



Westbury Infant School

Reception Writing Curriculum

2026 to 2027

In Reception, children learn that writing communicates meaning. Each week, a carefully chosen text builds knowledge, vocabulary and imagination through noticing, commenting, wondering, discussion and carefully chosen questions. Oral composition develops through this talk, Poetry Basket, play and weekly Helicopter Stories. Explicit teaching of handwriting, phonics-based spelling and sentence transcription helps children record increasingly manageable captions and sentences for meaningful purposes.

The Reception writing model

Component	What children learn	How it is taught
Oral composition	Knowledge and skills Ideas can be developed and organised in speech before they are written. Children formulate, rehearse and hold an idea or sentence; adults model complete sentences, word order, tense and connections in context.	Provision Weekly rich-text talk; Poetry Basket for repeated listening, joining in and performance; weekly Helicopter Stories for child-authored, adult-scribed stories and enactment; retelling, play, adult modelling and Drawing Club in Summer 1 and Summer 2.
Spelling	Knowledge and skills Spoken words can be segmented into phonemes and taught graphemes can represent those sounds. Some frequently occurring words require specific teaching.	Provision Daily RWI at the assessed stage, Fred Fingers, taught Red Words, cumulative word practice and immediate feedback.
Handwriting	Knowledge and skills Letters have an agreed starting point, direction and formation. Comfortable posture, grip, orientation and control support increasingly fluent writing.	Provision At the start of the year, Squiggle Whilst You Wriggle develops whole-body and large movement patterns towards smaller controlled movements. This supports, but does not replace or delay, explicit RWI handwriting alongside sounds, modelling and short frequent practice.
Sentence transcription	Knowledge and skills A short spoken message can be held and written without losing its meaning. Written words are separated by spaces and sentences have visible boundaries.	Provision Brief cumulative dictation, RWI sentence routines and Hold a Sentence when appropriate, moving from sounds and words towards captions, phrases and simple sentences.
Meaningful application	Knowledge and skills Writing has a purpose and a reader. Children can use drawing, marks, labels, captions, messages and sentences to communicate.	Provision Inviting opportunities across provision, shared experiences and curriculum contexts. Adults respond first to meaning and supply spellings that contain untaught code.

Core teaching principles

- RWI assessment determines the teaching group. The half-term routes below are indicative trajectories, not ceilings or fixed deadlines.
- Directed transcription principally uses previously taught code. Children are not required to guess spellings containing untaught code.
- The weekly text supports noticing, commenting, wondering, discussion, vocabulary and oral composition without requiring a predetermined written product. Adults model or scribe language children cannot yet transcribe while preserving authorship.
- Dictation is teaching and guided practice, not simply a test. The amount written remains manageable enough for children to apply the intended learning successfully.

How the Reception approaches work together

This writing pathway sits within the wider Reception curriculum. It should be read alongside the Communication and Language, Literacy, Being Imaginative and Expressive and Physical Development progression documents and the annual Reception long-term plan. Those documents identify the fuller progression in talk, comprehension, narrative, performance and physical development, together with the planned text and poetry entitlement. This page makes explicit what each consistent approach contributes to writing.

Approach	Contribution to writing	Progression across Reception
Weekly focus text and daily read-aloud	Purpose The long-term plan names the focus texts; daily reading extends beyond this list. Texts build knowledge, vocabulary, enjoyment and ideas. Adults use comments, descriptions, wondering and carefully chosen questions to sustain genuine discussion.	Progression Attend and join in; recall and sequence; predict and use new vocabulary; retell, explain, invent or adapt ideas. A text may inspire meaningful writing, but it does not require a predetermined written product.
Poetry Basket	Purpose The planned poems in the Being Imaginative and Expressive framework develop enjoyment of language, rhythm, rhyme, imagery, memory and expression through repeated listening, joining in and performance.	Progression Listen and respond through words, actions or gesture; join repeated words and refrains; remember increasing amounts; recite familiar poems with others using growing confidence and expression.
Helicopter Stories	Purpose Once each week, children author an oral story, an adult scribes their words and the group enacts it. This protects authorship while developing narrative language, sequencing, listening and awareness that speech can be recorded.	Progression Contribute an idea and hear it read back; connect events and develop a role or character; increasingly invent, adapt and recount a connected narrative. Independent transcription is welcomed when ready but is not required to take part.
Talk Through Stories and text talk	Purpose Selected stories are revisited in depth once Reception routines are secure. Explicit vocabulary teaching, repeated story language, discussion and retelling strengthen comprehension and the language available for composition.	Progression Respond to a familiar story; recall characters or events; retell a sequence; predict, explain and use recently introduced vocabulary in talk, play and storytelling.
Squiggle Whilst You Wriggle	Purpose Early whole-body and large movement patterns support strength, coordination and movement control before transfer into smaller mark-making movements. This complements rather than replaces direct handwriting teaching.	Progression Develop large controlled movements and spatial awareness; transfer patterns into increasingly controlled marks; continue targeted gross- or fine-motor support where assessment identifies a need.
RWI phonics and handwriting	Purpose Daily, assessment-led RWI teaches the alphabetic code, blending and segmentation. Agreed formation phrases, Fred Fingers, word practice and brief dictation connect reading, spelling and handwriting.	Progression Retrieve and form taught graphemes; segment and spell accessible words; hold and transcribe short captions; move towards dictated or rehearsed phrases and simple sentences as code and sentence memory become secure.
Drawing Club	Purpose Beginning in Summer 1, Drawing Club brings together established talk, imagination, vocabulary, drawing and increasingly secure transcription. Adults maintain ambition in ideas while keeping the amount children record manageable.	Progression Explore character, setting or adventure orally and through drawing; formulate and rehearse an idea; select a manageable label, caption or sentence to record using taught transcription knowledge.

Writing development points

These Development Points are cumulative milestones, not termly stages, ceilings or a separate assessment checklist. Children may demonstrate learning from more than one point at the same time. RWI assessment identifies detailed phonic knowledge; these statements help practitioners notice the broader development of handwriting, spelling, sentence transcription, oral composition and purposeful writing.

Development point	Knowledge children build	Transcription skills	Composition and application skills
Typical starting points	Children may know Marks, drawings and print can carry meaning; tools can be used to make different marks.	Children may Explore drawing and mark-making tools with varying control; make marks in different ways; imitate or attempt familiar shapes, symbols or letters.	Children may Give meaning to a drawing or mark; communicate an idea through talk, gesture, action, play, drawing or marks; show interest in writing used by other people.
DP1	I know Sounds can be written with letters; letters have an agreed formation; words are made of sounds; writing can share meaning.	I can Form some taught lower-case letters from the correct starting point and direction; hear a taught sound and write its grapheme; use Fred Fingers with support; begin to represent sounds in simple words using taught graphemes.	I can Orally say a simple idea or sentence; hold and repeat a short spoken sentence with adult support; use drawings, marks, initial sounds, labels or messages for a meaningful purpose.
DP2	I know Sounds can be written with letters or groups of letters; words can be segmented for spelling; a spoken sentence can be written; rehearsal supports memory; spaces separate written words.	I can Correctly form an increasing range of taught lower-case letters, including in simple words; use Fred Fingers to segment; spell simple words with taught graphemes and an increasing range of Red Words; hold and write a short dictated caption; begin to leave spaces with support.	I can Orally compose and rehearse a simple sentence about an idea or experience; retain the sentence while an adult scribes or while I record a manageable part; write labels, messages, captions or observations for a known purpose.
DP3	I know Letters and letter groups represent sounds; words can be segmented for spelling; a sentence communicates a complete idea; oral rehearsal helps me hold it; rereading helps me check meaning.	I can Form most taught lower-case letters correctly in words and sentences; segment and spell using taught code and Red Words; hold and write a dictated phrase or simple sentence; leave spaces; reread and check with support where needed.	I can Orally compose and rehearse a simple sentence; shape an idea into a sentence that is manageable to write; increasingly use secure transcription to record my own ideas; explain what my writing communicates.
End of Reception statutory destination	The ELG Is an assessment point at the end of Reception, not the curriculum sequence and not a requirement for every child to arrive by the same route or at the same time.	Children at the expected level Write recognisable letters, most correctly formed; spell words by identifying sounds and representing them with a letter or letters; write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.	Evidence May come from dictation, directed application and meaningful self-chosen writing. Oral composition, adult-scribed authorship and storytelling remain important evidence of composition, although the statutory Writing ELG assesses what children can transcribe.

Annual text and poetry entitlement

Across every half term, children receive daily RWI, explicit handwriting and transcription practice, daily high-quality read-aloud, rich conversation and purposeful opportunities to draw, mark-make and write. A focus text is explored each week, Helicopter Stories takes place weekly and Poetry Basket material is revisited regularly. Once introduced later in Reception, Talk Through Stories is used every other week. Drawing Club begins in Summer 1. The entitlement below is guaranteed; teachers also read additional high-quality books chosen for their classes.

Term	Weekly focus text spine	Poetry Basket repertoire
Autumn	Autumn 1 The Colour Monster; All Are Welcome; You Choose; Once There Were Giants; The Squirrels Who Squabbled; The Gruffalo. Autumn 2 A Little Glow; Last Stop on Market Street; Emergency!; Kipper's Birthday; The Gingerbread Man; The Christmas Pine; Bunnies in a Sleigh.	Planned poems Chop Chop; Falling Apples; Leaves Are Falling; Breezy Weather; Wise Old Owl; Who Has Seen the Wind?
Spring	Spring 1 Old Bear; Not a Box; The Snowy Day; The Snow Fox and the Long, Long Night; The Tiny Seed; Supertato. Spring 2 The Little Red Hen; The Three Little Pigs; What the Ladybird Heard; Elephant in My Kitchen!; Eggs!	Planned poems I Can Build a Snowman; Popcorn; Pancakes; Spring Wind; Hungry Birdies; Little Seed.
Summer	Summer 1 The Very Hungry Caterpillar; The Artist Who Painted a Blue Horse; Me on the Map; The Naughty Bus; We're Going on a Bear Hunt; Mae Among the Stars; The Story Machine. Summer 2 Bunnies in a Boat; What the Ladybird Heard at the Seaside; Somebody Swallowed Stanley; Commotion in the Ocean; Sharing a Shell; The Journey Home from Grandpa's; The Wonderful Things You Will Be.	Planned poems Under a Stone; I Have a Little Frog; A Little Shell; Pitter Patter; Five Little Peas; Dance.

The wider nursery-rhyme and song repertoire remains a guaranteed part of Reception and is mapped in Being Imaginative and Expressive. Texts and poems provide language, knowledge, enjoyment and ideas; they are not a list of compulsory written products.

Autumn term

Throughout the term, weekly rich-text discussion, daily read-aloud, Poetry Basket, conversation, play and weekly Helicopter Stories provide ideas and language. The principal directed-writing emphasis is establishing sound-to-grapheme retrieval, formation and early word transcription.

Half term and curriculum context	Composition and meaningful application	Spelling and sentence transcription	Handwriting and growing independence
Autumn 1 Belonging, families, school routines, growing and early autumn. Indicative RWI route Groups A and B, with movement determined by assessment.	Oral composition Communicate an idea through talk, gesture, play, drawing or marks. Contribute a spoken idea during weekly Helicopter Stories and hear an adult read it back. Application Own name, drawings with meaning, purposeful marks, initial sounds, labels and messages within provision.	Knowledge Letters represent sounds; spoken words are made of sounds; writing carries meaning. Skills Hear a taught phoneme and write its grapheme; orally segment simple words with support; begin to use Fred Fingers; hear, repeat and retain sounds, words and very short phrases. Dictation Sounds and very short accessible words only, matched to taught code.	Teaching Use Squiggle Whilst You Wriggle to develop whole-body and large movement patterns, then transfer control into smaller mark-making movements. Alongside this, establish comfortable posture, paper position and functional grip, and teach lower-case formation with each RWI sound using its agreed phrase, starting point and direction. Independence Select a tool, make a purposeful mark and increasingly retrieve a taught grapheme without copying.
Autumn 2 Community roles, celebrations, familiar stories and seasonal change. Indicative RWI route Group C for many children; pupils continue at the assessed stage.	Oral composition Retell or sequence a familiar event; say a short message or sentence for an adult or peer; rehearse repeated story language. Application Names, cards, labels, messages and simple words or captions connected to real purposes and play.	Knowledge Words can be segmented into phonemes; taught graphemes can be selected for spelling; a spoken message can be written. Skills Spell accessible CVC words using taught Set 1 sounds; write taught Red Words; hold and transcribe a very short word sequence or caption one word at a time. Dictation Cumulative words and a very short caption when the code is secure.	Teaching Consolidate taught formations inside simple words; reinforce left-to-right orientation and begin to establish visible spaces between written words. Independence Use Fred Fingers and formation phrases with decreasing prompting; reread a short message with an adult.

Autumn assessment emphasis

Notice sound-to-grapheme recall, formation movement, oral segmentation and whether the child can retain a very short message. Assessment should identify the precise limiting component rather than judge the finished amount of writing.

Spring term

Children continue to develop oral narratives and explanations through the wider curriculum. Directed transcription moves towards short dictated captions and simple sentences as phonic knowledge, formation and sentence memory become secure enough.

Half term and curriculum context	Composition and meaningful application	Spelling and sentence transcription	Handwriting and growing independence
Spring 1 Toys then and now, materials and change, life in India and perseverance. Indicative RWI route Ditty for many children; pupils continue at the assessed stage.	Oral composition Sequence two or more related ideas orally; retell a familiar event; use newly taught vocabulary in a spoken sentence. Application Labels, messages, captions, simple storyboards and writing arising naturally from play, objects and first-hand experiences.	Knowledge Two or more letters can represent one sound; a short spoken caption can be held and written. Skills Spell CVC words and accessible Special Friend words; write an increasing range of taught Red Words; hold a short caption and transcribe one word at a time without losing the message. Dictation A short cumulative caption using secure Set 1 code and taught Red Words.	Teaching Consolidate formation through RWI letter families after initial sound-linked teaching. Develop orientation, size, line placement and spaces without sacrificing correct movement. Independence Prepare to write by saying the caption, use Fred Fingers for accessible words and check the written sequence against the spoken message.
Spring 2 Growth, animals, living things, information and familiar narratives. Indicative RWI route Red for many children; pupils continue at the assessed stage.	Oral composition Answer how and why questions; orally explain an observation or retell part of a familiar story; connect ideas using and, then or because with modelling. Application Captions, labels, messages, short observations and simple statements for a known purpose.	Knowledge A sentence communicates a complete idea; rehearsal supports memory; spaces show where written words begin and end. Skills Spell accessible four- and five-sound words using taught code; hold and write a short dictated caption or simple sentence; leave spaces with support; reread with an adult. Sentence conventions Adults consistently model a capital letter and full stop. Children use them when ready; independent punctuation is not treated as a fixed Reception milestone.	Teaching Form an increasing range of lower-case letters correctly within words; explicitly model capital-letter formation once lower-case foundations are secure. Independence Move from copying or adult-led recording towards using secure code to transcribe a rehearsed sentence with manageable prompts.

Spring assessment emphasis

Compare isolated word spelling, dictated captions and self-chosen writing. Notice whether difficulty arises from oral formulation, sentence memory, segmentation, grapheme retrieval, spelling, formation or spacing, and teach that component explicitly.

Summer term

Drawing Club begins in Summer 1 and continues in Summer 2. It brings together established talk, imagination, vocabulary and increasingly secure transcription. Children continue to receive explicit practice rather than being expected to develop fluency simply by writing more.

Half term and curriculum context	Composition and meaningful application	Spelling and sentence transcription	Handwriting and growing independence
Summer 1 Local journeys and maps, life cycles, observation, creativity and one space-inspired week. Indicative RWI route Green for many children; pupils continue at the assessed stage.	Oral composition Generate and rehearse a complete sentence about an observation, experience or imagined idea. Select a manageable version to record. Application Drawing Club, labels, captions, messages, map annotations, observations and one self-composed sentence when ready.	Knowledge Set 1 code can be applied across a sentence; a sentence needs meaningful word order and visible word boundaries. Skills Spell words using secure Set 1 code and taught Red Words; hold and write a cumulative dictated sentence; leave spaces; begin to use a capital letter and full stop; reread to check the message. Support Adults supply untaught spellings so composition remains age appropriate.	Teaching Increase ease and consistency while maintaining formation, relative size, line placement and spacing. Continue explicit lower-case and capital-letter practice. Independence Say, rehearse, segment and write a manageable sentence, using prompts or a sound mat as needed; make one supported check after rereading.
Summer 2 Seaside, contrasting environments, caring for the natural world and transition. Indicative RWI route Purple for some children; pupils continue at the assessed stage and are not held back by the calendar.	Oral composition Sustain and order a short sequence orally; use relevant detail and vocabulary; adapt an idea in Drawing Club or recount a meaningful experience. Application Drawing Club, purposeful messages, information captions, observations and simple phrases or sentences. Children who are ready may write more without this becoming the expectation for all.	Knowledge Secure Set 1 and taught Set 2 code can support increasingly independent transcription; rereading checks whether writing communicates the intended message. Skills Spell using cumulative taught code and Red Words; retain and transcribe a simple phrase or sentence; maintain spaces and increasingly secure sentence boundaries; reread and correct one taught feature with support. Dictation Cumulative sentence practice matched to assessed knowledge.	Teaching Maintain fluent, legible formation and spacing; use RWI-taught joins only when the programme sequence indicates readiness. Independence Choose an idea, rehearse it, use known transcription routines and explain what the writing says. Reduce support according to the component the child can control.

Statutory destination and assessment

The Early Learning Goal is an end-of-Reception assessment point, not the curriculum sequence. At the expected level, children write recognisable letters, most correctly formed; spell words by identifying sounds and representing them with a letter or letters; and write simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others. Evidence is gathered from what children know and can do across RWI, handwriting, dictation, directed application and meaningful independent writing. The school does not require every child to reach the destination at the same time or through the same amount of writing.

Transition to Year 1

Transition information identifies each child's secure RWI code and group, word-spelling knowledge, sentence memory, formation and spacing, oral-composition strengths, effective support and precise next transcription step. Year 1 continues RWI and explicit transcription from what each child securely knows while maintaining access to age-appropriate ideas and oral composition.