

## Guide to encouraging writing at home



At St Mildred's Primary Infant School we know how important it is for teachers and parents to work together to give your child the best start. Parents help so much supporting children in learning to read at home but can be unsure of the best ways to help with writing. We have put this booklet together in order to help with this! We hope you will find it useful and full of ideas to help you encourage your child with writing at home!



**WRITE  
WITH  
YOUR CHILD**

Writing and reading are part of every aspect of your child's life and while children do lots of literacy based activities at school (e.g. writing, reading, handwriting, phonics), there are lots of ways that you can support your child at home. This booklet aims to give lots of suggestions and ideas for making writing fun and meaningful at home and improving achievement levels at school.

### **General tips and ideas**

- The basis of all good writing is good talk. Writing depends on knowing lots of words and being able to join them together in interesting ways.

Encourage your child/ren to:-

- Explain a game or activity
  - Describe a person, place, picture or thing
  - Retell stories
  - Talk about things they have done e.g visits, day at school, encourage detail
  - Predict what might happen next in a story, TV programme or sequel to a film
  - Play word games
- Be a reading model and read to your child (e.g. stories, poems, factual information such as timetables, magazines, newspaper reports, letters, emails, adverts, instructions) - discuss the ways authors use words to shape their ideas.
  - Be a writing model and encourage your child to write alongside you for real purposes e.g. shopping lists, birthday/Christmas lists, labels, invitations, thank you letters, emails to friends, postcards, cards for relatives, scrap books of holidays/hobbies/special events, diaries, posters for real events, short stories or poems for family members, menus, texting, bedroom or house rules.
  - Have an exciting selection of writing materials available e.g. a range of pencils, pens, coloured crayons, writing icing, writing soaps for bathtime.
  - Praise your child for trying and don't dwell on mistakes. Focus on content and enjoyment of writing for fun and for purpose.



## Early Writing

Encourage young children to look at print on road signs, food packets, in books, magazines and catalogues. Go to the library and read favourite books over and over again. Enjoy them.

Try fun activities that strengthen your child's hand e.g cutting, painting, squeezing playdough, picking up small things with tweezers and pegs.

Use magnetic letters and make small words together. Leave a message on the fridge door and encourage your child to reply.

Praise play writing - early squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing.

Make up a story together about one of their toys. You write the story as they say the words. Make up a little booklet. Take photos and use the pictures in the book.

Buy stickers of a favourite TV programme or book. Make your own little book about it.

Let your child write their own Christmas cards, thank you letters, cards or emails to friends or relatives, invitations to a party, or a list of things they need to take on holiday.

Cut up letters from magazines for children to make their names and short sentences.

Make handwriting interesting - practise drawing letters in sand, water or paint, use white boards, playdough, pastry or shaving foam.

## More confident writers

Continue talking about experiences, this remains the key to good writing. Talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted and touched with as many details as possible.

Play word-building games to develop descriptive vocabulary such as Boggle, Scrabbles, Guess Who, 'What am I?' (one person thinks of something to describe. They give clues by describing it, without saying its name. Other players have to guess what it is with as few clues as possible.)

Create silly sentences or tongue twisters using alliteration (a group of words that all begin with the same sound) e.g. Sad Sid slipped on Sam's salad sandwich.

Encourage your child to rehearse their sentence out loud before they write it down. Also encourage children to punctuate their sentences with a full stop and capital letter. Celebrate what the writing says first of all rather than focusing on errors. If a tricky word has been used in an interesting way, this should be praised even if it is spelled wrongly. Remember, it is difficult to get everything right when you are learning!

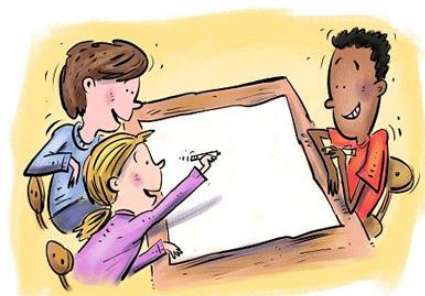
Let children write part of shopping lists and then let them be responsible for carrying the list and finding certain items.

After making a cake, doing a craft activity or playing a game, challenge children to write instructions for someone else to follow.

Make up fun ways to remember how to spell difficult words e.g Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants = because, **what** has a hat, **when** has a hen.

Play 'I Spy' and 'Hangman' which encourage use of sounds and spellings.

Encourage your child to learn some key spellings or high frequency words. Write the spelling in sentences with accurate punctuation and practise high frequency and handwriting.



## Confident Writers

Help your child write a letter to their favourite author. Details can be found on the internet.

As with early writers be aware of occasions when children can be involved in writing - shopping lists, cards, phone messages, notes to friends, invitations to family occasions, emailing friends, blogging, texting (be aware of e-safety).

Write information pages or booklets about a hobby or something they find interesting e.g. dinosaurs, class topics, sports stars etc. Illustrate and label. Encourage use of paragraphs for blocks of information.

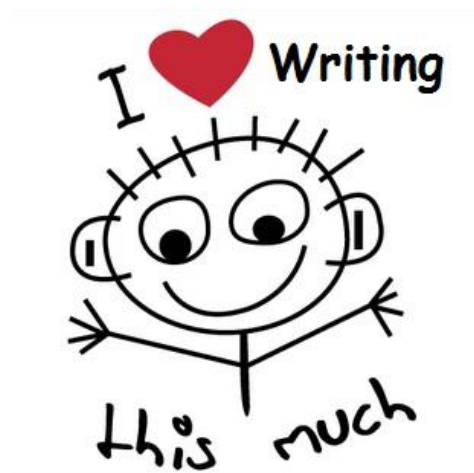
Write post cards from holidays and record holiday events in a diary that can be shared with friends or family.

Provide your child with a comfortable place to work and exciting writing materials. A dictionary or spell check on a computer would also be useful.

Let your child see you being a model writer but also let them see that you are not perfect! Checking, making changes and editing what you write are a natural part of writing.

Ask your child what his/her writing targets are and help them work specifically on these.

Read books to, and with, them that are at a higher level than their own reading to expose them to ambitious vocabulary and complex sentence structure.



## Encourage Reluctant Writers

If your child has barriers towards writing, or low self esteem as a writer, praising and valuing your child's writing is very important. Your child may need support when they write and may need you to talk through their ideas first and help with composing and structure.

You can help your child with any spellings they ask for but encourage them to try to use their phonics first and have a go. Let them know how important it is to try and praise their efforts even if it is not correct. When they have finished writing you could always go back and choose one particular word to focus on and learn how to spell.

Remember that writing does not have to be lengthy or boring - write about things they love or are interested in!

Writing for real purposes is more meaningful and rewarding for children and creates a fun and interesting way for children to develop their writing skills.

Have fun learning together!



## Some useful websites:

<http://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/tips-to-support-writing-at-home/>

<http://www.midlandit.co.uk/education/writingtips.htm>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/magickey/adventures/index.shtml>

<http://www.sentenceplay.co.uk/sentenceGames.htm>

<http://www.crickweb.co.uk/ks1literacy.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/starship/english/storyplant.shtml>  
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