

# Westgate Primary School

## English Policy



### 1. Introduction

Using the English language effectively is at the heart of all children's learning. English enables children both to communicate with others effectively for a variety of purposes and to examine their own and others' experiences, feelings and ideas, giving these order and meaning. As English is central to children's intellectual, emotional and social development it has an essential role across the curriculum and helps pupils' learning to be coherent and progressive.

At Westgate Primary School, we believe that literacy and communication are key life skills. By teaching a broad and balanced English curriculum, we will help children develop the skills and knowledge that will enable them to communicate effectively and creatively through spoken and written language and equip them with the skills to become lifelong learners. We want children to enjoy and appreciate literature and its rich variety.

### 2. Aims

- To provide a language-rich environment that promotes a culture where reading, writing and speaking and listening are valued;
- To develop in pupils an interest in and a love of books and literature, that will not only support their learning across the curriculum but also enrich their lives;
- To value and use books as a basis for learning, pleasure, talk and play;
- To teach children the craft of writing in order to develop in the confidence and skills to write well for a range of purposes and audiences;
- To foster in pupils the confidence, desire and ability to express their views and opinions both orally and in writing;
- To value and celebrate diversity in culture and language;
- To have a suitable technical vocabulary through which to understand and discuss their reading and writing;
- To have an interest in words and their meaning and a growing vocabulary.

### 3. Speaking and Listening

- Our aims for learning and teaching within speaking and listening are to enable children to listen to and make sense of what they hear; follow verbal instructions, with or without non-verbal cues; understand what good listening is and how to respond during discussions, conversations and when information is given or asked for; use communication, including talk, to communicate their needs and to develop and express their ideas.
- The four strands of speaking and listening are: speaking; listening and responding; group discussion and interaction; drama.
- Speaking and Listening targets are incorporated into Unit Plans so that for particular lessons, verbal responses are targeted as opposed to written responses (eg in a class debate or discussion).
- Speaking and Listening plays an important part in daily conversations involving the teacher and Learning Partners. Children are encouraged to verbalise their ideas before writing tasks.
- The principles of Talk for Writing are used regularly. The system of moving from imitation to innovation to independent application can be adapted to suit the needs of learners at any stage and is an important part of the Sentence Stacking structure: can you 'Say it' before you 'Write it!'
- We provide drama opportunities for children with Nursery, KS1 and KS2 Christmas concerts and in Year 6, every child takes part in the Leavers' Play

#### 4. Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling (GPS)

- a. Grammar skills, in line with national curriculum year group expectations, are always revised and practised within English Sentence Stacking lessons and are an important part of delivering a Unit of work. As important, is the introduction of new skills (often discrete lessons before a Sentence Stacking unit commences). Within Sentence Stacking units, GPS revolves around the reinforcement of existing skills and the application of those skills in more challenging and complex sentences, which are taught as children progress through school.
- b. Within each Sentence Stacking writing unit there are features of the text type which require the children to have the knowledge of specific grammatical terms related to sentence construction and punctuation. Each year group has a specified set of terms which require specific teaching and these, alongside punctuation expected to be used in each year group, are tested at the end of each year. Much of this vocabulary is critical in helping children understand how more complex sentences can be constructed and relate to helping the reader use punctuation to make the text clear. Teachers are made aware that they should not be reliant on previous teaching to have mastered a particular piece of punctuation, as these become increasingly challenging to use as sentence structures becomes more complex and so need constant re-visiting
- c. We use The Training Space's The Spelling Book spelling scheme from Y2 to Y6, to ensure the National Curriculum spelling patterns and word lists are addressed and taught in appropriate Year groups. The emphasis is on teaching spellings and allowing children to investigate patterns and exceptions to those patterns.
- d. When writing, children should be concentrating on higher-order thinking skills and are encouraged to 'have a go' at spelling and underline words that they are unsure of. When marking children's work, we do not correct all spelling errors: instead we focus on high frequency words, topic words and those taught in spelling lessons.

#### 5. Phonics

- a. In Reception and Key Stage 1, daily phonics is the key to the children's learning of spelling. This is taught using the Government approved and validated SSP (Systematic Synthetic Phonics), Bug Club Phonics. The programme teaches phonics lessons in Phase 1 (pre-Reception) and builds a systematic approach through Reception into Years 1 and 2 (Phase 6).
- b. From Y2 and into Key Stage 2, the children move towards using their phonic knowledge to help them to understand spelling rules and patterns and the exceptions to those patterns. We teach children to use their growing understanding of the morphology and etymology of words to support their spelling. Helping children to understand how to use and apply known spelling patterns (and to develop a range of strategies to tackle tricky words) helps them to become successful spellers. Spelling skills are embedded in English lessons so strategies and rules can be taught in the context of writing. Children are encouraged to have a sound knowledge of high frequency words for use in their daily work. Children will be taught to use dictionaries and thesauruses;
- c. Fully phonetically decodable books are used to teach each phase,
- d. Phonics is taught through 6 phases. It is taught as a discrete session each day. Each lesson follows the structure of review, teach, practice and apply.
  - Phase 1 supports the development of speaking and listening;
  - Phase 2-5 is a systematic approach to phonics teaching and word recognition skills;
  - Phase 6 focuses on word-specific spellings and the rules for spelling alternatives.

These are distributed as follows:

- Nursery focuses on the teaching of Phases 1-2
- Reception focuses on the teaching of Phases 1-3
- Year 1 focuses on the teaching of Phases 3-5
- Year 2 focuses on the teaching of Phases 4-6

#### 6. Reading

- a. The school is committed to providing all children with a rich reading and word environment.
- b. Each class has its own fiction bookcase and there is a whole school non-fiction library.
- c. Reading is taught both discretely and as an integral part of the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to become confident, enthusiastic, reflective and independent readers. They

experience print in a variety of forms and for a variety of purposes and read for enjoyment, information and interest.

- d. **Whole class reading** develops listening skills, a love of story and reading for pleasure. A text is chosen which challenges the year group with vocabulary and content. This is teacher-led reading of a class book or novel, with children listening and responding to questions, predictions and vocabulary choices as appropriate to the level of the children. This occurs regularly in all year groups.
- e. **Guided reading** is used to target and teach children's reading skills. Guided Reading sessions take place outside English lessons. Guided Reading takes place at least 4 times a week in each class for between 20-30 minutes. During a Guided Reading session the children read and respond to a challenging text. Texts of graded difficulty are carefully chosen and matched to the reading ability of the class. It is intended that Guided Reading provides an opportunity for children to further develop and extend their reading and comprehension skills;
- f. Each class has a **Reading Challenge** which is launched in the Autumn Term. This consists of a collection of set texts or genre which the children are encouraged to read during the year. Children who successfully complete their challenge have the chance to visit a bookshop with a member of the SLT in the Summer Term. Class Reading Challenges will be displayed in each classroom and in the library.
- g. In Reception, Guided Reading takes place during the summer term;
- h. In Key Stage 1, children read 1-1 with an adult at least once a week. TAs and Volunteer Readers support reading activities to ensure that children have more frequent opportunities to read with adults. As the children move through the school, opportunities to read independently for a sustained period of time are afforded to them;
- i. Although much of the Guided Reading at Westgate uses verbal responses, as the children progress through school, there are increasing opportunities for them to practise more formal written responses using comprehension texts and these support both children and staff in identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in reading skills.
- j. Children have access to graded books in a reading scheme to support the development of their individual reading skills. Children start the reading scheme in Reception and continue on this scheme until they become competent independent readers (usually by Year 3). Guidance will still be given after this point to ensure children are reading challenging and age-appropriate texts. Children are heard read individually by an adult in school at least once a week until they reach this stage.
- k. In Reception and Key Stage 1, the children take home books from the home reading scheme and have e-books allocated to further support their reading. Parents note comments in their reading record.
- l. Children have many opportunities to have their Reading for Pleasure enhanced; we take children regularly to our local library to choose books for the class library and for talks on specific authors or how to use a library; we celebrate World Book Day with a variety of challenges; displays throughout school enhance the reading experience; parental newsletters feature favourite or recommended texts from different members of staff; weekly assemblies feature 'Book of the Week' which are chosen by different children across both Key Stages; all children have regular opportunities to visit the school library to choose or read non-fiction books; we use the Leeds Library Service to enhance our Topic and fiction books- these are changed on a termly basis.

## 7. Writing

- a. Writing Unit plans help to structure the teaching sequence. The purposes and audiences for writing are clearly established and ensure teaching questions and success criteria are explicit to children, so they know why they are studying a particular text or text type, what a good one looks like and the kind of writing activities they need to undertake to be successful. Most of our Sentence Stacking Units are derived from The Training Space, as is the style of the teaching sequence.
- b. The teaching sequence is built around the concept of Sentence Stacking, to ensure sentences are regularly modelled and then independently written by children as preparation for a longer independent task at the end of the unit. These lessons not only establish the style, vocabulary and GPS for the genre but also allow children to recap skills taught in previous years which now can be applied in more complex and challenging texts (e.g. the use of capital letters in longer names and titles or commas in multi-clause sentences).

- c. Sentence stacking is a form of shared writing and is modelled by the teacher as the expert writer, with contributions from the children. This is teacher-led writing with children interactively observing and contributing ideas. The emphasis may be on the generation of ideas, grammatical awareness, spelling and phonics, compositional, transcriptional, presentation and text level skills or other key strategies needed in writing. The teacher, as the expert writer, leads the writing process and then the children have a clear model to base their own work on. This process makes it clear to the children what the expectations are for that part of the lesson;
- d. The lessons are predominantly split into smaller learning chunks so that children can review, proof-read and assess one or two sentences three times in a given lesson. The 'scaffolding' is reduced for higher attainers and options given to extend the sentence (Deepen the Moment) or be more creative or specific with their vocabulary choices for children working at Greater Depth.
- e. Sentence stacking can be done using the whiteboard or a visualiser and can involve teachers using the 'author's voice' to articulate what is happening during the writing process to help the children internalise what a writer is thinking as he/she writes;
- f. Children will often verbalise their sentences with their Learning Partners before writing so they can hear how the words fit together and hear how new vocabulary works in a sentence;
- g. Independent writing tasks at the end of a teaching sequence are an essential and critical part of the writing process. The children are immersed in the genre, with examples of 'What makes good'. This helps to teach the features of the genre so the children can easily identify them in a new text and eventually in their own writing. Following this, the children are specifically taught how to use the technical grammar features and get a chance to use them confidently, using the appropriate vocabulary to describe the features while Sentence Stacking.
- h. Away from Sentence Stacking, there are times when a new piece of punctuation or word class is introduced to the class and this is often taught as discrete lessons so the skill can be embedded and mastered and be the main focus of a lesson. It will then be picked up and practised in Sentence Stacking later in the year and in subsequent years so that it can be mastered in different contexts and genres.
- i. Sometimes there will be a partial or full re-draft of the writing and the strategies used to do this will be modelled and will be different in each year group. All writing is subject to the Feedback Policy. All feedback will be aimed at enabling children to make progress with their writing skills and support them in making their proof reading increasingly independent and accurate.
- j. From Year 1 to Year 6 children are given personalised writing targets to achieve which are based on areas for improvement identified through independent sustained writing tasks and writing target meetings- the first priority will always be to master an aspect of writing taught in a previous year but not yet mastered;
- k. Independent sustained writing tasks occur on a regular basis (usually at least 2 each half-term) and are then revisited by children for redrafting (especially in Key Stage 2) either with a learning partner or independently. Over the course of a year, these writing tasks form the basis of evidence to make decisions about whether children have met or exceeded the expected standard for the year group.
- l. Teachers meet children termly on an individual basis to establish writing targets and provide specific goals for each child. They are recorded on Writing Expectations sheets (placed in the front cover of their writing book), which also have a list of basic skills based on the previous year's expected standard, which most children should be using in all of their writing at school. These are differentiated across the year groups. A writing target should always be based on these, as previous skills should be mastered before new ones are chosen.
- m. Guided writing is used with intervention groups to support a specific small number of children with the same skill. These sessions take part outside English lessons and provide focused and short term support with a writing skill (eg handwriting or basic sentence construction) which will support them with whole class writing during English lessons.

## 8. Handwriting

1. Children should always be seated comfortably when writing and staff reinforce the correct sitting position.
2. Care is taken to ensure that left-handed children are given appropriate support e.g. their position in relation to other children, space to adjust the angle of their paper and the correct writing implement;
3. From Year 1, the children are taught to use an approach stroke and exit stroke so every letter begins and ends on the line;
4. Children are shown consistently a comfortable grip (primarily the default setting is the tripod grip).
5. The basic joins are taught and reinforced throughout the school, with the teacher modelling the correct formation.

6. Emphasis is placed on correct size, proportion of the letters, upright and diagonal lines and fluency.

### **9. Inclusion, SEN and Equal Opportunities**

1. English lessons, tasks and materials can be differentiated by the class teacher to meet the needs of individual children. Children identified as having Special Educational Needs may need differentiation and support of materials and tasks consistent with that child's Learning Passport.
2. A number of targeted intervention strategies are used to develop children's specific learning needs in both reading and writing. These include: FFT Wave 3 Literacy (Y1 and Y2); FFT Write Away Together (Y5 and Y6); 1<sup>st</sup>Class@Writing Pirate Crew in Year 3; and 1<sup>st</sup>Class@Writing Dragon Hunters in Y4. These interventions vary in length but all have the aim of supporting the children involved with reaching the Expected Standard for their year group. The classteacher and SENCo then ensure the impact is assessed using entry and exit data. They are delivered by trained teaching assistants;
3. Adult support is regularly offered to children with SEN but is not used exclusively in every lesson so that children do not become over-reliant on adult support;
4. All children will be given opportunities to participate on equal terms in all English activities and due consideration will be given to the principles of Inclusion so that no child is unable to participate in a task. This might include use of a keyboard to support a child with poor fine motor skills, increased levels of 'scaffolding' to support text cohesion or close support from a TA to allow a child working significantly below age related expectations to take part in an activity at their level.
5. Those children who have specific issues regarding handwriting and recording skills are supported in their writing by using assistive technology (usually in the form of a laptop or iPad). This might take the form of typing work, to improve legibility, or using voice recognition software (eg Popplet) so that composition skills can be assessed and children get the opportunity to express themselves and see themselves as writers.

### **10. Role of Subject Leader**

The English Subject Leader will work in conjunction with the Senior Leadership Team to improve the standards of learning and teaching in English through:

1. taking the lead in policy development;
2. modelling good practice;
3. monitoring and evaluating standards in English by analysing pupil progress data;
4. keeping up-to-date with developments and disseminating new information to staff;
5. auditing needs and organising staff training;
6. monitoring curriculum coverage and the provision of English through scrutiny of planning and books, lessons observations and reporting back to staff;
7. auditing the learning environment;
8. purchasing and organising resources;
9. supporting teachers in planning and using resources.

### **11. Monitoring and Review**

The implementation and impact of this policy is monitored in a number of ways:

1. Book Looks for writing take place at regular intervals by the subject leader. These involve monitoring of both standards and the teaching sequence. Specific targets are monitored and then fed back to staff so that action can be taken. These may include for example, teaching of conjunctions, presentation, sentence construction influencing independent writing and methods of feedback so children can take ownership of proof reading;
2. Alongside Book Looks, the subject leader may work with a small group of children to assess the impact of teaching practices, the learning environment and attitudes towards learning in English;
3. The subject leader may also conduct targeted lesson observations to look at the quality of progress children are making within a lesson or to support a teacher with a specific concern;
4. Book Looks and Lesson Observations will sometimes take place with other members of the SLT and governors to ensure the process is rigorous and transparent;
5. Book Look summaries, along with lesson observation outcomes, are fed back to the next Teaching and Learning sub-committee;
6. Progress in reading and writing is monitored by the SLT using termly Pupil Progress Meetings and kept on the Sharepoint for staff to access. Children are ranked termly so that staff can focus on key children who are on the cusp of the boundaries between Greater Depth, Expected Standard and

Below Expected Standard. Children's books form the main evidence base for progress in writing and are monitored by termly 'Book Looks' conducted by the subject leader/ senior leadership.

7. Results of regular reading assessments support staff in the ranking process as well determining whether the child has met EXS.
8. Feedback is given to teachers from their class book look and themes and a summary is passed to Governors.
9. While Y2 and Y6 have nationally moderated tests for reading and GPS, Y3-Y5 use NFER tests in the summer term to assess their progress. These tests are then evaluated by the subject leader and results fed back to staff

**This policy was agreed in July 2022 and will be reviewed every three years thereafter.**

**Signed:** (On behalf of the governing body)

**Signed:** (Head teacher)

**Date:** 11/07/2022