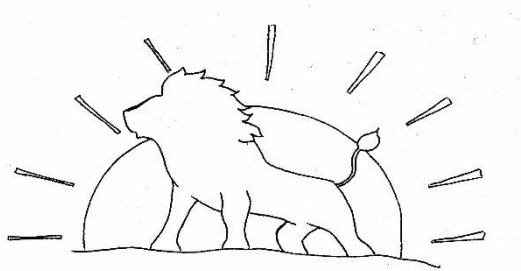


English Policy

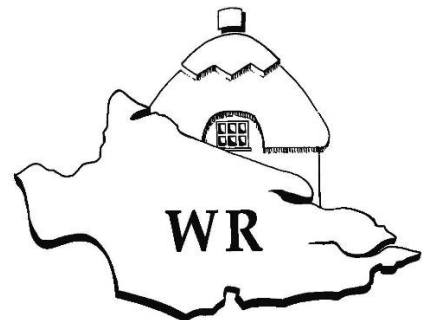
Northwick Park MAT



Northwick Park Primary and Nursery
We Take Pride



...working together



Approved by: LGBs

Date: June 2021

Last Reviewed: March 2024

Next Review Date: March 2026

English Curriculum Policy

Intent

The 2014 National Curriculum states that:

'English has a pre-eminent place in education and in society. A high-quality education in English will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them. Through reading in particular, pupils have a chance to develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually. Literature, especially, plays a key role in such development. Reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know.'

We aim to provide a quality English curriculum that develops pupils' love of reading, writing and discussion. We aim to inspire an appreciation of our rich literary heritage and a habit of reading widely and regularly. We recognise the importance of creating a culture where children are confident writers who use their writing to express themselves clearly in a range of contexts and situations. We want to inspire children to be confident in the skills of speaking and listening and be able to use discussions to further their learning. We believe a thorough grasp of English skills is crucial for children to participate fully as valued members of society and to fulfil their potential. Children will encounter a range of texts to enhance a love of literature across a range of genres, cultures and styles.

These aims are embedded across our wider curriculum. This policy sets out in detail how we approach the various strands of English teaching. These strands work together to ensure pupils become the confident and literate children we aspire for them to be. English teaching is woven throughout our curriculum and cross-curricular links are well-developed.

Reading and Phonics

Intent:

Our aim is for every child to become a fluent reader. We aim for children to reach or exceed age-expectation in reading in order to access learning. We also aim to provide opportunities for children to become life-long readers who read for pleasure.

We aim to develop the necessary skills for pupils to:

- show high levels of achievement and exhibit very positive attitudes towards reading;
- rapidly acquire a secure knowledge of phonics and make sustained progress in learning to read fluently;
- read easily and fluently with good understanding across both fiction and non-fiction;
- acquire a wide vocabulary;
- participate in the teaching of phonics knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic and enjoyable way;
- develop their reading in all subjects to support their acquisition of knowledge;
- develop a love of reading;
- appreciate and access a wide range of texts representing a diverse range of authors and characters;
- read for pleasure both at home and school on a regular basis;
- through their reading develop culturally, emotionally, intellectually, socially and spiritually;
- develop good comprehension skills to access learning.

Implementation:

Phonics:

Please see the separate Phonics Policy for more information on phonics teaching in the Trust.

Our school follows the Read, Write Inc Phonics programme. In Nursery, children will experience hearing the sounds letters make and play early phoneme discrimination games. In Reception and into KS1 children have a structured daily Read, Write Inc session to build confidence. Children are placed into ability groupings for these sessions (once pupils are ready) to allow pupils who need extra support to consolidate learning and ensure sufficient pace for children who may be developing their phonic knowledge more quickly. Teachers plan these sessions carefully and the two schools work together to ensure sessions are lively and engaging.

In Year 2 children continue to receive phonics teaching, but the very structured Read, Write, Inc sessions do not continue in the same format for all children.

Pupils in Year 3 (and beyond if necessary) who continue to need phonics support will be provided with this by their set teacher or via an intervention group. Teachers in Year 3 will work with the Year 2 teachers to plan phonics support to fill learning gaps during reading and English lessons. SEN children who continue to need support with phonics beyond Year 3 will have support put in place via the SENCO. This may include one to one phonics booster sessions or individual reading support if phonics teaching is not having an impact.

Impact:

Regular assessments in phonics take place via the Read, Write Inc programme. These run alongside reading record checks and other assessments. These assessments are used to track progress and ability settings are regularly reviewed and flexible to ensure children are working at their optimum level.

Statutory phonics assessments take place in Year 1. These tests also take place in Year 2 for those who do not reach the threshold in Year 1.

Reading

We recognise that a high quality system for teaching phonics is, for most children, an effective way to ensure the rapid acquisition of decoding skills. However, reading is much more than this. We aim for children to develop a love of books and become confident in their reading comprehension skills.

Implementation:

Children are given banded books to take home, once they are ready. In Nursery and Reception, children take home 'sharing' books to read with an adult at home and help foster a love of books and stories. Northwick Park pupils in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are heard to read regularly by an adult. Children move through the book levels when assessments in school show they are ready. It is important to realise that a child may be able to 'decode' a book they are unable to understand so pupils should only be moved to a new book level when we are sure they can not only recognise the words in the book but understand the meaning behind it too. Reading records are conducted by trained staff to ensure reading is taking place at instructional level. Children take home books that carefully match their ability in phonics. Accelerated Reader books are accessed once children are ready. Attractive displays of books are placed in corridors and in the library.

Read, Write Inc group sessions incorporate reading activities to develop fluency and confidence. During these very structured sessions, whole groups work with a text to apply phonic learning to a reading book context to develop confidence and apply learning.

We believe children have the right to high quality reading texts. Every Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 class has a box of 'Special Smiley' books. These are high quality picture books that are the same in each teaching room. The aim of these books is to be a 'core' of texts that children are familiar with and feel confident with. Staff will read these books to children and, as pupils learn them by heart and begin to read them independently, they will gain confidence. These books were specially chosen with the children to be engaging, visually stimulating and easier to learn. Pupils were consulted when deciding which books to choose. From Year 2, this list expands to become a Reading Spine of books. These books were carefully chosen to promote excitement and interest in reading. These books are read to the children by their teachers at the end of the day.

When children are ready to engage with longer texts, for some children by Year 2, they will begin to move towards a more independent way of working with an increasing emphasis on reading comprehension. In addition to English hours, receive an additional half hour of reading teaching every day. This allows us the flexibility to ensure high quality teaching and gives us the time to engage with high quality, longer novels.

In Key Stage 2, children spend half these sessions working on high quality class novels (agreed with the Subject Leader) and increasingly more challenging texts as children mature. The other half of the sessions are spent working in groups on the VIPERS resources. VIPERS sessions develop focused comprehension skills based around different comprehension skills e.g. inference, vocabulary, prediction.

There are different class novels to suit different ability groups. These texts are carefully chosen to match interests and are age appropriate. The medium term plan sets out which texts should be used in each year group, but there is flexibility to allow for the interests of different cohorts of children. Using class novels enables pupils to engage with a longer, more challenging text and encourages reading for enjoyment e.g. picking another book by an author they have enjoyed studying.

Independent reading/ERIC (Everyone Reads In Class) takes place to ensure children value the reading process and understand that everyone reads!

The EYFS curriculum is followed in Foundation Stage and the National Curriculum from Year 1.

Impact:

A great deal of the school's resources and time is spent delivering our reading offer. Children who are working on phonics and early reading skills have a 'running reading record' check at least every 2 weeks. Children continue to have these running record checks until they no longer are ready to move to Accelerated Reader books. These checks are carried out by trained members of staff which ensures consistency in assessment. Teachers keep their own records on reading attainment and these are used to inform planning.

Reading and reading age checks also take place at least twice yearly.

Statutory reading assessments take place at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

Statutory phonics assessment takes place in Year 1 and in Year 2 for some pupils.

Internal reading assessments take place once per term. Most children will sit a termly reading test – we use the 'Headstart' tests which generate a scaled score for each child. These scores (along with teachers' assessments) are used to inform ability groupings and identify any children who may need a support package. Teachers use the analysis of these test results and their own assessments to inform subsequent planning and teaching.

Where a child is not making enough progress, a support package will be put in place. All children who are not reading at an age-appropriate level receive extra support. This support may take the form of: individual reading support, working in pairs with an LSA to work on short reading comprehension activities, engaging with an interactive programme e.g. Nessy or Lexia, paired or individual tutoring prior to SATs (where this is identified as a need). The subject leader, SLT and SENCo oversee support to ensure this is best suited to the needs of each child or cohort.

All children receive quality first teaching. Where children are more able, these pupils will work in more able ability sets in which the teacher will ensure stretch and challenge is provided in lessons.

Home Learning and Enrichment

We recognise the vital role parents have to play in supporting their child in their reading journey. As pupils start their journey in Nursery, pupils will be given attractive books for their parents to read to them at home. As children transition into their Reception year, parents are asked to read with their children at least 3 times per week. Regular reading at home has been shown to have a significant impact on attainment and it is vital that children have the chance to read to an adult to practise and consolidate the skills they are learning at school. In Reception, children will also bring home phonics games and word lists. We ask parents to work with us to support children on their learning journey. Induction meetings are held in Reception so parents are aware of how best to support learning.

Parents are requested to continue to hear their child read at least three times per week throughout the primary age range. Even when children are confidently able to decode a text, parents can support pupils' reading comprehension skills e.g. by asking questions about a text, explaining the meaning of any new vocabulary in texts, asking about characters, encouraging children to summarise what has happened in story, predict what may happen or support a child when using an information text to find and understand information. Question stems to support parents helping with reading comprehension at home are sent out to parents and available on the website.

Throughout the year, there are plenty of opportunities for parents to become involved in the schools' reading communities. Each term, the schools run year group 'Reading Cafes', these provide an informal opportunity for parents to come in to school and read a book with their child while enjoying cake! Teachers are on-hand to discuss any problems children may be encountering with reading as well as make suggestions or signpost to facilities like the local library who may be able to help. The schools also run 'Book Fairs' where children are encouraged to choose a book and raise funds for books in school; these are always very well supported. We also hold exciting 'Book Week' events where children are encouraged to dress up and we invite visitors to school to inspire the children's love of reading.

Writing and Grammar

Intent:

Our aim is for every child to become a confident, competent writer. We recognise that good writing skills, including the accurate use of grammar and spelling, are essential for children to express themselves. Children are given a range of writing opportunities across a range of tasks to develop an understanding of genre and the purpose of writing for different situations. Cross-curricular writing opportunities underpin our creative curriculum.

We aim to develop the necessary skills for pupils to:

- demonstrate high levels of achievement and exhibit positive attitudes to writing;
- use and understand language as speakers, readers and writers;
- be confident, competent and independent in their writing skills;
- be aware of the different audiences and purposes of writing;
- apply their phonetic and spelling knowledge in their writing;
- increasingly apply their grammatical knowledge in their own writing;

- widen their vocabularies and take risks when writing to make their writing more exciting;
- be confident in their ability to edit, re-draft and improve their writing as this is what authors do;
- use feedback to improve work (this may be from a peer or a teacher);
- develop increasingly accurate spelling, grammar and syntax in their writing as they mature;
- know the basic building blocks of good writing to allow them to be fully equipped for their journey beyond primary.

Implementation:

Children are taught writing skills in their dedicated English lesson each day. These skills are reinforced and applied across other curriculum areas. Writing skills are taught explicitly and systematically.

In Foundation Stage, children follow the EYFS curriculum. Pupils learn to write their letter sounds and begin to form simple words, phrases and then sentences. A wealth of writing opportunities are provided across the Foundation Stage day e.g. writing interest corners, writing labels, experimenting with making letters in sand, free play activities etc. Our early writing skills are linked to the children's phonetic development through the Read, Write Inc programme.

Teachers plan sequences of lessons which will develop the necessary grammatical elements children need to become confident and accurate writers. From Year 1, as children progress onto the National Curriculum, teachers follow detailed medium term plans that set out which text types children will learn about and which skills they will acquire each year to allow them to become increasingly independent writers. The Northwick Park Academy Trust Curriculum Map has been carefully developed and refined to ensure children have interesting opportunities to develop writing skills across the curriculum e.g writing a non-chronological report about Brazil in Year 4 when studying rainforests and a newspaper article about the Blitz in Year 6 when studying the Second World War. Medium and long term plans ensure that relevant links to other curriculum areas are fully developed and this learning is underpinned through a firm foundation in basic skills.

Teachers plan together, children work in ability sets from Year 2 and work is adapted to match ability. Teachers carefully structure writing plans and use good quality writing models; scaffolded writing activities to build confidence and competence; opportunities to edit and improve work; feedback to improve outcomes in writing and the opportunity to write in different genres/contexts.

Impact

At Northwick Park Academy Trust, we assess children using the Oxford Writing Criterion Scales which we have aligned to our school tracking system. This system allows us to carefully track children's skills in writing and ensure assessment is thorough and consistent. Teachers use their own notes and work samples to complete the Oxford Scales sheets at least once per term. Subject Leaders check pupils at random to quality assure data.

SLT and Subject Leaders regularly scrutinise data. Any pupils whose progress is not on track are discussed at Pupil Progress Meetings. Where necessary, interventions, and/or additional monitoring is put in place.

Pupils' book checks frequently take place (a range of staff are involved) that serve to check children's writing is being systematically taught and that progress is evident. English books are often the subject of book checks, additionally writing in other subjects is often reviewed to ensure good quality writing skills are transferring to other curriculum areas and opportunities.

Children also each have a Writing Achievement Book. These books travel with the child from the end of Reception to Year 6. Two pieces of writing are included in this book per year to document the writing journey and celebrate achievement in this area.

Lesson observations by a senior member of staff are used regularly to ensure high quality teaching in all classrooms. New staff and ECTs receive mentoring and induction programmes to ensure consistency in practice.

Statutory teacher assessments at the end of FS, Year 2 and Year 6 take place.

Spelling

Accurate spelling skills are an important skill for life. Spelling development is taught in a structured way. In EYFS and Year 1 children follow the RWI spelling structure which helps align spelling skills to phonics knowledge and also supports the spelling of 'tricky words' where phonetic knowledge is less helpful. When pupils are ready, they move to using the Rising Stars spelling structure. This sets out the words children need to learn to spell from Year 1 to Year 6 and aligns with the National Curriculum. Children bring home weekly spelling lists to learn. These spelling lists may be adapted to meet the needs of pupils.

Spelling development is far more than learning lists of spelling words. Children are encouraged to transfer their spelling skills into their own writing, across the curriculum. Pupils are taught how to use simple dictionaries in order to edit and correct their own work. Additionally, words we have identified for vocabulary development in all curriculum areas, which may be unfamiliar to pupils, will be displayed through the use of 'word banks' and 'vocabulary boards' etc. Teachers reinforce spelling patterns throughout teaching and return to spelling patterns regularly to ensure learning is consolidated.

Spoken Language

Good spoken language skills and self-expression are key to all aspects of life. Children are encouraged to take part in a range of activities throughout the curriculum in all aspects of school life. Staff are expected to be good models for spoken language in school and will encourage children to express themselves clearly using language appropriate for the task.

In addition to less formal opportunities to develop spoken language skills, pupils also take part in more structured activities e.g. taking part in the School Council, Pupil Voice activities, representing the school in the community, taking part in shows and plays etc. Children in Year 5 who show a

particular aptitude in spoken language are encouraged to participate in the 'Speak Out Challenge' (in years when this occurs) this is a prestigious public speaking competition that takes place across all the Canvey primary schools. All year 5 children also participate in a yearly 'Poetry Slam'.

Children who experience difficulties in their spoken language, communication or social language skills can access a range of interventions, e.g. the Wellcomm/NELI resources, speech and language social skills or Lego therapy. We also have on staff an LSA who has enhanced training in speaking and listening.

Handwriting

Handwriting is a developmental process with its own distinctive stages of progression from readiness for handwriting, through to letter joins, practising speed and fluency and higher presentation skills. A flexible fluent and legible handwriting style empowers children to write with confidence.

The National Curriculum states that children should be taught to write in a joined, legible style. To facilitate this at Northwick Park Academy Trust there are 3 distinct handwriting stages. The handwriting system below has been refined over time and reflects what works best for our pupils.

There are three distinct stages to handwriting in Northwick Park Academy:

Stage A

This stage represents the simplest stage of letter construction. Letter formation at Stage 1 ties in with Read, Write, Inc resources to ensure there is no confusion.

Stage B

This stage is used when the children can write their simple letters correctly, orientating them correctly, starting them in the correct place and positioning them correctly on the line. This stage 'bridges' the gap towards joined handwriting and children are usually ready for this stage in Year 1. Children learn to add 'curly tails' and 'exit flicks' to their letters, ready for when they will join them together.

Stage C

This stage moves to joined, cursive, handwriting. Children are taught how and where to join their letters to each other. They are taught other conventions of handwriting also e.g. not to join capital letters.

Children receive focused handwriting sessions regularly. The expectation of good handwriting and careful presentation is encouraged across the school in all curriculum areas. Children are praised for presenting their best work.

Handwriting interventions run where these are needed and presentation is always checked during book monitoring exercises.

SEND/Higher Attainers/Pupil Premium

Differing needs and abilities are catered for through quality first teaching including adaptations made within lessons, ability setting, the use of resources and LSA support.

PPG funding is allocated based on pupils' needs and may be used for initiatives such as providing extra staff, attending tutoring sessions or Easter booster classes.

Homework

In English, homework takes the form of book sharing, phonics games for younger children, reading and spellings to practise. In Year 6, children have more formal English homework set in addition to regular reading and spelling, this homework usually focuses on consolidating taught aspects of grammar, punctuation and conventions of text.

Monitoring and Evaluation

English medium and long term plans are evaluated as part of yearly review cycles.

Monitoring activities including checking books, observing lessons, speaking to children about their learning and monitoring data take place regularly and ensure consistent quality across the schools in the academy.

Teachers regularly meet within year groups and across the academy to plan sequences of lessons and take part in standardisation and moderation activities. Moderation activities also take place with other schools and we have several staff trained as Essex County Council moderators across all Key Stages; their expertise is called upon during assessment and moderation activities.

Equal Opportunities

All children are provided with equal access to the English curriculum. We aim to provide suitable learning opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity or home background. We aim to provide resources e.g. reading books and a curriculum that reflects a broad range of cultures and backgrounds.

Leadership and Management

Leadership of English across the MAT is led by Miss S Gould and the English Team. This team is comprised of several staff across the academy to ensure enough staff are available to effectively manage this broad area of the curriculum. Staff lead on various specialist aspects such as phonics, handwriting and creative writing.

The subject leader attends regular county updates to keep abreast of current developments. English is the regular focus of staff training and new initiatives/ developments in practice are disseminated.

Governor Involvement

The named Trust governor for English is Mrs Judy Gwilliams. Members of local governing bodies are invited to attend various activities throughout the year e.g. attending moderation sessions/staff training. Governors are regularly updated on English outcomes via the CEO's Report to Governors.