

English Subject Policy

Milton Road Primary School



Where Learning is an Adventure

INTENT

“We want our children to be happy and healthy today, fulfilled in the future and able to make their world an even better place.”

At Milton Road Primary School, we seek to encourage all of our children to become lifelong learners. We know that the acquisition of English skills (speaking & listening; reading; writing) is essential for children to be effectively prepared for life in 21st century society. We believe that providing pupils with a well-balanced, enriching and engaging English curriculum will aid them in developing into self-assured communicators.

Underpinning the teaching and learning of English are our four key values: Courage Responsibility Excellence Wisdom

At the heart of English teaching at Milton Road is the voice of the pupil and their ability to communicate and express themselves. We want children to be happy today, fulfilled in the future and able to make their world a better place. By equipping children with the fundamental tools of communication, we are playing a huge role in achieving this. As a community of learners, it is vital that we can communicate effectively with each other, learning to listen and speak, as well as learn from the wealth of literature available to us. In doing so, we will empower children to have a voice and know that their voice – whether written or spoken – is heard, valued and respected.

As the National Curriculum states, a high-quality education in English *will teach pupils to speak and write fluently so that they can communicate their ideas and emotions to others, and through their reading and listening, others can communicate with them.*

Nurturing literate children from EYFS through to Year 6 is vital for their growth not only intellectually but emotionally, socially and spiritually. Reading, writing, speaking and listening – in English lessons and across the curriculum – give children language keys through which they can unlock their ability to articulate their own responses, thoughts and ideas. In essence, we are giving our children a voice by which they can be heard. Furthermore, reading also enables pupils both to acquire knowledge and to build on what they already know. All the skills of language are essential to participating fully as a member of society; pupils who do not learn to speak, read and write fluently and confidently are effectively disenfranchised.

Through high-quality, research-driven teaching, our ambition is that children leave us in Year 6 equipped to:

- write independently with confidence, fluency and understanding in order to communicate their thoughts, ideas and responses, knowing that their words have value and they have something worthwhile to share
- understand the power of language and communication as a means of engaging and influencing others
- read confidently and fluently, developing a love of a wide range of books and enthusiasm for reading, grasping opportunities to read for pleasure and enjoyment
- developing a rich vocabulary in spoken and written forms in order to accurately express their views
- understand and use a range of text types and genres to write in an appropriate manner in response to a stimulus or situation
- develop their powers of imagination, curiosity and creativity, as well as broaden their understanding of different cultures through literacy and different media
- Enjoy high quality texts, reflecting the wonderful diversity of our world. These are at the heart of our curriculum and are central to the children’s school day and learning journey
- Be ready for secondary school with a resilient approach to learning and life beyond school, skillfully using the learning in English

IMPLEMENTATION

Writing

At the heart of English teaching at Milton Road is the voice of the pupil and their ability to communicate and express themselves. 'We want children to be happy today, fulfilled in the future and able to make their world a better place.' By equipping children with the fundamental tools of communication – writing fluently, for purpose and meaning being just one of these – we are playing a huge role in achieving this.

Through high quality, research-driven teaching, our ambition is that children leave us in Year 6 equipped to:

- Write independently with confidence, fluency and understanding for a variety of audiences
- Communicate their thoughts, ideas and responses, knowing that their words have value and that they have something worthwhile to share
- Understand the power of language and communication as a means of engaging and influencing others
- Use a rich vocabulary in written form in order to accurately express their views
- Understand and use a range of text types and genres to write in an appropriate manner in response to a stimulus / situation
- Use the conventions of written language and grammar.
- Be confident, competent and accurate spellers.
- Use a neat, joined, legible handwriting style.

Our approach to the teaching of writing develops across the phase groups in order to best suit the children at each point in their writing journey.

The EYFS curriculum at Milton Road has been designed using the 7 educational programmes identified within the EYFS Statutory Framework. The progression of knowledge and skills are delivered through a combination of adult directed learning during whole class inputs, enhancements, challenges and activities as well as child initiated through access to an ever evolving provision. English promotes learning and development in Communication and Language through 'oracy' as well as Literacy. Writing teaching in EYFS and Year 1 is based on a 'Talking and Writing' approach supported by CLPE core texts and sequencing, moving towards more of a book-based approach as and when appropriate in Year 1. While many elements of 'Talking and Writing' are naturally maintained in Year 2 (and above), writing teaching in Year 2 and KS2 will largely take the form of the 'three phase planning sequence' based around a high-quality text. The three phase planning sequence, has strong foundations in oracy; using speaking and listening skills to embed and deepen learning. In phase one, children read and respond to the text and become familiar with the text type and genre. In phase two, they analyse and practise grammar in context. In phase three, the teacher offers opportunities for shared writing with independent application. This allows the independent application of grammar features both independently and creatively.

Additionally, children will also have opportunities to write across the curriculum, for example, their response to a historical event, a DT evaluation or a scientific write-up.

Through a combination of these approaches, we are aiming to inspire children to write for pleasure, purpose and meaning. We believe that all children have a voice, which deserves to be heard. We believe that all children are writers and our job, as educators, is to help them discover and develop this side of themselves.

Handwriting

Also see Handwriting Policy

At Milton Road Primary School we seek to ensure that all children are able to write using a clear, legible, fluent, joined handwriting style in order that their written communication can be understood.

Children are taught handwriting skills and have the opportunity to practice in discrete handwriting sessions. We use the Letter Joins handwriting resource to support planning and lesson delivery.

As a school, we know that there are some key issues which support effective handwriting, these include:

- Posture – to achieve the best handwriting, it is important to be sitting in a comfortable position with the table and chair at the correct height.
- Pen-grip – A tripod grip should be used. The pencil or pen should be lightly supported and not gripped tightly (i.e. it should be possible to remove the pen from the child's grip without lifting their hand at the same time).
- Paper position – The paper should be angled comfortably according to the hand of the writer (approximately 30 degrees to the right for a right-handed person and 30 degrees to the left for a left-handed person) and supported with the non-writing hand.
- Writing implement – It should be suitable for the purpose. If points are too sharp they will dig into the surface of the paper and hinder fluency.
- Light – strong light should be available to enable pupils to see clearly.
- Example – Teachers should ensure that their own handwriting on the interactive screen, displays, worksheets, notices etc. is clear, legible and conforms to school policy

Spelling

We aim to develop our children's ability to become confident writers, with the self-esteem necessary to believe in themselves as competent authors. To achieve this, children are supported in developing their spelling skills through the direct teaching of the subject. Where possible, spelling rules are taught in context so that children have the opportunity to apply what they have learnt in a meaningful way. Children are supported in learning to accurately spell the National Curriculum word lists for their year group as well as a wide range of age appropriate spelling patterns.

The teaching of spelling in EYFS and KS1 is done through the Little Wandle phonics scheme (see Phonics and Early Reading for more information). Statutory phonics checks remain in place for Year 1 and any in Year 2 not meeting the required pass mark. Targeted 1-to-1 support, or small group support will be in place to help any children for whom specific gaps have been identified which continues into Key Stage 2 for as long as the child needs it. Once children have graduated from the Little Wandle phonics programme, in Year 2 they begin Little Wandle Spelling. Little Wandle Spelling builds on children's knowledge of the alphabetic code and teaches them how to spell with confidence. The programme provides a seamless link from the core Little Wandle programme to teaching spelling in Year 2.

KS2 children (Year 3-6) use "Essential Spelling" as a core scheme for progression. Teachers are encouraged to supplement the scheme using high quality resources to meet the needs of their class. Essential Spelling, crucially builds on children's phonics knowledge acquired and honed in the previous two years, and is one tool used to teach spelling up to and including Year 6. We have adapted the scheme to embed and retain spellings taught, so teaching one new block over the course of two weeks based on a cycle of 'teach, explore, recall, apply.' Teachers will deliver these blocks through a minimum of 3 short sessions each week and more, if they have the opportunity. In doing so, children benefit from a research-based consistent approach of repeated practice, spaced learning and they are actively taught spelling rather than simply being tested. They are provided with a variety of strategies to enable them to access the rules and statutory lists found in the KS2 English curriculum. The content of these sessions is then embedded in writing lessons across the curriculum to ensure children are able to apply their understanding and skills

Grammar and Punctuation

As with the teaching of spelling, grammar and punctuation is addressed through direct teaching. Again, where possible, grammar rules are taught in context rather than in isolation, so that children have the opportunity to apply what they have learnt. The National Curriculum programme of study sets out what grammar and punctuation knowledge is taught and teachers use this to support them in their planning, appropriate to the genre of writing they are currently focusing on; the year group they are teaching and the identified individual needs within their class. Please see the separate progression document for more detailed information.

Phonics and Early Reading (See Phonics and Early Reading Policy) Phonics teaching is a vital part of early reading in English. At Milton Road Primary School we aim to teach children fluent phonic coding and decoding skills to

provide a solid foundation in reading, writing and spelling - right from the start. In Early Years and Key Stage 1 we use the Little Wandle – Revised Letters and Sounds Programme. Little Wandle is a systematic, synthetic phonics program. 5 From Year 2 onwards, once children have completed the Little Wandle programme and passed their fluency test, children consolidate their phonics knowledge through the Little Wandle spelling programme and progress onto whole class reading. At the end of Year 1 the majority of pupils undertake the Phonics Screening Check in June. Children who did not pass the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1 will then re-take the test at the end of Year 2, after further intensive support in phonics and early reading through the Little Wandle Rapid Catch-up Programme.

Reading Practice KS2

Through the delivery of high-quality teaching of reading, we seek to develop children's competence, confidence and enjoyment of reading. Our goals are:

- For children to become fluent, skilled, independent readers who are able to enjoy reading for pleasure, regardless of disadvantage.
- That each time they read, new knowledge connects with, builds on and sometimes replaces what they already know.
- For children to be able to read independently and to be able to follow personal interests and use their research skills to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- To provide a wide range of high-quality texts, both fiction and non-fiction to support children's reading development.

In class, children have regular opportunities to engage in whole class, independent and shared reading. Class teachers and support staff seek to provide children with daily reading sessions where they are encouraged to respond to a text in a variety of different ways. Class teachers make use of whole class reading sessions as a teaching and learning strategy. During reading sessions, adults focus on developing a child's ability to become a fluent, independent reader, who is able to engage with and understand texts effectively.

In Lower Key Stage 2, children take part in daily whole-class reading sessions, in which they work through a variety of high-quality texts. This ensures increased emphasis on a range of fluency and comprehension skills (creating a mental model, drawing on experience and knowledge to make inferences, considering meaning, knowledge of sentence structure and punctuation etc). Explicit teacher modelling of these skills to the whole class, including the thought processes involved in making inferences: metacognition, means that children understand what it means to be a good reader and see themselves, teacher and peers as readers. By modelling fluent, expressive reading, children's fluency and therefore their comprehension is improved. In Upper Key Stage 2, reading practice is taught through a mixture of whole class and guided group work, ensuring that the class teacher is able to hear each child read aloud each week. This allows any remaining gaps that children may have at this stage to be identified and closed more quickly and effectively.

In line with the updated Reading Framework (July 2023) across the KS2, class teachers are committed to develop pupils' fluency through: guided oral reading instructions, modelling fluent reading, repeated reading and encouraging pupils to do the same by asking them to echo read, choral read or perform to the class. Fluency bridges the gap to comprehension (Pikulski and Chard 2005) and teachers are encouraged to model, share and practise; accuracy, prosody, pace and phrasing during reading lessons, drawing on a range of strategies, including elements of VIPERS.

Reading Inclusion and Diversity

When teaching reading to children with EAL or with SEND, we recognise that time should be spent on discussing and clarifying new and unusual words. Teachers consider support plans when planning effective reading sessions to ensure that SEND pupils are supported appropriately. We seek to ensure that children of all abilities are well planned for by taking into account their current reading levels and by providing them with appropriate texts which allow them to build on their reading skills and develop their independent learning and thinking skills. We use diagnostic tools such as FFT's Reading Assessment Programme or Little Wandle assessment tool to baseline

new children with EAL or SEND. These are easy to use tools that check specific learning goals and provides detailed reports for teachers to; inform next steps, provide bespoke interventions and track progress closely.

At Milton Road Primary school, we seek to promote equality and diversity by making sure that all children have access to a wide variety of age-appropriate texts, representing characters from different backgrounds, families, ethnicities and those with disabilities. We are always looking out for new, diverse texts and use CLPE and Empathy lab booklists to enhance our library so that children can connect personally with the books they read. We want the books in their hands to reflect their reality, provide a window to learn about others and open doors, to walk in a character's shoes. We regularly sort through our book stock to ensure themes and information are up to date and avoid stereotyping. Opportunities to discuss issues such as race, gender, different families are provided through careful discussion and thoughtfully chosen books.

The No Outsiders, Preparing Children for Life in Modern Britain programme forms the basis of our whole school assemblies. This programme uses a wide range of specially selected picture books and texts to promote the 'All different, All welcome' message

Reading for Pleasure and Book Choices

It is important to differentiate between reading practise (scheme) books and reading books. Children have access to a good balance of high quality, current fiction and information texts. A 'less is more' approach is often the most helpful, particularly when children are reading texts outside of a scheme regularly. Without guidance, some children's choices can lead to a drop in challenge, as well as an issue with pitch and quality. Teachers are the best promoters. We want children to trust the judgement of a teacher because they feel that the teacher knows them well enough to care about their likes and dislikes. Teachers intervene when appropriate if they notice children are regularly choosing books that are too easy or too hard; ensuring all the while that building a reader's confidence is not in jeopardy.

All classes have their own Book Corners. These reflect a varied diet of fiction and non-fiction, diversity and the children's interests. KS2 'free readers' are managed and supported in the same way as in KS1 to make book choices. Peer support and guidance is often invaluable for this.

Core strategies to encourage sustained, voluntary reading include:

- adults reading aloud regularly, including in class or form time
- informal book talk, including recommendations from peers and adults
- encouraging library use, including the local public library
- providing protected time to read
- sociable reading environments, reading together and sharing books.

In our attempt to provide a wide offer of texts, we can sometimes provide an overwhelming choice of books. A 'less is more' approach helps so that children can see clearly what the selection is. Care should be given to how books are displayed – are they attractive and inviting; are they regularly updated; are any forward facing? It can be helpful to hold back some books, adding them across the year so that children see that there's a regular supply of 'new' books keeping the offer fresh.

It is the role of the English Champion to ensure that staff are given advice on up-to-date, high quality texts, which they can then recommend to their children. Promoting a culture of reading for pleasure, ensuring that the desire to read is at the core of the curriculum, including monitoring and evaluating provision regularly. School Leaders are also ultimately responsible for building a team of expert teachers who know and understand the processes that underpin learning to read, and draw on expert training, practice and coaching to achieve this.

Speaking and Listening

At Milton Road Primary, we believe that speaking and listening form the foundations of all learning in English. In formal and informal situations, we create and encourage opportunities for meaningful conversation, discussion

and talk around learning. We strongly encourage children to be curious learners and to share their thoughts confidently in a supportive environment.

Through speaking and listening, children learn how other people make sense of the world, how language is used to reason, how emotions and identities are expressed, and how to work together to solve problems.

To develop each child's competence, confidence and enjoyment in speaking and listening, these activities are embedded throughout the curriculum. During a day children are involved in a range of speaking and listening activities, which help to develop their skills, including:

- Listening to and participating in stories, poems, rhymes and songs.
- Asking and answering questions across the curriculum
- Reciting and reading aloud
- Drama activities and performances to enliven and enrich children's learning.
- Re-telling and role-play
- Discussion and debating
- Presenting in front of an audience
- Play where fictional roles are explored
- Scaffolded activities for discussion – Talk Partners, small group work
- Metacognition – oral thought processing to help children think about their own learning more explicitly.

IMPACT

Assessment of Reading

In order to evaluate whether our teaching of reading is effective and successful, and the needs of all our learners are being met, robust assessment systems are in place. When data from these systems is collected, we then review decisions made around content, pedagogy and timetabling before deciding how to progress.

In EYFS and KS1 assessment is carried out following the Little Wandle programme (see the Phonics and Early Reading Policy for more information). Once a child has graduated from this programme (Year 2 onward) additional termly assessments are carried out using PIRA. The results of which allow more strategically informed monitoring, progression and support. It is vital to ensure that ongoing assessment, including of pupils' progress in phonics, is sufficiently frequent and detailed to identify those who begin to fall behind, and provide targeted support immediately.

In addition, it is important to acknowledge that regularly providing children with a piece of text and a set of questions around it, whilst potentially providing useful assessment information, is unlikely to move them on in their learning. Children need teacher modelling of active reading and high-quality post-reading discussion. Opportunities for this can arise both formally (whole class reading, guided reading sessions and reading across the curriculum in lessons) and informally (informal book talk during Story Time). Just as with writing, teachers should model the skills of the reading process in the classroom.

Assessment of Writing

To ensure adequate progression through the National Curriculum objectives, as well as targeted support at a class and individual level, teachers assess writing using Herts For Learning Assessments Grids. These will take place at three points during the year in the form of a 'Big Write' and will provide clear criteria for teachers to make a judgement as to whether a child is working towards age-related expectations, at age-related expectations or exceeding those expectations. Using these frameworks allows teachers to pinpoint areas of need across the class and tailor their teaching accordingly. In addition, writing moderation meetings within our cluster network occur termly.

Assessment of Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

From Year 3, children will undertake a GAPS test to assess their understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling taught until that point. This will sit alongside PIRA and PUMA tests, with the results being put on Insight.

An analysis of these results will allow teachers to tailor their class teaching and individual interventions in order to maximise progress in this area.