Understanding current practice and research priorities in teaching Writing

Practice review

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About the researchers

This practice review was conducted by a combination of the research and product teams from Pearson:

- Grace Grima, Director of Research: led and advised on the teaching Writing practice review.
- Alistair Hooper, Senior Researcher: created the sample, disseminated the surveys, carried out interviews, qualitative analysis, and reporting.
- Lisa Mullins, Senior Product Manager: designed surveys and interview questions, carried out interviews, qualitative analysis, and reporting.
- Ben Redmond, Senior Researcher: conducted quantitative analysis on surveys, carried out interviews, qualitative analysis, and reporting.
- Penelope Sharott, Head of Primary English: designed surveys and interview questions, carried out interviews, qualitative analysis, and reporting.
- Blake Ashworth, Assessment Researcher: conducted two-sample proportion tests.

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Introduction

Writing is a complex task, which requires the coordination of fine motor skills and cognitive skills, reflects the social and cultural patterns of the writer's time and is linguistically complex (Fisher, 2012). There is a general agreement in the literature that there is less evidence about the teaching and learning of Writing than about Reading (Myhill and Fisher, 2010; Department for Education, 2012a; 2012b; Slavin *et al.*, 2019).

A current priority for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is to further the understanding of current practice and research priorities in teaching Writing. Pearson were commissioned in October 2023 to conduct a study of current practice in the teaching of Writing in Primary and Secondary State schools in England, to inform priorities for future research and commissioning.

Methodology

In order to investigate 12 different research questions, Pearson adopted a mixed methods approach to the practice review, collecting data via a survey of 743 practising teachers[1] from Primary (n=391) and Secondary State schools (n=352). A total of 57 semi-structured interviews were carried out with survey respondents who expressed interest in being interviewed; 30 with Primary schoolteachers and 27 with Secondary schoolteachers.

Key conclusions

The survey found similarities in schools between all key stages in terms of their approaches and/or programmes to teach Writing, and how the decisions on the approach to Writing are made and by whom. Schools overwhelmingly reported that they create their own approaches to teach Writing and use a mix of approaches, or use programmes created by English Hubs or Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs). Whilst most schools created their own Writing programmes, some commercially available schemes were more commonly selected than others, namely: Talk for Writing; Read Write Inc. Spelling; Little Wandle; and Letter-join in Primary schools; and CGP (Coordination Group Publications) English Workbooks and Lit Drive in Secondary schools.

Interview findings showed literacy leads and heads of English tended to make decisions to implement new or amend existing approaches and/or programmes to teach Writing if within Local Authority Maintained schools, Standalone Academies and Free Schools. The decision was usually made in consultation with the SLT who gave final approval and allocated funding. In MATs, literacy leads and heads of English consulted with each other to agree a consistent approach. Evidence used to inform decisions varied widely, with no consistent theme emerging.

A noticeable difference at Secondary level, when compared to Primary, was that school-wide approaches were less common than department-wide. Most Secondary schools felt that they were consistent within their English department, but not cross-curricular, whereas Primary schools more frequently cited school-wide, cross-curricular approaches to Writing. In both surveys and interviews, most teachers across all key stages stated they created their own Writing interventions or delivered the same Writing approach for all pupils. The focus for intervention for struggling writers tended towards Reading rather than Writing.

Surveys suggested that teachers had minimal in-school Continuing Professional Development (CPD) on Writing. In the interviews it was also noted that throughout teachers' higher education studies, unless they had an interest in Writing, there was minimal coverage of Writing and the teaching of it. There is an appetite for more Writing training across key stages, with a particular focus on handwriting, motor skills, vocabulary, and spelling.

Interviews found that at Primary level, assessment of Writing took place through teacher assessment, with moderation forming a part of this process. At Secondary level, a more formal approach was taken. At Key Stage 3, bespoke assessments devised by the school were often used and usually marked against grade descriptors. In Key Stage 4, assessments were more frequent than in Key Stage 3 and typically took the form of past exam papers or questions marked against GCSE specifications and mark schemes.

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[1] 'Teachers' in this instance, and throughout unless otherwise stated, refers to classroom teachers, literacy leads, English teachers, heads of English, and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Survey data saw variation in schools' self-reported Writing approach effectiveness by school characteristics. Schools with below average Writing Standard Assessment Tests (SATs), and below average GCSE English language outcomes, as well as schools with a high percentage of free school meals (FSM) pupils, on average rated the effectiveness of their Writing approach lower than schools with higher outcomes and lower proportions of FSM-eligible pupils.

Motivation is higher for Writing in Primary school pupils than in Secondary school pupils, according to surveyed teachers. For Primary school pupils, teachers reported using 'hook' activities such as drama, cooking, and craft, often with an oral outcome, to bring Writing to life. Primary schoolteachers also provided praise, encouragement, and a safe space to write, in addition to providing practical applications of Writing such as writing to authors, to motivate pupils. A variety of factors were reported in interviews to influence motivation for Secondary pupils, including accessibility of the Writing (being provided with the scaffolding and skills), how relevant they perceive the writing task to be to them (if it directly impacts exam results at Key Stage 4) and if they have a safe space to express themselves. Secondary schoolteachers also highlighted using praise, feedback, rewards, and clear success criteria to motivate pupils to write.

Primary schools identified their main challenges as lack of pupil confidence in spelling, ensuring a consistent approach to teaching Writing across the school, and poor pupil vocabulary. Many have a high percentage of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) who can find Writing in English difficult to access and teachers cited a lack of resources and research into how best to support EAL pupils with Writing. Teacher confidence in assessing Writing, modelling Writing, and teaching grammar, are also challenges at Primary schools. For Secondary schools, motivation was the biggest challenge in addition to lack of confidence in spelling, ensuring a consistent approach to writing across the school and poor spoken language skills and vocabulary. Lastly, it was noted by teachers that with many EAL pupils entering Secondary schools not having had a UK Primary school education, there is an added layer of complexity in teaching Writing at Secondary school education.

This research points to three areas in which teachers saw the importance of for Writing outcomes: pupil motivation; confidence in spelling, punctuation, and grammar; and quality of language skills and/or vocabulary. Generating evidence on how to address these barriers would be beneficial for understanding the potential to increase attainment in Writing.

Limitations

The aim was to collect rich data from a range of voices across Primary and Secondary school education, rather than producing generalisable findings. Whilst the final sample of survey and interview participants offered a snapshot of views from schools with different performance levels, percentages of FSM-eligible pupils, of different types, and in different regions, the participants were self-selecting, and findings cannot be generalised to the national population.

Introduction

Background

The ability to express ideas through Writing is one of the most important of all life skills and one of the skills sought by employers and higher education institutions (Schmoker, 2018). Slavin *et al.* (2019; p. 5) stated 'Effective writing is essential in civic engagement, enabling people to state their views effectively in politics, social life, and business'. However, there is a general agreement in the literature that there is less evidence about teaching and learning of Writing than about Reading (Myhill and Fisher, 2010; Department for Education, 2012a; Slavin *et al.*, 2019). In international studies such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Reading is used as a proxy measure for literacy, and Writing is not included in the assessments. Hence, there is minimal evidence on pupils' performance in Writing in studies of international comparisons.

A companion review of research on Secondary Reading programmes using nearly identical inclusion criteria to Slavin *et al.* (2019) found 69 rigorous studies of 51 programmes, in contrast to 14 rigorous studies of 12 programmes for Writing in Slavin *et al.* (2019).This shows little progress since the 2012 Department for Education research report '*What is the Research Evidence on Writing?*', which cited a lack of evidence as to why pupils perform less well in Writing in comparison to Reading and other core subjects, and a lack of understanding of the effectiveness of specific interventions with struggling writers or effective strategies for teaching spelling (Department for Education, 2012b).

Evidence suggests that children with literacy difficulties need additional, targeted help to catch up with their peers (Brooks, 2016). Therefore, a current priority for the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) is to further the understanding of current practice and identify research priorities, in teaching Writing.

Furthermore, this study explores the 'areas of promise' identified in Slavin *et al.'s* (2019) review, which are highlighted as:

- structured approaches that give students step-by-step guides to Writing in various genres, focused squarely on Writing outcomes;

- teaching students to assess their own and others' drafts, to give students more feedback and insight into effective Writing strategies;

- approaches that prioritise balancing Writing with Reading;

- approaches that attempt to build students' motivation to write and enjoy self-expression;

- approaches that teach Writing conventions (e.g. grammar, punctuation, and usage) explicitly, but in the context of creative Writing; and

- approaches that provide extensive Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to teachers, in which they themselves experience the Writing strategies they will employ.

Objectives of the review

This practice review looks to answer the research questions addressed in Table 1.

Table 1: Research questions

Research question no.	Research questions
1	What approaches and/or programmes are most used in Primary and Secondary schools in England to teach Writing at different key stages?
2	What determines a school's choice of Writing approach and/or programme and to what extent is it evidence-based?
3	What approaches and/or programmes are most used in Primary and Secondary schools in England to intervene with struggling writers at different key stages?
4	What determines a school's choice of Writing intervention and to what extent is it evidence-based?
5	To what extent do the approaches and programmes identified for both the teaching of Writing and intervention with struggling writers, align with the 'areas of promise' identified in Slavin *et al.'s* (2019) review?
6	What professional development do teachers receive around teaching Writing and Writing interventions?
7	How do schools track their pupils' progress in Writing in different key stages?
8	According to their tracking of progress, which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results?
9	Is there any relationship between a school's Writing results and the approach and/or programme they are using?
10	Which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools see as leading to the best pupil motivation around Writing?
11	According to their tracking of progress, which Writing intervention approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results for struggling writers?
12	What challenges do teachers face around the teaching of Writing?

Methods

Data collection

Data was collected from Primary[2] and Secondary State schoolteachers in England via two methods: surveys; and semi-structured interviews. The survey was intentionally designed to take no more than ten minutes to complete, with a series of closed-ended questions to enable the collection of quantitative data and explore the research questions. Separate survey questions were developed for Primary schools and Secondary schools to account for their different contexts.

Pearson leveraged its internal literacy expertise in writing both the survey and interview questions, in collaboration with the EEF. The survey and interview questions were trialled with a small number of teachers to ensure they elicited the required information and were not too time-consuming.

The survey link was distributed to schools from a paid-for national database (from Buzz Education), reaching approximately 25,000 email addresses in total, and some relevant social media groups were also informed about the survey. The surveys formed the first wave of data collection with the interviews taking place shortly after. The option was given to survey respondents to sign up for a 30–45-minute semi-structured virtual interview at the end of the survey. Please see Appendix A for the survey questions.

The semi-structured interviews were held via Microsoft Teams and participants were invited based on their expression of interest from the survey. Please see Appendices B and C for the interview structure.

Participation in the survey was incentivised by a prize draw of a £50 Amazon voucher for each of the Primary and Secondary surveys, which was an opt-in process. Participation in the interviews was incentivised by a £25 Amazon voucher for each participant.

Survey sample

Throughout this report, sample information, results, discussion, and implications are usually split by Primary and Secondary level. The total number of respondents was 919, but 176 of these respondents fell out of scope of the study due to being outside of England, in an Independent School or a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), leaving the total number of eligible survey responses at 743. The final survey data was not weighted and is presented in raw numbers or percentages. It is worth noting that information based on school type, region, percentage of free school meals (FSM) and English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils and performance in either Key Stage 2 Writing Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) or GCSE English language is all self-reported and therefore, could potentially be inaccurate. Where possible, in instances where survey respondents had identifiable school information (which was the majority), school type and FSM percentages were checked against the publicly available data[3] and were amended if inaccurate, although the self-reporting for school type and FSM was largely found to be accurate. However, some respondents did not include their full school name, or used a personal email address to complete the survey, which resulted in not all self-reported school FSM percentage accuracy being checked and classified as 'unknown' (2% of sample—see Tables 5 and 11).

Primary schools survey sample

Tables 2 to 7 illustrate the breakdown of responses from Primary schools. In total, there were 391 responses that were relevant to the scope of the research project. Overall, there was a range of responses from across the country, from different school types, of varying proportions of pupils eligible for FSM and EAL pupils. However, the sample is skewed more towards the South (and lowest from the North-East) and schools with below average EAL.

Table 2: Primary school survey sample – region of England

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[2] 'Primary' and 'Secondary' are used throughout the report to refer to the level of schooling, rather than the type of evidence or research being discussed.
[3] GOV.UK. (2023) available at: Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk).

Region	Number of respondents	Respondents %	National %
North-West	72	18	15
North-East	15	4	8
Yorkshire and The Humber	30	8	10
West Midlands	33	8	10
East Midlands	34	9	7
East of England	41	10	8
Greater London	29	7	18
South-West	54	14	10
South-East	83	21	13
Total	391		

Table 3: Primary school survey sample – school type

School type	Number of respondents	Respondents %	National %[4]
Part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)	106	27	40
Standalone Academy	25	6	
Free School	12	3	
Local Authority Maintained	248	63	60

Table 4: Primary school survey sample – Key Stage 2 Writing performance

Key Stage 2 Writing performance ('national average' in 2023 was 71% at expected standard in Writing in Key Stage 2 SATs)	Number of respondents	Respondents %
Above national average	149	38
In line with national average	82	21
Below national average	120	31
Not sure/prefer not to say	40	10

Table 5: Primary school survey sample – FSM

FSM	Number of respondents	Respondents %
Above average (over 30%)	134	34
Average (15–30%)	132	34
Below average (below 15%)	115	29
Unknown	9	2

Table 6: Primary school survey sample – EAL

EAL	Number of respondents	Respondents %
Above average (over 25%)	92	24
Average (15–25%)	81	21
Below average (below 15%)	197	50
Unknown	19	5

Table 7: Primary school survey sample – job role

[4] Based on figures from GOV.UK (2023) available at: Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2022/23 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK (explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk) after removing Independent Schools, PRU, and Special Needs schools.

Role	Number of respondents	Respondents %
SLT	208	52
Middle leader	102	26
Teacher	81	20
Newly qualified teacher	7	2
Teaching Assistant (TA)/support staff	0	0
Total	**398**	

Secondary schools survey sample

Tables 8 to 13 illustrate the breakdown of the Secondary schoolteachers who completed the survey. In total, there were 352 responses that were relevant to the scope of the research project. Overall, there was a range of responses from across the country from different school types, of varying proportions of pupils eligible for FSM and for EAL pupils, and GCSE English language outcomes, albeit skewed towards the South, below average EAL and higher GCSE English language performance.

Table 8: Secondary school survey sample – region of England

Region	Number of respondents	Respondents %	National %
North-West	32	9	15
North-East	26	7	7
Yorkshire and The Humber	25	7	10
West Midlands	34	10	10
East Midlands	21	6	7
East of England	22	6	8
Greater London	52	15	20
South-West	55	16	10
South-East	85	24	12
Total	352		

Table 9: Secondary school survey sample – school type

School type	Number of respondents	Respondents %	National %
Part of a MAT	197	56	80
Standalone Academy	54	15	
Free School	11	3	
Local Authority Maintained	90	26	20

Table 10: Secondary school survey sample – GCSE English language performance

GCSE English language performance ('national average' is 64.7% in 2023 at Grade 4/C or higher in GCSE English language)	Number of respondents	Respondents %
Above national average	213	61
In line with national average	54	15
Below national average	60	17
Not sure/prefer not to say	25	7

Table 11: Secondary school survey sample – FSM

FSM	Number of respondents	Respondents %

Above average (over 30%)	102	29%
Average (15–30%)	154	44%
Below average (below 15%)	90	26%
Unknown	6	2%

Table 12: Secondary school survey sample – EAL

EAL	Number of respondents	Respondents %
Above average (over 25%)	66	19
Average (15–25%)	71	20
Below average (below 15%)	174	49
Unknown	42	12

Table 13: Secondary school survey sample – job role

Role	Number of respondents	Respondents %
SLT	47	13
Middle leader	187	53
Teacher	108	31
Newly qualified teacher	10	3
TA/support staff	0	0
Total	352	

Primary schools interview sample

Table 14: Primary schools interview sample breakdown

Region	School type	Role in School	FSM	EAL	Key Stage 2 Writing performance
North-West = 4	Local Authority Maintained = 18	Senior leaders = 21	Above average = 10	Above average = 13	Above average = 12
Yorkshire and The Humber = 2	MAT = 8	Middle leaders = 4	Average = 10	Average = 4	Average = 6
East of England = 6	Standalone Academy = 2	Teachers = 6	Below average = 10	Below average = 13	Below average = 12
West Midlands = 4	Free Schools = 2				
East Midlands = 2					
Greater London = 2					
South-West = 3					
South-East = 7					

Over 100 Primary schoolteachers expressed an interest in participating in an interview. These were stratified to ensure there was a range of teachers based on their region, school type, proportions of pupils eligible for FSM and EAL pupils, Key Stage 2 Writing performance, and job role.[5] The purpose of this was to try and provide a teacher voice from a range of establishments across the country. Table 14 illustrates the final sample breakdown for the 30 Primary school interviews. It is important to note that the intention was to cover a range of voices in the interviews, but not all regions were covered in the interview sample, nor roles equally represented, but this was not intentional and a result of availability issues from school participants.

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[5] In this study, Primary school senior leaders are considered headteachers, deputy headteachers, literacy coordinators whereas middle leaders are key stage leaders, head of year group, or Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDCO).

Secondary schools interview sample

Over 100 Secondary schoolteachers expressed an interest in participating in an interview. These were prioritised based on their region, school type, proportions of pupils eligible for FSM, EAL pupils, GCSE English language performance (in 2022), and job role.[6] Table 13 illustrates the breakdown of the final sample for the 26 Secondary level interviews. Again, it is worth noting the sample of interviewees is not representative of the national population but incorporates a range of voices. The intention was to interview 30 Secondary school participants but due to tight timelines and some dropouts, this was not possible.

Table 15: Secondary schools interview sample breakdown

Region	School type	Role in school	FSM	EAL	GCSE English language performance
North-East = 3	Local Authority Maintained = 3	Senior leaders = 1	Above average = 7	Above average = 6	Above average = 15
Yorkshire and The Humber = 1	MAT = 17	Middle leaders = 18	Average = 12	Average = 7	Average = 5
East of England = 3	Standalone Academy = 6	Teachers = 7	Below average = 7	Below average = 13	Below average = 6
West Midlands = 3					
East Midlands = 1					
Greater London = 2					
South-West = 8					
South-East = 5					

Data analysis

Survey analysis yielded quantitative data in the form of descriptive statistics for each question. This helped provide high-level information whilst the interview data delved into the teaching approaches and rationale behind them. Further survey analysis was carried out on schools with high proportions of pupils eligible for FSM, using two-sample proportion tests to compare their responses to that of the schools who have low FSM, identifying any statistical differences. The following question was used to probe the percentage of FSM pupils in schools, which was subsequently checked against publicly available data, where possible:

Which of the following best describes the percentage of pupils eligible for FSM in your school? Response options: Above average FSM (over 30%), About average FSM (15–30%), Below average FSM (under 15%), I'm not sure / prefer not to say.

Two-sample proportion tests were also carried out to look for statistical differences in responses for schools reporting high English/Writing performance outcomes versus those reporting low outcomes. For Primary schools, expected standards in Writing in Key Stage 2 SATs were used as an indicator of outcomes, with the following question used to probe this:

In 2023, 71% of Primary pupils in England reached the expected standard in Writing in Key Stage 2 SATs. How did your school compare to this national average? Response options: Above national average, In line with national average, Below national average, I'm not sure / prefer not to say.

For Secondary schools, GCSE English language results were used as an indicator of attainment, with the following question used to probe this:

In 2023, 64.7% of Secondary pupils nationally achieved Grade 4/C or higher in GCSE English language. How does your schools' % compare? Response options: Above national average, In line with national average, Below national average, I'm not sure / prefer not to say.

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[6] In this study, Secondary school senior leaders are considered headteachers/principals, deputy headteachers, assistant headteachers, and business managers whereas middle leaders are head of English, key stage leaders, head of year group, or SENDCO.

Two-sample proportion tests are a type of hypothesis test that compares the proportions of two distinct populations, such as the ones in this study. They are used to determine whether the difference between the proportions is statistically significant. The null hypothesis states that the proportions are equal, whilst the alternative hypothesis states that they are not. The test statistic is the difference between the proportions, which are provided as a percentage, and the p-value is the probability of obtaining a test statistic at least as extreme as the observed value under the null hypothesis.

Findings from the two-sample proportion tests are only reported in the findings if they: a) are statistically significant (p = ≤ 0.05); and b) met the assumptions test. P-values will be reported to three decimal places.

The data from the surveys helped to inform the interview agenda, with twice-weekly triangulation meetings to discuss emerging themes. Each interview participant had completed the survey, which enabled the interviewers to probe specific questions/responses from the survey. The interviews were conducted on Microsoft Teams, recorded, and auto-transcribed, with detailed notes taken throughout. Transcriptions and notes were analysed using thematic analysis based on the research questions. Analysis of the interviews was conducted by both research experts and literacy experts to ensure the depth and quality of the data is recognised in the findings. In practice, this meant that each interview's notes were reviewed by both a literacy expert and a researcher, and then themes discussed afterwards.

Ethical and data considerations

All data was collected with informed consent, with the research adhering to the British Educational Research Association (BERA) guidelines (BERA, 2018).[7] Any personal information collected was held securely and kept confidential and no individual pupil or school will be identifiable in any report or publication. Pearson only holds data long enough to allow the analysis and reporting of the study, after which the data will be deleted from their systems. Pearson ensured compliance with UK Data Protection Legislation including General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 throughout the study. Pearson is committed to upholding privacy, as detailed in the following privacy notice**:** https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/privacy-center/privacy-notices.html**.**

Any participants who decided to withdraw their data after participating, but before reporting, were removed from the project database.

Limitations

It is important to recognise some key limitations to the study described in this practice review, namely, sample representation, selection bias, and unconscious subjectivity in qualitative analysis.

The national database used to approach teachers was a self-selecting database, hence not all teachers or schools would have been a part of that database. However, with approximately 25,000 contacts, it did cover the majority of England's schools. Additionally, the nature of the survey was self-selecting and it is impossible to determine the motivation of the respondents and non-respondents, which will add potential bias to the findings.

The survey link, primarily sent via email, is unlikely to have reached all teachers as intended (e.g. email ending up in junk mail, change of email address, etc.). As a consequence, not every teacher will have had the opportunity to respond. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that the survey sample is representative due to its distribution process. Furthermore, an incentive was offered to respondents of both the surveys and the interviews. Surveys and interviews also required respondents to give up their time to participate (up to ten minutes for the survey and 45 minutes for the interview). It is possible that both these factors may have influenced people's responses and influenced the types of persons willing to participate. As with all qualitative research using teacher surveys and interviews, the data are subjective and only reflect their experiences and not the wider population.

The interview sample was selected based on: a) the survey participant expressing interest in being interviewed; b) the region, school type, and FSM percentage of the teacher's school; and c) the availability of the teacher. The majority of interview participants were senior leaders in Primary schools and middle leaders in Secondary schools, which will undoubtedly influence the findings. However, these staff members have a good overview of both classroom practice and school level (or MAT level) approaches, which helped to provide rich data for the research questions. Whilst the

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[7] BERA (2018) available at: https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018**.**

interview findings may not be generalisable to all English schools, they offer an invaluable snapshot into the teaching of Writing in England.

Lastly, all the team working on analysing the interview data had awareness of the project's research questions and the history of teaching Writing in England, which could potentially have introduced bias to the thematic analysis. In order to mitigate this, an experienced team, used to working with qualitative data, was assembled. Regular peer reviews and standardisation meetings took place during analysis to share and critique findings.

Findings and discussion

The findings are structured based on research questions. Some questions were addressed by both survey and interview, whilst some were addressed either by the former or latter methods.

Table 16: Research methods applied to the research questions

Research question no.	Research questions	Survey	Interview
1	What approaches and/or programmes are most used in Primary and Secondary schools in England to teach Writing at different key stages?	✓	
2	What determines a school's choice of Writing approach and/or programme and to what extent is it evidence-based?		✓
3	What approaches and/or programmes are most used in Primary and Secondary schools in England to intervene with struggling writers at different key stages?	✓	
4	What determines a school's choice of Writing intervention and to what extent is it evidence-based?		✓
5	To what extent do the approaches and programmes identified for both the teaching of Writing and intervention with struggling writers, align with the 'areas of promise' identified in Slavin *et al.'s* (2019) review?	✓	✓
6	What professional development do teachers receive around teaching Writing and Writing interventions?	✓	✓
7	How do schools track their pupils' progress in Writing in different key stages?	✓	✓
8	According to their tracking of progress, which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results?	✓	✓
9	Is there any relationship between a school's Writing results and the approach and/or programme they are using?	✓	✓
10	Which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools see as leading to the best pupil motivation around Writing?	✓	✓
11	According to their tracking of progress, which Writing intervention approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results for struggling writers?	✓	✓
12	What challenges do teachers face around the teaching of Writing?	✓	✓

Research question 1. Findings: What approaches and/or programmes are most used in Primary and Secondary schools in England to teach Writing at different key stages?

Primary
Figure 1 shows the responses teachers from Primary schools gave to the question: *What programme(s) or resource(s) do you currently use to teach Writing in your Primary school (Tick all that apply.) If you use any other external programme(s) or resource(s) please state in the 'other' text box.* Pearson provided a list of programmes for respondents to indicate their use (including an 'other' free-text box, which was not used). The overwhelming response from 381 respondents to this question demonstrated that Primary schools create and use their own resources, receiving 23% of all responses. It is interesting to note that using a mix and match of resources, and using resources created by Hubs or MATs, also both received significant numbers of responses. These two selections are quite similar in their nature to 'creating own resources' and emphasise the fluidity and variation of Writing resources used by teachers. Of the named resources, the following received more than 60 responses each: Talk for Writing; Read Write Inc. Spelling; Little Wandle; and Letter-join.

Two-sample proportion tests showed no statistically significant patterns in responses for high versus low FSM or high versus low Key Stage 2 Writing performance outcomes.
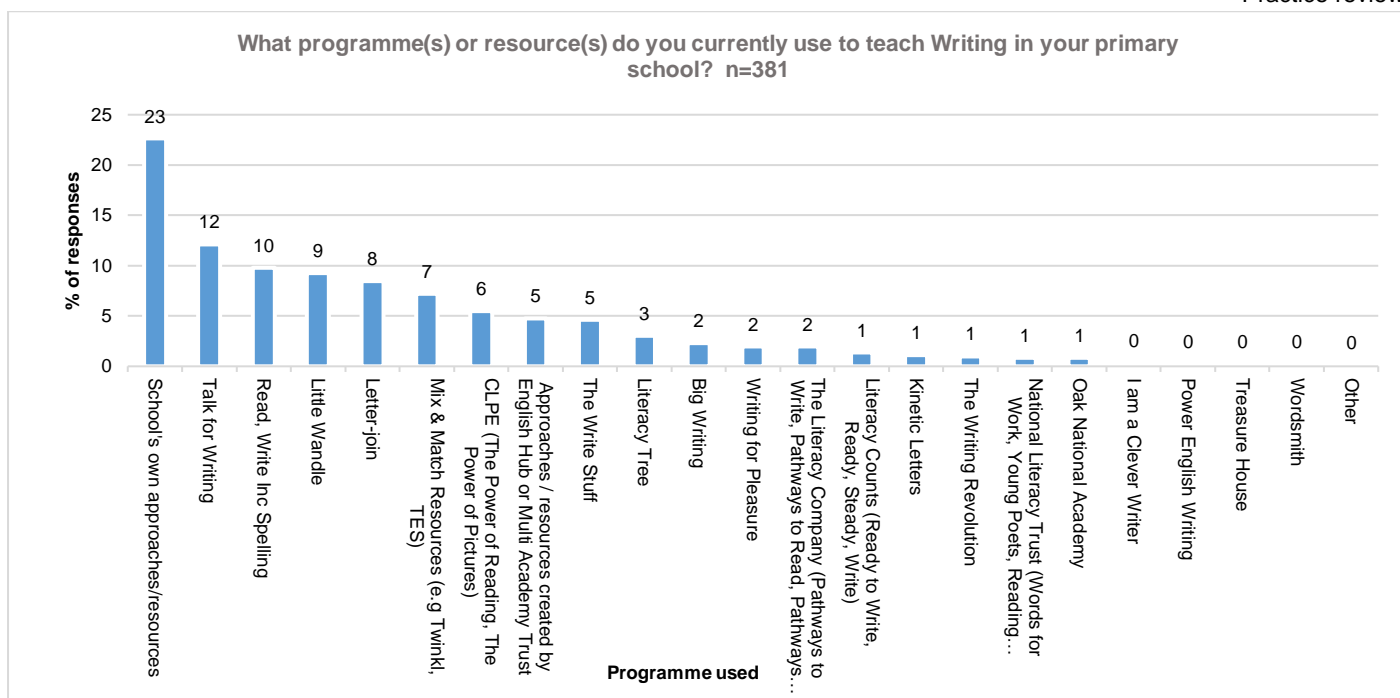
What programme(s) or resource(s) do you currently use to teach Writing in your primary school? n=381

Figure 1: Primary schools responses to Writing resources used[a]

[a] Respondents could select multiple responses to this question. CLPE, Centre for Literacy in Primary Education; TES, Times Educational Supplement.

Secondary

Figure 2 shows the responses Secondary schoolteachers gave when asked: *What programme(s) or resource(s) do you currently use to teach Writing in your Secondary school?* Like the Primary school findings, the most common response by far indicated that Secondary schools create and use their own resources, with 32% of respondents selecting this option. Once again, using a mix and match of resources, and using resources created by Hubs or MATs, both received significant numbers of responses (10% and 7%, respectively). Of the named resources, only the following received more than 60 responses each: CGP (Coordination Group Publications) English Workbooks and Lit Drive.

Secondary schools with above average GCSE English language outcomes in 2022 were 24% more likely to select school's own approaches/resources than schools with below average outcomes (p = 0.001). Conversely, schools with high FSM were 19% less likely to select school's own approaches/resources than schools with low FSM (p = 0.003). They were also 10% less likely to select Teachit (p = 0.001) and ZigZag (p = 0.049) compared to schools with low FSM. Schools with below average GCSE English language outcomes were 8% more likely to select English Mastery as a programme for teaching Writing than schools with high outcomes (p = 0.026).

What programme(s) or resource(s) do you currently use to teach Writing in your secondary school? N=332
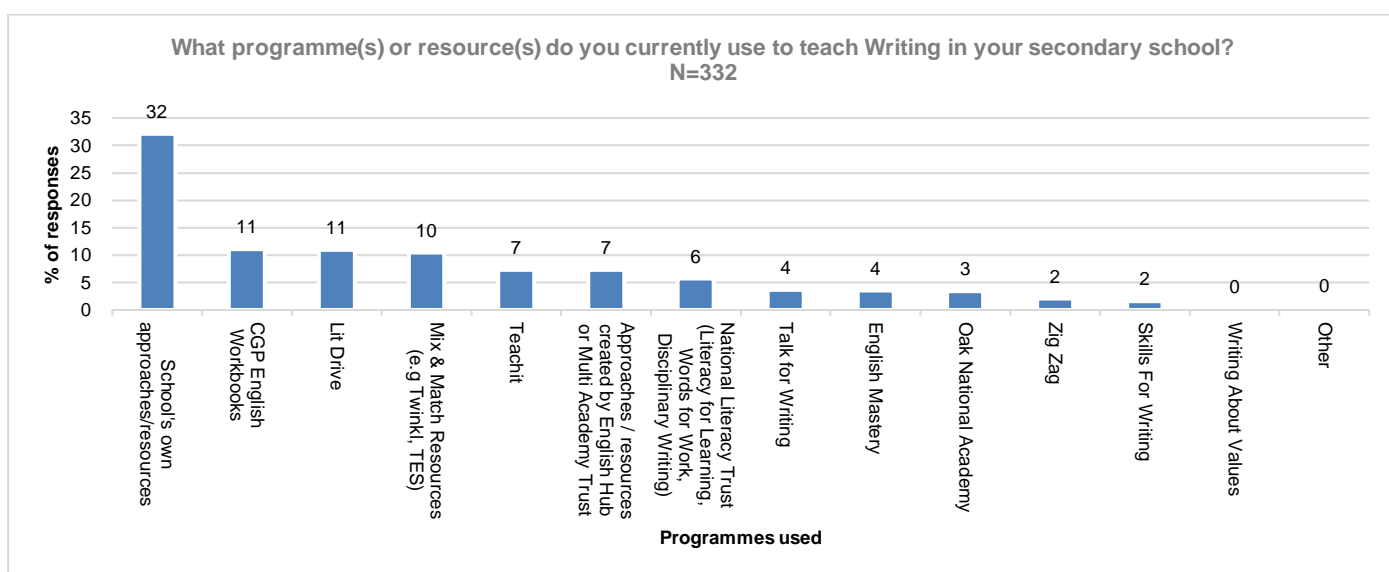

Figure 2: Secondary schools responses to Writing resources used

Research question 2. Findings: What determines a school's choice of Writing approach and/or programme and to what extent is it evidence-based?

Primary

During the interviews, it was common for schools to describe a whole-school approach across key stages, striving for consistency from one year group to the next. This was more apparent in smaller schools where this is more achievable. In this sense, school-wide means all subjects taught within the school have a Writing approach embedded within it, rather than just literacy lessons. Some teachers within MATs mentioned a consistent Writing approach across the schools in the Trust, but with flexibility for teachers to use different resources if needed. There were also cases where there was no agreed upon approach from the school and individual teachers were left to create their own approaches. However, these were in the minority and teachers were often in the process of applying a more consistent school-wide approach.

One English lead and Year 6 teacher commented on their school's cross-curricular approach to Writing:

> *…we designed a curriculum that incorporated a topic-based approach. And so that all subjects tied into that overarching topic…Writing was embedded within that too.*

Poor Key Stage 2 attainment was often cited as the main driver to change approach or embed an agreed upon school-wide approach. Teachers referred to purchasing a set of resources to structure their schemes of work or collaborating as a staff workforce to agree an approach to teaching Writing. Other factors that led to a change in approach was an increase in the number of EAL or special educational needs and disability (SEND) pupils at the school. The latter typically prompted a more structured approach.

Interview participants were asked about the evidence they based their decisions on in terms of Writing approaches, namely: *Why did they select this approach to teaching Writing?* Some mentioned they based their decisions on evidence, but this was inconsistent. The most frequent response indicated that the literacy lead would carry out desk research into various programmes, products, and approaches and then select one, or a combination, that they felt would work for their school. This would include evidence from the resources providers such as survey results, and research conducted by independent third parties, such as the EEF or government guidance.

A second common approach was to learn from others, either local schools that have successfully implemented a particular Writing approach, a local authority literacy expert, or a school in their own Trust (if part of a MAT).

One school literacy lead explained the process of implementing a Writing approach:

> *…I worked with an English specialist from the local authority, and we did a bit of a diagnostic in the school. Our biggest challenge [was] obviously...the demographic we're teaching…with the very high level of EAL children, (English) vocabulary was a real problem. So that informed the decisions that we ended up making in terms of the planning of English, making sure there was a consistent approach across the school and that wasn't in place before.*

The key decision-makers in Primary schools were typically the literacy leads in consultation with their SLT. The consensus was that the literacy lead would be the main catalyst for change, but they would need guidance and support from the SLT at the school in terms of budget and scope.

Secondary

A key difference at Secondary level, when compared to Primary level, was that school-wide approaches were considerably less common than department-wide approaches. Most schools felt that they were consistent within their English department, but not cross-curricular. This could be explained by the structure of typical Secondary schools, where embedding a cross-curricular approach could take significant time and resources to develop policy, schemes, and to train relevant staff.

Like the Primary school findings, there was a huge variation in programmes used, but most adopted a mixture of resources and created their own approaches, working backwards from expected GCSE standards. One head of English stated:

> *…we create all our own schemes of work. And because we have a school which is about 50% English as an Additional Language we obviously focus quite a bit on Writing, particularly academic Writing. So, all of our schemes of work will involve paragraph Writing, sentence starters, building up into essay Writing, essay*

planning, etc. Our main aim is to check we are meeting the objectives of the specification and exam for Key Stage 4.

Another teacher talked about the benefit of having examiners on their teaching staff, and using chief examiner reports to base their improvements on:

… when the examiners' reports came out and they stated that things were bit structured across the country (towards Writing), which we felt we were lacking and so then this year, we've added more options to our structure.

Some decisions on Writing approaches were considered 'evidence-based' by interviewees, by which they meant it was based on the school's identified gaps in attainment as a result of GCSE English literature and language outcomes. Teachers described consulting with English Hubs and schools in their Trust or local area and experimenting with different resources. For example, one teacher described how a new member of their English team introduced a new resource to their school based on previous experience at another school and it was successfully adopted.

The decision-making in Secondary schools tended to sit with the middle to senior levels of management, such as heads of department and deputy headteachers/headteachers but required the English department to drive the change. An English teacher from a Locally Maintained School commented:

The decisions are made as a collaboration between our head of department, myself, and our Key Stage 3 lead as well.

For MATs, decisions on the Writing approach are made at the senior leadership level to encourage consistency across schools, whilst allowing enough room for teacher autonomy within that.

Across both Primary and Secondary schools, resources that were cost-free were more likely to be used by teachers than paid-for resources. Additionally, the interviews identified minimal use of technology in the teaching of Writing. Primary schoolteachers declared low levels of confidence using technology and Secondary schoolteachers also flagged technology as an area for development. The technology most frequently mentioned in the interviews was using the basic functions of interactive whiteboards to model Writing. However, teachers expressed interest in exploring further how technology can help their teaching of Writing. However, findings from the interviews regarding CPD show that there is limited budget available for developing teacher skillsets or training them on using specific resources.

Research question 3. Findings: What approaches and/or programmes are most used in Primary and Secondary schools in England to intervene with struggling writers at different key stages?

Primary
The survey asked Primary schoolteachers to select, which resources they use for struggling writers at Key Stages 1 and 2. Again, the list was provided by Pearson based on the knowledge of the market, with a free-text 'other' available, but not used by respondents. The most frequent responses by some distance were schools developing their own interventions and/or using the same approach used for the rest of the school. Read Write Inc. Fresh Start was the commercially available programme cited by most schools. Furthermore, schools with high FSM were 13% more likely to use Read Write Inc. Fresh Start with struggling writers than schools with low FSM ($p = 0.010$).

Schools with above average Key Stage 2 Writing performance outcomes were 12% more likely to select that they have developed their own intervention resources than schools with below average outcomes ($p = 0.011$). Additionally, schools with below average Key Stage 2 Writing performance outcomes were 15% less likely to select that they use the same programmes as their main delivery programme ($p = 0.004$), potentially indicating they are more likely to be using a specific programme for Writing intervention. However, there were no programmes selected by a statistically significant number of schools with below average Key Stage 2 Writing performance outcomes to support this.
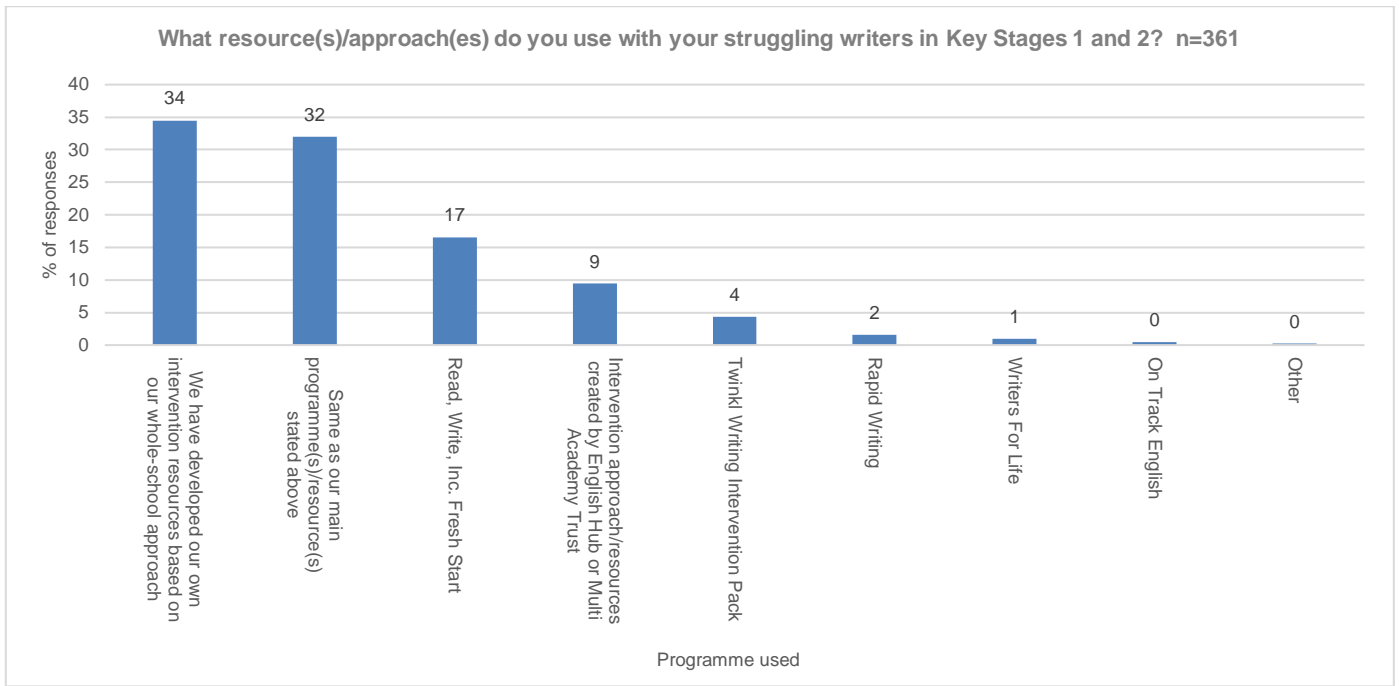
What resource(s)/approach(es) do you use with your struggling writers in Key Stages 1 and 2? n=361

Figure 3: Primary schools responses to Writing resources used for struggling writers

Secondary

The Secondary schools' response mirrored those of the Primary schools, with the majority selecting that they develop their own Writing interventions and/or use the same approach with struggling writers as they do with all other pupils. The English Hub interventions and CGP were also popular choices for intervention approaches. Read Write Inc. Fresh Start was again popular with schools with high FSM when compared to schools with low FSM, with schools 12% more likely to select it from that sub-group (p = 0.021).

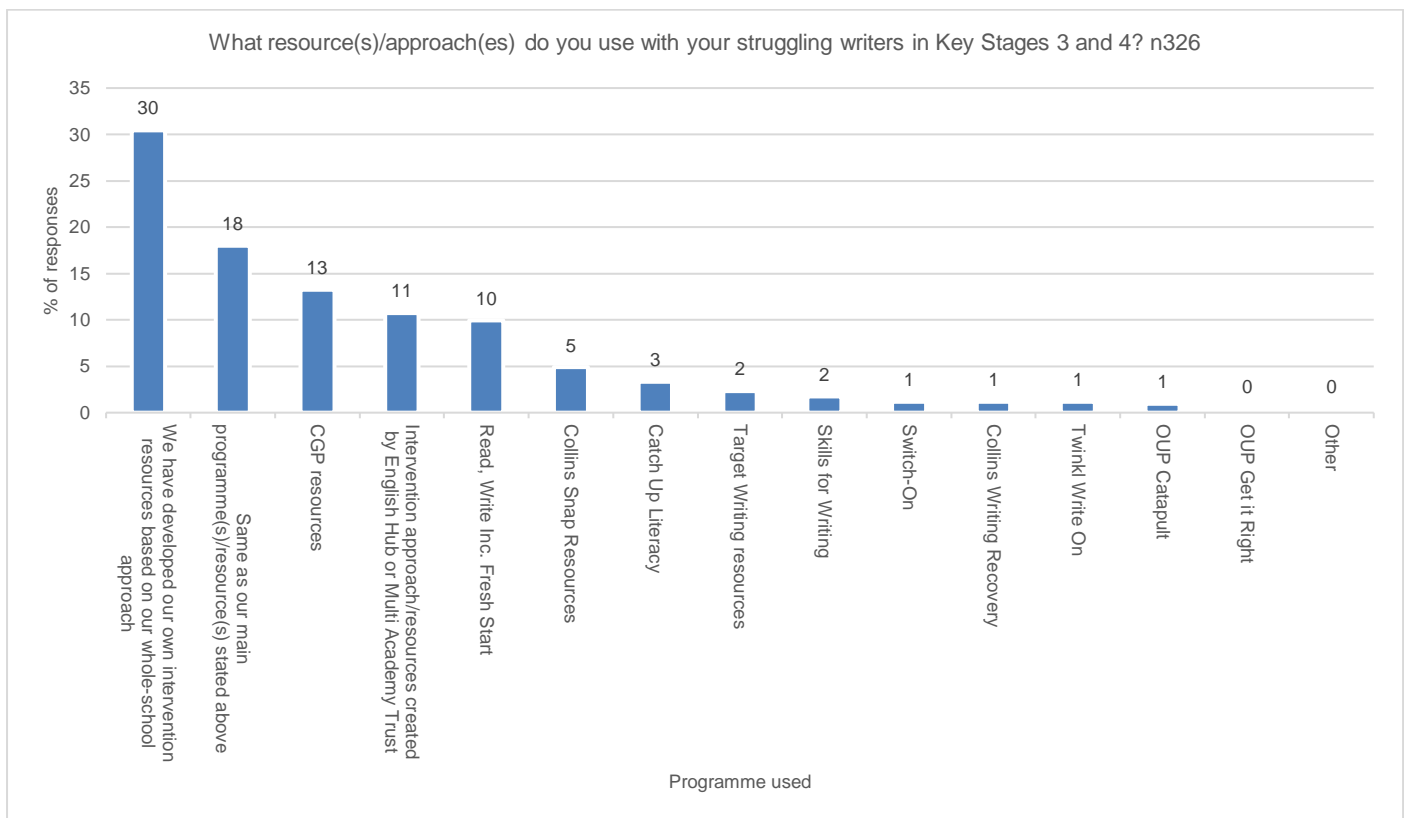**What resource(s)/approach(es) do you use with your struggling writers in Key Stages 3 and 4? n326**

Figure 4: Secondary schools' responses to Writing resources used for struggling writers

Secondary schools with above average GCSE English language outcomes were 17% more likely to select that they have developed their own intervention resources than schools with below average outcomes (p = 0.011).

Research question 4. Findings: What determines a school's choice of Writing intervention and to what extent is it evidence-based?

The results from the interviews on choice of intervention have been combined for Primary and Secondary schools as the themes were consistent across both.

Most schools did not offer a structured intervention for Writing, but those that did, used a variety of programmes and with mixed success. Most commonly, the same approach was used for all pupils with differentiation built into the scheme of work to help cater for the struggling writers. When it came to pupils with SEND or specific learning needs, teachers mentioned having one to one support and small group 'catch-up' sessions for struggling writers, but these were resource and funding dependent.

One Primary literacy lead commented on the minimal intervention they have for struggling writers:

> *The only interventions in place we have are a lot of language-based interventions, but not for Writing. Children who have very limited spoken vocabulary have quite intensive and language-based interventions that are based from external speech and language therapy and providers, and they come in and do the sessions with these children.*

> *…we do some 'pre teaching' at the beginning of a new term. We will give them the list of technical vocabulary that they might need for a specific topic coming up so they hopefully get a head start.*

And another Primary schoolteacher commented on focusing on Reading before Writing:

> *…because the need is for them to read before they write, and we have so many new to English that we have to teach them how to read first.*

Likewise, a Secondary school head of English reported minimal intervention for struggling writers, but more of a focus on Reading. The focus on Reading, which teachers felt was often prioritised over Writing, was a key theme in the data.

> *And there's some specific Reading interventions and they might write as part of that as well. The SEND department deliver the interventions and it is for very low-level readers and writers, so they will provide support for handwriting and basic principles.*

Often in Secondary schools, the notion of intervention was deemed unnecessary due to the allocation of pupils into sets based on ability, and differentiation of schemes of work and lessons to stretch and challenge all abilities. The use of SEND and TA support to work with struggling writers was also common.

There was no firm evidence base used to make decisions on interventions for struggling writers, but some schools partnered with local schools and/or schools in their Trust to share good practice and compare strategies targeted at improving Writing outcomes for high Pupil Premium and EAL pupils.

However, it was frequently mentioned that teachers had plans or desires to create Writing specific interventions but possessed limited understanding or knowledge of the best way to achieve this. A Secondary school head of English in a school with high FSM stated:

> *I think Writing is certainly an area we need to look at because I think (…) once we get pupils up to speed with their Reading, it's the creative Writing that is last thing that we look at for pupils, which obviously isn't right.*

Research question 5. Findings: To what extent do the approaches and programmes identified for both the teaching of Writing and intervention with struggling writers, align with the 'areas of promise' identified in Slavin *et al.'s* (2019) review?

The survey asked respondents to rate to what extent (from the greatest extent to the least extent), the 'areas of promise' from Slavin *et al.'s* (2019) review were embedded in their teaching of Writing. The options to rate were different for each key stages to reflect the different expectations for Writing at different ages, hence there are more options for Key Stage 4 than there are for Key Stage 3, for example.

Primary

For both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, the survey showed the approaches used to the greatest extent are the use of step-by-step guidance for a particular genre; balancing and integrating Reading and Writing; and, explicitly teaching Writing conventions in the context of creative Writing. The approach of pupils giving feedback on each other's drafts was used to the least extent at Key Stage 1 (Figure 5) and teachers experiencing the Writing strategies that pupils are taught was used to the least extent at Key Stage 2 (Figure 6).
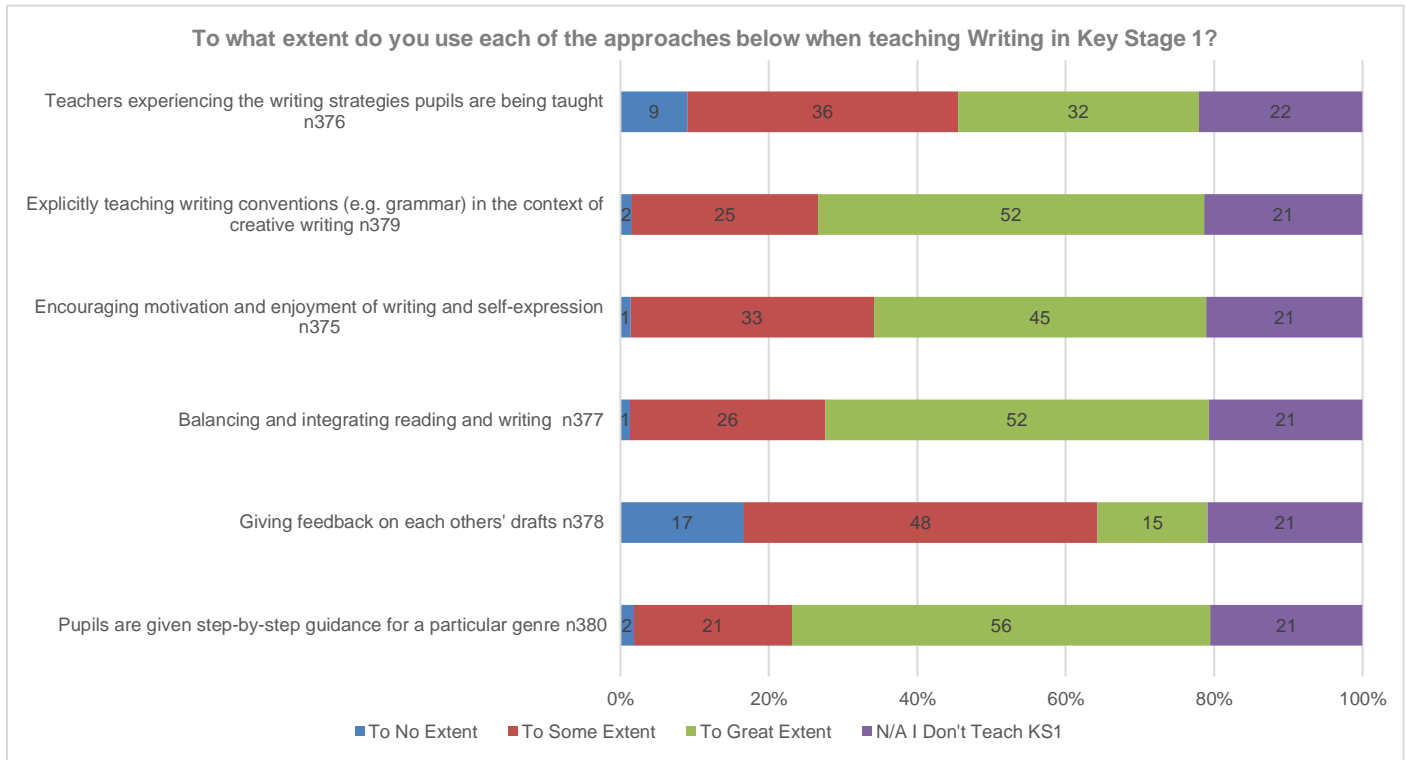

Figure 5: Extent of use of approaches when teaching Writing for Key Stage 1

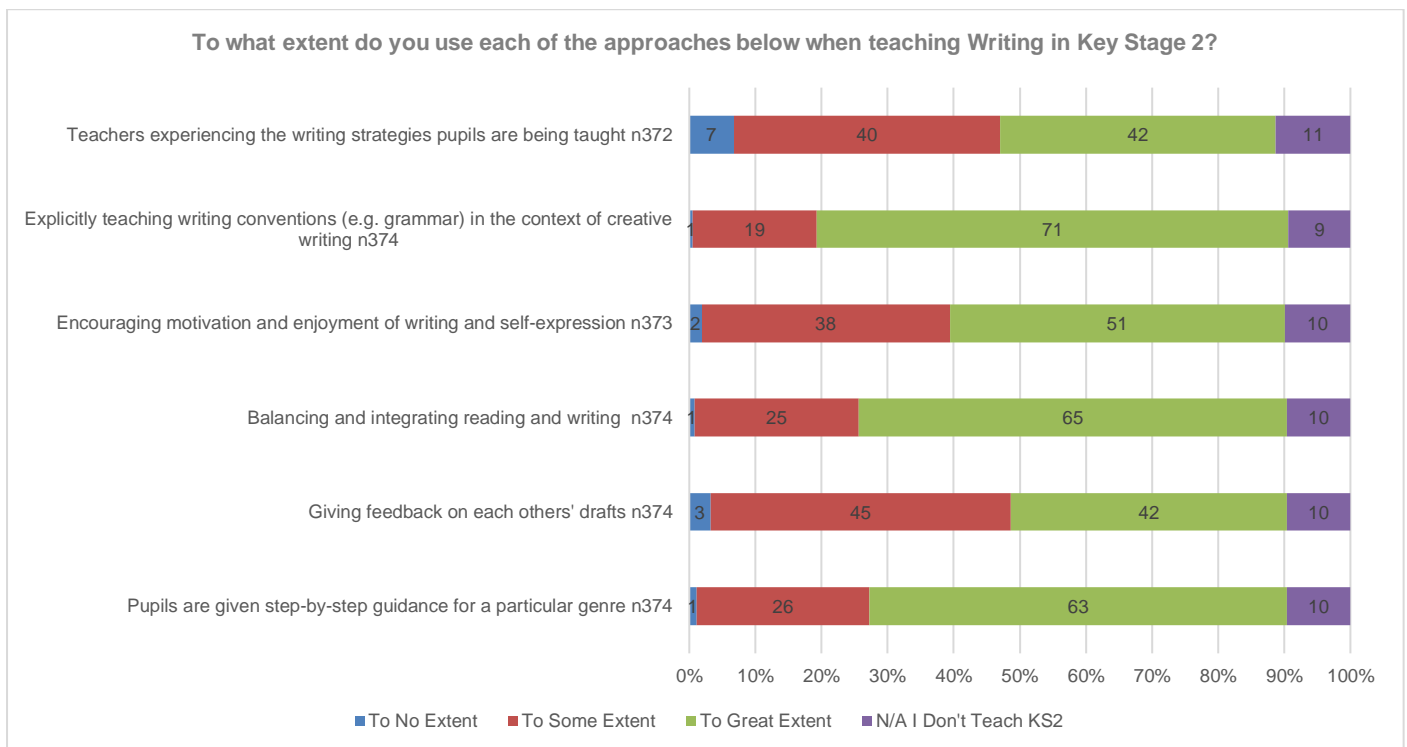Note: n varies because not all respondents responded for every option. N/A, not applicable.

Figure 6: Extent of use of approaches when teaching Writing for Key Stage 2

Note: n varies because not all respondents responded for every option. N/A, not applicable.

The interviews carried out with Primary schoolteachers mirrored our survey findings with Reading into Writing approaches and step-by-step guidance for a particular genre being most embedded.

Primary schools are using quality rich texts to motivate Writing. Reading culture has been a large focus in schools in recent years and curricula designed around high-quality texts therefore, provides engaging material to use for Writing. Teachers also incorporated 'hook' activities into their teaching activities designed to introduce and engage pupils in the genre or theme. Activities cited by teachers include drama lessons, craft activities, and author visits.

Both Primary and Secondary schools use texts to provide a model of text types, as mentioned by one Primary schoolteacher:

> *We always say they need to know what good looks like if we're using it as an assessed piece for example a diary. We would do a week where we're looking at obvious features…how a diary is formed…the teacher would actually stand up and physically write a diary and not necessarily linked to what they're going to write about…so they're actually seeing the process of Writing.*

Step-by-step approaches build up skills, knowledge, and confidence towards a Writing outcome. Teachers do this by giving the pupil the building blocks for the genre of writing that they will be writing in. Teachers do this by using texts, which are high-quality examples of the genre being studied, and then clearly defining the features for that genre of writing. This process includes teacher modelling, providing the grammar and vocabulary required, proofreading, editing, revising, and redrafting with peer assessment. Pupils are often asked to co-construct goals for their writing. This supports pupils in having investment in the outcomes and a clear understanding of what good writing looks like in that genre.

Oracy was also used to support the writing process by fostering discussions on the characteristics of good quality writing within a specific genre. This includes children engaging in conversations about their own work as well as the work of their peers.

Primary schools reported that the process of pupils assessing their own and others' drafts to gain more feedback and insights into effective writing posed the greatest challenge. Teachers reported a tendency for pupils to focus on mistakes and presentation rather than the outcomes, purpose, and improvement.

> *…with the editing, your lowers are just looking for mistakes, but they're not looking how to improve, and which is you know what we need to progress really…they need to know how to improve.*

Teachers explained that EAL and SEND pupils may struggle with the focus on outcomes, purpose, and improvement for a variety of reasons, but such pupils benefit from Reading aloud and hearing models of other pupils' work.

Teachers also described Writing conventions to be particularly challenging for struggling writers as they can have difficulty remembering terminology and correct usage. A lack of oracy skills and struggling with Reading contribute to this challenge. Most surveyed schools do teach Writing conventions explicitly in the context of creative Writing, but for some it is a challenge for their teachers because the teaching of grammar and language features requires good subject knowledge and the ability to make the conventions purposeful.

Secondary

For Key Stage 3, the approaches used to the greatest extent are explicitly teaching Writing conventions in the context of creative Writing; balancing and integrating Reading and Writing; and creating opportunities for creative and transactional Writing through themes and text. A cross-curricular approach to working across departments and encouraging teachers to experience writing strategies pupils are being taught were the least used approaches (Figure 7).
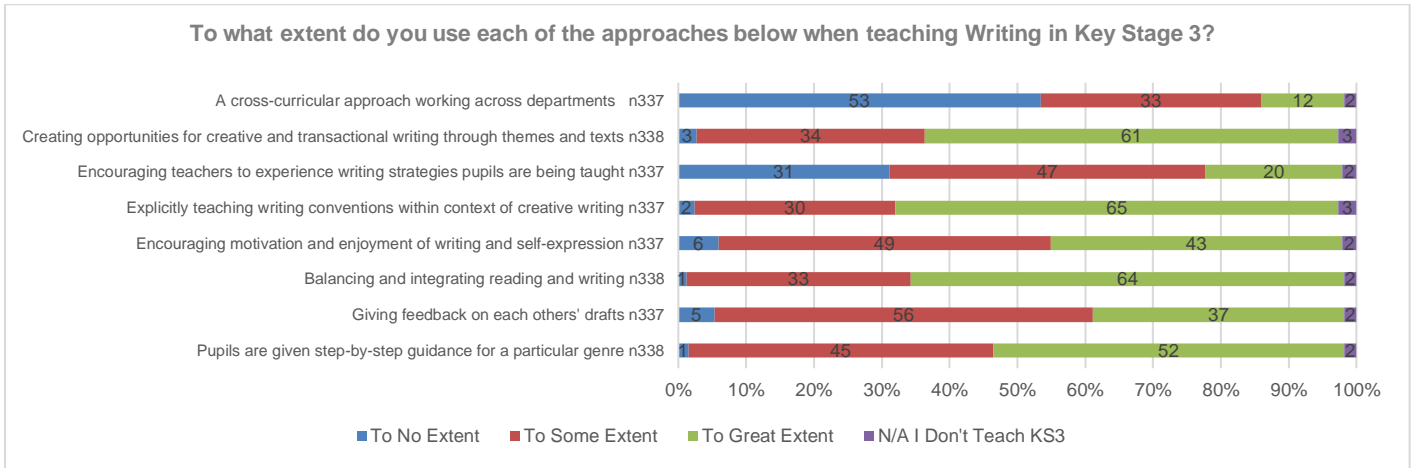
To what extent do you use each of the approaches below when teaching Writing in Key Stage 3?

Approach	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To Great Extent	N/A I Don't Teach KS3
A cross-curricular approach working across departments n337	53	33	12	2
Creating opportunities for creative and transactional writing through themes and texts n338	3	34	61	3
Encouraging teachers to experience writing strategies pupils are being taught n337	31	47	20	2
Explicitly teaching writing conventions within context of creative writing n337	2	30	65	3
Encouraging motivation and enjoyment of writing and self-expression n337	6	49	43	2
Balancing and integrating reading and writing n338	1	33	64	2
Giving feedback on each others' drafts n337	5	56	37	2
Pupils are given step-by-step guidance for a particular genre n338	1	45	52	2

Figure 7: Extent of use of approaches when teaching Writing for Key Stage 3

Note: n varies because not all respondents responded for every option. N/A, not applicable.

For Key Stage 4, the approaches used to the greatest extent are developing analysis and comparison Writing skills, developing essay Writing skills for exams/assessments, and using exemplar answers to develop exam/assessment Writing skills. A cross-curricular approach to working across departments and encouraging teachers to experience Writing strategies pupils are being taught were the least used approaches.

The Secondary school interviews dived deeper into what they perceived as the most embedded in their Writing approaches and they identified a crossover between approaches. Several interviewees explained that their school's curriculum is largely designed with a focus on texts that lead into Writing, as this aligns with the exam approach. Respondents also reported a greater focus on Reading in recent years and felt that there needs to be more of a balance towards Writing.

At Key Stage 3, interview respondents reported using a guided step-by-step approach to produce a Writing outcome. Many explained that this was to provide structure and support, particularly for analytical/academic Writing, and that it also supported struggling writers. Teachers also reported using modelling of writing to support pupils with the Writing process.

At Key Stage 4, teachers were more focused on exam requirements and building independence through gradual removal of Writing scaffolds because exams do not have those scaffolds provided. Additionally, the focus on understanding the key features of Writing, which support pupils to achieve more marks in their exams, was a key theme.
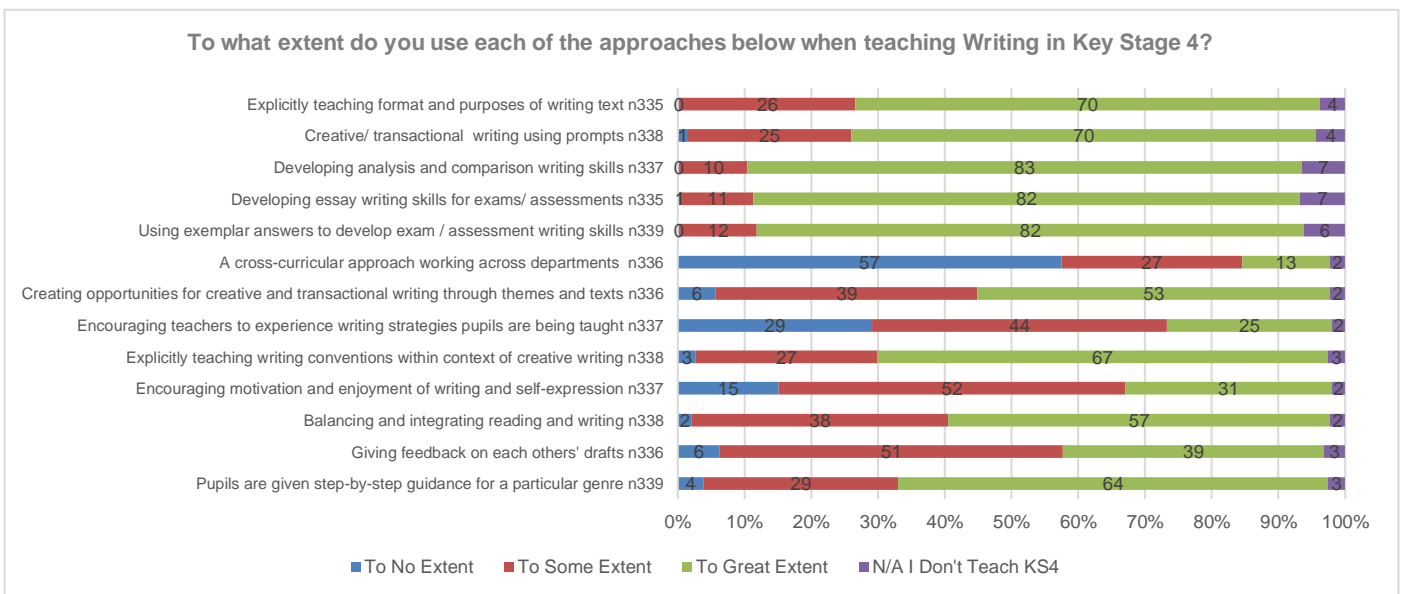

To what extent do you use each of the approaches below when teaching Writing in Key Stage 4?

Approach	To No Extent	To Some Extent	To Great Extent	N/A I Don't Teach KS4
Explicitly teaching format and purposes of writing text n335	0	26	70	4
Creative/ transactional writing using prompts n338	1	25	70	4
Developing analysis and comparison writing skills n337	0	10	83	7
Developing essay writing skills for exams/ assessments n335	1	11	82	7
Using exemplar answers to develop exam / assessment writing skills n339	0	12	82	6
A cross-curricular approach working across departments n336	57	27	13	2
Creating opportunities for creative and transactional writing through themes and texts n336	6	39	53	2
Encouraging teachers to experience writing strategies pupils are being taught n337	29	44	25	2
Explicitly teaching writing conventions within context of creative writing n338	3	27	67	3
Encouraging motivation and enjoyment of writing and self-expression n337	15	52	31	2
Balancing and integrating reading and writing n338	2	38	57	2
Giving feedback on each others' drafts n336	6	51	39	3
Pupils are given step-by-step guidance for a particular genre n339	4	29	64	3

Figure 8: Extent of use of approaches when teaching Writing for Key Stage 4

Note: n varies because not all respondents responded for every option. N/A, not applicable.

Secondary schoolteachers reported that encouraging pupils' motivation and enjoyment of Writing and self-expression as well as Writing conventions, such as grammar, posed the greatest challenges. Confidence was identified as a key barrier to encouraging pupils' motivation and enjoyment of Writing. This is linked to the challenges around Writing conventions as a lack of adequate grammar and spelling knowledge (which the teachers reported seeing increasingly in pupils entering Key Stage 3) reduces confidence to approach Writing. They also reported that less able writers often struggle with ideas for creative Writing. Teachers found that reading often provides good motivation for Writing, therefore a good reading culture was suggested as important, especially in improving vocabulary and modelling Writing.

Furthermore, respondents stated that the focus and time at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 is on academic Writing rather than self-expression, due to assessment pressures. They explained that pupils at Key Stage 4 struggle to see the link between self-expression and exam results, and therefore lack motivation for creative Writing.

An additional challenge for teaching Writing conventions cited by some of the teachers was a lack in their own skills and confidence for teaching grammar. They expressed difficulty in integrating teaching conventions into their approach, particularly for creative Writing.

Research question 6. Findings: What professional development do teachers receive around teaching Writing and Writing interventions?

Primary

According to the survey, Primary school respondents had predominantly received internal training by their schools on an approach to Writing or a Writing product. Primary schools with high FSM were 12% more likely to have external training run by a local English Hub (p = 0.015) and 10% more likely to run internal training than schools with low FSM (p = 0.036).
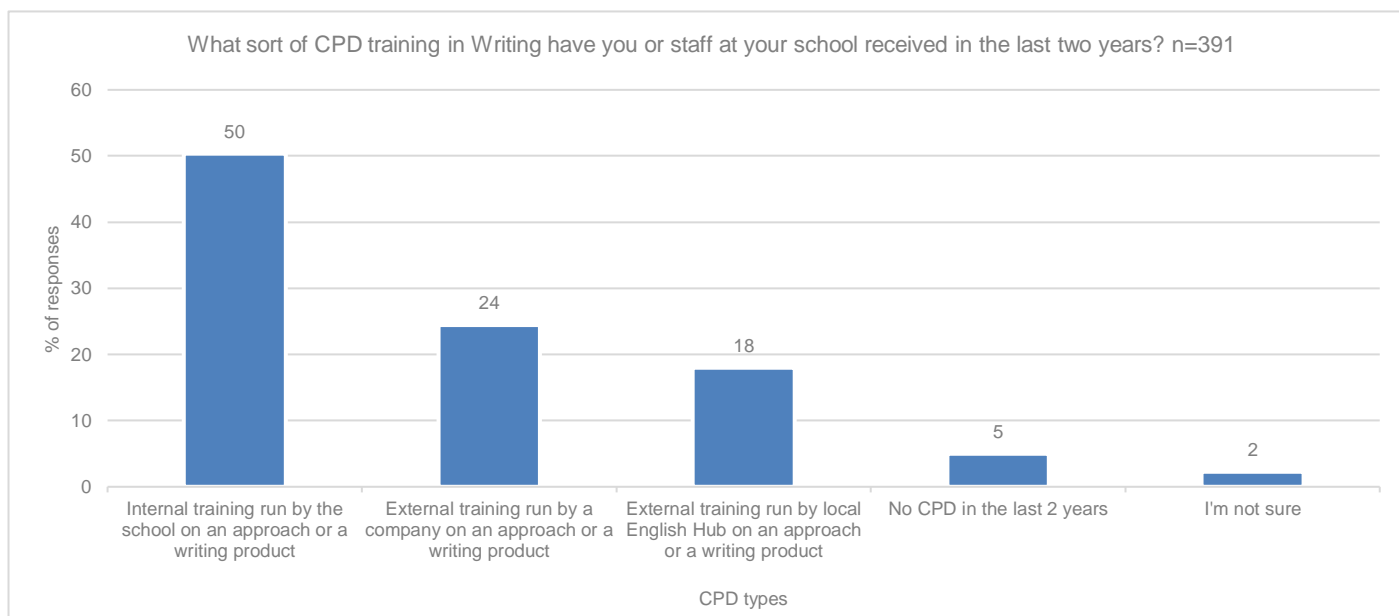
Figure 9: CPD types[a] in Primary schools

[a] For this question, more than one answer could be selected by respondents.

Primary schoolteachers interviewed, reported having generally received limited recent Writing CPD. Most Writing training had been provided by their MAT or school. Internal training was normally developed to match the school-wide approach and delivered by English leads within the MAT or school. The interviews allowed further exploration of the external training on an approach or writing product with training on bought-in programmes/curricula such as Curriculum with Unity Schools Partnership (CUSP), Read Write Inc. and Talk for Writing being mentioned.

Writing moderation commonly formed part of teachers' CPD on Writing. Cross-MAT or cross-Local Authority moderation was seen to support assessment of Writing, giving a good sense of what good writing looks like and what progress looks like, which then feeds back into teaching.

In survey responses, when reflecting on teaching Writing skills, Primary schoolteachers were most confident in supporting pupils in coming up with ideas/choosing the focus of their Writing, as well as choosing effective words and

sentences. Planning and considering the motivation or purpose of Writing was also ranked highly, as shown in Figure 10. There were two statistically significant differences between schools with high and low FSM. First, teachers in schools with high FSM were 12% more likely to select most confident in teaching handwriting than teachers in schools with low FSM (p = 0.014), and second, 16% less likely to select considering the motivation or purpose of Writing (p = 0.004).
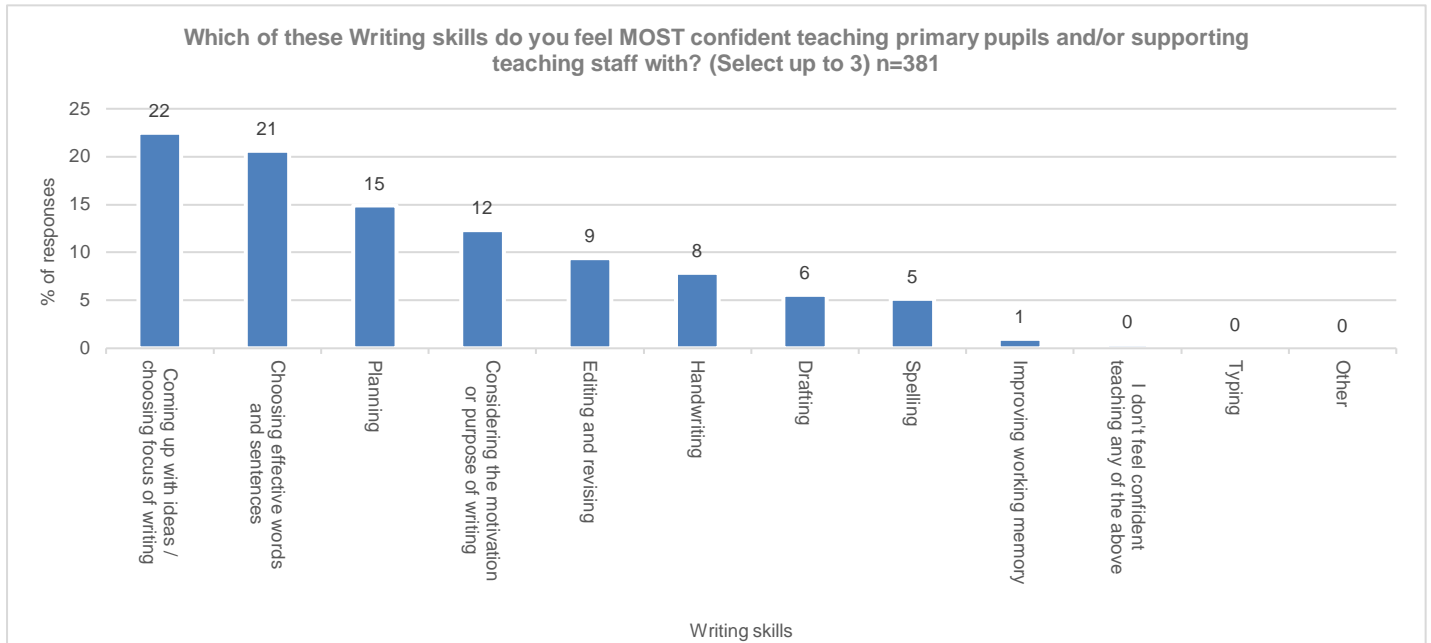

Figure 10: Skills most confident in teaching Primary[a]

[a] *For this question, up to three answers could be selected by respondents.*

In survey responses, when reflecting on Writing skills teachers were least confident in, improving working memory was the most commonly selected. Editing and revising, as well as spelling, were also areas where teachers lacked confidence in teaching Primary pupils, as shown in Figure 11.
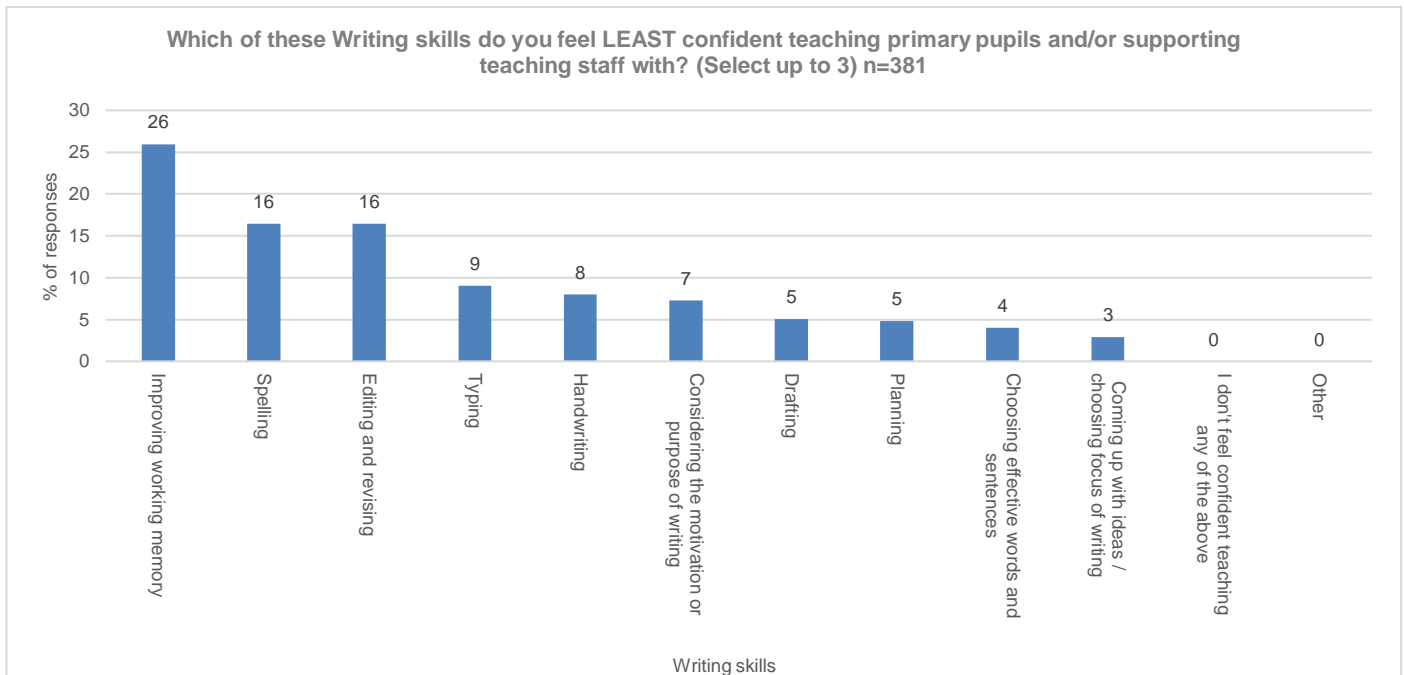
Figure 11: Skills least confident in teaching Primary[a]

[a] *For this question, up to three answers could be selected by respondents.*

Secondary

According to the survey, Secondary school respondents had predominantly received internal training on an approach or Writing project, or no training on Writing, in the last two years.

What sort of CPD training in Writing have you or staff at your school received in the last two years? n=352
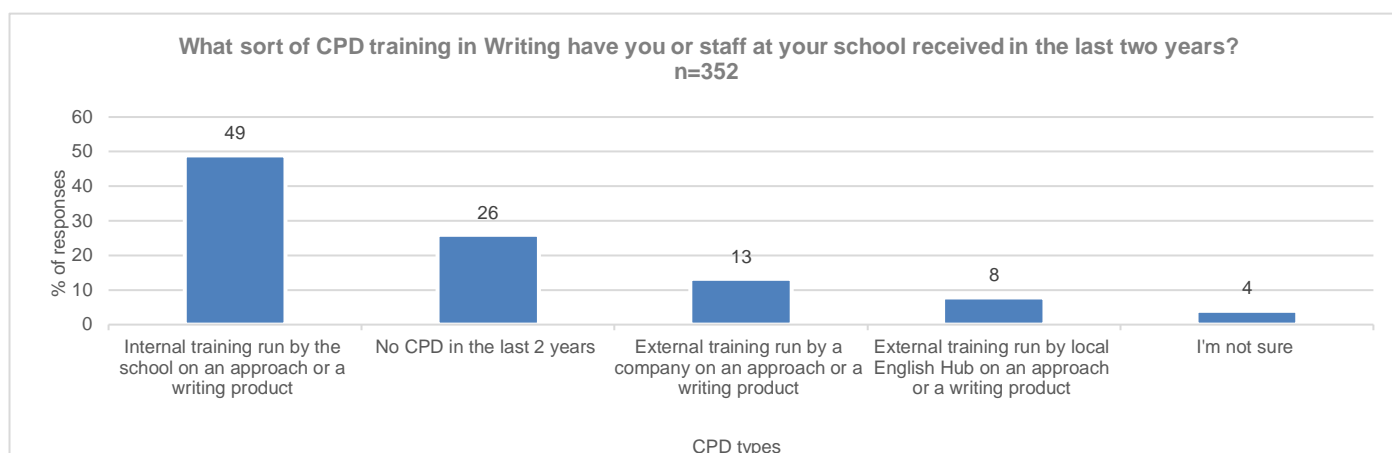
Figure 12: CPD types[a] in Secondary schools

[a] For this question, more than one answer could be selected by respondents (up to three responses).

Similarly, the feedback from the interviews was that Secondary schoolteachers had received limited recent CPD. Most training had been provided by their MAT or internally developed by the head of department/literacy lead.

Teachers described attending Exam Board training to support their assessment of Writing and help pupils to meet the exam requirements. They also reported using social media and other networks for free CPD, often out of school time. Popular education influencers were mentioned as 'go-to' people for free resources. As previously mentioned, there was a desire from teachers to want to understand the most recent research, practice, and thinking in teaching Writing. It is also worth noting that some training is given as part of delivered programmes such as Ark Mastery and Teach First, and that English leads are also increasingly undertaking the National Professional Qualification in Leading Literacy (NPQLL).

There is a lot of appetite from teachers for CPD, particularly vocabulary- and grammar-focused training. To a lesser extent, but still of note, handwriting, motor skills, and spelling were also highlighted as useful focuses for training. Primary schoolteachers are often trained on these topics, but the lack of fundamental Writing skills of many Key Stage 3 pupils during their transition from Key Stage 2 was highlighted as making them increasingly relevant to Secondary schoolteachers. Writing stamina was also described as an issue at Key Stage 4, where extended writing in multiple exams is required.

When asked to identify Writing skills, teachers were confident in teaching, Secondary schoolteachers selected supporting pupils in writing an analysis and comparison of texts, coming up with ideas/choosing focus of Writing, choosing effective words and sentences and exam/assessment answer Writing, as shown in Figure 13.
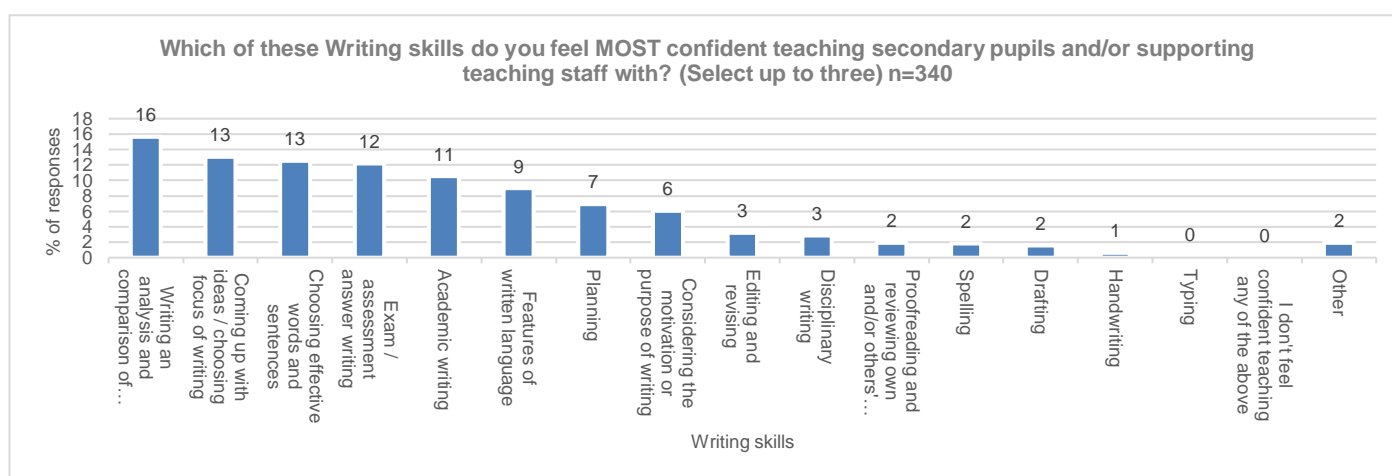

Which of these Writing skills do you feel MOST confident teaching secondary pupils and/or supporting teaching staff with? (Select up to three) n=340
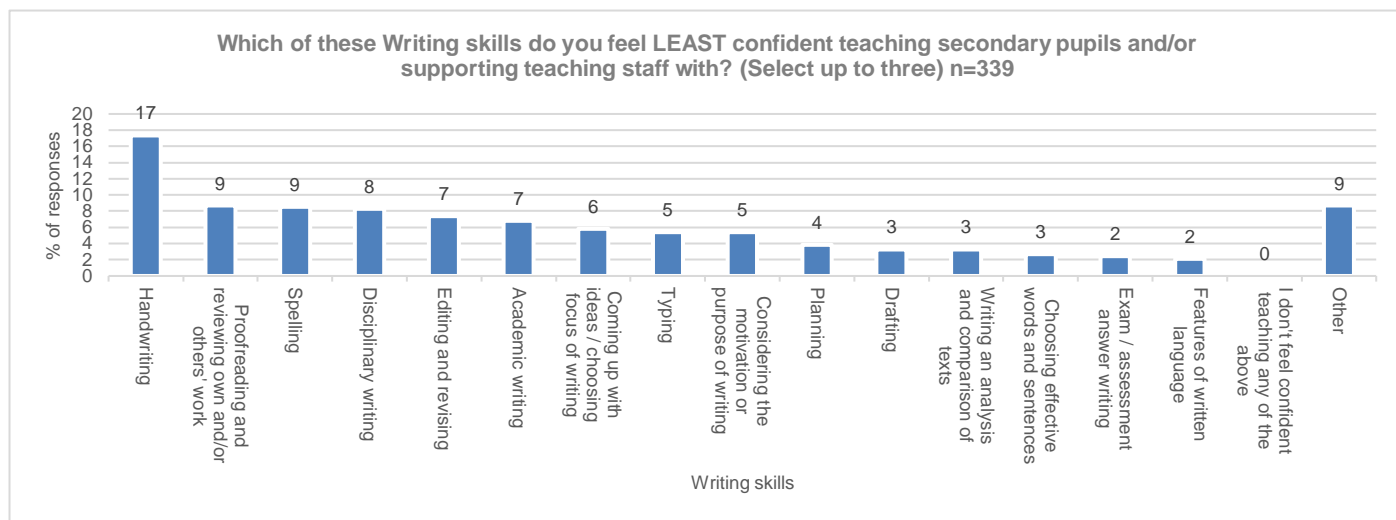
Figure 13: Skills most confident in teaching Secondary[a]

[a] For this question, up to three answers could be selected by respondents.

In terms of the areas teachers were least confident in teaching, handwriting was by far the most commonly selected response as shown in Figure 14. When asked to select areas in which they were lacking in confidence, teachers from schools with high FSM were 16% less likely to select academic Writing (p = 0.015) and 15% less likely to select considering the purpose and motivation of Writing (p = 0.010), but 15% more likely to select coming up with ideas/choosing focus of Writing (p = 0.024) than teachers from schools with low FSM.

Figure 14: Skills least confident in teaching Secondary[a]

[a] For this question, up to three answers could be selected by respondents.

Research question 7. Findings: How do schools track their pupils' progress in Writing in different key stages?

Primary
Interview data showed that Primary schools commonly use teacher assessment as a key tool for tracking their pupils' progress. Teacher assessment was balanced through moderation from SLT, or other teachers. Occasionally, moderation took place across different schools within the same MAT or Local Authority.

> *We will do…Writing moderation in house and then we've done it previously as well between schools and in our local area.*

> *We've just had moderation…we do that three times a year.*

Formative assessment was also seen as an important part of teaching Writing. Some Primary schools referenced using tracking packages such as No More Marking, Sonar Tracker, or Insight. Interim Teacher Assessment Frameworks (ITAFs) were a common tool used by teachers for tracking pupils against Year 6 SATs scores.

Secondary
Interview data showed that in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, schools were using formal assessments to track pupils' progress in Writing. At Key Stage 3, bespoke assessments devised by the school were often used and usually marked against grade descriptors. In Key Stage 4, assessments were more frequent than in Key Stage 3, and typically took the form of past exam papers or questions that were often marked against GCSE specifications and mark schemes. Schools were using a more data-driven approach at Key Stage 4, recording progress and setting targets on an individual pupil basis.

One head of English commented:

> *There's a formal assessment at the end of each half term, which drives the predicted grades. We then will mark their work on a three-week basis, which is where we then give feedback on their Writing.*

Similarly, a Key Stage 4 lead said:

> *…in class we have the checkpoint assessment and the summative assessment at the end and we keep that data, and track that over the year and it's their main kind of mock exams which they do three of per year that we kind of compare.*

Additionally, at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, many schools were using teacher assessment, peer assessment, and self-assessment to support teaching of Writing.

Research questions 8 and 9. Findings: According to their tracking of progress, which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results? Is there any relationship between a school's Writing results and the approach and/or programme they are using?

Research questions 8 and 9 were analysed together to explore how schools rated their own effectiveness in teaching Writing and how this varied by school performance. Under research questions 8 and 9 we also explored the relationship between the specific approaches that schools took to teaching Writing, and their Writing outcomes but were unable to show a direct relationship between these two factors based on the evidence gathered in this study. Respondents in both Primary and Secondary school interviews often stressed the challenges in linking specific approaches to outcomes around Writing given the multiple variables shaping this relationship. Teachers also noted that making this link was made harder by changes in staff, existing staff changing approach to teaching Writing, and pupils moving between schools.

Primary
Asked to rate the effectiveness of their approach to teaching Writing on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is ineffective and 5 is highly effective), many Primary schools were positive about the effectiveness of their approach to teaching Writing, with an overall mean of 3.59. Around 7% of Primary schoolteachers selected a rating of 5, whilst 47% selected a rating of 4. Other Primary schools were more cautious in their evaluation of the effectiveness of their approach with 40% selecting a rating of 3 and 6% selecting a rating of 2. No Primary schools selected a rating of 1 (ineffective) in response to this question (see Figure 15).
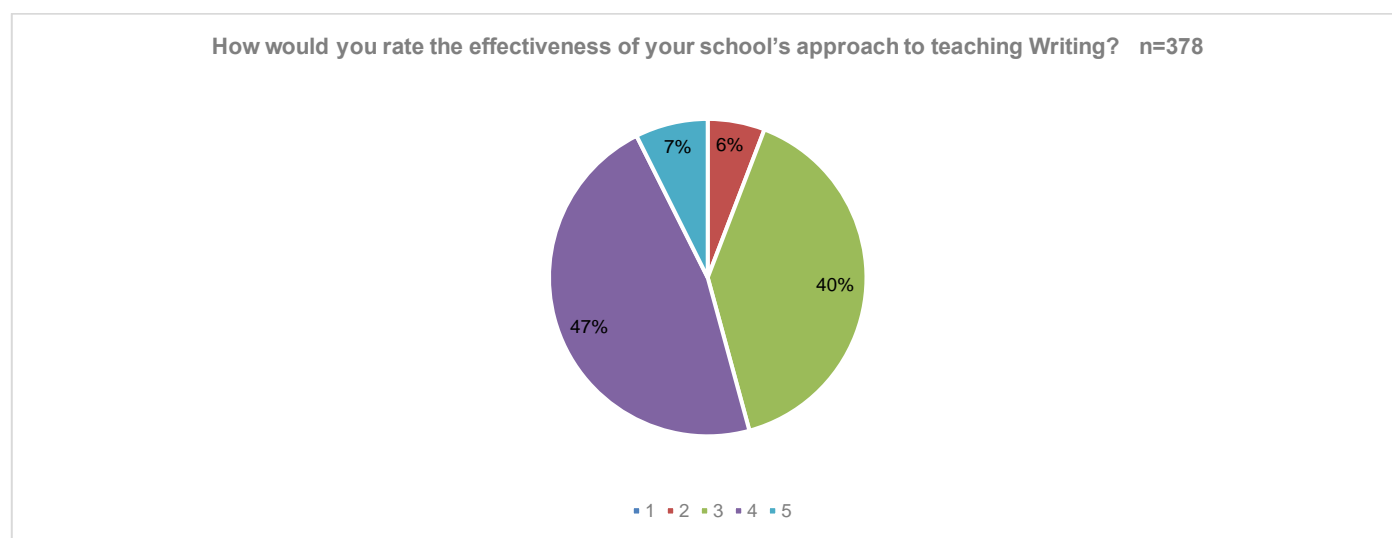

How would you rate the effectiveness of your school's approach to teaching Writing? n=378

Figure 15: Effectiveness of Writing approach in Primary schools

Based on survey responses, we also saw differences in how Primary schools rated the effectiveness of their approach[8] based on different school characteristics. Schools reporting low outcomes in Key Stage 2 SATs[9] had an overall mean of 3.2 whilst Primary schools reporting high outcomes had a mean of 3.8. When rating the effectiveness of their approach, Primary schools with high percentage of FSM pupils, had a mean of 3.4 compared to 3.7 from Primary schools with low FSM. The differences in mean scores were not statistically significant for any of the comparisons.

Based on responses in interviews, Primary schoolteachers were often positive about impacts where they had brought in a whole-school approach to teaching Writing, with all teachers using the same vocabulary and structure. However, it was considered that any approach is only as good as the teacher that is delivering it in the classroom. One Year 5 teacher from a school with high staff turnover commented:

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[8] Where 1 is ineffective and 5 is highly effective.
[9] Question was: *How did your school compare to the national average in Key Stage 2 SATs? Above national average/In line with national average/Below national average/I'm not sure.*

I think the approach works and it's good if teachers have the subject knowledge to plan and deliver from it but if they're a new teacher then it would be difficult I think, unless they have expertise in the area.

The Primary schoolteachers referenced significant gaps in Writing attainment, which they felt were linked to COVID-19 disruption. However, teachers felt it was difficult to track this, and that they were still working to understand the long-term impacts of the disruption to the teaching of Writing. The following is an indicative quote from one teacher:

We're currently at 50% for Writing because cohort is so different and they massively struggle with Writing, but we've noticed a huge impact since COVID because everything else could be taught. Writing was the thing that wasn't getting done during COVID, it just wasn't happening at all.

Secondary
Like their Primary counterparts, many Secondary schools were positive when rating the effectiveness of their approach to teaching Writing, although the overall mean on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is ineffective and 5 is highly effective) was slightly lower at 3.37, but this difference was not statistically significant.

How would you rate the effectiveness of your school's approach to teaching Writing? n=347
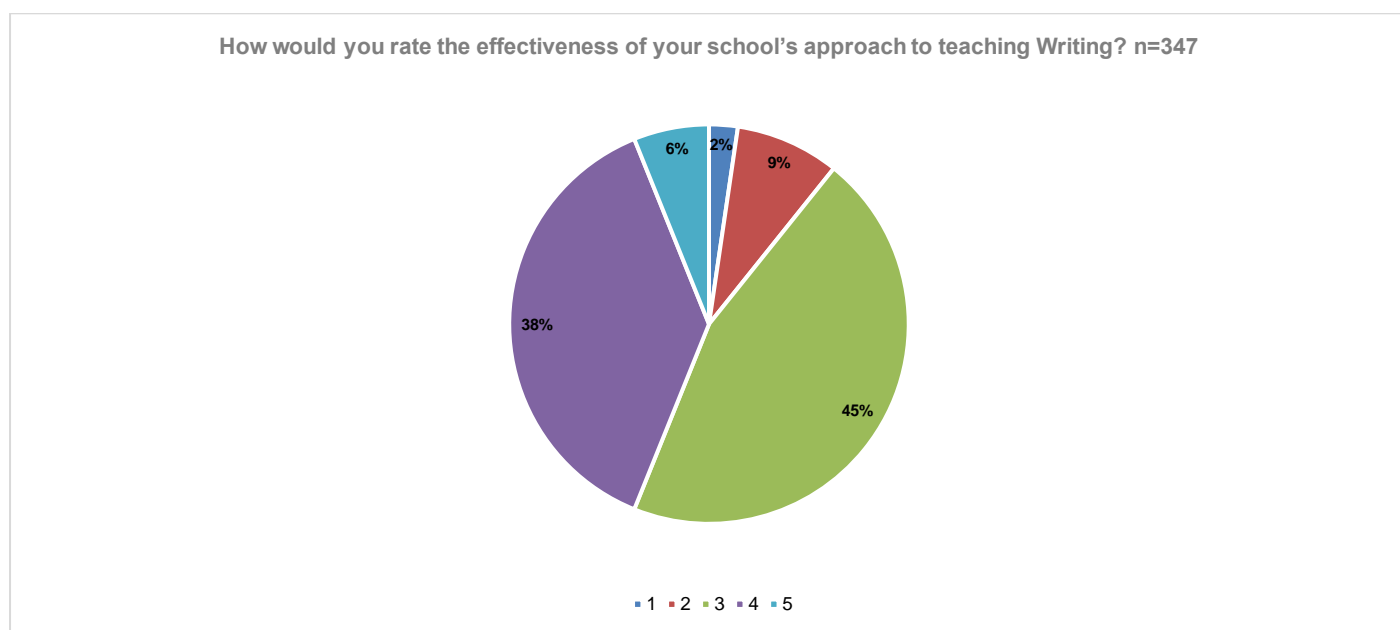
Figure 16: Effectiveness of Writing approach in Secondary schools

Based on survey responses, we also saw differences in how Secondary schools rated the effectiveness of their approach based on different school characteristics.

Secondary schools reporting low outcomes in GCSE English language had a lower overall mean of 3.2 compared to 3.7 from Secondary schools reporting high outcomes in GCSE English language. Secondary schools with high FSM reported a mean of 3.3 compared to schools with low FSM reporting a mean of 3.7. Again, none of the differences in mean were statistically significant.

In interview data, at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, teachers' comments suggested that outcomes around Writing were mixed, with some reporting positive progress in recent years and some the opposite. Of the schools reporting a reduction in progress and outcomes in current cohorts, the conjecture amongst interviewees was that lost learning during COVID lockdowns, especially for economically disadvantaged learners was to blame.

Of the schools reporting positive outcomes, improvements were often related to staff encouragement of enjoyment of creative Writing, as well as confidence in Writing, which tended to stem from providing ample revision and exam practice time. One teacher from a school with high FSM and high outcomes, where they have created their own approach from a mixture of resources, stated:

I would definitely say that it had a massive impact on our pupils because where I teach is in a highly deprived area and there's like 65% on Pupil Premium in the school, but we performed 10% above average in English GCSE. I think the key is giving plenty of revision time, exam practice, and exemplar materials.

However, based on teachers' comments, the attainment gap remains in terms of outcomes for pupils with FSM.

The interview data also suggested positive outcomes where approaches taken to teaching Writing were structured and consistent.

Research question 10. Findings: Which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools see as leading to the best pupil motivation around Writing?

Primary

The survey asked teachers to rate their pupils' motivation around Writing on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is completely unmotivated and 5 is highly motivated. As seen in Figure 17, over half of schools were positive about their pupils' motivation, with 6% rating motivation at a scale of 5 and 46% rating motivation at a scale of 4. However, 38% rated motivation at a scale of 3 and 10% rated motivation at a scale of 2. Overall, Primary schools' ratings of their pupils' motivation had a mean rating of 3.47.

How would you rate your pupils' motivation to write as a result of your school's approach? n=384
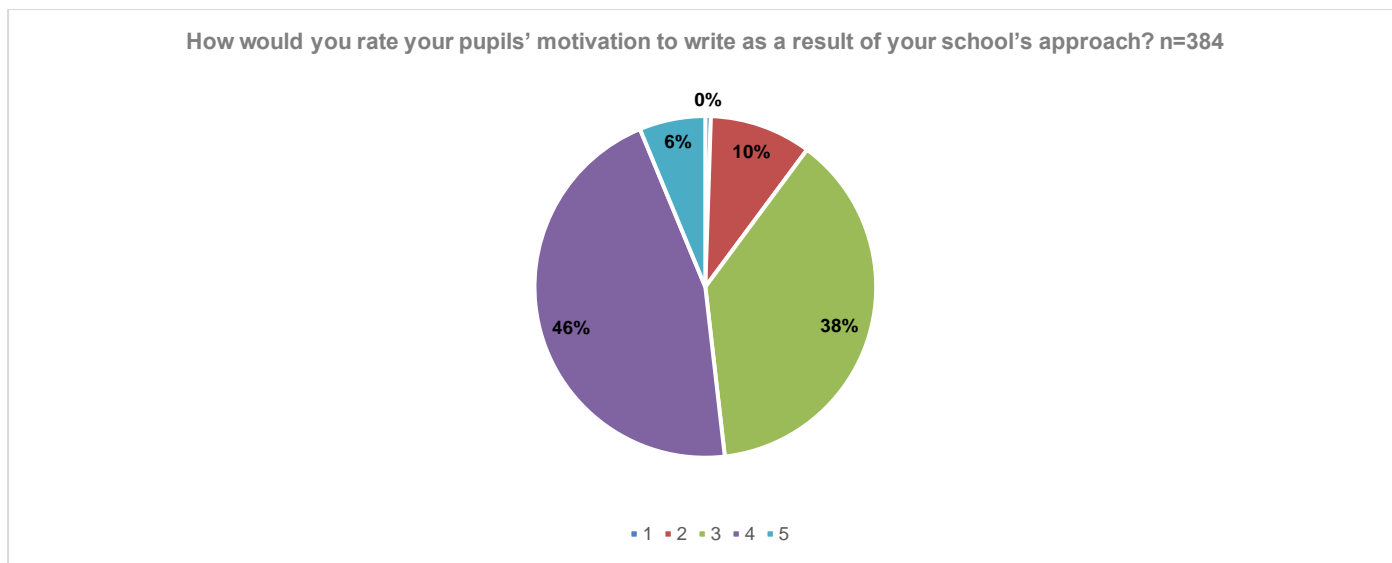
Figure 17: Pupil motivation in Primary schools

Schools reporting low outcomes in Key Stage 2 SATs had a mean rating of 3.2 compared to a mean rating of 3.8 for schools reporting high Key Stage 2 Writing performance outcomes. Schools with a high percentage of FSM pupils had a mean rating of 3.4 compared to 3.7 for schools with low FSM. The difference in mean was not statistically significant.

The teacher interview data yielded a common theme of hook activities. Many schools talked about using a 'hook' to bring Writing to life. This could be drama, a craft activity, outdoor learning, or cooking; it often involved an oral outcome.

> *...we are trying to keep it topic based...we give them their wow moments. We try and do an experience like we always start our topic or our terms off...with either a school trip or a workshop or an experience within the classroom.*

Another commonly cited hook was the use of a text to engage pupils. Additionally, there were frequent mentions of writing to authors and author visits.

> *…it's really important that when you're doing your thematic planning that you're choosing text types and extracts and stories that hook them in because that leads to them being interested in the Writing side.*

Many teachers talked about practical applications for Writing. As well as writing to authors, there were presentations to bookshops and writing to the local church. Praise and encouragement (e.g. wow walls, star writer, writer of the week, etc.) and a safe space in which to make mistakes, were seen by teachers as key components of a successful approach to motivating pupils to write.

> *We celebrate Writing school-wide more than we used to do, so we now have what we call the Writing Wonderwall board up in the school hall, and every term teachers put up to four samples of children's Writing that is then celebrated and shared throughout the school.*

Teachers emphasised the importance of giving pupils some autonomy in what they write to allow them to express themselves. This can include allowing them to choose the format.

We've also started something called Free Write Friday and which we are just allowing children to write without it being marked, doesn't even have to be looked at by the teacher.

Secondary

The survey asked teachers to rate their pupils' motivation around Writing on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is completely unmotivated and 5 is highly motivated. Secondary schoolteachers reported lower motivation in their pupils compared to Primary schoolteachers. As see in Figure 18, over half of respondents (51%) rated a scale of 3 and only 21% rated a scale of 4 or 5. At the other end, 25% of respondents rated motivation at a scale of 2, and 3% rated motivation at a scale of 1 or completely unmotivated. Overall, Secondary schoolteachers' ratings of their pupils' motivation had a mean of 2.95.
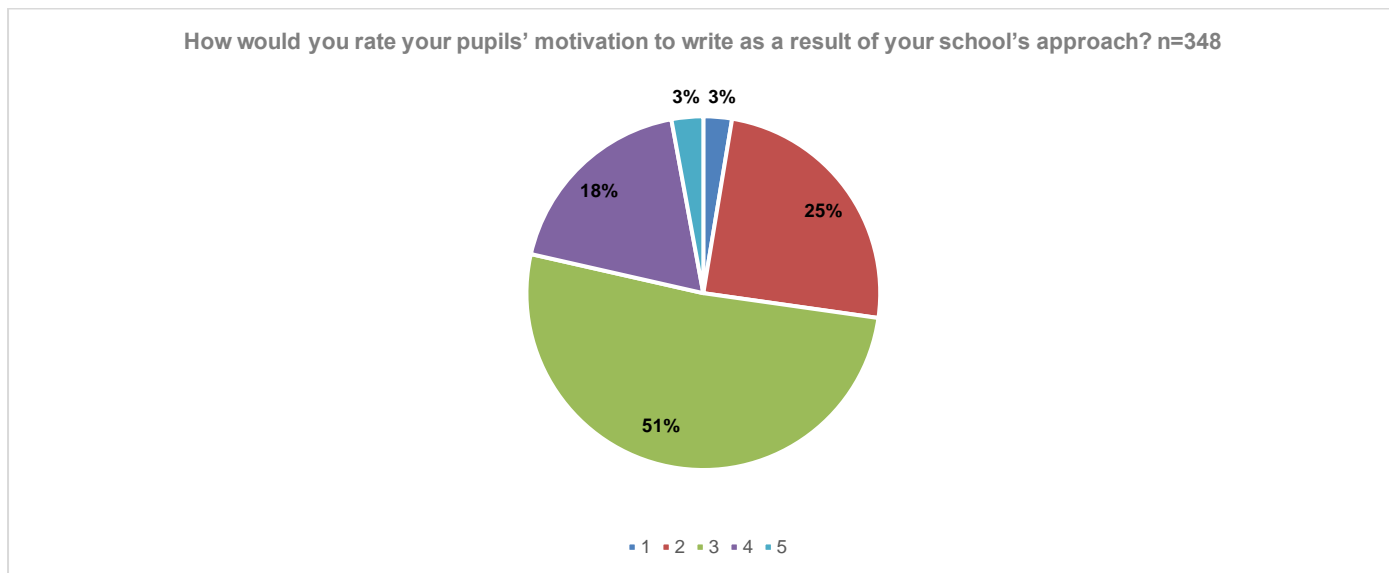
Figure 18: Pupil motivation in Secondary schools

Secondary schools reporting low outcomes in GCSE English language had a mean rating of 3.2 compared to 3.7 from schools reporting high GCSE English language outcomes. Secondary schools with a high percentage of FSM pupils reported a mean rating of 3.3 compared to a mean rating of 3.7 from schools with low FSM. Again, the differences in mean were not statistically significant.

During interviews, the most prominent theme regarding motivation was around providing praise, prizes, rewards, feedback, and success criteria, which gives pupils confidence and encouragement. Creativity, self-expression, and freedom, as well as providing a safe space were also recurring. Many teachers talked in interviews about needing an accessible way for pupils to approach writing tasks, such as starting with short, contained tasks, scaffolding, and sentence starters. The relevance of writing tasks to pupils was also reported as a clear factor influencing motivation, whether that be relevant topics or relevant model texts.

Research question 11. Findings: According to their tracking of progress, which Writing intervention approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results for struggling writers?

Primary

As stated for research question 4, the approach to intervention for struggling writers was often the same as for the whole class, potentially with extra scaffolding built in. This approach was thought to achieve the best results by respondents because it was seen as not putting a ceiling on attainment and improving confidence and motivation as pupils see themselves staying in the main class with their peers rather than having to be given additional sessions either in a small group or one to one. However, many talked about there being room for improvement and a desire to do more if: a) they could find/afford an intervention programme; or b) they had more staff to do small group work.

Secondary

Overall, as Figures 7 and 8 illustrate, the survey data showed slightly more use of specific interventions in Secondary than in Primary, although many teachers still stated they use the same approach as the mainstream with some

adjustments. Some also talked about using Reading interventions for Writing. As for Primary, a few interviewees said Writing is an area for improvement or that they have not been able to find good intervention materials. In other instances, respondents described recently implementing an intervention approach and having yet to see the full effect. Specific interventions that were cited by a minority of schools as achieving good results were Lexia and Read Write Inc.

Research question 12. Findings: What challenges do teachers face around the teaching of Writing?

Primary
The top three challenges identified in the survey were pupils' lack of confidence in spelling, poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary, and ensuring a consistent approach to Writing throughout the school.
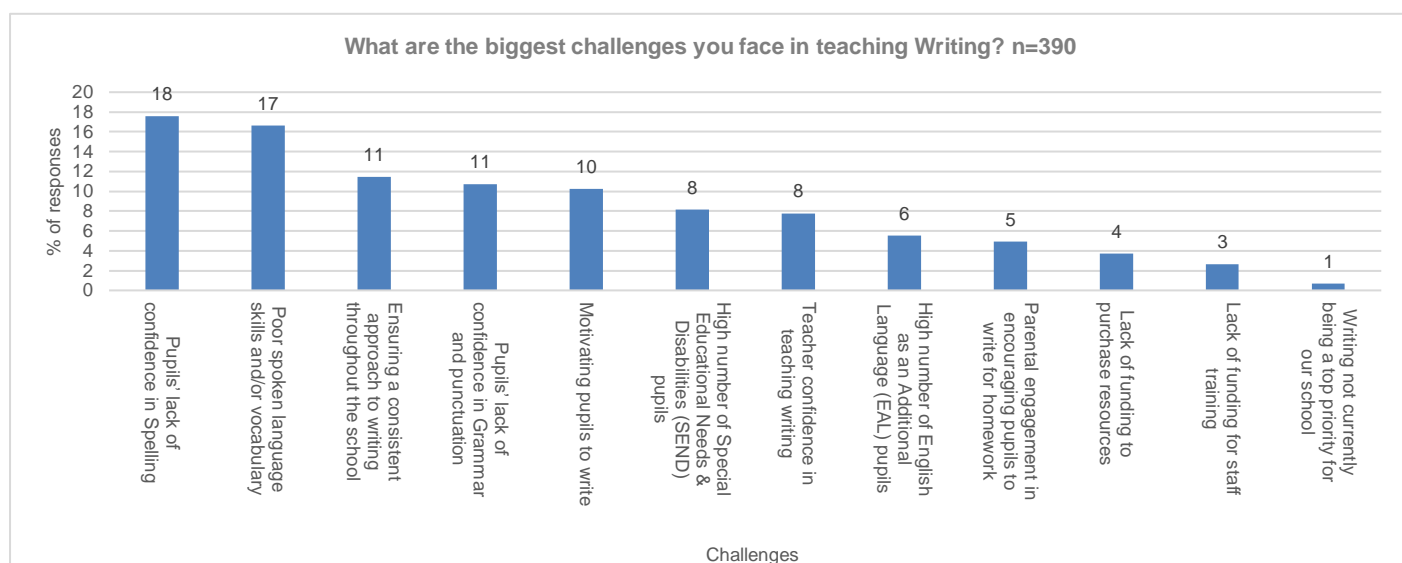
Figure 19: Biggest challenges in teaching Writing in Primary schools[a]

[a] For this question, more than one answer could be selected by respondents.

The challenge most frequently cited in the interviews was spelling, punctuation, and grammar (SPAG), especially spelling. Some teachers believed challenges around SPAG to be an ongoing effect from COVID-19 and often considered the issue to be school-wide. Teacher confidence was also identified as a key challenge, with many teachers finding subjectivity challenging for marking. A number of schools cited their percentage of EAL pupils as a challenge in improving Writing. Other schools talked about poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary across the whole cohort. Furthermore, many respondents explained that budgetary constraints were a key challenge for obtaining resources to support Writing and employing TAs and training staff.

Analysis of the survey data by Writing outcomes in Key Stage 2 SATs demonstrated there were statistically significant differences in the challenges schools with different characteristics faced in teaching Writing. Schools with below average Key Stage 2 Writing performance outcomes were 19% more likely to select poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary ($p = 0.001$), 17% more likely to select high number of EAL pupils ($p = <0.001$), 13% more likely to select high number of SEND pupils ($p = 0.073$), and 7% more likely to select parental engagement in encouraging pupils to write for homework ($p = 0.036$) as their biggest challenges than schools with higher Writing outcomes. Schools with higher Writing outcomes were 11% more likely to select lack of funding to purchase resources ($p = 0.030$), 11% more likely to select pupils' lack of confidence in spelling ($p = 0.043$), and 6% more likely to select lack of funding for staff training ($p = 0.030$) as their biggest challenges compared to schools with lower Writing outcomes.

Similarly, there were large variations in challenges selected by Primary schools when analysed by FSM. Primary schools with high levels of FSM were 38% more likely to select poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary ($p = 0.179$), 15% more likely to select high number of SEND ($p = 0.002$), and 11% more likely to select parental engagement in encouraging pupils to write for homework ($p = 0.005$) as their biggest challenges compared with schools with low levels of FSM. Additionally, Primary schools with high FSM were 25% less likely to select pupils' lack of confidence in spelling ($p = 0.001$), 19% less likely to select ensuring a consistent approach to Writing throughout the school ($p = 0.001$), and

10% less likely to select lack of funding to purchase resources (p = 0.003) as their biggest challenges compared with schools with low levels of FSM.

Secondary

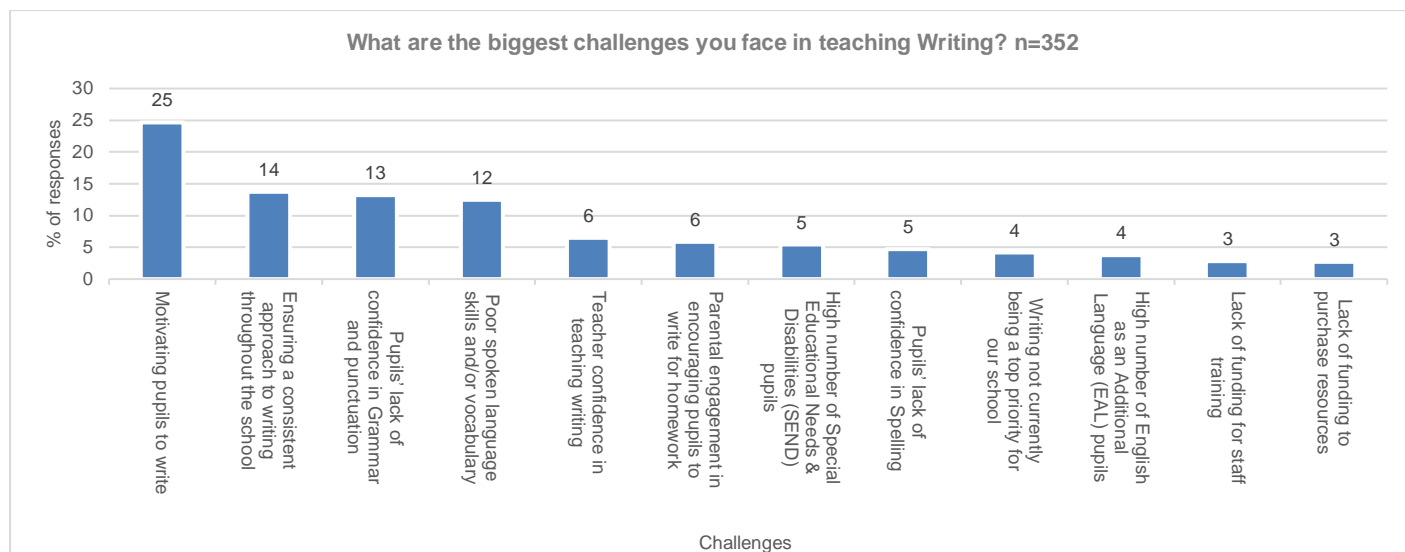

What are the biggest challenges you face in teaching Writing? n=352

Figure 20: Biggest challenges in teaching Writing in Secondary schools[a]

[a] For this question, more than one answer could be selected by respondents.

The top three challenges identified in the survey by respondents from Secondary schools were: motivating pupils to write; ensuring a consistent approach to Writing throughout the school; and pupils' lack of confidence in grammar and punctuation.

Secondary schools who reported above average outcomes in GCSE English language were 18% more likely to identify pupils' lack of confidence in grammar and punctuation (p = 0.004) as their biggest challenge than schools with below average outcomes. They were also 22% less likely to select high number of SEND (p = 3.044) and 21% less likely to identify poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary (p = 0.001) as key challenges compared with schools with below average outcomes.

Schools with a high proportion of FSM were 13% more likely to identify poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary (p = 0.039) and 8% less likely to select Writing not being a priority for the school (p = 0.044) as a challenge than schools with low FSM.

In interviews, teachers also had the opportunity to discuss key challenges they encountered in teaching Writing. The joint top challenge cited by Secondary schools was motivation, with many participants stating that pupils find Writing '*boring*' and '*difficult*' and '*do not see the relevance*'. Tying with motivation as the most cited challenge was SPAG, particularly spelling, poor language skills, especially a lack of vocabulary and a general lack of Reading for Pleasure were also identified as key barriers to teaching Writing. Where schools had a high proportion of EAL pupils, especially those who had not attended Primary school in this country, this created further challenges. This could be attributed to a potential lack of strong English phonics knowledge and vocabulary, which are crucial elements supporting the Writing process.

Conclusion

This practice review aims to add to the evidence base around the teaching and learning of Writing—an area where available literature is limited. The findings offer a snapshot of current practice in teaching Writing in England, as well as the opportunities and challenges encountered by teachers engaged in this.

There were similarities across key stages in the Writing resources used by teachers, with schools most likely to create and use their own resources. Many schools were also using a mix and match approach to writing resources, or using resources created by Hubs or MATs. Most Primary schools take a whole-school approach to Writing, whilst in Secondary schools, this was a considerably less common approach. Most Secondary schools felt that they were consistent within their English department, but not cross-curricular.

The use of evidence in determining a school's Writing approach was inconsistent across both Primary and Secondary levels, with the most common theme being desk research carried out by the literacy lead looking at different programmes or approaches. This desk research often relied on evidence produced for marketing purposes and research conducted by independent third parties, such as the EEF or government guidance.

The decision-makers in Primary schools were typically the literacy leads/coordinators. In Secondary schools, the decisions tended to sit with the middle to senior levels of management, such as heads of department and deputy headteachers/headteachers but required the English department to drive any changes in Writing approach. For MATs, decisions on Writing approach are generally made at the senior leadership level to encourage consistency across schools, whilst allowing enough room for teacher autonomy within that. Access to pedagogical expertise, staff time, and funding, also shaped decision-making around approaches to teaching Writing.

Ratings of the effectiveness of each schools' approach were mainly positive, with Primary school respondents slightly higher in their self-ratings. However, teachers stressed the challenge in linking Writing approach to Writing outcomes. Making this link was made harder by changes in staff and pupils moving between schools and teachers frequently making changes to approaches used to teach Writing. There was variation in schools' self-reported effectiveness by school characteristics. Schools with lower educational outcomes, as well as schools with a high percentage of FSM pupils on average rated their effectiveness low, whilst schools with high educational outcomes rated their approach as more effective.

In terms of interventions for struggling writers, some authors (e.g. Brooks, 2016) advocate for specific Writing interventions, whilst others (e.g. Santangelo and Olinghouse, 2009) argue that most whole-class approaches are effective for struggling writers. In the current study, most schools used the same approaches and programmes used for the whole class with pupils who were struggling but there was no firm evidence base used to decide how to approach intervention for Writing.

Findings on the areas of promise identified in Slavin *et al.'s* (2019) review suggested that the least used in Primary schools were pupils giving feedback on each other's drafts and encouraging teachers to experience the Writing strategies that pupils are taught. Similarly, in Secondary schools, encouraging teachers to experience Writing strategies pupils are being taught was the least used approach from the areas of promise.

The lack of external CPD on Writing was evident amongst the participants. The majority of respondents had received internal training on teaching Writing in the last two years, but a significant minority had received no CPD focused on teaching Writing in the last two years at all.

Primary school survey data showed their biggest challenges in teaching Writing to be pupils' lack of confidence in spelling, poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary, and ensuring a consistent approach to Writing throughout the school. For Secondary schools, motivating pupils to write, ensuring a consistent approach to Writing throughout the school, and pupils' lack of confidence in grammar and punctuation were the biggest challenges.

Motivation was seen as a key issue for creative Writing, particularly at Secondary school level where the drive is more towards academic writing for examination purposes. It would be of benefit to further explore approaches, which promote creativity, such as those schools using hook activities, challenges and competitions, utilising teacher modelling of creative Writing to share vulnerability, and providing safe environments in which self-expression is encouraged and supported.

Throughout the report, there have been numerous instances when statistically significant differences have been noted between how schools with high proportions of pupils eligible for FSM responded to the survey questions when compared to schools with low proportions of pupils eligible for FSM. Likewise for schools with above average Key Stage 2/GCSE English language attainment and below average. It seems useful to summarise in this conclusion what schools with above average attainment were doing differently to their counterparts, and what challenges schools with higher proportions of pupils eligible for FSM faced.

When compared to schools with below average Key Stage 2 Writing performance/GCSE English language attainment, schools with higher attainment were more likely to create and use their own resources, including creating their own interventions for struggling writers, and rated the effectiveness of their Writing approach, higher.

Schools with above average proportions of pupils eligible for FSM were more likely to use Read Write Inc. Fresh Start with struggling writers, and stated their biggest challenges were poor spoken language skills and vocabulary, higher number of pupils with SEND, lack of parental engagement, and Writing not being a priority for their school. The CPD on Writing was more likely to be internally led training than using external providers. Finally, teachers in these schools were more likely to feel confident in teaching handwriting but less confident in considering the motivation and purpose of Writing and coming up with ideas or an area of focus for Writing.

Implications

It would be interesting to explore how schools who perform well in Writing (at Key Stage 2 and GCSE English language) deliver their Writing approaches. Further research would help to understand the impact of a school-wide approach compared to other approaches, establishing a guide for good practice at both Primary and Secondary levels. Additionally, research into what impactful Writing interventions look like would help to establish if any specific interventions are more effective at improving pupils' Writing outcomes.

Primary schoolteachers reported that the elements of Writing skills they were least confident in teaching were improving working memory, editing, revising, and spelling, which are therefore areas where future CPD could usefully focus. Secondary schoolteachers reported low confidence in teaching handwriting, although confidence in this was higher in schools with higher FSM, making this a relatively straightforward focus for further CPD. A key implication from the research was the need for more targeted CPD. Resources supporting teachers to teach these elements of Writing, and address the main challenges, would be beneficial, as would further research to understand the barriers to implementation.

Moreover, the findings from the interviews suggest that it would be valuable to look at the effectiveness of oracy-led approaches, particularly when working with struggling writers and those with EAL, across all key stages. Teachers reported that oracy can support vocabulary development, planning of Writing and help pupils to assess their own and each other's drafts through discussion.

It would also be valuable to further investigate effective step-by-step approaches, such as giving a scaffold and model of what 'good' Writing looks like. These approaches were cited by many schools as being good for motivation and confidence with Writing. There are varied forms of step-by-step approaches, and it would be useful to understand what process is effective in making Writing accessible, particularly for struggling writers.

Interview data suggested that literacy leads and heads of English in schools are often key decision-makers and catalysts for change, although they require support from the SLT at the school regarding budget and scope. They also have limited time to carry out research into Writing approaches hence, research and communication of findings should be targeted at this audience in an easily digestible format for maximum impact.

Lastly, the consistent theme of low pupil motivation towards Writing was interesting to note, and whilst it is a complex issue, it is worth exploring methods to motivate pupils to write at the various key stages. Some ideas on motivating pupils were suggested from teachers in this review, which can be built upon to develop a toolkit of initiatives for teachers.

This grounded understanding will be key to guiding support for teachers, both in terms of CPD and resources, aimed at making the teaching of Writing more effective, engaging, and consistent. Teachers expressed a genuine enthusiasm for the teaching of Writing, and a recognition of its importance in education. It is crucial to recognise the numerous positive areas uncovered by this research, such as the creative approaches taken by teachers to engage pupils with Writing tasks. The intention of this practice review was to understand the good practice already taking place in schools, whilst revealing areas where increased support would be helpful.

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Appendix A: All survey questions (Primary and Secondary combined)

EEF: Understanding current practice and research priorities in teaching Writing

INTRO

Thank you for participating in our survey on Writing practices in Primary and Secondary schools in England.

This survey is being carried out by Pearson on behalf of the Education Endowment Fund (EEF). The purpose of the research is to help the EEF get a better understanding of teachers' current practice for teaching Writing, which will help them to identify areas to prioritise in 2024.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. In return for your time, you will have the opportunity to enter a prize draw to win a £100 Amazon voucher.

Any personal details you provide will be used only for the purposes of collating and analysing data from this survey. We will contact you only for the purpose(s) of inviting you to a further interview or if you are selected as a prize draw winner. You can choose whether you wish to opt into either of these at the end of the survey.

Please visit the Pearson Privacy Notice for more details:

https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/privacy-center/privacy-notices.html

SECTION 1: SCHOOL & RESPONDENT DETAILS

1. What is the name of your school? Textbox
2. What is your school's postcode? Textbox
3. Which area of England is your school based in?

If you select the final option (not based in England) you will be taken to the end of the survey.
   a. North-West
   b. North-East
   c. Yorkshire and the Humber
   d. West Midlands
   e. East Midlands
   f. East of England
   g. South-West
   h. South-East
   i. Greater London
   j. Not based in England (go to submit/end of form)

4. Which of the following best describes your school?

If you select the final three options (Independent, SEN, PRU schools) you will be taken to the end of the survey.
   a. Academy (standalone)
   b. Academy (part of a Multi-Academy Trust)
   c. Free School
   d. Local Authority Maintained
   e. Independent (go to submit/end of form)
   f. Special School for SEN pupils (go to submit/end of form)
   g. Pupil Referral Unit (go to submit/end of form)

5. What is your role in school?

If you select the final option (Teaching Assistant/ Support Staff) you will be taken to the end of the survey.
   a. Senior Leadership Team
   b. Middle Leader
   c. Teacher
   d. Newly Qualified Teacher

e. Teaching Assistant/Support Staff (go to submit/end of form)

6. What is your school type?
a. Primary (go to Question 7)
b. Secondary (go to Question 8)

7. In 2023, 71% of Primary pupils in England reached the expected standard in Writing in KS2 SATs. How did your school compare to this national average? (go to Question 10)
a. Above national average
b. In line with national average
c. Below national average
d. I'm not sure / prefer not to say

8. In 2023, 64.7% of Secondary pupils nationally achieved Grade 4/C or higher in GCSE English Language. How does your schools' % compare? (go to Question 9)
a. Above national average
b. In line with national average
c. Below national average
d. I'm not sure / prefer not to say

9. In 2023, 74.3% of Secondary pupils nationally achieved Grade 4/C or higher in GCSE English Literature. How does your schools' % compare? (go to Question 10)
a. Above national average
b. In line with national average
c. Below national average
d. I'm not sure / prefer not to say

10. Which of the following best describes the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) in your school?
a. Above average FSM (over 30%)
b. About average FSM (15–30%)
c. Below average FSM (under 15%)
d. I'm not sure / prefer not to say

11. Which of the following best describes the percentage of pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) in your school?
a. Above average EAL (over 25%)
b. About average EAL (15–25%)
c. Below average EAL (under 15%)
d. I'm not sure / prefer not to say

12. Which of the following best describes the percentage of pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in your school (with or without an Education, Health & Care [EHC] plan)?
a. Above average SEND (over 20%)
b. About average SEND (15–20%)
c. Below average SEND (under 15%)
d. I'm not sure / prefer not to say

SECTION 2: RESEARCH QUESTIONS – TEACHING & RESOURCES

13. What sort of Continued Professional Development (CPD) training in Writing have you or staff at your school received in the last 2 years?
a. Internal training run by the school on an approach or a Writing product
b. External training run by a company on an approach or a Writing product
c. External training run by local English Hub on an approach or a Writing product
d. No CPD in the last 2 years
e. I'm not sure

14. What are the biggest challenges you face in teaching Writing? Select up to 3 options
a. Motivating pupils to write
b. Pupil's lack of confidence in spelling, grammar and punctuation
c. Parental engagement in encouraging pupils to write for homework
d. Ensuring a consistent approach to Writing throughout the school
e. Teacher confidence in teaching Writing
f. High number of English as an Additional Language (EAL) pupils
g. High number of SEND pupils
h. Accessibility of Writing/access to support resources (i.e., laptops)
i. Poor Reading skills/Reading below age-related expectations
j. Poor spoken language skills and/or vocabulary
k. Lack of stamina in Writing
l. Lack of funding to purchase resources
m. Lack of funding for staff training
n. Writing not being a top priority for our school
o. Other, please state

15. Which key stages do you teach? (multiple answers available)
a. Key Stage 1 and/or 2 (go to Question 18)
b. Key Stage 3 and/or 4 (go to Question 19)

16. Which of these Writing skills do you feel MOST confident teaching Primary pupils and/or supporting teaching staff with? (Select up to 3)
a. Coming up with ideas/ choosing focus of Writing
b. Choosing effective words and sentences
c. Handwriting
d. Typing
e. Spelling
f. Planning
g. Drafting
h. Editing and revising
i. Considering the motivation or purpose of the Writing
j. Reviewing own and/or others' work
k. Improving working memory
l. I don't feel confident teaching any of the above
m. Other (please state)

17. Which of these Writing skills do you feel MOST confident teaching Secondary pupils and/or supporting teaching staff with? (Select up to 3)
a. Coming up with ideas/choosing focus of Writing
b. Choosing effective word and sentences
c. Academic Writing
d. Disciplinary Writing
e. Handwriting
f. Typing
g. Spelling
h. Vocabulary

i. Planning
j. Drafting
k. Editing and revising
l. Considering the motivation or purpose of the Writing
m. Proof Reading own and/or others' work
n. Features of written language
o. Exam / assessment answer Writing
p. Writing an analysis and comparison of texts
q. Other (please state)
r. I don't feel confident teaching any of the above

18. Which of these Writing skills do you feel LEAST confident teaching Primary pupils or supporting teaching staff with? (Select up to 3)
a. Coming up with ideas/ choosing focus of Writing
b. Choosing effective words and sentences
c. Handwriting
d. Typing
e. Spelling
f. Planning
g. Drafting
h. Editing and revising
i. Considering the motivation or purpose of the Writing
j. Reviewing own and/or others' work
k. Improving working memory
l. I feel confident teaching any of the above
m. Other (please state)

19. Which of these Writing skills do you feel LEAST confident teaching Secondary pupils or supporting teaching staff with? (Select up to 3)
a. Coming up with ideas/choosing focus of Writing
b. Choosing effective word and sentences
c. Academic Writing
d. Disciplinary Writing
e. HandWriting
f. Typing
g. Spelling
h. Vocabulary
i. Planning
j. Drafting
k. Editing and revising
l. Considering the motivation or purpose of the Writing
m. Proof Reading own and/or others' work
n. Features of written language
o. Exam / assessment answer Writing
p. Writing an analysis and comparison of texts
q. Other (please state)
r. I feel confident teaching any of the above

20. What programme(s) or resource(s) do you currently use to teach Writing in your Primary school? (Tick all that apply.) *If you use any other external programme(s) or resource(s) please state in the 'other' textbox.*
a. Big Writing
b. I am a Clever Writer
c. Literacy Tree
d. Kinetic Letters
e. Letter-join

f. Literacy Counts (Read to Write, Ready Steady Write)
g. Little Wandle
h. National Literacy Trust (Words for Work, Young Poets, Reading Champions)
i. Oak National Academy
j. Talk for Writing
k. Power English Writing
l. Read Write Inc. Spelling
m. Treasure House
n. Wordsmith
o. Writing for Pleasure
p. The Literacy Company (Pathways to Write, Pathways to Read, Pathways to Spell)
q. CLPE (The Power of Reading, the Power of Pictures)
r. The Write Stuff
s. The Writing Revolution
t. Mix & match resources (e.g. Twinkl, TES)
u. Approaches/resources created by English Hub or Multi-Academy Trust
v. School's own approach/resources
w. Other (please state)

21. What programme(s) or resource(s) do you currently use to teach Writing in your Secondary school? (Tick all that apply.) *If you use any other external programme(s) or resource(s) please state in the 'other' textbox.*
a. Talk for Writing
b. National Literacy Trust (Literacy for Learning, Words for Work, Disciplinary Writing)
c. Oak National Academy
d. Writing About Values
e. English Mastery
f. Skills for Writing
g. CGP English Workbooks
h. Teachit
i. Lit Drive
j. Zig Zag
k. Mix & match resources (e.g. Twinkl, TES)
l. Approaches/resources created by English Hub or Multi-Academy Trust
m. School's own approach/resources
n. Other (please state)

22. What resource(s)/approach(es) to teaching Writing do you use with your struggling writers in KS1 and KS2? (tick all that apply) *If you use any other external programme(s) or resource(s) please state in the 'other' textbox.*
a. On Track English
b. Rapid Writing
c. Read Write Inc. Fresh Start
d. Twinkl Writing Intervention Pack
e. Writers for Life
f. Intervention approach/resources created by English Hub or Multi-Academy Trust
g. We have developed our own intervention resources based on our whole-school approach
h. Same as our main programme(s)/resource(s) stated above
i. Other, please state
23. What resource(s)/approach(es) do you use with your struggling writers in Key Stages 3 and 4? Tick all that apply. *If you use any other external programme(s) or resource(s) please state in the 'other' textbox.)*
a. Switch-on
b. Skills for Writing
c. OUP Get it Right
d. OUP Catapult
e. Read Write Inc. Fresh Start
f. Collins Writing Recovery

g. Catch up Literacy
h. Twinkl Write On
i. Target Writing resources
j. CGP resources
k. Collins Snap resources
l. Intervention approach/resources created by English Hub or Multi-Academy Trust
m. We have developed our own intervention resources based on our whole-school approach
n. Same as our main programme(s)/resource(s) stated above
o. Other, please state

Likert scale: To No Extent / To Some Extent / To Great Extent / N/A

24. To what extent do you use as each of the approaches below when teaching Writing in Key Stage 1? (go to Question 24)
a. Step-by-step guidance to create a Writing outcome in particular genres
b. Assessing own and others' drafts, to give more feedback and effective Writing insight
c. Aiming to balance and integrate Reading and Writing
d. Encouraging motivation and enjoyment of Writing and self-expression
e. Explicitly teaching Writing conventions within context of creative Writing
f. Encouraging teachers to experience Writing strategies that are taught

25. To what extent do you use as each of the approaches below when teaching Writing in Key Stage 2? (go to Question 27)
a. Step-by-step guidance to create a Writing outcome in particular genres
b. Assessing own and others' drafts, to give effective Writing insight
c. Aiming to balance and integrate Reading and Writing
d. Encouraging motivation and enjoyment of Writing and self-expression
e. Explicitly teaching Writing conventions within context of creative Writing
f. Encouraging teachers to experience Writing strategies that pupils are being taught

Likert scale: To No Extent / To Some Extent / To Great Extent / N/A

26. To what extent do you use each of the approaches below when teaching Writing at KS3? Tick all that apply (go to Question 26)
a. Step-by-step guidance to create a Writing outcome in particular genres
b. Assessing own and others' drafts, to give more feedback and insight into effective Writing
c. Aiming to balance and integrate Reading and Writing
d. Encouraging motivation and enjoyment of Writing and self-expression
e. Explicitly teaching Writing conventions within context of creative Writing
f. Supporting / encouraging teachers to experience the Writing strategies that the pupils are being taught
g. Creating opportunities for creative and transactional Writing through themes and texts
h. A cross-curricular approach, working across departments to improve disciplinary literacy

27. To what extent do you use each of the approaches below as part of your approach to teaching Writing at KS4? Tick all that apply (go to Question 27)
a. Pupils are given step-by-step guidance to create a Writing outcome in particular genres
b. Assessing own and others' drafts, to give more feedback and insight into effective Writing
c. Aiming to balance and integrate Reading and Writing
d. Encouraging motivation and enjoyment of Writing and self-expression
e. Explicitly teaching Writing conventions within the context of creative Writing
f. Supporting / encouraging teachers to experience the Writing strategies that the pupils are being taught
g. Creating opportunities for creative and transactional Writing through themes and texts
h. A cross-curricular approach, working across departments to improve disciplinary literacy
i. Using exemplar answers to develop exam / assessment Writing skills

j. Developing essay Writing skills for exams /assessments
k. Developing analysis and comparison Writing skills
l. Developing synthesis Writing skills
m. Creative/transactional Writing using prompts
n. Explicitly teaching format and purposes of Writing of texts

28. Sliding scale 1 to 5 where 1 is ineffective and 5 is highly effective.
a. How would you rate the effectiveness of your school's approach to teaching Writing?

29. Sliding scale 1 to 5 where 1 is completely unmotivated and 5 is highly motivated.
a. How would you rate your pupils' motivation to write as a result of your school's approach?

30. Please share anything else you would like us to know about how you teach Writing, challenges you face and any useful Writing resources you use not mentioned above or N/A if you have no further comments. (textbox)

31. If you would be willing to further support our research by speaking to a member of our team via a 30-minute Teams call, please write your email address below. We are able to offer a £25 Amazon voucher as a thank you for giving us your time for a call.

Otherwise leave this question blank. (text box)

Appendix B: Primary interview agenda

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is [Name], and I will be your interviewer today.

This interview forms part of a study commissioned by the EEF to inform which areas of Writing should be prioritised for further research and inform future funding decisions and around supporting Writing in schools. The responses that you give during this interview will help us to understand, in greater depth, current practices and approaches to teaching Writing in English Primary schools. The interview should last approximately 30-45 minutes and will go into more detail on some of the responses to the survey you recently completed on Writing. The interview will be recorded for purposes of analysis and reporting. We want to assure you that your responses during the interview will remain confidential and that you and your school will remain anonymous in any reporting. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

Finally, although we have set questions that we would like to put to you today, this is an informal discussion and there are no wrong answers, so please feel free to let us know your thoughts as we proceed.

- Do you have any questions before we get started?

Now I just have a couple of quick questions to ensure that you are happy to participate in this interview.

- Do you consent to participating in this interview?

- Do you consent to this interview being recorded?

- Can you tell us your name and role for the purposes of the recording?

	Interview question	RQ

Q1	What influenced your choice of Writing approach?
	  a. Who chooses the approach i.e., teacher led, subject leads, school leads?
	  b. Is it a school-wide programme/approach?
	  c. Is there a difference in approach for KS1 and KS2?
	  d. Can you explain the reasons why your school has chosen this approach? E.g. why did you/they think that this approach would be effective?
	  e. How important was the evidence base to the choice of approach?
	  f. How effective do you find the approach?
	  g. What do you feel could be improved upon?
	  h. How do results and progress for specific groups of children (Pupil Premium/FSM) compare to children outside of these groups?
	  i. How does technology feature in your Writing approach?
		2

Q2	What influenced your choice of Writing approach for struggling writers?
	  a. How does your school define and recognise struggling writers?
	  b. Can you explain the reasons why your school has chosen your approach to support struggling writers? E.g. why did you/they think that this approach would be effective?
	  c. Is there a difference in approach for KS1 and KS2?
	  d. How important was the evidence base to the choice of approach for struggling writers?
	  e. Can you give us an example of the evaluation of that approach and what the results were?
	  f. How effective do you find your school's approach to struggling writers?
	  g. What do you feel could be improved upon
	  h. How do results and progress for specific groups of children (Pupil Premium/FSM) compare to children outside of these groups?
		4

Q3	How do you track pupils' progress with Writing?
	  a. Is this different for different Key Stages?
	  b. From your progress tracking, which Writing approaches and/or programmes do you perceive as getting the best results?
	  c. From your progress tracking, which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results for struggling writers?
		7, 8, 11

Q4	In your opinion, has your approach to teaching Writing had an impact on:
	    a. On progress at KS1
	    b. On outcomes at KS2
		9

Q5	In the survey, you were asked to describe how embedded this list of approaches were in how you/ your school teach Writing.
	
	Please then share list below
	  • Pupils being given step-by-step guidance to create a Writing outcome
	  • Pupils assessing their own and others' drafts, to give pupils more feedback and insight into effective Writing
	  • Balancing and integrate Reading and Writing
	  • Encouraging pupils' motivation and enjoyment of Writing and self-expression
	  • Explicitly teaching Writing conventions (e.g. grammar and punctuation) within the context of creative Writing
	  • Teachers experiencing the Writing strategies that the pupils are being taught through CPD
	Questions
	    a. Please choose at least one approach from this list that you feel is well embedded in your approach/your school's approach to teaching Writing. What does this approach look like in your teaching?
	    b. Do you wish any of these approaches were more embedded in the way you teach/your staff teach Writing? If so, why?
	    c. Which of these approaches do you think you would/your staff would find challenging to teach?
	    d. What support do you think you would/your staff would benefit from to help you teach this approach?
	    e. Do pupils struggling with their Writing find any of these approaches more challenging than others?
		5

Q6	What do you find motivates your pupils around Writing? a. Are there any programmes or approaches incorporates this?	10

Q7	You have identified _____ as challenges with Writing.
	    a. Which of these do you find most challenging? What issues have you found/come across on this?
	    b. What do you think would support you with this?
	    c. Are there any key challenges that we have not discussed?
		12

Q8	What CPD training have teachers in your school received for Writing/supporting struggling writers?
	    a. How useful was that training/How useful do you think teachers found that training?
	    b. What additional training do you think would be useful to support Writing?
	    c. What would you want more support with?
		6

Q9	Is there anything else you would like to cover?	

Appendix C: Secondary interview agenda

Introduction

[Important: ask informally if interviewee is happy to be recorded prior to Reading introductory script **[press record]**]

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. My name is [Your Name], and I will be your interviewer today.

This interview forms part of a study commissioned by the EEF to inform which areas of Writing should be prioritised for further research and inform future funding decisions and around supporting Writing in schools. The responses that you give during this interview will help us to understand, in greater depth, current practices and approaches to teaching Writing in English Secondary schools. The interview should last approximately 30 minutes and will go into more detail on some of the responses to the survey you recently completed on Writing. The interview will be recorded for purposes of analysis and reporting. We want to assure you that your responses during the interview will remain confidential and that you and your school will remain anonymous in any reporting. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time.

Finally, although we have set questions that we would like to put to you today, this is an informal discussion and there are no wrong answers, so please feel free to let us know your thoughts as we proceed.

- Do you have any questions before we get started?

Now I just have a couple of quick questions to ensure that you are happy to participate in this interview.

- Do you consent to participating in this interview?

- Do you consent to this interview being recorded?

- Can you tell us your name and role for the purposes of the recording?

	Interview question	RQ

Q1	What influenced your choice of Writing approach?
	  a. Who chooses the approach i.e., teacher led, subject leads, school leads?
	  b. Is it a school-wide programme/approach?
	  c. Is there a difference in approach for KS3 and KS4?
	  d. Can you explain the reasons why your school has chosen this approach? E.g. why did you/they think that this approach would be effective?
	  e. How important was the evidence base to the choice of approach?
	  f. How effective do you find the approach?
	  g. What do you feel could be improved upon?
	  h. How do results and progress for specific groups of children (Pupil Premium/FSM) compare to children outside of these groups?
	  i. How does technology feature in your Writing approach?
		2

Q2	What influenced your choice of Writing approach for struggling writers?
	  a. How does your school define and recognise struggling writers?
	  b. Can you explain the reasons why your school has chosen your approach to support struggling writers? E.g. why did you/they think that this approach would be effective?
	  c. Is there a difference in approach for KS3 and KS4?
	  d. How important was the evidence base to the choice of approach for struggling writers?
	  e. Can you give us an example of the evaluation of that approach and what the results were?
	  f. How effective do you find your school's approach to struggling writers?
	  g. What do you feel could be improved upon?
	  h. How do results and progress for specific groups of children (Pupil Premium/FSM) compare to children outside of these groups
		4

Q3	How do you track pupils' progress with Writing?
	  a. Is this different for different Key Stages?
	  b. From your progress tracking, which Writing approaches and/or programmes do you perceive as getting the best results?
	  c. From your progress tracking, which Writing approaches and/or programmes do schools perceive as getting the best results for struggling writers?
		7, 8, 11

Q4	In your opinion, has your approach to teaching Writing had an impact on:
	    a. On progress at KS3
	    b. On outcomes at KS4
		9

Q5	In the survey, you were asked to describe how embedded this list of approaches were in how you/ your school teach Writing.
	
	Please then share list below
	   • Pupils being given step-by-step guidance to create a Writing outcome
	   • Pupils assessing their own and others' drafts, to give pupils more feedback and insight into effective Writing
	   • Balancing and integrate Reading and Writing
	   • Encouraging pupils' motivation and enjoyment of Writing and self-expression
	   • Explicitly teaching Writing conventions (e.g. grammar and punctuation) within the context of creative Writing
	   • Teachers experiencing the Writing strategies that the pupils are being taught through CPD
	Questions
	    a. Please choose at least one approach from this list that you feel is well embedded in your approach/your school's approach to teaching Writing. What does this approach look like in your teaching?
	    b. Do you wish any of these approaches were more embedded in the way you teach/your staff teach Writing? If so, why?
	    c. Which of these approaches do you think you would/your staff would find challenging to teach?
	    d. What support do you think you would/your staff would benefit from to help you teach this approach?
	    e. Do pupils struggling with their Writing find any of these approaches more challenging than others?
		5

Q6	What do you find motivates your pupils around Writing? a. Are there any programmes or approaches incorporates this?	10

Q7	You have identified _____ as challenges with Writing.
	    a. Which of these do you find most challenging? What issues have you found/come across on this?
	    b. What do you think would support you with this?
	    c. Are there any key challenges that we have not discussed?
		12

Q8	What CPD training have teachers in your school received for Writing/supporting struggling writers?
	    a. How useful was that training/How useful do you think teachers found that training?
	    b. What additional training do you think would be useful to support Writing?
	    c. What would you want more support with?
		6

Q9	Is there anything else you would like to cover?	

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