



Whitehall Nursery and Infant School

English Policy

Rationale

At Whitehall Nursery and Infant School, the delivery of the English curriculum is paramount for the continuing development of the language acquisition of our children. The English curriculum is driven in such a way to motivate, inspire and engage children to become lovers of literature, effective communicators and expressive writers. With these skills and attributes, they will be equipped for future challenges and successes in life.

This document supports and guides the school community by clarifying the intent and delivery of all aspects of the English curriculum across both Key Stages. This policy should be read in conjunction with Equal Opportunities Policy, Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, Most Able and SEN Policies and Disability & Discrimination Policy.

English is important because:

- it is the basic language of communication in our society;
- it is the foundation for all the learning which takes place in our school;
- its mastery empowers the learner and is essential for independent learning, the world of work and most other aspects of everyday life in Britain.

Aims and objectives

At Whitehall Nursery and Infant School we aim for children to:

- Develop a **love of books** and stories that they will remain passionate about for their whole lives.
- Have an interest in **developing** their own **vocabulary** through curiosity of new words and their definitions.
- Independently select appropriate and positive language, in order **communicate effectively** in a range of contexts and to a range of audiences.
- Be able to use their reading skills to **read and respond to an extensive range of texts** (including literature from different times and cultures, information and reference texts, media texts and online social and collaborative communications), thinking **critically** and **creatively**.
- Become increasingly coherent in **expressing** their opinions, **emotions and imagination** creatively, both through spoken and written language.
- Understand a range of **text types** and **genres** and be able to write in a variety of styles and forms appropriate to the situation.
- Be able to **write effectively** for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Be **reflective learners**, who are keen to improve their English knowledge and skills.
- Be **collaborative learners**, who are able to offer constructive feedback and criticism to their peers.

English and the National Curriculum

English is a core subject in the National Curriculum. The three attainment strands are:

1. Spoken Language
2. Reading - comprising word reading and comprehension
3. Writing – comprising transcription, handwriting, composition, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling.

Spoken Language

What?

At Whitehall Nursery and Infant School, we understand the importance of the development of spoken language. Spoken language is a key feature of the teaching of English at our school which is explicitly through carefully and strategically planned lessons. There are many opportunities for children to revisit and develop these skills embedded within the wider curriculum; both planned and incidental. Interactive teaching strategies are used to engage all pupils in order to develop effective communication skills and raise standards in reading and writing.

Infant teachers focus the importance of oracy and the direct impact that has on children's writing skills. With this in mind, we firmly believe that a child must first be able to say it before they can write it and consequently planning for spoken language across the curriculum is as important as planning for writing.

Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to:

1. value and respect the talk of others
2. value spoken language as a primary medium of learning, including the expressing of their own thoughts and ideas
3. learn to select from, reformulate, question and challenge what they hear
4. use standard English

How?

Spoken Language is developed through:

- providing a range of opportunities for children to talk and listen in formal and informal settings
- learning to respond by action, orally and in Makaton to what they have heard or seen
- a regular story time when the teacher reads or tells stories aloud to the class
- giving and receiving of messages
- the use of drama, role play, small world and hot-seating to explore imagined situations
- partner talk, discussion in small and large groups, performance of poetry or learnt phrases as part of a collaboration and promoting pupil voice
- careful planning pinpointing tailored activities to ensure inclusion of children with identified speech/language barriers

The following teaching approaches are used to support children's development of spoken language:

- Partner Talk – organising children into partners (usually of varied abilities) to allow for plenty of opportunities for children to speak and listen to their partners.

- Call and response (MTYT) – teacher models new vocabulary/sentence structure etc and children to repeat afterwards. This can be repeated as many times as necessary and in various voices.
- Popcorn – allowing all children to say their contributions aloud at a specific time to ensure all children have a ‘voice’ and do not feel under pressure to speak in front of their peers. This strategy also allows for teachers to pick up on opportunities to develop new vocabulary.
- Dictogloss – Dictation of familiar text that is slightly above the level of the children it is pitched to.
- Role play – children act out parts of a story/event
- Hot seating – children to take on the role of a character and be challenged or questioned by the teacher or their peers. They respond in character.
- Makaton – storytelling is often reinforced with the use of Makaton signs throughout the school. SEND children and EAL children use Makaton to reinforce their spoken language.

Reading

Reading for pleasure

Why?

‘The overarching aim for English in the national curriculum is to develop a love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment’ (DFE 2014).

- At Whitehall we aim to establish all children as lifelong readers by actively encouraging reading for pleasure daily across our school. We believe that daily reading opportunities, along with the exposure to a wide range of texts, will contribute to the children’s overall educational achievement. Children need to learn the skill of reading but it is important for this to be balanced with the desire to read, which will ultimately help the children to become lifelong, independent readers.

How?

The teachers role in reading for pleasure at Whitehall is to be a reading role model; inspiring children to read widely and often by showing children that they love to read too, through modelling and discussion. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of children’s literature which they are then able to share with their class. This also allows them to make recommendations of reading materials to the children and other teachers across the school. Weekly story assemblies also give teachers an opportunity to present themselves as readers to the children, by discussing and sharing their chosen book.

Independent reading is included on the class timetables across the year groups. Children are given daily opportunities to choose their own reading material from the class reading areas.

Children can:

- read by themselves or to an adult,
- listen to a story read by another child or adult,
- share a book with a peer and take part in informal book talk.
- have freedom to find a space in the classroom where they feel comfortable reading or sharing a book.

Story time is also included on class timetables and takes place regularly. It is another opportunity for teachers to share book recommendations and take part in informal book talk with the children.

Each class have a set of books called 'The favourite five' which are displayed in classrooms and are regularly used in story time as a way of building up children's familiarity with texts. It also gives teachers an opportunity to introduce new and exciting stories as well as traditional tales and books related to their topics. The books are then available for children to choose as their own reading material during independent reading time.

Children are given three books to take home each week. They are given a book which is matched to their reading ability that they can read independently at home; this is their 'RML' phonics book and is known as their '**reading book**'. Additionally, they select a colour banded book from the library which is suitable for their level of comprehension; this book can be read with a varied level of support and is known as their '**challenge book**'. They also have free choice of a story from the school library, which should be a book that they can share with an adult at home and read together for enjoyment; this book is known as their '**reading for pleasure**' book. In addition to physical books, children have access to Oxford Owl, an online reading resource, where teachers are able to allocate books matched to the children's reading levels for additional reading material at home.

Phonics

At Whitehall Nursery and Infants, we teach a systematic synthetic approach to phonics using the RML programme (known as RWI). Phonemes and their corresponding graphemes are taught through rhymes and pictures to help children to recognise letters and the sounds that they make, which they will blend together when reading and segment when spelling.

In EYFS, children begin with a 'Pre RML' stage. During this stage there is a focus on making sounds, discriminating between sounds, identifying sounds in the environment, singing and rhyming. When children show that they are ready to learn specific sounds they will then move onto our RML programme followed throughout the rest of the school.

In EYFS and Key Stage 1, all children engage in a 30 minute RML session, four times per week. Throughout the week in these sessions, children will experience speaking, listening, reading and writing activities which allow them to practice their phonic knowledge, blending and segmenting skills. As children move through the RML programme they follow the progression of the RML books which are closely matched with children's increasing phonic ability. Children move up to the next set of books in the progression each half term. When children come to the end of our RML programme they will continue to focus on reading and comprehension skills with books linked to their reading ability at a greater depth level.

Assessment

Progress is monitored and tracked by the RML coordinator in school and also by year group leaders and class teachers. Each child is assessed at the end of each half term to ensure they are moving through the phonic phases and check that all children are working in an RML group which is matched to their ability.

In Year 1, children take part in a statutory phonics screening check during which they will use their phonic knowledge to read real and pseudo words. The school based check takes place in the summer term and it is designed to give teachers and parents a reflection of how their child is

progressing in phonics. The check will be repeated in Year 2 for children who have not reached the required pass mark. The school will provide parents with their child's result on their school report at the end of the year and the results are also reported to the local authority.

Phonics interventions are targeted to children's individual needs and they are identified through monitoring and assessment. Teachers and teaching assistants work with small groups throughout the year who have been identified as needing extra support with any aspect of phonics.

Parental Involvement

Every year parents are invited to attend phonics workshops and stay and learn sessions with their children to share how phonics is taught and give ideas of how to support children at home.

Phonics beyond RML

Children are encouraged to use their reading and phonics knowledge outside of RML sessions, in all other curriculum areas. Teachers will use phonics to model reading and writing throughout the school day and also provide phonics resources which are available for children to use.

Writing

What?

As a school, we recognise the importance of the fundamental relationship between spoken and written language. The use of a wide range of speaking, listening and drama activities supports the development of children's oral skills as a prerequisite to writing and they are given opportunities to explore and extend their talk as a preparation for writing.

How?

We make clear links between the children's reading skills and writing and high quality texts are often used as a stimulus for developing writing skills. As a school, all English topics start with a 'book for a hook'; other strategies, resources and artefacts may be used to strengthen the delivery of the curriculum. These include stimulus for writing including drama and role-play, props/artefacts, first hand experiences, visual starting points including film clips and pictures.

All classes have between 5 and 7.5 hours of English every week.

In EYFS

- Children are assessed against the Development Matters statements for writing
- Writing resources are available in all areas of the provision offering children a range of opportunities for mark-making and developmental writing.
- Children's independent attempts at writing are celebrated and promoted alongside the direct teaching of key skills that will enable the children to progress through the stages of writing development.

In KS1

- The 2014 National Curriculum Programme of Study forms the basis of English lessons

- Teachers find opportunities for children to apply English knowledge and skills into non-core lessons.
- The teaching and learning of writing is experienced through a gradual release 'I do, we do, you do' model, which provides the opportunity for high quality modelled, shared and guided writing until children are able to write confidently, creatively and independently.

Shared writing is the key teaching tool for demonstrating the process of writing. It is used to teach the generation of ideas, grammar and spelling skills, to demonstrate features of layout and presentation and to focus on editing and refining work. The teacher explicitly models teaching points. Once skills have been modelled, the children are given a chance to add their own words, suggestions, modifications etc.

Guided writing involves the teacher working intensively with a small group of children. Sessions are used to meet specific objectives and to focus on specific aspects of the writing process. Based on assessment, guided writing can be used to target particular areas for individual children.

Independent writing is when children are given opportunities to apply skills learned in shared and guided writing in English or across the Curriculum in a range of contexts. All writing activities have a purpose and quality is promoted through high expectations of presentation and coherence. Independent writing is supported through the use of working walls, dictionaries, word banks, writing frames and phonic and word displays. There are a wide range of opportunities for children to apply and develop their literacy skills across the Curriculum.

For the Most Able pupils, in particular those working at Greater Depth, teachers:

- Encourage children to develop their own clear voice in writing
- Encourage children to write with a sense of audience and purpose
- Encourage children to apply skills that they have been taught with confidence, accuracy and effectively in a range of writing
- Support children to draw on models from reading and manipulate them for their own purposes
- Support children to develop an increased stamina in the quality and quantity of text written
- Guide children to take ownership of their own learning, through self and peer assessment and planning next steps/targets (personalised targets)
- Encourage children to edit own work to improve
- Provide children with a range of alternative texts to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of greater depth children

Spelling and Handwriting

What?

Spelling at this school follows the Appendix for Spelling as it applies to Year 1 and Year 2 of the revised National Curriculum document. Whitehall have a clear policy for handwriting which draws guidance from the appendix to the NC. Included in the school policy is the use of the 'Whitehall' font, which has been developed in-house to replicate our teaching of best practice in letter formation.

How?

Spelling is developed through;

- the teaching and practice of phonics using the RML synthetic phonics programme
- encouraging phonetically plausible attempts through 'Fred talking' when spelling;
- appropriate spelling lists are taken home to learn on a weekly basis. Children are taught strategies to learn their spellings at home including:
 - look, say, cover, write, check
 - spelling flowers (spellings are practised on each petal)
 - spelling pyramids (spellings are broken down letter by letter to form a pyramid shape)
 - rainbow words (children write the word over and over again using various colours)
- teachers focus on a specific word or spelling pattern whilst marking work; children are then asked to practise this spelling at the beginning of the following lesson
- use of dictionaries
- availability of key vocabulary related to the children's learning.

The Most Able children are targeted by revisiting spellings/patterns already taught and then being introduced to more challenging multisyllabic words.

Handwriting is developed through:

- teaching correct letter formation in FS followed by regular teaching and practice sessions using printing at Key Stage 1 and developing a cursive form as children move towards Greater Depth
- handwriting 'families' are introduced and children practice these in their daily English lessons. Please refer to the appendices.
- Joins are introduced as and when children have mastered their letter formation; these are introduced steadily with bottom joins first, followed by top joins. Please refer to appendices.
- the use of rubbers is discouraged

Approaches

The teachers:

- expect high standards of presentation where appropriate and model the same
- use the 'Whitehall' font on all resources produced to support writing
- provide dictionaries, glossaries, common exception word mats, key vocabulary mats and lists of appropriate subject vocabulary and encourage children to use them
- teach spelling practice strategies for children at the beginning of the year and send a copy of strategies home
- help pupils to use a range of strategies to learn spellings including:
 - Fred talking
 - look-say-cover-write-check
 - make connections between words with the same spelling patterns
 - explore families of words

| Planning

- long-term planning - school curriculum framework (responsibility of year group leaders to edit as and when necessary to suit the needs of their current cohort)
- medium term planning - schemes of work produced by the year group in consultation with subject leader in accordance with the school's long term planning; these plans relate specifically to the stimulus being used to drive the English curriculum.

- short term planning is expected of NQTs and staff that have been identified as having difficulties.

Pupils' Experiences

In English opportunities are created for pupils to:

- Go on trips – these may be specifically related to the learning taking place in English e.g. a visit to the woods in order to provide the children with a first-hand experience that will support their writing of story settings. One of the main reasons for trips in our school are to develop language through experiences; children write recounts of these experiences in English lessons.
- Experience live performance – not only for enjoyment and to see drama in practice but also as a stimulus for writing
- Reading – visits to libraries and visits from librarians to read to children in school

Assessment

Children demonstrate their ability in English in a variety of different ways. Teachers will assess children's learning by making informal judgments as they observe them during lessons. By asking frequent and directed questions, throughout the lessons, to assess their learning and immediately address any misconceptions. On completion of a piece of work, the teacher assesses the work and gives oral or written feedback, as necessary, to support the child in making progress. Pupils are also encouraged to make judgments about how they can improve their own work. A judgement is made by the class teacher with regard to the progress a child has made and this is recorded on a subject specific matrix. The subject leader looks at examples of children's work across the year groups and monitors these against the expected attainment for the end of Key Stage.

Summative assessment takes place on a half-termly basis.

In writing:

- Children in KS1 are given the opportunity to write independently throughout the curriculum. This writing is assessed against the in-house assessment steps.
- Children in EYFS are provided with many opportunities to demonstrate writing skills independently; this may be recorded directly in their writing books or gathered as evidence by teachers. Teachers then form a judgement about the child by looking at a sample of the work produced. They assess using the Development Matters documentation.

In reading:

- Children across school have one-to-one reading opportunities with their teacher. This helps their teacher to form a judgement against the in-house steps or the Development Matters documentation.
- Children are grouped according to ability in phonics in Reception and KS1; this also provides information for the purpose of assessment.

Resources

Classroom resources include:

- a class library containing fiction and non-fiction
- selection of poetry books
- half termly favourite five books

- dictionaries, thesauruses, word books, common exception word mats, sound charts and topic word mats
- RML sound chart
- grammar and punctuation books
- reading scheme material
- modelled letter formation
- computers, IWBs
- Makaton timeline

Central resources include:

- RML books and additional resources to support the delivery of the RML programme (stored in the PPA room)
- Texts suitable for the 'off the programme' groups (generally stored over in FLAC)
- The library
 - RML book bands that children can take home as their independent reading book
 - colour banded books that present some extra challenge that are to be read as a guided reading book with parents/guardians
 - a large broad range of texts that are available for the children to choose from and take home for the purpose of reading for pleasure. All library books are available to support the delivery of the curriculum.
- DVDs to support the delivery of English; these are used in conjunction with a text where appropriate

Monitoring

The coordination and planning of the English curriculum is the responsibility of the subject leader, who also:

- supports colleagues keeping informed about current developments in English and by providing a strategic lead and direction for this subject;
- discusses progress with the head teacher and evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in their subject and highlighting areas for further improvement;
- arranges time to review evidence of the children's work;
- observes English lessons taught by class teachers in order to provide constructive feedback, highlighting positive areas and areas for improvement; directing colleagues to sources of support including in house good practise;
- provides a termly summary to Governors.

This policy will be reviewed every three years.

Signed: N. Dogan and S. Spencer

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Updated 23.09.2022 John Palmer