



Gulf British Academy

# Writing Subject Policy

Reception / Primary

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## Introduction and acknowledgements

The school has focused on the work of Alan Peat and Pie Corbett strategies to develop this policy.

Whilst the strategies in the document (and indeed the MTPs) may appear at first sight a little prescribed, the school believes that *you need to know a rule to break a rule*. The end goal is not that children will use the strategies to produce formulaic stereotypical texts but will use the knowledge of them to produce high quality pieces of creative and original writing.

## Fiction

### Developing secure story structure

Story structure falls into two distinct areas. The first area relates to **plot development** whilst the latter relates to **story planning**.

These must be seen as two clearly distinct activities because where teachers seek to meld them together, planning will become muddled and confused in the mind of the child and lack a sharpness of focus that they both need as a prerequisite to writing.

### A. The Plot

Whilst there is truth that the ability to write a story in a fluent style will engage the reader, true engagement starts with a secure idea for a plotline. The plot is the starting point for engaging the reader. As all stories hinge around the “problem/solution” dilemma then the children need to focus on these to develop creative and original ideas for their story.

The story of the wicked troll trapping the beautiful princess in the castle is not as interesting as the beautiful princess trapping the evil troll. The former leads the reader to believe they know the ending of the story before they start reading assuming that somewhere in the story a knight will appear to save the princess and they will all live happily ever after. The latter poses interesting thoughts in the mind of the reader, and leads them to read on.

*“the only reason people keep on reading is because they want to find out what happens in the end”*

- E.M Forster

The plot is therefore the foundation block to all good story writing. In many ways it is preferable to read a badly written story with an interesting plot as opposed to a well written, well structured story about, yet another princess being rescued from, yet another evil giant from (surprise, surprise) the giant’s castle.

So what should plot planning look like? It should focus on two questions and two questions alone.

### **What is the problem and what is the solution?**

Whilst the teacher might suggest the context for the story e.g. shipwreck, a greek myth and legend, a fairy tale etc. the children should then be encouraged to avoid writing the story that they know the teacher will read 30 times when they come to mark the work.

Engaging the reader is imperative and that is done through thinking outside of the box, not following the same predictable storylines written by children for generations.

In teaching terms, there should be a narrow focus on the two questions. There should be no emphasis placed on detail at this point; this can come later in the story planning process. Here, the only concern is to find a quirky reason for both the problem and the solution.

## **Plot Types**

In the course of their writing career throughout the school, the children should be exposed to a variety of plotlines. The plots fall into 5 simple categories – all of which can be found in Alan Peat’s book *Improving Literacy Creative Approaches* (p36-37).

1. Heroic adventure
2. Good triumphs over evil
3. Rags to riches
4. Ugly to beautiful
5. Shipwreck

By the end of Year 2, the expectation should be that the children have met most of the story plots. They should be able to verbally plan a story, virtually spontaneously, on any of the 5 plot lines.

## **Genre**

On top of the structure and the plot lies the genre. These will include all those found in the MTPs e.g Science Fiction, Romance, Historical, Fantasy, Cultural, Myths and Legends, Fables, Humour, Fairy Tales, Adventure Stories etc.

These provide a broad range of opportunities to be explored in the various plot scenarios. The children might write a Science Fiction/Shipwreck, Romance/Rags to Riches story or an Ugly to Beautiful myth. Without wishing to state the obvious, the options are endless.

## **B. Story planning**

### **Planning**

With the element of plot secure in the mind of the child and with an understanding of the story upon which their narrative hangs the child and/or the teacher can move into the process of "Story Planning".

At Gulf British Academy the teaching of writing is split into 4 phases as suggested by Pie Corbett. These 4 phases last between 2 to 3 weeks:

**Familiarisation phase** - this phase is where children are introduced to the text type and similar text types. It may consist of research, reading, role play, hot seating or other strategies to familiarise children with the text type being taught over the next 2-3 weeks.

**Imitation phase** - this phase is used for children to imitate or copy a given structure. During this phase, the use of 'Boxing Clever', 'Text Maps', shared writing, guided writing, modelled writing and scaffolding are used to give children a framework to adapt and innovate on at a later date. Teachers will ensure they are emphasising grammar and punctuation points during this phase.

**Innovation phase** - the teacher and children will begin to innovate on the imitation phase writing created prior. The extent to which the teacher is involved in this innovation will depend on the year group. Whereas in Year 1 it may be totally teacher-led, as children enter Year 2 and beyond the responsibility for innovation should fall more upon them. This is a good opportunity to be creative and discuss different ideas and viewpoints for where their independent story may go.

**Independent phase** - this is the time for children to write their own text using the skills and models taught previously. Success criteria should be used relating to the text type.

All story planning in the early years of the school (Reception to Year 2) should follow the basic format below as a central core (following the 'boxing clever' method of Alan Peat).

<b>Beginning</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Solution</b>	<b>Ending</b>
Who, Where, Where next?	What goes wrong?	Who helps?	Where last? Feelings

The story planning deals less with the plot and moves into the more technical elements of the writing process. There are questions to be posed such as; How will we begin the story; How will we describe the character in the story? How will we introduce the problem? Will we use in Media Res to start the story? How can we end the story?

The story planning will develop throughout the school and in relation to the age, more pertinently, the ability of the child. As children move into KS2, they should move away from this structured story type and begin to manipulate it.

## **Reception and Key Stage 1**

In the early years of KS1, it may be that once the plot is secure and the child has told their story in skeleton form, the "Story Planning" is undertaken by the teacher who introduces technical elements of the writing process to the children as they move through their story.

The teacher may decide to "teach" the "three-question opening" or 'characterisation' and will introduce this to the class. In the next lesson, they may use "Multi-sensory locational writing" to set the scene for the story.

The teaching process, therefore, continues with the children being "taught" more and more skills, which they can integrate into their immediate piece of writing. They will also develop a toolkit of strategies that they can call upon at a later date.

To this end, the children may have nothing more than the plot outline to support their writing because much of the rest of the structure is provided by the teacher in a highly scaffolded way.

## **Key Stage 2**

At the lower end of KS2, children should be taught many ways to open and end a story. They should begin to move away from the structure above and be more fluid. At the top end of KS2 it would be expected that the child rather than the teacher will drive the planning process.

With a range of writing strategies at their fingertips learnt throughout KS1 and lower KS2 they should be making their own independent decisions as to which opening they feel would be best for their particular story, what strategies they might use to introduce their characters.

Unlike their KS1 counterparts, the upper KS2 children will have many notes/storyboard pictures to support their writing. They may have a storyboard showing not just the plot but where they will introduce setting the scene and what strategy they will use to achieve this.

This greater independence will result in them having a storyboard with as many as 12-15 storyboard cards, but the plot planning will still hinge around the two central questions lest the plot becomes watered down or even worse, lost in the planning of the writing.

Throughout a child's school life, therefore, there will be an increasing element of independence given to them in the planning process. Whilst in Year 1 it might be 100% teacher led by Year 6 it should be totally driven by the children.

The transfer of this control will occur as the child moves through the school and its balance will be determined by each teacher based on the cohort of children and the teacher's ability to release the children into further elements of individualised planning.

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## Grammar

Grammar concepts at GBA are taught both discreetly and non-discreetly during each writing unit. Grammar from previous year groups is often re-visited and embedded throughout the next year.

Year Group	Grammar concepts taught
Year 1	Capital letters (for names, places, days of the week and at the start of sentences), full stops, finger spaces, nouns, adjectives (1A and 2A sentences), connectives (and), alliteration, plural 's' & 'es', time connectives (first, next, then, finally), rhyming words, question marks
Year 2	Adjectives (2Ad sentence type), prepositions and prepositional starters, connectives (because & BOYS sentence type - but, or, yet, so), past tense, present tense, nouns, characterisation (focusing on more than looks), verbs, question marks, rhyming words, adverbs and adverbial starters, sentence starters, exclamation marks, fact vs fiction, commas in lists, Imperative verbs, time connectives, apostrophe for possession, comparatives and superlatives, speech marks, similes

Year 3	Capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, nouns and adjectives, a and an, time connectives, commas for lists, verb tenses, prefixes and suffixes, prepositions and prepositional starters, subject-verb agreement, 1st and 3rd person, BOYS sentences, noun who which where sentence type, speech marks, apostrophes, brackets, 3_ed sentence type, powerful verbs and adverbs, bullet points, imperative verbs
Year 4	Question marks, exclamation marks, time connectives, singular and plural nouns, similes and metaphors, 2 pairs sentence type, verb person sentence type, powerful verbs and adverbs, adjective-same-adjective sentence type, 1st and 3rd person, noun which who where sentence type, speech marks, characterisation, BOYS sentence type, brackets, apostrophes
Year 5	Prefixes and suffixes, Rhetorical questions, direct and indirect speech, commas, singular and plural nouns, similes and metaphors, 2 pairs sentence type, verb person sentence type, imagine 3 sentence type, personification, adjective-same-adjective sentence type, apostrophes, noun which who where sentence type, brackets, the more the more sentence type, speech marks, power verbs and adverbs, bullet points
Year 6	Emotion word comma sentence type, 2 pairs sentence type, verb person sentence type, if if if then sentence type, 3_ed sentence type, adverbial starters, modal verbs and adverbs of possibility, active and passive voice, colons and semicolons, dashes, synonyms and antonyms, ellipses, adverbial starters, bullet points

**Colour-coding word classes** - word classes are given colour codes in KS1 to help embed them in children's writing. This is phased out in KS2 where children should be confident in their use.

**Nouns - black**

**Adjectives - blue**

**Verbs - red**

**Adverbs - orange**

**Prepositions - green**

## **Non-fiction texts**

Non-fiction writing is taught using the same phases as mentioned above and relies heavily on Alan Peat and Pie Corbett non-fiction writing strategies such as 'boxing up' a text and 'text maps' in Key Stage 1. As children progress to Key Stage 2, much more independence is given in the planning of non-fiction texts.

## **Continuous monitoring of student levels**

Teachers use Ros Wilson levelling criteria to assess children's writing 3 times a year. This information is used to support and push children on in their writing. Teachers look at gaps in knowledge and aim to fill them during the year.

## **Continuous monitoring of teaching and learning**

In order to ensure that the level of teaching and learning is constantly high, regular lesson observations and pop-ins take place throughout the year. Regular feedback is given to teachers to ensure they are aware of their strengths and areas for improvement.

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Reviewed:	September 2019
To be reviewed:	Annually by September
Responsibility:	Reception / KS1 / KS2 Coordinators