

Marking: Making a difference

Good practice in responding to
children's writing



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Background

This booklet is one of the results of an ongoing project focusing on progression in writing during key stage 2. The project is part of the collaboration between the QCA English team and the National Literacy Strategy (NLS).

The first outcome from the project was **Marking Guidelines for Writing**, which can be found on the Standards website at www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/literacy/publications.

Since then the team has collected and analysed a large number of pieces of writing by children in each year group of key stage 2. It has also involved a short questionnaire about how teachers mark children's writing.

This booklet is the second in a series of publications from the project. Further work is continuing on how to identify progression in writing and how to assess children's progress on an ongoing basis. These approaches complement the ways writing is assessed in the national curriculum English tests from 2003. It is available on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk/ca/subjects/english

The thinking behind these materials

Improving children's writing

Writing is a complex activity so the best teaching of writing includes:

- interesting children in the ideas and language that are fundamental to successful communication;
- reducing the burden on the learner-writer by focusing on specific features of a text and by breaking down the composing process into stages;
- intervening as the writing is happening rather than leaving the writer to compose individually and then responding once the impetus is fading.

The NLS has developed materials that illustrate and support these approaches to teaching writing: *Grammar for writing* (DfES ref: 0107/2000); *Developing early writing* (DfES ref: 0055/2001); *Teaching writing support material for text level objectives* (DfES 0532/2001).

At the other end of the teaching process is an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses and areas for development of individuals' or groups of children's work. Some of this assessment is done using national curriculum levels, either in a test or through school devised systems for ascribing levels to children's work during the year. However, the use of levels in this way does not enable teachers to use specific assessment information in their planning, as a level is too general a judgement to be useful for planning purposes. The same is true even where the levels have been subdivided, since the levels are a broad summative judgement, not a detailed, diagnostic one.

These materials do not recommend ways of trying to identify level related qualities in any piece, nor break down levels into little chunks which can be ticked off, in the hope that such little chunks can slowly be accumulated into a level. In English, level related judgments should be made only periodically – perhaps once or twice a year. Inspiring teaching, using a systematic approach, such as in the *Framework for Teaching*, accompanied by sensitive approaches to assessing and target setting, is much more likely to result in higher standards than trying to measure progress too frequently.

What is needed is marking which responds to each child appropriately, and yields useful detailed information related to teaching objectives. This can then be used to influence the emphases given to objectives in the next opportunity to teach writing and in setting learning targets. This is assessment linked to learning, and will contribute to raising standards in writing.

Underpinning the approaches suggested in these materials is Assessment for learning which:

- is embedded in teaching and learning;
- involves teachers in sharing learning goals with children;
- helps children to know and recognise the standards they are aiming for;
- involves children in self-assessment;
- gives children feedback that helps them to recognise their next steps and how to take them;
- involves both teachers and children in reviewing and reflecting on a range of assessment information.

Responding to children's writing

This booklet explores the principles involved in responding to children's writing and includes practical activities, suggestions and examples of how to respond to writing. Following the approaches outlined in *Target Setting and Assessment in the National Literacy Strategy* (QCA 1999), the ideas are intended to be manageable and to show how marking can help teachers with their with short- and medium-term planning.

All marking involves decisions about the purpose, scope and focus of the work being marked. These decisions need to be built into planning, so that the advice teachers give to children is tied to the teaching in a coherent way.

Marking should vary depending on:

- the number and range of teaching objectives – all writing shows evidence of skills at word, sentence and text level;
- the focus of those aspects which have been taught and are most relevant to the task and text type;
- how much the teacher intervenes during the writing process. Some writing can be a chance to try out particular skills and should be linked to short-term planning. The overall impression of the writing may then be less significant than some of the specific strengths;
- whether the teacher is looking for a more generalised view of children's writing skills and how they orchestrate what they have been taught over a period of time. This should be linked to medium-term planning.

The most common context for marking is a written task, set by the teacher to encourage the learning and demonstration of specific skills that are being taught. Sometimes the writing has been worked on intensively during the process, with class and group sessions on particular aspects of the writing. Sometimes the teaching includes a number of aspects at word, sentence and text levels. Where there has been a lot of intervention by the teacher it is likely that the final marking is mostly aimed at reinforcing the messages set out during the teaching.

About these materials

The rest of this booklet gives the materials for three training sessions. They include suggestions for ways in which teachers can review how they respond to children's writing and develop more effective means of assessment for learning.

- The first session looks at everyday marking and how best to respond to individual pieces of writing.
- The second session points to manageable ways of collecting information about patterns of strength or weakness in relation to teaching objectives. Teachers can use this information to plan the next task.
- The third session suggests how to look in depth at the writing of a child or small group, to gain a detailed analysis of what to focus on for improvement.

Focusing on marking and responding to children's work can result in significant improvements in what children understand and can do in writing. The effectiveness of the teaching of writing should also be improved through the use of assessment information in planning and in discussions with children.

How to use the materials

Each of the sessions can be adapted to school based staff training sessions. They can contribute to a review of a school assessment policy. Examples of children's work are provided but where possible it is better to use writing from children in school.

Session 1:

Focus of everyday marking

Contents of the session

Assessment for learning and marking children's work

What do children and teachers want from marking?

What happens now?

Principles for everyday marking

Follow up to secure progress

Assessment for learning and marking children's work

Assessment for learning involves:

- gathering and interpreting evidence about children's learning;
- children and their teachers using that evidence to decide where children are in their learning, where they are going and how to take the next steps.

Introductory questions for discussion

- How does our understanding of our class of children's writing influence our planning at present?
- When we plan for differentiation in relation to writing, what do we do?
- How do we follow up on targets and progress towards them?
- Is there a consistent approach across the school?

Points to make

- Marking that focuses on individual children's work may leave a rather hazy impression of the picture across the class.
- The interaction between objectives, targets, actual writing and planning for teaching is complex.
- Record keeping may be laborious and not yield much value in terms of action.

What do children and teachers want from marking?

Questions for discussion

When children have completed a piece of writing and you need to respond to the piece, either orally or in writing:

- What do the children need from your comments?
- What do you aim to do?

The following chart summarises some of the purposes for writing.

Children need:

- some indication of how far they have fulfilled the task;
- whether there are other good qualities to their work;
- what they now need to work on to improve.

At times they may also need:

- a sense of their overall progress, not just a response to the last piece they wrote;
- to understand how their targets relate to the teaching they receive as well as to their personal progress.

Explicit understanding of these areas enables children to begin to make self-assessments of their needs and priorities.

Teachers need:

- the same as the children and more besides;
- to check how far children have learned what they have been taught;
- to recognise and respond to the personal achievement of the child and the effort put in;
- to identify how individual children progress and so advise them on next steps;
- to gain a sense of how the class as a whole, or groups of children within it, are performing. This overall sense may be related to objectives, current learning and/or future priorities for teaching.

Where a child's writing is proving problematic or a group stands out from the rest, teachers may need to do a detailed analysis in order to form a more complete picture of the writing.

For this part of the session it would be best to collect examples of what teachers across the school do actually write on children's work. Alternatively use the examples below, which come from a small survey of marking practices.

What happens now?

In a small survey, teachers told us that they normally tick positive features as they read the work, identify spelling errors and then write a short comment linked to the teaching objective for the work.

Questions for discussion

For each of the three collections of comments boxed below, or using teachers' own comments:

- what do the comments focus on?
- what do they, implicitly or explicitly, imply about what a child should do next?

Points to make

These comments focus largely on features of surface accuracy and this implies that the content is satisfactory and all that is needed is some proofreading.

Points to make

These comments respond to the content and use of form in the writing, and give positive support for the identified achievement. These comments do not, however, give the children a sense of how to maintain this standard or further develop their writing.

Points to make

These comments suggest specific things which children should focus on next time they write to improve the organisation of the content and the portrayal of characters. It is important for the teacher to follow up these comments by setting appropriate tasks and reinforcing the suggestions in both teaching and marking.

Draw on the school's English policy and any agreements about the nature and frequency of responding to children's work.

An interesting piece of writing. Remember to proofread your work and edit it. (Y5)

Please remember to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences and full stops at the end. (Y3)

Well done. You have started to use the three types of punctuation we discussed this morning. Please try to use them now in all your writing. (Y4)

You have composed a clear biographical account using descriptive language. I learnt a lot about Harry Potter! (Y6)

This is a likely continuation of the story. You have included some detail to create interest (Wind blowing in their faces) and some imaginative vocabulary. A very good effort. (Y4)

A wonderful witch profile. Very frightening indeed. Remember to use words other than evil. (Y4)

You have used some interesting vocabulary to describe the sights and sounds in the house. However, remember to look carefully at your plan, as this will help you decide where to begin a new paragraph. (Y6)

You have some super ideas for describing Pongo. On Wednesday we will organise them more carefully, so that ideas about where he lives are not muddled up with what he looks like. I can see an improvement in your handwriting too. (Y3)

You have really started to think about how a character can react to a given situation. Think about dialogue next time. (Y6)

Principles for everyday marking

Questions for discussion

What should be normal practice by all teachers when children have produced complete pieces of writing?

Does this practice fit with the principles of assessment for learning as discussed at the beginning of the session?

What makes comments helpful to children?

Comments should:

- relate to what has been taught, reinforcing the learning objectives;
- be positive, indicating what has been done well;
- pick up individual or group targets, where relevant;
- indicate an area for further work and how to set about the next priority;
- be precise, including the use of shared technical terms;
- be realistic in expectations.

When is it more useful to talk to a child?

- When you are not sure exactly what the child knows or intended and you need to check this before commenting;
- When the feedback is complicated, may be too much to write (and read) and/or needs to be staged carefully;
- Where the work is well above or below expectation and you need to deal with the issues more sensitively.

What should written comments at the end of a piece look like?

It is not practical to talk to each child about each piece, so it is important to develop a style of written comment which is accessible and enables children to make use of what is written.

As a minimum, written comments should:

- include a positive comment linked to the teaching objectives;
- indicate something to improve and how;
- refer to any relevant targets for writing.

Don't forget:

- written comments need not always be at the end of the work. It can be more effective to make annotations on the text at the relevant place, to indicate either strengths or problems;
- generalised comments, particularly of a vaguely approving sort, may recognise effort but do not move the child on;
- to devise routines so that the points are followed up either in group work or the next piece of writing.

Questions for discussion

What are the best ways to respond to the writing?

Specifically, what should be the written comment at the end of the piece?

Agree the sort of response rather than getting caught up in detailed discussion of a specific child's problems.

Use some examples of children's work from different classes. These could be the same task by different children, or individual pieces.

Use the pieces of children's writing from the last section.

Follow up to secure progress

Questions for discussion

Consider what to do to follow up the marking, so that the advice is acted on and secures children's progress in writing.

Points to make

When the marking has identified action for the child to take, there are different ways to follow this up:

- on the next piece the child can explain how s/he has tackled the aspect identified;
- children can read others' work to see how they have succeeded in this task;
- the teacher plans guided sessions for those with common needs;
- the teacher can build reinforcement into the next unit of work.

Over time

Systematic and explicit marking means that children can look back over the comments made on their writing to trace their own development. Parents can also form a clearer view of expectation and progression.

Where the children have targets for writing that are relevant to a specific piece, teachers should recognise progress towards these and identify the next steps to be taken. For example, if the target is to use figurative language, teachers would ask the children to identify any figurative language they have used and share examples from their work, saying why they are effective or how the language might have been improved.

Where children have met the specific target, teachers should acknowledge this and return to it at intervals to check that the achievement is maintained. Teachers should make a note of those children who need more support to meet the target and what models, opportunities and experiences they will need to provide.

Finally

At the end of the session make sure everyone has decided on an action point for their next opportunity to mark writing.

Moving on

At the end of marking individual children's work, a teacher has a collection of impressions about different aspects of the work. Views of some children's performance will have been reinforced or challenged, and previous expectations based on work in lesson time will have been modified. However, a general sense of the class as writers is not necessarily clarified on the basis of these impressions. Forming a well-grounded overview of the patterns of success or weakness across the class requires different action and is the focus of the next session.

There is an example of two girls sharing their writing on the video in the pack *Working with gifted and talented children* (QCA, 2001)



Session 2: A systematic picture of where the class is

Why be systematic in collecting evidence?

Session 1 focused on responding to individual children and the approach covered leaves the teacher with a range of impressions of how the class is progressing. Most teaching cannot cater specifically for each individual child's needs on every occasion, but teaching based on sound evidence of what children are doing is likely to be more focused and helpful.

Question for discussion

What is the best way to gain a picture of the writing strengths and weaknesses of the class?

Points to make

Collecting systematic evidence of a class's writing enables us to:

- have a picture of achievement in specific aspects before deciding on the emphasis of teaching;
- look at the extent and spread of understanding after teaching;
- monitor the effectiveness of teaching;
- inform pupil and curricular target setting.

But it must be easy to collect and analyse so it is helpful to:

- decide in advance two or three features of the writing;
- relate the analyses to the teaching objectives;
- choose a small representative sample of the range in the class;
- record evidence in the simplest way;
- look for patterns, not exceptions.

Ways of recording systematically

Many aspects of writing take a while to become securely embedded in children's work. Recording of evidence needs to be sensitive to how far the relevant aspect is secure and being used effectively. The Marking Guidelines suggest a code for recording evidence easily:

Is there evidence of effective use?		
Yes:	✓	
Partially:	P	(can be divided into mostly effective P+ and not very effective P-)
No:	×	(not used effectively)
Not present:	-	(the aspect was not present in the writing – this could be omission or because the feature is not appropriate to the piece)

Use one or two pieces of writing from different classes. Ask teachers together to look at them for evidence of effective use of a specific feature, for example:

- in a story beginning, is there effective use of different sentence structures, adjectives, a range of verbs?
- in a piece of information writing, is there effective use of organisational devices to structure the writing? This could be divided into devices such as subheadings, connectives, topic sentences.

Then discuss a format for recording such judgements across a range of scripts, for example

Effective use of:	Jim	Sofia	Jane	Craig
subheadings				
connectives				
topic sentences				

Yes = ✓ Partial = P (+) or (-) No = X not present = -

CASE STUDY 1

Sentence punctuation and use of conjunctions in Year 3

In completing her plans for teaching in Year 3 term 1, this teacher wanted to see what her pupils already knew in relation to some of the sentence level objectives.

Teaching objectives

Identify the boundaries between separate sentences in reading and their own writing (Y3T1 S10)

Write in complete sentences (Y3T1 S11)

Demarcate the end of a sentence with a full-stop and the start of a new one with a capital letter (Y3T1 S12)

How sentences can be joined in more complex ways through using a widening range of conjunctions in addition to *and* and *then*, eg *if . . . so*, *while*, *though*, *since*, *when* (Y3T3 S5)

The teacher summarised these objectives into a simple grid:

	Below Average			Average			Above Average		
Mark boundaries between sentences. Demarcate the end of a sentence with a full-stop and the start of a new one with a capital letter (Y3T1 S10, S11, S12)									
Join sentences using range of conjunctions, eg <i>if . . . so</i> , <i>while</i> , <i>though</i> , <i>since</i> , <i>when</i> (Y3T3 S5)									

Yes = ✓ Partial = P (+) or (-) No = X not present = -

Ask participants to complete the coding themselves in the above grid, using the children's writing on pages 16-18.

Before planning the emphasis for her teaching, the teacher wanted to identify what her Year 3 class already knew, so she asked them to complete a short, unaided piece of writing describing a new invention. Having scanned the writing of the whole class, she sorted the work into three broad categories – below average, average and above average. She then selected the writing of three children in each category and completed the grid. This was her grid, filled in:

	Below Average			Average			Above Average		
	Adele	Noor	Chad	Linda	Ahmed	Brett	Briony	Parvinder	Janine
Mark boundaries between sentences. Demarcate the end of a sentence with a full stop and the start of a new one with a capital letter (Y3T1 S10, S11, S12)	P-	P-	X	✓	✓	P	P	P	✓
Join sentences using range of conjunctions, eg <i>if... so, while, though, since, when</i> (Y3T3 S5)	X	X	X	P	X	X	P	P	P

Yes = ✓ Partial = P (+) or (-) No = X not present = -

The teacher then looked for patterns in her scoring, and considered the implications for her planning.

Implications for planning

The evidence shows that the majority of the children need consolidation work on how to identify and demarcate grammatical sentences with capital letters and full stops. This could form the focus of shared writing with the whole class which is then reviewed during guided writing and reinforced in independent and plenary sessions. For the less able writers this will mean a lot of focus on sentence demarcation, and personal targets to achieve. The others need to learn to use full stops and capital letters independently and accurately.

The least able and average writers are equally in need of work on ways of joining sentences. The more able children can be encouraged to be more ambitious in the way they structure and punctuate sentences in their guided writing sessions. The conjunctions needed in this writing are *if, when, so, which*. In the more able group there is some evidence of children attempting to use them, but the other children need explicit teaching on how to link their statements so they are clearly related. This work is needed before moving on to the other conjunctions named in this Y3T3 objective.

Samples of children's work – Year 3

Below average for the class (Y3)

The children in the below average group are able to write simple statements and can sometimes identify the boundaries between separate sentences in their own writing, mainly by line breaks and capital letters. In general, the use of capital letters is associated with the start of a line or the use of a pronoun. Ideas are sometimes linked by the use of *and* or *but*, indicating that the idea of coordination is present, but not subordination.

Adele

The new invention
Super fast skateboard

My skateboard is Cold Ceta.

My skateboard is fast.

My skateboard is maid out woold

My skateboard is ingin fast

My skateboard has A Boost

My skateboard has a Baba and it has a xst.pepi

My skateboard is Zoom

Noor

The new invention

Super fast skateboard

My skateboard is cold zoo

My skateboard got defrnt colre stripes were my feets go.

I can turn in a scooter

My skateboard can go fast.

My frend can ride it But she falls of

Chad

The new invention pen you will ever

My pen is made of metal it can talk and fly it is magic It does anything I tel it to do

The average group also needs some further consolidation on sentence demarcation, but what is more obvious in this group is the need to join ideas together while still maintaining accurate punctuation. The children need explicit teaching on how to use *and* and *but* to form compound sentences before moving on to the other conjunctions named in the Y3T3 objective

Average for the class (Y3)

Linda

The new invention. Pen yiu wil ever nnedd

My Pen is a ink pen it tells you evrthing in the wold. And it glows to. And it light up. I tolk with it to. I never breaks at all I lisens to me. If you put water on it nothing will happen to it. Try smaching it. It is a tripprll pen. It is goldy silver. It can even senc things. It looks like a Jort pen. I douse not need battrays. Its nib never breaks.

Ahmed

The new invention

Super fast skateboard

My skateboard has a sale and a engine. It is called sleeping cocnot. It has wings for more speed sometimes I have a fan at the back. It has a bracke and a alam.

My skateboard has a beeck. It has a speed timer. And it has big wheels. Hot air makes it fastter.

Brett

The new invention

Super fast skateboard

My skateboard has five car ngin My skateboards name is cald Mechanical.

The superfast skateboard has a water gun that squirts olel on the flow. On the skateboard there is a green butone that says Ruth evrething that you pres it mackes you proud. My skateboard couler is red. and is made oute of metal.

Children in the above average group are beginning to use *if* to link statements together so they are clearly related. The conjunctions needed in this type of writing are *if, when, so, which* in order to link the features of the object with their functions and effects.

Above average for the class (Y3)

Briony

The new invention
Super fast skateboard

I've got a skateboard that has got four wheels its name is Zoom. Zoom is my best thing I ever had it has got a cover if it's raining and a engine on the back. I have to push this button then it go's fast. I have to say on the speaker if I want to go fast or slow It is made out of metal the colour of my skateboard is red and black. The engine makes it go faster. Sometimes when the speaker is not working it go's slowly but my dad fixes it so it go's super super fast it even go's faster than a cheater. It can even take about five people in the skateboard. Sometimes if I make it bigger it can take ten people. It has got lights to it if I ride it in the night. It has got a t.v if I'm on it it goes automatic if I'm tired that all about my skateboard.

Parvinder

The new invention
Super fast skateboard

My skateboard is called Cheetah. I called it that because a cheetah is the fastest animal in the whole world. And it has super fast engines and gears, a really strong flash light on the front and the back. You have to push a button to make the rain stop by going on you push the gears or turn them. I have a huge radio on the top only two people can ride on it. There is a really long extension on the top of it. That makes it so fast. It has pictures of stars and warts. If you flip it over it turns over into a scooter It can go 90 miles per hour it zooms like a motor bike and makes a loud sound nearly the whole street can hear it.

Janine

The new invention
Super fast skateboard

My skateboard has four wheels. The colour of it is pink, yellow, Red and blue. It is called Zoom. When it is raining it has a sheet which can cover people. It is made out of hard metal. My skateboard has an engine on the back. It has some buttons to make it go really fast and sometimes to go slow. It has a black engine. The engine can go big and small. The Colours on my skateboard can change. When it is cold it can bring back some people. When it is sunny I can sit down and ride it. It has a steering wheel to steer with if it is going to bump into something. It can go super fast sometimes. If I want it to go slow I have to push some buttons. It can put five people on it. The best thing I like about it when it goes fast. I can even make it go big and small. Zoom can land safely when it has

Checking Year 6 children’s knowledge of sentence construction in preparation for a unit of work on persuasion

This teacher identified related sentence level objectives from Year 6 term 1 which she felt needed to be secure before she moved on to objectives around conditionals in term 2.

Sentence level objectives for Y6T2 require revision of complex sentences and the following objectives were drawn from Y6T1:

- how words and phrases are typically connected in different types of text (sentence 4);
- how meaning is affected by the sequence and structure of clauses (sentence 5);

These objectives were drawn from Y6T2 (sentence 5):

- use of conditionals to construct sentences which express possibilities or hypotheses;
- use of conditionals in past and future to, for example, speculate about possible causes (past) and review a range of options (future).

All children were asked to complete a short unaided task to check the extent to which they were able to apply sentence level work from the previous term to writing to persuade. The task was to write to the headteacher in response to her proposition that school should operate on Saturdays as well as Monday to Friday and persuade him of its merits or defects.

On an initial impression, the teacher noted that all children made some use of subordination and all were able to use *because* to create a basic sense of cause and effect. She also noted that even the most able children made some basic punctuation errors and no children were yet demonstrating use of more sophisticated punctuation marks.

She decided to look at the writing of five children who represented the range of ability so that she could see in more detail how they were connecting and structuring clauses, and using conditionals appropriately for this text type. The work of these pupils is included on p18-20.

Objectives	John	Liam	Kieran	Kylie	Stuart
A range of connectives used to show logic and/or causality	X	X	P-	P	P+
Clause/sentence structures varied appropriately	P-	P	P+	✓	✓
Use of conditionals to speculate and express possibilities	P	P-	P+	P+	✓

Yes = ✓ Partial = P (+) or (-) No = X not present = -

Because few children had full understanding of any of the features, the teacher's use of the three subdivisions of the 'partially successful' category was particularly significant. There were big differences between those just beginning to use a feature in a simple way and those using it with some understanding.

What the analysis showed

All the writing showed a limited range of connectives to express logic and causality. John and Kieran are able to use *because* to provide some reasons to support what he thinks should happen. Katie, Kieran and Stuart introduce *so*, and Stuart also uses *as*. Kylie attempts to use the more adventurous *therefore* and *however*.

Most of the writing showed at least some understanding of how to speculate using modals. John is able to use *would* and *wouldn't*. Katie and Stuart are able to use *if* constructions. Liam and Kieran both use *might*, and Kieran's use of *when* with *might* is effective (...*when we have caught up they might get an extra playtime*) in that it develops the speculation. Kylie is also able to use sequence possibilities (...*might not want to be there and will not concentrate, so they won't get high scores in SATs*).

All the pieces include complex sentences, but some show a repetitive pattern in beginning sentences with a pronoun. The more able writers have inserted phrases to set the tone and appeal to the reader: *in a way* (Kieran), *including you and all of the staff* (Kylie), *as we know* (Stuart).

Implications for planning

This analysis suggests that all the class would benefit from work on the range of connectives which show causality and logic and how these are appropriate for this type of writing. It confirmed the need to explore how to use modal verbs to show different levels of certainty and to emphasise potential consequences of actions. The analysis suggests that the construction of clauses and sentences is less of a priority.

Samples of children's writing

John

Dear Mrs Mayhew

I think that Saturday school shouldn't be allowed it is for our own benefit.

There is consequence that might happen for instance we might get over tired. I hope your getting my point. Also I would like to inform you the point I have made about banning Saturday school. Children would be getting tired.

Here are my points.

- (1) There will be too much pressure on us because we would have done lots of work in the week.
- (2) We would have been missing out on seeing family or friends.
- (3) It is our day of rest
- (4) We might have sports clubs on a Saturday.
- (5) We would be over tired.
- (6) We need a social life.
- (7) You the headteacher plus the teachers need a rest.

I hope that I have made it clear to you that I don't want Saturday school. And if Saturday school is on I will keep on fighting.

Yours sincerely
Child of your school

Liam

Dear Mrs Mayhew,

I am writing this letter about Saturday morning school for the children.

My first point is, I don't agree with it because the children do not have enough time to do their homework.

Secondly, the children might have sports on Saturday mornings and they're going to have to give it up and come to school instead.

My next point is that it's more money for school dinners and parents might not have the money at the moment.

Finally, you only get one day of rest and children and teachers won't be able to work.

Yours sincerely
P.S. It's your sake and ours.

Kieran

Dear Mr Gent,

My opinion is that you shouldn't do a Saturday morning school. Because that will make you and the other teachers spend a lot more money on us and you won't be able to afford it. In a way you should because the little children will learn more for the next terms. We the big children will catch up more on the work and when we have caught up they might get an extra playtime. We won't get as much fresh air like usual and won't get that much playing outside. You should open it till just before dinner so we will see our friends more. The teachers will get paid more and we will learn more behavior skills. We might have football on that day or other session and it wouldn't be fair to miss them.

Yours sincerely

BS

Kylie

Dear Mrs Mayhew

I am just writing to say that the idea of Saturday School from my point of view is a bad idea, Here are my points of view.

Firstly, the children attending Saturday School might not want to be there, and will not concentrate, so they won't get high scores in Sats.

Secondly, the children won't have enough time to finish their homework, and that won't help them. The children will rush their homework, and won't learn anything from it

My next point is the children will be tired and too drowsy to work.

Therefore, if the children don't do their school work, how will they fit it in as homework?

However, if there is a Saturday school all of the staff, including you and all of the teachers, will have to come in and if they are tired, they may not teach at a high standard.

Last of all, I hope that you have read and agreed with my points of view on the Saturday School letter.

Yours sincerely

Stuart

To

Mr Dieppe

I am very pleased to tell you that, your idea of Saturday morning School is Excellent. I think that your idea will help increase childrens knowledge, so that they become more successful in the things they want to achieve. Saturday School will also please parents, as now they know that their children may have a better chance of Achieving things in life. Also Saturday School has changed a lot of things for parents, because as we know they send their children to Tuition which they have to pay about £10-£20. So if we have Saturday School it will save the parents money.

Anyway, as we know that children easily get bored, if theres nothing to do on a Saturday. So then they might as well Just come to Saturday school. because we all know its better than being bored at home. So at the end of the day, children learn more things than they were meant to learn and that make Teachers and Parents more happier. So thats why I think Saturday schools GREAT!

We all know that the 11+ is getting nearer so why not let your children pass the exam by going to Saturday Morning School, And another thing is saturday may help your child get better results in the exams they take and make them get a better Job, car, house etc...

So in my opinion, if we all have saturday morning school. it will make life more easy for children and parents, so I think we SHOULD have Saturday, as it will help children make their lives easier by going university and



Session 3:

Detailed analyses and overviews

The previous sessions focused on day-to-day responses to children's writing and on collecting systematic information from a sample in a class to inform teaching periodically. The examples in this section can form the basis of a further training session, looking at samples of writing in detail.

Questions for discussion

When is a more detailed picture of children's writing skills needed?

This could include:

- where a child is giving cause for concern and an overview of the writing is to be the basis for deciding on further support;
- to gain a picture of the strengths and weaknesses of a small group in the class and to target any differentiated support;
- to collect detailed information on a small sample of the class as a 'health check', perhaps at the beginning of the school year.

For each of these, what evidence needs to be analysed?

- Collect evidence from more than one piece of writing by a child or group of children. Patterns will not necessarily be shown in a single piece, just as it is not possible to judge the standard of work against national curriculum levels on just one piece of writing.
- Children's success in writing varies with the text type and their interest in the topic.

What approach should be used across the school?

- The information needs to be recorded systematically and not just based on impression, or it will rarely repay the time spent collecting it.
- A standard system for reviewing children's work across the school will help individual teachers keep track of their reflections and analyses, as well as providing an approach which can be shared between colleagues. Once an approach is established it becomes easier to use and interpret.
- The approach recommended here complements the way writing is assessed in the tests from 2003.

In the examples that follow, we have looked at several samples of children's work in detail, using the main marking grid to give a comprehensive analysis and provide evidence for a range of purposes. The grid was originally introduced in *Marking Guidelines for Writing* at www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/literacy/publications.

CASE STUDY 3

Looking in detail at writing by a small group

The teacher of a Year 5 class wanted to make appropriate provision for a small group of more able writers. He decided to take a fairly thorough look at their writing to see if there were any patterns in strengths and weaknesses. He set a piece of writing to describe and explain the features of a new toy.

The coding framework from the Marking Guidelines was amended slightly to fit the group analysis on to one sheet.

<i>Pupils</i>	<i>Judgement of effective use</i>			
	1	2	3	4
<i>Sentence level</i>				
simple sentences	✓	✓	✓	✓
complex sentences	✓	✓	✓	✓
variation within sentences	✓	P	✓	P
coordination	✓	P	X	✓
subordination	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Word level</i>				
noun groups	✓	✓	✓	P
verb choices	✓	✓	P	✓
tense	✓	✓	✓	✓
adjectives	✓	✓	✓	✓
adverbs	–	–	–	–
pronouns	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>Punctuation used to demarcate</i>				
sentences	P	X	P	P
clauses	X	X	X	X
phrases	X	X	X	X
words in lists	X	X	✓	X
direct speech	–	–	–	–
<i>Text level</i>				
appeal to reader	P	P	P	P
development of topic, content, theme	P	P	P	P
openings and closings	P	P	P	P
organisation and length of paragraphs	X	X	X	X
presentation and layout	P	P	P	P

Yes = ✓ Partial = P (+) or (–) No = X not present = –

What the analysis showed

By looking at the grid, patterns of achievement become instantly visible. In general these children can vary their sentence construction effectively. They are also able to use verbs and tenses appropriately and use expanded noun phrases.

The analysis can be checked against the writing, and compared with the commentary below.

Much more significant as priorities for teaching are punctuation and text level features. Since these children can write complex sentences it is now important for them to learn to use punctuation to clarify meaning, marking clauses and phrases.

There are clear areas for development at text level. The overall structure and development of their writing is only partially successful. For more able writers it is essential to develop control beyond sentence level. The evident need to develop paragraphing and presentational features can be encouraged as these children learn about structure and organisation.

By doing this analysis the pattern of priorities for this group has become clear. This clarity is unlikely to have been so obvious from a general impression marking.

Detailed commentary

Sentence level

This analysis showed that the group are generally manipulating sentences effectively. They are making use of subordination, for example: *When the alarm goes on the wiss board starts to shoot little pins...* (script 2). Two children also use coordination to some effect: *It travels on petrol and whenever the petrol starts to get less it fills itself up* (script 3). Coordination is used less effectively by other children, leading to over-extended sentences or lack of control in sentence demarcation. All children use subordinating conjunctions to form complex sentences: *... cool wizz board has water pistols which you can not see....*(script 2). Script 1 makes good use of variation within sentences: *My skateboard ...: The features...: It is If you...* However, the coding showed the need for some teacher input for two pupils in the group.

Word level

The children are making appropriate and varied verb and noun choices. Conditionals are used effectively by the group: *If someone tries to steal it...* However, in some scripts modal forms are overused. All children control verb tense appropriately.

There is some expansion of the nouns by adjectives: *loud alarm; silver diamonds*. However, some adjectives are more suited to a persuasive task: *super powers; wild experience*. Adverbs are rare. Adverbial phrases are used but are not particularly needed in the task.

Punctuation

Sentence punctuation is varied. All children show only partial consistency in sentence demarcation. Coordination is used where demarcation would be more appropriate: *... starts shooting little pins and it also has a rope ...*(script 2). Commas are rarely used and where they are present, they are incorrect: *If you stop the skateboard will laugh at you, if someone tries to steal it...* (script 1).

Text level

All children managed to appeal to the reader, with predominantly persuasive purpose.

All children used simple opening and closing statements, which were descriptive or persuasive: *My superfast skateboard is called the cool board; SO GET ONE NOW I'M COOL!* (scripts 1 and 2). Openings and closings are not well-developed. Children group their ideas by theme, for example, script 2 has grouped ideas such as: security, special powers, construction, anti-theft devices. However, these groupings are not marked clearly for the reader by paragraphing. In some cases lack of paragraphing has led to a list of statements with little reference or cohesion between ideas.

Implications for teaching

Punctuation

This group would benefit from:

- explicit teaching of the function of commas to separate clauses and phrases;
- revising sentence demarcation, with explicit teaching on the need for punctuation to maintain the sense of the text for the reader.

Text structure and organisation

This group would benefit from teaching on:

- the function and structure of opening and closing statements;
- the purpose of paragraphs;
- planning to encourage organisation of text into paragraphs and the development of topics within the paragraphs;
- the purposes, structure and linguistic features of explanatory texts.

Samples of children's writing

1. Introducing the superfast skateboard

My superfast skateboard is called the cool board. The features that my skateboard has are very cool because it has lots of secret buttons and pass words. It is different from the other skateboards because it goes super super fast and you won't fall of. It has a cool pass word the pass word is the coder and there is a botton if you press the golden bupaten it glows. My skate board will be made of gold because I like it that way and I want it to be shiny and glittery. The special parts of my skateboard works by pushing them pulling it pressing it and saying the pass word. If you stop the skateboard will laugh at you, if someone tries to steal it thay can't get away because the owner has a key that tells you where your skateboard is. My skateboard is very cool

Diagram

2. Introducing the superfast skateboard

The new board is called the wizz board it is superfast its cool, The wizz board can only work on your password, it can recognize your voice. The wizz board has super powers, it could talk to you it could also hold you if your about to trip over. The cool wizz board has water pistols at the back, which you can not see. it has little balls shooting from underneath, if you need them in emergency Just step on the secret button which you only now it on the side. The wizz board is made out of strong metal, The weels are made of plastic, you could have The wizz board in any type of colour evan gold or silver. The wizz board has a load alarm and when the alarm goes on the wiss board starts shooting little pins and it also has a rope which can tie the person up who tried to steal it.

SO GET ONE NOW I'M COOL!

Diagram

3. Superfast Skateboard

My invention is called the zoom blaster.

It is different from other skateboards because it has more specials parts. It travels on petrol and whenever the petrol statts to get less it fills up itself. It is made out of silver diamonds. If you want a ride all you have to do is enter a password. If someone is chasing after you all you have to do is push a red button and marbles will start coming out and the person will slip. If someone tries to break it the skateboard will turn into a scary robot and the person will run away. The zoom blaster has red wheels the red wheels travel very fast if you want it to fly in the air all you have to do is shout fly. And it will start to fly. If you want it to go fatser you just have to say how faster you want it to go. If you are hungry you say to zoom blaster what food you want and it will give it to you.

Diagram

4. My invention is called the Dolphin zoomer it is made out of cristel it has many secret buttons don't let anyone know where they are I will show you where the buttons are in my diagram. It will be a wiz of a time trust me. It's grrreat belive me I've tried it. fun! fun! fun!

Diagram

Trust me you Kids will just love it. It's only £50 on a sale. Hurry down to the 3000 super store. Sales end within the next 2 weeks. So hurry before the sales end. Even you might like it. Treat your self's buy one for yourself have a wild experaince. Come on have some fun for yourself. It's garanteed if you don't like it hand it in within 3 weeks an you will get a full refund of your money of if it get's broke you get a new one. But that will be suprising it's un brakeable cristle.

Suitable for Ages 7 and up

Detailed analysis can be useful to:

- analyse the writing of a child who is at a level threshold to identify what is needed to move through the threshold;
- check whether specific features are established in a child's repertoire;
- check whether a child needs any additional support;
- check whether a child is equally strong across a range of text types.

This analysis focuses on two pieces of writing from a girl in Year 6. The pieces are a piece of narrative writing based on a story starter and a piece explaining a new invention. This girl reads widely, so the writing for analysis includes non-fiction, to compare with narrative, which is regarded as her strength.

Narrative writing

Ask participants to read each piece separately and, for this first impression, make notes on the strengths and weaknesses of each.

Mystery Friends

Tom stared down at the floor and sighed, how long would Aunt Maria be? Would grandfather be okay?

Tom had been worrying all morning about being left in his Aunt's huge house in charge of two little sisters and two little brothers.

They had been staying with their Aunt for only a few days and even she had gone to visit grandfather in hospital - just like his Mum and Dad - Grandfather was very ill.

Tom went through to the kitchen turning over what his Aunt had said in his mind: "You won't be lonely. The children will talk to you". Well what children? Tom decided it must be one of her wild statements, after all everyone said she was mad and he was inclined to believe them.

But no sooner had he thought this there was a kind of humming sound and then the air was filled with silver. Whooshh! Tom blinked and then gaped for there in front of him hovered two children. They were dressed in strangely white transparent clothes - well very strange clothes at that - ragged dirty and thin, well that was what the boy was wearing. But the girl was dressed in a long skirt and blouse with a broach pinned to it.

Tom realized it was victorian dress, poor and rich. The children stared back with marble like eyes, Tom bent to touch (to touch) the girl's smooth hand. He suddenly yelled and pulled back his hand for when he touched the girl his hand had gone through hers and he had felt **an** icy cold shock.

"Are ...are you ghosts?" he asked **trembling**.

"I spose you could say that. We're from the past if that what you mean. I'm Jack and this is Alice, we often talk with your Aunt." answered the boy in an **echoey** voice.

"Yes your Aunt said you might need help!" added Alice.

So Tom, Jack and Alice did **their** best to keep the children under **control**.

They also talked - Tom told them about his grandfather and they took pity on him. Three hours later there was a knock on the door and the two children said goodbye and went with a pop.

It was his Aunt - his grandfather was getting better. Tom smiled **tired** but happy.

Initial reading of this narrative showed a strong sense of the reader and familiarity with many features such as direct speech and appropriate use of descriptive language.

Explanatory text

The piece is typed across the page, not – as the child originally wrote it – in magazine layout.

Brainy wiz pen

Rocket:

When you tell your pen you need it the pen will fly across the room to you **dodging** objects in its way. - Plastic wings will shoot out allowing it to glide and it is programmed with **sensor** so it has a safe flight.

Fantastic extra talent **makes** school life better.

No writing:

If you pick up the pen and dictate what you want to write your pen will come to life and write down all you say as well as excellent suggestions on how to improve your work.

The Brainy wiz pen can read out work to help blind people.

Time:

When you need to find out the time the pen will respond to the pressing of a button on the end of the pen and a voice will say the time you want. If the time needs to be changed you open up the pen and move round the hands of the clock.

The pen works by many wires inside that join up to produce the voice , **connect** the ink and the time

Superb different colours of ink you just press the button with the colour on.

The wings snap out at the command of a voice.

Initial reading suggests that perhaps this text is not as well organised as the narrative text, although the original magazine layout diverts attention from the quality of the text. However, there are some examples of good sentence constructions.

Analysis for Year 6 girl

Pupils	Judgement of effective use	
	Narrative	Explanatory
Sentence level		
simple sentences	✓	✓
complex sentences	P	✓
variation within sentences	X	✓
coordination	✓	X
subordination	X	✓
Word level		
noun groups	✓	✓
verb choices	P	✓
tense	✓	✓
adjectives	✓	P
adverbs	✓	X
pronouns	✓	✓
Punctuation used to demarcate		
sentences	✓	✓
clauses	P	X
phrases	P	X
words in lists	X	X
direct speech	✓	X
Text level		
appeal to reader	✓	P
development of topic, content, theme	P	P
openings and closings	✓	X
organisation and length of paragraphs	P	X
presentation and layout	✓	P

Yes = ✓ Partial = P (+) or (-) No = X not present = -

On close analysis, it appears that the writer is much better at organising and creating effect in her narrative text, as predicted. However, there is more variety in her sentences in the explanatory text. In both texts, the punctuation of sentences, other than using full stops and speech marks, is weak. Word choice is generally good.

In the narrative, the writer is able to expand sentences but there is little subordination and a tendency to use the comma splice (see the sentence beginning *The children stared back ...*) and dashes rather than commas. Also, some sentences are very confused, especially those describing the children. However, in the explanatory text, the sentence construction includes complex sentences appropriately structured for this text type, with the subordinate clause

before the main clause showing cause, then effect: *If you pick up the pen and dictate what you want to write your pen will come to life and* This construction is marred only by the omission of the comma after *write*.

Word choice across the two pieces is quite good. However, in the narrative, although noun and adjective choices are good, verb choices could be more effective. In the explanation, the adjectives could be more precise. These word choices are probably linked to development of topic, content and theme. This writer has yet to develop a full understanding of readers' needs and, to a lesser extent, audience and purpose.

Key targets for Joanne

- Use complex sentences to develop coherence throughout her writing, making connections appropriate for the text type.
- Use punctuation within sentences to clarify meaning.
- Analyse and deconstruct different texts in order to develop her understanding of how writers develop topic and content to meet the purpose and the needs of the reader, so that she can apply this to her own writing.

 Curriculum and Standards	
Audience	Headteachers, literacy coordinators, assessment coordinators and teachers at key stages 1 and 2
Circulation lists	Schools, LEAs, ITT institutions, educational libraries and teacher centres
Type	Advice and in-service materials on responding to children's writing in key stage 2
Description	Guidance
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Action required	
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