

Writing Key Considerations

It is important that teachers and SLT see the catch up of writing as a 'long game' and not a 'quick fix'. This is more of a challenge for children currently in Y1 and Y5, as they will face statutory assessments when they return to school in 2021. For these children a clear focus on transcription will be key.

1. Writing stamina will have dropped. Some children may have written very little at all and others may have written online if a lot of their lockdown work was digital. Perhaps a whole class focus on writing for a week or two with a shared outcome is the best way to start. This could take the form of a pandemic diary and a link could be made to Samuel Pepys's diary (for Great Fire of London) and Anne Frank. This can be done from an animal's perspective, such as a pet or a pigeon that flies past the flat everyday... images of Bristol during lockdown can support here. Do not ask children to engage in a cold write task, as this will be too difficult and will not tell us about what they have retained regarding knowledge of grammar and punctuation.

Alternatively, a short class book could be used as the stimulus for writing. The form of writing chosen should be accessible such as diary writing and perhaps informal (not a newspaper report) as this will be more readily accessible by children of all ages. Lots of speaking and listening opportunities and modelling (such as a WAGOLL – what a good one looks like). An exemplar of articulation of ideas should precede any writing and focussed, short burst pieces of writing will best support children. Writing tasks should have a clear purpose and audience in mind, so children know how to manipulate their writing and what they have been asked to communicate. It is always helpful for children to write for a real audience so consider how this could be achieved when deciding upon a task. Concentration levels may also have dropped.

2. Consider other stimuli for writing such as:
 - Pobble 365 images: <https://www.pobble365.com/being-big/>
 - Harris Burdick mystery pictures: <https://www.slps.org/cms/lib/MO01001157/Centricity/Domain/10749/rotated.pdf>
 - Literacy Shed: <https://www.literacyshed.com/home.html>
 - Poetry: e.g. the Listeners; the Highwayman (lends itself to lots of different writing opportunities)
3. Consider which forms of writing have been missed, both fiction and non-fiction, and focus on a couple of these (too many different forms will be overwhelming). For children who are currently in Y1 and Y5, looking at the Teacher Assessment Framework will support with prioritisation of writing forms. For other year groups, based on AfL during from the above suggestion (pandemic diary), consider which form of writing is best suited to learning need.
4. For writing, initially prioritise cohesion. Does the writing make sense and is it linked and does it flow? This will look different in different year groups (see accompanying writing key priorities document).

5. For grammar, also see writing key priorities document, which outlines the key foci for each year group.
6. Using AfL, revisit some of the key spelling patterns and/or key words covered so far in fun, interactive games (such as Scrabble, Boggle, Countdown, Online Spelling Bee etc.). This will enable teachers to assess which rules and keywords have been retained and which, moving forwards, need re-capping or teaching to 'stick'. For younger children, prioritise HFW and key words.
7. Writing can be supported across the wider curriculum too, including in maths, science, RE and the humanities. Again, clear, focussed short burst activities will be most supportive, such as reasoning in maths or recording predictions in science.
8. As lockdown measures begin to be eased, consider the key priorities for transitioning children back to school, to prepare them personally and academically for return. Does some specific work need to be set to support this as part of the transition from remote learning to school based learning? Can ICT support this, such as a Zoom lesson or a class quiz/challenge? For young children this may well be letter formation and or handwriting. If a diary entry (point 1) is the preferred form of writing on return, then a bridging task may need to be set to support children into this task (such as children keeping a record of things they are doing at home as an aide memoire). If a shared text is the preferred stimulus, then perhaps learning related to this could be shared in advance (e.g. the front cover and questions about what it may be about and what can be inferred from the illustration and the blurb).
9. Over the last few weeks, for many children, there would have been a loss of routine, structure, friendship, opportunity and freedom. These need to be carefully rebuilt and the learning environment needs careful consideration to support this.
10. When schools return, it will be to a new normal, as we will be living with a virus rather than having been able to eliminate it through vaccine, appropriate treatment or effective and definitive testing for immunity. Social distancing and control over the spread of infection will significantly shape our pedagogical practices moving forwards. Therefore, children are likely to be writing individually and not able to write collaboratively together for a significant amount of time. Consider how writing work can continue, such as via video demonstration; children editing documents online (Google Docs or Share point etc.). This may well mean that self-drafting and self- editing has heightened significance.
11. Transition to the next year group will also be important for all children. Teaching and learning for the class will need to be discussed in detail by the current and new class teacher to ensure:
 - areas that were not covered are highlighted
 - aspects that the class found challenging and were not 100% secure with are revisited

Alongside these ideas, it is key that staff, and school leaders, should not make any assumptions about the children when they return to school. Some children will have done no formal writing while they have been at home and it is likely that these children will have 'lost' some of the knowledge that they had gained in the 6 months that they had in school.

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