

BRITISH EMBASSY STUDY GROUP



**'BIG
WRITING'**

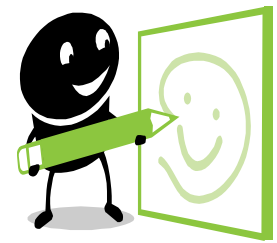
Improving Standards in Writing

A Guide

for

Staff

Parents and Children



Dear Reader,

One of our school improvement targets for the academic year 2009/10 is 'to further improve and develop writing'. In order to do this we at BESG, have started a project called 'Big Writing', You may have heard children talking about this. 'Big Writing' is a teaching approach created in 2004 by Ros Wilson.

Ros Wilson has introduced a new teaching methodology for raising standards in writing rapidly and effectively. The method is based on fast, fun and lively teaching of the 'writing voice' through oracy. It gives pupils confidence and the understanding to develop control of a higher level writing voice without requiring the understanding of technical knowledge of syntax and grammatical analysis. This is important as not all primary aged children are ready for the level of technical knowledge and understanding required to access higher order language in this way.

Big Writing

'Big Writing' is a completely new approach to the teaching of the skills of writing. It is highly effective for pupils from Reception to Key Stage 3, and has an immediate impact on writing standards. Thousands of teachers are now using this approach across the country. It has been praised by HMI in their monitoring of schools in category, and its impact has been recognised in OFSTED reports.

The approach has also been found to be a huge motivator for boys, who are quickly found to become 'excited writers'. It is also highly successful for bilingual pupils, because of its clarity and structure. 'Teachers, Managers and pupils are all excited about Big Writing.'

VCOP - Vocabulary, Connectives, Openers and Punctuation

Have you heard your child singing V COP to the tune of YMCA? The teaching of VCOP is one of the key strands of Big Writing. VCOP is focused teaching of the following:



Vocabulary=teach a wide range of 'wow' words, (ambitious vocabulary);
Connectives = teach a wide range of words and phrases for connecting thoughts, ideas, sentences etcetera;

Openers = teach a wide range of ways of opening sentences, including sequence words, linking words and phrases and the 3 power openers;
Punctuation = teach a wide range of punctuation.

Punctuation Pyramid

The Punctuation Pyramid is a graphic representation for the range of punctuation that should be realistic for most children at each level of writing.

Each line represents a level and therefore use of a full stop only is Level 1 in punctuation, (not necessarily in writing overall) a full stop and a question mark are Level 2 and so on.

Pro-active teaching encourages children to be 'having a go' at levels they are not yet quite ready for and thus they go through an 'emergent' phase where the use may not be quite accurate.

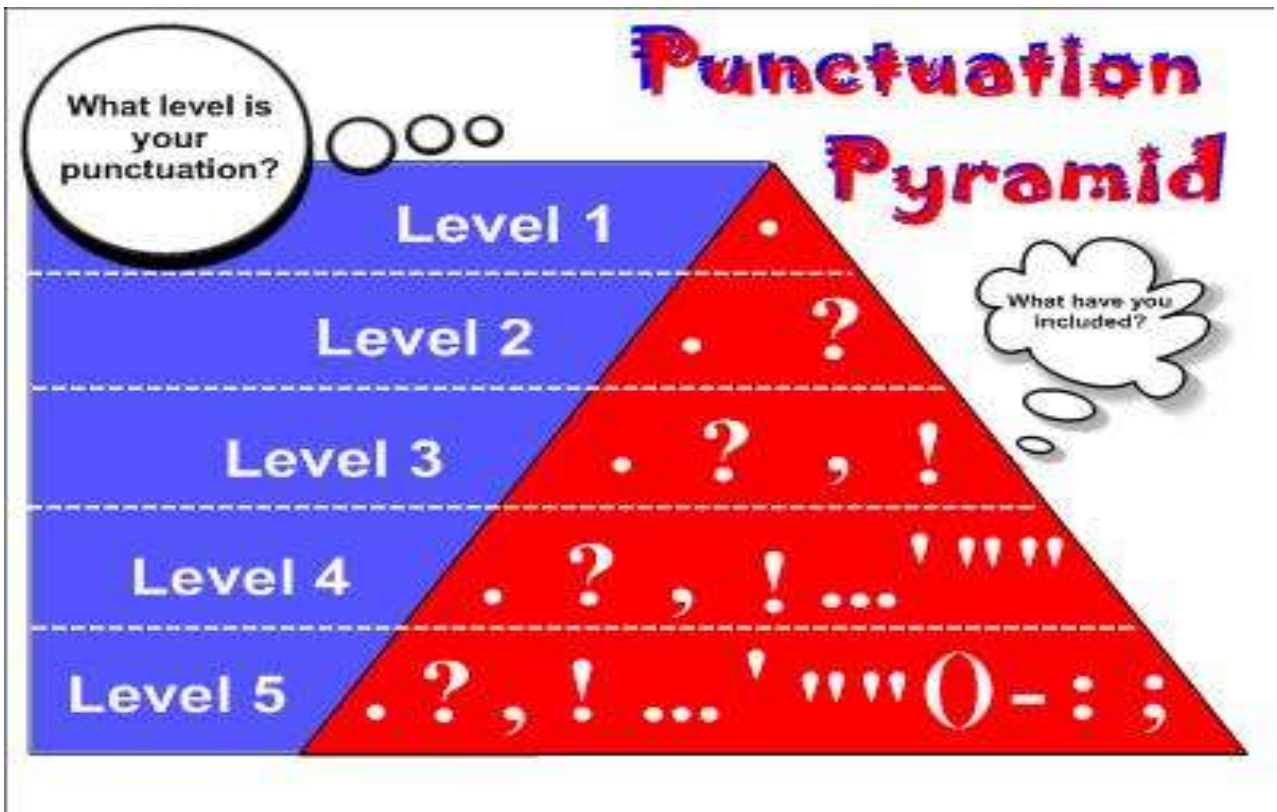
This phase must be praised and the child not made to feel they are 'getting it wrong'.

The teacher continues to model correct use of the punctuation and encourage increased understanding through use of strategies such as the following:

You may have heard the children talking about some of the punctuation games that they play:

- The roving post-it
- What punctuation would come at the end of
- Kung Fu Punctuation
- The work of the imaginary friend

The use of a wide range of punctuation is always celebrated. Teacher's refer to it every time the pupils work and use the activities to embed the pyramid the 'mind's eye' of all pupils.



connectives

eventually just then because also

punctuation

Punctuation ? , !

openings

First... Next...
Once upon a time... After a while...
Another thing... The last time...
All of a sudden... Then...

WOW vocabulary

Would one of these words be better than said?
said said said said said

Timing

Big Writing takes one and a half hours a week. This is split exactly in half by break time, creating two forty five minute sessions. In Year 1 Big Writing is a one hour session split into two thirty minute sessions.

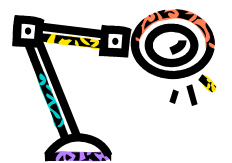
The first session is fast, fun, lively oracy-based activities. There is then ten minutes for the pupils to 'consolidate their ideas'. The focus of the text type is introduced the day before.



Creating the right atmosphere

As pupils enter the classroom at the beginning of 'Big Writing' there are three changes.

Lighting: The lighting is dimmed. Some of the main lights are turned off and fairy lights are turned on.



Aroma: A large aromatic candle is placed at the front of the classroom. Children are encouraged to take 'brain breaks' whilst writing, they gaze at the candle flame, reflect and return to their work.



Music: Calming music is playing on the stereo. This is so quiet that it can only be heard if the classroom is silent.

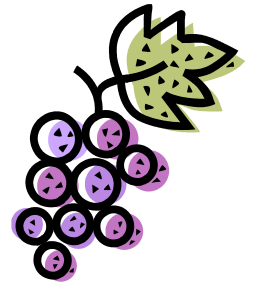


Resources

Pupils have a special book and a special pen for 'Big Writing'. They are only used during 'Big Writing'.

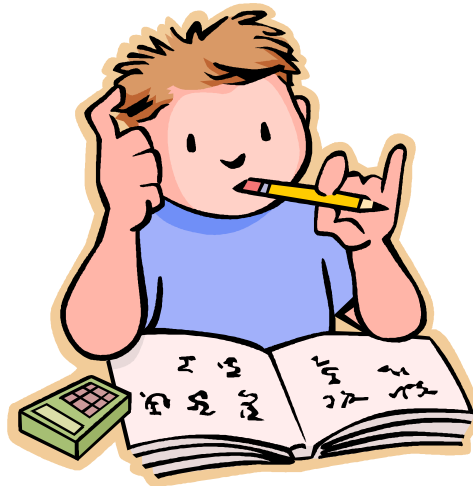
Rewards

Grapes may be used as a reward for using the appropriate **Vocabulary, Connectives, Sentence Openers or Punctuation**. During the 'Big Writing' session the teacher monitors the progress of children and hands out grapes.



Home discussions

The text type and context is introduced the afternoon before 'Big Writing'. For example the stimulus could be a letter home. Your child will come home from school talking about the 'Big Writing' theme for the week. Your child might be asked to talk to as many people as possible about an event or issue.



Reading

Schools are reporting that the teaching of Big Writing is having a positive impact on reading comprehension scores and the answering of questions.

'Big Writing' is an exciting new project for our school.

