

English Rationale

Our vision for English at St Mary's

At St Mary's, we believe that all children are entitled to a broad and balanced English curriculum that allows them to maximise their learning potential; preparing them for the application of English skills across the whole curriculum and life beyond education. Our English curriculum promotes language development which enables our children to communicate effectively, seeing language as a source of pleasure and enjoyment and using it to develop powers of imagination and creativity. Children at St Mary's will use their English skills to communicate and work effectively with others, developing as independent learners.

At St Mary's, we aim:

- to provide a language rich environment that promotes a culture of reading and writing.
- to develop in pupils a love of books and high-quality literature that will not only support their learning across the curriculum, but will also extend beyond the classroom environment.
- to explicitly teach reading skills throughout our school that continually develop children's understanding and enjoyment of texts;
- to teach children the craft of writing in order to develop the confidence and skills to write well for a range of purposes and audiences;
- to teach the basics well - spelling, grammar, handwriting and punctuation, so children have all the necessary tools;
- 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.

The content of our English curriculum

Our English curriculum primarily focuses on developing children's reading, writing and spoken skills, including knowledge and vocabulary, by building on prior learning and ensuring that progression of these skills is evident as children move through the key stages. Teachers plan 'text-based' English units which work towards a range of reading and written outcomes. Where possible, English units and texts studied are linked to our school's wider curriculum. There is a balance

between fiction, non-fiction and poetry and an emphasis on high quality whole texts.

Reading

At St Mary's, our priority is both the teaching of reading skills and the enjoyment of literature, enabling children to become lifelong, confident readers. We believe that high-quality literature is key to both motivating children to read and instilling in children a love of literature. Children throughout the school are read to at some point of each and every day.

Each English unit begins with 5 – 10 reading sessions, known as 'Reading as a Reader' sessions. During these sessions children across years 1 – 6 are given lots of opportunities to pose questions, predict, infer, connect, describe feelings and evaluate texts through a range of engaging activities. We use the Literacy Shed's VIPERS (vocabulary, inference, prediction, explanation, retrieval, summarise) question stems across school to ensure questions and activities posed promote higher level thinking for all ability groups and ages.

In addition to the English cycle, guided reading sessions are also taught daily across school. In EYFS/KS1, these 30 minute sessions take place straight after dinner each day and run on a two week cycle. Week 1 focuses on decodable texts, where children read in small groups closely matched to their reading ability. Week 2 has a strong focus on developing comprehension skills through high quality texts – again, the VIPERS questions stems are used regularly in the effective planning and delivery of these sessions. There are also regular opportunities for children to access classroom libraries, choosing a variety of texts to read for enjoyment. Identified children in EYFS/KS1 will also read on a 1:1 basis with an adult daily.

As children move into KS2, the daily 30 minute guided read session is completed as a 'whole class' session for all children working within their age related expectations. During these whole class reading sessions, teachers will immerse children in further high quality texts and extracts which link to the English cycle where possible. VIPERS question stems and activities linked to these ensure high quality sessions take place which promote higher order thinking for all children, including the most able.

Any children in KS2 who are working below age related expectations will complete a daily, smaller group guided reading session with planned objectives matched closely to children's reading ability. These 30 minute sessions have a good mix of decodable reading and comprehension work.

Children from years 2 - 6 have an Accelerated reading book at their own level. The children are encouraged to read this book at home and at certain times during the school day to encourage fluency and independence. When a book has been finished they complete a quiz on the computer in school which tests fluency and the range of reading skills – teacher's access quiz scores regularly to analyse progress of reading over time. STAR reading tests also form part of this programme

– children complete these interactive comprehension tests termly to track reading age progress and to effectively identify any gaps.

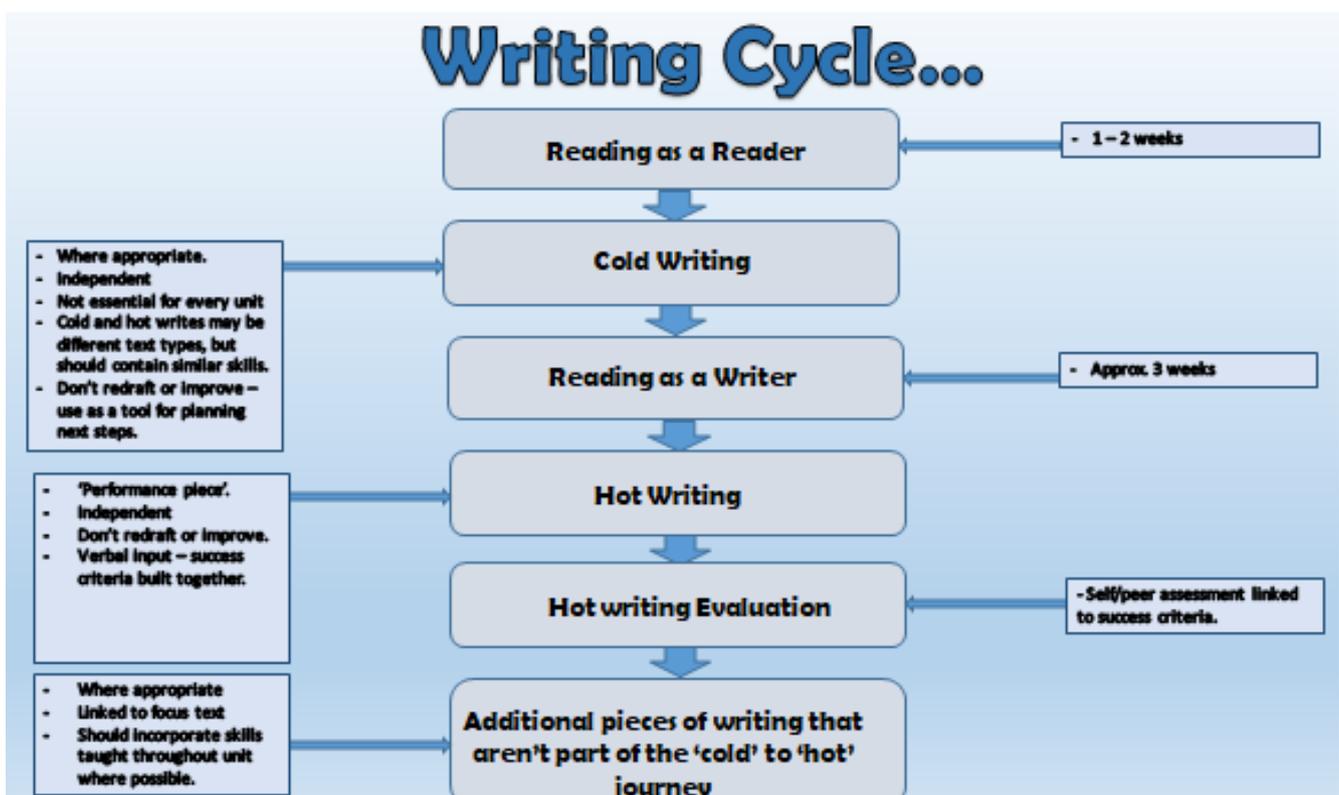
We are working hard to develop a 'Reading Culture' at St Mary's:

- we read across the curriculum: topic books, news articles, class magazines etc.;
- we tell and re-enact texts through drama: we invite storytellers and performers into school across the key stages;
- we have previously set up visits from authors and illustrators;
- we hold regular 'book weeks' throughout the year, such as 'multi-cultural' book week and 'world book week';
- all class teachers are expected to read a high quality class novel/story regularly;
- we hold a yearly Book Fair;
- we take part in reading competitions and fundraisers run by The National Literacy Trust;
- we have worked hard to develop both the open area library and class reading areas – we have bought a huge selection of new, engaging high quality texts along with new furniture.

Children are expected to read at least three times a week at home, writing in their reading diaries with an adult to keep a record of what they are reading.

Writing

At St Mary's, we strive to create an environment that will promote writing. We teach writing through a 'cycle' linked to a specific topic, text or theme. For each genre taught there will be a teaching cycle, shown below:



This cycle shows clear progression throughout a unit of work and allows children to work towards the four writing purposes regularly; writing to inform, writing to persuade, writing to entertain and writing to discuss. During our 'writing weeks', children both learn new, and practise previously taught punctuation, grammar and sentence construction skills which they then have opportunities to embed through a range of written pieces. We ensure lots of opportunities for consolidation before the final 'hot piece' of writing. Clear links are continued to be made to the initial reading weeks in addition to modelled/shared writing, planning, editing and re-drafting opportunities.

A daily 15 minute vocabulary session also takes place across the whole school. We use the 'Vocabulary Ninja' programme for this. We believe Vocabulary Ninja develops our children's understanding through regular exposure to tier 2 vocabulary with meaning.

We also ensure:

- a purpose and audience for each piece of writing is decided from the outset through targeted success criteria.
- the success criteria is added after an independent piece of writing to ensure the writing isn't overly scaffolded. This aids marking and the identification of next steps.
- writing is displayed throughout school.
- teachers provide regular, helpful feedback through marking – this may be verbally or written.
- time is planned into lessons for children to respond to marking and feedback.
- writing is regularly linked to class topics through cross-curricular work to promote engagement;
- we ensure progression in complexity of tasks each year.
- we build stamina for writing by providing opportunities to write for extended periods;
 - peer marking is encouraged as an additional way for children to respond to writing.
- self-assessment is encouraged
- writing cycles are displayed on our classroom working walls with examples of work, vocabulary and definitions that the children can refer to.

Handwriting

St Mary's follows the Nelson Handwriting programme throughout school. Nelson Handwriting is a consistent whole-school handwriting scheme which introduces printed and cursive handwriting in step-by-step stages in line with the National Curriculum expectations. The programme develops children's personal

handwriting style to ensure they meet the 'expected standard' in the end of key stage writing teacher assessments. It introduces letters in line with Letters and Sounds and includes pattern practice and motor skills work with three levels of differentiation.

A daily, 20 minute handwriting session takes place in KS1 and years 3 and 4. Children in upper key stage 2 will complete handwriting sessions when judged appropriate by the class teacher. Additional handwriting interventions are put in place for specific children across school following the Nelson programme, led by our teaching assistants.

Phonics & Spelling

At St Mary's we follow the Letters & Sounds phonics programme. Letters and Sounds aims to build children's speaking and listening skills in their own right as well as to prepare children for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge and skills. It sets out a detailed and systematic programme for teaching phonic skills for children starting at Reception, with the aim of them becoming increasingly fluent readers by the time they enter KS2. From EYFS – Year 2, children take part in a daily 30 minute Letters & Sounds session. Our teaching of phonics is planned in accordance with school's phonics planning format. This format includes the revisit/review- teach- apply- assessment sections recommended by the Letters and Sounds programme.

Additional Letters & Sounds interventions are put in place for any child in EYFS/KS1 with identified gaps, planned by teachers and delivered by our teaching assistants.

From Years 2 – 6, children working at age related expectations will move onto the Read Write Inc. Spelling programme. This is a daily 30 minute session that uses a proven approach underpinned by phonics, fast-paced lessons and a bank of exciting, online resources to ensure children are confident with the statutory spelling rules for their year group.

Children in KS2 who are working outside their year group will complete the Soundwrite programme as opposed to the RWI spelling programme. The Sounds Write programme is targeted at our children who have already completed the Letters & Sounds programme, but haven't secured all phases from 1 – 6. Sounds Write's multi-sensory approach ensures the quality teaching of both sounds and spelling rules, tailored specifically to each child's level of understanding.

Speaking & Listening

At St Mary's we believe that children should be able to express their ideas fluently, showing creativity in their thoughts and language choices. Children should develop a mature understanding of the differences between written and spoken language. We've found that the ability to speak and listen is fundamental to pupils' language and social development, and that it is an essential tool for all areas of the curriculum, as talk underpins learning and thinking. We understand that our children need to be provided with many and varied contexts for talk, but they also need direct teaching in the skills of speaking and listening.

We believe that learning talk includes a variety of different genres which children should access on a regular basis throughout all areas of the curriculum. These include: narrate; explain; instruct; discuss; negotiate; argue, reason and justify; imagine and speculate; ask different kinds of question; receive and build on answers; analyse and solve problems; explore and evaluate ideas. Furthermore crucial to this development is the ability to: listen; think about what they have heard; give others time to think, and be receptive to alternative points of view.

We understand that good questioning is key to the development of talk. Teachers ask a range of open ended questions that involve higher order thinking in order to: stimulate discussion, focus attention, rouse curiosity and interest, elicit views, feelings and experience and make the children think. We understand the differences in children's developmental ability to answer questions. In order to target questioning appropriately, we use Blank Level Questions.

Children in all classes are read aloud to on a daily basis. These experiences combined with planned musical and drama activities, including songs and rhymes, throughout curriculum areas aid the development of both listening skills and auditory memory. Teachers also plan to ensure children have the following regular opportunities:

- Questioning and taking risks with language;
- Presenting in-front of an audience;
- Reciting and reading aloud;
- Re-telling, role-play and drama productions;
- Listening to and participating in stories, poems, rhymes and songs;
- Drama activities to enliven and enrich children's understanding of character;
- Debate;
- Collaborative work and reporting back following group work;
- Presentations

At St Mary's, we appreciate the importance that developing children's language has not only on their reading and writing but also on social interaction. We use many of the principles of ELklan including;

- Word maps
- Mind maps
- Blank levelled questions
- Linguistic concepts

In Early Years/KS1 we use Welcom resources to assess a child's language ability in relation to their age and then plan a range of interventions for children who have not met age related expectations. Each child is assessed every term to ensure

progress is made. We also use the black sheep narrative packs to plan in interventions for children who are working significantly below age related expectations.

Assessment and Monitoring

Formative assessment - Reading

- In EYFS, children are assessed in their early literacy development against the Early Learning Goals
- Children read daily in both English sessions. Additional guided reading lessons take place where specific objectives are set.
- All children have guided reading notes taken during 1:1, small group or whole class reading sessions. Notes are recorded to inform assessment and make direct links to the National Curriculum expectations.
- Regular, quality questioning through the use of VIPERS and CLIMB question stems.
- Accelerated Reader Quizzes produce a report of ability in fluency and comprehension and suggest targets for improvement.

Summative Assessment - Reading

- Year 1 take the end of year Phonics test in June;
- Children in Years 2 and 6 take end of Key Stage national tests which examine a range of reading comprehension skills;
- NFER reading tests are completed termly in years 1 – 5.
- STAR reading tests (part of Accelerated Reader) are taken every half term to generate a reading age and to give information about fluency and comprehension ability. Targets are set accordingly.
- Teacher Assessments are recorded on the assessment system half termly. This tracks if children are working towards/at/exceeding end of year expectations.

Formative Assessment - Writing

- Verbal feedback occurs in all writing lessons, where teachers inform pupils of their strengths and areas for development/strategies for improvement, tailored to suit each child's individual need.
- Written feedback may occur if verbal feedback hasn't been given, which may inform children of their 'next steps', or what they have done well in relation to the session's objective.
- 'Live marking' ensures teachers are able to monitor pupils progress during sessions and that any misconceptions can be addressed quickly and effectively.
- Targets and next steps may be given verbally, or written. These will be specific to each child and their writing ability.
- Quality questioning and prior learning strategies also take place regularly.

Summative Assessment - Writing

- Final assessments at both the end of Key Stage 1 and 2 in writing are teacher assessed. There is no external assessment of composition; however our Local Authority will routinely moderate our judgements.
- Teacher Assessments for all year groups are recorded on school's assessment system termly. This tracks if children are working to/at/exceeding end of year expectations.
- Writing assessment tracking grids are monitored half termly, so gaps in learning can be planned for effectively.
- NFER spelling and grammar tests are completed termly from years 1 – 6. Key year groups 2 and 6 may also use past SAT papers to judge progress and areas for development.

Opportunities

In addition to providing our children with an exciting and bespoke English curriculum, wider opportunities linked to English bring further topics to life and allow our children to explore different themes and cultures. Each school year we hold:

- Multi-Cultural book week
- World book week
- A focus on quality 'growth mind-set' stories
- Book fairs
- Experiences delivered by external agencies