English Policy

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Related policies:

- Handwriting Policy
- Feedback Policy

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1. Rationale

This policy outlines our practice in the teaching of English; reading, writing, phonics, spelling, handwriting and grammar. It is defined by the National Curriculum. At Windrush Thamesmead Primary School we strive to ensure that our pupils receive a well-rounded English curriculum through the medium of reading, writing and speaking and listening. Through our high standards of language and vocabulary, we equip the children with a strong command of the spoken and written word that allows them to develop their love of literature through widespread exposure to a range of texts and books. Each section of the document begins with the rationale for the area of English, explains how we teach it and directs you to any necessary related documents.

2. Speaking & Listening

Our English curriculum reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum – cognitively, socially and linguistically. The quality and variety of language that pupils hear and speak is vital for developing their vocabulary and grammar and their understanding for reading and writing. The Talk for Writing process ensures all pupils continually development their confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills. Pupils develop a capacity to explain their understanding and to prepare their ideas before they write.

3. Writing

At Windrush Thamesmead we use the Talk for Writing approach from Nursery to Year 6. This approach enables children to write independently for a variety of audiences and purposes within different subjects. Teachers plan a 4-week unit which is toolkit-based, covering all stages of the talk for writing process. Teachers map out the unit as a whole before planning individual lessons on a weekly basis. Children internalise the language structures needed to write through 'talking the text' as well as close reading. The approach moves from dependence towards independence with the teacher using shared and guided teaching to develop a child's ability to write creatively and powerfully.

During their time at Windrush Thamesmead, children will become imaginative, creative and effective writers who can write clearly, accurately and coherently, adapting language and styles across a range of contexts, purposes and audiences. The children are exposed to a range of models in different genres that allow the opportunity to develop their writing skills. These writing tools are built upon each year to allow the children to develop their understanding of effective writing across a range of genres. (See Appendix I - Toolkit progression and Appendix II – Content progression). By the end of KS1, children should be able to write down their ideas with a reasonable degree of accuracy and with good sentence construction. They should be aware of how to orally rehearse a sentence before writing it down and write for a range of purposes including narratives about personal experience and the experiences of others, real events and poetry.

By the end of KS2, children are also taught a sophisticated bank of vocabulary, partly through our model texts, that they can apply in their own writing. They will be able to quickly write their ideas and compose a range of different pieces of writing with a broad understanding of grammar and punctuation and the effect it has on their reader. Children are taught the necessary skills to evaluate their own writing through opportunities for editing and to understand what underpins an effective piece of writing.

3.1 The Talk for Writing Approach

The Talk for Writing approach enables children to imitate orally the language they need for a particular focus or genre, before reading and analysing it, and then writing their own version. There is a whole school overview which outlines the different text types and focuses for each unit, e.g. a setting description in a

fantasy story (Appendix III – Whole School Overview)

3.1.1 The 'cold' task

Teaching is focused by an initial assessment of the children's ability and understanding of the focus. Teachers set a 'cold' task. An interesting and rich starting point provides the stimulus and content but there is no initial teaching. The aim of this is to see what the children can do independently at the start of a unit, drawing on their prior learning. Assessment of their writing helps the teacher work out what to teach the whole class, different groups and adapt the model text and plan. Targets are set for pupils from this task in KS2. By the end of the unit, pupils complete a 'hot' task which is an independent task on a similar focus with an engaging stimulus or prompt.

3.1.2 The imitation stage

The teaching begins with a 'hook' which engages the pupils, often with a sense of enjoyment, audience and purpose. The model text is pitched above the pupils' level and has built into it the underlying, transferable structures and language patterns that children will need when they are writing. This is learned using a 'text map' and actions, which helps children to internalise the text. Activities such as drama are used to deepen understanding of the text.

Once children can 'talk like the text', the model and other examples are then explored to understand the vocabulary and ensure comprehension of the text (read as a reader) before being analysed for the basic structure (boxing up) and language patterns (read as a writer). Additionally, a toolkit of writing techniques is co-constructed with the children. All of this first phase is accompanied by rehearsing key spellings and grammatical patterns.

Short-burst writing is used to practise key writing techniques which are relevant to the focus of the unit. The children are explicitly taught how to use techniques and what the effect on the reader is. For example, in a suspense unit, children may have a short burst writing technique where they 'hide the threat' by using empty words such as something or someone. All these techniques allow children to be effective, confident writers.

3.1.3 The innovation stage

Once children are familiar with the model text, the teacher leads them into creating their own versions. A new subject is presented and the teacher guides children through planning. With younger pupils, this is based on changing the basic map and retelling new versions, for example changing a character or setting. Key Stage 2 use boxed-up planners and the teacher demonstrates how to create simple plans and orally develop ideas prior to writing. Ideas may need to be generated and organised, or information researched, and added to a planner. Shared and guided writing is then used to stage writing over a number of days so that children are writing texts bit-by-bit, concentrating on bringing all the elements together, writing effectively and accurately. Feedback is given during the lessons as much as possible and then again in the following session in a feedback session. See Feedback marking policy for more information.

3.1.4 Independent application – the 'hot' task

Finally, children move on to the third phase, which is when they independently apply what has been taught and practised. Before this happens, the teacher may decide to give further input and time for oral rehearsal. Children are guided through planning, drafting and revising their work independently. It is essential to provide a rich starting point that taps into what children know and what matters so that their writing is purposeful. With non-fiction, children should apply what they have been taught across the curriculum. The final piece is used as the **'hot'** task, which clearly shows progress across the unit from the starting point of the 'cold' task.

4. Grammar

At Windrush Thamesmead, our grammar teaching is embedded within our English lessons. It is taught with a clear purpose so the children understand the grammar objectives clearly. Each year group has set grammar objectives to teach within each unit of writing (See Appendix grammar overview for more detail).

Writing Appendices

5. Handwriting

Please see our separate policy for how and when handwriting is taught across the school. Handwriting Policy

6. Spelling

In Early Years and KS1, children are taught how to spell using phonics and spelling words from the high frequency word lists.

In Year 2, children following Little Wandle Spelling (Appendix IV – Little Wandle Spelling Progression) which is a progression from their phonics programme. It teaches the foundational skills needing for spelling and teaches the children how to 'think about spelling'. Starting with a review of phonics learnt in Year 1, the programme encourages children to think about etymology, morphology and grammar when spelling new words.

In Key Stage 2, teachers follow the Silcock planning scheme (Appendix V – Silcock Scheme) that follows a clear sequence. Spelling is taught 3 times a week for 15 minutes. Each week a new rule or pattern is introduced. The scheme outlines progression in spelling. Teachers plan according to the following structure; review, teach, practise and apply. This supports children in exploring, understanding and practising new words. Where additional spelling support is needed, children work in small groups with an adult to either be taught at the appropriate level or to support/re-enforce spelling patterns.

No spelling tests will be given to children. However, words or sounds taught during the week can be given as a homework if the teacher wishes to. Statutory word lists are additional spellings that children need to learn and will be sent out to children so that parents can support their child with these spellings. Regular high-challenge, low-threat opportunities are given for children to practise spellings so that they can become embedded in their writing.

Spelling Appendices

7. Phonics and Early Reading

At Windrush Thamesmead we teach phonics and application of reading following *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised*, which is a validated systematic and synthetic phonics programme. We start teaching phonics in Nursery/Reception and follow the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* progression, which ensures children build on their growing knowledge of the alphabetic code, mastering phonics to read and spell as they move through school.

We also model the application of the alphabetic code through phonics in shared reading and writing, both inside and outside of the phonics lesson and across the curriculum. We have a strong focus on language development for our children because we know that speaking and listening are crucial skills for reading and writing in all subjects.

7.1 Foundations for phonics in Nursery

We provide a balance of child-led and adult-led experiences for all children that meet the curriculum expectations for 'Communication and language' and 'Literacy'. These include:

- sharing high-quality stories and poems
- learning a range of nursery rhymes and action rhymes
- activities that develop focused listening and attention, including oral blending
- attention to high-quality language.

We ensure Nursery children are well prepared to begin learning grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) and blending in Reception.

7.2 Daily phonics lessons in Reception and Year 1

We teach phonics daily for up to 30 minutes a day. In Reception, we build from 10-minute lessons, with additional daily oral blending games, to the full-length lesson as quickly as possible. Each Friday, we review the week's teaching to help children become fluent readers. Children make a strong start in Reception: teaching begins in Week 2 of the Autumn term. We follow the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* expectations of progress (Appendix VI – Little Wandle Progression document):

- Children in Reception are taught to read and spell words using Phase 2 and 3 GPCs, and words with adjacent consonants (Phase 4) with fluency and accuracy.
- Children in Year 1 review Phase 3 and 4 and are taught to read and spell words using Phase 5 GPCs with fluency and accuracy.

7.3 Daily Keep-up lessons ensure every child learns to read

Any child who needs additional practice has daily Keep-up support, taught by a fully trained adult. Keep up lessons match the structure of class teaching, and use the same procedures, resources and mantras, but in smaller steps with more repetition, so that every child secures their learning.

We timetable daily phonics lessons for any child in Year 2 or 3 who is not fully fluent at reading or has not passed the Phonics Screening Check. These children urgently need to catch up, so the gap between themselves and their peers does not widen. We use the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments to identify the gaps in their phonic knowledge and teach to these using the Keep-up resources – at pace.

7.4 Teaching reading: Reading practice sessions three times a week

We teach children to read through reading practice sessions and children read with an adult in a group three times a week. These are taught by a fully trained adult to small groups of approximately six children and use books matched to the children's secure phonic knowledge using the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessments and book matching grids. They are monitored by the class teacher, who rotates and works with each group on a regular basis.

Each reading practice session has a clear focus, so that the demands of the session do not overload the children's working memory. The reading practice sessions have been designed to focus on three key reading skills: decoding, prosody (teaching children to read with understanding and expression) and comprehension (teaching children to understand the text).

In Reception these sessions start in Week 4. Children who are not yet decoding have daily additional blending practice in small groups, so that they quickly learn to blend and can begin to read books. In Year 2 and 3, we continue to teach reading in this way for any children who still need to practise reading with decodable books.

7.5 Home Reading

A decodable reading practice book is taken home to ensure success is shared with the family. Reading for pleasure books also go home for parents to share and read to children. We use the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* parents' resources to engage our families and share information about phonics, the benefits of sharing books, how children learn to blend and other aspects of our provision, both online and through workshops. Children also have access to e-books which are selected to match their reading ability.

7.6 Ensuring consistency and pace of progress

All teachers from Early Years to Year 3 have been fully trained to teach reading using phonics using *Little Wandle Revised Letters and Sounds*, so we have the same expectations of progress. We all use the same language, routines and resources to teach children to read so that we lower children's cognitive load.

Weekly content grids map each element of new learning to each day, week and term for the duration of the programme. Lesson templates, Prompt cards and How to videos ensure teachers all have a consistent approach and structure for each lesson.

The Phonics Leader and SLT use the Audit and Prompt cards to regularly monitor and observe teaching; they use the summative data to identify children who need additional support and gaps in learning.

7.7 Ensuring reading for pleasure

'Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's success.' (OECD 2002) 'The will influences the skill and vice versa.' (OECD 2010)

We value reading for pleasure highly and work hard as a school to grow our Reading for Pleasure pedagogy. We read to children every day. We choose these books carefully as we want children to experience a wide range of books, including books that reflect the children at Windrush Thamesmead and our local community as well as books that open windows into other worlds and cultures. Every classroom has an inviting book corner that encourages a love for reading. We curate these books and talk about them to entice children to read a wide range of books. In Nursery/Reception, children have access to the reading corner every day in their free flow time and the books are continually refreshed. Children from Nursery/Reception onwards have a home reading record. The parent/carer records comments to share with the adults in school and the adults will write in this on a regular basis to ensure communication between home and school.

7.8 Assessment

Assessment is used to monitor progress and to identify any child needing additional support as soon as they need it. Assessment for learning is used daily within class to identify children needing Keep-up support as well as weekly in the Review lesson to assess gaps, address these immediately and secure fluency of GPCs, words and spellings.

Summative assessment is used every six weeks to assess progress, to identify gaps in learning that need to be addressed, to identify any children needing additional support and to plan the Keep-up support that they need. SLT and teachers scrutinise the *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* assessment tracker, to narrow attainment gaps between different groups of children and so that any additional support for teachers can be put into place.

7.8.1 Statutory assessment

Children in Year 1 sit the Phonics Screening Check. Any child not passing the check re-sits it in Year 2.

7.8.2 Ongoing assessment for catch-up

Children in Year 2 and 3 are assessed through their teacher's ongoing formative assessment as well as through the half-termly *Little Wandle Letters and Sounds Revised* summative assessments.

Early Reading and Phonics Appendices

8. Reading

Our priorities are to teach children both the skills needed to be fluent readers and also the enjoyment of reading to enable children to become life-long confident readers. As children begin to read in Foundation Stage we focus on decoding. As children build fluency, comprehension skills including retrieval, deduction, inference, and understanding the use of language become the focus of teaching. Books are chosen carefully by adults to introduce children to a wide vocabulary and to develop children's schemata.

By the end of KS1, children will be able to read a range of texts written at an age-appropriate interest level both in class and for pleasure. They should be able to read them accurately and at a speed that is sufficient for them to focus on understanding what they read. They will be able to decode most new words outside their spoken vocabulary, making a good approximation to the word's pronunciation.

By the end of KS2, our children will be taught and understand the necessary skills that they need to be a fluent and confident reader and are able to apply these skills both in class and for enjoyment. A love and passion of reading in our children will be instilled by giving them ample opportunities to read widely and often, both for pleasure and information. Children will be able to read aloud a wider range of poetry and books written at an age-appropriate interest level with accuracy and at a reasonable speaking pace. We aim for our children to be competent readers who can actively take part in book discussions, recommend books to peers, and have a desire to read across a range of genres.

8.1 Teaching of Reading

In KS2, reading is taught as a whole class four times a week for 30 minutes. Whole class reading means that children of all attainment are immersed in the same high-quality texts and are able to be involved in discussions of these texts. As a result, children will understand the text, develop a love of reading and enjoy high quality rich texts. We teach all the children the necessary reading skills with exposure to high quality vocabulary. Teachers plan a unit of whole class reading based on a high-quality text. Different reading skills, such as prediction, summarising or inference, are taught using the same text following the 'understand, teach, practise, apply' approach. Teachers will model the skill before giving children the opportunity to practise that skill with other extracts. In the apply stage, children will answer questions (based on the reading skill they have been taught) independently on a new as an opportunity for assessment to take place. The whole class reading overview ensures that a range of texts are being taught and that skills are being built upon year upon year (Appendix VII – Whole Class Reading Overview).

8.2 Reading at Home

In KS1, parents are asked to sign reading records once they have read with their child and indicate when their child is ready to have their book changed as all children's progress in reading is different. If a parent or carer has not signed their record book, their reading book will not be changed and the class teacher will contact parents to offer support and training if necessary. In Reception and KS1, the class teacher or teaching assistant either chooses the child's next book to match their phonic ability. Reception and KS1 teachers have additional time in the school day to change books/monitor book change. Staff will use reading

records books to monitor the reading undertaken at home by signing the reading records at least once a week.

In KS2, all children are given a reading record that they take home with them. When they have read with an adult at home or at school, it must be signed and dated. Teachers check these reading records twice a week to ensure children are being read with at home. Children in Year 5 and 6 are encouraged to complete this record with increasing independence.

Reading journals are introduced in Year 6. All children in Year 6 have a reading journal that they must complete three times a week. They choose from a range of different activities to complete based on the book they are currently reading. With this, children are able to show their understanding and engagement of their book and teachers can ensure children are actively engaging with the book they are reading.

8.3 Reading culture at Windrush Thamesmead

At Windrush Thamesmead, we create a reading culture throughout our school to promote a love of reading in our children. We have a dedicated reading for pleasure session once a week in which both staff and children promote books to each other and share their love of reading. Opportunities for reading are provided across the curriculum throughout all subjects and we encourage our children to enjoy all genres of books. Each class has a dedicated reading corner which promotes book talk. (See Appendix VIII – reading corners expectations and examples) Teachers take the time to promote their book of the week and share any new books for the reading corner with the children. All classes enjoy a class book/novel and this is usually shared at the end of the day. It is expected that teachers will read to their class everyday and this is timetabled for. We celebrate world book day and hold book fairs annually.

Reading Appendices