This document supports the Literacy Focus for Writing, *Teaching grammar in context* section located in the Literacy Teaching Toolkit (Department of Education and Training, Victoria).

A summary of major linguistic changes in control of written language: Early childhood (6 – 8 years) to late childhood – early adolescence (9 – 12 years) to mid-adolescence (13 -15 years) (adapted from Christie & Derewianka, 2008, pp. 209 -226).

Within the primary school, the first two age ranges would be most evident. The third is provided to illustrate the scope beyond typical primary years writing but which might be evident in texts of more competent writers.

**Expressing and developing ideas**

| **Early childhood (6 -8 years)** | **Late childhood – early adolescence (9 -12 years)** | **Mid-adolescence (13 -15 years)** |
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| Use of simple verb groups and simple noun groups  Mostly prepositional phrases of time and place | Expanded verb groups and varied range of verbs (action, relating, saying, thinking, feeling)  Expanded noun groups which include pre- and post- modification of the Head noun  Varied use of prepositional phrases to include those of time, place, manner, cause and adverbs | Expanded verb groups and varied use of lexical verbs (verbs which carry content)  Noun groups become more dense, possibly involving abstraction and technicality |
| Simple (one independent clause) or compound sentences (two or more independent clauses) where clauses are mostly ‘equal’ using co-ordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet)  Complex sentences most commonly include dependent clauses of time (e.g. After we ate our lunch) | Simple, compound and complex sentences    Expanding range of dependent clauses to include reason (because, as, since, seeing that); purpose (so that, in order to, so as to, in order that); condition (if, unless, as long as, in case, on condition that); concession (although, even though, even if, despite, while and whereas); and manner (by, through, as, as if)  Non-finite clauses are more frequently used (e.g. Sitting on the beach)  More intricate use and linking of different clause types  Projected clauses, for example, direct or reported speech  Emergence of nominalization (water evaporates becomes ‘evaporation’) | Simple, compound and complex sentences, also fragments used for effect  Expanding range of dependent clauses to include: reason (because, as, since, seeing that); purpose (so that, in order to, so as to, in order that); condition (if, unless, as long as, in case, on condition that); concession (although, even though, even if, despite, while and whereas); and manner (by, through, as, as if)  Varied range and combination of clauses  Quite frequent use of non- finite clauses  Information becomes more compressed as ideas are structured in grammatically different ways, usually involving more abstract concepts, for example ‘Animal habitats are being destroyed. More animals become endangered when their habitat is taken away from them.’ could be written as ‘The destruction of animal habitats leads to an increase in endangered species.’ |

**Interacting with others**

| **Early childhood (6 -8 years)** | **Late childhood – early adolescence (9 -12 years)** | **Mid-adolescence (13 -15 years)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mostly first person (I, we)  Simple positive or negative attitudes expressed through adjectives (an awful person, a dangerous animal) and use of adverbs of intensity (a really awful person, a very dangerous animal)  Use of verbs to express positive or negative emotion or feeling (e.g. liked, laughed, cried, hated, loved, enjoyed) | Use of third person more common or frequent  Use of modal verbs (could, should, might, must)  Expression of attitudes (stating feelings, evaluating the quality of things, judging human behaviour) more evident through more frequent use and varied range of verbs, adjectives and intensifiers | Third person more dominant; first person selected for particular genres and disciplines  Range of modal verbs, nouns (requirement, necessity), adjectives (possible, necessary) and adverbs to temper (e.g. surely, apparently, perhaps)  Attitude used selectively and as appropriate (e.g. limited in science texts but more evident in argument) |

**Text structure and organisation**

| **Early childhood (6 -8 years)** | **Late childhood – early adolescence (9 -12 years)** | **Mid-adolescence (13 -15 years)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Subject mostly at the beginning of the sentence, quite often first person pronoun; some use of adverbs or prepositional phrases of time or place  Reference made through use of pronouns, although not often clearly | Varied sentence beginnings:   * with subject (which might be expressed in different ways) * prepositional phrases or dependent clauses   Clear connection between clauses  Topic sentences  Paragraphs  Reference more controlled | Dependent clauses appear more frequently at the beginning of the sentences; cohesion in some genres (e.g. explanation, argument) established through end of sentence being picked up in the beginning of the next sentence (e.g. The dissolved gold is taken to another tank with small amounts of carbon. The carbon pieces are screened from the slurry.)  As texts become longer, ‘macro-Themes’ are used as the beginning point for the whole text, and ‘hyper-themes’ or topic sentences at the beginning of the paragraph |