

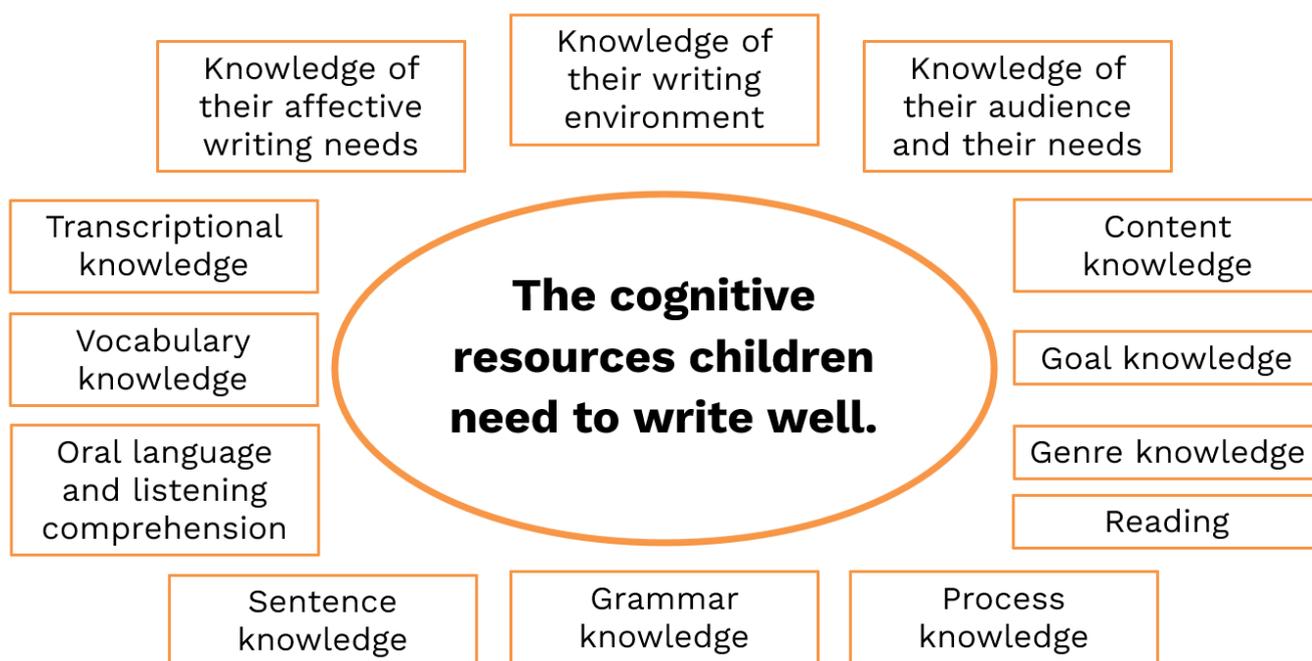
# Evidence-based writing instruction for children with SEND



## The Writing For Pleasure Centre

- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

For all students, writing is the most cognitively challenging thing they do while at school. Writing requires children to coordinate at least thirteen different cognitive resources simultaneously (Young & Ferguson [2022](#)). In addition, there are many social, emotional, metacognitive and self-regulatory skills that they have to use and apply to produce a great piece of writing, and to develop themselves as confident and successful writers (Young & Ferguson [2021](#)).



*(Writing is hard (but rewarding)). The cognitive resources children have to draw on to write well. Adapted from The Science Of Teaching Primary Writing by Young & Ferguson [2022a](#))*

Children with SEND can find writing a particular challenge (Young & Ferguson [2023](#)). For example, children with learning disabilities can find it difficult to:

- Conceptualise what their writing is meant to do for their reader and what it is meant to look like.
- Write imaginatively.
- Organise their ideas and write with a strong authorial voice.
- Generate ideas.

- Translate their ideas into sentences fluently.
- Find the words they want to use.
- Craft sentences which are transcriptionally accurate.
- Use conventional spelling.
- Handwrite quickly, happily and fluently.
- Rework their compositions and make revisions.
- Manage themselves during writing time.

Children with learning disabilities typically have:

- Less writerly knowledge than their peers.
- Less process knowledge than their peers.
- Less genre knowledge than their peers.
- Negative feelings about writing and being a writer.

Children with learning disabilities typically believe that:

- Writing is about mechanics, spelling, punctuation, capitalisation, and penmanship.
- They can't write without someone else being there to help them.

Children with learning disabilities typically produce writing that is:

- Low in quality, disorganised and lacking cohesion.

Below is a review of the meta-analyses of studies specific to working with children with SEND. The table lists the evidence-based instructional practices and their 'effect size'. This tells us how powerful the type of instruction is found to be across the multiple studies analysed. Anything at or above 0.4 can be considered to make a significant positive contribution towards children's learning. Effect sizes can often be different across different papers. Readers should therefore treat such findings only as a broad indicator of what can work when the conditions are right.

<b>Evidence-based writing practices specific for children with SEND</b>	
<b>Type of instruction</b>	<b>Effective size</b>
Goal setting	0.57
Genre study	0.94
Teaching the writing processes	0.60
Generating ideas, drawing, talking and making plans	1.55
Mini-lessons (SRSD instruction)	2.09
Transcriptional instruction (encoding, letter formation, handwriting and spelling)	2.40
Be a writer-teacher (modelling and writing alongside)	2.48
Pupil-conferencing by the teacher and feedback from peers	0.75
This table is taken from: <i>Supporting Children With SEND To Be Great Writers: A Guide For Teachers And SENCOS</i> (Young & Ferguson <a href="#">2023</a> ).	

The table above confirms that teachers and schools who use the *Writing For Pleasure* approach and its associated materials are already doing an excellent job in supporting their children with SEND to become great writers. For example, the *Writing For Pleasure* approach ensures:

- Children are writing for a sustained period every single day (The Writing For Pleasure Centre [2023](#)).
- Children are regularly invited to write about things they know a lot about and are motivated to write about. This means they are naturally writing from a position of cognitive confidence and strength (Young & Ferguson [2022b](#)).
- Children are taught daily mini-lessons which are short, elegant, explicit and follow the principles of self-regulation strategy development instruction. This includes lessons on grammar, sentence construction and other literary *craft moves* (Young et al. [2021](#); Young & Ferguson [2022c](#), [2022d](#)).
- Children are always set a precise and easily achievable ‘process goal’ for each lesson (Young & Ferguson [2023](#)).
- Writing instruction is regularly accompanied by a poster, chart, checklist or other resource to visualise and reiterate taught content (Young et al. [2021](#); Young & Ferguson [2022c](#), [2022d](#), [2022e](#); Young & Hayden [2022](#)).
- Children get to write in environments which are calm, well-organised and reassuringly consistent ([2023](#)).
- Children with SEND are invited to write alongside their friends who may be more experienced writers.
- Children receive live verbal feedback and responsive individualised writing instruction every day from their writer-teacher (Ferguson & Young [2021](#)).
- Children see writing modelled (either live or pre-made) every day as part of a good mini-lesson and they have opportunities to watch and write alongside their writer-teacher during writing time (Young et al. [2021](#); Young & Ferguson [2022c](#), [2022d](#), [2022e](#)).
- Children are encouraged to use a writer’s process which suits where they are developmentally (Young & Ferguson [2023](#)).
- Expectations are clear as children are shown what they are expected to produce for themselves via the use of mentor texts and genre study (Young & Hayden [2022](#)).
- Children receive a solid apprenticeship in writing in the EYFS and KS1. This means they master encoding, letter formation, handwriting fluency and basic sentence construction early into their writerly apprenticeship (The Writing For Pleasure Centre [2023](#); Young & Ferguson [2022f](#)).
- Writing classrooms are set up to ensure that children are always expected (and importantly, are utterly able) to write well independently. This means they don’t acquire bad habits like ‘learned helplessness’ (Young et al. [2021](#); Young & Ferguson [2022f](#)).

Finally, it's important to say that by no means is every student with a SEND a poor writer. Indeed, we've met many pupils with a SEND who are exceptionally talented writers. It's also important to say that we have an absolute belief and faith in children with SEND. We think they are really funny, original, interesting, knowledgeable, thoughtful, and super smart. Students with SEND bring many writerly strengths to our classrooms.

If you are interested in reading about how to support children with SEND to be great writers, get our latest eBook: [Supporting Children With SEND To Be Great Writers: A Guide For Teachers And SENCOS](#)

