Big Talk for Big Writing

Helping your child to improve their English Skills

What is Big Talk for Big Writing?

As part of our continued drive to enhance learning English, we are introducing a new initiative across the school, 'The Big Write'. It is based on a highly successful Ros Wilson’s Big Writing scheme which follows the philosophy that if children can say it, they can write it.

Pupils that take part in Big Talk and Big Write make better progress and are more confident in English.

Big Write will involve children bringing home "Talk Homework" once a half term to discuss at home in preparation for writing the next day. Through Big Write we hope that our pupils will become more confident and ambitious in their writing.
SOME HINTS FOR ADULTS TAKING PART IN A Big Talk for Big Writing CONVERSATION WITH THEIR CHILDREN:

- Encourage as many family members as possible to be involved in the Big Talk for Big Writing activity
- Make it an enjoyable activity
- Switch off the television to try to ensure that this is dedicated talking and listening time
- Begin a conversation by modelling... “I think that... because...”
- Ask other family members to give their ideas, opinions and reasons why.

These are exactly the same types of activities as your child’s teacher will be using when developing oral literacy. As well as word games and sentence building, teachers try to develop children’s listening and talking skills in every area of the curriculum. In short, discussion skills are vital.

To help develop your children’s skills, you may also use activities such as those below, asking your children to:
- Listen carefully to follow a story or an account and answer questions about it
- Listen carefully and work with others to think up questions about the story or report
- Talk about their own experiences and those in stories
- Express preferences and likes and dislikes, giving explanations
- Actively participate in oral storytelling
- Identify and describe the main characters and setting of a story
- Describe key traits of characters
- Sequence events in fiction and non-fiction using talk
- Retell stories in different ways e.g. roleplay/ dressing-up/puppets

What else can help improve my child’s writing?

In your child’s classroom there are VCOP pyramids. These are being used in class to help your children remember the more ambitious Vocabulary (V), Conjunctions (C), Openers (O) and Punctuation (P) so that they can improve their talking and writing.

The purpose of the pyramids is to show children how they can progress by improving the language they use, both orally and in writing. If you are not familiar with these, please ask your class teacher who can print them off for you to use at home. The simplest examples are at the top of the pyramid, working down to the more ambitious at the bottom. These are examples only - what is considered “ambitious” will vary from child to child. Ambitious vocabulary will also vary according to the subject being discussed or written about. We hope that you find these useful when approaching the ‘talking homework’.

We hope that Big Talk for Big Writing will provide the opportunity for parents to play a vital role in developing their children’s English skills. One useful way to get the conversation started is by using open questions, which lend themselves to extended answers, such as:
- What would happen if...
- I wonder...
- What do you think about...
- In what way...
- Tell me about...
- What would you do...
- How can we...
- How did you...
How will parents know when to do Big Talk?

“Big Talk for Big Writing” sheets containing the topic for discussion will be given to your child once a half term on a Thursday evening. On the sheet will be a description of the topic to discuss at home and the genre. E.g. Narrative writing about “The Lost Key”. (If the sheet somehow gets mislaid on the way home, then please check our website on your class page for information!)

We would like to reiterate that this homework activity involves discussion only, but is just as valuable as any written homework and should have the same amount of time spent on it. We strongly recommend that the TV is turned off and all other distractions are avoided in order to spend ‘special’ time talking to your children to help develop their language skills.

If you have any questions you would like to ask about Big Talk for Big Writing, please contact your child’s class teacher.

Too much information? So in short...

- **Big Talk for Big Writing Homework Sheet comes home.**

- **Parent talk at home about the topic with your child.**
  See the handy hints, use the VCOP pyramid.

- **Back at school your child’s class will have a special writing session called a Big Write.**

Thank you for your help and co-operation in introducing Big Talk for Big Writing!