

# The Ribblesdale Federation of Schools



## English Policy

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**Executive Headteacher: T Ward**

**Chair of Governors: P. Gibbons**

## **The Ribblesdale Federation of Schools**

### **English Policy**

#### **Introduction**

English is of central importance to modern society as competence in English enables children to communicate effectively at home, at school and in the wider world. The skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing enable children to organise and express their own thoughts and to access the knowledge and ideas of others. In addition to this, the ability to respond to literature at a personal and aesthetic level enriches our children's lives.

#### **Aims**

When teaching all subjects we promote high standards of language and literacy by equipping pupils with a strong command of the spoken and written word, and develop their love of literature through widespread reading for enjoyment. When teaching English, we aim to ensure that all pupils:

- read easily, fluently and with good understanding;
- develop the habit of reading widely and often, for both pleasure and information;
- acquire a wide vocabulary, an understanding of grammar and knowledge of linguistic conventions for reading, writing and spoken language;
- appreciate our rich and varied literary heritage;
- write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting their language and style in and for a range of contexts, purposes and audiences;
- use discussion in order to learn and they should be able to elaborate and explain clearly their understanding and ideas;
- are competent in the arts of speaking and listening, making formal presentations, demonstrating to others and participating in debate.

#### **Teaching and learning**

English is taught in each class each day. This includes regular coverage of reading, writing and grammar, punctuation and spelling. On occasion, lessons may be doubled up. English skills are also taught through other subjects and experiences across the year.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Grammar Policy, Speaking and Listening Policy, Handwriting Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy, Marking and Feedback Policy and Assessment Policy.

#### **Spoken Language**

The National Curriculum for English reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically. Spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing and therefore, in the Ribblesdale Federation of Schools, we provide regular opportunities for class discussions, presentations and performances each term.

#### **Reading**

Within school and outside of school, we encourage children to read widely for pleasure. We develop three dimensions of their reading in lessons: word reading, prosody and comprehension. Throughout the year, we share stories, non-fiction and poetry with the children, including texts that are at a level higher than they can read themselves. We regularly read and teach objectives linked to poetry, including learning poetry by heart each term to share with the rest of the school during assemblies.

### **Word recognition**

In EYFS and KS1, children have a daily 20-minute session separate to their English lesson, for phonics and/or spelling and grammar. Extra catch-up activities are also planned for those children who need them, for example, precision teaching. Teaching assistants may lead phonics sessions for a group of children working at a similar stage, or children may join in with sessions in a different class if this meets their needs. Class teachers are responsible for monitoring each child's progress and ensuring that the child has a reading book that matches their current attainment in phonics.

We follow a synthetic phonics approach and use the Little Wandle Letters and Sounds resources to plan sessions. We show complete fidelity to the Little Wandle scheme and, as such, resources from other schemes are not used. This ensures consistency throughout and across our schools. We teach the children the different graphemes (letters or groups of letters) that represent the 44 phonemes (sounds) in the English language. They learn how to blend phonemes to read words, and segment words in order to spell them. Children are taught to read and spell common exception words, which have unusual ways of spelling a certain phoneme, and also cover spelling and grammar objectives from the National Curriculum.

In June, Year 1 children undergo the national, statutory Phonics Screening Check. Children work with a familiar teacher, on a one-to-one basis. The child is shown 40 words, which are a mixture of real and pseudo words, and is expected to use their phonic knowledge to read each word accurately. Children not meeting the expected standard are given further support in phonics and re-take the test in June of Year 2.

### **Reading comprehension**

Throughout school, children develop their reading comprehension in a variety of ways. Explicit reading skills and strategies are taught through the acronym of VIPERS (vocabulary, inference, prediction, explanation, retrieval and summary). Children practise a combination of these skills during whole class reading.

Comprehension skills are further developed through independent and shared reading. Our book scheme is linked to the phonics phases and becomes more challenging as the child progresses through the phases. Until the child is fluent, they will be involved in Shared Reading, in a group with other children of a similar ability to themselves. Shared Reading is when all the children in the group read aloud together to an adult. This takes place 3 times per week and each time, the same book is read but with a different emphasis. The first read focuses on fluency; the second read focuses on prosody and the final read of the book focuses on comprehension. The book chosen for the group is from the same Little Wandle scheme as the children read for their home and independent reading books, but it will be slightly more challenging than they are expected to read independently.

Once the child is fluent, and has completed all the book phases, they become a Fluent Reader, and are able to access all the books available to them in their classroom. Books are arranged into genres so that children are able to practice the habits of lifelong readers and discover their personal preferences. When children are Fluent Readers, the books they read continue to be tracked to monitor the depth and breadth of reading. Fluent Readers are heard reading aloud at least once a week and a comment is recorded in their Reading Record along with the adult's initials.

In KS2, children continue to follow the Little Wandle reading scheme if they are assessed as being at that level. A book in their phase is chosen for them by an adult and recorded in their Reading Record.

### **Home Reading**

At home, both word recognition and comprehension need to be developed to ensure fluency and understanding. Therefore, each child in EYFS and KS1 takes home a reading book from the Little Wandle book scheme alongside a reading for pleasure book, to share with an adult. Fluent Readers take a book of their choice home to read independently from their classroom.

Parents and carers should use the Reading Record to communicate with school about reading and it is very helpful if all reading is recorded in the record, including the child's own choice of reading material from the classroom or home. Parents and carers should aim to listen to their child read regularly and, as a minimum, this should be three times per week and this is written into the 'Home, School Agreement'.

When hearing a child read, we advise that the child is given praise and encouragement as well as support. Phonics should be the prime approach when asking children to read unfamiliar words. If the child still struggles, model how to sound it out and practise the word together. Discussion of the text during and after reading is essential to develop comprehension of the text.

### **Assessment**

During EYFS and Year 1, teachers assess word recognition and reading comprehension using the Little Wandle half termly assessment materials. All other year groups use written assessment results and teacher judgements to assess children's attainment. NFER standardised tests are used in December and July, alongside one additional reading test in Spring Term.

At the end of Year 2 and Year 6, children sit a Statutory Assessment Test which assesses their reading and their understanding through comprehension questions and these results are compared nationally.

### **Writing**

In the Ribblesdale Federation of Schools, we want our children to become increasingly confident at writing in a variety of forms, for different purposes and audiences cohesively and creatively. We celebrate children's writing by displaying it, sharing it with others, publishing it where appropriate and asking children to show other teachers or our Executive Headteacher.

### **Writing progression**

During the beginning phases of writing, mark making for meaning is developed and we have a rigorous programme for teaching synthetic phonics using *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds*, aiming for children to be confident spellers with a growing vocabulary and the ability to use grammatically correct language. Emergent writers are not asked to trace and copy sentences that are already written for them. They are encouraged to make marks for meaning and as their letter formation and phonological understanding develops, it is expected that their writing will begin to have meaning for their reader, also. In the Early Years and KS1, opportunities are provided for child-initiated and role play writing. Children, in these stages in particular, are encouraged to orally express what they want to write before transcribing.

The Ribblesdale Federation of Schools plan for writing using the Jane Considine 'The Write Stuff' writing units and resources. As children progress with their writing, new genres are introduced with high-quality modelling (sentence stacking) to show key features, techniques and methods for adapting vocabulary and style as appropriate. The Writing Rainbow Lens Symbols are used to identify key features and techniques of writing and are displayed prominently around the classrooms and on success criteria.

When looking at each text type, grammar, punctuation and spelling objectives are taught alongside to ensure these skills are used appropriately for the audience, form and genre. This includes using grammatically correct sentence structures and accurate grammar to enhance meaning and to progress the complexity of their writing over time. Grammar, punctuation and spelling objectives are also taught explicitly where required and through spelling or phonics sessions each week to ensure children are given the knowledge and the strategies to become confident and accurate spellers. Please see our Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling policy for more details, which documents that we use the National Curriculum appendices for each year group.

Throughout their time at school, we aim for children to have an interest in words and their meanings, developing a growing vocabulary in spoken and written forms. We emphasise the importance of using the correct vocabulary and varied vocabulary to match the needs of the audience. This includes developing technical vocabulary across the curriculum to enable children to articulate their ideas and responses.

When teaching text types, children are shown how to evaluate and improve their own and peers' writing regularly through the use of purple pens for editing, and success criteria. From Year 2, children are also taught a cursive style of handwriting, promoting an understanding of how to present work appropriately, ensuring each child has pride in their written work. Please see our separate Handwriting policy for more details. Purple pens are also used to respond to feedback in EYFS, KS1 and KS2.

### **Assessment**

The opportunity to write for an extended length of time is provided for our children at the end of every unit, within English or across the curriculum. Teachers indicate a piece is independent by writing an 'I' in a circle at the top of the piece.

Assessment of writing attainment is completed using one of these independent writing pieces each half term, resulting in a minimum of 6 pieces assessed using our writing assessment frameworks by the end of the year. The assessment frameworks can be found in the appendix and a child is judged as Working Towards Expected Standard, Working At Expected Standard, or Working at Expected Standard with Greater Depth if they have evidenced all of the criteria consistently for that section, as well as the sections prior to it. If there is one criteria that cannot be assessed because of the nature of the piece, that should be recorded with N/A. On a termly basis, writing is moderated within and across key stages and schools to ensure consistency of assessment. Where a child is falling below expectations, intervention strategies are put in place to close the gaps.

When completing independent extended writing, children are given a task from the Independent Write Ideas list linked to the Jane Considine unit that they have just covered in class. Teachers may choose one that they feel suits their class, at their own discretion. Children will be given success criteria which includes all the key features and techniques covered in the unit, along with the symbols from the Writing Rainbow Lens. Each written task has a clear purpose and is designed to encourage children to write with interest, commitment and enjoyment.

Grammar, punctuation and spelling assessments are completed in Year 2 through to Year 6 to assess objectives covered that year in December and July using NFER tests, alongside one additional written test in Spring Term.

A grammar, punctuation and spelling Statutory Assessment Test is completed by Year 6 pupils at the end of the year.

### **Handwriting**

We believe that developing excellent handwriting and high-quality presentation skills gives children a real sense of pride in themselves and their work and increases their motivation

and enthusiasm for writing. We have a charter for presentation of our work which is displayed in each classroom and we follow the 'Letter Join' handwriting scheme. Children are taught handwriting skills in discrete sessions. The frequency of these lessons is determined by the needs of the children. Children in EYFS and Year 1 are taught to form lower- and upper-case letters correctly, through the teacher modelling and the children copying then practising the letters on lined handwriting paper. By Year 2, most children are ready to move on to joined letters and the scheme outlines how to join letters. In KS2 classes, children can be given an intense series of handwriting lessons in order to raise standards if required. Please see the handwriting appendix which shows the Letter Join handwriting booklet.

### **Pen Licences**

When a child consistently demonstrates that they have mastered handwriting and presentation skills, they are rewarded with a pen licence which allows them to use a pen rather than a pencil. This is based on their stage rather than age. It is seen as a privilege which is earned which can also be withdrawn temporarily if the standard of handwriting is not maintained. At times, it is more appropriate to draft using a pencil to allow for editing.

### **English Feedback**

Teacher expectations are high across school and teachers use the Marking and Feedback Policy to give children feedback on what they are doing well, their next steps and this feedback can be verbal or written. Developmental marking is used for independent writing, in line with the policy. When given feedback, children are given time to respond by using a purple pen to acknowledge the feedback or to edit their work.

We encourage children to monitor, evaluate and improve their own work throughout their writing tasks and at the end to develop their own sense of achievement and awareness of next steps for progress. This is completed in purple pen and children are also provided with opportunities to complete this process with partners, to develop peer assessment.

### **Dissemination of the policy**

The full policy is available to parents and carers and pupils on request and is also available via the school website.