

Writing at Westfield



Pupils come to Westfield School because they have been assessed as experiencing communication and interaction within a moderate difficulties range. The vast majority of our pupils will have a diagnosis of ASC and other comorbid diagnoses such as ADHD, Sensory Processing and Developmental Co-ordination difficulties.

Intent

At Westfield School, our intent is to provide a comprehensive and highly individualised writing curriculum for children with moderate learning difficulties and speech and language delays. Our approach, developed in collaboration with Sarah Lilley from I'm A Clever Writer, is underpinned by the principles of mastery learning, focusing on teaching children at their current levels, repetition, gradual progression, and small, manageable steps. Our aim is for these children to independently think of, say, and write clear, coherent and legible sentences. Our curriculum progression closely aligns with our speech and language program (SHAPE CODING™) and incorporates occupational therapy-based handwriting skills. We also empower children to apply their phonics skills in writing, producing simple written sentences. High-quality fiction and non-fiction books are integrated into our curriculum to inspire and support children in their writing journey, enhancing their communication, language, and literacy skills.

Implementation

Our writing approach at Westfield School is characterised by the following key implementation strategies:

1. **Bespoke Writing Curriculum:** Our writing lead, in collaboration with Sarah Lilley from I'm A Clever Writer, has designed a specialised writing curriculum tailored to the unique needs of our children. This curriculum progresses systematically, allowing children to master writing skills at their own pace.
2. **Mastery Values:** We incorporate mastery values, which involve teaching children at their individual levels, providing repeated opportunities to revisit and reinforce learning, and introducing new elements of writing expectations gradually to facilitate skill embedding in long-term memory.

3. **Clear Sentence Writing:** Our primary goal is for children to independently produce clear and comprehensible sentences. We provide explicit instruction and practice to achieve this objective.
4. **Sentence Sequencing:** Once children can write a range of clear sentences independently, they are taught how to sequence these sentences effectively, promoting the development of coherent written narratives.
5. **Integration with Speech and Language Program (SHAPE CODING™):** Our curriculum progression aligns closely with SHAPE CODING, ensuring a seamless transition between verbal and written communication skills.
6. **Handwriting Curriculum:** We incorporate occupational therapy-based handwriting instruction to enhance fine motor skills, enabling children to write legibly and comfortably.
7. **Phonics Integration:** We empower children to apply their phonics skills in writing, allowing them to construct simple written sentences with confidence and accuracy.
8. **Inspiration from Quality Books:** We utilise high-quality fiction and non-fiction books to inspire children's writing within the context of their phonics and SHAPE CODING™ levels.
9. **Integration within Communication, Language, and Literacy Lessons:** We are beginning to use these high-quality books to teach reading and language skills in addition to using them as inspiration for writing activities. This creates a cohesive approach to communication, language, and literacy development.

Impact

Our innovative teaching approach introduced in the summer term of 2023, has brought about transformative changes in our children's learning experiences and outcomes within writing. Many children have expressed a newfound confidence in their writing. A year 6 child (July 2023) stated, "Now I know what I'm meant to write."

Furthermore, the ability of many children to recognise and point out improved elements in their writing (like tall ladder letters and finger spaces) demonstrates their increased self-awareness and engagement in the learning process. Our approach has empowered them to take ownership of their progress. The teaching team and children take pride in their visible progress and achievements. This pride serves as a powerful motivator, driving our children to strive for improvement. Further still, their pride in their writing enhances the self-esteem.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our writing approach is driven by a clear intent, implemented through a collaborative and tailored curriculum. It has a tangible impact on our children's ability to independently and to confidently write. We remain committed to refining and enhancing our approach to empower every child to become proficient and confident writers and communicators.