



## **IBSA Writing Policy**

### **Rationale**

Writing makes a significant contribution to the development of children as thinkers and learners. The purpose of this policy is to promote a consistency of approach and to ensure that continuity and progression are embedded in our practice. All staff must follow the IBSA School Programme of Study in Writing as this forms the basis of our teaching.

### **Writing Aims**

- To assist pupils in becoming efficient and effective writers who are able to write appropriately for a variety of audiences.
- To assist pupils in acquiring the knowledge and skills to communicate effectively within a range of contexts.
- To assist pupils to become aware of and appreciate the writer's craft.

Writing is a complex skill that will not develop without teaching and practice. We endeavour to meet our aims by:

- helping children to use texts to gain more knowledge about improving their own writing,
- giving practice of extended writing in a variety of purposeful contexts,
- developing positive attitudes to the writing process including planning and redrafting,
- supporting improvement and having high expectations of core skills i.e. spelling, grammar, punctuation,
- developing and maintaining a high writing achievement ethos at all stages in the school,
- allowing children to plan, draft, read and redraft their writing,
- providing feedback to pupils which will enable them to improve their writing skills,
- giving a monthly writing task which is assessed with a view to target setting.

### **Principles of effective learning and teaching**

- Clear targets should be set for each writing lesson. These should be shared with the pupil/group and displayed during the lesson.
- Provide children with a model of the kind of writing expected.
- Children should be encouraged to plan their writing, perhaps following a group discussion, with teacher recording suggestions on the board.
- Children may be given a scaffold to help them with their planning.
- Children may discuss their plan with a writing partner.
- All children should be involved in some form of continuous writing at least once each week.
- Any context for writing may be chosen but the range of skills necessary should be taught systematically.

- Starting points for writing should be carefully selected to provide a meaningful context. Children respond better when they know why they are writing and whom it is for.
- From time to time pupils should be given the opportunity to write about any subject of their choice.
- There should be a literacy rich environment in the classroom, reflecting both current topics and pupils writing.
- Talking and reading assist writing. This should be appropriately encouraged in both the classroom and home to encourage knowledge and use of extended vocabulary and style.
- Planning / drafting / editing should be used to improve both the context and the conventions of writing.
- Spelling mistakes of “known” words can be highlighted and used as a tool for learning but this should not overshadow other aspects of the writer’s craft.

### **Promoting high expectations**

All teachers should have high expectations in regard to the standard of pupils’ writing, taking due account of the child’s stage of development. All pupils should be encouraged to achieve the highest possible standard of writing according to their stage of development and level of ability. These expectations can be made explicit in a variety of ways:

- Use of positive feedback (oral or written)
- Stickers/stamps
- Star writer awards/certificates
- Reading children’s writing to the class
- Child reads writing to the class (or another class)
- Display children’s writing around the school
- Publish children’s writing in ‘books’

### **Formative assessment as part of teaching**

The purpose of formative assessment is to identify what pupils have learned and can do and what their next steps in learning should be. While children are engaged in their writing task teachers will:

- ‘conference’ with children i.e. talk to them about their writing while they are doing it. This is the most effective form of assessment.
- Children should be encouraged to proof read and edit their own work, or that of a writing partner. It may be helpful to provide a criteria checklist to help children with this task.
- Teachers may conference with a group of children during the writing task. An effective technique identified by HMI is the ‘author’s chair’ where pupil writers explain to others what and how they are trying to achieve in a piece of writing. The audience may comment and make suggestions.
- After each writing task pupils should be made aware of their next steps in learning.

## Marking finished writing

- Teachers should mark a finished piece of writing against the targets/criteria set for the task.
- Marking should help the child improve his/her writing.
- The teacher's first response should be about **what** has been written and should be positive and encouraging. Only then should she/he turn to how it has been written.
- The best approach to this is for the teacher to go over the pupil's work with him/her, highlighting obvious errors in spelling and punctuation, talking about choice and use of language and discussing the selection and organisation of ideas.
- From children's writing, the teacher should observe and note points, which require to be taught on an individual/group/class basis.
- After discussion, and depending on the maturity of the pupil, s/he should be encouraged to follow a first draft with a second, more refined version. The redrafting process can also focus on just one part of the first draft e.g. Let's rewrite the opening paragraph to make it more mysterious.
- Teachers should avoid detailed scrutiny of every piece of writing produced by a child. Occasionally, it is appropriate to focus **only** on the positive aspects of a child's writing.

## Correction Code

C capital letters needed

NP new paragraph needed (// to mark place in text)

sp spelling (whole word written by teacher in margin or child to find correct spelling)

U word(s) missed

## Summative assessment and recording

- **At least once** during each term teachers should make a summative assessment of pupils' writing i.e. assess a piece of writing against the appropriate Key Stage First of the Month Writing Assessment and Target Sheet.
- A record of these assessments must be kept by the teacher.
- Ideally teachers should have the opportunity to crossmark children's writing to ensure consistency in assessment.
- Pupil profiles will be updated twice a year giving an indication of pupil progress in writing.

## Writing at the Early Stages

At the very early stages teachers will use a three pronged approach to developing pupils' writing skills:

- **Independent writing** – the child attempts to write his/her own story. This may consist of scribbles, letter-like forms, actual letters, invented spellings, conventional words, or a combination of these. Children should be encouraged to read back what they have written.
- **Scribing** – the teacher acts as a scribe for the child. On *some* occasions it will be beneficial to write down exactly what the child says without modification by the teacher. Children should learn that writing can be speech written down.
- **Copying** – the child creates a short piece of writing using either a class or personal bank of word cards. The child selects the relevant cards from the wordbank, places them in the correct order and then copies them onto a page. The teacher can introduce this approach by scribing what the child wants to write on a long strip of paper, asking the child to read what has been written, and cutting the sentence into two or three parts. The child then puts the sentence back together again and rereads it before copying it out on paper. It is not recommended that children simply copy a scribed story as this has little value in terms of developing storywriting skills.

## Additional needs

Children with specific writing or language difficulties may require an individualised programme. This may be planned in consultation with the learning support teacher. Time should be taken to analyse the problem/s which may be related to language processing, hand, eye or ear difficulties. Appropriate short/long term strategies should then be planned. Such children may be identified at any time.

## Resources

- Oxford Reading Tree, Ginn, Sunshine books.
- Dictionaries, thesauruses and word banks should also be available where appropriate.
- Photographs, posters, poems, artefacts, music or video material and real events can all help to provide useful stimulus.
- IBSA School's own writing targets.
- A modified Jolly Phonics approach is used to introduce letter sounds.
- Nelson handwriting scheme
- Proof-reading and Editing provides further practice of grammar.

## Spelling

- At the early stages the child's natural curiosity for and enjoyment in words should be exploited. Rhymes, rhythms, jingles and patterns will be a daily occurrence. Children should be encouraged to experiment with spellings and be praised for their attempts. At this stage the main aim should be to develop confidence and enjoyment in writing and the written word.
- Handwriting sessions might also be used as a focus for spelling. Attention might be drawn to initial letter sounds, letter strings or phonic blends as appropriate. Using a multisensory approach involving finger tracing can help in learning to spell new words. Research has shown that a flowing, clear and speedy handwriting style helps to improve spelling.

### **As the child's writing and awareness develops the following principles should apply:**

- The teacher should make reference to spelling regularly and on an ongoing basis. This can include the teacher writing on the board asking for help in spelling a word, pointing out pitfalls within words, asking for homonyms, homophones, words with the same pattern, etc.
- Throughout the school, the **LOOK, SAY, COVER, WRITE, CHECK** strategy should be adopted.
- Children should be encouraged to make an attempt at a spelling in order not to break the flow in writing. Spellings can be checked later.
- It is important that pupils are asked to attempt words for themselves before the teacher writes it for them. Breaking the word into syllables helps in this process.
- Encourage children to look for small words inside large ones eg ear/hear
- Children should be encouraged to check their own spellings. Automatic use should be made of dictionaries and class word banks for this purpose.
- Spelling rules should be used frequently and the most basic ones should be taught.
- Spelling and/or word study should be fun! Children should be encouraged to develop a fascination for words. For this reason games, puzzles and rhymes will be an essential part of the school programme.
- Progress in spelling should be monitored regularly through writing. If children write regularly, teachers will have ample opportunity to assess spelling.
- From Y1-Y6 pupils will be given spelling homework.

## **Handwriting**

There should be a consistent approach to handwriting in every class, by every teacher, throughout the whole school. To assist with this the 'Nelson' handwriting schemes will form the basis of development work in handwriting. The first handwriting lessons are the most important. What is learned then may affect the writer for many years to come. The teacher's attitude is also important. Where an imaginative positive approach is used, it is likely that pupils will react in the same way. Short handwriting exercises should be planned as they produce the best results. It is important that a fast, fluent hand is promoted. First priority should be legibility and the second speed. Ensure that children are comfortable and relaxed and that their pencil grip is correct. Ensure that pupils have appropriate writing tools i.e. pencils are of adequate length and sharpened.

· Individuals should be monitored during handwriting exercises to ensure that the way they form letters, begin words, hold the pencil and position the paper are all conducive to good practice.

## **Using ICT to enhance and develop writing skills**

Computers have a vital role to play in enhancing and developing writing skills. It is important to realise and develop the powerful tool we have in word processing and desktop publishing packages in an appropriate and effective manner for all children in IBSA School.

### **Aims:**

- To allow children freedom to draft and redraft without having to start at the beginning each time.
- To present a new dimension for written expression.
- To enable all children to present work in an attractive and professional manner.
- To allow children to write in 'real life' context, e.g. newspaper production using a DTP package.
- To motivate children to write.

## **The writing process**

In the early stages of writing, on-screen word banks can help the writing process. Recognising and then selecting words avoids the need for laborious copying and consequent misspelling. A 'speak' facility allows the child to listen to the text they have typed on the screen, helping to identify mistakes. Spelling mistakes are more easily identified by the child when seen in print than in their own handwriting. At the top of the school, children can use spell-check and thesaurus tools to improve their writing.

### **Drafting and Re-Drafting**

It is important that the word processor should not be used only to produce a 'fair copy'. All children should regularly have the opportunity of drafting a piece of work directly on to the screen and then be able to take advantage of the ease of redrafting. Redrafting at first takes the form of correcting spelling and punctuation and adding and deleting text. Later on pupils can use cut, copy and paste commands to move blocks of text easily.

### **Presentation**

Using a word processor gives an immediately attractive, uniform look to a child's writing which can be especially satisfying and confidence boosting to a child with poor handwriting. At all times, children should be encouraged to think about the purpose of the piece of writing and what audience it is for and this should influence the final presentation of their writing, eg choice of font, justification, use of bullet points etc.

### **Monitoring and Review**

Teachers' plans will provide evidence of balance and appropriateness of writing activities. Pupil work on writing will be monitored regularly. This will involve the HT or Head of English in sampling examples from each class on a regular basis. Classroom displays will also provide evidence of a number of the learning and teaching points. Discussion with pupils and with staff will also help to ensure that the school policy is being followed.

This policy was agreed by the SMT in June 2010 and will be reviewed in June 2011.