

STAFFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL

WRITING PAMPHLET

**A helpful guide for parents of
Stafford Primary Students**

INTRODUCTION TO THIS GUIDE

Dear Families,

Writing is a complex task that takes time and practice for children to become proficient. Sometimes, however, when working with children at home, parents are not always sure of the best way to help. This pamphlet is designed to assist parents and guide their support of their child's writing. It is this support that will help each child on their pathway towards seeing themselves as writers. Our goal is that when students leave Stafford Primary School they see themselves as competent and confident thinkers, learners, and willing to tackle any challenge thrown their way. Becoming a proficient writer is just one aspect of this goal, and it is our hope that this pamphlet will help parents in their support of their child on this journey.

Put together with support from Site Council, this pamphlet came about due to parents wanting to better understand how to help their child with writing at home. Thank you to all who worked so hard to bring this great idea to life.

The Stafford Site Council

TIPS FOR PARENTS TO HELP SUPPORT WRITING

- **Model good English language** use in both speaking and writing.
- **Model writing every day.**
- **Encourage your child** to reflect on their understanding of written language structures.
- **Provide time and opportunities for your child to write**, i.e. journals, picture stories, family newsletters describing recent activities, trips, or celebrations, reminder notes, letters to family and friends, thank you notes, etc.
- **When reading aloud to your child, ask questions about the writing.** What picture do you have in your head about the story? The characters? The action? What words did the author use to describe people, places, actions, etc.? What words did the author use to make you feel what you are feeling?
- **Encourage your child to share** their writing experiences.
- By the time a child reaches the end of fifth grade, he or she should be **writing for a variety of reasons:**
 - For pleasure,
 - To record information,
 - To interpret meaning,
 - To communicate clearly,
 - To express an opinion,
 - To support their opinion using details and examples.

THE WRITING PROCESS

1. **Prewriting:** This is the first step in the writing process. The writer spends time thinking about a topic, brainstorming, and planning their writing.
2. **Drafting:** The writer puts their first thoughts and ideas down on paper. This draft is often referred to as the “rough draft.”
3. **Revising:** The writer spends time reworking the draft, which will result in changes to the organization of the draft. The writer will also add clarifying details, adding texture or taking out pieces that do not fit the direction of the piece. The writer may repeat this stage often in the writing process.
4. **Editing:** The writer is editing their work at this stage. They are reviewing and correcting spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation. The writer may repeat this stage often in the writing process.
5. **Evaluating:** The writer takes time to reflect and assess what has been written. This relates directly to the revising piece in terms of the writer using a critical eye towards all aspects of the piece they are writing.
6. **Publishing:** The writer completes the final draft and shares it with others. Students do not always take pieces to the “final draft” form. However, students regularly share all aspects of their writing with others.

WRITING MODES

By the time your child reaches fifth grade they will have experience in writing in the following modes. When assisting your child with writing have them identify the mode they are writing in and have them ask the following questions.

IMAGINATIVE MODE

In imaginative writing, the writer may **CREATE** a scene, character, or solution to a problem that is not real. Imaginative writing is **INVENTIVE**. It takes an unusual approach to a topic and delights or surprises the reader *and is meant to entertain and engage the reader in an imaginative experience*. It is the *most difficult mode* for students to write well in, but usually the mode they choose first. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Is the writing creative, dramatic, humorous, and/or fantastic?
- Are the ideas original?
- Does the writing make sense as it amuses, intrigues, and/or surprises the reader?
- Are new areas explored?
- Is there a beginning, middle, and end? Is there a clear main idea?
- Is there a problem and a resolution?

PERSUASIVE MODE

The writer uses the persuasive mode to convince the reader of a **POINT OF VIEW**. The writer takes a stand and tries to persuade the reader to take that same stand or take a certain action. The main issue is clear and the writer *uses details and examples to present a logical argument* to support their position. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Is the writer's position clear?
- Does the writer understand the key ideas?
- Is the writing focused?
- Is there support for the idea?
- Is the writer's position well supported in a logical and sequential manner?

NARRATIVE MODE

Narrative writing **TELLS A STORY**. *Narratives are often drawn from the personal and direct experiences of the author*. The details work together to create a complete story with a beginning, middle, and end. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Does the writing tell a whole story?
- Are the events easy to follow?
- Do the details and events make a whole story?
- Does the story have a main point or a lesson?

EXPOSITORY MODE

Expository writing gives **INFORMATION**. It *explains or defines something*. The writing is clear and complete. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Are the ideas clear and explained fully?
- Is there something to be learned?
- Does the writer know the topic?
- Does the writing explain, define, or instruct?
- Is the information presented in a systematic and organized manner?

TRAITS OF WRITING

By the end of fifth grade, students should demonstrate the following traits in their writing.

IDEAS AND CONTENT: The paper is **INFORMATIVE, INTRIGUING**, and/or **ENTERTAINING**. It holds the reader's attention. The paper has a **PURPOSE**. The main idea is developed with examples and details. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Does the writer seem to know the topic well?
- Do details make the writing clear and interesting?
- Has the writer focused the topic?
- Do the important ideas stand out?
- Does the writer try new ideas?
- Does the writing give the reader information or provide entertainment?

ORGANIZATION: IDEAS, DETAILS, and EXAMPLES are presented in an order that makes sense. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Does the paper have an inviting beginning?
- Does the ending work well?
- Are the ideas and details tied together so that they make sense?
- Do the details fit where they have been placed?
- Does the order make the paper interesting?

VOICE: The writer has a **POINT of VIEW**. The reader can almost “hear” the writer's expression. The reader gets to know something about the writer. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Does the writer take a point of view?
- Does the writer seem to “speak” directly to the reader?
- Does the reader learn something about the writer?

WORD CHOICE: The writer carefully selects words to make the **MESSAGE CLEAR**. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Are the words accurate, vivid, and specific?
- Do the words create a mental picture?
- Are the words fresh, original, and interesting?

SENTENCE FLUENCY: The ideas **FLOW SMOOTHLY** and the paper is **EASY TO READ** and **UNDERSTAND**. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Does the writing sound natural?
- Are the sentences varied in structure?
- Are the paragraphs varied in length?
- Can the paper be read aloud easily?

WRITING CONVENTIONS: Writing conventions (correct punctuation, spelling, and grammar) are **USED TO SUPPORT** the writer's message. The following are questions for you or the writer to ask:

- Is punctuation correct?
- Is spelling accurate?
- Does the grammar make the message clear?
- Do the paragraphs stop and start in places that make sense?

OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING PHASES

PHASE 1: Role Play Writing

Children are beginning to understand that language exists as written symbols. *They are beginning to understand that writing is used to convey meaning or messages*, and experiment with marks on paper with the intention of communicating.

PARENT TIPS:

- **Acknowledge / praise all** attempts at writing, regardless of whether it looks like actual letters or writing.
- Encourage your child to **discuss** the writing.
- **Write with** and for your child.
- Help your child **develop vocabulary** by listening to your child and provide modeling for communication.
- **Read** a variety of good literature to your child.

PHASE 2: Experimental Writing

Children are aware that speech can be written down and have meaning. They understand the left to right organization of print, and they experiment with writing letters and words. *They demonstrate an understanding of one-to-one correspondence by representing most spoken words in their written texts*. These words may consist of one, two, or three letters, and reflect their developing understanding of sound-symbol relationships.

PARENT TIPS: In addition to all of the tips above, include:

- **Demonstrate writing** for your child. **Encourage them to read it back to you** and to others.
- **Talk about letters, sounds, words, sentence patterns and features in the text**, i.e. *this is the letter R. This is the word sad.*

PHASE 3: Early Writing

Children write about topics that are important to them. They are beginning to consider an “audience.” *They have a sense of sentence, but may only be able to deal with one or two elements of writing at a time*, i.e. spelling, but not punctuation. Early writers have a small bank of frequently used words that they spell correctly. When writing unknown words, they choose letters on the basis of sound, without regard for conventional spelling patterns.

PARENT TIPS: In addition to all of the tips above, include:

- When reading with and to your child, encourage your child to **discuss how different characters** are represented in texts and make comparisons in real life.
- Support your child’s **spelling attempts** and praise their efforts.
- **Encourage your child to try different ways to work out the spelling of an unknown word** by: breaking the word into parts, using common letter patterns, using letters that work together, thinking about the root word.

PHASE 4: Transitional Writing

Transitional writers *show increasing control over the conventions of writing such as punctuation, spelling, and text organization*. They consider audience and purpose when selecting ideas and information to be included in texts. Writing shows evidence of a bank of known words that are spelled correctly.

PARENT TIPS: In addition to all of the tips above, include:

- **Provide opportunities** for your child to write.
- **Give encouragement** for your child’s writing efforts and respond to the message rather than focusing on punctuation, grammar, and spelling.
- Encourage your child to **talk about the strategies they use** to attempt spelling of unknown words.

PHASE 5: Conventional Writing

Writers are familiar with most traits of the writing process and have practiced each mode.

Their control of punctuation, structure, and spelling may vary according to the difficulty of the writing task. They take responsibility for adjusting the language and content to suit specific audiences and purposes. In this phase, writers use an increasing bank of known words and select from a wide vocabulary. They integrate a range of strategies to spell unknown words.

PARENT TIPS: In addition to all of the tips above, include:

- Encourage your child to **use the “Writing Process”** (prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, evaluating, and publishing). By this time in their schooling, they should be able to identify these steps.
- Encourage your child to **revise** their writing both alone and with you.
- Encourage your child to **experiment** with new and interesting vocabulary in their writing. **Use a thesaurus.**
- Encourage your child to **talk about strategies they use to attempt the spelling of unknown words**. For example: break the word into syllables, use common letter patterns, think about the root word, and look for words within words.
- Support your child in the completion of **research work**. Emphasize the *process* in the end result.

PHASE 6: Proficient Writing

Writers have developed a personal style of writing and **can write well in all modes**. They demonstrate control over spelling and punctuation. They choose from a large vocabulary, their writing is organized and makes sense to the reader. Proficient writers are able to convey detailed information and explore different perspectives.

PARENT TIPS: In addition to all of the tips above, include:

- Encourage your child to **read as writers and write as readers**.
- Encourage your child to **use writing to reflect** on his or her own learning.
- **Discuss and encourage** a sense of “personal voice,” style, rhythm, and vocabulary.