

NATIONAL PRIMARY ENGLISH CONFERENCE 2026.

Writing Matters: Bridging Research and Policy into Primary Classroom Practice

Tuesday 17th March 2026 | 9am-4pm | Online

Price: **£159** +VAT

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#WritingMatters

Time	Details			Location
8:45 – 9:00am	Conference registration Pre-recorded 'how to' and navigation			Main Stage
9:00 – 9:10am	Conference welcome and introductions, HFL Education			
9:10 – 10:00am	Picking Apart the Research into The Writing Framework Dr Tim Mills, MBE , DfE RISE adviser and lead author of the DfE Writing Framework			
10:00 – 10:10am	Break			
10:10 – 11:00am	Nurturing Young Writers Professor Teresa Cremin, CBE , Co-director, Literacy and Social Justice Centre, The Open University			Main Stage
11:00 – 11:20am	Break			
11:20am – 12:05pm	Workshops			Workshop rooms
	Workshop 1: Disciplinary literacy in primary schools Shareen Wilkinson , Education Adviser	Workshop 2: Writing engagement: Spotlight on financially disadvantaged voices Dr Francesca Bonafede , Research and Evaluation Manager, Writing for Pleasure, National Literacy Trust	Workshop 3: Developing morphological awareness Ben Meyjes , Primary English Teaching & Learning Adviser, HFL Education	
12:05 – 1:05pm	Lunch			

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	Workshops			
	Workshop 4	Workshop 5	Workshop 6	
1:05 – 1:50pm	<p>Oracy: What it is, why it matters, and why everybody's talking about it ...</p> <p>Geoff Barton, CBE Former teacher, headteacher & general secretary of the Association of School & College Leaders. Recently, chair of the Oracy Education Commission</p>	<p>Handwriting: Understanding how to put research into practice</p> <p>Dr Mellissa Prunty, Chair and Michelle Stone, Co Vice Chair, National Handwriting Association</p>	<p>Writing is an art form! Creating opportunities for meaningful writing</p> <p>Dr Darren Chetty, Lecturer in English Education, UCL Institute of Education</p>	Workshop rooms
1:50 – 2:00pm	Break			
2:00 – 2:50pm	Telling Tales: Words, Pictures and the Space in Between Bethan Woollvin, Children's Book Author and Illustrator			Main Stage
2:50 – 3:00pm	Break			
3:00 – 3:50pm	Creating an Evidence-Based Writing Program Professor Steve Graham, Regents and Warner Professor, Arizona State University			Main Stage
3:50 – 4:00pm	Final thanks and conference close			

KEYNOTE SESSION SUMMARIES

Dr Tim Mills, MBE, DfE RISE adviser and lead author of the DfE Writing Framework

Picking Apart the Research into The Writing Framework

The body of research into writing has been growing along with the evidence of how best to teach it. DfE's Writing Framework has tried to distil this research and evidence into a format that is useful for schools and teachers. This session digs into the research a little more deeply and suggests how it helps us teach writing in primary schools.

Professor Teresa Cremin, CBE, Co-director, Literacy and Social Justice Centre, The Open University

Nurturing Young Writers

In this keynote, Teresa will foreground children's writing identities and explore ways to nurture their belief in their own potential as writers. Linking to the DfE Writing Framework and another derived from a recent three-year study of reading and writing for pleasure, she will consider individually and socially oriented principles of evidence-informed practice.

Bethan Woollvin, Children's Book Author and Illustrator

Telling Tales: Words, Pictures and the Space in Between

Join children's book author and illustrator Bethan Woollvin at the National Primary English Conference 2026 as she shares the art of reimagining classic fairytales. Discover how her playful use of refrains, visual storytelling and inference invites children to think critically, read with curiosity and to enjoy stories in exciting new ways.

Professor Steve Graham, Regents and Warner Professor, Arizona State University

Creating an Evidence-Based Writing Program

This presentation draws on over 1,000 studies on teaching writing to propose five principles for creating an evidence-based writing program. This includes devoting time to student writing; supporting students as they write; teaching writing skills and strategies; connecting writing, reading, and learning; and creating a positive and supportive writing environment.

WORKSHOPS

Time slot one choices 11:20am – 12:05pm

WORKSHOP 1

Shareen Wilkinson, Education Adviser

Disciplinary literacy in primary schools

This session explores how primary pupils can read, write, and communicate across the curriculum. It will focus on age-appropriate strategies for writing, speaking and reading like an historian, geographer, or scientist, as well as other areas across the curriculum.

WORKSHOP 2

Dr Francesca Bonafede, Research and Evaluation Manager, Writing for Pleasure, National Literacy Trust

Writing engagement: Spotlight on financially disadvantaged voices

For the past 14 years, more children and young people receiving free school meals (FSM) have reported enjoying writing in their free time than their non-FSM peers, a consistent trend that has endured despite the unprecedented economic challenges of our time. This session explores the latest survey findings on children's writing, revealing steep declines in enjoyment but unexpected resilience among students from low-income backgrounds. It challenges deficit assumptions, urging recognition of diverse, expressive writing lives, and calls for policies, pedagogy, and assessments that bridge personal and academic writing to empower all young voices.

WORKSHOP 3

Ben Meyjes, Primary English Teaching & Learning Adviser, HFL Education

Developing morphological awareness

In this session, we will explore strategies to help pupils make connections between word structure and spelling patterns, supporting both accuracy and vocabulary growth. Through engaging examples and classroom-ready approaches, this session will show how developing morphological awareness can: improve spelling by linking meaning to word formation; support reading comprehension and writing fluency; and build pupils' confidence in tackling unfamiliar words.

Time slot two choices 1:05 – 1:50pm

WORKSHOP 4

Geoff Barton, CBE, Former teacher, headteacher & general secretary of the Association of School & College Leaders. Recently, chair of the Oracy Education Commission

Oracy: What it is, why it matters, and why everybody's talking about it ...

Alongside reading, writing and arithmetic, oracy - how we talk and how we listen - is surely now the fourth 'R', an essential foundational skill for every child. This session will explain the work of the Oracy Education Commission, its recommendations, and how we can make oracy education a lived reality in every classroom.

WORKSHOP 5

Dr Mellissa Prunty, Associate Professor, University of Limerick & Chair, National Handwriting Association and **Michelle Stone**, Specialist Teacher, East Riding of Yorkshire Council & Co Vice Chair, National Handwriting Association

Handwriting: Understanding how to put research into practice

Handwriting remains a vital skill for literacy development, yet many schools struggle to translate research into effective classroom strategies. In this session, Dr Mellissa Prunty and Michelle Stone will bridge the gap between theory and practice, sharing evidence-based insights on handwriting development and practical approaches for supporting pupils.

WORKSHOP 6

Dr Darren Chetty, Lecturer in English Education, UCL Institute of Education

Writing is an art form! Creating opportunities for meaningful writing

How can we reclaim writing as an art form and give children permission to recognise their own lives as valuable material for writing - just as real writers do? In this workshop will look at examples that draw on children's scholarly *and* experiential knowledge. We'll develop principles and strategies for inclusive, antiracist creative writing classrooms by bringing meaning back to writing lessons.