



CORPUSCHRISTI

We are His body, living and learning as one.

TEACHING WRITING IN EYFS GUIDANCE



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Teaching Writing in EYFS – Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust

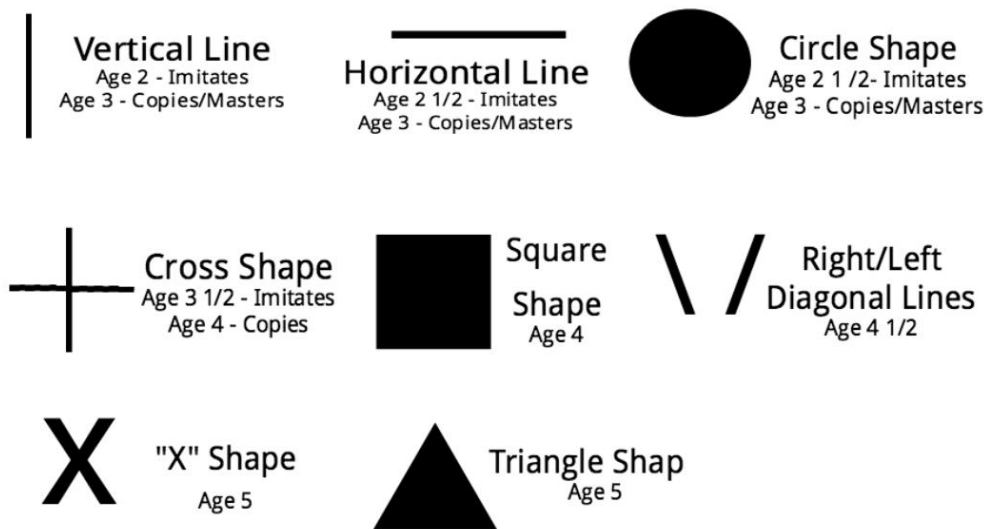
1. Writing Development in EYFS

- **Staff need to make clear distinctions between the different aspects of writing.** Writing is a multi-faceted skill. To write a simple sentence - 'The cat is black.' requires:
- **cognitive knowledge** of: phoneme-grapheme correspondence (phonics); high frequency word (the); understanding of what we mean by a sentence (one idea = one sentence) and how we lay out and demarcate a sentence (punctuation) – capital letter, finger spaces and full stop. The child also has to have something to write about – an idea; for this we use the Five-a-Day story approach.
- **Writing is a spatial activity.** The child has to identify where on a blank piece of paper to begin to make a mark, and to control the flow of the marks. Learning where to start to write or draw takes time and children need to be guided through stages of different sized unlined and lined pages.
- **Writing is a physical activity.** Not only do children need to develop upper body strength and fine finger and hand control before they can begin to hold writing implements correctly, but once they can hold large pencils, crayon etc, they need to build up muscle memory for the correct shape of each letter. The phonics jingles (maisy mountain, mountain 'm' and 'round the apple and down the leaf 'a') are deliberately designed to support their remembering of the letter formation. Many children can recite the jingle but cannot form the letter shape correctly.

Spatial:

- It is useful to have a progressive/developmental set of books that the child moves through as his/her spatial and physical dexterity improves. **This has nothing whatsoever to do with cognitive ability.** Potentially, the most-able group of children for phonics could each be using a different book to write in based on their physical/spatial development.
- There is a recognised progression of spatial awareness. When we ask the children to form letter shapes, we are asking them to make composites of the shapes below and we assume that they have all received the early background support and experiences to enable them to do this. This is what we used to call **Pre-Writing Skills**. In short, pre-writing skills are the **lines and strokes** children need to master and know **before** learning how to print the alphabet. Each of these lines is developed in a sequence, based on how old the child is. This developmental sequence is:
 - Vertical Line – (Age 2 imitates, age 3 copies/masters)
 - Horizontal Line – (Age 2 1/2 imitates, age 3 copies/masters)
 - Circle Shape – (Age 2 1/2 imitates, 3 copies/masters)

- Cross Shape (+) – (Age 3 1/2 imitates, age 4 copies)
- Square Shape – (Age 4)
- Right/Left Diagonal Line – (Age 4 1/2)
- X Shape – (Age 5)
- Triangle (Age 5)



- Staff should assess which children can draw these shapes easily and then prepare activities to support those who cannot: tracing, painting, ribbons, large chalks on playground floor etc.
- Teachers should teach the children overtly to see the spatial aspects and sizing of the ascenders and descenders in words. For example, in the word 'jam', the descender is j; in the word 'hat', the ascender is h. And staff should point out explicitly the relationship in size between the shapes that all sit together and parts of the ascenders and descenders which are all the same size. To make it easier for children, staff should simply teach that all letters are the same size (the bit that typically sits on the line) and that all ascenders are the same height and all descenders are the same length. Crucially, staff must model this approach unfailingly and overtly. Adults' script on boards should be exaggerated so that children 'see' the spatial arrangement of the letters.

Physical:

- In addition to the gross and fine motor skills mentioned above, the children need **to develop specific muscle memory for each individual letter**

shape that they have to form – ie 26 lower case shapes. This is manageable. The best way to help children who are struggling with this is the **'hand over hand'** method. The adult places their hand over the child's hand (who is holding a pencil or crayon) and makes the letter shape in a large, exaggerated fashion, repeatedly, over the same shape, so that the child begins to 'feel' the shape for him/herself.

- When the child begins to 'get' the shape, the roles can be reversed with the child driving the movement with the adult's hand lightly over ready to take control if the child struggles again.
- In order to write correctly, **children need to sit properly**. Typically, as adults we hold our books or paper at a slight angle to write and we hold the paper or book still on one side. We need room to move our right, or left, arm across the page and table. This is why a left-handed child and a right-handed child should be positioned so that their elbows move outwards away from each other and not inwards towards each other. Children should sit back in their seats, and the chairs should be pulled up under the table. Children should know what is a 'good sitting position.'

Cognitive:

- Capital letters need to be taught explicitly: what they are, when they are used and how they are formed. Classrooms should have a capital letters display, (this also combines physical and spatial components).
- Children need to see, and begin to learn, what a sentence looks like LARGE (spatial impact) and see the capital letter, LARGE, the finger spaces LARGE and the full stop.
- In the very early stages of writing sentences, children can be taught 'set sentences': I can see the cvc word; It is a cvc word; Here is acvc word; This is acvc word. These can be written on the board to copy or in individual sentence strips or in the child's book for them to practise underneath.

TYPICAL PENCIL GRASP DEVELOPMENT FOR HANDWRITING



2. Physical Development

Physical Development and writing skills are inextricably linked. To be able to perform the fine motor dexterity required when writing, children need **strong muscles, good co-ordination and balance.**

Gross and Fine motor activities to support writing:

Physical activity is vital in all children's development. It enables them to pursue happy, healthy and active lives. Gross and fine motor skills develop incrementally throughout early childhood, starting with sensory explorations and the development of a child's strength, co-ordination and positional awareness through tummy time, crawling and play movement with both objects and adults. By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, adults can support children to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility. Gross motor skills provide the foundation for developing healthy bodies and social and emotional well-being. Fine motor control and precision aids hand-eye co-ordination which is later linked to early literacy. Repeated and varied opportunities to explore and play with small world activities, puzzles, arts and crafts and the practice of using small tools, with guidance and support from adults, allows children to develop increasing proficiency, control and confidence.

Gross motor development:

By the end of Reception children at the expected level of development (ELG) will:

- **Negotiate space and obstacles safely, with consideration for themselves and others.**
- **Demonstrate strength, balance and coordination when playing.**
- **Move energetically, such as running, jumping, dancing, hopping, skipping and climbing.**

In Nursery and Reception daily opportunities for the children to explore and play in the outdoor areas develops their gross motor control.

The outdoor environment will always include the following:

- Bikes and scooters – staff to ensure children are using the pedals when riding bikes.
- Balancing beams for children to improve core strength and posture.
- Climbing walls/frames and overhead bars for children to improve visual convergence and fine manual manipulation.
- Catching and throwing balls of various sizes into targets to improve hand eye co-ordination and develop shoulder muscles.
- Games including hopping, skipping, jumping, crawling, sliding, running, and walking.
- Weekly PE lessons to further develop these skills.

Fine motor development:

By the end of Reception Children at the expected level of development (ELG) will:

- **Hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing – using the tripod grip.**
- **Use a range of small tools, including scissors, paint brushes and cutlery.**
- **Begin to show accuracy and care when drawing.**

In Nursery and Reception daily fine motor development tasks are linked to the weekly topic/key text. Each teacher will have targeted children who need to access this area with support and increased frequency to improve their fine motor skills in preparation for writing. The following activities will be provided to support this:

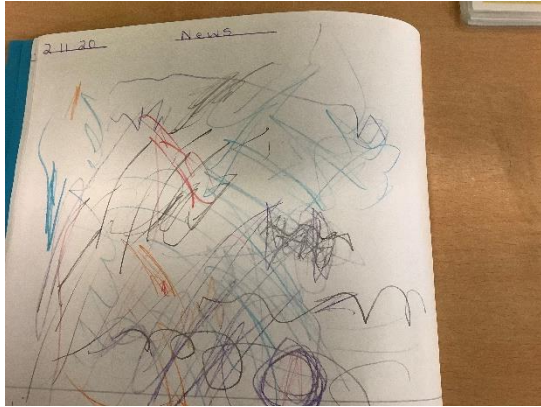
- Rolling, squashing and kneading – this can be done through the use of play dough. Chairs will be removed from this area to allow children to stand therefore strengthening their shoulder muscles.
- Pinching using thumb and first finger – use of peg boards and pegs, threading beads onto a string and tweezers to pick small objects.

- Cutting – provide a range of opportunities for children to use scissors following straight and curved lines.

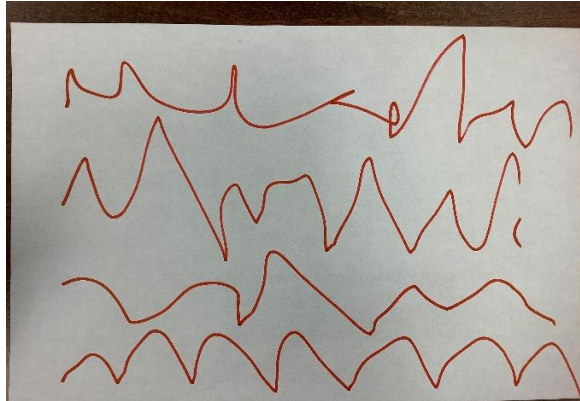
3. Stages of writing:

Below shows the stages of Writing Development.

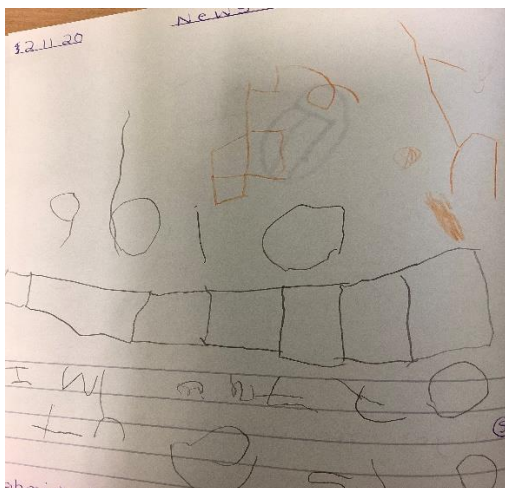
Stage 1 Random scribbles (ages 2-3)



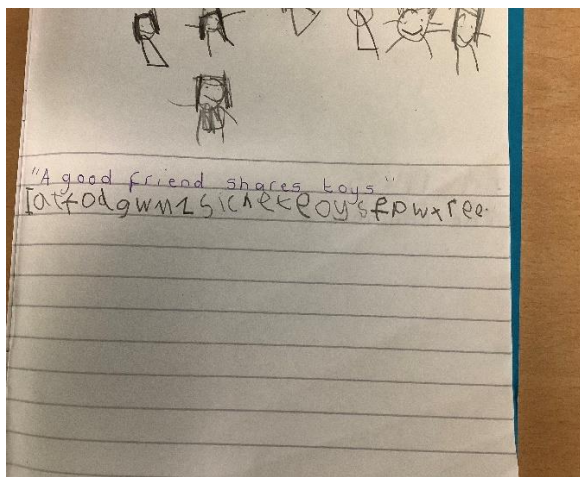
Stage 2 Controlled scribbles (age 3)



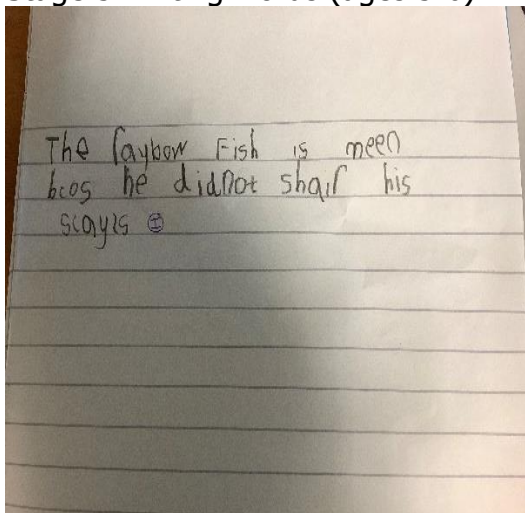
Stage 3 Mock writing (ages 3-4)



Stage 4 Writing letters (ages 4-5)



Stage 5 Writing words (ages 5-6)



Stage 6 Refinement (ages 5-6)



By the end of Reception, a good standard of writing looks like this:



There is a strong focus on sentence construction: each sentence is one idea. The sentence begins and ends with a capital letter and full stop and words are appropriately spaced with finger spaces. Letters are correctly formed and there is an increasing regularity of alignment and sizing. Ascenders and descenders are mostly correctly positioned on the line.

At this stage, every type of writing (story, report, letter, poster etc) is a vehicle to engage children's interest. The primary focus is on developing a secure grasp of sentence construction.



4. Early development of writing

- **Audio storytelling – Young children are given the opportunity to orally tell stories.**

Adults scribing what a child has said provides a written model of children's spoken language. This begins the foundation of children's understanding of the purpose of writing. The Five-a-Day story is critical to support children's language acquisition.

- **Early Emergent Writing - The first writing stage characterized by 'scribbling.'**

Children pretend they are writing using any medium. They are mimicking what has been modelled by adults, siblings or peers. This includes: pencil and paper, paint, chalk, hitting random keys on a keyboard, writing letter strings. Children will also begin 'logographic' writing of high frequency and easily recognisable words including, the child's name and text logos like LEGO, Lidl and McDonalds.

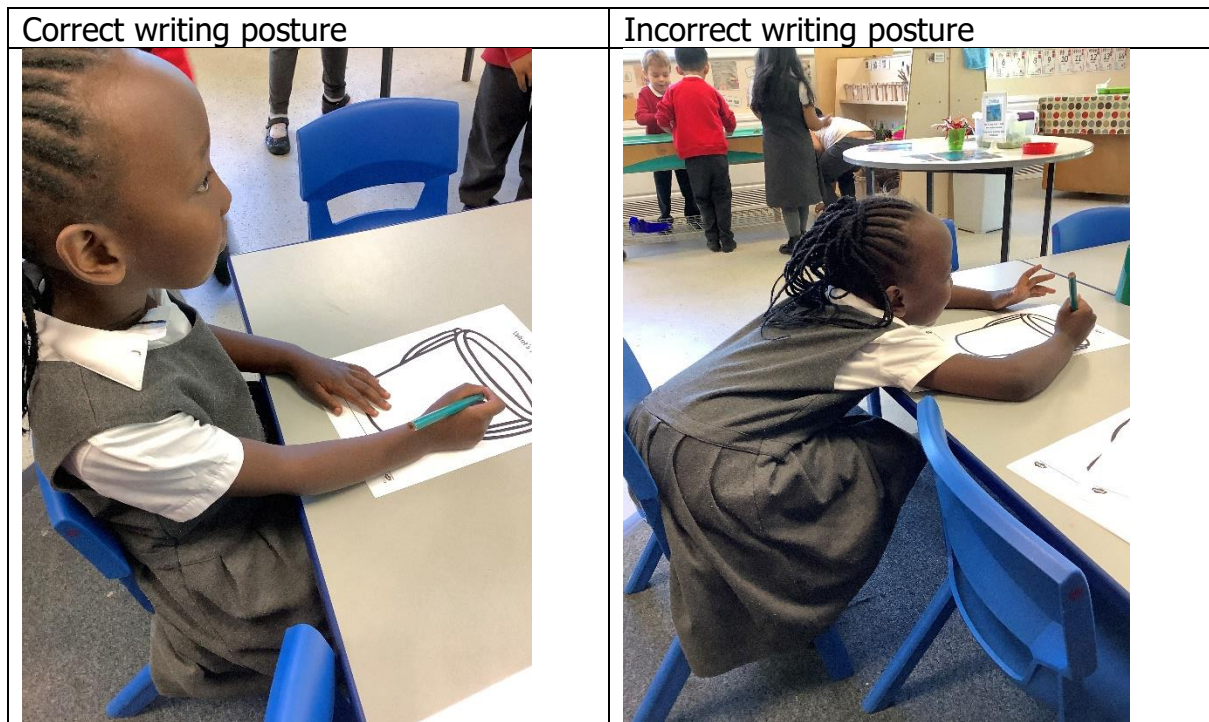
- **Emergent Writing – Children have an initial understanding of phonics.**

A correspondence between letters patterns (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes) is evident in their written work. Some words may have the correct initial letter followed by other letters. Children are developing an understanding of letter/sound relationships. Children begin to make the reading-writing connection and are much more aware of embedded clues, such as pictures and initial letters.

5. Resources required for Early Writing opportunities:

- Large sheets of paper/cardboard for children to draw on – staff to encourage children to make clockwise and anti-clockwise movements to support letter formation.
- Large sheets of paper on top and underneath tables for children to draw freely and develop the different arm/shoulder muscles.
- Opportunities for large scale writing outside. Paper to be placed vertically as well as horizontally.
- Use of different tools - scissors, tweezers, rolling pins, knives, clay tools, potato mashers, spoons, whisks.
- Crayons of different sizes.
- Chalks – large and small.
- Chunky hexagonal pencils and grips **always sharpened**.
- Paintbrushes of varying sizes and weights/rollers.
- Ribbons to make large circular movements as well as weaving activities.
- Sewing.
- Large canvases to create large artwork.
- Chalk boards/dry wipe boards and pens.
- Different types of paper - Sugar paper/wallpaper/newsprint/squared/lined.
- Opportunities to write/draw standing up/sitting down/laying on their front and back.
- Exercise books that are at the correct level for each child. Progression of writing books as follows:
 - blank paper
 - bulletin books
 - mixed blank and line
 - lined – 20mm then onto 15mm/12.5mm

6. Sitting and posture



- Children's bottoms must be right back in the seat and children facing forwards.
- Children's chairs should be pushed under the table.
- Feet flat on the floor.
- Paper/writing books need to be slightly angled in preparation for writing.
- Pencil held in the tripod grip. Pencil grips used if needed.

7. Teaching: writing expectations

- **The first priority** within EYFS is to teach sentence construction starting with SATPIN words and the basic tricky words
For example:

The sun is hot.

The man is big.

The dog sat in the mud.

The next stage is to use sentence stems such as:

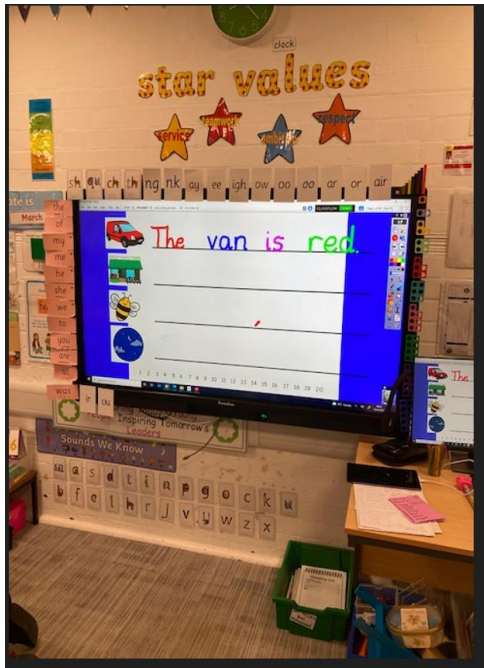
I can see a/the cvc words.

It is a cvc word.

He is cvc.

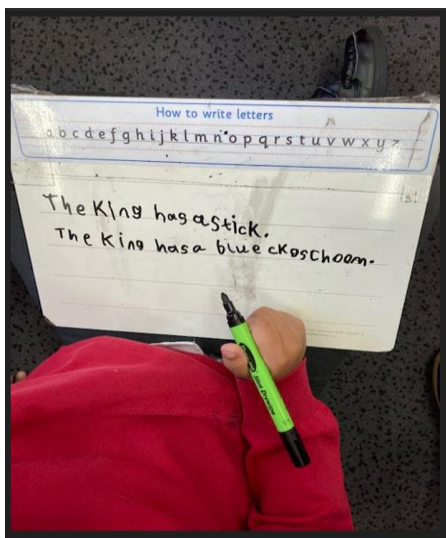
She is cvc.

He has a cvc.



- **The second priority** is to teach children to identify and correct their own errors:
capital letters, full stops, phonetically correct spelling, correct spelling of high frequency words, correct letter formation, position and relative size.

In order to ensure this, children should be provided with the appropriate resources. Packs on tables: key words, phonic fans, phonic mats, finger space markers and sentence strip icons.

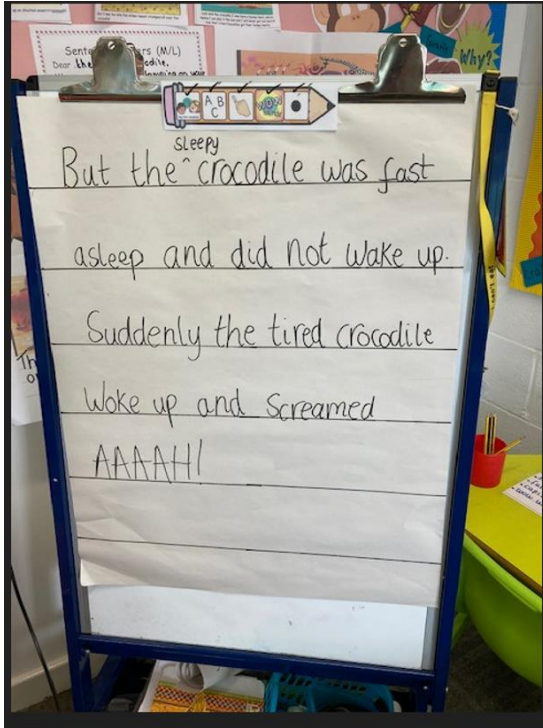


- **The third priority** is for children to construct a simple sentence. One sentence is one idea. Children use a capital letter and full stop accurately. Teachers continually model writing a simple sentence correctly and model the editing process. Teachers use the 'think out loud' strategy as they model

accurately formed sentences. Teachers have high expectations at all times and insist upon pupil accuracy.

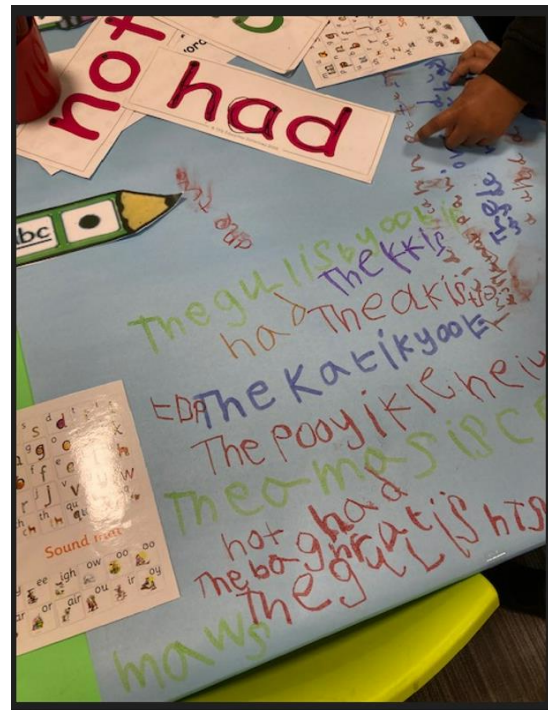
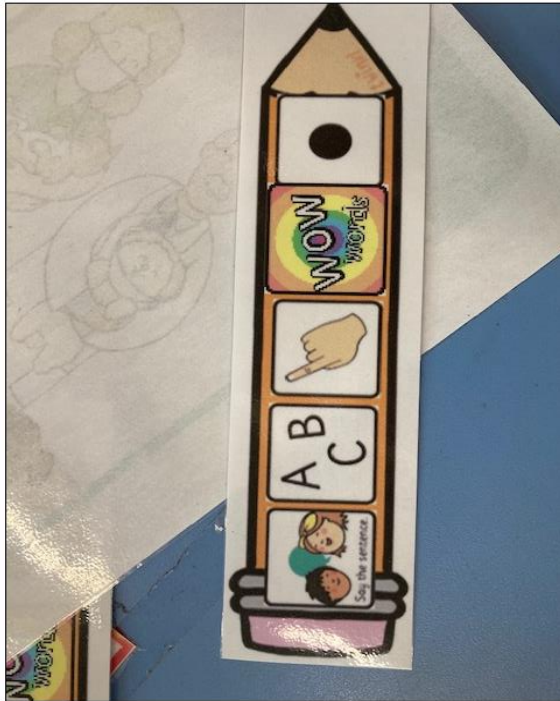
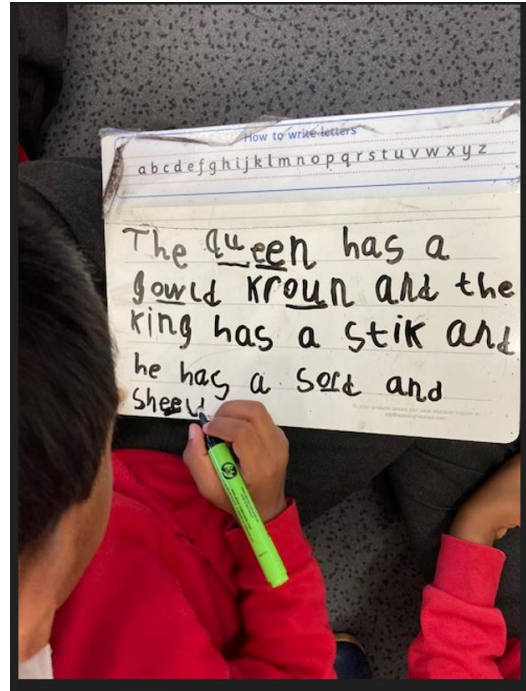
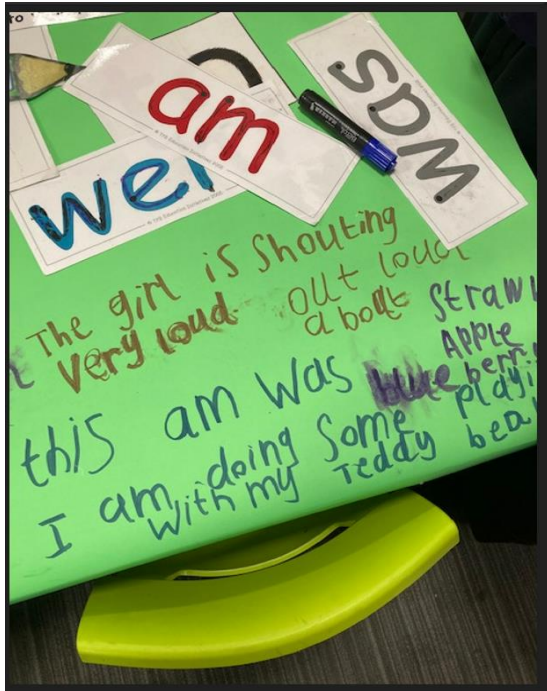
Teachers should orally rehearse holding a sentence with the children using a 'my turn, your turn' approach.

Teachers should accurately model letter formation using lines with correct alignment, sizing and ascenders and descenders.



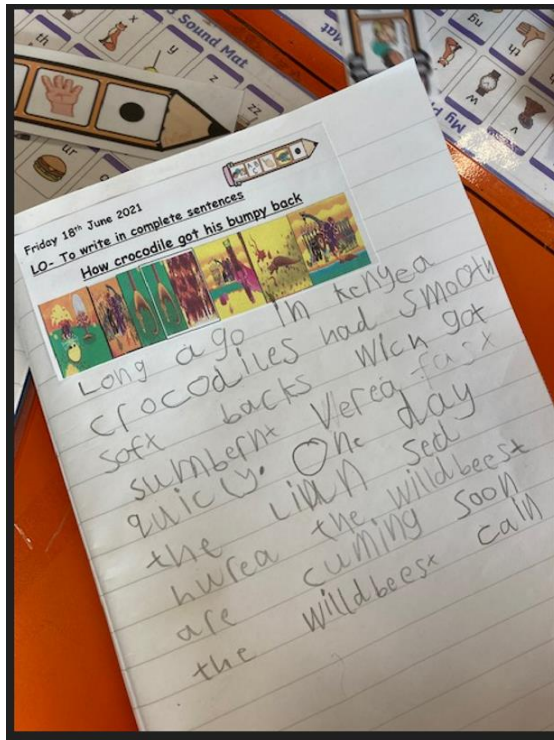
By the end of Spring 1 in Reception:

Children will write in full sentences with letters formed correctly. Tall and short letters will sit correctly on the line. Words are phonetically correct and red words are spelt correctly. A tripod pencil grip will be used.



By Summer in Reception:

Children can write the full date, all letters are correctly formed, sentences start with a capital letter and end with a full stop. High frequency words are spelt accurately with other words phonetically correct. Several ideas are linked together using simple conjunctions. Children can write for a range of different purposes ensuring transcription skills and sentence construction are accurate.



- Target rockets to be on display in each classroom and to be used for children's next steps:




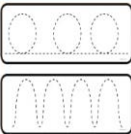




- **Writing opportunities are provided in all areas.** Resources will be readily available in these areas to support the writing. For example, word mats, pencil target card, red words, technical vocabulary linked to current theme/text, Ruth Miskin sound mats tailored to individual need.
- **Writing packs to be available across Reception classes for children to use independently.** These will include the following:
 - Individually tailored phonic mats.
 - Complex sounds – when appropriate.
 - Red words.
 - Vocabulary linked specifically to the weekly story.
 - Letter formation example – tailored to pupil need.
 - Capital letter model.







8. Success Criteria Icons

Success criteria icons can be used in writing provision and during writing focuses as visual prompts of what children should include in their writing to make it successful. Below is an example of possible icons that could be used, however schools may have their own.

Working towards expected standard in Reception

					
Write name	Fred talk initial sounds	Some letters formed	Good pencil control	Comfortable pencil grip	Write CVC words

Working at expected standard in Reception

					
Finger space	Capital letters	Full stops	Fred talk	Correct letter formation	Read back writing

9. Assessment in EYFS

Corpus Christi Catholic Academy Trust Writing Assessment & Moderation N

Working towards the expected standard in Nursery			
Physical Development	Aut	Spr	Sum
I can show a preference for a dominant hand.			

Literacy	Aut	Spr	Sum
I can demonstrate good gross motor skills in making large marks e.g. playground chalk, water painting etc.			
I can demonstrate good fine motor control when using tools e.g. scissors, threading etc.			
I am beginning to tune into the sounds in words – showing understanding e.g. toy talk for blending and segmenting			
I can orally blend segmented words			
I am beginning to say the initial sound for some words			
I give meaning to marks I have made e.g. drawings and 'writing' (random shapes/ lines/ letters)			
I can write the first letter of my name			
I 'write' in a variety of context (shopping lists, phone numbers, drawings, letters, party invitations) My writing looks like random letters/ numbers/ squiggles and drawings			
I can write some of my name			

Working at the expected standard in Nursery	Aut	Spr	Sum
I can use a comfortable grip with good control when holding pens and pencils e.g. the tripod grip			
I can write some letters with good formation e.g. the letters from my name			
I am beginning to orally segment single sound CVC words e.g. e-a-t			
I can say the initial sounds in most words			
I can label initial sounds on my drawings			
I can write some sounds correctly			
I can write my own name			

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Working towards the expected standard in Reception			
Physical Development	Aut	Spr	Sum
I can show a preference for a dominant hand with a comfortable pencil grip			
I can show good pencil control when mark making and drawing			
I can sit at a table to write			

Literacy	Aut	Spr	Sum
I can write some lower case letters correctly			
I can write some upper case letters that I know (e.g. name, Mum, Dad, sibling name etc)			
I can write most lower case letters correctly			
I can identify known letters to match initial sounds - set/phase 2 sounds			
I can match set 1/phase 2 letters and sounds			
I can write CVC words and labels e.g. c-a-t			
I can match set 1 special friend sounds and the start of phase/set 2 and 3 letters and sounds			
I can write short captions			
I can spell some tricky words			

Working at the expected standard in Reception (Early Learning Goal)	Aut	Spr	Sum
I can hold a pencil effectively in preparation for fluent writing, using the tripod grip in almost all cases			
I can write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed			
I can spell words by identifying sounds in them and representing the sounds with a letter or letters			
I can write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others			