



What Happens Before the Pencil Hits the Page

Classroom Checklist

This checklist is not about doing *more*. It is about noticing and strengthening what already happens before writing. Teachers can use this as:

- a planning reflection
- a staff-meeting discussion tool
- or a personal classroom audit

✓ **Talk as the Foundation**

- Do children regularly explain ideas out loud before being asked to write?
- Are they encouraged to speak in **full sentences**, not just short answers?
- Do I model clear, structured spoken language when demonstrating ideas?
- Is talk purposeful and structured, rather than rushed or incidental?

✓ **Storytelling and Shared Language**

- Are stories revisited and retold, not just read once?
- Do children have opportunities to retell stories in their own words?
- Is storytelling used across subjects (history, science, RE), not just English?
- Do children experience language in extended, connected forms?

✓ **Vocabulary as Living Language**

- Are new words introduced orally before being expected in writing?
- Do children use new vocabulary in talk across the day?
- Are similarities and differences between words discussed aloud?
- Is vocabulary revisited over time, rather than taught once and moved on from?

✓ **Oral Rehearsal**

- Do children say sentences aloud before writing them down?
- Is oral rehearsal modelled and valued as a writing strategy?
- Are children encouraged to whisper or quietly repeat sentences as they write?
- Do children read their writing aloud to check meaning?

✓ **Writing as the End Point**

- Does writing feel like a natural next step rather than a sudden leap?
- Are children supported to move from idea → language → page?
- Is success measured by clarity of meaning, not just quantity of writing?

Reception to Year 6: How the Foundations Develop

Reception

Focus: *Language formation*

- Rich talk through play, storytelling and role play
- Repeated retelling of familiar stories
- Vocabulary developed through shared experiences
- Oral sentences rehearse ideas without writing pressure

👉 Writing grows out of spoken language and experience.

Year 1

Focus: *Turning talk into simple writing*

- Oral rehearsal of sentences before writing
- Clear modelling of sentence structures aloud
- Vocabulary explored through hearing and saying words in context
- Story retelling supports early composition

👉 Writing begins to mirror what children already know how to say.

Year 2

Focus: *Extending and organising ideas*

- Children rehearse multiple linked sentences orally
- Vocabulary choices discussed before writing
- Stories adapted orally before written changes
- Talk supports sentence flow and cohesion

👉 Writing becomes more connected because thinking is more organised.

Lower KS2

Focus: *Structuring meaning*

- Oral planning of paragraphs and explanations
- Spoken sentence starters model academic language
- Vocabulary refined through discussion and comparison
- Talk used to rehearse subject-specific writing

👉 Writing improves because ideas are shaped before writing begins.



Upper KS2

Focus: *Refining clarity and control*

- Oral rehearsal of arguments, explanations and narratives
- Children talk through purpose, audience and tone
- Vocabulary choices justified through discussion
- Editing begins with reading aloud and listening

👉 Writing becomes deliberate, controlled and purposeful.