

**Wren's Nest Big Write Policy**  
**January 2008**

**Introduction**

Wren's Nest has undertaken to improve standards of children's writing as a main priority within the school improvement plan. The school has decided to adopt the Big Write approach to proactively teaching writing skills and producing written outcomes.

Each year group has a copy of the Purple Book (Strategies for Immediate Impact on Writing Standards by Roz Wilson) and there is a copy of the Gold Book ( Write on target) in Key Stage 1.

The Senior Leadership team and the staff have met to discuss how to implement the Big Write at Wren's Nest so there is a consistent and clear message to all children.

This resulting policy sets out how the Big Write will be delivered at Wren's Nest. Any queries or questions arising from reading this policy should be addressed to team leaders.

**Two 'Whats' and two 'Hows'**

Roz Wilson identifies that there are two 'Whats' and two 'Hows' that are central to the writing challenges that children face. The 'Whats' are thoroughly covered by the literacy curriculum and children are exposed to many text types through their reading. The 'Hows' are critical to providing the child with tools and strategies to enable them to become confident writers able to write in different genre and to a range of stimulus. The Big Write centres on proactively teaching children the strategies and steps they need to develop from embryonic writers into emerging writers and finally confident mature writers who can apply their skills.

The Whats: 1) Text type and characteristics  
2) Purpose of writing / stimulus

The Hows: 1) Skills - grammar, handwriting, spelling and punctuation  
2) The writing voice and use of VCOP

**VCOP - Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers, Punctuation**

By proactively teaching VCOP (Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation) this will equip the child with the understanding and skills to write increasingly sophisticated text.

The 6 model lesson plans in the Purple Book (KS2) and the Gold Book (KS1) provide a model for teaching VCOP. Each teacher can choose how they wish to teach and deliver these four generic targets of Vocabulary, Connectives,, Openers and Punctuation but they should be taught systematically and in lively fun ways. Proactive teaching of these tools will enable children to have the tools to grow into confident writers with a range of strategies at their disposal.

## Key VCOP Aspects for Wren's Nest!

**Vocabulary** - Children's vocabulary constantly needs to be extended and reinforced through patterning (repeated use of spoken language to enable a child to use it in their writing). "Wow" words (interesting and ambitious vocabulary) should be avidly collected - stolen from texts, from authors and from each other. At Wren's Nest each class will build a collection of wow words. Each wow word will be written on sentence strip card and the contributing child's name added to the card. A large collection should build up which is consistently added to. Old wow words can be stored and revisited as a 5 minute recap. A wow word collection should be an evolving and changing display - not a set of words, which become part of the classroom wall paper.

Wow words are age related and the teacher's definition of ambitious is crucial - A wow word should not usually be used by a child of this age or stage of development prior to proactive teaching. For example age 5/6 - exciting, interesting, age 6/7 - enormous, fierce, age 7/8 - silently, happiness, age 8/9 - patiently/courage, age 9/10 - aggressively, anxiety, age 10/11 - formidable, speculation (See pages 30 /31 of the Purple Book for more examples.

**Connectives** - Every class should have a display of possible connectives to support the children in their writing. Every literacy set should have a set of connective key rings which allow the children to respond to questions / set tasks for each other / play games etc with a range of connectives The Roz Wilson purple book provides suggestions for a range of 'stocking filler word games' which help teach the use of connectives.

**Openers** - The use of openers helps children to construct interesting and complex sentences. Each class should have a range of opener words on display and make reference to them regularly in shared and guided writing.

**Punctuation** - The Big Write uses the punctuation pyramid, which explains simply to children the level of punctuation required to hit each national curriculum level. The punctuation pyramid should be displayed in each classroom and referred to regularly in lessons. (See Roz Wilson purple book for ways to encourage children to engage with the punctuation pyramid). Each literacy set should have a set of punctuation fans so each child can interact with punctuation and respond to questions, rather than only one child in the class having opportunity to share their answer.

## Wren's Nest has high expectations!

All staff should have high expectations for all children's writing:

Roz Wilson's mantras to be adopted by all at Wren's Nest are:

**"Write less but write best!"  
"No sloppy writing"**

If children are allowed to write using bad or 'sloppy' habits outside of the literacy hour then this is the writing style, which will become a habit. All writing in all lessons should provide opportunity for children to apply their writing skills.

### **Basic Skills**

All children will practice basic skills each day. In KS1 this will be delivered during the day as part of the curriculum.

In KS2, ten minutes of basic skills will be taught each day as an Early Start activity. To be effective the skills should be taught so they are fast, fun and lively. The teaching assistant will undertake the administrative duties of taking the register and collect tuck money whilst the teacher will lead and teach the basic skills session. It is vital that we are all consistent in the delivery of the basic skills programme so that the children learn the systems and skills, which transfer from year to year.

The programme for basic skills in KS2 is:

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|-----------|--|
| Monday    | Reinforcement of reading and spelling high frequency words from the previous years list in the literacy strategy. (ie Y5 will revise the words in the Y4 literacy list)  |
| Tuesday   | Handwriting - the teacher will teach and demonstrate the handwriting joins, taking patterns of letters. The Nelson handwriting scheme should be used as the pattern for joins. Handwriting practice should not be copying out a piece of text as this does not teach the child and can reinforce bad habits which currently exist. |
| Wednesday | Revision of multiplication tables - this can be delivered in a number of ways including the use of the huge number of multiplication games available through the interactive whiteboard, powerpoint speed quizzes (available on the shared area), quick fire questions, bingo etc.   |
| Thursday  | New words from the current year groups words are introduced with children learning to read and spell the words.  |
| Friday    | Phonics - This can be reinforcement of sounds learnt in KS1 / Y3 or a review of a spelling pattern (National Literacy spelling book although old is extremely useful!) eg -sion and -tion, swim → swimming   |

## The Big Write session

At Wren's Nest all children should have opportunity to engage in a Big Write session most weeks. This will be up to each individual teacher to plan and decide when the sessions are appropriate.

In KS2 the session should be long enough to allow a talk and planning session (Section H of the Purple Book has a range of suggestions for forms of planning), a short break and then a timed writing session.

## Arrangements for the Big Write:

### **Resources:**

At Wren's Nest all Big Write pieces of work will be on writing sheets with the prompt on the first page. This is less over facing than a A4 lined piece of paper which can be a challenge to many of our children. Special Big Write pens or pencils (children's choice in Y5&6, pencil lower down the school) will be used. These should be given out and collected at the end of the session and treasured until the next Big Write session!

### **Environment:**

A positive writing environment should be created for the children. This should involve the use of a focus candle or nightlights on tables (see attached risk assessment in Appendix!). The children should not talk to each other and music can be played to enhance concentration - Roz Wilson advocates Mozart!

### **Ethos:**

Roz Wilson identifies 5 elements of a positive ethos:

- 1) Creating a positive atmosphere
- 2) Creating a secure atmosphere
- 3) Creating an ethos where children feel they have some control
- 4) Creating an atmosphere within which children feel successful
- 5) Creating a framework for children to work towards known, achievable goals

**Teacher input** - During the Big Write session the teacher may wish to model writing themselves or move from child to child quietly reminding them of personal targets. The teacher should also give children time targets and reminders about the use of connectives, openers, and punctuation as appropriate.

Children should keep their Big Write work in a writing portfolio that is valued. At Wren's Nest we will use a display album with plastic pockets, which will hold a terms worth of Big Write work. This can then be transferred to an A4 file for each child to build up over the year.

## Assessment

All writing will be assessed using the Roz Wilson Big Write Criterion Scale. Each member of staff should have photocopies of this scale in their writing assessment folder. Wren's Nest recognises that this set of assessment criteria underestimates rather than over estimates children's achievement and is often a sub level lower than assessment against the LEA ladder to success criteria.

The scale is however very precise and easy to use. There is a child friendly version on the shared area with the assessment statements written so children can understand them. This should be shared by the children so that they can see how much they CAN do - and share the next steps they need to take.

Levels of writing should be discussed with the children so that levelling becomes part of their normal vocabulary. Roz Wilson suggests a range of ways in which children can look analytically at work and improve it in a motivating and celebratory way - Spot the difference, Goal scores, Uplevelling etc.

Children's writing has to be assessed at 'east 3 times within the year using the Roz Wilson assessments. Many teachers will choose to undertake assessment of work more frequently so that they are very clear about the steps a child needs to do next to make progress. The assessments in December, April and July will form the basis for tracking children's progress through the year and will be kept in the writing assessment folder.

The writing assessment file will be passed on to the next class teacher in the following year group to provide a bank of evidence of the child's achievements. In September the child's last piece of work from the previous year should be revisited the child and the teacher to show the quality and success that has already been achieved and marks the foundation and expectation from which to work.

All children should know what they need to do next in order to improve their writing. This may be as an individual target or a group target. Children should be able to talk about their writing with an adult.

## Speaking and Listening

It is vital that children develop a "writing voice" as well as their community voice. This is based on the principle that

**' If a child cant say it, they cant write it'**

Roz Wilson stresses the importance of 'patterning' - repeated use of language to enable children to then transfer this and use it in their writing.

Two specific activities will be introduced as part of the Wren's Nest Big Write programme to help develop children's writing voice:

### 1) Talk Assemblies and homework

Each week a whole school topic will be shared with the children in assembly on Monday mornings. This assembly will be led by Kay or Ruth and provide the foundation for two talk opportunities:

- a) Class mentors will be briefed on the assembly and asked to pick up this topic with children at lunchtime. This will take place on Monday whilst the assembly is fresh in the child's mind.
- b) The children will talk a note home to brief parents about their "talk homework" The letter will be produced by the office and will provide parents with some prompts and questions to ask their child.

The talk topic for assembly will not link with the literacy genre or the topic for the Big Write session at the end of the week.

Appendix: Sample letter to parents regarding talk homework

## **2) Posh Lessons**

Once a week staff will deliver a posh lesson with the children and the teaching assistant/class mentor being the speech police. The teacher deliberately uses community voice speech within the lesson and the children need to correct the teacher!

## **Specific talk homework relating to the Big Write topic.**

Teachers may wish children to undertake a second talk homework prior to the day of big write when children are asked to think about and discuss the topic that will be focus of the Big Write. This will be individual to each class and member of staff and used as a a supportive technique when appropriate.

## **Policy Development and Review:**

Wren's Nest is just beginning the process of introducing the Big Write and it will take sometime for strategies to embed. Literacy teachers in Y4-Y6 have all received the Big Write training from Roz Wilson during the Autumn term and will implement the Big Write in full from January 2008.

The KS1 phase leader will review the current KS1 writing and basic skills programme and adopt aspects of the Big Write policy as appropriate. This will be formalised and added to the policy in April.

Y3 staff will attend training on the Big Write during the Spring term and adopt the KS2 Big Write policy during the Spring term when they feel confident and prepared.

The development of basic reading and writing skills remains a priority for the Foundation Stage and these will be developed through all the areas of learning.

**The policy will be reviewed after the Spring term and amended as appropriate.**

## Big Talk Homework!



Dear Parents,

Tonight's talk homework is about Mrs Pugh's holiday to see the polar bears!

In a special assembly your child has had chance to find out about Mrs Pugh's trip to Churchill in Canada. She has shared some of her photographs of the sights and animals that she saw.

Please spend 10 minutes talking with your child about the assembly. You may want to use the questions below as prompts to help to encourage your child to talk.

Remember we are trying to help all our children develop excellent speaking and listening skills, which will help them with their writing.

**"If a child cant say a sentence then they cant write it either!"**

Thank you for your support in helping your child.

Mrs Wylie

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- 1) **What animals did Mrs Pugh see?** *(Polar bears, artic fox and an artic rabbit)*
- 2) **What colour were the animals? Why are they this colour?** *(All the animals were white and this helps them to be camouflaged and hide in the snow. The rabbit really needs to be hidden from the fox!)*
- 3) **How did Mrs Pugh stay safe when watching the polar bears?** *(The visitors all went into the tundra (snow grounds) in a tundra buggy which was a huge minibus type vehicle on 8 foot wheels! There was a viewing platform on top).*
- 4) **What was the weather like?** *(Very cold -5°C but clear and bright, there were snow blizzards at night)*
- 5) **If you got chance would you rather go on a holiday like this or to somewhere sunny? Why?** *(There are no correct answers to this question but encourage your child to justify their answer.)*

