



Dear Parents

17 September 2013

Big Write

One of our School Development focuses this year is on further developing and improving children's writing skills through launching Big Write, where all staff were trained on this on one of our Inset days in September.

What is Big Write?

Big Writing is a term used for an approach to writing that was pioneered by Ros Wilson. Big Writing focuses on 4 main aspects of the writing process and gives the children the skills to improve their own writing through the development of talk for writing, sharing of language ideas within games, practising and improving their own writing skills through self-assessment and through a weekly special writing session.

The Four Elements of Big Write

The children are taught to think about their writing in four particular ways Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation (V.C.O.P). Last year, this was shared with parents of children in Years 2-4 when we introduced the VCOP pyramid. The children use these aspects to help them improve their writing. It must be remembered however that this process is to do with one aspect of their writing. We are also committed to improving the quality of the content, how they use writing to express themselves and developing their handwriting and presentation skills.

This term teachers from Year 2 – Year 4 have begun to introduce the elements below which are displayed in the classrooms and on the VCOP pyramids which children can refer to on their tables.

Vocabulary: Classes have a 'Vocabulary Wow Words' board where new and impressive words that the children have used are shared for everyone. The children are encouraged to use these words where appropriate in their writing.

Connectives: Classes have a 'Connectives' display, where powerful connectives (joining words) are displayed. Children are encouraged to use these in their writing.

Openers: Classes have an 'Openers' display, with good openers (sentence starters) that the children can choose from. We also teach ways of improving a basic sentence e.g. 'The children climbed the hill slowly' to a better sentence by changing the word order; 'Slowly, the children climbed the hill.'

Punctuation: A clearly displayed 'Punctuation Pyramid' shows the levels of punctuation. Children are taught the names of the higher level punctuation from Year One onwards and learn to use them in their writing.

How can you support your child develop their writing skills?

Articulate talk is a vital skill that enhances children's language development, vocabulary and writing skills. As part of Big Write children will be asked to take part in 'Talk homework'. Starting this week in Key stage 2 and later this term in Key stage 1 and Foundation Stage your child will bring home 'talk homework' each fortnight detailing the focus for talk for writing, on some occasions this could be a picture to discuss with the family. We would ask during this special 'talk time' that you encourage as many members of the family to take part in the discussion and that there are no distractions e.g the television is turned off. Ideally it might take place seated around the dinner table while you are eating your evening meal. First your child should give their opinions on the topic being asked to discuss, being encouraged to give reasons for their opinion using the word 'because'. This gives your child the chance to think through their thought process, discuss their ideas and for other members of the family to share their ideas which will support your child's writing the following day. All of this is purely through quality talk and discussion in preparation for their Big Write session the next day and nothing should be written down!

The Big Write session-

Fortnightly the children will take part in a Big Writing lesson where the teacher creates a special atmosphere by lighting a candle and playing very quiet classical music while the children independently write applying their 'talk homework' ideas and their writing skills they have learnt during the week. The teachers then mark their writing and then share with the children ways to further improve it by editing their work against the elements of VCOP. The following week the children have the opportunity to improve an aspect of their Big writing by up-levelling it e.g. Using a wider range of connectives or improving use of vocabulary or varying their sentence openers or by using a wider range of punctuation.

We are very excited about launching Big Write which has been proven to rapidly develop children's progress in writing. We look forward to sharing more about Big Write with you later in the year and hope that you enjoy supporting us by engaging in 'Talk for Writing homework.'

Yours sincerely

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