

Parent advice booklet – Helping your child with SEN at home

Supporting writing skills



What can I do at home?

Writing is a tricky skill to learn and develop. There are so many things for children to think about; letter size and shape, spelling, content and grammar. It can all be quite confusing. Children who don't enjoy writing or find writing difficult may become reluctant writers as they grow older.

The best way you can support your child's writing is by creating a relaxed, enjoyable, and calm approach to any activities related to writing.

Whilst there is no pressure to practice formal writing skills with your child at home, there are lots of fun and engaging activities or games that you can be doing to encourage good writing skills.

You could try the following:

- ❖ General advice:
- ❖ Write in small, short bursts to keep your child motivated.
- ❖ Don't worry too much if your child's letters or words are backwards or misspelt. It is more important that they are having fun, and are making an effort. If these errors become persistent, speak to your teacher about what can be done.

- ❖ You can share writing in your home language if it is not English.
- ❖ Have writing resources available for your child to play with, eg. Pens, pencils, paper, crayons, chalk, glittery pens, envelopes, and other craft type materials. The more motivating, the better.
- ❖ Have space in the house for writing activities and make sure the environment is suitable, eg. table / desk and chairs at a correct height. Make the environment fun and personal.
- ❖ Lots of praise and encouragement when your child writes. The experience should always be as positive as possible.
- ❖ If your child struggles with spelling, use a multi-sensory approach: hear it, say it, see it, write it and draw it. Use different coloured pens and paper.
- ❖ Encourage children to go back to check the spelling of words 10 minutes later so it goes from the short term memory to the long term memory.
- ❖ Young writers:
- ❖ Write in front of your child and talk to them about what you are doing and how you are doing it. For example, you might say. "I'm going to write a shopping list so I don't forget what I need. Let's write the word 'apple' together. How do I write that? I need to sound it out. Can you help me?..."

- ❖ Try activities which develop fine motor skills (good for early writers), such as cutting and sticking, using playdough, tweezers, using clothes pegs, etc.
- ❖ Encourage young children to look for print in their environment.
- ❖ Water and a paintbrush on a dry path / running a stick through sand / large chalk on a patio are all fun ways to write letters and words.
- ❖ Play eye spy and give them the initial sound, eg. I spy with my eye something beginning with the sound 't'. It is important you use the letter sound and not the letter name. If you need further help with the difference between letter names and letter sounds, ask your child's class teacher.
- ❖ Go on a letter sound hunt, finding all the items in your house or garden that begin with that letter sound.
- ❖ Work with them to put labels on places and things, eg. Label the items in cupboards.
- ❖ Put magnetic letters on the fridge. Encourage your child to write words with the letters.
- ❖ Older writers:
- ❖ You could try encouraging your child to write using a laptop or tablet and print out or send the outcome of their writing to show friends and family.

- ❖ Encourage your child to write birthday cards / shopping lists / postcards when you go on holiday / diary memos / recipes.
- ❖ Have a go at doing activities such as word searches and crosswords together – children find these highly motivating.
- ❖ Display your child's writing where others can see it and they can be proud.
- ❖ Enjoy the message, rather than becoming overly anxious about spellings and grammar. Spellings and grammar can be taught separately.
- ❖ Play with words and encourage a love of new words – look up new words in the dictionary.
- ❖ Give your child a reason to write – leave them notes in funny places and ask for a reply, eg. In their lunchbox, when they are staying with a relative, from the tooth fairy, etc.
- ❖ Help them to create a scrapbook with lots of pictures, encourage them to think of stories or explain the events that go with them.
- ❖ You could get them to explain a story to you and you write it down for them. Talk about how you are writing it.
- ❖ If your child is experiencing persistent and unexpected difficulties with handwriting and letter formation, a referral to Occupational Therapy may be requested.

Are there any useful resources or websites I can use?

The letters and sounds website introduces you to phonics (letter sounds) and has lots of free resources and ideas for games to play:

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com>

Familylearning website has some good ideas for games you can play at home with spelling sight words. There are also lots of interactive phonics games.

http://www.familylearning.org.uk/sight_word_games.html

The Literacy Shed is an excellent bank of short video clips and photos to inspire creativity and story telling:

<https://www.literacyshed.com/home.html>

The CBeebies website has lots of literacy games, videos and fun activities:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/topics/literacy>

Oxford Owl website has some excellent tips from experts, and some great resources such as wordsearches to get you started:

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/advice-for-parents/encouraging-writing/>

Nessy is a really useful programme for children who are experiencing difficulties with spelling and reading. There is a fee to join: <https://www.nessy.com/uk/>

FunBrain is a fun website with lots of printables and games to encourage early writing skills. Also includes reading and maths resources. It is an American website but still useful. <https://www.funbrain.com/pre-k-and-k-playground>

National Literacy Trust is a great website which has developmental milestones and fun activities you can try at home <https://literacytrust.org.uk/parents-and-families/>

To support early letter formation, use these sayings: <http://www.thebellbird.cambs.sch.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/Letter-formation-chart.pdf>

Who can I ask for more help or advice on supporting writing?

Your child's class teacher and the school SENCO, Mrs Lee, will always be happy to help you with advice on supporting your child's writing at home. Please do come and have a chat.

We hope you enjoy this resource and find many of the practical tips useful.

St Pauls CE Primary School