

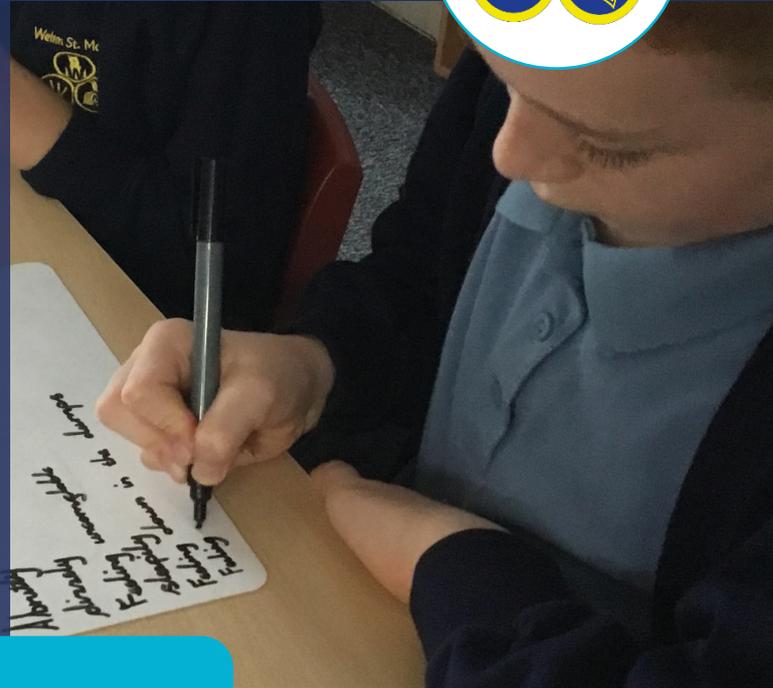


ACTIVE ENGLISH CASE STUDY

The Impact of Active English on SPaG and Writing Data

A Post-Pandemic Case Study

Through the use of Active English, this case study outlines the positive impact of having a highly-focussed, whole school approach to the rehearsal of grammar skills and application to writing from Year 2 to Year 6 at Welton St Mary's Primary Academy.



INTENT...

At Welton St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy, our school motto is 'Together we care, learn and thrive' with a key driver of our school vision being 'opportunities'. We are a village based two-form entry school with 375 pupils on roll. The number of pupils on the SEND register is 31.5% lower than the national average and the number of children who speak English as an additional language is 11, significantly below the national average for a school of our size. We have been using Active English since 2017, but since the Covid-19 pandemic, writing data had

slipped below the national average while our SPaG scores remained above national but was down on previous years by roughly 10%. In our combined reading, writing and maths data, it was clear that the writing data was a major contributing factor pulling the data below the national average. In the academic year 2022-2023, the teaching of writing formed a large part of our school development plan. After some exploration, we found that Active English was being taught, but inconsistently and often did not link to the children's writing outcomes.

OUTCOMES:

- To ensure that Active English was being taught consistently in all classrooms from Year 2 to Year 6
- To ensure that Active English is being used for grammar rehearsal and not grammar teaching
- To ensure skills are being taught, the models being used and the sentences that the children create in Active English link to their current writing genre
- To ensure the skills being rehearsed in Active English are referred to in the writing lesson
- For staff to feel more confident in teaching the Active English approach which would then impact on the progress made by the children
- For children to be at least meeting the national average for writing at the end of Year 6 and exceeding national average in SPaG



IMPLEMENTATION...

Since the initial implementation of Active English, our school had had some staff turnover with newer staff teaching Active English without having had the training. After a Quality Assurance visit in January 2022 as well as whole school observations, it became apparent that some top-up training was needed so that the approach was being taught consistently across all classrooms.

During this training, it was also decided that Active English must be taught before the English lesson and must link explicitly to the genre being taught. It was noticed during the 'Explore' phase that in classrooms where this was happening, the writing outcomes of the children were positive.

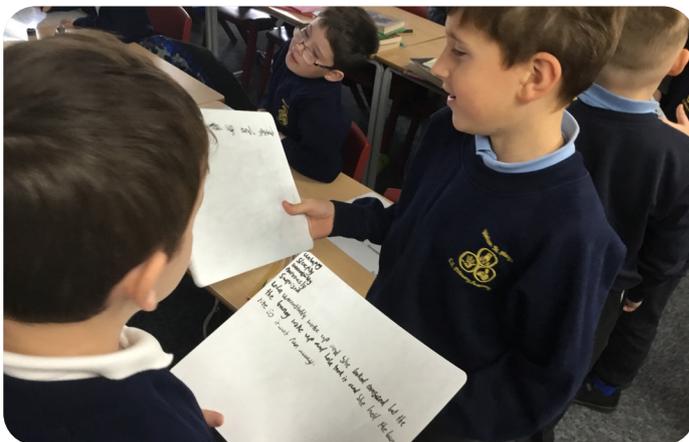
A follow-up staff meeting took place showing how Active English can feed into and enhance the English lesson. Staff were then given time to feed this into their practise before some mutually agreed lesson drop ins. At these drop ins and in follow up CPD sessions, staff commented on the positive impact of the changes made so far but also mentioned that getting the Active English to fit into the 15 minutes allocated was proving tricky.

After further investigation, further CPD sessions took place working with staff to improve the pace of certain elements of the lesson. In a follow up staff meeting a few months later, staff further commented on the positive impacts of the changes made to their practice but specifically highlighted the impact of making Active English link explicitly to the English lesson and referring to the grammatical skills rehearsed in Active English in the English lessons.

Across the year, good practice was shared amongst and between year group teams, further coaching and CPD sessions took place and an improvement was noticed in

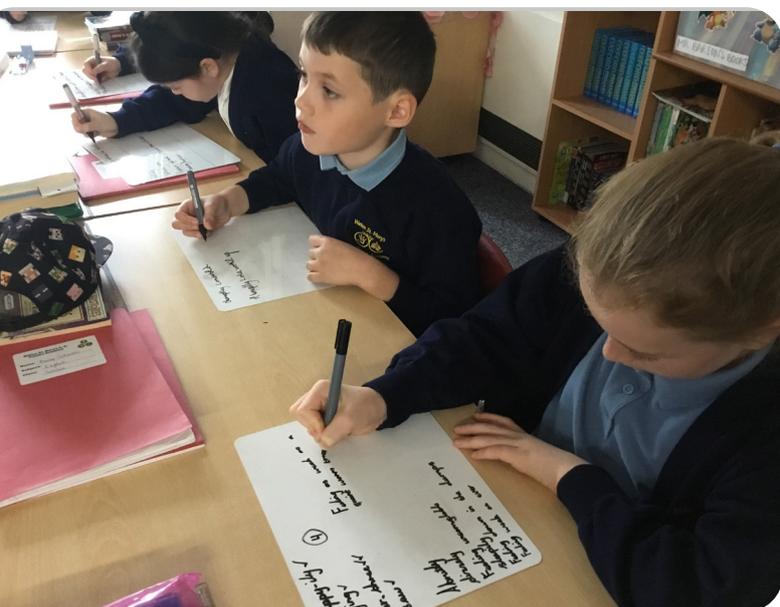


the quality of non-core writing as well. In a parent survey asking what parents would like more support with to help their children at home, Active English was top of the list in most year groups, indicating that children were talking to their parents about their writing more at home than in the past. Based on this, the school hosted two successful Active English Parent Workshops with positive feedback being received. After a year of hard work, the school now has a clear model for the teaching of writing with Active English being at the heart of this.



"The Active English approach has had a huge impact on both knowledge of SpAG and writing at Welton St. Mary's. The symbols provide hooks which enable pupils to gain a strong grasp of various grammatical elements. The approach is based upon recalling knowledge regularly, ensuring that new knowledge is retrieved repeatedly and therefore committed to long term memory. The low stakes methodology encourages all pupils to have the confidence to experiment with vocabulary and grammar. As a result of the elements mentioned above, as well as tweaks to the way in which we teach writing skills, we have seen the quality of what pupils are able to produce improve greatly."

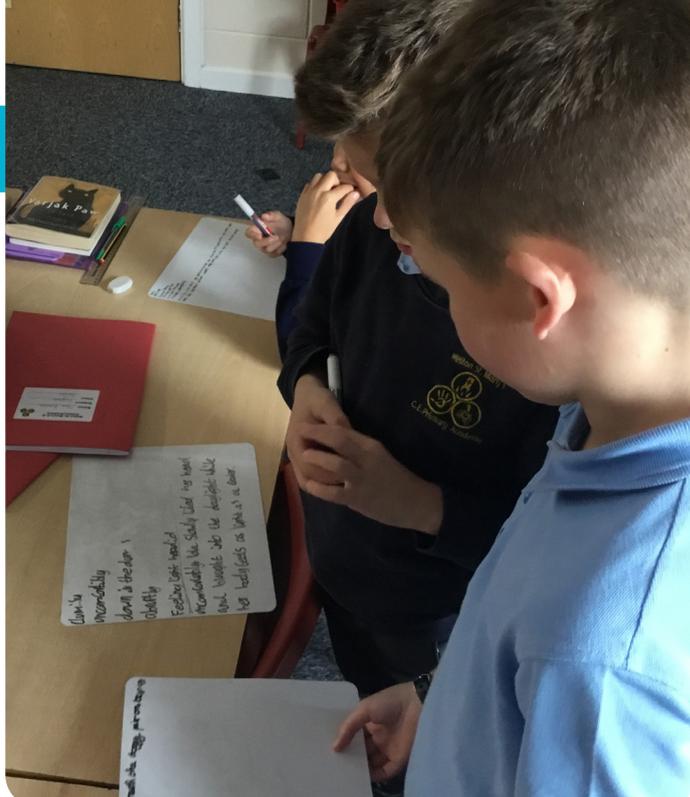
Hannah Sirdifield, Year Three Class Teacher



IMPACT...

The changes that we made to the quality, consistency and thoroughness of the teaching of Active English has had a positive impact on not just SPaG and Writing outcomes, but also on engagement with writing across the school. Staff have mentioned that they feel more confident in teaching the approach and that the impact can be seen in the quality of writing that all children are producing, including children classed as SEND and EAL.

The impact of high quality grammar rehearsal through Active English has positively impacted various areas of our schools 'Writing Cycle': an improved knowledge of grammar has led to more thorough investigation and better engagement with model texts, higher quality sentence construction in shared writing lessons and more ambitious vocabulary and sentence types being applied to independent writing.



End of Y6 Data July 2022

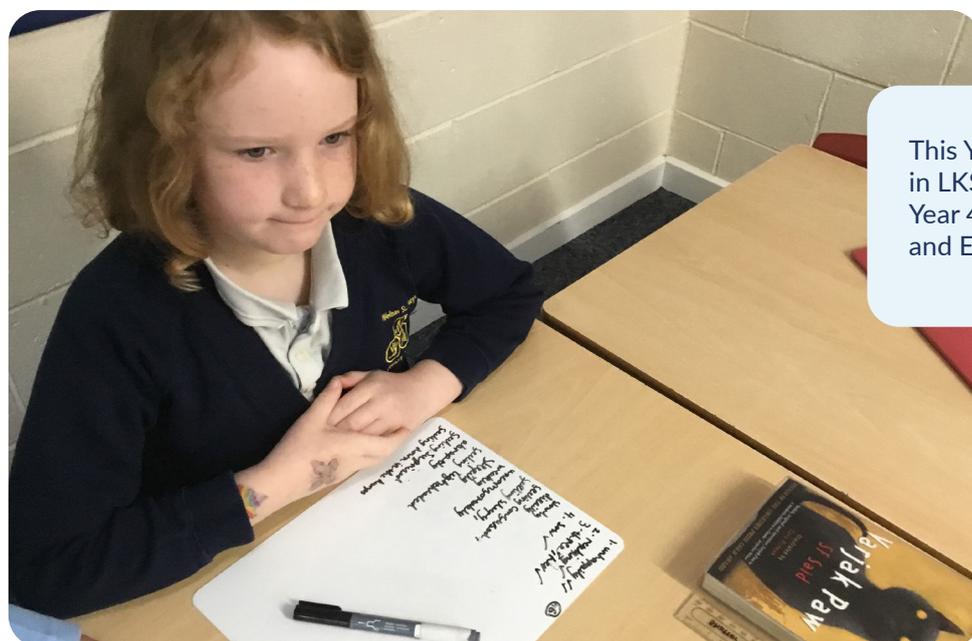
| | National | WSM | % difference |
|--------------|----------|-----|--------------|
| Writing | 69% | 57% | - 12% |
| SPaG | 72% | 81% | + 9% |
| RWM Combined | 59% | 58% | - 1% |

End of Y6 Data July 2023

| | National | WSM | % difference |
|--------------|----------|-----|--------------|
| Writing | 71% | 75% | + 4% |
| SPaG | 72% | 90% | + 18% |
| RWM Combined | 59% | 71% | + 12% |

"Driven by strong leadership, Active English has not only set high expectations for teaching and learning but also resulted in a consistent pedagogical approach across the school. Staff enjoy teaching it, children are fully engaged in Active English sessions and the learning that has happened has had a significant impact on progress and outcomes."

Nicola Gough, Head Teacher



This Year 6 cohort had both lockdowns in LKS2 and had 26% new joiners since Year 4, including children with SEND and English as an additional language.