



## English Policy

for Hamsey, Plumpton & Barcombe Schools

Written by Matt Dean and Abigail Wilkins, September 2022

### Rationale

English makes a major contribution to the development of a child's language, which in turn contributes to the child's understanding of their world, the world of others and the world of imagination. We believe that language is the basis of all learning. It is language that allows us to share experiences and it is through language that we develop ideas and opinions. Since English is integral to the learning process throughout the curriculum, it follows that whenever anything is being taught or learned, there is potential for developing a child's written and oral language.

We wish to provide the best possible opportunities for children to learn to express themselves well in speech and in written work, including factual and imaginative work, prose, verse and drama. Reading is an essential skill which children need to master and every opportunity will be taken to encourage its development. The school will build on the language experience that children bring from home, as children have considerable knowledge and understanding about language and the way it works before they start school. Language development at school will be a continuation of pre-school language development.

### Aims

Our English policy will enable all pupils – including those with Special Educational Needs – to:

- a) Use phonics to read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding
- b) Use phonics knowledge to monitor their reading and correct their own mistakes
- c) Understand the sound and spelling system and use this to read and spell accurately
- d) Have fluent legible handwriting
- e) Have an interest in words and their meanings and a growing vocabulary
- f) To develop an understanding of grammatical conventions used in speaking and writing
- g) To develop age-appropriate strategies for spelling in line with the National Curriculum
- h) Know, understand and be able to write in a range of genres in fiction and poetry, and understand and be familiar with some of the ways in which narratives are structured through basic literary ideas of setting, character and plot
- i) Understand, use and be able to write a range of non-fiction texts
- j) Plan, draft, revise and edit their own writing
- k) Have a suitable technical vocabulary through which to understand and discuss their reading and writing
- l) Through reading and writing, develop their powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness
- m) Experience the potential of drama as a creative art form and as a learning method;
- n) Enjoy the world of books and literature
- o) Identify and support all pupils following the guidance as laid out in the East Sussex Dyslexia Learning Friendly policy
- p) As outlined in the SEN policy, pupils can use Clicker 8 to support learning in reading and writing.

## Reading

*'Reading and Writing of standard English, alongside proficient language development, is the key to unlocking the rest of the academic curriculum' – Rt Hon. Nick Gibb MP*

### Aims:

- To teach children to use their phonics knowledge as their primary reading strategy, blending sounds to read words.
- To provide a school environment which is rich in a variety of genres
- To ensure that reading is an enjoyable and worthwhile activity and that children read for pleasure
- To develop pupils' advanced reading skills and comprehension, for example, evaluating a story, analysing style and structure, identifying implicit meanings
- To involve the child's family through the use of home-school reading records
- To ensure children understand the variety of written language and the differences between fiction and non-fiction
- To ensure that children can understand and respond to a wide range of books and media texts
- To ensure that children improve their abilities in analysing, evaluating and criticising texts which they have read

## Methods

### Phonics

At the Skylark Federation, we use the Rocket Phonics SSP programme.



Rocket Phonics is a systematic synthetic phonics programme that has been written by phonics experts. It includes a combination of digital and printed resources, and two fully matched series of decodable reading books. The reading books we use have been carefully designed to appeal to the tastes and interests of children who are starting out on their reading journey. They include a variety of fiction and non-fiction, and have been carefully devised to provide practice and application of phonics knowledge and skills in full alignment with the classroom lessons.

### Key Concepts:

- Phonics is taught for a minimum of 30 minutes daily
- All staff are supported with regular phonics professional development training
- A clear pathway is followed through the alphabetic code
- Children are not asked to read texts by themselves that they can't yet read
- The Teaching & Learning Cycle (revisit and review, teach, practise, apply) is followed
- Phonics is taught at letter-sound, word, sentence and text levels
- Teachers focus on details, such as accurate modelling and pencil hold

## What is Phonics?

Words are made up from small units of sound called phonemes. Phonics teaches children to be able to listen carefully and identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps children to learn to read words and to spell words.

In phonics lessons children are taught three main things:

1.) Phonemes: Each letter in the alphabet has a 'name' (a = ay, b = bee, c = see, etc), but spoken English uses about 44 sounds (phonemes). These phonemes are represented by letters (graphemes). In other words, a sound can be represented by a letter (e.g. 's' or 'h') or a group of letters (e.g. 'th' or 'ear'). These sounds are taught in a particular order. The first sounds to be taught are s, a, t, p.

2.) Blending: Children are taught to be able to blend. This is when children say the sounds that make up a word and are able to merge the sounds together until they can hear what the word is. This skill is vital in learning to read.

3.) Segmenting: Children are also taught to segment. This is the opposite of blending. Children are able to say a word and then break it up into the phonemes that make it up. This skill is vital in being able to spell words.

## What makes phonics tricky?

In some languages learning phonics is easy because each phoneme has just one grapheme to represent it. The English language is a bit more complicated than this. We only have 26 letters in the alphabet so some graphemes are made up from more than one letter, such as *ch th oo ay*. These are all digraphs (graphemes with two letters), but there are other graphemes that are trigraphs (made up of 3 letters, e.g. *igh*) and even a few made from 4 letters (e.g. *ough*). Some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme. For example, *ch* makes very different sounds in these three words: *chip, school, chef*.

## Pronunciation:

When learning to read the children are encouraged to pronounce letters in a slightly different way. This is called 'precise pronunciation' or 'pure sounds'. Some family members may find they are not sure about this new pronunciation as they were not taught this way when they learned to read. It is really important for children that we all learn this new way as it will help them with their reading.

## Guided and Whole-Class Reading

Throughout the school, the children will take part in shared and guided reading sessions, and will be encouraged to enjoy texts and apply their phonics knowledge to read fluently. Children will also be encouraged to use a range of strategies in order to comprehend texts.

We understand the importance of children being active readers and expect them to not only read fluently, but also to have a comprehensive understanding of what they read. We encourage them to engage in dialogues and answer questions about a wide-range of texts, sharing their opinions, views and understanding of what they are reading.

In Reception, we:

- Focus primarily on 1:1 readers and then small group reading with a focus on blending
- Develop children's background knowledge by building our curriculum around experiences and linked key texts
- Share carefully selected 'Core Texts' and 'Core Rhymes' which are read multiple times allowing children to thrive on repetition
- Expose children to VIPERS vocabulary in reading sessions
- Introduce children explicitly to VIPERS comprehension skills in the summer term
- Use quality stories and non-fiction to support our unique Reception curriculum
- Embed stories throughout the day, all day, every day

In Years 1-6, we:

- Teach whole class Guided Reading or Shared Reading sessions daily, for 20-30 minutes
- Teach the VIPERS comprehension skills through reading sessions and, in each session, one of the following VIPERS skills is explicitly focused on: V- Vocabulary I- Inference P- Predict E- Explain R- Retrieve S- Sequence/Summarise
- Use a VIPERS workbook for each child from Year 2
- Ensure a range of text types are covered in each term
- Ensure that texts are regularly appraised and changed where necessary, ensuring that they are: appropriate for the needs of the year group, progressive throughout the year and engaging for the children. Over the year there should also be a range of diverse texts and modern books

\*Additional 1:1 and small group reading sessions will be delivered for any non-fluent or struggling readers with a particular focus on the bottom 20% of readers across the school.

## Resources for Reading

1. Phonic phase books to be kept in KS1 classrooms/central store and used as home readers for children in EYFS and KS1.
2. Phonics resources/ displays to aid early readers with blending sounds.
3. Book corners/ areas in each classroom containing a selection of fiction and non-fiction, and poetry books. This area should celebrate and encourage reading for pleasure.
4. A pleasant library area where children can choose from a selection fiction and non-fiction books, Big Books, poetry books and comics.
5. Sets of reading books for Guided Reading which cover a range of genres and are graded according to reading ability/phonics phase.
6. Material all around to develop reading, for example, indexing, captions, labels, instructions, labels, audio books and children's own written work.
7. Regular purchase of new non-fiction and fiction books.
8. Book Fair Week.
9. Visitors e.g. authors and storytellers.
10. ICT (including daily use of interactive whiteboards in each class).

## Home-School Reading

An important ingredient of reading with the children is the home-school reading scheme. Books are to be taken home regularly for the children to read, to or with their parents, older siblings or another adult, or independently. The children will all have a Reading Record Diary, in which comments can be made by both parents, the teacher, or, if they are older, by the children themselves. This provides an important home-school link. There will be an expectation that these are filled in at least 3 times a week. Those who read 4 times per week will be celebrated in weekly assemblies.

To ensure fidelity with our Rocket Phonics programme, within the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, Rocket Phonics phase and sound-specific books will be used; home reading books will be changed every Tuesday and Thursday, as new sounds are introduced in phonics lessons.

## Writing

### Aims:

To develop pupils' writing skills so that they can:

- Express themselves clearly and precisely for enjoyment
- Demonstrate their understanding of how writing enables them to remember, communicate, organise and develop their ideas and information
- Write for an increasing range of purposes matching their language to the needs of the appropriate audiences
- Recognise how different grammatical functions have an impact on the reader
- Understand the appropriate use and purpose of an increasing range of written forms
- Use their phonics to segment and spell words
- Write neatly and with accurate punctuation

Children will learn to write gradually. Their writing will improve within a supportive environment where they are allowed to develop and make mistakes. Children's confidence will grow if the attitude of others is supportive, not only praising, but commenting constructively in a perceptive manner. Writing is closely related to reading and the two activities will reinforce each other in English lessons. Pupils need to understand that much of their writing will be read by other people. It is also very important that writing is valued within the class and school by displaying and publishing children's written work.

### Methods:

#### Power of Reading

The schools support the Power of Reading scheme and staff have access to their website and schemes of work. Power of Reading encourages the use of high-quality literature in English lessons and focuses on raising children comprehension skills, writing for different genres and a love of reading. Within each academic year, it is suggested that staff will use at least 3 PoR texts in the classroom.

#### Talk for Writing

To be used alongside The Power of Reading Scheme books for fiction and non-fiction writing, primarily in KS1. The Talk for Writing scheme enables children to learn new vocabulary and grammatical skills by immersing them in a high-quality text, often from the Power of Reading scheme. Together the class learn the story and begin using the rich vocabulary to re-tell the story. The children then move onto 'innovating' the story, e.g. making additions to it, re-writing it from a character's point of view, changing the genre of it, etc. Finally, children should use the skills they have learned and picked up from the text to write their own story. Rich texts, especially those recommended by the Power of Reading scheme, are used to support this scheme and are linked to learning journeys where possible.

#### Jane Considine

It is expected that, for a portion of each term, teachers will use the approach popularised by Jane Considine in order to deliver their English lessons. That is to say, teachers should develop children's vocabulary, understanding of sentence structure and their use of grammar by closely modelling through 'lenses'. In addition to the Power of Reading and Talk for Writing approaches outlined above, a Jane Considine-inspired unit of work should comprise a portion of each term. For instance, teachers might begin a given half-term by delivering English project work through Jane Considine, before then using the closely modelled techniques outlined in this unit more freely using Power of Reading and Talk for Writing in subsequent weeks: this is a hybrid model and both scaffolds children and allows them to exercise autonomy.

### Modelling

Modelling is to be seen in all writing lessons to show children what the writing process looks like and to model high level writing.

### Moderation

Writing moderation meetings to happen termly using the NC objectives and interim assessment documents (year 2 & 6) and looking at an independent piece of writing alongside children's workbooks (different genre focus each time). This will ensure consistency across the schools and a deep understand of what a greater depth writer looks like in each year group.

The children will have access to ICT for developing and extending the writing process, either through the use of class computers or during weekly laptop sessions.

## **Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling**

### Aims:

- To ensure that all pupils have knowledge of phonics and spelling patterns in order to spell age appropriate words accurately
- To look at the internal structure of words
- To study groupings of words and common structures
- To realise that they can spell from memory and have the confidence to do so
- To use word lists, dictionaries and thesauri
- To learn a variety of other strategies as appropriate
- To learn specific spelling rules
- To improve accuracy in writing through knowledge of age-appropriate grammatical conventions
- To recognise the impact of punctuation on fluency, accuracy and meaning when reading and writing

From Key 1 Stage onwards, phonics and segmenting is to be the primary approach used, however, children are encouraged to 'have a go' at spelling unfamiliar words. In marking, emphasis is placed on positive re-enforcement of correct sounds used. 'Corrections' are pointed out as the year progresses, appropriate to development and ability, as children become more confident as writers and are able to understand some spelling rules.

Children will be taught specific spelling rules from year 1 onwards in line with the spelling rule outlined in the NC. Grammar is to be incorporated into daily English lessons to provide context and taught discreetly as needed. Teachers are to model good grammar in every lesson and use the correct terminology from EYFS onwards.

## Handwriting

### Aims:

- To develop a handwriting style with flow, neatness, good presentation and consistency.
- To provide the children with a framework to allow progression throughout the school.

### Methods:

1. The youngest children will have access to different types of pencils when they begin to write (rocket pens/handwriting grips).
2. EYFS and Year 1 pupils write non-cursive and, by end of Year 1/beginning of Year 2, pupils are confident in writing in the Skylark Federation cursive script.
3. The youngest children will also have the opportunity to make patterns with brushes, felt pens, crayons and other media, to encourage a flowing hand.
4. All children will have handwriting books, handwriting sheets and or tracing sheets.
5. The Interactive Whiteboard and iPads will be used, wherever possible, to support handwriting.
6. Handwriting will be modelled by all adults working with the children in every English lesson and at all other opportunities.

### Letter Formation:

Children are to be taught to form their letters in a coherent, structural style. Flowing letters help to give speed. Children will practise single letters first, where emphasis will be placed upon ensuring consistency in size and proportions of letters and the spacing between letters and words. Once single letters are mastered, the children will then move on to joining, using learnt joins increasingly in their independent writing as they progress through the school. Children will begin by learning how to join digraphs and trigraphs, in the order that they are introduced in Rocket Phonics.

### Handwriting Checklist:

- Single letters, and capital letters that start a word, will not have lead ins
- In joining, the letter x will be joined on to, but will not be joined on from
- Small letters the same height (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z)
- Ascenders are to be the same height (b, d, f, h, k, l, t)
- Descenders are to have the same length tails (f, g, j, p, q, y)
- Loop 'g's, 'y's, fs and js, ks can be looped at teachers' discretion.
- All ascenders and descenders are to be at the same angle

**\*\*For further information see separate handwriting policy – updated 2022\*\***

## Speaking and Listening

### Aims:

- To ensure the development of effective speaking and listening so that pupils can:
  - Formulate, clarify and express their ideas
  - Express themselves in a variety of situations, using language which is appropriate to their needs and the intended audience
  - Listen, understand and respond appropriately to others
  - Use, with increasing confidence, the vocabulary and grammar of standard English.
- To create an environment in which children feel confident to talk, and know that what is said is valued.

Opportunities for talk will be provided for a range of purposes:

- a) Describing
- b) Informing and expanding
- c) Instructing and directing
- d) Reporting and narrating
- e) Presenting arguments and debating
- f) Show and Tell sessions

There should be appropriate planned intervention by the teacher, as a receptive listener, as a catalyst, a facilitator, as a person who asks pertinent questions leading to clarification of thought and further ideas (not merely question and answer sessions).

Children should become familiar with tasks which support talk, and communicate their conclusions to Others, for example, reporting a group's findings to the rest of the class and taking part in plenary sessions. Adults must be seen by the children to value their achievements as talkers and listeners, as highly as their achievements as readers and writers. Where this happens, the children will be enabled to take a similar view of themselves. The groupings of children will need to reflect the purpose of the activity; consideration should be given to special needs and equal opportunities. A guiding principle should be to ensure children learn to work harmoniously and effectively with a range of children.

External audiences for children's talk may include:

- Parents/ carers
- Governors
- Members of the community
- Children from other classes and schools
- Other staff
- Other visitors

### Monitoring Speech

Careful observation by the class teacher - reference made in the pupil's record if necessary and with recourse to the SENCo.

### Monitoring Listening

This is an important aspect of child development and is encouraged in all aspects of the English Curriculum.

Ways to develop listening skills include:

Children to listen and learn poems/rhymes; Drama and role play; Use of voice to introduce variation; Music, repeated melodies and phrases; Action songs and miming stories; Children telling news, others listening; Asking questions about a story; Giving an alternative ending to a story; Puppet shows

## Presentation of Work

These guidelines aid children in all written work:

- All pieces of work to have a Learning Objective.
- Always write the date at the top of a piece of work. The date should be written fully in English from Year 4 and printed in KS1/year if a mixed Year 2/3 class.
- Always use a pencil (KS1) and pen by year 4.
- Always write neatly and carefully. Join your handwriting from summer Year 1 onwards.
- Write on every line, not every other line.
- Always write in complete sentences when appropriate.
- Always take care to spell correctly.
- Put a neat line through mistakes.
- Only use a rubber when drawing or for 'small' mistakes
- Never write or draw on the cover of your books; keep them clean.
- Write question numbers in the margin.
- 'Final copies' of all work in exercise books should be presented neatly.
- Rushed or untidy work will not be acceptable.

## Conclusion

The English policy functions through effective teaching and learning strategies (see policy). We aim to promote enthusiasm and motivation and encourage positive attitudes to learning whilst ensuring progression in English throughout the school.

Through regular reviews of the English policy i.e., staff meetings, INSETS, Governor Curriculum Committee, school monitoring, moderation, pupil target setting and achievement, the quality of language development will continue to be a high priority.

To be reviewed September 2023