

St. John Fisher Catholic Primary School

English Policy



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Overview

At St. John Fisher we recognise the central importance of English. Through English, pupils are taught the skills they need to communicate effectively, using the spoken and written word, allowing them to fully engage in the curriculum and in the world around them. The teaching and learning of English is therefore given a high priority in our school and is at the heart of our curriculum.

As well as wanting our children to leave St. John Fisher with the highest levels of literacy, we also want them to have a positive attitude towards it. Furthermore, we also want our children to leave having developed a love of reading which will stay with them forever.

Objectives

Statutory requirements for the teaching and learning of English are laid out in the National Curriculum in England: English Programmes of Study – Key Stages 1 and 2 (2013) and in the Communication and Language and Literacy sections of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (2017).

In the Foundation Stage (Reception) children are given opportunities to:

- Speak and listen and represent ideas in their activities.
- Use communication, language and literacy in every part of the curriculum.
- Become immersed in a language rich environment.

At Key Stage 1 (Years 1 and 2) children are given opportunities to:

- Learn to speak confidently and listen to what others have to say.
- Learn to read and write independently and with enthusiasm.
- Learn to use language to explore their own experiences and imaginary worlds.

At Key Stage 2 (Years 3-6) children are given opportunities to:

- Learn to change the way they speak and write to suit different situations, purposes and audiences.
- Read a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetic texts and respond to different layers of meaning in them.
- Explore the use of language in literary and non-literary texts and learn how the structure of language works (using grammatical terminology).

Key Strategies

Speaking and Listening

At St. John Fisher, we believe that speaking and listening form the foundations of all learning in English. In formal and informal situations, we create and encourage opportunities for meaningful conversation, discussion and talk around learning. Questioning forms a large part of our teaching and we strongly encourage children to be reflective and inquisitive and to share their thoughts confidently in a supportive environment. Through oracy, children learn how other people make sense of the world, how language is used to reason, how emotions and identities are expressed, and how to work together to solve problems.

In St. John Fisher you will see spoken language skills being developed in all areas of the curriculum. Opportunities to develop spoken language are planned into our reading and writing units and our younger children all enjoy daily rhyme time.

Key Strategies

Phonics

Upon entering St. John Fisher Primary school children will begin developing the skills needed to read. At St. John Fisher we use the Read Write Inc literacy programme. This program helps all children learn to read fluently and at speed so they can focus on developing their skills in comprehension, vocabulary and spelling. The programme is designed for children aged 4-7. However, at St. John Fisher we extend the program to children beyond the age of 7 if they still need support in their reading.

Children who need additional phonics support receive this in the shape of Fast Track Tutoring which is delivered daily by a trained member of staff.

During meetings throughout EYFS and KS1, parents are also shown how to support their children with phonics and additional resources are sent home.

The program is delivered to small groups of children who are all at a similar stage in their phonics journey. Children are assessed every 6 weeks to ensure they are in the right group and that they are reading books appropriate to their level.

Key Strategies

Reading

In St. John Fisher early reading begins with phonics and daily story, rhyme and song time. Children revisit a core set of stories, rhymes and poems and have access to these within their environment.

Once children are blending sounds and are able to read words they are given 'RWI Book Bag Books' which are uniquely matched to the existing Read Write Inc. Phonics Storybooks. This reinforces children's learning of phonics at the level appropriate to each child. These books are read in school with an adult and then again at home.

All EYFS and KS1 children also have a weekly library session where they are supported in choosing a library book which they take home and are encouraged to share with their family. This book is for pleasure and may well be beyond their current reading level.

As children become more confident readers, we introduce Whole Class reading sessions. These begin in Year 2. Whole Class reading sessions are built around high-quality texts, which are examined by the class through high-level questioning and discussion.

Over a week children will take part in a range of smaller group activities that enable pupils to further develop their vocabulary and comprehension skills working independently and with an adult.

Throughout the week, KS2 pupils also access Reading Plus. Reading Plus is a personalized online program that helps students develop skills they need to be confident, capable readers and lifelong learners. By using Reading Plus, children are able to read at a fluent rate with good comprehension.

In KS2 adults continue to listen to children read within group sessions and, where a child is struggling with reading, on an individual daily basis.

Reading for Pleasure

Our reading culture is such that reading for pleasure is embedded into our daily routines and structures.

All our classes enjoy time to read independently and share their reading experiences with their friends and adults – book talk is encouraged and supported.

All classes enjoy daily story time where they are read to by an adult – enabling them to hear what fluent reading sounds like and to enjoy books that might be slightly above their reading level or outside of their interest. Our staff are constantly working to improve their knowledge of children’s literature and learn more about our pupils learning habits, so where possible our read aloud texts will be selected with this in mind.

We are proud of our social reading environments. From entering Reception, children are taken into our school library where adults will read to them and help them to choose books to read and take home to share with their family. This practise continues into KS2 where children become more independent and confident selecting their own books to read at home or in class.

Our classrooms also have well-stocked library areas where children can access high quality books. We ensure that we provide books that are new and books that children are familiar with. We have a reading spine for each class which consists of high-quality texts suited for each year group. Books from this reading spine are available in class libraries. Poetry collections, magazines and a range of topical non-fiction books are also available.

Over the year we will also run special events linked to reading where we will try to encourage parents to feel part of our reading community too.

Key Strategies

Writing

To develop children as writers, we develop vocabulary and writing skills through a mastery approach. At St. John Fisher, this means that we develop in children a deep understanding of learning and the ability to recall learning fluently, use learning flexibly, and apply learning readily to a variety of contexts.

The mastery approach that is embedded into our teaching of writing is sequenced as follows:

- Conceptual understanding – we start with a hook to establish a purpose for writing and to immediately engage the children.
- Procedural fluency – this is an unpicking of the skills (either practising skills already taught or learning new ones).
- Mastery – the opportunity to apply these skills to new contexts and/or in other areas of learning.

Each half term teachers will deliver two units of work. The first will be a poetry unit, in which pupils can specifically develop vocabulary and language skills. The second unit is based around a high quality, engaging text. Each unit of work has a specific sequence that develops vocabulary and writing skills by using 'Mastery Keys.' Mastery keys are the skills taught in each unit and are year group specific. Mastery keys are revisited many times, within the unit and in other units. Each unit offers opportunities to revisit skills taught in previous years and offers challenge to greater depth writers.

Assessment

Writing

At St. John Fisher we firmly believe in the power of immediate, personalised feedback, so much marking is done 'pen-in hand' by the teachers during lessons. Being next to a child and having a conversation in the moment about their work has far more impact than a lengthy written feedback in many instances.

Work is still marked and assessed against the specific skills (or mastery keys) taught. Pupils and adults both give a score between 1-9, indicating the mastery of the skill taught, at the end of each lesson. These scores are then transferred onto our online assessment tracker "Balance", and is updated twice per half term.

Written feedback is given in books after extended pieces of writing twice per unit.

See assessment policy for more information on whole school monitoring and evaluation, tracking and work sampling.

Reading

KS1 pupils (and those KS2 pupils needing further phonics support) are assessed half termly. The assessments consider sound knowledge, reading fluency, accuracy and speed. Children are then grouped and reading books assigned accordingly.

When children read with their teachers, during group and whole class sessions, their comprehension skills are being informally assessed. Children's progress during these sessions is recorded and later transferred to our online assessment tracker, Balance.

KS2 pupils are also assessed via Reading Plus. Weekly assignments include visual skills development for eye-tracking, reading tasks for comprehension and fluency, and vocabulary tasks. Data from these assignments indicates reading speed, comprehension, and vocabulary age; they combine to give each child an overall 'reading proficiency' age which can be closely tracked.

Summative testing also takes place in the form of NFER reading tests for Year 1-6, KS1 and 2 SAT's and Year 1 phonics screening in June, and in EYFS, children are assessed against the EYFS profile. In addition to this, we also use Rising Stars termly reading assessments.

Cross-curricular Links

Through the high-quality texts that drive the teaching of reading and writing, teachers seek to take advantage of opportunities to make cross curricular links. They will plan for pupils to practice and apply the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired through literacy lessons to other areas of the curriculum. Extended writing is expected to take place in other subjects, and this should showcase the children's mastery of their literacy skills.

Language and communication skills are also developed through the curriculum with lots of planned opportunities for different types of talk and speaking & listening activities.

Parental Involvement

Parents can play a vital role in the development of English skills. We aim to foster a strong home-school partnership from the moment children enter our school. In Reception we invite parents into school for a phonics workshop to give them some insight into how we teach phonics and how best they can support their children at home. For children needing additional 1-1 support in phonics, parents are invited in to observe 1-1 sessions to better help them understand how they can support their child.

Reading records are used throughout the school as a means of communicating. Parents are welcomed into school to listen to children read. Homework is set, in line with the Homework Policy, in EYFS and Year 1 this consists of reading and a 'talk homework' and in Year 2 onwards, includes reading and spelling.