

Helping your Child with Writing

Writing- a skill for life!

How many times have you written today? From shopping lists to text messages we all use writing to communicate every day. As parents and carers you can have a profound effect on your child's attitude to writing.

Your help is invaluable and we've written this booklet in response to the many requests from you about ways to help your children develop as writers.

How we teach writing at St. Michael's

One of the first, and most important, steps on the road to becoming a confident writer is having something to say and the language to express it! At St. Michael's we recognise the importance of speaking and listening skills which is why before our children are asked to write they are given time to talk, play with language and to explore ideas (e.g. through drama). Many children have commented on how much more confident and prepared they feel about writing in our Big Write sessions having first completed their 'talk homework'.

The importance of phonic knowledge is recognised throughout the school; with the greatest teaching emphasis taking place in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. From Foundation Stage children are taught letter sounds, letter formation and the spelling of key words. Spelling is taught throughout the school, often through spelling investigations; some groups of children/ classes learn weekly spellings whilst others may be set spelling investigations for homework.

Handwriting skills are also taught throughout the school. We ensure children are given the opportunities they need to develop their fine motor skills through a range of activities. We recognise the importance of developing a comfortable and efficient pencil grip in order to facilitate the correct formation of letters.

In recognition of the importance of writing for a purpose many specific text types are taught and consolidated through subjects other than the literacy; e.g. report writing in science or instruction writing in D.T. Children are taught to recognise the features of a range of text types, through reading, which they then apply in their own writing. The Big Write also provides opportunities for sustained independent writing; class teachers plan the Big Write to meet the needs of their class and so a huge range of text types and subjects are covered across the school.

Don't forget:

- ✓ **Something interesting to write about**
- ✓ **Plenty of time for discussion and exploration**
- ✓ **Time to plan (this doesn't have to be written; pictures can be helpful)**
- ✓ **It's great to take risks and making mistakes helps us to learn**
- ✓ **Somewhere comfortable to write**
- ✓ **The correct tools (a range of paper and pens/pencils or access to a computer)**
- ✓ **Value effort above all else (has your child tried? Are they proud of what they have achieved? Focus on the positive because writing at home shouldn't become a chore for you or your child)**
- ✓ **Handwriting and spelling are important but not as important as the content of the writing (focus on the positive aspects of your child's writing; it's best to correct a couple of key word spellings rather than highlighting lots of errors)**
- ✓ **It's better to write enthusiastically for ten minutes than miserably for thirty**

Ways to help your child become a writer

❖ **Write for a reason**

Make any writing purposeful. Children can write cards for special occasions, send postcards, letters, e-mails. They can help write a shopping list, write reminders on post-its or keep a scrapbook/ holiday diary (filled with pictures which they might want to label).

❖ **Create a book with your child**

Help your child to make their own book about something you both enjoy (e.g. a favourite football club or sport or celebrity or a joke book!)

❖ **Write a script**

Help your child to create a script based on their favourite TV programme, film or book. Then help them to act it out!

❖ **Help your child become a storyteller first**

Make up stories together and act them out before focusing on writing.

❖ **Write a story**

Discuss what kind of story your child might enjoy writing and who will have the opportunity to read it afterwards. It might be fun to plan it together and ask your child to share the techniques that they have learnt at school with you. They may wish to draw on the VCOP pyramid we use as part of the Big Write or think about a story mountain to help them to plan.

❖ **Read to your child or tell them a story (whatever their age)**

A really good way to develop an understanding of how stories work is by listening to them.

❖ **Share rhymes and poetry with your child**

This can be a good starting point for their own poetry writing.

❖ **Play word games**

From 'I spy' to Balderdash there are many entertaining games available which can help your child to develop their spelling, knowledge of vocabulary and story-telling skills.

Useful websites:

www.wordsforlife.org.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/parents

www.longman.co.uk (click on primary)

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

www.wordle.net

www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks2