

# **ST THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**

## **ENGLISH POLICY**

### **Introduction**

This policy sets out St Thomas More Catholic Primary School's aims and strategies for the successful delivery of English. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant school policies such as: Curriculum; Teaching & Learning; Assessment & Marking; Equal Opportunities and SEND policies.

This policy has been developed by the English Leaders (Miss Jones and Miss Campbell) in consultation with the English Team, Leadership Team and general teaching staff. This policy is based on government documentation for statutory and non-statutory programmes of study.

### **Aims**

St Thomas More Catholic Primary School believes that every child should have the right to a curriculum that champions excellence; supporting pupils in achieving to the very best of their abilities. We understand the immense value that a high-quality English education can play in enriching pupils' lives.

Our aim is to promote a love of reading, language and literature and its rich variety, encouraging an enthusiastic approach towards reading and writing both at school and at home. We recognise that children will have encountered varying literary experiences before they begin school, upon which we will build by exposing our children to a variety of literature, genres and authors.

Pupils will be given a rich learning diet and immersive environment that will provide the foundations needed to be able to communicate effectively and creatively, be highly literate and a mobile member of society. They will recognise the importance English has on every subject and beyond the school.

### **Our Intent**

- The ability to read and write effectively not only has a direct impact on progress and attainment in all areas of the curriculum but also upon children's confidence, self-esteem and motivation to learn.
- In line with the National Curriculum for English (2014), our aim is to provide a high-quality English education, which develops pupils' spoken language, reading, writing and vocabulary, as well as providing a key to access the whole curriculum.
- The subject coordinators have designed the curriculum to develop pupils' knowledge sequentially, revisit, remember and apply old skills and learn new skills to achieve the objectives set by the 2014 National Curriculum.
- The curriculum design intends to provide a balance between exposure to classic texts and ambitious language as well as engaging, modern and exciting texts, which enable children to appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage and develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and to gain knowledge.

- The intention of using a range of high-quality texts ensures a cultural capital, which expands children’s horizons and exposes them to culture, gives high aspirations, makes children aware of all future possibilities and empowers children to be socially mobile
- The English curriculum intends to develop powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness in all areas of literacy;
- The curriculum intends for pupils to acquire a wide vocabulary, a secure understanding of grammar and linguistic conventions, as well as the ability to spell new words by effectively applying the spelling patterns and rules they learn throughout their time in primary school.
- The teaching of varied and rich literature inspires and nurtures a culture where children take pride in their writing and fosters confident, life-long writers, communicators and fluent readers who are able to effectively articulate their ideas and emotions as members of society and the wider world.

## **Curriculum**

As a school, we have created our own bespoke English curriculum from Reception to Year 6 in line with the National Curriculum. The English curriculum supports our teachers in delivering engaging and challenging lessons and learning opportunities which help to raise standards and allow all pupils to achieve to their full potential. We do not follow one particular scheme; however, as a staff we refer to a range of sources to support teaching and learning. Teachers plan closely with year group colleagues to ensure consistency of opportunity for all children. We are confident that our English curriculum provides everything a child will need to succeed. It provides immense flexibility, contextualised and cross curricula learning opportunities.

## **Reading**

From the very start of their time at our school, pupils should be given an environment that provides rich opportunities for building linguistic knowledge, skill and understanding. A strong emphasis is placed on giving opportunity for emerging reading and writing with clear intertwined links between, spoken and written form.

Phonics teaching is carried out progressively. In Foundation and Key Stage One, the phonics programme, which follows *Letters and Sounds*, offers a coherently planned sequence of lessons that supports the effective teaching of phonics. These phases are regularly revisited and recapped through daily phonics sessions. This cycle supports the retention of knowledge, allowing children to process, apply and consolidate their understanding. In Foundation Stage, parents receive an electronic sheet via Tapestry (an online learning journal) summarising the sound their child has learnt that day to further support their phonic learning at home.

In FS and KS1, children follow a sequence of daily phonics lessons, which is designed to support both reading and writing. Each year group progresses through the phases, starting with environmental sounds and progressing through to Phase 6.

We see reading as a shared activity between home and school; therefore, children are encouraged to take books home. At first, they will be helped to choose books that can be read in partnership with an adult but as they become more proficient, a greater choice and variety of books are available. By Year 2, most children choose their own books. From the outset, children are encouraged to see themselves as readers and are helped through discussion to form opinions and comment about the books that they read. A reading diary is kept to record the

books that children are reading; this is brought back to school every day and allows teachers to check that children are reading books appropriate for their age and ability. A range of books including Oxford Reading Tree are used in order to develop children's decoding and comprehension skills. Children will regularly take home a book which is matched to their phonetic ability and will encourage children to improve their comprehension skills by looking at the text and/or pictures. Readers who are more competent are encouraged to choose their own books as they work towards becoming a 'Free Reader' at the end of Year 4.

In FS and Key Stage 1, teachers may use big books and the interactive whiteboard to share books. Listening to poems and stories read by the teacher and sharing books together plays an important part in their reading development. Teachers model fluent reading which allows children to explore rich and varied vocabulary and learn key reading skills. Time is also set aside for children to read with an adult on a one to one basis as often as possible.

Across Key Stage 1 and 2, reading sessions focus on a VIPERS approach within whole class reading sessions, where there is a high level of interaction between teachers and children. VIPERS is an acronym to aid the recall of the 6 reading domains as part of the UK's reading curriculum. They are the key areas which we feel children need to know and understand in order to improve their comprehension of texts. VIPERS stands for: vocabulary, inference, prediction, explanation, retrieval, sequence or summarise. The 6 domains focus on the comprehension aspect of reading and not the mechanics: decoding, fluency, prosody etc. As such, VIPERS is not a reading scheme but rather a method of ensuring that teachers ask, and students are familiar with, a range of questions. They allow the teacher to track the type of questions asked and the children's responses to these which allows for targeted questioning afterwards.

## **Writing**

Within Early Years, Fine Motor Skills, which helps strengthen finger muscles, are an important part of each day. When teachers assess that children are ready, handwriting patterns are taught. Writing is taught through daily differentiated phonic lessons, which progresses through mark making, CVC words and then simple sentences. By the end of the year most children should all be able to write recognisable letters, most of which are correctly formed, spell words by identifying sounds in them, represent the sounds with a letter or letters and write a simple sentence to be able to reach the Early Learning Goal.

Teachers promote writing and look for ways to inspire and motivate pupils so that they see themselves as 'writers'. Teachers establish the purpose and audience for writing and make teaching objectives explicit to pupils so they know why they are studying a particular text type, the kind of writing activities they need to undertake and what the expected outcome will be. This approach will utilise high-quality texts, which provide children with a wide range of text types, rich and varied vocabulary and punctuation. A clear model for writing is key to the delivery of English lessons. Children benefit from both shared (constructing as a class) and modelled (teacher-led) writing. Shared and modelled reading and writing provide a context for discussion and a demonstration of grammatical features at word level, sentence level and text level. This will enable children to adapt their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences.

Children are given clear expectations and the opportunity to observe and engage whilst going through the process of putting ideas into written form.

The writing process breaks down into a number of steps that will need to be taught and practised regularly:

1. Planning (including examining language, vocabulary and layout structures within modelled texts)

2. Drafting and writing
3. Evaluating, editing and re-drafting (from Year 2, children will have opportunities to use purple pens to edit and assess their learning.)
4. Proof-Reading (teacher-led, paired, independent)
5. Reading aloud and sharing

In Key Stage 2, children develop their spelling through daily Spelling Workshop sessions, an ‘in-house’ developed scheme, which builds upon children’s previous phonetic knowledge. This includes the development of knowledge of graphemes, phonemes, root words, prefixes and suffixes, homophones, spelling rules and exceptions. Alongside this, children will learn their year group spelling words and apply their understanding of spelling patterns to these.

## **Handwriting**

*Legible writing that can be produced comfortably, at speed and with little conscious effort allows a child to attend to the higher-level aspects of writing composition and content.* National Handwriting Association

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, we teach our children to write in a cursive script. Teachers will follow the school policy to help each child develop legible and fluent handwriting, provide direct teaching and accurate modelling; provide resources and an environment that promotes good handwriting; observe pupils, monitor progress and determine targets for development.

For our youngest pupils we teach: movements to enhance gross motor, skills such as air-writing and pattern making, a range of daily exercises to develop fine motor skills; letter learning to familiarise children with shapes, formation and vocabulary.

When children are ready, they are taught to sit properly in order to have the correct posture for writing, hold a pencil in the correct tripod grip and develop a legible and, when appropriate, joined handwriting style.

As children progress into KS2 and develop their cursive presentation, they will work towards writing in pen and obtaining their ‘pen licence’. This is awarded when children demonstrate a more consistent, cursive style. By the end of Key Stage 2, all children should be displaying an efficient, quick, neat and legible handwriting style that is effective in recording their ideas.

Handwriting practice will be planned as necessary by each teacher according to a class’ needs. Teachers may wish to focus on particular aspects of writing such as letter strokes, letter families or letter joins to meet an individual, group or class need.

Stroke-related families are as follows:

1. Line and arch letters:                    i l t u y
2. Down, up and over letters:            h n m r b p k
3. Round letters:                            c a d g q o e
4. Diagonal and counterchange:                v w x z                    f s

The 26 letters of the alphabet can be grouped by their entry and exit strokes to show those with similar joining patterns.

These letters join at the baseline:        i l t u h n m a c d e k

These can join from the crossbar:        f t

These join from the top: o r v w  
These may be left unjoined as appropriate: g j y  
This has a unique join: q

Teachers are responsible for ensuring that pupils' handwriting and presentation across all subjects is neat. Whilst cursive script will be modelled by all teachers, it will not be the only exclusive form of writing script shown to the children; as in life, children will be exposed to a variety of different handwriting styles and text fonts and should become accustomed to seeing this variety. Teachers must also teach pupils about different types of handwriting, for example-personal note taking, or best display presentation.

## **Resources**

All resources are procured with the underling considerations of value:

- The extent at which the resource impacts on learning and the material cost of this.
- A range of resources is available which successfully supports delivering the English curriculum and enables all learners to reach their full potential.
- Resources are suitably maintained and replenished when needed or requested, which is overseen by the English Leader

Every class has a selection of reference books e.g. dictionaries, thesaurus etc. and a class library. The library can also be used for a story or study session and informal access is encouraged within school hours. The library uses a computerised system for cataloguing the book stock. This system entitled 'Junior Librarian' (Micro Librarian Systems) allows books to be loaned or returned using either a scanned bar code system or by use of individual thumbprint recognition.

Each classroom has a wide range of books. Most children have formal access to the library, at least once a week, to choose a book with assistance from a member of staff. iPads, kindles, cameras and other computing equipment are used to facilitate a more cross-curricular, inclusive approach to learning within the classroom setting.

## **Assessment**

Assessment informs provisions at all levels, gaps and next steps are identified, as well as underperforming or coasting pupils through whole school and year group specific pupil progress meetings.

Formative assessment is undertaken each session in English and pupils are very much encouraged to be involved in the process. Opportunities are provided for teacher-pupil feedback and self- and peer-assessment is used with increasing frequency and effectiveness as children progress throughout the school.

Reading assessments are made as teachers listen to the children read and note their progress both individually and in whole class reading sessions. A detailed reading record form is used for all children in Foundation and Key Stage 1. This record is continued at Key Stage 2 until teachers decide that a child is sufficiently fluent for it to be no longer needed. At all stages, records are kept of books read. SALFORD reading tests are used to assess the reading age of children and inform the teacher planning cycle. Termly, all children across the school are assessed using Rising Stars assessments in Reading, Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation to track progress, plan the next step in lessons, adapt where necessary and target provisions. Summative assessment is undertaken in line with the

assessment cycle (see Assessment Policy). Teachers provide teacher assessed levels three times a year which are recorded using Target Tracker.

At the end of each Key Stage children undergo statutory Standardised Assessment in Reading and Writing as directed by the Secretary of State for Education. Reading is assessed through the Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2 SATs and writing is teacher assessed and submitted to the Medway Local Authority, who may undertake a sample of external writing moderations.

### **Inclusion**

At St Thomas More Catholic Primary School, we aim to enable all children to achieve to their full potential. This includes children of all abilities, social and cultural backgrounds, those with disabilities, EAL speakers and those with EHC plans. We place particular emphasis on the flexibility technology brings to allowing pupils to access learning opportunities, particularly pupils with SEN and disabilities.

All children receive quality first English teaching on a daily basis and activities are differentiated accordingly. Children who are not meeting age related expectations, will be monitored by teachers and supported with Quality First Teaching and appropriate differentiation. Through assessments, teachers implement rapid interventions and amend planning to ensure a continued high level of pupil performance. These are detailed within each classes' provision maps. Additional support and advice from specialist external agencies will be sought where necessary.

Every child will be given equal opportunity and encouragement in English, irrespective of gender, race and disability. For further clarification refer to our Inclusion Policy. Every effort is made to ensure that English activities are equally interesting for both boys and girls, from all ethnic groups within the school, and that fair opportunities are offered to all.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Feedback**

Having identified priorities, the Senior Management Team and English Coordinators construct an action plan that may form part of the School Development Plan. This forms the basis for any monitoring activities and will clearly identify when, who and what is to be monitored and how this will take place. This may be through:

- Work scrutiny
- Learning walks
- Observations
- Pupil, parent and staff voice

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher, Middle Management Team and the English Coordinators will be responsible for monitoring English. All teachers are expected to capture pupil observations and assessment pieces of work regularly and promote high standards of English across all subjects.

**Policy updated by:** Miss L Jones and Miss E Campbell

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