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Oxford Primary Writing Assessment © Oxford University Press 2015

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Aston Fields Middle School, Bromsgrove
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Woodchester Endowed Primary
Harewood Juniors
Rodmarton Primary
Great Rissington Primary
Redbrooke Primary
Naunton Park Primary
Stroud Valley Community School
Mickleton Primary
Bledington CE Primary
Bibury Primary
Sheepscombe Primary
Haresfield Primary
Oxford Primary Writing Assessment

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Introduction

The aim of this Handbook is to ensure that all children develop their full potential as writers by acquiring a wide range of writing skills and a life-long enthusiasm for writing. Together with its sister publication, Oxford Primary Reading Assessment, it provides schools with a whole school solution to teacher assessment of English, written by experts and thoroughly trialled in schools.

In this Oxford Primary Writing Assessment handbook, you will find:

- The Oxford Writing Criterion Scale – a comprehensive set of criteria created to inform consistent teacher assessment of writing from Reception/P1 right through to Year 6/P7
- Advice and simple tools to help teachers record and track pupil attainment and progress
- Clear next steps for children to ensure they make good progress
- Advice on reporting outcomes to parents and other stakeholders
- Exemplification of writing standards for each year group, with detailed commentary about judgements and next steps
- Additional writing samples for staff training and to support moderation
- A choice of writing ‘starters’ to use for summative assessment purposes.

Who is this book for?

All schools know that high quality assessment – linked to targeted and effective teaching – is the key to ensuring children make good progress. It allows teachers to identify and address any challenges children are facing as early as possible and also to extend and deepen learning for those who are ready.

For schools in England, the Oxford Writing Criterion Scale offers a comprehensive solution to assessment without Levels and can be used both as a periodic summative teacher assessment tool (see pages 8–9) and as a tool to inform next steps for success, both in the short and long term. It has been matched to the yearly expectations of the 2014 National Curriculum, so that teachers can assess, track and report pupil attainment and progress against these expectations. We have provided exemplification of the expected standard at the end of each year group as a guide.

Schools outside England, or those not following the National Curriculum in England, can also use the Oxford Writing Criterion Scale with confidence. That is because it is based on a deep understanding of progression in writing and the skills children need to master along the way, and goes far beyond simply ‘ticking the boxes’ of the 2014 National Curriculum in England. The Oxford Writing Criterion Scale is a curriculum-neutral assessment tool that sets high expectations for all children and draws on best practice and expert subject knowledge.
About the Oxford Writing Criterion Scale

The Writing Criterion Scale was developed by assessment expert Ros Wilson. It describes the writing journey that children make, from their first pre-writing behaviours through to a more complex and sophisticated understanding and mastery of writing skills. The Writing Criterion Scale breaks down children’s writing development into small steps so that it is easy to identify the point children have reached and the steps they need to make next in order to progress. Although the criteria are set out in a rough hierarchy, every child’s writing journey is different, so the Writing Criterion Scale supports a ‘best-fit’ teacher judgement against national expectations whilst also giving teachers (and other stakeholders) a very accurate, individual picture for every child.

Developed over more than 15 years and informed by over 20,000 pieces of children’s writing, the Writing Criterion Scale has recently undergone further development to ensure that it matches the expectations of the 2014 National Curriculum in England, and it is now known as the Oxford Writing Criterion Scale.

About the author

Ros Wilson has over forty-eight years’ experience in education, including twenty-seven years in schools, ten years in Senior Management positions and fourteen years in advisory and inspection work. She has taught in primary, middle and secondary schools in England and overseas, and has wide experience in teaching and advising on raising achievement for pupils with English as an additional language and also pupils with special educational needs.

Ros has a Masters Degree in Education, specializing in assessment. As well as being the creator of the Writing Criterion Scale and the widely used Big Writing approach to raising standards in writing, she is also co-creator of the Reading Criterion Scale and the Big Reading programme.

The Oxford Writing Criterion Scale and Big Writing

It goes without saying that it is only through the effective teaching and development of children’s writing skills that they will make the progress required. The Oxford Writing Criterion Scale can be used alongside any teaching approach but is particularly powerful when combined with Big Writing.

The Big Writing method has been proven over many years to be a highly effective approach to raising standards in writing. It focuses on:

1. Setting high expectations for all children and making writing fun!
2. Regular teaching and practice of basic skills (grammar, handwriting, spelling, punctuation)
3. Developing, through talk, the four key aspects of writing that make a real difference:
   • Vocabulary – increasingly ambitious words and phrases
   • Connectives – conjunctions, adverbs and prepositions to vary sentence structure
   • Openers – a range of techniques for opening sentences, again to vary structure
   • Punctuation – increasingly sophisticated forms of punctuation
4. Regular opportunities for children to apply their skills to extended writing
5. Ongoing assessment, marking and feedback of children’s writing – by teachers and peers

If you would like to know more about Big Writing and the CPD offered visit www.andrelleducation.com

If you would like to know more about Oxford University Press’ writing programme Big Writing Adventures visit www.oxfordprimary.co.uk
The Art of Writing

Writing is like ballet. It is only when all the steps have been learnt, the sequences have been rehearsed and re-rehearsed, the techniques have been honed and the performer has brought them all together in a wonderful interpretation of performance, that the abilities of the dancer (or the writer) can be truly judged. To know if a child has become a great writer we need to examine his or her actual writing, produced independently in response to a stimulus and purpose. The outcome of writing is ‘the dance’.

The curriculum defines what skills and abilities a child should have learnt by the end of each year of primary education. Teachers, however, must know what the outcomes of that learning should look like if the child deploys that learning to maximum effect in a piece of unsupported writing. This is problematic as there are many factors that influence how successful a piece of writing is, including:

- the purpose of writing
- the type of text that would achieve that purpose
- the audience for the writing
- the stimulus for writing.

Add to this list the child’s understanding and ability to select which of the myriad taught skills and abilities are the most appropriate and effective to achieve the maximum potential for achievement at or above age expectation, and we begin to understand the complexities of the task in hand.

Because it is such a complex skill, it is only when a child can consistently produce independent writing for a range of purposes and audiences around the expected standard for their age that they can be said to be writing securely at that standard.

Summative Assessment

Assessing the overall standard of achievement in writing through ongoing course work or work done in the course of daily practise is inappropriate for summative purposes. That type of assessment has a place – it is called formative assessment! It informs teaching and learning as the course progresses. At the end of the course, however, it is only by examining the individual’s ability to use that learning to produce a unique work of art that we can judge the standard the individual is performing at.

Writing must be assessed through ‘cold’ performance – the child needs to draw on their long-term memory, which will be retained into the future, rather than their short-term memory, much of which may ultimately be forgotten. They must not have had immediate coaching or other input and should not be able to draw on information provided through scaffolds or classroom displays. The teaching has been done – we now need to know what the outcome is and what the child still truly needs to learn and what they need to do most urgently. Summative assessment of a child’s writing should, therefore, take place termly to provide vital evidence of achievement.
Timing

Producing writing for assessment no longer needs to be time limited. Completion within a set time was necessary to prepare for an external testing system that no longer includes judgements on writing ability. It does, however, need to be done within one extended session, to ensure full independence. Alternative activities for ‘brain breaks’ might be provided if considered necessary, although by Upper Key Stage 2 roughly one hour to one and a quarter hours should be sufficient time to write, proof read, edit and improve a finished piece.

The only role for the teacher during production of the assessment piece might be quiet time prompts and monitoring that all the children seem comfortable and engaged.

Choosing appropriate stimuli for writing

Classes may be given a choice of three stimuli for the writing, from which they choose the one they feel most motivated by. It is, however, desirable that the whole key stage write to the same type of text. This enables better comparison of effectiveness of teaching, both of skills and of types of text.

Letters are a particularly useful text type for assessment purposes, particularly in the early stages, as they enable secure judgements on a wide range of features, such as organization and awareness of the audience. Particularly strong judgements are facilitated when the text is a ‘hybrid’, such as a letter with a set of embedded instructions, or a diary item or newspaper report.

Poetry, recount of a known story and narrative are not, usually, useful genres for assessment. Narrative is often the easiest and best context for developing writing skills, but children must be able to transfer their skills to at least two other text types before moving on. Otherwise they may use their writing voice in narrative only, where it is the obvious choice, and not in any other types of text, where it is essential for high level achievement.

For more suggestions of suitable tasks for the formal assessment of writing, see pages 76–77.
An example of an OWCS assessment

Below is the summative assessment outcome of a piece of writing done by a Year 2/P3 child towards the end of the autumn term. The writer has been judged to be a Developing Standard 3 and is therefore on track to meet national expectations at the end of the year. Criteria marked with a ● indicate the most obvious next steps for this child. (For more information about target setting, see pages 50–55).

**STANDARD 3: Year 2/P3**

**Name:** Sam Peters

**Date:** 11/12/2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Can communicate ideas and meaning confidently in a series of sentences of at least a paragraph in length. (May not be accurate, but mainly 'flows' as it has lost the 'list like' form typical of some early writing.)</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Can control use of ascenders/descenders and upper/lower case letters in handwriting.</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Can write in three or more text forms with reasonable accuracy. (If the writing is a narrative, simple report or recount of a known story, this cannot be ticked as they should already know these three text forms. If it is another genre, it can be ticked.)</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can provide enough detail to interest the reader (e.g. is beginning to provide additional information or description beyond a simple list).</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Can vary the structure of sentences to interest the reader (e.g. questions, direct speech or opening with a subordinate clause, etc.).</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Can sometimes use interesting and ambitious words (they should be words not usually used by a child of that age, and not a technical word used in a taught context only, e.g. 'volcano' in geography or 'evaporate' in science).</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Can usually sustain narrative and non-narrative forms (can write at length – close to a side of A4 at least – staying on task).</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Can match organization to purpose (e.g. showing awareness of the structure of a letter, openings and endings, the importance of the reader, organizational devices, beginnings of paragraphing, etc.).</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Can usually maintain the use of basic sentence punctuation (full stops followed by capital letters) in a piece close to a side of A4 in length. (May be on a shorter piece or may not be accurate to achieve the 'Developing' category.)</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Can spell most common words correctly and most of the Years R, 1 &amp; 2 High Frequency Words, and the Year 1 &amp; 2 words in the National Curriculum. Appendix 1.</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Can use phonetically plausible strategies to spell or attempt to spell unknown polysyllabic words. (If all the spelling is correct in a long enough piece to provide secure evidence, tick this criterion.)</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Can use connectives other than 'and' to join two or more simple sentences, thoughts, ideas, etc. (e.g. but, so, then, or, when, if, that, because).</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Can use a range of punctuation, mainly correctly, including at least three of the following: full stop and capital letter, exclamation mark, question mark, comma (at least in lists), apostrophe for simple contraction and for singular possession (at least), e.g. 'John’s dog...’, ‘The cat’s bowl...’</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Can make their writing lively and interesting (e.g. provides additional detail, consciously uses humour, varies sentence length or uses punctuation to create effect, etc.).</td>
<td>✘</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Can link ideas and events, using strategies to create flow (e.g. Last time, also, after, then, soon, at last, and another thing...).</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Can use adjectives and descriptive phrases for detail and emphasis (consciously selects the adjective for purpose, rather than using a familiar one, e.g. a title: 'Big Billy Goat Gruff').</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Structures basic sentences correctly, including capitals and full stops in a longer piece (one error is acceptable).</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Can use accurate and consistent handwriting (in print at a minimum, can show consistent use of upper/lower case, ascenders/descenders, size and form).</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Begins to show evidence of joined handwriting.</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Uses past and present tenses correctly.</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Can produce close to a side (or more) of A4 writing that is clear and coherent with one or more strong features.</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Standard 3 – Developing</td>
<td>✔ = 8 ➥</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence of progress between summative assessments

Below is the summative assessment outcome of a piece of writing done by a Year 2/P3 child at the end of the spring term. It follows the assessment carried out in the autumn term – shown on page 10.

This child is now judged to be a Secure Standard 3 and should therefore be able to meet the National Standard in the end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessment. The child has made good progress from Developing to Secure and from a total of 8 to 13 points. However, there are still aspects of Standard 3 that this child needs to develop, in particular: varying sentence structure (on which no progress has been made), adding descriptive detail to interest the reader, and writing stamina in general.

**STANDARD 3: Year 2/P3**

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<td>Can match organization to purpose (e.g. showing awareness of the structure of a letter, openings and endings, the importance of the reader, organizational devices, beginnings of paragraphing, etc.).</td>
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<td>Can usually maintain the use of basic sentence punctuation (full stops followed by capital letters) in a piece close to a side of A4 in length. (May be on a shorter piece or may not be accurate to achieve the ‘Developing’ category.)</td>
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<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> Standard 3 – Secure</td>
<td>✔ = 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0–5 ticks = Not yet working at this Standard; review against Standard 2</th>
<th>6–9 ticks = Developing</th>
<th>10–16 ticks = Secure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17–21 ticks = Advanced Assessment point = Children with 18 or more ticks may be assessed against Standard 4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>