Suggested strategies and approaches

- Whenever you set a piece of writing, show (or model) what a successful piece of writing looks like and how the assessment criteria are exemplified in the writing.

- Aim for quality over quantity - set fewer pieces of writing, but put a lot of effort into each one.

- Always model how to write, making explicit the choices an effective writer makes.

Weakness	Explanation	Teaching approaches
Spelling	Some students' spelling is very poor. This is particularly marked in students who have a good vocabulary. Students' spellings often lack phonic logic e.g. *rember*.	- Insist that students sound out troublesome words before writing them down. They should count the number of syllables a word has and then ensure that that number of syllables is represented in their spelling of the word e.g. re**mem**ber; terr**o**rist. - Make a point of speak tricky, technical words in a syllabic way, emphasising each part of the word: *sig-nif-ic-ance*. - Encourage students to read short texts aloud, clearly and carefully emphasising each syllable of unfamiliar words. This could be done in pairs or small groups. - When marking, don't give corrections for words that can be improved through the application of phonics: indicate which words are miss-spelt and encourage students to correct these words themselves – allow time for correction. - Before students write longer texts get them to use a word bank as part of their planning. Some are available on *Teachit History*, search '19516' and '24954' on the site.
Limited connectives	Some students rarely use connectives beyond the ordinary and thus fail to signal the connections between points they are making. The lack of these 'signposts' makes writing less coherent than it should be.	- Make students aware of the full range of connectives grouped into different functions: sequencing, cause and effect, contrast, etc (see below). During shared writing, model how to decide which group to choose from. - Require students to use the following connectives: however, while, despite, although, whereas. - Make the use of these connectives into a class game, deliberately using them in conversation, especially at the start of sentences e.g. 'Although I understand that you want me to eat my cabbage, I am going to have to politely decline.' Encourage them to say the comma – see below. - Ban the words: and, then, but, also.

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Over-long sentences	Some students rarely write short, simple sentences. Instead they write long meandering sentences which lose clarity and focus. In essay writing these meandering sentences distract students from making a clear, distinct point.	• Revise the three sentence types (simple, compound and complex). • Give students long, convoluted sentences from an academic text and ask them to break them down into a series of short sentences (don't ask them to practise the reverse). • Show students examples of good narrative and argumentative writing that alternates between long and short sentences for effect. Get them to continue the writing. • Ban sentences of more than two clauses for a period of time. • Teach students to use semi-colons; their writing will improve. • Give students three different sentences, containing the same information but organised differently, and ask them to consider the effectiveness of each.
Commas	Students often use commas instead of full stops, but they very rarely use commas within sentences for emphasis and to mark clauses.	• Use shared writing to show students how to use commas within sentences and for emphasis. • Show students sentences whose lack of commas creates ambiguity (e.g. 'Let's eat Grandma!') • Show students a piece of writing and ask them to explain the purpose of each comma. • Take the commas out of a piece of writing. Tell students how many commas you have taken out and ask them to put them back in.
'Loose' pronouns.	Some students over-use pronouns. They use words such as *this* and *it* without making clear what these words refer to. In fact, the reference often exists only in their heads, rather than in the text they are writing. The result is that students don't really say what they mean.	• Ban the use of pronouns for a period of time. Write the banned words on sheets of paper and display them crossed through or torn apart as reminders. • Limit the use of pronouns. Tell students that there is a national pronoun shortage and they are being rationed. Give them a maximum number of pronouns that are available to them. • Show students a piece of writing that over-uses pronouns and thus becomes ambiguous. Work with students to improve the writing to make its meaning explicit.

Weakness	Explanation	Teaching approaches
Lack of clarity and development	Some students fail to make clear and distinct points. In argumentative writing they can seem to contradict themselves without acknowledging this. This can make essays rambling and repetitive.	• Insist that students plan the content of a series of paragraphs before they begin writing. • Model writing topic sentences then ask students to write one for each of their paragraphs before they write the whole text. • Practise 'reverse engineering' texts. Give them a text and ask them to work out the structure, and therefore the plan, that it is based on. • Give students a text cut up into its sections or paragraphs. Ask them to identify the purpose of each section and arrange them into the 'right' order. • Remove a couple of paragraphs from a text and challenge students to decide the likely topic of the missing paragraphs and then to write them. As a way-in to this task, show students a picture with a couple of missing bits. What is missing and how do they know? • Ask students to write using someone else's plan from time to time. This will highlight the 'holes' in their own planning. Alternatively, ask students to work in groups to write 'Frankenstein essays'; each student takes one paragraph, then the whole piece is 'stitched together' but must still make sense.
Poorly constructed paragraphs with no links between them	Some students use no paragraphs at all. The ones they do use are randomly begun and they end in a way that has no link to the original topic sentence. Many paragraphs consist of a single sentence with no development and paragraphs are rarely linked.	• Model how to make a clear point in the first sentence and how to develop this point through the remainder of the paragraph e.g. by qualification. • Practise sequencing and joining sentences, using 'ties' such as 'this suggests that …'; 'on the other hand …' • Show students a paragraph without its first sentence. Ask them to write the first sentence. • Show students how to use the extended PEE chain to establish coherence and clarity, concentrating on the use of evidence and examples.