

## You Can... **Demonstrate practical uses of writing**

Consider for a minute the amount and variety of pieces of printed paper that will cross your path today: newspapers, letters, junk mail, advertising flyers, business reports, bank statements, work records and plans, notices, reminders, memos, lists, notes from parents, notes to go home, marks sheets, registers, and so it goes on. Where would we be without writing?

### **Thinking points**

- Hold up a few examples of written communications that you are dealing with today and explain to the children that people have sat down and written all these things, each with a different purpose. Point out how this demonstrates the importance of writing.
- Letter writing is one of the first forms of purposeful writing that a child will encounter outside school. As a literacy task it is useful for teaching many aspects of writing, from the use of capitals at the beginning of proper nouns and sentences, to the exclusive idiosyncrasy of a personal signature, as distinct from printing your name.
- Preserving anonymity, share or paraphrase some excuse, permission or explanatory note from parents. Explain how these differ from word-of-mouth messages. They include a date, an address and a signature. Details can be re-read, avoiding ambiguity. Compare the permanence of letters with the transitory nature of speech.

### **Tips, ideas and activities**

- Explain that the purpose of all writing is communication, but that letter-writing is very specific in this. A letter is often to one person from one other person, in order to relay important information or news; it is a way of 'speaking' in a way that can be read and re-read – like replaying a tape.
- Demonstrate the basic layout of a letter including address, date, Dear and a closing phrase such as *Love from*, *Yours sincerely* or *Best wishes*.
  - Invite children to write their own letter, putting in personal details. They might imagine they are writing a thank-you letter to an aunt or uncle. Let them choose what present or kind help they have received or suggest that the relative has sent them money. Ask them to write why the choice of present was a good one and/or how they spent the money or benefited from the kindness.
- For younger children, a less formal but useful exercise is writing a postcard. This still involves writing an address – they can 'send' a postcard home with their own address and discover how Mum and Dad have formal names and titles, too. Give children a blank postcard. Ask them to draw and colour a picture on the plain side. On the other, show how one side is reserved for a message, the other for an address and the recipient's name. Their message need only be brief.
  - Involve the children's imaginations – a postcard from the moon; a postcard from their pet rabbit writing from the bottom of the garden; a postcard from Father Christmas. If funds permit, allow the children to post these home to reinforce the experience of writing something to be read later. Make sure that you use a standard post-office sized card.