Writing: Full progression map

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The full progression map for writing provides a description of writers working at each level (levels 2 to 8) to help you identify the level your pupils are working at.

Select one of the writing stages below (budding, developing, etc.) and match your knowledge of the pupil's work to the detailed descriptions. Alternatively, you can match your pupil to a writing stage from the level judgements on the pupil's Assessing Pupils' Progress (APP) guidelines sheet.

Budding writer

Likely to be assessed as low level 2 in Key Stage 3

Pupils at this stage are beginning to write with some relevant content which may be either brief and underdeveloped or repetitive. In some forms of writing, their purpose is clear and some of the expected features of the type of writing are present. Sequencing and grouping of ideas is at a basic level.

Pupils write mainly in simple sentences with limited use of connectives apart from ‘and’. Some straightforward sentences are demarcated accurately with full stops and capital letters.

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Words are likely to be chosen from a simple, almost 'speech-like' vocabulary.

These writers are likely still to need targets to take them to level 2 in some AF areas.

See the following primary writing standards files for exemplification of pupils' work at this level but please note that these pupils are well below secondary age. There are no secondary-age pupil standards files for this level.

- APP writing standards file: Julia (Year 1 low level 2)
- APP writing standards file: Kaycee (Year 2 low level 2)
- APP writing standards file: Stephanie (Year 4, low level 2)

Likely to be assessed as secure or high level 2 in Key Stage 3

Pupils' writing is beginning to express their own ideas and sometimes engages the reader's interest with an apt choice of words. In some forms of writing, they try to match the style to the task. While the overall organisation is basic, openings and closings are sometimes successfully managed.

Mostly simple sentences are still used but some variety in sentence openings is now evident. There is some use of punctuation marks apart from the full stop. Use of present and past tenses is now usually consistent.

Pupils are beginning to try out the effect of newly learned words in their own writing.

These writers are likely to need targets to take them to level 3 in some AF areas.

See the following primary writing standards files for exemplification of pupils' work at this level but please note that these pupils are well below secondary age. There are no secondary-age pupil standards files for this level.

- APP writing standards file: Nikita (Year 1 secure level 2)
- APP writing standards file: Daniel (Year 1, high level 2)
- APP writing standards file: James (Year 1 high level 2)

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Developing writer

Likely to be assessed as low level 3 in KS3 or GCSE grade G in KS4

Pupils at this stage are beginning to write with a sense of audience and purpose. They are beginning to establish a viewpoint and maintain it in their writing for some of the time. There is an attempt to sequence ideas or material logically.

Pupils write mainly in simple sentences with and, but, then and so as the most common connectives. Some straightforward sentences are demarcated accurately with full stops, capital letters and question marks.

In most writing, pupils use simple, generally appropriate vocabulary.

These writers are likely still to need targets to take them to level 3 in some AF areas.

Likely to be assessed as secure or high level 3 in KS3 or GCSE grade G/F in KS4

Pupils' writing is often imaginative and clear and is beginning to be adapted to different readers. In most writing, there is an attempt to organise ideas with some related points placed next to each other. Within paragraphs/sections pupils attempt to link sentences. There is usually a sense of a beginning and an end to a piece of writing.

Pupils are starting to write longer sentences and sometimes choose from the wider range of connectives that will support this. There is some variation in tenses and verb forms and use of a wider range of punctuation - for example the use of speech marks.

Pupils are beginning to use vocabulary for effect.

These writers are likely to need targets to take them to level 4 in some AF areas.

See Pupil 9 – Year 7 – High level 3 for exemplification of pupil work at this level.

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Competent writer

Likely to be assessed as low level 4 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade F in Key Stage 4

Pupils who are becoming competent writers have relevant ideas, some of which are developed with some detail. They can usually establish a viewpoint and maintain it most of the time. They are usually clear about the purpose of their writing and can sometimes sustain consistently the form and style that matches it. They are beginning to organise their writing by clustering ideas or by using a time sequence. These writers often produce work that starts with promise.

Sentences are beginning to vary in length and structure. There is increasing use of complex sentences with connectives such as if, when, because. Most sentences are correctly demarcated with capital letters and full stops. They are starting to develop the use of commas.

The range of their vocabulary is growing and words are occasionally chosen for effect.

These writers are likely still to need targets to take them to level 4 in some AF areas.

See the standards files below for exemplification of pupil work at this level.

- Pupil 11 - Year 8 - Low level 4
- Pupil 12 – Year 9 – Low level 4

Likely to be assessed as secure or high level 4 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade F/E in Key Stage 4

Pupils who are securely established as competent writers can be relied upon to choose relevant content and to develop some aspects of it by adding detail. They establish a straightforward viewpoint and manage to maintain it with good consistency. The writing has clarity of purpose and the main features of the selected form are deployed appropriately, although there is still the possibility of some inconsistencies. The organising principles behind their writing will be simple but usually strong enough to link the openings and the endings.

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Secure competent writers sometimes make conscious attempts to vary the length, structure and subject of sentences. Changes of verb tense are now managed without confusion. Complex sentences are used more frequently with the range of connectives that these require. The accuracy of sentence demarcation may decrease a little as sentences become longer and more varied in structure. There is emerging evidence that these writers are beginning to understand the use of commas to mark clause boundaries. Other punctuation such as speech marks and question marks is used.

Words are now sometimes chosen deliberately for impact and the vocabulary used may be extended beyond the everyday to incorporate specialist words linked to the subject matter.

These writers are likely to need targets to take them to level 5 in some AF areas.

See Pupil 10 – Year 7 – Secure level 4 for exemplification of pupil work at this level.

Active writer

Likely to be assessed as low level 5 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade E in Key Stage 4

Pupils who are becoming active writers have relevant ideas that are developed with some imaginative detail. They are usually clear about the purpose of their writing, and are able to write in a form and style that matches it. They are beginning to organise their writing in paragraphs to give it an overall structure, and are starting to manage the development of their material effectively across the whole text.

Sentences usually link together well within paragraphs and show a variety of lengths, structures and subjects. There may be some examples where this variation has been consciously chosen for a particular effect. A wider range of connectives is now used to show the relationship between ideas. There may be a greater use of modal verbs to express shades of meaning. Active writers use a full range of punctuation. Sentence demarcation is mostly reliable, but punctuation within sentences often still poses problems, particularly in longer and more ambitious sentences.

Some words are chosen for effect and attempts at a wider, more ambitious vocabulary are often successful.

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These writers are likely still to need targets to take them to level 5 in some AF areas.

See Pupil 14 – Year 8 – Low level 5 for exemplification of pupil work at this level.

Likely to be assessed as secure or high level 5 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade E/D in Key Stage 4

These writers can establish an appropriate style for their writing. Because of increasingly confident control over written language, they are able to shape their material appropriately for the form they have chosen. The main purpose of the writing is clear and consistent, and these writers structure their work into paragraphs that are clearly linked. In addition to these features, a consistent viewpoint and some well-chosen attention to detail mean that active writers are able to maintain the interest of their readers throughout the whole text.

Paragraphs are built from well-linked sentences with a variation in length, structure and subject. The secure active writer knows that there are choices that can be made when composing sentences and is sometimes able to exercise that choice to good effect – perhaps for emphasis or greater clarity. Active writers can deploy a range of verb forms and connectives to express meanings that are more complex. Punctuation, both at sentence boundaries and within sentences, is usually reliable: where mistakes occur, it will be in ambitious structures.

Active writers use a wider vocabulary to match the needs of their subject and make conscious word choices for effect. Inappropriate choices are still possible but will usually be 'near misses'.

These writers are likely to need targets to take them to level 6 in some AF areas.

See the standards files below for exemplification of pupil work at this level.

- Pupil 13 – Year 7 – Secure level 5
- Pupil 15 – Year 9 – Secure level 5

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Reflective writer

Likely to be assessed as low level 6 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade D in Key Stage 4

Reflective writers are beginning to write with a convincing individual voice, selecting an appropriate level of formality. They can adapt or combine the usual conventions of certain text types in order to create more imaginative and effective pieces of writing. Control over structure across the whole text is becoming more secure.

The development of topics within paragraphs is often well managed so that meaning and purpose are clear. Links between paragraphs usually ensure that the development of ideas is clearly signalled to the reader. Reflective writers are becoming increasingly confident in deploying a range of sentences that contribute to the overall effect of their writing. Punctuation within longer sentences is still developing and there may still be occasional errors, as they are beginning to deploy a full range of punctuation marks.

These writers are likely still to need targets to take them to level 6 in some AF areas.

See Pupil 16 – Year 8 – Low level 6 for exemplification of pupil work at this level.

Likely to be assessed as secure or high level 6 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade D/C in Key Stage 4

These pupils write with a convincing individual voice, selecting an appropriate level of formality. The range of text types within which they can adapt the usual conventions in order to create more imaginative and effective pieces of writing is widening. Reflective writers have enough control over text and sentence structure to decide confidently what is required to take account of the needs of the reader.

The development of topics within paragraphs is well managed so that meaning and purpose are clear. Links between paragraphs ensure that the development of ideas is clearly signalled to the reader. Reflective writers reliably deploy a range of sentences that contribute to the overall effect of their writing. Within longer sentences they deploy a full range of punctuation marks to increasingly good effect.

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Vocabulary is chosen to match purpose and audience, is varied in range and includes ambitious choices.

These writers are likely to need targets to take them to level 7 in some AF areas.

Versatile writer

Likely to be assessed as low level 7 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade C in Key Stage 4

Like the reflective writer, versatile writers engage and sustain the reader's interest. They adapt style and register to different forms, including using an impersonal style where appropriate. They use a range of sentence structures and varied vocabulary to create effects.

Paragraphing and correct punctuation are used to make the sequence of events or ideas coherent and clear to the reader. Versatile writers can, however, do all these things with greater reliability in a wider range of contexts. They can work independently and successfully on a wider range of writing tasks, bringing to bear more experience and deploying a larger repertoire of responses.

These writers are likely still to need targets to take them to level 7 in some AF areas.

Likely to be assessed as secure or high level 7 in Key Stage 3 or GCSE grade C/B in Key Stage 4

The secure versatile writer has mastered the key aspects of the craft of writing. They have confidence in using their writing skills and can respond clearly and coherently across the full range of forms they have encountered, taking account of purpose and audience. They perform well in a range of contexts including when they need to write without support under pressure of time. They recognise that they still have much to learn but the foundations are in place, so that through increasing maturity, continued application to their individual targets, wider experience of reading and writing, increasing care and accuracy, their writing will continue to improve.

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These writers are likely to need targets to take them to level 8 in some AF areas.

See Pupil 20 – Year 9 – Secure level 7 for exemplification of pupil work at this level.

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