**Writing at Robert Miles Juniors**

Within English, we teach writing, reading, grammar, vocabulary and spelling, as well as working on developing oracy. Through real experiences and creative teaching, we want children to achieve their full potential and become fluent readers and writers.  We aim to promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong spoken and written word.  We want to develop their love of literature and instil in them an enjoyment of reading. The National Curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils:

* Read easily, fluently and with good understanding.
* Develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information.
* Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language.
* Appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage.
* Write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences.
* Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate on and explain clearly their ideas.
* Are competent in the art of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.

**Our Aims**

**A Robert Miles Writer**

At Robert Miles we want all children to draw on a wide range of experiences to become confident, eager and enthusiastic writers. We aim for them all to be able to communicate creatively and fluently, for a wide range of purposes and for a variety of audience. They do this by communicating their thoughts effectively by making conscious, ambitious choices, demonstrating a vivid imagination, thus enabling readers to engage with and enjoy their writing.

When writing non-fiction, a Robert Miles writer makes effective use of a range of organizational features and technical vocabulary to convey their information effectively.

Last, but by no means least, a Robert Miles writer is a good reader, who has a love for a great book and chooses to curl up with their current book when they have some free time!

**Our Curriculum for Writing**

We have recently embarked on a two-year journey with Talk For Writing, after careful consideration of what we were currently delivering and where we wanted to get to. The approach very much matches what we wanted to achieve in our curriculum, that ability to read and write independently for a variety of purposes and audiences within different subjects. There is a high focus on children internalizing the language structures needed through talking the text, repeatedly, until all of them, even the struggling learners, are familiar with it. Close reading takes place, with children learning to read as a reader first (what do I know? What do I think I know? What puzzles me?), before reading as a writer. There is a gradual move from dependence to independence, with less confident writers ‘hugging’ the original text closely and more confident using the structure to write their own version. We write for a purpose, always, these being either to entertain, to inform, to persuade or to discuss.

The length of writing units varies but all build in the skills of transcription and composition. They vary in structure depending on the age, experience and needs of the children. In year 3, for instance, there is a greater emphasis on skills of transcription to help build skills in writing sentences effectively before moving on to writing simple narratives, whereas in older year groups more of the unit is focused towards developing a range of sentence structures and building coherence throughout a piece.

All children are taught how to plan, draft, edit and evaluate their writing.

The writing teaching and learning that we do at Robert Miles is underpinned by our own fiction spine, which all children have access to, experience and draw upon for their written pieces. Talk For Writing brings us imaginative units of work, with a proven success record, thus releasing teachers from sourcing and planning. This means teachers can concentrate on adapting their teaching to the needs of the class/children they are teaching.

**The Writing Process**

**Baseline Assessment and Planning – the Cold Task**

Teaching is focused by initial assessment. Generally, teachers use what is known as a **‘cold’** task or a ‘have a go’ task. An interesting and rich starting point provides the stimulus and content but there is no initial teaching. The aim of this is to see what the children can do independently at the start of a unit, drawing on their prior learning. Assessment of their writing helps the teacher work out what to teach the whole class, different groups and adapt the model text and plan. Targets can then be set for individuals. By the end of the unit, pupils complete a ‘hot’ task or a ‘show us what you know’ task which is an independent task on a similar type of writing with an interesting stimulus. Progress should be evident which encourages pupils and helps schools track the impact of teaching.

**The Imitation Stage**

The teaching begins with some sort of creative ‘hook’ which engages the pupils, often with a sense of enjoyment, audience and purpose. Writing challenges, such as informing Dr Who about how the Tardis works or producing leaflets for younger children about healthy eating, provide a sense of purpose. The model text is pitched well above the pupils’ level and has built into it the underlying, transferable structures and language patterns that students will need when they are writing. This is learned using a ‘text map’ and actions to strengthen memory and help students internalise the text. Activities such as drama are used to deepen understanding of the text.

Once students can ‘talk like the text’, the model, and other examples, are then read for vocabulary and comprehension, before being analysed for the basic text (boxing up) and language patterns, as well as writing techniques or toolkits. All of this first phase is underpinned by rehearsing key spellings and grammatical patterns. Short-burst writing is used to practise key focuses such as description, persuasion or scientific explanation.

**The Innovation Stage**

Once students are familiar with the model text, then the teacher leads them into creating their own versions. A new subject is presented and the teacher leads students through planning. With younger pupils, this is based on changing the basic map and retelling new versions. Older students use boxed-up planners and the teacher demonstrates how to create simple plans and orally develop ideas prior to writing. Ideas may need to be generated and organised or information researched and added to a planner. Shared and guided writing is then used to stage writing over a number of days so that students are writing texts bit by bit, concentrating on bringing all the elements together, writing effectively and accurately. Feedback is given during the lessons, as well as using some form of visualiser on a daily basis, so that students can be taught how to improve their writing, make it more accurate, until they can increasingly edit in pairs or on their own.

**Independent Application and Invention – the Hot Task**

Eventually, students move on to the third phase, which is when they apply independently what has been taught and practised. Before this happens, the teacher may decide to give further input and rehearsal. Students are guided through planning, drafting and revising their work independently. It is essential to provide a rich starting point that taps into what students know and what matters so that their writing is purposeful. Writing may be staged over a number of days and there may be time for several independent pieces to be written. With non-fiction, students should apply what they have been taught across the curriculum. The final piece is used as the ‘hot’ task, which clearly shows progress across the unit.

It is important that at the innovation and independent application stages, the writing becomes increasingly independent of the original model rather than a pale copy. Whilst four-year-olds may only make a few simple changes, older students should be adding, embellishing, altering and manipulating the original structure. From Key Stage 2 onwards, almost all children will be using the text structure and writing tools to write, drawing on the model, their wider reading and experience so that they are writing independently at a high level. This has to be modelled in shared writing.

The aim of Talk for Writing is to develop imaginative, creative and effective writers. In the same way, the aim of Talk for Reading is to grow confident, critical and appreciative readers. No student can be said to really be a reader until they make their own choices about what to read and begin to develop a taste. In the same vein, children are not really writers until they decide what they want to write and have opportunities to create their own writing tasks and write about their interests and lives creating stories, poems and informative writing for themselves.

For this reason, schools plan ‘invention’ units which often sit between taught units. These ‘invention’ units are when students have time for their own writing. Teachers may provide a stimulus such as a film clip, interesting object, drama, wordless picture book, work of art, music, visitor or visit as a starting point but the students decide what and how to write. This is truly independent writing. In the early years, children should be playing at making up stories daily, acting stories out and at least once a week be led by the teacher through making up class stories for future sharing.

**Final Assessment**

The quality of the model texts is crucial to progress. The models should be short and provide excellent examples of the key linguistic features being focused on, and they should increase in difficulty. With younger children, the imitation stage will take longer, as the children need to establish the language patterns that will underpin their learning; this is so that they can see how to innovate on a text and write their own version independently. As they get older, more sophisticated ways of imitating text and a greater range of models can be used, and there will be a greater emphasis on ensuring that the innovation stage helps the pupils to move away from the initial model, so that they become increasingly skilled as independent writers.

When the children are first taught a text type, they will co-construct the toolkit to help them understand the ingredients to consider. As they progress up the school, these toolkits should travel with them so that, year-on-year, they are refined as the pupils develop their skills. Over time, they should internalise these toolkits so they select appropriate features automatically and no longer need a visual support to scaffold their writing.

**How Writing is Taught?**

Writing at Robert Miles is planned and taught in the same manner by all teachers in a year group: each child experiences the same lesson content. We employ two additional teachers for English who teach a small group, comprising of 6 children from each class. Most of these children fall within our pupil premium category. Having the two extra teachers means that class sizes are smaller, thus giving class teachers more time per pupil, as well as allowing the pupil premium children to benefit from being taught in a small group.

The Talk For Writing process is in its infancy at Robert Miles: we embarked upon our two year journey in October 2022. The first year allowed us to focus on the teaching of fiction writing, working closely with our consultant to assess and improve. October 6th 2023 was an inset day when the consultant will train teaching staff in the non-fiction strand.

One of the advantages of the TFW process is that all children, of all abilities, can access it. Those lower ability children will ‘hug’ close to the model text when it comes to writing their own version of the story, whereas the more able will use its structure as a scaffold to create their own piece.

Throughout the units of work, we introduce a whole range of writing features, grammar and punctuation, as well as continuing to build on their vocabulary. Short burst writing allows the children to experiment and try out these newly learnt strategies, before applying them in their main, end of unit piece. Writing is modelled by the teacher and a key part of this is to model the thinking process that happens when we take the beginnings of an idea and work it through to a clause/phrase/sentence that is used in the piece.

Editing is a key part of any writing unit and the children are taught to edit for accuracy as well as for improvement. This is carried out in a range of ways: peer marking; editing stations; whole class (use of visualizer).

Sometimes writing is linked to the year groups’ topic and other times it is a stand-alone unit. This is because the key focus has to be on the writing objectives being taught and a topic-linked unit is not always the best way of doing this.

TFW is enabling us to revisit our current skill set as teachers, reassess it and build new skills into our teaching toolkits. It has created a writing buzz around school with high energy and enthusiasm levels evident. There is no doubt that the children are feeding off of this and they are particularly loving the verbal element used to learn the model text: it is impressive to see every child, even the lowest of ability, stand up and tell the story with actions, using the story map to support.