

English Policy



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Whale Hill Primary School English Policy

Intent

At Whale Hill Primary School we know high-quality reading and writing is a vital skill for academic success, communication and life beyond school. Our approaches to reading and writing are closely aligned and underpinned by the Department for Education's Reading and Writing Frameworks (2023 & 2025), ensuring a coherent and progressive literacy curriculum from Reception through to Key Stage 2. Both frameworks emphasise strong foundations, clear sequencing of learning, and the reduction of cognitive load so that children can focus on mastering essential knowledge and skills. High-quality texts sit at the heart of our English curriculum, providing rich models of language, structure, and vocabulary, while explicit teaching supports children to apply this knowledge with increasing independence. Through carefully planned teaching, regular opportunities for practice, and consistent teacher modelling, we enable pupils to become fluent readers and confident writers who can communicate effectively, think critically, and develop a lifelong engagement with language.

Aims and Objectives

The aim for English in the national curriculum is to promote high standards of literacy by equipping pupils with a secure understanding of the spoken and written language, and to develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment. The national curriculum for English aims to ensure that all pupils:

- Read easily, fluently and with good understanding
- Develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information
- Acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language
- Appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage
- Write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences
- Use discussion in order to learn; they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas
- Develop competency in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debates

Implementation

English Teaching in the Foundation Stage

Speaking and listening skills are vitally important as they underpin all learning at this early stage. From Nursery, development of these skills is encouraged through activities such as listening to stories and poems, joining in with rhymes and songs, participating in role and imaginative play, responding to simple instructions, talking to accompany play etc. In Nursery, speaking is developed using the Early Talk Boost intervention – a 3 day a week, 9 - week programme.

From Nursery, phonological awareness skills are developed daily through teacher-led activities, games and songs. There is a strong focus on oral blending and children are introduced to the Read, Write Inc. scheme by learning to blend with Fred the Frog. The first half-term in Reception continues to focus on teaching

children the first set of letters and corresponding sounds with daily practise of oral blending. Children then follow the RWI programme.

Knowledge about books is developed through activities such as listening to stories and rhymes, retelling familiar stories in their own words, reading a big book with the teacher, re-reading favourite stories and listening to taped stories etc. There are books in every area of provision to enhance children's learning across every area of the curriculum.

From Nursery, there are daily opportunities for children to mark make, through teacher-led activities or through their independent play. The important gross and fine motor skills needed for writing are developed daily using the Squiggle whilst you Wiggle programme and continued in Reception using Dough Disco. Children learn to write their name through daily practise with an adult. Emergent writing is encouraged through multi-sensory experiences and children are encouraged to write in role. The learning environment provides purposes for writing e.g. shopping lists, signs, instructions, recounts etc. When children begin the Read, Write Inc. programme they are encouraged to attempt writing using their phonic knowledge by using 'Fred Fingers' to segment words.

English Teaching in Key Stage 1 and 2

Reading

The programmes of study for reading at key stages 1 and 2 consist of 2 dimensions:

- word reading
- comprehension (both listening and reading)

It is essential that teaching focuses on developing pupils' competence in both dimensions; different kinds of teaching are needed for each.

Skilled word reading involves both the speedy working out of the pronunciation of unfamiliar printed words (decoding) and the speedy recognition of familiar printed words. Underpinning both is the understanding that the letters on the page represent the sounds in spoken words. This is why phonics is emphasised in the early teaching of reading to beginners (i.e. unskilled readers) when they start school.

Good comprehension draws from linguistic knowledge (in particular of vocabulary and grammar) and on knowledge of the world. Comprehension skills develop through pupils' experience of high-quality discussion with the teacher, as well as from reading and discussing a range of stories, poems and non-fiction..

KS1 Reading

Children in Reception and Key Stage 1 are taught phonics through a daily Read Write Inc lesson. This programme promotes a strong and systematic emphasis on the teaching of phonics to aid the teaching and learning of reading. Through this scheme children will be taught to:

- Decode using letter sound correspondence.
- Read common exception words on sight.
- Develop reading comprehension.
- Read with fluency and expression.

Children are assessed half-termly and placed in small groups depending on their stage. They have a daily Read Write Inc. lesson lasting 45 minutes and this comprises of 2 parts – Speed Sounds (phonics) and Reading.

The **Speed Sounds** part consists of:

- Teaching oral blending.
- Introducing and revising sounds.
- Decoding words.
- Decoding of 'alien' words.

The **Reading** part consists of:

- Reading a book that is closely matched to their phonic knowledge.
- Reading words speedily using 'Fred in your head'.
- Reading common exception words.
- Partner reading.
- Echo reading and choral reading to develop fluency.
- Comprehension – retrieval, inference and deduction

The book is read 3 times in class (or more, depending on how fluent the children are). The first read focusses on decoding the words on the page, the second read focusses on reading fluency and the third read focusses on comprehension of the text.

When children have completed the RWI programme and are fully competent with phonics they move to the RWI Comprehension programme to develop their fluency and understanding.

KS2 Reading

In KS2 guided reading is taught daily at the beginning of every English lesson, using high quality age-appropriate texts with a range of reading journal tasks and comprehension skills.

Our main reading scheme following on from RWI is **Oxford Reading tree**. There are many strands to the Oxford Reading Tree Scheme allowing all pupils to experience a breadth of genres in both fiction and nonfiction.

As part of the recent update of our reading scheme, we will offer pupils who are no longer on the RWI scheme access to Oxford Reading Buddy (ORB). This is an additional online element to Oxford Reading Tree that supplements the physical scheme. The children can access virtual copies of their reading books, as well as further levelled texts, and challenge themselves with comprehension quizzes. This informs both parents and teachers of their progress. We encourage the children to access this on a weekly basis.

Children in year Five year Six also access **Reading Plus** up to three times per week within the Guided Reading time of their English lessons. This is an online reading programme designed to improve reading speed and fluency, increase vocabulary and accelerate reading comprehension.

Home Reading

Once on the RWI programme, the following happens for children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2:

- When children can read the decodable class book fluently, it is taken home to practice. We encourage children to share and 'show off' their reading to their families.
- An additional 'Book Bag' book is taken home alongside this. This is a story book with a similar focus and again, is matched to the children's phonic knowledge.

Following RWI:

- Children take home their ORT books and are expected to read 4 times a week. Children are encouraged to complete one quiz a week, if possible, in or out of school.

Reading for Pleasure

At Whale Hill, we recognise that reading for pleasure at school is a vital piece of the jigsaw when enabling children to learn to have a life-long love of reading. We enjoy sharing our love of reading in school by engaging in different events and initiatives –

- Every classroom has an inviting **book corner** that encourages a love of reading. The books in here are carefully chosen to entice children to read a wide range and they are continually refreshed.
- Every class has daily timetabled **Story time**. The books we read aloud are carefully chosen as we want children to experience a wide range, including books that reflect the children at Whale Hill and our local community, as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures.
- We are incredibly proud of our **school library** which is packed full of books for all ages – including adults! Every class, from Reception to Year 6 have allocated Library time each week where they can go and explore the books we have on offer. From Year 1 onwards, each child has a library card and they can take a book home to enjoy. The library is open at additional times during the day and after-school for pupils to visit and take books out.
- Our Headteacher spends some playtimes and lunchtimes in the library, reading with and exploring books with the children.
- We love to celebrate **World Book Day** each year, where staff and pupils dress as book characters and get a chance to share and talk about their favourite books.
- To foster a love of reading and inspire the children, we occasionally host author visits, providing opportunities for learners to engage with writers and explore the world of literature.

Reading Volunteers

We have a team of Reading Volunteers, made up of parents, carers and Grandparents, who visit school on a weekly basis to hear children read. This gives our children more vital practice at reading and is particularly beneficial for those who do not read regularly at home.

English Hub

We are delighted to have been selected to be an English Hub partner school, working closely with our local English Hub (Westgarth). This allows us to receive intensive support to improve the teaching of reading, with a particular focus on phonics, early language and reading for pleasure.

Assessment of Reading

The phonics Lead coaches, monitors and evaluates the teaching and learning of reading on a regular basis, to ensure continuity and progress is evident.

In Reception and Key Stage One, ongoing formative assessment is used to monitor progress in phonics and reading and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it.

In Reception and Key Stage One, Summative assessment is used every half-term. Each child completes the Read, Write Inc online assessment and this informs groupings for the next half-term.

The Lowest 20% of learners are quickly identified through this process and daily 1:1 intervention is provided to support them. From Year 1 to Year 6, children's reading is also assessed termly using the Test Base reading comprehension tests.

Termly Pupil Progress Meetings will allow teacher and Assessment Lead to agree strategies to be used to ensure progress.

Statutory Assessment

- Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. This is a short, statutory assessment in English schools to determine if a child can effectively decode words using their phonics skills. The purpose of the check is to identify pupils who need extra support to improve their reading and ensure they do not fall behind in this vital early reading skill. Any child not passing the check in Year 1 will re-sit in Year 2.
- Year 6 pupils complete statutory assessments (SATs) in reading and grammar, punctuation and spelling, as required by national guidelines, to monitor progress and ensure standards are met.

Writing

The programmes of study for writing at key stages 1 and 2 are constructed into:

- transcription (spelling and handwriting)
- composition (articulating ideas and structuring them in speech and writing)

Writing down ideas fluently depends on effective transcription: that is, on spelling quickly and accurately through knowing the relationship between sounds and letters (phonics) and understanding the morphology (word structure) and orthography (spelling structure) of words. As these skills become more automatic, pupils are freed to focus their cognitive resources on composition, meaning and audience.

Effective composition involves articulating and communicating ideas and then organising them coherently for a reader. This requires clarity, awareness of the audience, purpose and context, and an increasingly wide knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Writing also depends on fluent, legible and, eventually, speedy handwriting.

It is essential that teaching develops pupils' competence in these two dimensions and both are embedded in our Writing Scheme of Work.

Spoken Language

Oral language is the foundation on which fluent writing is built. The 2025 Writing Framework stresses that "in the early stages of learning to write, sentence-level composition should be carried out orally" (i.e. children should say aloud what they intend to write before writing it). At Whale Hill, our writing curriculum has a strong focus on Oracy and writing lessons will routinely include the following practice –

- In EYFS and Key Stage 1 teachers model and scaffold oral composition of simple sentences, encouraging pupils to say a sentence aloud before writing.
- Teacher modelling: thinking aloud, verbally modelling structuring a sentence, choosing vocabulary and ordering.
- Small group or paired talk where pupils discuss ideas, rehearse sentence structure, choose vocabulary, and converse about purpose and audience.
- Talk partners to prepare writing, share drafts and discuss improvements.

Writing in KS1 and KS2

In Reception and KS1, the skills of writing are taught daily during the 45- minute Read, Write Inc session. Children are first taught the individual letter formations and begin to write CVC words as soon as they have the phonic knowledge that allows them to. They then move on to writing short captions and sentences using the sounds they have been taught. From the beginning of the programme, children are taught to hold, practise and rehearse a sentence before writing it (Hold a sentence). Every Speed Sounds lesson has a spelling element where children learn to spell quickly and accurately by applying their phonics knowledge.

They are taught to segment words using 'Fred Fingers'. Alongside this, pupils are taught common exception and tricky words which do not follow a usual pattern.
In addition to the daily RWI session, children in Year 1 and Year 2 have a daily writing lesson.
From Y3 to Y6 writing is also taught daily.

During each English writing block the children follow a set writing journey. High quality texts are used to engage and motivate all learners. For our children to grasp a good understanding of a range of writing genres, we ensure that for each genre, writing is taught in the following three stages:

Stage 1 – The Investigation Stage

Stage 2 – Teaching and Collaboration Stage

Stage 3 – Show Me Stage

Teachers will ensure children have sufficient knowledge and background information of topics to support them in the writing process. Staff will take ownership of planning and resourcing, ensuring lessons are adapted and responsive to meet the needs of all children.

Spelling in Year 2 to Year 6

From Year 2 upwards, children use the RWI Spelling Scheme, which follows the guidance for spelling, as set out in the National Curriculum. Children work in spelling groups based on their spelling ability and these groups are monitored throughout the academic year. Spelling is taught in interactive, 15-minute-a-day spelling sessions and taught in units based on spelling rules. Children take home spellings for each unit to learn at home for weekly or fortnightly spelling tests.

Punctuation and Grammar

Read Write Inc (RWI) teaches punctuation and grammar progressively, starting with basics like capital letters, full stops, and finger spaces in early years, then moving to conjunctions, verb tenses, noun phrases, and sentence types. From Year 2 to 6 there is explicit teaching within writing lessons which covers apostrophes (possessive & contraction), adverbs, fronted adverbials, and using punctuation for effect, all integrated into reading, spelling, and comprehension to build functional skills for writing.

With support of The Place Value of Punctuation (grammarsaurus) children are taught specific skills tailored to their age and programme of study (writing scheme). This teaches children the basis of mastering sentence structure.

Word of the day is taught daily to all of KS2 to promote and expand the use and understanding of high quality vocabulary.

Handwriting

Handwriting is taught using the Read, Write Inc. Handwriting programme.

In Reception, children are taught to read and write Set 1 sounds as part of their Read, Write Inc. Phonics lesson. As soon as they can read Set 1 sounds, they are taught a separate daily 10-minute handwriting lesson. At this early stage they will write on unlined paper.

In Year 1 and Year 2 handwriting is taught 3x a week in the following 4 stages:

- **Stage 1** begins as soon as most children can read Set 1 sounds and they are taught to form these letters correctly.

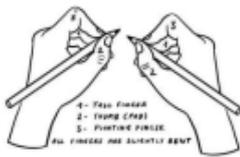
- **Stage 2** begins during Year 1. Children learn the relative size of letters and to form letters that will flow easily and into a joined style.
- **Stage 3** follows straight on. Children learn how to join letters using two basic joins – the ‘bridge’ join and the ‘hill’ join and the two variations on each.
- **Stage 4** helps children develop a mature and speedy style.

Each stage ensures pupils meet the National Curriculum requirements for handwriting from Reception to Year 4.

We teach letters in handwriting families by grouping letters that have a similar formation. In Stages 2 and 3, children write on wide-lines using the ‘sponge-cake’ visual as an aid.

Children are encouraged to maintain a correct and comfortable sitting position and tripod grip:

Finger positioning using the tripod grip:



Paper positioning for right-handers:



Paper positioning for left-handers:

Assessment and marking

Marking is in line with the school’s marking and feedback policy. A consistent approach to marking is a vital part of our children’s continued development. In addition, writing will be marked against the success criteria generated prior to starting the task. The marking policy is regularly reviewed and updated.

Teachers also plan opportunities in lesson time to allow children to respond to the marking; this will include opportunities for 1-1 feedback where appropriate and needed.

Writing is moderated termly within phase teams and across the Trust to ensure consistency, accuracy, and high standards in assessment. A portfolio of samples is collected across the trust for people to use to aid assessment.

Monitoring and Review

Senior Leaders will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy through termly learning walks, book sampling, pupil voice and analysis of data. The desired outcome is consistent high-quality teaching and learning, supporting all pupils to achieve literacy excellence