

English Writing: Pedagogy

At Emmaus, we want children to be able to express themselves and communicate their ideas clearly. We want them to acquire a wide vocabulary and an understanding of how grammatical structures contribute to meaning. Our writing is planned around a shared text, based on the expertise of the Centre of Literacy in Primary Education's 'Power of Reading' programme (CLPE 2021). Power of Reading uses quality children's literature at the heart of the writing curriculum, allowing a shared text to act as a stimulus for children's writing.

Our Writing Sequence

Writing lessons follow a sequence that helps children to order their thinking and their writing. Each lesson builds on previous learning to work towards an independent write at the end of each unit. This allows children to develop their knowledge and skills over time. Greater depth objectives are planned for children who have a secure understanding of the content taught. At Emmaus, we use the language of 'Acquire' and 'Apply' to identify learning at greater depth. Our writing lessons are taught using the following sequence:

- **Stimulus:** Children encounter the text or stimulus related to the text. For example, 'Leon and the Place Between' takes place in a circus tent. The Stimulus lesson may include part of the text and some circus music to help the child to 'inhabit the world of the text' (Corbett 2012).
- **Vocab:** The focus of this lesson is on building high-quality vocabulary that links to the text the children are reading about and are going to write about. Discussions in this lesson may focus on the use of vocabulary to create different shades of meaning.
- **Model:** This lesson uses a high-quality example or extract that has qualities (either in terms of vocabulary or sentence structure) that we want the children to use in their writing. This shows how the vocabulary the children are developing can be used in practise. For example: when reading 'Storm' by Kevin Crossley-Holland, children write a description of a marsh (the setting of the story). To see this in practise, the children read an age-appropriate extract of a marsh description from 'Where the Crawdads Sing' by Delia Owens.
- **Toolkit 1:** A lesson with a grammatical focus that relates to the text type the children will write (see below for more detail about how spelling, punctuation and grammar are taught).
- **Toolkit 2:** A lesson with a second grammatical focus.
- **Sentence Crafting:** A lesson with a focus on sentence construction and variation. This lesson may make links to the 'Model' lesson where a sentence structure was first encountered. Strategies used can include sentence combining, sentence shrinking, sentence expanding and sentence signposting (Quigley 2023).
- **Getting Set:** A planning lesson, where children can record all they have learned so far in one place.
- **Put into Practise:** Children write independently, using their previous vocabulary and grammar lessons in their writing.
- **Edit and Check:** Children have individual or small group feedback on which to act. We use purple pens for editing, so that it is clear where children have made changes to their work. They then check their work for basic punctuation and spelling errors.
- **Publish:** Children have the opportunity to create a neat version of their work for a specific purpose. This could be handwritten, typed or recorded.

Teaching Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPG) is taught explicitly during our 'Toolkit' lessons and discretely where appropriate. Our lessons are taught in line with National Curriculum expectations and are underpinned by principles outlined by Debra Myhill et al (2013, p. 105):

- "Grammatical metalanguage is used, but it is always explained through examples and patterns;
- Links are always made between the feature introduced and how it might enhance the writing being tackled;
- Discussion is fundamental in encouraging critical conversations about language and effects;
- The use of 'creative imitation' offers model patterns for students to play with and then use in their own writing;
- The use of authentic examples from authentic texts links writers to the broader community of writers;
- Activities should support students in making choices and being designers of writing;
- Language play, experimentation, risk-taking and games should be actively encouraged."

Teaching sentence crafting

Educational research indicates that teaching sentence construction explicitly helps to improve children's accuracy and quality of writing (Andrews et al 2006; Ofsted 2022). Children will practise four main sentence variation strategies:

TEACHING SENTENCE VARIATION

Sentence Variation Strategies



Sentence Combining

Sentence combining is the combination of two or more sentences into one complex sentence.

e.g. The Great Fire of London began on Pudding Lane in the bakery of Thomas Farriner. The fire worsened due to the long, hot summer.

Is revised to...

During a long, hot summer, the Great Fire of London likely began in the bakery of Thomas Farriner.



Sentence Shrinking

Sentence shrinking is the controlled reduction of sentence length for clarity or for rhetorical impact.

e.g. It hadn't rained for months so that farmers had to find new technologies to water the crops..

Is reduced to...

Hydration technology was used to water the crops.



Sentence Expanding

Sentence expanding involves the development of a sentence by adding additional clauses.

e.g. He is a total monster.

Is added to...

He is a total monster, stomping through the school, screaming at petrified pupils.



Sentence Signposting

Sentence signposting is the crafting of conjunctions to clarify and connect across and within sentences.

e.g. 'First... in addition...To conclude...'

'Due to... particularly... so that...'

'Notably... however... In short...'

(Image: Quigley 2023)

For further information, please read:

Andrews et al. 2006 The effect of grammar teaching on writing development; *British Educational Research Journal* Vol. 32 No. 1

CLPE 2021 *Power of Reading: Quality children's literature at the heart of all learning*
<https://clpe.org.uk/powerofreading> Accessed 27.04.2021

Corbett P 2012 *Teaching English Creatively* <https://www.talk4writing.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Overview-Teaching-English-Creatively.docx.pdf> Accessed 27.04.2021

Myhill D et al 2013 Playful explicitness with grammar: a pedagogy for writing; *Literacy* Vol. 47 No. 2 pp. 103-111

Quigley A 2023 *Crafting Great Sentences* <https://www.theconfidentteacher.com/2023/05/crafting-great-sentences/> Accessed 15.09.2023

