

Suggested scenarios to illustrate ‘particular weaknesses’

Working towards the expected standard

Wesley

Wesley can ‘describe settings and characters’, although at a fairly simple level. He can write for a range of purposes, including non-narrative writing. Wesley struggles with organisation and finds planning day-to-day tasks difficult. This affects his writing since, although he has many ideas, he cannot always work out how to group them logically into sections or paragraphs. In non-narrative writing, his teacher encourages him to use headings, sub-headings, bullet points, numbering and diagrams to support his organisation of a text. These devices help him structure his writing and he understands how they help others to read what he has written, such as when following numbered steps in sequence. However, in narratives such as recounts, stories and biographies, Wesley often fails to use paragraphs as he finds it more difficult to recognise the boundaries between groups of connected ideas.

Wesley’s teacher is confident that his difficulty with paragraphing is a particular weakness in relation to the overall standard of his writing and should therefore not detract from the judgement that he is ‘working towards the expected standard’.

Wendy

Wendy’s writing shows that she is ‘working towards the expected standard’ for key stage 2 (KS2) writing. This is shown across a range of writing for the statements relating to composition, punctuation and handwriting. Her independent writing also shows some evidence of the statements related to ‘working at the expected standard’, such as her awareness of purpose and audience, her correct and consistent use of verb tenses and her fluent joined handwriting.

Class tests show that she can spell ‘some’ – but not ‘most’ – words from the Year 3 & 4 list, especially those where she can apply her phonics knowledge and skills, as in *believe, caught, consider, difficult, heart, probably and straight*. She tackles some of the words from the year 5 & 6 list in a similar way: *bargain, identity, lightning, shoulder*. She rarely misspells these. She has also learnt mnemonics for spelling words such as *necessary* (Y5/6). However, there are many words on the 2 lists that she continues to spell incorrectly, both in tests and in her independent writing.

In her teacher’s opinion, Wendy’s difficulty in spelling many of the words on the word lists (especially the year 3 & 4 list) should be considered a particular weakness and should not detract from the overall judgement that she is ‘working towards the expected standard’.

At the expected standard

Ebrahim

Ebrahim has been assessed by his teacher as ‘working at the expected standard’ for KS2 writing.

His writing overall is grammatically accurate. He is able to spell words from the statutory word list correctly, helped by his willingness to use a dictionary independently to check the spelling of words he is unsure of. His punctuation is excellent: he uses the range of punctuation taught at key stage 2 almost always accurately.

The teacher believes that Ebrahim's writing provides evidence of all the 'pupil can' statements at the 'expected standard', except for his limited use of a 'range of devices to build cohesion'. In particular, in narratives, including in stretches of dialogue, Ebrahim often fails to identify where he might use a pronoun or other ways of referring to a character rather than repeating the character's name. The result is sometimes a staccato or stilted style. However, when his writing is read back to Ebrahim, he can usually identify where he needs to make changes to improve the cohesion. He has made progress with doing this during the year, although he still fails to make the necessary changes independently.

Taking into account that his writing securely evidences all the other statements at this standard, the judgement is that Ebrahim is 'working at the expected standard'.

Emmie

In virtually all respects, Emmie's writing meets the requirements of the 'expected standard', except that, when she writes at speed, words are sometimes illegible, although she maintains a joined hand. Emmie is an enthusiastic writer and, particularly in story writing, once she has planned what she wants to say, her thought process has a tendency to overtake her physical ability to produce consistently legible handwriting. When asked to read back her work back, Emmie is able to interpret words which lack legibility and, when prompted, can decipher these for her teacher. For the most part, her written work shows that she is capable of producing well-formed, joined handwriting that is clear enough to read.

Emmie's teacher knows that, if it were not for her occasional difficulties with handwriting, she would meet all of the statements for the 'expected standard'. Her occasional lapses into illegibility are therefore considered to constitute a 'particular weakness'.

Working at greater depth within the expected standard

Graham

Graham has a wide vocabulary and uses this to great effect in his writing. He can write in different forms and styles and whatever he writes is mature and convincing. His grammar, punctuation and spelling are of a high standard.

The only very minor weakness his teacher identifies is Graham's confusion about when to use a semi-colon and when using a colon might be more effective.¹ The confusion does not stem from

¹ R L Trask's *Penguin guide to punctuation* provides excellent examples, if you needed to add similar examples here.

Graham's lack of understanding of main clauses but, rather, from his failure to identify where a colon (or a semi-colon) might be used to 'enhance meaning and avoid ambiguity'.

His teacher is in no doubt that Graham is working at 'working at greater depth within the expected standard' for KS2 writing and that his confusion about colons and semi-colons should be considered only as a 'particular weakness' in this respect.

Gabriele

Gabriele speaks German as well as English; she speaks German at home. She reads widely in both languages and writes them both fluently. She draws extensively on this reading in her writing. Very occasionally, she translates a German expression into English, which does not quite work.

All the evidence from her writing indicates that she is 'working at greater depth within the expected standard' for KS2 writing. Her overall grasp of grammar in general, in German and English, contributes to her 'assured and conscious control over levels of formality', especially because she is able to 'manipulate' grammar to achieve it. Her understanding of clause structure supports her sentence punctuation, especially her use of commas to mark the boundaries between main and subordinate clauses.

Her teacher, however, says that Gabriele has a 'blind spot' about the possessive apostrophe. This is the only punctuation where Gabriele gets anything wrong. (She always uses the apostrophe for contraction correctly.) Her parents have explained that German generally does not use an apostrophe to signal possession, but that the influence of English on German is changing this.² Younger people in Germany sometimes use an apostrophe where their parents and grandparents would not. Gabriele's approach is to omit the possessive apostrophe altogether when writing English.

Her teacher considers the absence of the possessive apostrophe and the rare mis-judgements about vocabulary to be a 'particular weaknesses' that should not prevent her from making the judgement that Gabriele is 'working at greater depth within the expected standard'.

² This link provides a useful insight into the usages of the possessive apostrophe in German and how it is changing: <https://german.stackexchange.com/questions/2550/does-german-language-have-possessive-apostrophe>