

ENGLISH · ADULT REFERENCE

Whole-School Writing Progression

Pre-K to Grade 6 / Y6

Composition vs transcription

Pre-K & Reception (Pre-K and Kindergarten)

| Skill | Focus | On track |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| Mark-making | Drawings begin to represent meaning | Pretends to write; draws shapes meant to be letters |
| Phonics-to-print | Hearing initial sounds; writing them | Writes own name; attempts simple words |
| Composition (oral) | Tells stories aloud | Strong oral composition; rich vocabulary |
| Pencil grip | Tripod grip developing | Stable pencil grip emerging |
| Vocabulary | Tier 1 vocabulary expanding | Speaks in full, structured sentences |

Year 1 & 2 (Grades 1-2)

| Skill | Focus | On track |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Composition | Simple sentences with capital letter and full stop | Writes 3-5 connected sentences |
| Spelling | Phase 5/6 phonics applied; common-exception words | Spelling pattern-based; mostly readable |
| Sentence structure | Conjunctions: and, but, because, when | Uses 'and' confidently; 'because' emerging |
| Vocabulary | Adjectives, then adverbs | Begins choosing words for effect |
| Handwriting | Lower-case and capital letters formed correctly | Letters joined emerging in Y2 |
| Editing | Reads own writing aloud; spots errors | Beginning to self-correct simple errors |

Year 3 & 4 (Grades 3-4)

| Skill | Focus | On track |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Composition | Paragraphed extended pieces | Y3: 1-2 paragraphs; Y4: clear paragraphing |
| Spelling | Statutory spelling lists; less phonics-dependent | Most spellings correct; uses dictionary |
| Sentence structure | Complex sentences; subordinate clauses | Uses 'although', 'while', 'if' appropriately |
| Vocabulary | Tier 2 vocabulary in writing | Word choice noticeable; thesaurus use beginning |
| Handwriting | Joined writing consolidated; legible | Consistent legibility at speed |
| Editing | Re-reads for sense and accuracy | Self-corrects punctuation and spelling |

Year 5 & 6 (Grades 5-6)

| Skill | Focus | On track |
|-------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Composition | Sustained writing across genres | Multi-page extended pieces with clear structure |



| Skill | Focus | On track |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Spelling | Y5/6 statutory list; etymology | Most spellings correct including unusual patterns |
| Sentence structure | Wide variety; sentence-level effects | Uses parenthesis, semicolons, dashes appropriately |
| Vocabulary | Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary used for effect | Thesaurus internalised; word choice deliberate |
| Handwriting | Fluent joined hand | Legible at speed; some children develop personal style |
| Editing | Substantive revision; not just proofreading | Re-writes whole paragraphs; takes feedback |
| Genre awareness | Distinguishes purposes and audiences | Can write differently for narrative vs persuasive vs explanatory |

The genres SATs (and life) require

The 'reluctant writer' problem

English Lead's writing audit — annual



- Are children writing at length appropriate to age across KS2?
- Is spelling taught using a coherent scheme?
- Are children's books showing progression term-to-term?
- Is editing taught as a skill, not just a final step?
- Are reluctant writers identified and supported?
- Is handwriting taught explicitly across KS1?
- Are the major genres covered across the year in each year group?
- Are class teachers giving useful written feedback (not just ticks)?
- Are SEND children getting writing-specific support?
- Are extended writing pieces happening at appropriate frequency?

