

# DODFORD FIRST SCHOOL

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**Every Day, a Learning Journey**

## Writing Guide for Parents

This guide is designed to help you to understand a little more about the development of writing skills. It aims to provide practical guidance on how you can support your child at home.

### **Simple advice on helping your child enjoy writing.**

**Writing is just not easy** – and some children find it a chore rather than fun. Some children will happily write for pure pleasure, and others have to be encouraged to do even three lines of writing! So how can you make writing seem just a bit more attractive?

#### **Follow your child's interests:**

Does your child like football, cooking or making things, designing clothes or playing with Lego? Whatever their interest, there will be good writing opportunities around it. Perhaps a football diary, instructions or recipes. Use postcards or fancy writing paper, write in coloured pens and pencils. You could encourage them to write to family members. Provide post it stickers and encourage them to write messages to everyone, even the cat!

#### **Remember TALK comes first!**

The standard of children's writing at school is not only how they form letters and handwrite. They must also be able to express their ideas clearly. Can they put thoughts in order and discuss what they want to say? All of these depend on speaking. So talk to your child, encourage them to express themselves, listen and respond to their ideas.

**It all helps!**



# GOLDEN RULES

- ✓ **DO** offer plenty of praise. Writing takes practice and perseverance, both of which are hard if you are feeling discouraged. Think of nice things to say ~ 'I love the way you've put that! It's brilliant.' Not 'I wish you would leave a space between your words.'
  
- × **DON'T** bribe a child to write (or read!). When desperate to get a child to do their homework, a good bribe can seem like a simple answer. But the problem with bribery is that it gives entirely the wrong messages. Writing and reading are not things we should be bribed to do! We do them because they bring their own rewards – honestly!
  
- ✓ **DO** allow different forms of writing. Writing emails or typing messages are all perfectly good ways for children to express themselves in written form.
  
- × **DON'T** get obsessed with spelling.  
The main criteria for a healthy piece of writing is that:
  - We can read it
  - It is well expressed
  - It fulfils its purpose – i.e. if it is a thank-you letter to granny, it says thank you!
  - If the writing satisfies all these criteria then a few mis-spelt words do not really matter.





# Writing at Home

## Foundation Stage

- Encourage your child to write their own name, family names, letter sounds and key words.
- Explore writing with paint, chalk, misty windows etc...
- Develop their gross motor skills in controlling their bodies with care, such as making circles with their arms.
- Ask them to say and try to write simple sentences.

## Key Stage 1

- Encourage writing in play and what they do. For example:
  - lists for shopping, record the results for their favourite sports team.
- Engage with their writing through:
  - saying what you liked in it.
  - asking where their ideas have come from?
  - asking them to show you where a sentence begins and ends.
- Help them to organise and sequence their writing by asking them to talk about their ideas or to draw a sequence of simple pictures to show how the main events in a story might be organised.

## Key Stage 2

Encourage their personal writing, for example; a journal or diary.

- Talk through their ideas with them before they start to write, for example, prompt them to think about how they intend to tackle a subject.
- Help them to reflect on their writing, particularly the effect they hoped to have on the reader, for example, is the reader sufficiently prepared for the ending?
- Encourage them to read through their work, shaping their sentences for clarity and impact and checking their accuracy.

# Some Fun Writing Ideas

**Magic writing boards** are great fun for children. These can be bought cheaply and used even on car journeys.

**White boards** encourage the children to write and practise mark making.

**Write with your child** – ‘think aloud’ so they can hear the decisions you make as you write. Children will want to write if they see a purpose to the writing.

**Talk about the words they see in everyday life-** food packaging, signs in the supermarkets, messages on birthday cards and invitations.

**Write a shopping list together-** model and allow them to take their own list to the shop to give the writing a purpose.

**Send an email-** Your child says the message and you type it initially. Children can develop computer skills at the same time. Try writing an invitation to a story character.

**Provide your child with a ‘writing box’-** put a range of writing items in the box – pens, pencils, rainbow pencils, old birthday cards, coloured paper, sticky tape to make little books. Rolls of wallpaper can be fixed to a table or a fence for large writing and drawing.

**Praise them for their play writing-** those early squiggles and marks show that your child is beginning to understand writing.

**Set an example-** make sure your child sees you writing!

**Strengthen their writing hand-**Try fun activities which strengthen your child’s hand. For example: cutting, painting, squeezing playdough, picking up small things with tweezers and pegs.

**Messages-** leave messages with magnetic letters on the fridge for them to reply to.

**Make up stories together-** use their toys as characters and write the story with them so they say it. Make up a little booklet. Take photographs and use the pictures in the book.

**Notices and signs-** about important things in their play e.g. The Cave – Keep Out! Shoe Shop – Open, Don’t walk on the seeds we have planted!

**Captions-** to add to photos that they or an adult has taken.

## **Useful resources to promote writing at home:**

- sticky labels, e.g. for their letters, parcels, for labelling things they have made, labelling things for the role-play area
- paper in different shapes, sizes and colours for any of their needs
- an easel
- a whiteboard
- glittery / scented pens
- different sized writing implements – thick felt tips, paint brushes, fine pencils, sticks, wands, etc.
- clipboards and pens for drawing and writing
- a bag of puppets, monsters and other soft toys
- an easily erected tent or a sheet for an office, cave or den to make a perfect writing area
- envelopes
- sticky tape or glue
- coloured pencils and pens
- scissors
- glitter

We hope that you have found this booklet useful. As always please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like further guidance.

## **Happy Writing**

