

Big Writing

One of our school improvement targets for the academic year 2008/9 is to continue to 'improve and develop writing'. In order to do this at Sir Robert Geffery's we have started a project called 'Big Writing'. 'Big Writing' is a teaching approach that was 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. We call this a posh voice! 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' 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.

At Sir Robert Geffery's we have taught the children how to use VCOP. 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 etc.

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—all classes have copies of this pyramid and the children will have pyramids or mats on the tables. 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.



Parents help at home by encouraging children to collect WOW words and to talk about sentences and articles that they see in the paper, books or magazines. They also encourage children to discuss types of writing, eg Instructions when looking at recipes etc.

Big Writing is already having a great impact on the standards achieved in Literacy across the school. The teachers level work at least every month using Ros Wilson's writing criterion and therefore set targets each week to ensure the best progress is made.