



## Castle Gemstones Assessment:



## English - Writing





## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

To support the tracking of progress in Maths and English, we have developed our own Castle Assessment Levels.

We have called these Rainbow and Gemstone levels. This booklet will give you an overview of each Rainbow level, share the strategies we use to support learning in school and make some suggestions about how you can support your child with their learning at home.

There are additional booklets for English and Maths Gemstone levels.

Evidence for Learning helps us to gather evidence and links it to each of the criteria, so we can visually see progress. You can also share with us any evidence you have gathered at home via this platform.

Levels are also included in the Education Health and Care Plan paperwork.

If you would like more detailed information, please look at [www.castleschool.info/assessingpupilprogress](http://www.castleschool.info/assessingpupilprogress)

### **English at Castle School**

English at Castle School is centred around a text. Each class is provided with one or two texts per half term depending on the strand of learners within that class.

English at Castle School encompasses Reading, Writing, Phonics and Communication. We have a range of strategies and interventions that we use to support our learners through their learning journey.

A blend of reading and writing skills are taught throughout an English sequence of learning. In writing focussed English lessons, pupils are taught the writing skills at their level and are provided with plenty of opportunities to practice, apply and consolidate their writing skills. Assessment is ongoing throughout English sequences of learning. In the Formal Pathway, pupils apply the writing skills they have been taught into an extended piece of writing, which is then assessed by the teacher to determine pupil strengths and areas for development. In the Semi-Formal Pathway, writing skills build up over time towards a writing outcome, with planned opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their learning.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- **Handwriting:**
  - I can form lowercase letters.
  - I can form capital letters.
  - I can separate words with spaces.
- **Composition:**
  - I can construct sentences using Colourful Semantics.
  - I can compose a sentence orally before writing it.
  - I can begin to write for different purposes.
- **Vocabulary grammar and punctuation:**
  - I can use adjectives in my writing.
  - I can use verbs in my writing.
  - I can name the letters of the alphabet.
  - I can join words and clauses using 'and'.
  - I can use capital letters at the start of a sentence, for names and the pronoun 'I'.
  - I can use full stops in my writing.

**Ruby**

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Experimental letter formation** – Use shaving foam, playdough, flour and sand to practise forming a particular letter. Show your child how to form the letter and see if they can practice it independently.
- **Letter families** – Teach your child how to form lowercase letters from specific families
  - Curly caterpillars: c, a, o, q, d, g, e, s and f
  - Long ladder letters: l, i, t, j, y, and u
  - One armed robot: r, b, n, h, m, k and p
  - Zig zag letters: v, w, x, and z
- Using a book with handwriting lines can help your child with the sizing of their letters (if they're ready).
- **Finger space fun** – Use a lollipop stick as a “space buddy” between words when writing. Once your child is confident using the stick, encourage them to use a finger to separate each word.
- **Practice sentence building games** – Use family photos or their favourite toy/topic to create simple sentences (subject - noun, verb, object- noun). Practice saying them aloud together.
- **Record and replay a simple sentence** – Record your child saying a sentence (The dog ran). Play it back to them and support them use their phonics to write it.
- To practice writing for different purposes, see if your child can independently
  - Create a shopping list
  - Write a birthday card
  - Write simple instructions



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- **Composition:**
- I can write for different purposes.
- I can sequence sentences to form short narratives.
- I can check my writing has capital letters and full stops.
- I can comment on what I have written.
- I can use bullet points in my writing.
- **Spelling:**
- I can spell words containing each of the 40+ phonemes.
- I can add 's' or 'es' as the plural marker for nouns.
- I can use 'ing', 'est', 'er' and 'ed', where there is no change needed in the root word.
- I can write from memory simple sentences dictated by an adult that include 'tricky' words.
- **Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation:**
- I can use a question mark in a sentence.
- I can write an exclamation sentence.
- I can write a short command sentence.
- I can write a statement.
- I can use commas for specific purposes (in a list).

Sapphire

### Activities to support writing skills

- To practice writing for different purposes, support your child to write
- A letter or list to Santa.
- Write a menu for a pretend restaurant.
- Write a diary entry. They could write about their day in a few sentences.
- To help sequence sentences use photographs (1-5) to sequence events or key parts of a story beginning, middle and end. See if your child can put the pictures in order. Help them to think of a sentence for each picture. See if they can use their phonics to write those sentences.
- **Be a sentence detective** – Read back their writing together and hunt for capital letters and full stops. Show your child where the capital letter should be and how to form it.
- To support your child to use bullet points they could write a shopping list, a holiday list or a list of items from their favourite topic.
- **Play phonics bingo** – Use the sounds and focus words from your child's phonetically decodable book. Write down the focus words from the book and play a game of bingo with your child. When you both have the same word, you practice writing the word by saying the sounds in the word to spell it.
- Sort toys and label them – For example one car, two cars, one bus, or two buses.
- **Adjective games:** Compare things around the house – “The sofa is soft, but the blanket is softer. The teddy is the softest!”
- **Tricky word dictation:** Read a short, simple sentence aloud (“The dog is in the garden.”) and let your child write it from memory.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- I can use time adverbials (first, then, next, after that, finally) in my writing.
  - I can write in the past tense (regular and irregular).
  - I can use adverbs.
  - I can begin to understand there are different types of sentences (statement, command, question or exclamation).
  - I can construct a sentence using 'so', when prompted by an adult.
  - I can construct a sentence using 'because', when prompted by an adult.
  - I can use the word 'or' in a sentence when prompted by an adult.
  - I can use the word 'but' in a sentence when prompted by an adult.
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- I can form lower case letters of the correct size relative to one another.
  - I can write capital letters of the correct size, orientation and relationship to one another and to lower case letters.

**Pearl**

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Question quiz** – Show your child how to use question words such as who, what, when, where, why and how to write question sentences to different family members.
  - Act out and write short exclamations about funny or shocking moments. For example, What a huge spider!
  - Write simple instructions using time adverbials.
  - Create some command cards with your child for a game of Simon Says, 'Clap your hands, brush your teeth and wave your hands.'
  - Create different lists with commas separating the items. For example, I like apples, bananas, grapes and pears.'
  - Write a set of instructions with time adverbials (first, then, next, after that and finally).
  - Play regular **past tense bingo** – For example, play-played, walk-walked or talk-talked.
  - Play **irregular past tense snap** – For example, see-saw, run-ran, eat-ate and swim-swam. When the pair is matched, you must both spell the past tense version to keep the snap.
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- **Letter families** – Teach your child how to form lowercase letters from specific families
  - Curly caterpillars: c, a, o, q, d, g, e, s and f
  - Long ladder letters: l, i, t, j, y, and u
  - One armed robot: r, b, n, h, m, k and p
  - Zig zag letters: v, w, x, and z
  - Place emphasis on the sizing of the letters.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- I can write narratives with at least 5 sentences about personal experiences and the experiences of others (real and fictional).
- I can use fronted adverbials in my writing.
- I can use layout devices for different text genres.
- I can plan my writing.
- I can apply the prefixes (un, dis and mis) where no change is necessary.
- I can apply the suffixes (s, es, ed, ing, er and est) to a root word, where a change is required. For example, happy, happier and happiest.
- I can spell contracted words. For example, I am, I'm, I have, I've, I will, I'll or could not, couldn't.
- I can spell compound words (e.g. whiteboard, butterfly)
- I can write in the present tense.
- I can use commas with fronted adverbials.
- I can use pronouns correctly such as his, her, its and their in my writing.
- I can use co-ordination to create compound sentences (or, and, so and but) when prompted.

Pearl

### Activities to support writing skills

- Print of photographs from a recent event and experience with your child. Place 3-5 photographs in front of your child to use as a stimulus. Support your child to think of a sentence for each picture and then write it.
- **Prefix match and the root word** – Create cards which contain root words and some which contain prefixes. Your child must match them together to create a new word.
- **Prefix detective:** Give your child a list of root words and ask them to add the un, mis or dis prefix to change the meaning.
- **Match the suffix and the root word** – Create cards which contain the root words, s, es, ing, er and est suffixes. Ask your child to match the suffix and the root word to create a new word.
- **Suffix challenge:** Ask your child to think and write a sentence using different suffixes.
- **Contraction match** – Match two words with the words in their contracted form. For example, 'I am with I'm.'
- **Compound word dominoes** – Join word parts to create compound words (rain + bow).
- **Picture Match:** Match pictures to the compound words.
- **Pronoun swap:** Replace nouns in the sentence with pronouns.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- I can use subordinating conjunctions to create complex sentences (if, when, because and that) when prompted.
- I can use expanded noun phrases to provide detailed descriptions in my writing.
- I can use commas with expanded noun phrases in my writing.

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#### • **Composition:**

- I can confidently and independently plan what I will write about, including generating my own ideas.
- I can proofread my writing for errors.
- I can make improvements to my writing to suit the purpose and the audience.
- **Spelling:**
- I can check the spelling of words using a dictionary or using an electronic alternative.
- I can spell homophones and homonyms.
- **Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation:**
- I can use the progressive present tense in my writing.

Pearl

Silver

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Sentence jigsaw:** Match two sentences and join with a conjunction.
  - **Sentence matching:** Ask children to match the main clause to the subordinate clause.
  - **“Finish My Sentence” Game:** Parent starts (“I went to the park because...”) and pupil’s finish.
  - **Describe the Picture:** Use expanded noun phrases to describe a scene (“The tall, green tree near the river”).
  - **Adjective Bags:** Pull adjectives from a bag and build noun phrases.
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- **Punctuation police:** Provide a picture for your child based on their interests. Show your child how to write a few sentences to describe the picture. After each sentence, read each sentence aloud to spot any mistakes and fix them. Ask your child to write a few sentences to describe the picture. Tell your child to read their work aloud and tell them to check their spellings, punctuation or how to improve their writing.
  - **Fix the sentences** – Present your child with some sentences with common errors (no capital letters, incorrect spellings, incorrect or no punctuation). Show your child the process of reading each sentence aloud, spotting errors and correcting mistakes.
  - Show your child how to use a dictionary.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- I can write in the future tense.
- I can write consistently in a tense.
- I can use the past progressive tense (events that occur over a period of time) in my writing.
- I can understand vocabulary used for both informal and formal speech and writing.
- I can link ideas across paragraphs, using adverbials and ellipsis as appropriate.

**Silver**

**Gold**

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#### Handwriting:

- I can present my work clearly and appropriately, using joined-up handwriting.
- **Composition:**
- I can plan my writing by discussing it before I start.
- I can create settings, characters and a plot for a story.

### Activities to support writing skills

- Show your child how to use digital technology (iPad, laptop or desktop computer) to search for the meaning and spelling of words by searching them in the search engine. Provide a list of words for your child to spell before using the dictionary or iPad to clarify the spelling and meaning.
  - **Play homophone snap** – Have pictures of words that sound the same but are spelt differently (night, knight, see, sea, flour, flower, buy and bye). Play a game of snap, where you say the word snap when you reach a pair of two homophones.
  - **Play homonym snap** – Have pictures of words that sound the same and are spelt the same, but have different meanings (bat, bat, bark, bark, park, park, ring, ring, watch and watch). Play a game of snap, where you say the word snap when you reach a pair of two homonyms.
  - **Verb and suffix ing match** – Have pictures of different verbs (cook, read, eat, drink, walk, talk etc.) with cards with the ing suffix. Show your child how to match the verb and suffix to change the tense to the present tense. Say a sentence with the present tense verb. For example, I am cooking dinner.
  - **Add the ing suffix to verbs** – Write a list of verbs and add your child to add the ing suffix to change their tense.
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- Show your child how to join lowercase letters horizontally (across) then show them diagonal joins.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- I can read my writing aloud to a wider audience (non-familiar peers) e.g. during assemblies or to visitors.
- **Spelling:**
- I can use further prefixes and suffixes (ment, ness, ful, less and ly) in my writing.
- I can spell homophones, homonyms and homographs. (e.g. near homophones like except and accept)

## Gold

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Show and tell:** Give a picture to your child as a stimulus for some creative writing. Encourage your child to proofread their work. Show your child how to read aloud their work to different family members. Arrange a time, where your child can read their writing aloud to members in your family.
- **Suffix pairs – ment** (the act of) Have a list of the following base words enjoyment, arrangement, judgement, achievement, excitement and arrangement alongside pictures of the meanings. Ask your child to find the pairs.
- **Suffix pairs – ly** (how something is done) Have a list of verbs quickly, slowly, carefully, kindly, quietly, loudly alongside pictures of the meanings. Ask your child to find the pairs.
- **Matching activity – ness** (the state of) Have a list of the following base words happy, tidy, kind, fair, soft and bold with some cards with the suffix ness. Ask your child to match the pairs. Show them the rule where if a word ends with a y, replace it with an i before adding the ness suffix.
- **Matching activity – ful** (full of) Have a list of the following base words help, care, cheer, dread, meaning, play, pain, hope, harm, fear and joy with some cards with the suffix ful. Ask your child to match the pairs.
- **Homograph snap** (same spelling which may or may not have a different sound) - Have pictures of homographs with the spelling underneath and a different sound such as bow, bow, tear (rip), tear (cry), lead (to guide), lead (metal), skied (high above) and skied (travel over snow). Play a game of snap, where you say the word snap when you reach a pair of two homonyms.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- I can use the possessive apostrophe (e.g. John's ball) in my writing.
- I can punctuate direct speech correctly.
- **Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation:**
- I can punctuate direct speech correctly.
- I can use similes in my writing.
- I can use colons to introduce a list in my writing.
- I can write competently across a variety of genres.

## Gold

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Apostrophe detective:** Write a list of objects and owners with them. For example, dog-bone, boy-football or girl-toy. Show them how to use the possessive apostrophe. For example, 'the **dog's** bone was buried.'
- Practice writing inverted commas "" to show speech. Use role play to have conversations with your child about topics that interest them. Show your child how to use the speech marks to record the conversation. For example, "Do you like dinosaurs?" asked Mum. "I love dinosaurs. They are my favourite toy." Said Ben.
- **Simile description** – Present your child like pictures and how them how to create a descriptive comparison. For example, 'the torch was as bright as the sun' or Ben was as fast as a cheetah.'
- **Write everyday lists with colons** - Write themed sentences such as: "For the picnic, we need: sandwiches, fruit, juice, and cake." Make it interactive by using real objects (shopping, toys, snacks).



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

#### Composition:

- I can write sentences with more than one clause.
- I can link ideas using different paragraphs.
- I can evaluate and edit my work, checking for spelling and vocabulary errors.
- **Spelling:**
- I can use the possessive apostrophe for regular words such as boys' or girls' or irregular plurals such as children's.
- **Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation:**
- I can use a wider range of conjunctions (when, if, because, although) in my writing.

**Emerald**

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Build a sentence challenge:** Show your child a range of simple sentences on strips of paper. For example, 'the dog barked loudly.' Show your child of some examples to extend them with conjunctions. For example, 'Although it was sunny, the dog barked loudly' or 'the dog barked loudly, when they saw a stranger.' Encourage your child to extend the sentence using a range conjunctions such as although, when, if, that, though, also, for, nor, but, yet, so, while, however, even though, before and since.
- **Paragraph practise:** Choose a topic your child enjoys or is interested in and plan what belongs in each paragraph. You could plan an introduction, main events or ideas within one topic and a conclusion.
- **Writing reflection:** After a piece of writing your child has written, show them how to edit and improve the writing by reading their work aloud and correcting any spelling errors, punctuation errors or thinking about using more advanced vocabulary. You could show them the thesaurus, so they can choose more advanced vocabulary.
- **Become an apostrophe detective:** Write sentences together with the possessive apostrophe. For example, 'the boys 'footballs were muddy' or 'the children's coats were on the floor.' Ask your child 'who owns the object? This will encourage them to think about where the possessive apostrophe should be placed.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

#### Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation:

- I can use adverbial phrases (e.g. “he looked at me with an evil stare”).
- I can use the present perfect tense (“I have seen”)
- I can use adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions to express time and cause.
- I can use fronted adverbials (“Yawning and stretching he climbed out of bed”).

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Adverbial phrase detective:** Watch a short clip together to help generate some ideas or read some pages of a book of their choice. Describe what is happening with adverbial phrases. For example, ‘the cat crept with silent paws’ or ‘she looked at me with excitement.’
- **Write a diary entry in the present perfect tense** – Show your child how to journal each day or to journal on the weekend. Show them how to use the present tense to journal activities they have done each day or on the weekend. For example, ‘I have visited Grandma’ or ‘I have built a Lego tower’ or ‘I have seen the perfect gift for my birthday.’
- **Time and Cause trail:** Use adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions to show time and cause. Give your child some time adverbials (before, after, since, because and while). Show them how to include these words in a mini story. Ask them to write a mini story with them included. For example, ‘After dinner, we went for a brisk walk because the sun was setting.’
- **Fronted Adverbial fix** – Give your child the following sentence starters such as “*Early in the morning,*” “*With a loud crash,*” “*Without thinking,*” ask your child to complete the sentences.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- **Handwriting:**
  - I can ensure my handwriting is legible, fluent and performed with increasing speed.
- **Composition:**
  - I can identify an audience for my work and write with them in mind.
  - I can draft my work, develop initial ideas and research where necessary.
  - I can consider how authors have developed their characters and settings.
- **Spelling:**
  - I can distinguish between homophones and words that are confused (e.g. aisle, isle, aloud, allowed, alter, altar, and bridle, bridal).

Jet

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Character creator** - Read a short story together (or a chapter of a familiar book). Discuss how the author describes the setting or builds a character's personality. Then, write a short paragraph inventing a new character **in the same style**. For example, "Like J.K. Rowling, I used adjectives and small actions to show personality."
- **Non-fiction project:** Pick a topic your child loves (e.g. volcanoes, a footballer, a historical figure). Research 3–5 key facts together. They could write or type those facts. Afterwards, they could draft a short non-fiction report or leaflet using headings, facts, and pictures. They could present it aloud to family members as a "mini expert."
- **Draft and editing challenge:** After your child has written a piece of writing, read it back and discuss: Where could vocabulary be improved? Are sentences too short or long? Does it make sense to the reader? Then rewrite a final version with the improvements.
- **Homophone detective:** Create pairs of words (e.g. *aisle/isle, aloud/allowed, alter/altar, bridal/bridle*). Write sentences using each correctly. For example, "The bride walked down the aisle." "The bridle was loose on the horse." Draw simple illustrations to help remember meanings.



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- I can spell words with silent letters (e.g. psalm or solemn)
- **Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation:**
- I can punctuate direct and indirect speech.
- I can spell words with silent letters (e.g. psalm or solemn)
- I can ensure that I will use the consistent and correct tense throughout a piece of writing.
- I can write persuasively using rhetorical questions and logical connectives (so, therefore).
- I can use relative clauses (e.g., "The boy, who had not done his homework...") in my writing.
- I can use modal verbs and adverbs confidently.
- I can use metaphors (e.g., "his fingers were frozen icicles") in my writing.

### Activities to support writing skills

**Homophone snap:** Create pairs of homophones on cards. Play "Snap!" or "Matching Pairs." Each time a match is made, the player must use both words correctly in sentences. *For example,* "The **altar** was covered in flowers." "I will **alter** my dress before the party."

**Silent Letter Word Detective:** Choose a set of silent letter words (e.g. *knight, island, comb, write, doubt*). Write them on paper and ask your child to "spot the silent letter" and colour it in.

Create a "Silent Letter Poster" by writing each word in a sentence: "The **knight** rode his horse at night."

**Comic strip speech bubbles:** Draw two comic-strip speech bubbles for a short dialogue. For example, direct speech "I can't wait for the weekend!" said Tom. Indirect speech "Tom said he couldn't wait for the weekend."

**Tense time machine:** Write a short paragraph in past tense (e.g. *Yesterday I went to the park.*). Re-write it in present tense (*Today I go to the park.*) and future tense (*Tomorrow I will go to the park.*). Discuss how the meaning changes.

**Relative clauses challenge:** Write some relative clauses (begin with who or which to extend ideas) with your child. Give your child sentence starters. "The dog, who was covered in mud, ran into the house." "The castle, which stood on the hill, looked mysterious."

**Metaphor maker:** Look at pictures (weather, landscapes or emotions). Write descriptive metaphors together: "The clouds were fluffy marshmallows." "The sun was a golden coin in the sky."



## Castle Assessment Levels Gemstones

### Castle Writing Gemstones Assessment

- **Composition:**
- I can independently check my work for spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors.
- I can assess the effectiveness of my own and other people's writing.
- I can suggest changes to the vocabulary, grammar and punctuation I have used to improve my writing.
- **Spelling:**
- I can use a thesaurus to uplevel my vocabulary.
- I can independently check the spelling and meaning of words.
- I can use etymology (origins of the word throughout history) to understand the spelling of some words.
- **Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation:**
- I can use passive verbs (e.g., "he was hit by the flying object").
- I can use the past perfect tense (e.g., "I had seen").
- I can use hyphens, brackets, and dashes.
- I can use semi-colons, colons and dashes as boundaries between independent clauses.
- I can punctuate bullet points.

## Diamond

### Activities to support writing skills

- **Peer review at home:** Swap pieces of writing (yours and your child's). Each one of you gives one *compliment* (what works well) and one *suggestion* (what could improve). Use sentence starters like: "I like how you..." "You could make this stronger by..."
- **Use a thesaurus** - Choose 5 overused words (*big, nice, said, went, happy*). Find 3 stronger alternatives for each using a thesaurus (online or paper). Write sentences using the new vocabulary. For example, "The castle was **enormous**." "She was **delighted** with her present."
- **Meaning matchup:** Write sentences with one tricky or misused word each (e.g. *their/there/they're, affect/effect*). Your child checks the meaning and corrects any wrong uses using a dictionary.
- Create mini "definition flashcards" with a word on one side and meaning on the back.
- **Make a word origins notebook** - Choose a tricky word and explore its history online or in a dictionary. For example, *Telephone* = Greek "tele" (far) + "phone" (sound). *Transport* = Latin "trans" (across) + "portare" (carry). Discuss how understanding its root helps with spelling or meaning.
- **Passive voice detective:** Write pairs of sentences together:
  - *Active:* The wind knocked over the tree. *Passive:* The tree was knocked over by the wind. Discuss which sounds more formal or scientific.
- **Time traveller challenge:** Write a short story where something happens *before* something else. For example: "By the time I reached the station, the train **had already left**."