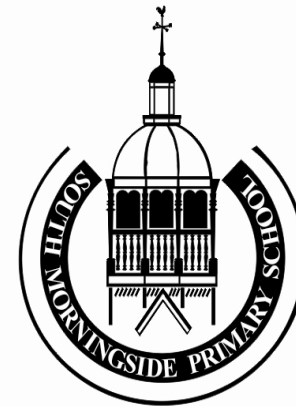


## How can I help at home?

Here are some ways in which you can help your child at home with their writing:

- Talk! Talk! Talk! - ask children to describe anything and everything
- Write! Write! Write! -encourage them to write letters, a diary, email friends and family, send postcards, make lists, play vocabulary games, write stories and illustrate them .....
- Take the opportunity to comment on interesting use of VCOP when reading with your child
- Use a dictionary or a thesaurus to find interesting words to use
- Encourage children to think about how to improve work completed at home through use of VCOP
- Be prepared to explain new words to your child and give examples of how to use them
- Read often and widely with your child
- Encourage children to use phrases or words seen in a book in their own writing
- Look at a picture or photo and describe it; use it to tell a story

# South Morningside Primary School



## Big Writing

### A Guide for Parents

## Dear Parents/Carers

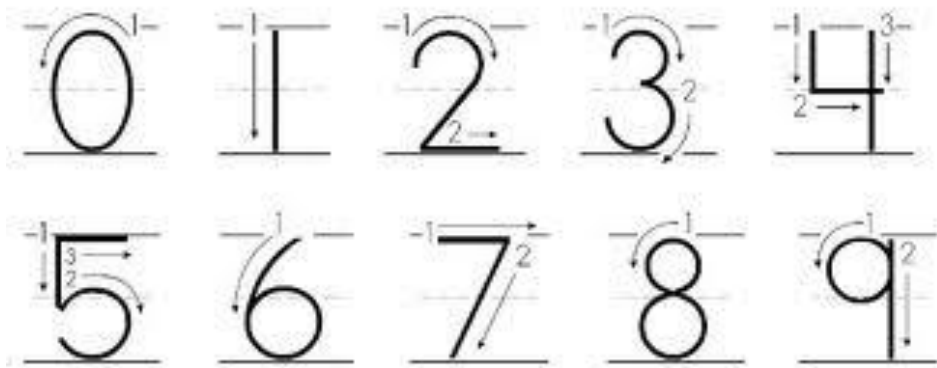
Big Writing is a whole school initiative to encourage children to become independent and expert writers. This booklet aims to explain this approach and to answer any questions that you may have.

As a parent, you are your child's first teacher. Your help at home is very important in supporting the work carried out at school. This booklet will give you some useful and helpful ideas about how to have fun with your child as he/she learns to write. The ideas that follow can be enjoyed at any time and in any order.

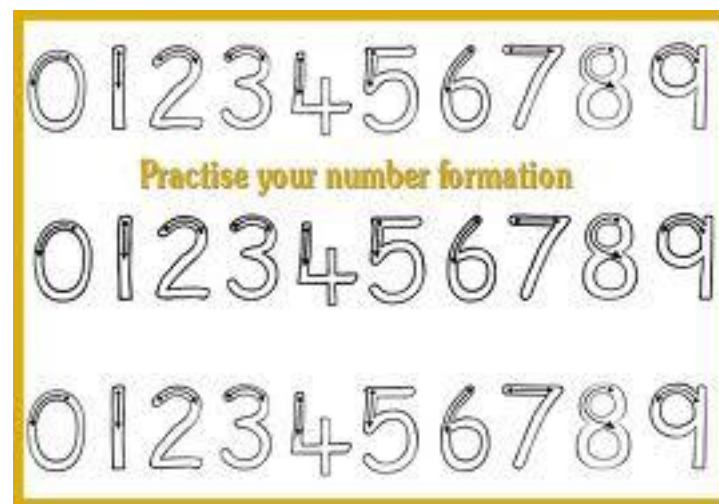
It is these skills that will hopefully help your child to become proactive in their own learning and to explain their thoughts.



## Numbers start from the top



Please note that number 5 begins with the small down stroke and finishes with the stroke across the top



Letters are written as shown and begin on the dot

a b c d e

f g h i j k

l m n o p

q r s t u

v w x y z

## Big Writing

Writing is a major part of the curriculum and along with reading, listening and talking, makes a significant contribution to the development of children as thinkers and learners.

Writing involves a set of complex skills that will not develop without structured teaching and practice. At South Morningside Primary School we are using the Ros Wilson approach to writing, called Big Writing. Big Writing focuses on four main aspects of the writing process (VCOP) and gives the children the skills to improve their writing through self-assessment.

Children are taught in class which specific vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation will be suitable for particular task or writing genre e.g. a story or an information sheet. They then go on to practise these in different ways such as through games, highlighting text, or using them in their own writing.

## So what does VCOP stand for?

**V** - is for vocabulary (ambitious 'WOW' words) and children are encouraged to widen their use of language to make their writing richer. In the classroom, new and expressive words are collected and shared.

**C** - is for connectives (joining words) such as and, because, so, besides, although, however, but etc. This makes writing more cohesive and interesting.

**O** - is for openers (opening your sentences in a variety of ways). Varying the way you open sentences makes them more engaging to read. There are three main ways of opening sentences - using connectives and words ending in 'ly' and 'ing'. Another way includes starting a sentence with a word ending in 'ed'.

**P** - is for punctuation -correctly using punctuation appropriate for age or level. Children are taught the names of the different punctuation and they learn how to use them to up level' their writing.

## Pencil Grip

It is very important that a child holds their pencil in the correct way. If a child's hold starts incorrectly, it can be very difficult to correct later on.

- The pencil should be held in the tripod 'grip' between the thumb and first two fingers. We liken this grip to 'froggy legs'



- Encourage your child to rest the pencil between the thumb and first finger. The next finger prevents the pencil from falling and the last two fingers are tucked away
- The hand rests on the table and the movement of the pencil is through the thumb and first finger
- It is important that the knuckles point outwards

## The importance of 'Talk'

The development of extended speech and encouragement of all children to be confident and articulate talkers prepares them for writing. The premise of Big Writing is that if children can't say it or talk about it, then they can't write it. Having a wide vocabulary and using language well helps children with all of their learning.

### **It's really easy to help your child with this!**

- Encourage as many family members as possible to be involved in Talk Homework
- Switch off the T.V. - try to ensure this is dedicated talking and listening time
- When giving your opinion, use the 'because' word to explain why you think that
- Give the possible opinions of two contrasting family members and use the 'because' word to explain why they may be different
- Ask your child his/her opinion and ask them to use the 'because' word
- Link the topic you are given to discuss back something you remember from when you were a child and say why things may be different now or how things may be different in the future

## Ingredients which make a Big Writing lesson

- A lively, fun lesson that focuses on the VCOP and generates ideas for writing - games, activities and active learning
- An undisturbed writing session, perhaps with music, lights, special pens or books, and silence!
- Lots of experience of writing different text types chosen for Big Writing e.g. story, report, news article, diary entry
- A chance to read through good examples of similar writing -we call this 'hooking in'
- Talking homework - discussed in class and sent home (important discussion and planning time)
- Reading the writing with a partner and helping one another to make improvements
- Setting targets for how to make progress next time they write

## Vocabulary

We promote the use of 'WOW' words in children's writing. These are words which are ambitious for the children to use, e.g. lumbered or meandered (instead of walked). We encourage the children to look for WOW words in their reading books / novels read to them at home.

### It's really easy to help your child with this!

- Read with them and to them
- Share WOW words from your own reading
- Tell them words which you would use in different situations

## Connectives

Connectives make sentences longer **because** they join pieces of information together.

### How can you help?

- Discuss different connectives with your child
- Match connectives together - for example, which connectives could be used instead of "and"?
- Talk about making sentences longer and more interesting by using a range of connectives - not simply and - but also but/because/so

## Openers

There are different ways of opening sentences. Younger children will use words like I / Then / They. We want to encourage the children to think of other words to use.

### Ideas on how to help with Openers

- Spend time discussing different ways to start sentences  
e.g. **Today** I saw.... **Yesterday** I... **At the weekend** I
- Use verbs and adjectives to describe what people are doing and make up a sentence with the verb/adjective at the beginning  
e.g. **Walking** home from school on day, I saw a massive dog.

## Punctuation

We show the children different forms of punctuation and give them examples of how to use them.

### You can help!!

Make up fun sentences using different forms of punctuation. Give your child a piece of punctuation and ask them to give you a sentence using it and... you will be amazed at the improvement in their understanding.