



# *Guidance on the Development of Early Writing in Reception Classes*

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES

## Purpose of the guidance

This guidance brings together and summarises advice on teaching writing in Reception classes contained in recent publications sent to schools, in particular:

- Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage (QCA/DfEE May 2000)
- Developing Early Writing (DfEE May 2001)

It is intended for the use of practitioners, headteachers and governors and aims to illustrate the relationship between the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage*, the National Literacy Strategy *Framework for teaching* and *Developing Early Writing* within the specific context of the Reception class.

## The Foundation Stage

The Reception year is the final year of the Foundation Stage. The *Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage* is the core reference document for all early years practitioners.

Reception class practitioners should also refer to the guidance set out in the NLS *Framework for Teaching* and *Developing Early Writing* when planning for writing.

## Reception Classes

Children enter Reception classes at different points throughout the school year from a range of early years settings and may attend full-time or part-time. For a few children it will be their first experience in a group setting outside the home. Reception classes will therefore include children who have very different levels of experience and understanding, including those with special needs. It is important that practitioners' support for children takes account of previous experiences and builds on what children can already do. Effective practitioners use their awareness of children's prior experience, knowledge and skills together with their professional judgement to provide an appropriate Communication, Language and Literacy curriculum. Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. Schools should

therefore seek to develop an effective partnership with parents with a two-way flow of information, knowledge and expertise. They should also seek to obtain information from previous settings attended.

## **Teaching in the Reception class**

Throughout the Foundation Stage, including the Reception year, the role of the practitioner includes:

- establishing relationships with children and their parents;
- planning the learning environment and curriculum;
- supporting and extending children's play, learning and development; and
- observing and assessing children's achievements and planning their next steps.

All of these aspects of teaching are important in promoting early writing.

## **Intended outcomes for writing – what practitioners should teach towards**

The Early Learning Goals set out what most children are expected to achieve by the end of the Reception year. The word, sentence and text level objectives in the NLS *Framework for teaching* are in line with these goals. These goals and objectives are carefully selected to support early writing and provide a smooth transition into Y1. The NLS target statements for writing summarise the objectives for writing for the Reception year. The table below sets them out alongside the relevant Early Learning Goals.

## EARLY LEARNING GOALS

## TARGET STATEMENTS FOR WRITING

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use their phonic knowledge to write simple regular words and make phonetically plausible attempts at more complex words.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phonics and spelling</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Spell CVC words e.g. shop, leg, rich.</li> <li>● Attempt to spell unfamiliar words using a phonemic strategy (including analogy).</li> <li>● Spell some words for YR in Appendix List 1 in the NLS Framework.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Use a pencil and hold it effectively to form recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Handwriting</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Write letters using the correct sequence of movements.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Extend their vocabulary, exploring the meaning and sounds of new words.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Style: language effects</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Begin to use some story language, such as 'Once upon a time....'</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Write their own names and other things such as labels and captions and begin to form simple sentences, sometimes using punctuation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Style: sentence construction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dictate a simple sentence.</li> <li>● Begin to write simple sentences.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Punctuation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Write own name, using a capital letter.</li> <li>● Begin to use capital letters and full stops to punctuate a sentence.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Attempt writing for different purposes, using features of different forms such as lists, stories and instructions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Purpose and organisation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Retell a narrative or a recount.</li> <li>● Begin to write simple narratives and recounts.</li> <li>● Invest writing with meaning. Write simple labels, captions and sentences.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Retell narratives in the correct sequence, drawing on the language patterns of stories.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Process</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dictate and invent own compositions.</li> <li>● Think about what to write ahead of writing.</li> </ul>

## **Using every part of the curriculum to develop writing**

The Foundation Stage curriculum is organised in six areas of learning but young children's learning is not compartmentalised. They learn when they make connections between experiences and ideas that are related to aspects of their lives in the setting, at home and in the community.

All the areas of learning contribute to children's developing ability to write:

- some contribute more to children's developing disposition to write, for example Personal, Social and Emotional Development;
- some more to providing a content for writing, for example Knowledge and Understanding of the World;
- some more to the physical aspect of handwriting, for example Physical Development;
- and some more to children's developing ability to hear and distinguish sounds, example in Creative development.

In writing these can be brought together when, for example, children create a book to preserve memories of special events as part of their developing understanding of their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people or make and use a cookery recipe book. Children's developing motivation, confidence to try new activities and ability to maintain attention and concentrate will support, and will be demonstrated through, their early writing.

## **Writing as part of Communication, Language and Literacy**

The Communication, Language and Literacy section of *Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage* contains guidance on how practitioners can support children in making progress in this area of learning.

All the different strands within this area have a direct bearing on writing. Young children learn how to write through:

- Developing oral language;
- Playing and experimenting with writing, for example through role play, and watching others write (shared writing);
- Reading with an adult individually and/or in a group;
- Playing games and singing rhymes which help them to hear sounds in words and form the letters that represent them (early spelling and handwriting).

## **Writing for a purpose – play and experience to generate writing**

Play is a key way children learn throughout the Foundation Stage. Through play, children can explore, develop and represent learning experiences and practise and build up ideas, concepts and skills. For example, when playing in an improvised café children can be encouraged to look at menus, reservation lists and relevant recipe books, and incorporate these into their play. This establishes meaningful links with their other literacy learning. When children are encouraged to write their own menus, reservation lists and recipes and use these in their play, they are learning that letters and words are useful symbolic ways of preserving meaning. Having a purpose for writing, which is real and of interest to children, will help them to understand why learning to write is important and will motivate them to write. They also need someone to provide a model as a writer and to respond as a reader to their early attempts at writing. As children take part in shared reading and writing activities they begin to recognise and use the conventions of composition, spelling, and handwriting in their own writing.

## **Meeting the needs of each child**

Practitioners should monitor the progress of each individual child so that their planning takes account of the diversity of needs within the Reception class. It is important to monitor progress in order to identify significant differences early. These will include both difficulties and strengths. The Stepping Stones in the *Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage* will help teachers identify

the needs of individual children and the Target Statements for Writing (in *Developing Early Writing*) will help them set targets for improvement. The guidance will also help in planning to ensure the inclusion of all children in planned activities, taking account of their differing learning styles and interests.

Children speaking English as an additional language, those who use sign language and those who are moving towards using Braille present further opportunities and challenges for practitioners. They should value linguistic diversity and take every opportunity to foster the use and development of home language skills. It is important to provide plenty of opportunities for talk and, where possible, support in the home language or through signing.

## **Planning the learning environment**

Children will be encouraged to write if they learn within an environment rich in print and possibilities for communication with:

- a planned environment that reflects the importance of language through signs, notices and books;
- Regular opportunities for children to see and discuss adults writing for specific purposes;
- opportunities for children to become aware of languages and writing systems other than English, and communication systems such as signing and Braille;
- opportunities for children to experiment with writing for themselves through mark making, personal writing symbols and conventional script;
- displayed and celebrated examples of children's own writing.

## **The role of the practitioner in teaching writing**

Practitioners will need to draw on a range of strategies to help children make good progress towards and, where appropriate, beyond the Early Learning Goals and Target Statements for Writing (see p3).

These strategies will include:

- Supporting and encouraging children's early writing by valuing and celebrating children's developing and emergent writing and joining in their play; for example, by taking on the role of patient for whom the children had written a prescription.
- Modelling writing by using writing explicitly for a variety of purposes and demonstrating what they are doing when writing notes, completing registers, making lists, completing forms, writing labels, directions, captions, responding to children's work; for example, by organising the creative workshop area with children and deciding with them what will be written on the labels.
- Reading with and to children to provide a wide experience of reading as the primary source of children's knowledge about how written language looks and sounds; for example, re-reading 'Avocado Baby' with a group of children, encouraging them to enjoy the text and talk about the different way the author might have told them the story if he had met them another day.
- Teaching phonics systematically and regularly; for example, by playing games, where children create rhyming strings or real and imaginary words or where they identify sounds and make links to letters (detailed advice for the Reception year is given in *Progression in phonics* (DfEE 1999).
- Regular shared writing to teach the skills of text composition directly; for example, by scribing the 'thank-you' letter the class want to send to a visitor who had come to talk to them about her lace making.
- Supporting children's independent personal attempts at early writing which will often arise spontaneously from play and will also be linked to, and developed from, shared writing; for example, by talking to children about what they have written about their chosen illustration from, for example, a favourite story.

- Telling, retelling and refining texts with children as a preparation for writing; for example, by children re-telling 'Going on a Bear Hunt', and acting it out in sequence as part of a shared writing session.
- Supporting the continued development of children's gross and fine motor skills and the movements involved in letter formation; for example, in their painting and drawing and through practising letter shapes as they write names and captions.

## **References:**

*Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* QCA/DfEE May 2000  
Available from QCA Publications tel 01 787 884444 Order ref QCA/00/587

*Guidance on the organisation of the National Literacy Strategy in Reception classes* DfEE Ref: 0153/2000

*Developing Early Writing* DfEE Ref: 0055/2001 (book) 0056/2001 (video)

*Framework for teaching* DfEE 0500/2001

*Progression in phonics* DfEE 0033/2000

Copies of all the publications with the DfEE reference numbers are available from DfES Publications, tel 0845 60 222 60

This publication is available online through the DfES website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/achievingssuccess](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/achievingssuccess).

Additional copies of this document may be obtained from:

DfES Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Sherwood Park  
Annesley  
Nottinghamshire NG15 0DJ