



**TITLE:** English Teaching Sequence: A Commentary of Planning and Teaching Decisions

**SCHOOL:** Ilfracombe Church of England Junior School

**CONTEXT:**

Ilfracombe Junior School is a large, four to five form entry, junior school in the coastal town of Ilfracombe, North Devon. It is an area that is above the national average for deprivation.

Total Pupils: 449 aged between 7 and 11 years

SEND: 22.93%

FSM: 17.37%

Pupil Premium: 21.82%

EAL: 2%

White British: 93.31%

(Figures 2018/19)

**AIMS:**

- To have consistent, high expectations and standards of the teaching of writing and writing outcomes.
- To follow a progression of writing, where teaching builds upon previously taught sequences.
- Children to take the role of a writer and understand how to fulfil the role successfully.
- To develop teaching sequences that are suited to the needs of the children and the gaps in knowledge as identified in the School Improvement Plan.
- Throughout the sequence, writers to have plenty of opportunities for deliberate practise.
- Children to 'know' about the style of writing, 'grow' their understanding and application of the writing and then 'show' their own interpretations; writers move from 'novice' to the 'expert'
- Feedback to provide helpful next steps on specific skills to close the knowledge gap.

**RESEARCH:** Rosenshine's *Principles of Instruction* and Martin Robinson's *Trivium 21C*

Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction are 10 research-based principles that all master teachers use to ensure classroom practice has the highest impact on students. The principles come from three sources: a) observation of master teachers, b) research in cognitive science and c) research on cognitive supports. The following 10 principles provide the teaching model for all our teachers:

- Begin a lesson with a short review
- Present new material in small steps
- Ask a high volume of questions to check for understanding of all students
- Provide models and blueprints
- Guide student practice
- Check for understanding
- Obtain a high success rate
- Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks
- Require and monitor independent practice
- Engage students in weekly and monthly reviews

Through the reading of Martin Robinson's *Trivium 21C*, and having had Martin work alongside our teachers, our entire curriculum reflects the pursuit of knowledge (grammar), critical thinking (dialectic) and the ability to communicate our understanding (rhetoric).

This classical approach to education is what underpins our approaches to teaching sequences. Our emphasis on the construction of the Writerly Toolkit, the discussion and reflection of writing through peer mentors and Mid-Unit Reviews all provide a solid platform upon which children can

be critical about their writing and therefore can communicate their writing with proficiency and success.

Finally, the demographics of our school require us to have an explicit approach to the teaching of language. The reading of Isabel Beck et al.'s *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction* underpins our focus on vocabulary. Each week, our children learn 5 carefully chosen tier 2 words that will feature in the children's writing. Clarifying unfamiliar words, fostering a curiosity and love of our language and becoming proficient at knowing and using a wide vocabulary bank is a key goal for our school. As the project has been reviewed, we are choosing more conceptual vocabulary that transcends subjects. This is now expanding children's vocabulary use across a broader range of subjects.

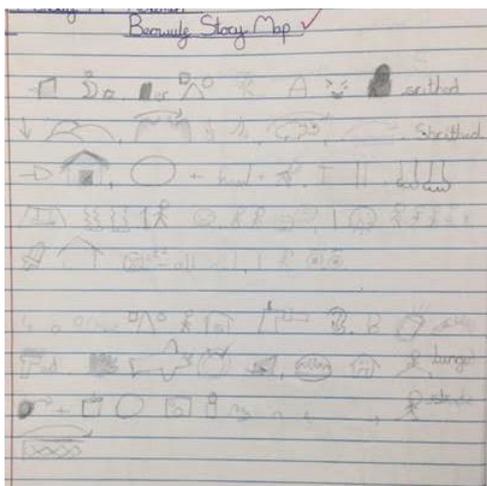
### IMPACT:

As children move through our school, they are familiar with the approach to writing and how to use each part of the sequence to improve their writing. All our chosen teaching sequences allow the writing to link with topic of the half term. This reduces the load on children's working memory as they use the knowledge learnt in the foundation subjects to inform their English. In addition, clear sessions for reflection and discussion, as well as preparation ensure our most disadvantaged children, and therefore all, can succeed.

**Book Talk** is used efficiently to explore the text, become familiar with its style and generate a knowledge, excitement and passion for writing. Children become excited by the prospect of writing their own interpretation of the text.

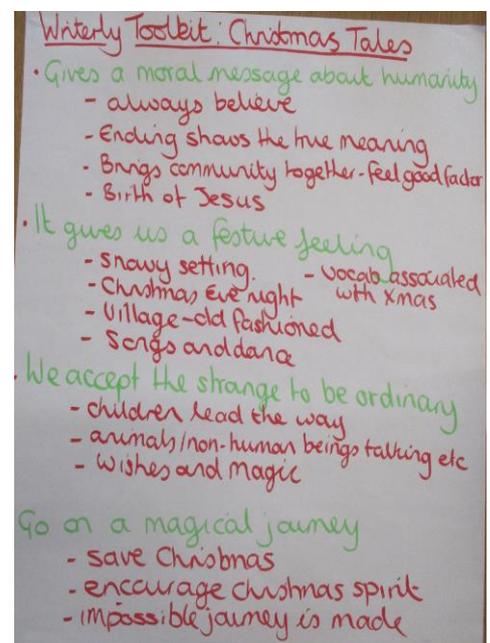
It is key that Book Talk does not become elongated (2-3 days maximum) and 'wishy washy', i.e. doing a task for task's sake. Therefore, writing opportunities, related to the **Writerly Toolkit (see picture)**, are planned as way for children to practise a concept or skill that can later be applied to their Practising or Independent Write.

For example, in the sequence of Shackleton's Journey, it was key for the children to adopt an archaic and formal tone of writing. Therefore, as part of the Book Talk, children 'magpied' key phrases and words from the text and wrote a letter to the Royal Geographic Society, applying for a role in the Antarctic expedition. Later, in the Practising and Independent Write, children adopted the same tone and subsequent vocabulary and phrases that came from the letter writing exercise.



Learning the **blueprint** through story-mapping is important for our school to help embed language structures. Story-mapping accompanies physical actions to help embed punctuation. Quantity and sentence structures from the blueprint are carefully selected by class teachers to ensure efficiency of time and the best possible scaffolds, which will provide specific skills for the writers to work on.

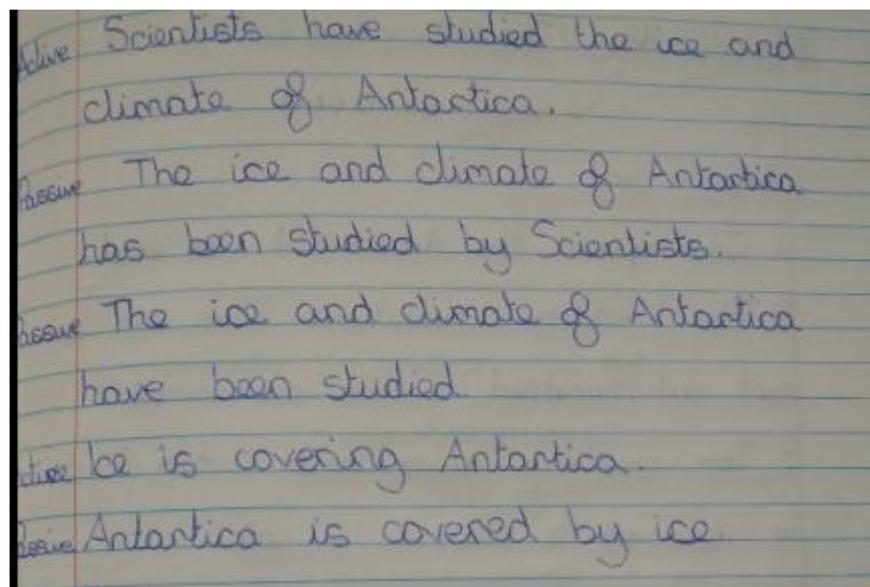
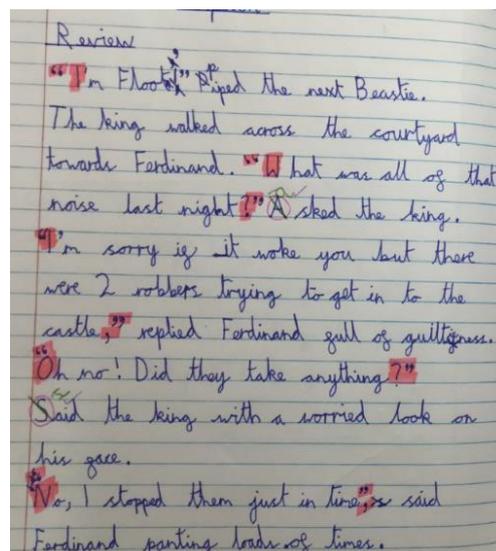
A Writerly Toolkit is constructed for each text; it is generated by a class' response to the text. As children have become more familiar with the art of 'reading as a writer', Writerly Toolkits have become a cornerstone in the move from the children writing as a child, to, a child as a writer. Children annotate the Toolkit with examples of their own writing. Toolkits are kept on flaps in books so children can refer to them easily when writing – both for current and past sequences.



**Box It Up** planning and oral rehearsal is used to allow children plenty of time to become familiar with the sound of their writing. Box It Up is planned before the practise of writing skills. This is so that children can begin to create sentences as part of their deliberate practice, around the theme of their future writing.

Oral rehearsal gives children an opportunity to 'trial and improve' sentences, borrowing from the blueprint where necessary. Again, the load on the child's working memory is significantly reduced, allowing them to focus on how they are writing, rather than what.

Objectives, as informed by the school's **English Teaching Sequences Progression Model**, and understanding of the class' knowledge gaps, are taught through **grammar-focused lessons** that follow the Principles of Instruction. Modelling through small steps, checking for understanding, cognitive and writing scaffolds and deliberate practice are the keys to understanding the skill, but more importantly the effect and purpose of the device in the context of the blueprint.



Just as in the Book Talk activities, the sentences composed in these sessions focus on the topic/theme of the Practising or Independent Write – not the original blueprint. In this way, children already have planned sentences, of a high quality that they can use in the independent pieces. These sentences are also displayed on the classroom 'Washing Line'.

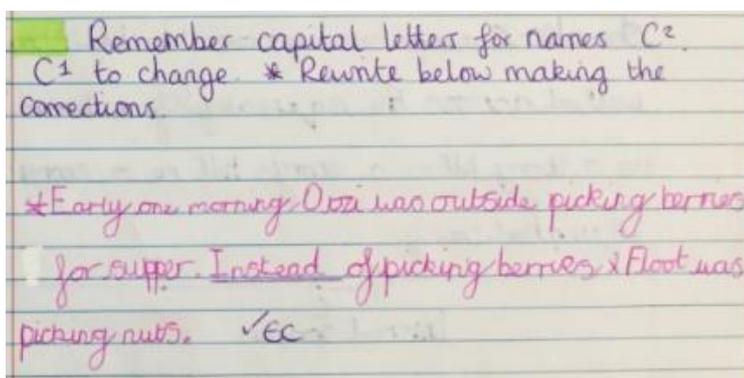
If an aspect is new, or unsecured, **Greater Depth** children are taught alongside the rest of the class. However, when GD children have

already demonstrated secure understanding of an aspect, a short input on a concept or skill is to be given. This allows children more independence to plan their writing, begin their Practise Write, or use an extended writing task to apply the skill or concept being practised.

**Feedback** is given either in small groups, within a lesson or as a whole class.

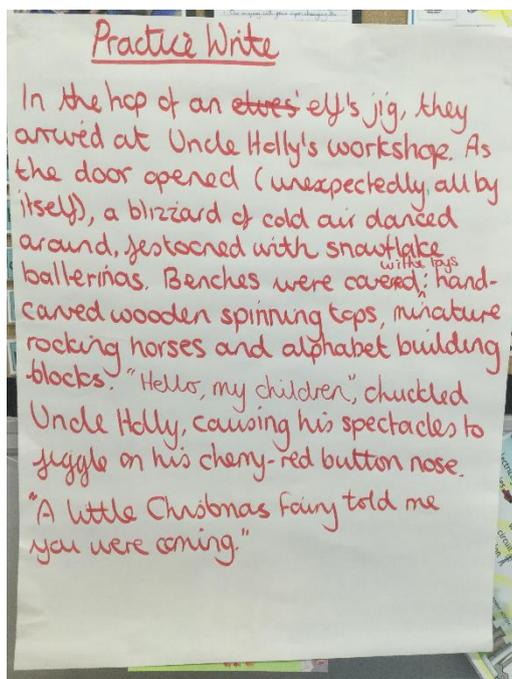
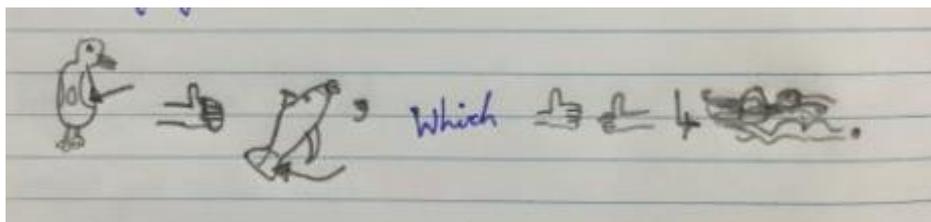
The main aims of feedback are:

- provide specific skills to work on for the writers to 'close the gap',
- deliberate practise of the aspect that they need to improve,
- and, for Below ARE writers, focus feedback and guided groups using a progression of 'Key Sentence Milestones'.



Date to be Reached	Key Milestones in Writing for Pupils Working Towards the Expected Standard Year 3
October Half Term	Write capital letters and lower case letters correctly.
Christmas	Orally create a sentence (understanding what makes a sentence/ what it needs to make sense).
February Half Term	Write a sentence in legible handwriting.
Easter	Punctuate a sentence using a capital letter and a full stop.
May Half Term	Punctuate sentences correctly using questions marks and exclamation marks.
Summer	Join independent clauses with <i>and</i> .

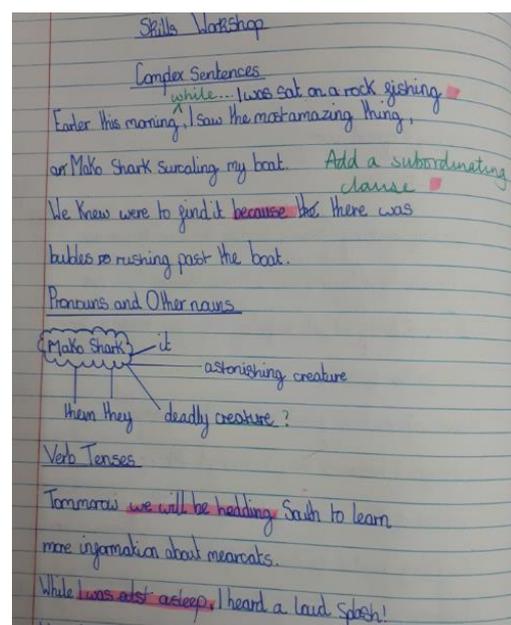
Before Shared Write sessions, children are given the opportunity to **orally rehearse** key sentences that they will use to help create a 'bare bones' their writing before they even start.



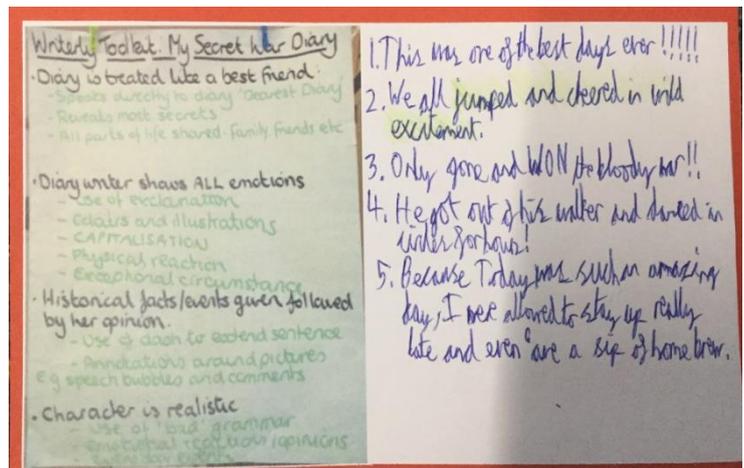
**Shared Writing sessions**, with peers and/or the class teacher provide a scaffold upon which to build children's writing. Teachers use sentence stems, play the role of a 'muttering author' and provide mini writing challenges as children construct their Practise Write. Commencing the process on whiteboards gives children the freedom to make mistakes, edit and change their writing before writing it into their books. It also allows teachers to check for understanding as the class is writing away. The Shared Write Session will often focus on the initial few paragraphs of the writing, or the 'tricky' part of the text.

Once the Practice Write is completed, teachers analyse the writing to decide on next steps. **Whole Class Feedback** and focus group

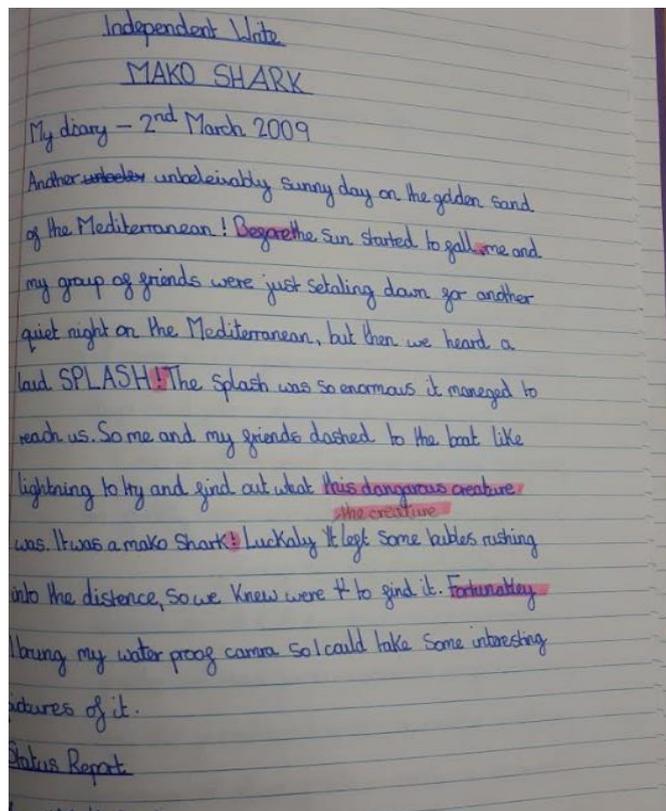
feedback is given. A 'workshop' lesson, where clear small steps are modelled, a volume of questions is asked to check for understanding of key pupils followed by a lengthy session, mean children can practise the key skill that they need to improve. Again, asking children to compose sentences based on the theme of their Independent Write will help build their confidence and provide them with accurate examples before the final Independent Writing task.



Mid Unit Reviews use meta-questions to give children a chance to reflect on the impact of their learning upon their writing. By identifying their key strengths and areas for improvement, children have a much more focused approach on improving key aspects of their writing. The use of elaborated code is modelled and promoted. Again, the **Writerly Toolkit** and Key Sentence Milestones form the focus of this evaluation. Children write example sentences from their own writing on the toolkits in their books as reference (see picture).



Example of a Writerly Toolkit Flap in a Year 6 book Independent Writes allow children to showcase their new understanding. The child is now able to show the outcome of their writer **journey from 'novice' to 'expert'**. Opportunities are provided for children to orally rehearse the 'bare bones' of their writing. This is achieved through Peer Mentor Interviews that are scaffolded with deeper thinking, higher-level questions.



Year 4 Independent Write

It is in the Independent Write that the Greater Depth Writers are provided with further opportunities to master newly acquired or past writing skills and concepts. Through planning opportunities for GD writers to have more independence (less need to learn blueprints or have shorter skills sessions) and applying skills to a wider range of genres, children flourish in a supportive, yet creative way. For example, during the teaching sequence of 'My Secret War Diary', Greater Depth writers worked with the teacher on shifting formalities and style. The children wrote a letter to the Imperial War Museum as a modern day relative of an evacuee child. The letter, evaluating and reflecting upon the stories contained in the diary, needed to contain extracts of their ancestor's diary.

### Teacher Voice

Year 3 Teacher

The writing sequence allows children to spend valuable time focussing on one or two aspects of writing at a time. This enables them to learn more deeply and apply this knowledge to relevant contexts more independently. The process is structured so that it supports gradual progression throughout.

We plan in grammar skills reviews before children begin their practising and independent writes so that they have time to think about sentence structure and linking it to the relevant context. For example, our most recent independent write was written after skills reviews of adverbial phrases and speech so that children had time to construct sentences orally about the Stone Age (topic) using these skills before writing the whole narrative.

Our independent writes have also been split into two lessons to allow children to edit and re-draft their work.

#### Year 4 Teacher

I feel the writing sequence that we follow gives the children the ability to 'get under the skin' of a text if you like. I adapt skills sessions, or the skills revisit to meet the needs of my class. I also use the Daily Review as a tool for ensuring all milestones are met.

#### Year 5 Teacher

I feel that the teaching sequence supports writing in our school by making the route, to creating a final piece of writing in the style of an author, explicit. The grammar lessons during a sequence, which enable the children to practice the best qualities in a text, are built on in small steps that are designed to revisit and consolidate previous knowledge, as well as practising more challenging/new grammar. This ensures that all children are encouraged to make sure that all skills can be applied regardless of whether they are explicitly being taught or not.