



## Tip Number Two: be specific in your praise

At the moment, lots of our norms are looking quite different. Some families have told us that their children are asking for a lot of reassurance, which is understandable given the circumstances that we find ourselves in, but can be difficult to answer if you aren't sure what is expected from them. We know that you're all doing your best in difficult circumstances and that most of you (unless teaching is your day job!) don't have the background training to necessarily know how children learn. That's not to say you can't apply a few of our tips and tricks, though, such as how to give specific praise.

Saying 'well done' and 'great work' is positive and supportive, but it doesn't help children to know what they've done well and what they could do better in the future. Children like to understand what is expected of them and then get clear feedback on which parts of that they've managed to achieve; this is one of the most powerful tools that teachers use to ensure children make progress. Some of it is written in books as marking, but much of it happens in the moment, when teachers are moving around the room giving verbal feedback to children. If children hear feedback whilst in the middle of a piece of work, it allows them to make improvements there and then.

Let's use writing as an example. When children write a longer piece such as a story or a persuasive speech, we call this 'extended writing'. It's when children combine all the skills and techniques they've been learning about into one longer piece of writing. It's often a big ask of our children – they have to combine handwriting, spelling, punctuation, formulating ideas into sentences and choosing great words all at the same time. It's quite a skill! If they know what kinds of skills to include, e.g. the type of punctuation or the type of language, there's something specific to measure it against. To help you understand the kinds of things that each year group works on, we've provided a summary of some of these in a table overleaf. If your child is in the middle of writing something, try using these as a way of identifying the very specific things that your child has done well at.

Examples of things you might say:

- Wow – the word dazzling is so good. It really describes just how bright the light is.
- I'm so impressed that you used an exclamation mark!
- Your description of the forest is so vivid. I can really imagine being there.
- I like how you included some speech between the characters here. It helps show what kind of people they are.
- Fantastic spelling. I can see that you've tried hard to use your phonics to spell this word.
- Well done for splitting your ideas into paragraphs. It really helps to structure your story.

You can also use these to ask your children what they think they did well. Children are used to talking about their learning in school so should be able to tell you what they think they did well.

## Grammar and Punctuation by year group

<b>Year group</b>	<b>The kinds of things we hope to see in children's writing</b>
<b>Reception</b>	Starting to use full stops and capital letters in sentences Finger spaces between words Use of phonics to have a go at spelling new words
<b>1</b>	Consistent use of full stops and capital letters in sentences Starting to use capital letters for the names of people and places Beginning to use question marks and exclamation marks Using 'and' to join parts of sentences (plus possibly 'because' and 'so') Good use of phonics to spell lots of words correctly and having a really good go at spelling longer words using the sounds they know
<b>2</b>	Consistent use of full stops, capital letters, question marks and exclamation marks Starting to use commas in a list, e.g. I like oranges, apples, pears and cherries. Starting to use apostrophes in singular nouns, e.g. The girl's name is Rose. Includes adjectives to describe people and objects, e.g. the steep, windy road Use of present tense (e.g. I jump) and past tense (e.g. I jumped) Using 'and', 'so', 'because' and 'but' to join ideas in sentences Spells words ending in er, est, ment, ful, less and ly correctly, e.g. enjoyment
<b>3</b>	Uses all of the punctuation learned in years 1 and 2 Starts to use speech marks around the words that characters say in stories Beginning to use apostrophes to shorten phrases, e.g. I've, you're, don't Uses words like 'while', 'when', 'before', 'after' to link ideas in sentences Includes 'ly' words to show how something is happening, e.g. the car sped swiftly Separates groups of sentences into paragraphs Spells words beginning with un, in, super, auto, anti, e.g. anti-matter, superwoman
<b>4</b>	Uses all of the punctuation learned in years 1, 2 and 3 Able to use apostrophes in plural nouns, e.g. the boys' names were Includes commas to separate parts of sentences, e.g. Whilst skipping down the lane, the children chatted merrily. Includes longer descriptive phrases, e.g. the dirty, scruffy dog with long, shaggy hair Uses the correct verbs for writing, e.g. I was, you were, etc. I did, you did, etc. Spells words ending with tion, sion, cian, ous and words beginning with dis and mis, e.g. misinformation
<b>5</b>	Uses all of the punctuation learned in years 1, 2, 3 and 4 Starting to use brackets, dashes or commas to add ideas, e.g. The bare tree, whose leaves had fallen over the winter, began to show its true beauty again. Confidently writes with different sentence structures and lengths Spells most words correctly, including those that sound the same, e.g. there, their and they're; bare and bear; fete and fate Can use modal verbs in the right context, e.g. could, would, may, might, should, will Writes with a consistent tense and chooses the right one, e.g. if the writing starts in the past tense, it carries on in the past tense consistently
<b>6</b>	Uses all of the punctuation learned in years 1, 2, 3 and 4 Starting to use semi-colons and colons in sentences (Google how to do this as it requires an explanation!) Can write for different audiences, e.g. if writing a news report for children or a news report for adults, knows that the language will be different Can write with different levels of formality, e.g. writing to your MP is very formal but writing an email to a friend is very informal