



English Policy

February 2025

St Mary & St Margaret's CE Primary School English Policy

School Values

Our School Values set the ethos in which this policy is grounded:

We believe that St Mary and St Margaret's CE Primary School exists to enable every child to realise his or her potential to the fullest possible extent, whatever his or her particular needs and abilities. We aim to help all children to be the best they can be by 'living life in all its fullness' (John 10:10).

To this end, we promote our agreed School Values:

- *Growing as a child of God*
- *Loving learning*
- *Caring*
- *Achieving*
- *Personal development*

Aims

At St Mary and St Margaret's we firmly believe that English in all its forms should be at the centre of children's learning.

High quality teaching and learning in all aspects of English should enable children to read, write and speak fluently, therefore allowing them to communicate their ideas and emotions to others. English is a key skill which is essential for all aspects of everyday life including independent learning and the world of work. Children should develop a love for English through their enjoyment of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

We encourage children to develop skills to communicate effectively in speech and writing, to listen with understanding and to be responsive, enthusiastic and knowledgeable readers. We will enable children to achieve this passion for English through providing stimulating and exciting experiences based around high quality materials and opportunities for learning which will lead to every child reaching and fulfilling their potential.

Our aim is to provide high quality teaching and learning experiences, so our children become enthusiastic, confident and independent users of language in the spoken and written word.

Therefore, we will:

- Set high expectations so our children will achieve their full potential.
- Respond to our pupils' diverse learning needs in accordance with guidelines in the National Curriculum by providing a broad and balanced language curriculum.
- Develop pupils' abilities and enthusiasm with an integrated programme of speaking, listening, reading and writing.
- Provide pupils with opportunities to consolidate, practise and develop new English skills across the curriculum.
- Encourage confidence and enjoyment in writing, reading, speaking and listening.

During their education at St Mary and St Margaret's we aim for all our children to:

- Have an interest in books and read for enjoyment whilst developing the skills to read a range of texts fluently and with good understanding.
- Practise, consolidate and develop English skills across the curriculum.
- Speak and listen confidently and respond appropriately to different audiences.
- Be effective, competent communicators within a range of groups in both formal and informal contexts.
- Read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding for a range of purposes and audiences.
- Use a range of strategies to self-assess, edit and refine their own writing.
- Develop their powers of imagination, inventiveness and critical awareness.
- Have an interest in words and their meanings and develop growing vocabulary.
- Use ICT skills to improve and consolidate literacy.
- Through the teaching of phonics develop an understanding of the spelling system.
- Understand how grammar and punctuation is used, building on skills throughout school and applying this knowledge when reading and writing.
- Develop a legible, fluent and cursive writing style.

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Teaching and Learning of English:

Much of our English work at St Mary and St Margaret's is text based, with children enjoying a wide and varied range of texts and genres. Key skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening will be developed and consolidated upon, before children are then stretched and challenged through a range of exciting learning opportunities.

- Varied teaching and learning styles reflect and support the overall development of English with a great emphasis on modelled, shared and guided writing.
- Children are given the opportunity to work within a variety of learning situations including: whole class, guided work, independent work, group work, paired work, problem solving, discussing, risk taking and investigating.
- Differentiated and challenging activities are given to support and extend.
- Drama and role play are used to widen understanding in English and across the curriculum.

Key areas within English:

Phonics

In order to teach all our pupils to become fluent, confident readers, who have a love of reading, it is paramount that we teach a daily phonics lesson. All pupils within the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 receive phonics teaching in line with current DFE guidance on the teaching of synthetic phonics using an approved scheme (Little Wandle Letters and Sounds). From Reception onwards, pupils receive a daily phonics lesson, targeted at their current level of attainment, and are encouraged to apply this learning in their reading and writing. Pupils continue to receive daily phonics teaching until they are confident with using and applying the skills taught within 'phase five' of our phonics scheme.

Within Reception and Key Stage 1 concepts are taught daily using flashcards and some interactive resources. Children who are making slower progress are identified through formative assessment during lessons and regular summative assessments and intervention is immediately put into place, alongside the usual phonics teaching. Children are sent home with reading books which are fully decodable and match sounds being taught.

Discrete phonics teaching (along with other strategies) continues into Key Stage 2, and for as long as necessary, for pupils who require extra support and learning time to focus on securing their phonics knowledge. This is followed by specific intervention programmes to bridge the gap between being phonologically aware and then an accurate speller

We work within all Key Stages to ensure that all pupils who would benefit from extra phonics teaching receive it. Any pupils who have not reached the expected phonics level by the end of Year 1, as assessed by the national screening check, receive additional phonics intervention within Year 2, so that they can catch up with their peers.

Reading

This is the cornerstone of our curriculum and is given a high priority to enable all children to succeed in all areas of the curriculum as well as being a 'life skill'.

We aim to foster a love of reading at St Mary and St Margaret's and we encourage children to read a wide range of books both at school and at home. All children have access to our school library which they are able to use to extend their independent reading, as a research tool or just to enjoy a good story.

For the majority of our children, we no longer set written homework tasks on a weekly basis, but instead have a formal reading homework. This is particularly intended to free up enough time to allow children to read much more regularly. Homework is as follows (with some element of adaptation according to age):

There is an expectation that children read at home at least three or four times a week. Depending on age, this may be independent reading or reading with an adult. Children (or parents) are asked to record this on their reading records, which are monitored regularly by class teachers. Parents are asked to sign at least weekly to show they are keeping track of children's reading and to confirm what has been recorded.

Weekly records are kept to show how many times each child has read (outside of class time) during the week. Home reading records are monitored by SLT and any impact noted. The records are also discussed at parents' evening etc. as appropriate. Children reading fewer than three times each week are monitored and appropriate interventions to support them may be put in place.

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Children reading four or more times per week receive a 'Regular Reader' sticker and across the year can earn Bronze, Silver and Gold certificates.

In addition, there is also the KS2 Book Blaster Award – this consists of a recommended '100 books to read before you leave St Mary and St Margaret's'. This starts in Year 3, and as children progress through KS2 they earn rewards such as book tokens.

Throughout Key Stage 2, children have the opportunity to earn rewards by taking part in the Reading Challenge – a series of six banded books chosen by our English Lead because of their complexity, variety and themes.

We have high expectations of children and the progression of their reading skills. Therefore, we offer as many opportunities for reading as we can. This may happen in the English lesson or across the curriculum.

Whole class reading

Children are given opportunities to listen to, read, and comment on, books and stories during whole class sessions. This is teacher led and the children interact and respond to differentiated questions, often during English lessons but also across the curriculum. Most classes use shared texts to base their English work around.

Shared reading

During English lessons the children are given a variety of text types as a stimulus for writing. The teacher and children share the text, and the teacher models as an expert reader, drawing out the key elements of the content.

Guided reading

Guided reading (reading for understanding) takes place regularly in the class, where possible with a text that links to the writing. This allows children to become fully engaged in a text, which then in turn helps them to make good progress in both their reading and writing.

Reception and Key Stage 1

In Reception and Year 1, children are taught phonics as a whole class with the emphasis on keeping up rather than catching up wherever possible. They are then grouped based on their current phonic knowledge for their three-times-weekly reading practice sessions – this book is then sent home for each child to 'show off' what they have learned by reading the book to a parent/carer. Children also choose a library book to share each week with the adults at home (adult reading to child). We encourage parents to read books from school with their child daily.

Reading practice sessions continue throughout Year 2 and are combined with daily phonics lessons at the start of the year and spelling lessons. When the children are confident with Stage 5 phonics, they are moved onto the Little Wandle fluency books for their reading practice sessions – these are small chapter books designed to increase fluency and enjoyment of reading.

When stories are read aloud to the children there is a focus on comprehension, asking the children what they think about what is happening as they read, and checking understanding of what they are reading.

Whole class reading comprehension

We explicitly teach key reading skills. The teacher first models a skill or concept and children may work in groups or pairs and then apply this learning to an independent activity. Reading comprehension is framed through the VIPERS framework strands.

VIPERS

Vocabulary, Inferring, Predicting, Explaining, Retrieving and Summarising or Sequencing. These core reading comprehension skills are pulled out and taught through our reading comprehension sessions.

Key Stage 2 individual reading

When the children are confident with their phonics, they are moved from the Little Wandle phonics reading scheme and Little Wandle Fluency books to banded books from our school library. They continue to take part in using the school library to select a 'reading for pleasure' book too. Books are changed by the children and are checked in by the school librarian, a teacher or teaching assistant.

Home School Reading

Home school links are very important in reading and children take home books regularly from our extensive resources in school. These reading books are matched to individual children's reading abilities. Children are heard reading frequently across school to support their development. Children share these books with parents/carers at home and also teaching assistants and teachers in school. Any comments made during these sessions by either party can be recorded in children's reading planners and therefore it is very much a two-way process.

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Children in upper KS2 may also at times bring books in from home or choose from a range of class novels that we have in school. We actively encourage parents/carers to share a good book with their children.

Writing

We aim to foster a love of writing as soon as children enter St Mary and St Margaret's Primary. This is achieved through many different teaching and learning strategies.

Early Years

We believe that communication and language, with opportunities to explore reading and writing, underpins the future learning of our children. Within our nursery and reception classes children have access to planned whole class or group writing activities but also many opportunities for child-initiated writing activities.

These may include the following:

- Opportunities to develop and experience speaking and listening skills
- Experiences that develop fine and gross motor skills through play and mark making activities.
- Sharing and enjoying a range of rhymes, songs, stories and books.
- Immersion in a print rich environment with opportunities for oral language and written communication.
- Whole class shared text activities
- ICT opportunities on iPads and interactive whiteboard.
- A focus literacy session in the morning with different activities that teach children early communication language and literacy skills.
- A daily phonics session which provides opportunity for children to practise the cursive script.
- Literacy integrated throughout the Early Years Curriculum.

Key Stage One

The children continue to develop their love of writing through:

- Following an 'Early Writing' Curriculum which develops which focusses on Transcription (including daily dictation), Composition and Effect, Text Structure and Organisation, Sentence Structure, Vocabulary, Grammar and Punctuation
- Explicitly taught and planned English sessions following the guidance and objectives of the statutory English Curriculum.
- Extended opportunities for discussion of writing, e.g. role play, pair talk, drama and hot seating to prepare children for the writing process.
- Modelled, shared and guided writing examples.
- Opportunities for children to write for and share their writing with different audiences.
- Songs, rhymes and games to develop English skills.
- Spelling and grammar work building on and deepening key skills across different year groups. In Year One there is a focus on phonics which then develops into spelling rules and strategies by the end of Year Two.
- Text level 'Language study' work using a range of genres and texts which will develop comprehension skills and understanding and enjoyment of books, helping to promote a love of writing.
- ICT work that complements and supports work in English, helping children to develop skills learnt through quality first teaching.
- Immersion in a print rich environment that promotes a reading culture and develops children's oral and written communication.

Key Stage Two

The children progress to become fully independent writers through:

- Explicitly taught and planned sessions following the guidance and objectives of the statutory English Curriculum.
- Experience of a wide range of genres used in reading and writing.
- Grammar, spelling and punctuation work led by quality texts to develop grammatical awareness and key punctuation skills building on and deepening key skills across different year groups.
- Text level work reading a range of genres to develop comprehension skills and support writing.
- Opportunities for cross curricular writing.
- Extended independent writing opportunities to apply the skills learnt when writing within different genres. Also, the opportunity for children to draft, edit and refine their own work alongside that of others.

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- Extended opportunities for discussion of writing, e.g. role play, pair talk, drama and hot seating to prepare children for the writing process.
- Modelled, shared and guided writing takes place in the classroom.
- Opportunities for children to write for and share their writing with different audiences.
- ICT work that complements and supports work in literacy, helping children to develop skills learnt through quality first teaching. This includes drafting and publishing work electronically.

Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation

Spelling

Within Reception and KS1 the focus is on phonics and children are immersed in the world of phonics (closely linked to their reading) as soon as they enter school. All children within Reception and KS1 access a daily lesson of phonics. The children in Years 1 and 2 also learn the common exception word lists for their year groups.

As children move towards the end of KS1 the focus changes from phonics to the learning of spelling rules and strategies. Within Year 2 children are also beginning to learn words from the national curriculum word list.

Within KS2 we currently follow the Herts for Learning 'Essential spelling' programme which allows teachers to follow a flexible approach to spelling tailored to the individual needs of their class. Key spelling strategies and rules are taught within the classroom. Children may receive weekly spelling lists or individualised spelling lists to learn at home.

Alongside learning spelling rules and strategies Years 3/4 and Years 5/6 are also expected to learn the word lists as stated in the national curriculum. Spelling is important to all children and it is essential that they are given every opportunity to embed key spelling rules so that they are then able to apply them to their own writing.

Grammar and Punctuation

Within the National Curriculum, 'grammar and punctuation' is a key focus and as such we teach grammar and punctuation as an explicit part of the curriculum through our weekly 'language study' session. This allows teachers to explain and model for the children the grammar or punctuation which is being taught. Children are then able to see the new learning being used in context. Finally, children are expected to use the new learning in their own writing therefore embedding the skill. This learning is assessed in an end of unit piece of writing.

In addition, the children in Key Stage One and Two undertake 'Slow Writing' sessions in which the children develop all aspects of their writing by taking short, focused tasks with set criteria to follow.

Speaking and listening

Spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing. The quality and variety of language which children hear and speak are vital for developing their metacognition, vocabulary and grammar and their understanding of reading and writing.

Children are provided with opportunities for:

- Talking to others
- Talking with others
- Talking within role play and drama
- Talking about talk
- Eliciting and extending responses and encouraging critique of books and writing
- Language development – acquiring new words, ideas and knowledge of the world and having the opportunity to talk about them.
- Storytelling – retelling well-known and familiar stories to assimilate the rhythms and patterns of story language
- Story-making - creating 'new' stories orally and/or as a preparation and rehearsal for writing
- Rehearsing what is to be written – composing sentences orally and refining them.
- Preparing for and taking part in debates.
- Opportunities to rehearse and learn different texts and present to different audiences.

Handwriting

At St Mary and St Margaret's we take great pride in the presentation of all our work. Within English we believe handwriting is an essential skill and we believe that the children's ability to write fluently for the rest of their lives depends on a good foundation of taught handwriting in the early years of their education. We believe that handwriting is a developmental process with its own distinct 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 and creativity.

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Handwriting is taught explicitly in Reception and Key Stage 1, and across Key Stage 2. The school follows both the 'Little Wandle' (phonics linked) letter formation approach (Reception and Y1) which then feeds into the 'Martin Harvey' handwriting programme and script. Teaching staff throughout the school are expected to model a cursive script in their own writing, on boards, in books and through displays and lettering.

Teachers will:

- Expose children visually to a cursive script and pre-cursive letter formation in the foundation stage alongside regular print
- Teach children to write using pre-cursive letter formation in The Foundation stage, leading onto handwriting in a joined script which is both legible and fluent.
- Help achieve this through regular, purposeful and guided practice.

Children will:

- Develop fine motor skills
- Understand the importance of correct posture and paper position whether right or left handed.
- Hold and use a pen/pencil effectively
- Learn how to start and finish letters correctly
- Form letters of consistent size and shape
- Use and understand the language of writing and how to use the correct terminology
- Use regular spaces between words
- Form upper and lower case letters correctly
- Join letters correctly
- Be able to write legibly in both joined and printed styles
- Be able to use different styles of writing for different purposes
- Understand the importance of neat and clear presentation in order to communicate meaning effectively
- Develop greater control and fluency as they become increasingly confident

Planning

St Mary and St Margaret's has its own bespoke English Curriculum with detailed medium-term planning that reflects the values and high aspirations of the school. It aims to provide:

- A balance of fiction, non-fiction and poetry
- A mix of classic and contemporary texts, including both picture books and a film unit
- A balance of race and gender within author choice
- Texts which reflect and promote our school values or safeguarding

Planning at St Mary and St Margaret's reflects a learning journey through a unit of work. Like all journeys, the plan should have a specific destination and journey time. There may be detours, hold-ups or opportunities for acceleration which arise from Assessment for Learning, but the acquisition and application of skills provides the driving force.

Teachers work from the medium-term plans which then feed into a weekly plan. The weekly plans have a focus around a specific text which can be narrative, non-narrative or poetry based. Often planning links closely with a class novel or a text that runs over several weeks. Links may also be made with other areas of the curriculum. Within our planning sequences we focus on five main sections: writing outcomes, opportunities to respond to the text, sentence level activities, speaking and listening opportunities, punctuation, grammar and spelling focus.

Day to Day Assessment

This is known as formative assessment. The basic principle of Assessment for Learning (AfL) is that whatever day to day judgements are made by the teacher about a child's attainment, go on to inform planning, teaching and learning. These judgements are made through talking and listening to the children, marking, observations, and occasional tests. The children are central to AfL and should be involved in their own progress. They should have a good awareness of themselves as learners and what their next steps are. In this way, AfL is not about being right or wrong, but about being at a certain stage of learning with identified areas for development. Children should know and understand their 'next steps' through marking and feedback discussion with the teacher.

Key Elements of AfL

Within the lesson:

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- Sharing the 'Big Picture' with the class-where the learning journey will take them
- Clear objectives
- Differentiated success criteria (we call these 'Steps for Success')
- Differentiated activities where appropriate
- Plenary to review learning/assessment opportunities

Involving children:

- Quality questioning
- Interactive learning
- Talk for thinking/writing
- Self/peer evaluations

Feedback and Marking (see Feedback & Marking Policy for greater detail):

- Specific links to objective and success criteria
- Balance of oral and written – using colour coded highlighter pens
- Deeper marking for extended pieces of writing
- Encouragement of verbal feedback when appropriate
- Independent/self-marked work if appropriate
- Support next steps learning in writing through 'Class Improvement Points' (CIPs)

Formal/Summative Assessment

Reading

- Termly reading assessment (NTS) used from Year 2-6.
- Statutory national assessments in Year 2 (optional) and Year 6.
- Termly review and teacher assessment against expected levels of attainment in Reading on school's SIMs
- Regular whole school internal and external moderation of children's skills and knowledge.

Writing

- Termly moderated writing sheets in children's English Book books assessed against key objectives from each year group.
- Statutory teacher assessments in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Termly review and assessment against expected levels of attainment in Writing on school's SIMs
- Termly pupil progress meetings with teacher and Headteacher
- Regular whole school internal and external moderation of children's skills and knowledge.

An annual report is given to parents each July which includes information about the curriculum in English and an individual assessment of strengths and areas for development. Parents are informed as to whether their child is working within, below or exceeding expectations for their age and year group. Parents' meetings are also held in the Autumn and Spring Terms, giving feedback on progress in English.

Marking and feedback

Quality feedback is essential so that children make good progress during each lesson, unit of work and over the school year. Marking in English follows the school marking policy. We regularly aim to give 'live' feedback to children as they write so that feedback can be acted upon immediately. Feedback can be given to children either verbally or as written comments. Children are also encouraged to edit and refine their own work against set criteria.

Role of subject leader

The subject leader is responsible for improving the standards of teaching and learning in English through:

- Monitoring and evaluating English.
- Pupil progress meetings.
- Provision of English across the school.
- The quality of the learning environment.
- Taking the lead in policy development.
- Auditing and supporting colleagues in their CPD.
- Purchasing and organising resources.
- Keeping up to date with recent English developments through their own CPD and that of others.
- Monitoring and assessment of English across the whole school.

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- Supporting teachers through team teach coaching sessions.
- Analysing data and creating action plans.

Inclusion and equal opportunities

We aim to provide for all children so that they achieve as highly as they can in English according to their individual abilities. We will identify which pupils or groups of pupils are under-achieving and take steps to improve their progress in order to close the gap. This will be done in discussion with the class teacher at pupil progress meetings. This information will then be shared with the SLT, SENCO and parents if required. More able children will be identified and suitable learning challenges provided to deepen and strengthen their skills in English.

St Mary and St Margaret's has high expectations for every child, whatever their background or circumstances. Children learn and thrive when they are healthy, safe and engaged. In order to engage all children, cultural diversity, home languages, gender and religious beliefs are all celebrated. Our curriculum includes a wide range of texts and other resources which represent the diversity and backgrounds of different children.

We recognise that parents play a large part in the education of their children. At St Mary and St Margaret's Primary School parents and staff work together in partnership to encourage the qualities, attitudes, knowledge, understanding and competences which are necessary to equip children for adult life.

Governors

The English Governor will meet with the English subject leader to discuss standards, actions and progress in this subject and to review policies and practice.

Policy agreed by Governors: February 2025

Review date: February 2028