

FIX IT WRITING

Structured support to improve
students' writing at KS2 and KS3

**TEACHER
HANDBOOK**

Contents

Introduction	004
Progression in writing: a framework	007
Summary of the <i>Fix it writing</i> skill focuses	009
Making sense of students' writing	012
Setting targets and planning sessions	017
<i>Fix it</i> session structure	019
Getting the most out of <i>Fix it</i>	023
Chapter 1: Writing and punctuating sentences	026
Session 1: Capital letters and full stops	026
Session 2: Ending sentences	031
Ways to improve	034
Chapter 2: Using conjunctions	037
Session 1: Varying conjunctions	037
Session 2: To suit purpose	041
Ways to improve	047
Chapter 3: Using commas	050
Session 1: Lists and clarity	050
Session 2: Clarity and effect	057
Ways to improve	064
Chapter 4: Varying sentences	067
Session 1: Sentence starts and word order	067
Session 2: Varying for effect	074
Ways to improve	079
Chapter 5: Expanding sentences	083
Session 1: Adding detail	083
Session 2: Relative clauses	089
Ways to improve	095

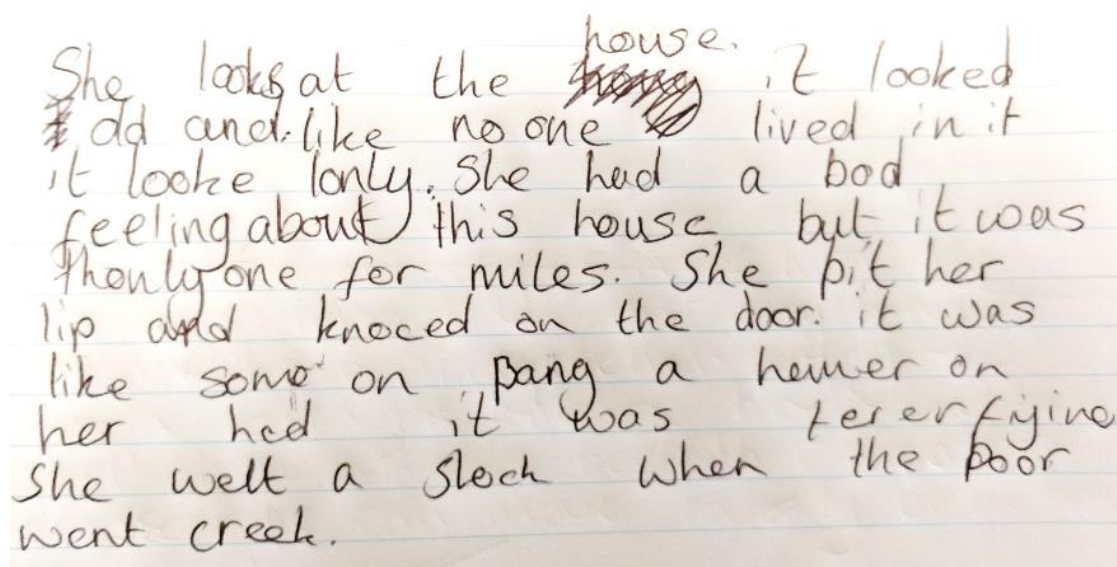
Chapter 6: Using verbs	098
Session 1: Identifying verbs	098
Session 2: The past	103
Ways to improve	106
Chapter 7: Generating and sorting ideas	109
Session 1: Non-fiction	109
Session 2: Fiction	115
Ways to improve	118
Chapter 8: Sequencing and organising texts	121
Session 1: Non-fiction	121
Session 2: Fiction	126
Ways to improve	130
Chapter 9: Organising paragraphs	133
Session 1: Topic sentences	133
Session 2: Writing paragraphs	138
Ways to improve	142
Chapter 10: Cohesive devices	145
Session 1: To suit purpose	145
Session 2: Comparing and contrasting	150
Ways to improve	155
Chapter 11: Linking paragraphs	158
Session 1: Adverbs and determiners	158
Session 2: Making comparisons	164
Ways to improve	170
Chapter 12: Writing formally	172
Session 1: Choosing the right words	172
Session 2: Choosing the right tone	175
Ways to improve	178
Chapter 13: Choosing effective words	181
Session 1: Setting and atmosphere	181
Session 2: Creating atmosphere/characters	185
Ways to improve	189
Acknowledgements	191

Introduction

Literacy intervention in secondary schools tends to focus far less on compositional skills than on reading and spelling. Yet when weak writers arrive at secondary school, many of them are still struggling to write fluently and coherently. Most primary teachers are only too aware of these students' weaknesses and they typically address them in a determined and systematic fashion. There is no doubt that without these teachers' efforts many more students would arrive at secondary school with a crippling lack of self-belief in their ability to write effectively. Weak writers would benefit from a *continuous* writing programme, beginning in the final years of KS2, and stretching into years 7 and 8, so that – in effect – primary and secondary colleagues would be working together to ensure that all students were writing competently and confidently by the time they write in GCSE exams.

The challenge

Most students do write well by the time they arrive at secondary school, and they write even better by the time they leave. However, there is a conspicuous group of students whose writing skills do not seem to develop significantly during their secondary years, and whose lack of confidence gradually converts into apathy, defeatism, and even anger. The writing sample below is typical of one of these students midway through year 7:



She looks at the ^{house.} ~~hang~~ it looked
dd and like no one ~~lived~~ lived in it
it looke lonly. She had a bad
feeling about this house but it was
thonly one for miles. She pit her
lip and knoced on the door. it was
like some on pang a hammer on
her hed it was fererfying
She wett a sloch when the poor
went creek.

This student has clear handwriting and seems to have some confidence in their ability to make sense. Plenty of year 6 or 7 students are weaker writers than this, but already we see many basic faults which might not be quickly and sensitively addressed in the hurly-burly of the secondary curriculum:

- mixed/wrong verb tenses ('looks'/'looked')
- unreliable sentence demarcation (full stops and capital letters)
- letters omitted ('th_', 'looke_')
- incomplete sentences ('some on bang' instead of 'someone was banging')
- high density of misspellings ('lonly', 'knoced', 'hamer', 'tererfiying', 'creek')
- incorrect use of upper case letters ('Bang', 'She', 'When', 'Door')

Other students are relatively able at the level of the sentence, but then their writing falls apart or peters out when they write at greater length. Again, these students' poor writing organisational skills may not improve significantly in their secondary school years, leading to frustration and resignation.

Weak writers share some of these typical characteristics. In addition to these, every writer has specific weaknesses as well as strengths. Building on the strengths while identifying and addressing the weaknesses is the challenge for any literacy practitioner – whether they are a classroom teacher, a specialist literacy teacher or a teaching assistant.

The purpose of *Fix it writing*

Fix it writing is designed to help all of those practitioners. The resource supports practitioners in diagnosing weaknesses, providing critical teaching to address those weaknesses, and monitoring progress. Of course, writing problems can never really be spotted and 'fixed'. If only it was that simple. However, the title reflects the urgency of the task and the need for practitioners to proceed with a sense of clarity and precision.

The most fortunate students receive help in a very expensive form – regular, small-group or even individual 'intervention', either in or outside the classroom. The high cost of this sort of intervention demands that the right intervention is applied to the right students. When schools get this right, the cost is justified and students benefit from time-limited intervention activities that boost their confidence and independence, rather than leaving them dependent and helpless.

The structure of *Fix it writing*

At its core, *Fix it writing* provides teaching session plans, each targeted on a specific and crucial aspect of successful composition – crafting sentences for clarity, using conjunctions to link ideas and information, sequencing and developing ideas, and so on.

Each section ends with general explanations of the ‘problem’, the crucial concepts and terminology related to the problem, and a variety of partial ‘solutions’ to the problem. Each session plan is therefore offered as a sort of ‘landmark lesson’, around which diligent practitioners can organise imaginative interventions, informed by the broader advice in the book and by their own judgement. *Fix it writing* is certainly not intended as an ‘off the shelf’ programme to be worked through from beginning to end with every student.

The session plans *are* the nucleus of the resource, and their common format is explained more fully later in these introductory pages. Essentially the sessions’ format is adapted from the literacy intervention programmes that emerged from the National Literacy Strategy and the Secondary Strategy. One advantage of drawing on these earlier materials is that many practitioners will already be familiar with the core approaches. In addition, the stepped approach of the sessions is designed to both challenge students to sharpen their skills, and to convince them that they *can* meet those challenges.

Finally, I have not mentioned the end of key stage 2 writing assessments, how these might turn out in the coming years, or how *Fix it writing* might contribute to students’ performance. Although these assessments are very important to primary schools, I still believe that it is students’ progress across KS2 and KS3 that should be our collective aim. If *Fix it writing* can help promote that aim, and can support a focus that can be shared by primary and secondary practitioners, then I will be more than satisfied.

Richard Durant May 2017

Progression in writing: a framework

Although writers progress in different ways, typical progression descriptors can be a helpful point of reference. Such descriptors can help to diagnose key features of weaker writers' habits, and to choose specific next steps. *Fix it writing* aims to support practitioners in identifying and promoting those next steps.

Writing progress markers: sentences and paragraphs

	Working towards the expected standard Students can ...	Working at the expected standard Students can ...	Working at greater depth within the expected standard Students do ...
Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use <i>and</i>, <i>but</i>, <i>or</i> • use some subordinating conjunctions including <i>when</i>, <i>while</i>, <i>if</i>, <i>because</i> • use relative pronouns including <i>who</i>, <i>which</i>, <i>that</i>. • use different verbs • use forms mostly accurately (e.g. use the right tense form – present <i>sing</i>, past <i>sang</i> – and match verb forms to subject – <i>I sing / she sings</i>.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use a wide range of clause types and structures, sometimes varying their position within the sentence • use adverbials (e.g. <i>quickly</i>, <i>last Tuesday</i>, <i>on the floor</i>, <i>with difficulty</i>) and noun phrases (e.g. <i>a pair of frightened eyes</i>) effectively to add detail, qualification and precision • write formal sentences mostly accurately • use passive (e.g. <i>she was seen</i>) and modal verbs (e.g. <i>should</i>, <i>might</i>) mostly appropriately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the features of the expected standard • use these features with growing independence and confidence, and trying out subtle ways to create effect and clarify meaning.

	Working towards the expected standard Students can ...	Working at the expected standard Students can ...	Working at greater depth within the expected standard Students do ...
Paragraphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use paragraphs to organise ideas • use some links within and across sentences and paragraphs (e.g. <i>this ...</i>, <i>next ...</i>, <i>then ...</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use paragraphs/sections to help to organise content, (e.g. use topic sentences to begin paragraphs, followed by explanation and/or example) • use a range of linking words, including adverbials (e.g. <i>however</i>, <i>similarly</i>, <i>fifty years ago</i>) within and across sentences and paragraphs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use the features of the expected standard • write coherent paragraphs that link effectively • use these features with growing independence and confidence, and carefully structure their writing to support their overall purpose.
Key progress targets:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • begin to use complex sentences • use the right tense • punctuate sentences correctly • use paragraphs • use some helpful linking words and phrases (cohesive devices). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vary length and structure of sentences • use complex sentences well • use the right verb forms (e.g. past, passive, modal) • use commas for clarity • link sentences and paragraphs helpfully. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • design sentences for clarity and emphasis • try out different ways of saying the same thing • use the full range of punctuation accurately • use a range of cohesive devices • link and sequence paragraphs well.

Informed by Interim teacher assessment frameworks at the end of key stage 2, Standards and Testing Agency, July 2016.

A crucial characteristic of progress in writing is that students move from being *able* to operate key skills, to operating them voluntarily. Essentially, students move from knowledge to capability to willingness. For example, many weak writers *know* where full stops should go, and they can write them into a text from which they have been removed. Next they are *able* to use them in their own writing when prompted and scaffolded. Finally, they use them without prompting. At this point they are independent in their use of that skill.

Name:

FIX IT

WRITING

SAMPLE

**STUDENT
WORKBOOK**

Contents

Chapter 1	003
Session 1	003
Session 2	008
Chapter 2	013
Session 1	013
Session 2	019
Chapter 3	025
Session 1	025
Session 2	031
Chapter 4	037
Session 1	037
Session 2	046
Chapter 5	054
Session 1	054
Session 2	060
Chapter 6	067
Session 1	067
Session 2	074
Chapter 7	080
Session 1	080
Session 2	086
Chapter 8	093
Session 1	093
Session 2	098
Chapter 9	105
Session 1	105
Session 2	113
Chapter 10	120
Session 1	120
Session 2	127
Chapter 11	134
Session 1	134
Session 2	139
Chapter 12	144
Session 1	144
Session 2	150
Chapter 13	156
Session 1	156
Session 2	162

Writing and punctuating sentences

CHAPTER

01

SESSION 01: CAPITAL LETTERS AND FULL STOPS

By the end of this session you should be much better at:

- marking the beginning and endings of sentences correctly
- recognising and writing units of sense (sentences).

What is a sentence?

A sentence is a group of words which are grammatically connected to each other and which usually includes a subject and a verb. Here is a complete sentence:

Most people like holidays.

It is a sentence because:

- it has a subject (a 'doer') – 'Most people'
- it has a verb (a 'doing' word) – 'like'
- it starts with a capital letter and it ends with a full stop
- it makes sense to us because it is complete.

Look at the groups of words in the chart below. Are they sentences or not?
Mark the chart to show your choice. The first two have been done for you as examples.

	Complete sentence	Not a complete sentence
1. The beach was crowded and noisy.	X	
2. In the sea.		X
3. Rock pools are good to explore.		
4. The rough waves.		
5. Because we were hungry.		
6. My mother was asleep.		
7. They went on the pier.		
8. Running along the beach.		
9. My father smeared sunscreen on all of us.		
10. The sun was hot.		
11. Ice-cream.		
12. Playing football on the beach.		
13. I dug carefully in the bright yellow sand.		

Your own sentences

Here are some sentences about holidays:

Most people like holidays. Beaches get very crowded in holiday times. Parents love to swim and sunbathe. Many children play happily in the warm sand.



Write two more sentences of your own about holidays.

Make sure:

- you start each sentence with a capital letter and end it with a full stop
- your sentences make sense.

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Putting sentences together

Read the definition of a sentence again to remind you of what you need to make a sentence.

Now write a whole paragraph of your own with at least three sentences.

- Write about something you are interested in.
- Start each sentence with a capital letter and end it with a full stop.
- Make sure that your sentences all include a subject and a verb.
- Make all your sentences have the same basic topic (e.g. holidays or football).

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What have you learned?

Write down two important things you have learned in this session. Say how you will use what you have learned before the next session. One example has been done for you below.

What I have learned	What I will do
<i>I must <u>always</u> use a capital letter at the start of a sentence.</i>	<i>I will check back through everything I have written in my geography book and put in every capital letter I have missed out, and then circle these in green. I will bring my geography book to the next session.</i>

Extension task

Task 1

The Best Holiday Ever

*my sister and I ran through the sea
she was laughing I was laughing too
the water was warm the sky was
blue the clouds were thin and pure
white we splashed and sprayed the
water at each other*



1. Put in punctuation to show the end of each sentence. (You should find seven sentences.)
2. Put a capital letter at the start of each sentence.

Task 2

Think of a 'Kung Fu' action or movement to represent the purpose and/or shape of capital letters and full stops. Try out a few different ones to decide on the best way to show these.

Writing and punctuating sentences

CHAPTER

01

SESSION 02: ENDING SENTENCES

By the end of this session you should be much better at:

- marking the beginnings and endings of sentences correctly
- recognising and writing units of sense (sentences)
- understanding the purpose of basic punctuation marks.

Using full stops

It is very easy to keep writing, and to forget to include all the full stops we need in our writing. Here is an example:

*The fair wasn't crowded we could go on all the big rides
because there were no queues.*

This sentence is actually two sentences, but there is no punctuation between the two sentences.