



# The teaching of Writing at Doubletrees school

The teaching of writing is linked to both reading and also communication at Doubletrees school. As such it provides the supportive structure through which are learners are both able to communicate, develop greater fine motor and co-ordination skills and also to convey their understanding of the world around them.



## Learning to Learn—pre-formal pathway

**Pre-requisites to writing including fine motor skills and mark making**

### Why?

Pupils who follow the Learning to Learn pathway have immersive access to writing. This pathway aims to maintain and develop fine motor skills and provide learners with opportunities to experience meaningful marks by engaging with these in a variety of contexts. The focus here will be both fine motor control as a pre-writing skill and also the use of photos, symbols and graphic shapes alongside text as a source of both information and communication. A total communication approach alongside a variety of immersive sensory activities enables learners to develop their skills in the four areas of need and develop their life long independence skills.

### How?

Communication takes place all the time and is never separated from other key areas of learning. It underpins all areas of learning. Therefore we implement the teaching approach most suited to the needs of our youngest EYFS learners and those who are working within Learning to learn pathways, which must be interactive, child centred and adapted to take account of their impairments.

Three basic principles:

**Interactive** – Our L2L and youngest pupils learn through interaction with other people and through active experimentation with objects. This learning style does not benefit from attempts to direct it towards specific goals. A young child or adolescent with multiple learning needs cannot take instruction from others until they are aware of what they, themselves, are capable of doing. Interaction, of course, implies that we must respond to whatever the child offers us, just as much as we expect them to respond to us.

**Child centred** – We believe that in order to help learners to make sense of the often confusing world around them, we must first attempt to enter their world and to see things from their point of view. In other words we must try to “make sense of their world”. This immediately shifts the burden of responsibility on to the adult and we stress the importance of the adult role in observing, reflecting and responding to the activities of the learner *‘in the moment’*.

**Adapted** – pupils with any impairment will have different ways of understanding their surroundings from a typical developing child. Our adaptations and our methods reflect this. The adaptations include ensuring that the whole environment – the physical surroundings, the people in that environment and the language they use – are

## Bridging to Learn—Semi-formal learning pathway.

**Developing understanding that text conveys meaning and an introduction to the written word**

### Why?

Pupils who follow the Bridging to Learn pathway have both immersive and discrete access to writing. This pathway builds upon the skills acquired from the pre-formal pathway experienced in their Early Years experience. The focus here will be both fine motor control as a pre-writing skill and also the use of graphic shapes and ultimately text as a source of both information and communication. As the learners progress through the school an additional focus of social sight and functional vocabulary is introduced to enable learners to develop their life long independence skills.

### How?

We will continue to implement this using an interactive, child centred and adapted approach, used by the EYFS/L2L pathway, whilst introducing more discrete, daily sessions that introduce learners to the idea that writing has meaning, links sounds to graphic shapes and encourage them to develop their understanding and awareness of this.

Developing communication skills and increasing vocabulary, both verbal and using AAC remains a priority and is supported by a language rich environment. It is clearly modelled and interwoven in all that is done. It is the foundation of learning in both reading and writing for this cohort.

Learners on this pathway will develop greater fine motor control skills and also awareness of the meanings that graphic forms can convey in discrete sessions, alongside a continuation of an immersive, total communication approach.

Attention to different signs/symbols with developing understanding of meaning is an early focus of both reading and writing. Learners on this pathway will follow the pre-reading stages, outlined in our reading pathway to develop their understanding that text conveys meaning. They will also develop their pre-writing skills through a range of activities.

As learners progress on their journey through our school, and enter the secondary phase of learning, the focus becomes using the written word to communicate in a way that is functional and practical for life outside the school setting.

A personalised learning approach is fundamental to the ethos of our school, and adaptations continue to be made to support individuals with sensory impairments or those with no or limited verbal communication.

## Ready to Learn—Formal learning pathway.

**The structured teaching of writing skills, including handwriting.**

### Why?

Our intent is for pupils who are able to access the national curriculum to follow the Ready to learn pathway and therefore undertake more structured teaching, enabling them to become as independent readers and writers as they are able. The focus here will be the development of letter formation, composition and vocabulary to enable our learners to clearly communicate their meanings and intentions through text and interact with the written word in the world around them. As the learners progress through the school, they are introduced to more real life opportunities to communicate and demonstrate understanding using the written word in a practical context, including gaining appropriate qualifications and accreditations.

### How?

Both handwriting/fine motor skills and composition of text will be taught through formal, hour long English lessons, daily. All our writing will begin with communication of meaning, through an individual’s preferred method, before becoming text. Handwriting skills will be developed, linked to the learner’s individual physical ability. Composition and vocabulary skills will be linked to the reading unit and genre, where the text is explored and experienced through reading, then this learning is then transferred and applied by composing and producing sentences and texts within this genre.

### What will you see?

#### Teaching the skill of handwriting

Formation of different shapes and patterns is developed into recognisable letter shapes. Letter formation is taught using the four letter groups: curly caterpillar letters first, followed by long ladder letters, then one armed robot letters and finally the zig zag letters.

The groups are initially taught as shapes and as the learner’s phonic skills develop, these can then be linked as graphemes that match the relevant phonemes, using the Letters and Sounds sets in phase 2.

Progression on to learning the formation of capital letters is facilitated when all lower case letters are learnt, learners are able to spell words by sounding out the phonemes and writing the corresponding graphemes and are ready to progress to sentence writing.

Adaptations will be made for learners who are unable to develop the fine motor control, or have sufficient muscle tone to clearly form letters, including the use of IT. Writing tools may be selected to suit a learner’s sensory needs. Appropriate grips will be encouraged, provided that this does not create a barrier to the act of writing itself.

#### Teaching sentence writing

always as accessible as possible from the children's point of view. We consider the significance of the multi-sensory experiences available to each child.

#### What will you see?

A language rich environment with engagement at its centre. A variety of activities both planned and incidental will support learners to develop their fine motor skills, both supported and independent. Interaction partners within this environment will support learners to find meaning within marks and movements that they make, using a total communication approach and an enthusiastic approach to engagement for learning, to celebrate and extend these skills.

Some examples you will see are:

- Intensive interaction, copying gross and fine motor movements to encourage and find communicative meaning in these.
- Multi disciplinary approach to fine and gross motor therapy outcomes (OT and Physio targets embedded throughout the school day.)
- Opportunities to make marks using a variety of tools and materials and for a variety of purposes with appropriate levels of support
- Cause and Effect opportunities embedded into the school day that encourage both fine and gross motor control development
- A variety of adapted resources to offer increased independence in early mark making and manipulation of tools.
- Sensory touch activities for body awareness with a focus on vestibular and proprioceptive input

#### Recognising that text holds meaning

The learners on this pathway will have access to text alongside any other available means of communication, through a sensory, language rich environment and within discreet lessons, such as sensory stories.

They will have opportunities to engage with words alongside signs and symbols. Through symbol/sensory cues these will form part of the Total Communication approach that will facilitate anticipation and initiation of events and transitions both familiar and new. They may also begin to recognise that text/symbols can be used to make choices, and will be given opportunities to select their preferences and make appropriate requests, using the signs, symbols and text that they are able to access.

#### What will the impact of this be?

The learners will maintain and develop their gross and fine motor skills and make progress towards their therapy aims. They will manipulate objects and tools with increasing independence in order to have an effect on their environment, including making marks. The effect that they have and the marks that they make will be celebrated and recognised as holding meaning.

They will be supported through a Total Communication approach to express preferences and anticipate transitions and events.

Progress will be measured by the tracking of the IEP and EHCP targets alongside Routes for Learning as summative assessment and the Engagement Model as ongoing, formative assessment. We look for learners within the L2L pathway to generalise their skills across a variety of settings.

#### What will you see?

A total communication environment where visuals support understanding and give meaning. An increasing focus on interaction with the environment around them. Learners are encouraged to develop their visual discrimination of different graphic shapes that are discrete and identifiable. They are encouraged to interact with each other and adults, verbally or through the use of signs and symbols with increased breadth and understanding. You will see the beginning of structured learning opportunities in discrete sessions of up to 15 minutes. You will see introductions to writing in the form of both pre-writing activities that encourage increasing fine motor control, or use of written graphic forms such as matching or exchanging activities.

Some examples you will see:

- Matching activities
- Listening and responding opportunities
- Use of signs and symbols
- Interactive screen games
- Letter and object/picture matching
- Early reading scheme books
- Shared stories
- Attention autism/bucket time
- Music and songs
- Letters and sounds resources and games
- Functional social sight vocabulary matching activities.

#### Recognising the purpose of text

The learners on this pathway will recognise that text has a purpose and be able to differentiate between some of these purposes. They will recognise that some signs and symbols may be used to make requests, give instructions and others are for enjoyment, such as stories and rhymes. They will be able to select their preferences and make appropriate requests, using the signs, symbols and texts that they are able to access.

#### Post 14:

Our post 14 provision aims to embed the functional sight vocabulary that will allow our learners to communicate and navigate their way through the world after leaving Doubletrees, having acquired whatever relevant qualifications or accreditations they are able to achieve.

#### What will the impact of this be?

The learners will develop their understanding that signs, symbols and text convey meaning and begin to use these themselves to express preferences and understand expectations and instructions. They will be able to demonstrate increasing precision in their fine motor skills and co-ordination.

Progress will be measured by the tracking of the phonics phase they are on, their IEP and EHCP targets and the progression steps of B-squared, or the adult steps of B-squared.

Before writing a sentence, learners will be encouraged, where they are able to rehearse a sentence. This may be orally, using word cards or technology to support. Initially, learners will be asked to complete sentences with key words. Then they will begin to compose and write simple, short sentences. At this point, written punctuation will be introduced, after learner's awareness has been developed through reading experiences. Use of complex sentences and connectives are introduced, when a learner has the appropriate vocabulary skills and the cognitive ability to process and understand these extended language structures.

#### Teaching spelling of words

Word spelling is linked to the teaching of phonics. When learners are able to match a range of phonemes to their corresponding graphemes and also form the shapes of the letters correctly, through their handwriting skills, they are then encouraged to form letter sounds that correspond to an orally produced phoneme. This then develops to identifying the phonemes within a word and writing the corresponding graphemes. Adaptations may be made for learners who follow the whole word recognition pathway. Here they will practise writing the words they are sight recognising, once the appropriate handwriting skills have been acquired.

Spelling of common exception words and topic vocabulary will be completed through look, write cover check methods, when and where appropriate.

#### Teaching writing in different genres

Through English lessons, learners are taught the different purposes and structures of text. This is initially taught as a reading focus. Then learners will be given the opportunity to demonstrate understanding by writing their own texts within each genre. This may begin within supportive frameworks to scaffold writing with these gradually being removed, with the aim of developing increasing independence and understanding of the purpose of texts enabling our learners to select the genre of text they need to write, linked to its intended outcome.

#### Post 16:

Our post 16 provision aims to embed and apply the skills acquired to real life situations to prepare them as fully as possible for life outside of school. Being able to convey information and communicate with others, via paper or using technology, such as email becomes a focus for this phase of their education. Relevant qualifications and accreditations will be sought at the end of Key stages 4 and 5, according to our accreditation pathways.

#### What will the impact of this be?

Learners will demonstrate increasing independence in their use of text to convey meaning, support their communication and can compose and structure this to match the intended outcome. Progress will be measured using the Pre Key Stage standards, National Curriculum expectations through B-squared or Adult B-Squared, plus the tracking of the phonics phase they are accessing to monitor their progress and inform next steps.

It will also be tracked using the progression steps framework of B-squared, adult B-squared and any relevant IEP targets linked to their EHCP.