos:

Roz Wilson identifies 5 elements of a positive ethos:

- 1) Creating a positive atmosphere
- 2) Creating a secure atmosphere
- 3) Creating an ethos where children feel they have some control
- 4) Creating an atmosphere within which children feel successful
- 5) Creating a framework for children to work towards known, achievable goals

Teacher input:

During the Big Write session, teacher and TA will move from child to child quietly reminding them of personal targets whilst giving verbal feedback. The teacher should also give children time targets and reminders about the use of connectives, openers, and punctuation as appropriate.

Assessment

At Chadsmead we will assess writing termly using the Roz Wilson Big Write Criterion Scale. Each member of staff should have photocopies of this scale in their writing assessment folder. Chadsmead recognises that this set of assessment criteria underestimates rather than over estimates children's achievement and is often a sub level lower than assessment against the LEA ladder to success criteria. The scale is however very precise and easy to use.

A Chadsmead Primary Academy child friendly version should be stuck in to the inside front cover of each child's Big Write books and each piece of writing assessed against it. The children should be given time during a Keys to English session to review the written feedback so that they can see how much they CAN do and understand what next steps they need to take.

Levels of writing should be discussed with the children so that levelling becomes part of their normal vocabulary. Roz Wilson suggests a range of ways in which children can look analytically at work and improve it in a motivating and celebratory way – Spot the difference, Goal scores,

Up levelling

The assessments in October, February and June will form the basis for tracking children's progress through the year and will be kept in the writing assessment file.

The writing assessment file will be passed on to the next class teacher in the following year group to provide a bank of evidence of the child's achievements. In September the child's last piece of work from the previous year should be revisited with the child and the teacher to show the quality and success that has already been achieved and marks the foundation and expectation from which to work. All children should know what they need to do next in order to improve their writing. This may be as an individual target or a group target. Children should be able to talk about their writing with an adult.

Speaking and Listening

It is vital that children develop a "writing voice" as well as their community voice. This is based on the principle that 'If a child can't say it, they can't write it'. Roz Wilson stresses the importance of 'patterning' – repeated use of language to enable children to then transfer this and use it in their writing.

Two specific activities will be introduced as part of the Chadsmead Big Write programme to help develop children's writing voice:

- 1) Specific talk homework relating to the Big Write topic.

Each week, prior to the day of Big Write, the children will be asked to think about and discuss the topic that will be focus of the Big Write. They will take a note home to brief parents about their "talk homework". The letter will be produced by the class teacher and will provide parents with some prompts and questions to ask their child.

Appendix: Sample letter to parents regarding talk homework

- 2) Posh Lessons

Once a week teachers will deliver a posh lesson. The teacher deliberately uses community voice speech within the lesson and the children need to correct the teacher!

Policy Development and Review:

Barbara Parker and Heather Taylor both received the Big Write training from Roz Wilson and Barbara Parker delivered the training to all teachers and teaching assistants in January 2014. Big Write has been in place across KS1 and KS2 since then.

Foundation

The development of basic reading and writing skills remains a priority for the Foundation Stage and these will be developed through all the areas of learning.

This policy will be reviewed in January 2016

Appendix A

Big Talk Homework!

Dear Parents,

Tonight's talk homework is about Mrs Pugh's holiday to see the polar bears!

In a special assembly your child has had the chance to find out about Mrs Pugh's trip to Churchill in Canada. She has shared some of her photographs of the sights and animals that she saw.

Please spend 10 minutes talking with your child about the assembly. You may want to use the questions below as prompts to help to encourage your child to talk.

Remember we are trying to help all our children develop excellent speaking and listening skills, which will help them with their writing.

"If a child can't say a sentence, then they can't write it either!"

Thank you for your support in helping your child.

Mrs Parker

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- 1) What animals did Mrs Pugh see? (Polar bears, arctic fox and an arctic rabbit)
 - 2) What colour were the animals? Why are they this colour? (All the animals were white and this helps them to be camouflaged and hide in the snow. The rabbit really needs to be hidden from the fox!)
 - 3) How did Mrs Pugh stay safe when watching the polar bears? (The visitors all went into the tundra (snow grounds) in a tundra buggy which was a huge minibus type vehicle on 8 foot wheels! There was a viewing platform on top).

4) What was the weather like? (Very cold -5°C but clear and bright, there were snow blizzards at night)

5) If you got chance would you rather go on a holiday like this or to somewhere sunny? Why? (There are no correct answers to this question but encourage your child to justify their answer.)