

Telling the Story: the English education subject report (OFSTED, 5th March 2024)

The latest report from OFSTED evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of how English is taught in 50 schools visited as part of routine inspections. There was much to celebrate, the teaching of reading and the impact of phonics programmes for example, but the report also highlights areas where “there is more work to be done”. Schools using Pathways products can rest assured that the methodologies behind Pathways to Write ensure that many of the points raised in the report will have already been considered.

Many of the key points raised in the report have been looked at against how Pathways to Write supports schools with teaching English lessons. This detail will reassure subject leaders in Pathways schools that they are applying sound methodology and will also help in their discussions with inspectors.

How does Pathways to Write address the points raised in the report?

- 1. *“Schools expect pupils to repeatedly attempt complex tasks that replicate national curriculum tests and exams. This is at the expense of first making sure that pupils are taught, and securely know, the underlying knowledge they need”.***

Pathways to Write contains appropriately designed written tasks which progress in complexity as the skills of the pupils progress. It ensures that pupils do not need to provide additional evidence for moderation or preparation for tests as all the national curriculum for vocabulary, grammar and punctuation is covered within Pathways to Write.

- 2. *“Schools teach grammar, sentence structure and punctuation explicitly. However, pupils do not always get enough practice to secure this knowledge”.***

The mastery approach ensures pupils regularly use and repeat new skills to consolidate their learning.

- 3. *“Primary schools often make choices based on links to themes being taught in other subjects and to wider issues, such as climate change and healthy eating. While this may be appropriate for additional texts read at other times of the day, the choice of texts for English lessons should be based on literary merit. These texts should also increase in complexity over time”. “Choose texts for study in English first and foremost on literary merit”.***

All the texts used for any Pathways units are selected first and foremost for ‘literary merit’. The texts increase in complexity of language and ideas over time. The texts used in *Pathways to Read* and *Pathways to Write* have significant elements which will contribute to SMSC development. From spirituality in the text ‘Festivals’ in EYFS to social and cultural elements in ‘The Place for Me: Stories about the Windrush Generation’ in year 6, SMSC can be promoted hand in hand with English delivery.

- 4. *“The rush to produce extended pieces of writing independently also means that oral composition appears to be undervalued as a process”.***

There is no rush to produce extended pieces in Pathways to Write units. Oral composition and retelling are planned for and extended pieces are written over time with high-quality models available for teachers to use and pupils to study. Pupils write short pieces to practise writing skills. Once pupils are familiar with text types, language styles and the necessary

grammar, they will plan and write their own pieces. This whole process takes place over a period of weeks not days.

5. ***“In primary schools, there is a disconnect between the different modalities of English (reading, writing and spoken language)”.***

This is not the case with Pathways to Write. The text-based approach to teaching writing means that reading, writing and spoken language opportunities are interlinked within all the units. These objectives are thought through and identified at the start of each unit.

6. ***“In some primary schools, the demands of moderation result in pupils being asked to produce overly manufactured portfolios of writing that may not reflect what they can do independently”. “In some schools, the curriculum is shaped by writing moderation and national curriculum tests”.***

This is not the case with Pathways to Write. As the skills of the children progress and develop throughout each unit, they use their skills to write independently resulting in a final independent outcome. There is no mention of national curriculum tests or any reference to SATs questions in the units.

7. ***“...some schools see the end point as the mode of practice, for example writing more stories to get better at writing stories.***

This means that pupils who are not secure in the foundations of writing are being asked to complete tasks that they are not ready for”. Pathways to Write units use the mastery approach. Lessons are planned to make sure that pupils learn more and can use their skills more. A variety of genres are studied throughout the Pathways units and pupils write in different genres and for a range of purposes.

8. ***“In the great majority of schools, there is significant use of scaffolding and editing. Some schools explained that this is because they needed to gather evidence of independent writing for local authority moderators. However, in the schools where these are overly used, pupils are rushed into composing complex texts, using features they have not properly learned yet, before they are ready”.***

This isn't the case in Pathways to Write; the planning process can be discussed before pupils independently make their own plans and create their writing. Pupils can edit their own work independently or with a partner using the mastery keys to guide the process.

9. ***“In the majority of schools, the sequencing of literature is not deliberate. Although texts get harder, for example moving from simple narrative structures to parallel or sub-plots, it is less clear how this is intentionally sequenced so that pupils build on what they have read before. This includes thinking about the themes, genres, forms and background knowledge that pupils need to access these texts.”***

Pathways programmes are very deliberately planned and sequenced with careful consideration given to genres, the progression of vocabulary and complexity of plots and subject matter.

The methodology around Pathways to Write is drawn from research and knowledge of the most effective ways to teach English. The texts used in Pathways to Write are chosen first and foremost for their literary merit – the vocabulary, the grammatical structures and the complexity of the subject matter. Continue to recommend to staff to teach the programme with fidelity; ensure there is time for the practise and mastery of writing skills for a range of purposes to develop your pupils as skilled and effective communicators.