SMART

Year 6 writing exemplars

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Introduction

These exemplars and the accompanying feedback are written using the year-level prompt for assessment window 1. Each exemplar illustrates the level of writing quality for this year-level that would achieve the assigned scores; all scores were produced by SMART's Vantage scoring system.

There are six writing exemplars in this set, with total scores ranging from the highest scoring at 29/30 to the lowest scoring at 5/30. Across the exemplars, most individual scores from 1 to 6 for each criterion in the rubric are covered. The rubric is available here: Writing to Persuade Rubric

The writing samples are intended to show a range of student achievement and at this stage they are not equated with curriculum expectations. This is a process that will take place after assessment window 1 closes, and at that point raw scores and exemplars at each year-level will be linked to progress descriptors.

For ease of use we have provided the writing progress marker from the Reporting to Parents Guidelines on this page. Use the writing progress marker information as your guide to curriculum expectations for this year-level; it outlines what students who are **proficient** in writing are expected to be able to do by the end of the year.

These exemplars, scores, and accompanying feedback can be used to support teachers to:

- mark any pieces of writing that SMART cannot (e.g. pieces that are too short). Find the exemplars that most closely match the student's piece of writing to inform your scoring decisions
- confirm or change the AI-scoring for students' pieces of writing. Find the exemplars that most closely match the AI-assisted scoring for a student's piece of writing to determine whether the scores can be confirmed or need adjustments.

Note that the writing samples and the accompanying feedback have been produced with the assistance of AI. They will be updated later in the year, to incorporate information from the standard setting, scaling and equating processes, which will make explicit how the exemplars align with curriculum expectations.

Year 6 — Morning Tea Break

Year 6 writing progress marker

- By the end of Year 6, students who are **proficient** in writing, can:
- correctly spell most words they use, including those with less-common vowel and consonant graphemes, affixes, and those requiring apostrophes for contractions or possession
- plan and write for an intended audience, making deliberate choices about text type, style, and language to suit the purpose
- produce multi-paragraph texts for a range of purposes
- write non-fiction that includes an introductory paragraph, paragraphs that develop ideas, and a concluding paragraph, using headings and subheadings where appropriate
- write narratives that, include an orientation, paragraphs describing a sequence of events that build tension, and a resolution that brings the story to a close.

Year 6 writing prompt

Your principal is considering removing the morning tea break so that there is more time for learning. Do you think that getting rid of morning tea break is a good idea or a bad idea?

Write to your principal explaining your opinion on this issue and persuading him or her to agree with you.

Remember to include reasons and examples to persuade your principal.

Score 5 and 6 Exemplar, Year 6: total score 29/30

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Feedback for Score 5 and 6 Exemplar, Year 6

Audience and Purpose [6/6]

Thorough and insightful response. Opens by accepting the principal's goal and repositioning the argument on shared ground, a sophisticated rhetorical move. The position is precise and sustained. The response goes beyond task by offering a reframing of the time argument in the counterargument section.

Content Development/Elaboration [6/6]

Three fully elaborated reasons are given: brain science and break timing (teacher testimony, research reference, productivity claim); physical movement and its cognitive effects; hauora as a curriculum value linked to social-emotional learning. The counterargument accepts the concern and reframes it quality-vs-quantity. Every claim is supported with specific reasoning.

Dear Ms Watene,

I understand that your goal is for every student at Riverside School to learn as much as possible during the school day. That is my goal too, and it is precisely why I am writing to you today. Removing the morning tea break will not increase learning at our school. The evidence strongly suggests it will decrease it. I have three reasons to explain why, and I would also like to show you that the concerns you have about lost learning time can be addressed in a better way.

The first reason is that the human brain, including the brain of a Year 6 student, cannot sustain deep concentration indefinitely without a break. Research into how children learn consistently shows that short, regular breaks between periods of focused work actually improve the total amount of information retained over the course of a day. Our morning tea break comes at exactly the right point in the school day, after approximately ninety minutes of learning. When we go back to class after that break, we are more focused, more settled, and more ready to engage with challenging work. The lesson after morning tea is, according to our teachers, often the most productive of the entire day. Remove the break and you remove the thing that makes that productivity possible.

The second reason is physical. Our bodies are not designed to sit still for three or more hours at a time. Physical movement, even a short burst of it, increases blood flow to the brain and helps students regulate their attention and behaviour. Many students in our class find it genuinely difficult to sit and concentrate for long periods. After morning tea, when we have had a chance to move, run, and decompress, that challenge becomes much more manageable. Physical activity during the school day is not a luxury. It is part of what makes productive learning possible.

The third reason connects to our school's own values around hauora. Social and emotional wellbeing is part of hauora, which is a core principle of our curriculum. Morning tea is one of the few times in the school day when students can resolve social tensions, strengthen friendships, and feel genuinely at ease. Students who feel socially settled learn better, behave better, and engage more constructively with teachers and peers. A school day without a morning break would produce students who are more anxious, more irritable, and less ready to cooperate with the learning programme.

I know you may feel there is simply not enough time in the school day for both adequate learning and a morning break. I would ask you to consider a different framing. The question is not how many minutes students spend in the classroom. The question is how many of those minutes are genuinely productive. Fifteen minutes of morning break, in exchange for sixty or ninety minutes of high-quality, focused learning in the period that follows, is not a loss of learning time. It is an investment in it.

I hope you will reconsider this proposal, Ms Watene. Please keep our morning tea break. Ngā mihi, Renata Heke, Year 6, Room 11.

Structure [5/6]

The structure is cohesive and unified. There is a disarming opening, three body paragraphs, substantive counterargument, and a strong conclusion. Transitional language is skilful and varied throughout.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [6/6]

The language is precise, formal, and audience appropriate. Hauora used naturally. Conditional structures demonstrate rhetorical control. There is strong sentence variety.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [6/6]

All sentences are correctly formed. Punctuation is purposeful. Ther are no spelling errors.

Score 5 Exemplar, Year 6: total score 25/30

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Feedback for Score 5 Exemplar, Year 6

Audience and Purpose [5/6]

Clear understanding. Principal addressed by name, and the position is stated and maintained. The counterargument directly engages the principal's rationale and rebuts it effectively with the quality-vs-quantity argument. All parts of the task completed.

Content Development/Elaboration [5/6]

Three reasons: brain science and memory (research referenced); physical movement and concentration (teacher testimony); wellbeing and social settling. Counterargument accepts the principal's goal before arguing the break serves it. Less specific than needed for a higher score.

Dear Ms Watene,

I am writing to ask you to please keep the morning tea break at Riverside School. I believe removing it would be a mistake, and I have three clear reasons to explain why I think the break is actually more important for learning than it might seem.

The first reason is that our brains genuinely need a rest after long periods of concentration. Research shows that students who take regular short breaks between learning activities are able to remember and use more of what they have been taught than students who work continuously. If we lose morning tea, the second half of our morning will be filled with students who are mentally tired and much less able to engage with new learning. We would be in class for longer but learning less effectively.

The second reason is that moving around outside gives us the physical and mental reset we need to focus properly for the rest of the morning. Exercise improves concentration, and fifteen minutes of activity makes a real difference to how alert and focused we feel when we come back inside. Our teacher has told us that the period after morning tea is usually one of the most productive times of the whole school day. That is not a coincidence.

The third reason is that morning tea is important for our wellbeing and our social connections. When students feel happy and settled in their friendships and in the school community, they are better able to concentrate and cooperate in class. Morning tea gives us the time to resolve any social tensions from earlier in the day and to feel ready to engage positively with our teachers and classmates.

I understand that you want more time for learning, Ms Watene, and I respect that goal completely. But getting rid of morning tea would not actually give us more learning. It would give us more time in the classroom with students who are too tired, too unsettled, and too unfocused to learn well. The break is not taking time away from learning. It is protecting the quality of the learning that follows. Please keep it. Ngā mihi, Sofia Perez, Room 11.

Structure [5/6]

The response is mostly unified. Clear opening, three body paragraphs, and counterargument and conclusion combined. Transitional language is effective.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [5/6]

Appropriate and effective with consistent voice. Some persuasive language. Sentence variety adequate.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [5/6]

Grammar and punctuation is mostly correct. Spelling accurate is throughout.

Score 4 Exemplar, Year 6: total score 20/30

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Feedback for Score 4 Exemplar, Year 6

Audience and Purpose [4/6]

The response clearly understands that the audience is the principal and that the purpose is to persuade them not to remove morning tea. The position is stated confidently at the beginning and remains focused and consistent all the way to the closing request. The writer does not just complain about losing a break; they frame the issue around learning, behaviour, and readiness, which is exactly what makes the persuasion more mature. The conclusion also directly addresses the principal's likely reasoning and responds to it. Sentences are varied, well formed, and used confidently to support the persuasive purpose.

Content Development/Elaboration [4/6]

The argument is developed thoughtfully and practically. The writer explains how morning tea supports concentration, mood, movement, and social regulation, and each point is clearly tied back to learning. The support includes cause-and-effect reasoning: hunger leads to distraction, sitting too long leads to restlessness, and a short break helps students return calmer. The mention of small friendship problems being sorted out informally is also a strong detail because it feels true to school life. Sentences extend each point with enough detail to make the reasoning convincing and well rounded.

Dear Principal,

I strongly disagree with the idea of removing morning tea break. Even though the plan is meant to create more learning time, I do not think it would actually improve learning. In fact, I think it could make students less focused, less settled, and less ready to do their best work.

One reason morning tea is important is that students need a chance to eat and drink in the middle of the morning. By then, many students are hungry and beginning to lose concentration. A short break helps them refuel and return to class ready to think clearly again. Without that break, some students may become distracted, tired, or irritable, which would make the extra class time less useful than it sounds.

Morning tea also gives students a chance to move, get fresh air, and reset. Sitting for too long can make people restless, especially younger students. It is also a time when friendship problems can be sorted out informally before they become bigger issues in class. A short break can actually protect learning, because it helps students return calmer and more prepared.

I understand that more learning time may sound like a good idea, but students need to be in the right state to learn well. Please keep morning tea break, because it supports both wellbeing and effective learning, and removing it would probably create more problems than benefits.

Yours sincerely,

Zara P.
Room 11

Structure [4/6]

The letter is very effectively structured. It begins with a clear overall position, develops the argument through two strong body sections, then finishes by addressing the "more learning time" counterpoint before closing with a direct request. This gives the response a clear persuasive arc rather than just a list of complaints. Each paragraph has a clear role and builds on the previous one. The letter format is complete and polished. Sentences connect smoothly and support the logical progression of ideas.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [4/6]

The language is precise, confident, and highly appropriate for a Year 6 letter to a principal. Vocabulary such as "concentration," "irritable," "informally," and "wellbeing" helps lift the quality while still sounding believable for this level. The tone is serious without sounding stiff, and the writer sounds thoughtful rather than emotional. The style is persuasive because it remains calm and reasoned throughout. Sentences are well structured and varied enough to keep the writing controlled and engaging.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [4/6]

The response demonstrates highly effective control of conventions for this level. Grammar is secure, punctuation is accurate, and spelling supports smooth reading throughout. Paragraphing is strong and helps separate the argument clearly. Longer sentences are handled well without becoming confusing. The sign-off is correctly formatted and adds to the letter's polished finish. Sentences are correctly structured and support clear communication throughout.

Score 3 Exemplar, Year 6: total score 15/30

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Feedback for Score 3 Exemplar, Year 6

Audience and Purpose [3/6]

The response maintains a clear opinion and addresses the principal appropriately. The writer understands that the task is to persuade, not just to explain a personal feeling about breaks. The argument stays on topic and includes a complete ending and sign-off, which helps the letter feel finished. However, the persuasion is more straightforward than would be needed to get a higher score and does not build as much pressure or detail. Most sentences are correctly structured and support the message.

Content Development/Elaboration [3/6]

The writer gives relevant reasons about hunger, concentration, movement, and calmness after a break. These are sensible and clearly connected to the issue. The response is stronger than a simple opinion because it explains how the break affects learning. However, the elaboration stays fairly general and does not extend into as much practical detail or cause-and-effect reasoning as a higher scoring piece of writing would. Sentences provide some development, though the support remains fairly straightforward.

Dear Principal,

I think getting rid of morning tea break is a bad idea. Even though it might give us more class time, I do not think it would help students learn better. I think students need that break during the morning.

One reason is that students get hungry. If they cannot eat until much later, they may find it harder to listen and finish their work properly. Morning tea also gives students a chance to move around and have a break from sitting in class. That can help them come back more focused.

Another reason is that students need a little time to relax and talk. Sometimes when people have a short break, they come back calmer. I know learning time is important, but students also need to be ready to learn. I hope you will keep morning tea break for our school.

Yours sincerely,

Aria W.
Room 11

Structure [3/6]

The letter is generally well organised. It begins with the opinion, develops two related reasons, and ends with a clear request. The order makes sense and the sign-off completes the form appropriately. Paragraphing is present and helps the response feel organised. The structure works well, though it is more functional than especially cohesive or skilful.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [3/6]

The language is appropriate and easy to follow. The tone remains polite and school-appropriate throughout. There are some useful choices such as “focused” and “ready to learn,” which help the piece sound purposeful. However, the style is still fairly plain and the sentence variety is moderate rather than strong. The writer shows a suitable awareness of the audience.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [3/6]

Control of conventions is competent. Grammar, punctuation, and spelling are secure enough that the writing remains clear all the way through. Paragraphing supports readability, and sentence boundaries are mostly correct. The sign-off is correctly handled and strengthens the letter form. Most sentences are correctly formed, with only minor weaknesses.

Score 2 Exemplar, Year 6: total score 10/30

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Feedback for Score 2 Exemplar, Year 6

Audience and Purpose [2/6]

The response does establish a position and does attempt to persuade the principal, so it is recognisably on task. The writer knows what they want and says it directly. However, the control of purpose is weak and the writing often becomes loose and unclear rather than a carefully shaped letter. The ending and sign-off help the response feel complete, but the persuasion remains basic. The frequent control issues interfere with clear communication, which is appropriate for this score point.

Content Development/Elaboration [2/6]

There are relevant ideas here: students get tired and hungry, they need food and a break outside, and talking with friends can help class feel better afterward. These are useful points and keep the response connected to the task. However, the development is uneven and harder to follow because spelling, wording, and sentence control interfere with clarity. Some ideas are started and then carried in a muddled way across long sentences. The support is partial rather than strong, and the reader has to work to understand the argument.

Dear Principal,

I think morning tea shood not go because students need it and school is a long time with no break and that makes pepol tired and grumpy and not as good at there work. We need to eat and drink and go outside a bit and then come back and do more work but if there is no break it gets all muddled and harder and I dont think the extra learning time will work the way it sounds.

Morning tea is also good because we can talk to frends and have a litle rest and then class is better after. Some people might say more class time is better but I dont think it helps if students are to tired and hungry because then the day gets worse not better and that is why I think you shood keep it.

Yours sincerely,

Levi S.
Room 11

Structure [2/6]

This response shows an attempt at paragraphing. The first paragraph introduces the main view and some reasons, and the second adds more about rest and talking to friends. However, the organisation is still weak because the internal flow of each paragraph is loose and hard to track. Several ideas run together without clear shaping. The sign-off helps complete the letter, but the overall structure remains basic and only partly effective.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [2/6]

The language shows a basic attempt to persuade, but the word choice and sentence control are limited. There are noticeable spelling mistakes such as “shood,” “pepol,” “frends,” “litle,” and “to tired,” and awkward phrases such as “gets all muddled.” These problems interfere with smooth communication. The tone remains school-appropriate, but the voice is weak and not carefully shaped for the audience. The writing does not yet sound controlled enough for a higher score.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [2/6]

Errors are frequent enough to interfere with clear communication, but not so severe that the message becomes impossible to follow. Sentence boundaries are weak, punctuation is limited, spelling mistakes are noticeable throughout, and grammar is inconsistent. The reader can still work out the main point, but not easily or smoothly.

Score 1 Exemplar, Year 6: total score 5/30

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Feedback for Score 2 Exemplar, Year 6

Audience and Purpose [1/6]

The response only partly addresses the task. It does suggest that morning tea is good and should stay, but the position is not clearly shaped or strongly maintained as a persuasive letter to the principal. The writing feels more like a stream of thoughts than a controlled argument for a decision-maker. There is no proper ending or organised closing beyond the last words. Communication of purpose is limited and incomplete, which matches this score point.

Content Development/Elaboration [1/6]

A few relevant ideas appear, such as students being hungry and tired, going outside, talking, and the class feeling better afterward. However, these ideas are only touched on briefly and are not properly developed. Some parts are vague or repetitive, and the writing circles around the same point instead of building reasons clearly. The content feels scattered and preference-based rather than like a built argument. The reader can see bits of relevance, but the writing does not shape them into a clear case.

Dear Principal morning tea is good because school is long and pepol get hungry and tired and if there is no break then its just work and work and i think thats to much and kids dont like it and it makes the class feel bad and i think when you eat and go outside and talk then class is better after and people can do more things but if its all morning with no stop it gets bad and hard and some kids will be grumpy and maybe not do there jobs and i think school needs brakes because thats part of school and it helps and i dont no why it would go away because it is only short and not that big and i am saying this because morning tea is important and that is what i think from Tyrese room 11

Structure [1/6]

This response does not use paragraphing. It reads as one long stream of writing, and the ideas blur together without clear organisation. There is no real shaping into beginning, middle, and ending. The lack of structure significantly weakens clarity and makes the letter hard to follow.

Language Use, Choice, and Style [1/6]

The language is simple, repetitive, and weakly controlled. There are noticeable spelling and word choice issues such as “pepol,” “to much,” “brakes,” and “dont no,” and there are also places where repetition weakens the writing. The tone is inconsistent and does not sound carefully shaped for the principal. The run-on style makes the voice feel unstructured and underdeveloped. Overall, the language control is very limited.

Writing Conventions, Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling [1/6]

Errors significantly interfere with communication, not just slightly. There are major sentence-boundary problems, missing punctuation, inconsistent capitalisation, spelling problems, and weak grammar throughout. The reader can still work out parts of the meaning, but it takes effort, and some parts remain unclear.