



Through wisdom, compassion and endurance, we endeavour to make the best decisions for our children

English Policy

**January 2022
Review: Jan 2024**

Overview:

Speaking and listening, reading and writing are fundamental for children to access learning and to develop as well-rounded individuals; they are everywhere, from books, to maths, to design technology and a conversation with another person. As such, at Whaddon we aim to develop children's English skills throughout our whole curriculum, enabling children to see language, reading and writing as both useful and enjoyable skills in their daily lives.

Aims and Objectives:

At Whaddon, we aim to ensure that:

- Children are given a secure foundation for literacy in Foundation Stage, through a child-led approach within which children's language and communication skills are given time to develop
- Talk is used throughout the curriculum to develop children's confidence and communication skills
- Children develop confidence and fluency in reading and a love of reading
- Books are central to our school; our curriculum includes high-quality books and each class has an attractive and well-used reading area
- Children are given a purpose for reading and writing
- English skills are used, developed and embedded throughout the wider curriculum
- Children feel confident about their reading and writing skills, whatever their age or ability
- Children are given opportunities to use their developing English skills to pursue their own interests and ideas
- Teaching is carefully matched to children's abilities, skills and interests to maximise learning potential

Development of Speech and Language:

Children's spoken language is fundamental to developing their reading and writing skills. Talk is therefore central to teaching and learning at Whaddon; in Foundation Stage, the child-led curriculum ensures children are communicating with each other and adults all day, with adults modelling effective spoken language. Throughout Key Stage 1 and 2 (KS1 and 2) children are given opportunities to work collaboratively, use 'talk partners' to share ideas and articulate their opinions and ideas. This is the case throughout the curriculum.

Reading:

Throughout the school, books are used as a source of enjoyment and information. Children have free access to reading areas, including the library, and are encouraged to use them either during child-led learning, whole-class reading sessions and to support learning and research during lessons. Books are central to the curriculum, ensuring that children build up a 'bank' of books they know and love.

In Foundation Stage, children are introduced to the basics of reading and begin to take a reading book home from the start. Individual reading sessions with an adult ensure that children develop pleasure in reading and can develop at their own pace. High-frequency word cards enable children to begin to develop fluency in sight reading, while phonics skills (see below) give them the tools they need to decode unfamiliar words.

In KS1 and KS2 we teach through whole class guided reading, using high-quality texts. The children read together and explore the text through a range of comprehension activities. This gives all children access to quality reading material, no matter what their decoding ability, and ensures their comprehension is challenged alongside their word-reading. During these sessions, questions and learning objectives are closely matched to the 2014 Curriculum. Any children who are behind ARE in reading also read with an adult on a 1:1 basis several times per week.

Writing:

Our aim for children is that they feel confident in their writing ability and able to use their written skills purposefully across the curriculum.

In Foundation Stage, teachers model writing at every opportunity. This could be for the whole class on the shared screen, or for a group of children who are making up a story. Children's mark making is celebrated and there are resources for mark making throughout the indoor and outdoor classrooms. From the spring term, children take part in focussed, purposeful writing opportunities through Mantle of the Expert (see below).

In KS1 and KS2 children continue to build their written skills while also being provided with purposeful writing opportunities through Mantle of the Expert contexts. They do this through:

Daily sentence writing: called 'super sentences', with a particular spelling or grammar focus

Shared writing: Teachers provide models for writing by demonstrating the writing process individually in groups or to the class. Children are shown how to approach a written task, and what high-quality writing looks like.

Small group guided writing: teaching is tailored to the needs of that group, and teachers can observe and respond immediately to the needs of individual children.

Children are supported to develop an enjoyment of writing. Teachers value children's attempts by taking an interest in their work, listening to them and sharing the work with the rest of the class. Wherever possible, writing should be given an engaging context to motivate children to write.

Handwriting:

Before children can form letters or hold a pencil, they must develop secure fine and gross motor skills. In Foundation Stage, children are provided with a wide range of opportunities to do this, through their child-led learning; for example, a climbing frame develops their upper body strength while using tweezers to explore a tray of objects builds their fine motor skills. They also begin forming letters in a range of contexts, such as outside with a water and brush, on a whiteboard or in the sand. All of these activities ensure that writing skills are built up gradually. We teach the initial shapes for handwriting and then teach children that the letters fall into different families, each family made up of similar shapes:

By the end of Foundation Stage the aim is for children to form most of the letters correctly. Going into Year 1, they are taught to recognise the different sizes of the letters and to place letters on the line. Joining begins as children are ready and once they are confidently forming all letters correctly.

Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar:

The 2014 National Curriculum places significant emphasis on Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPaG) skills. We have developed a whole-school overview of SPaG to outline what children should cover year-on-year, ensuring that all of the key skills are embedded by the end of KS1 (Appendix 4).

A key component of SPaG is Phonics (also outlined in the SPaG Overview, Appendix 5). In Foundation Stage, children learn one way to read and spell each sound in the English language. They learn how to blend and segment words, providing them with the building blocks to read and write simple words. In Year 1, the children learn alternative spellings for each sound and further secure their blending and segmenting skills. The Phonics Screening Check in June of Year 1 assesses children's ability to decode words. In Year 2, children focus more on spelling rules and conventions.

Throughout Foundation Stage and KS1, children learn to read and spell Common Exception Words.

Learning Outside the Classroom:

We recognise that opportunities for children to learn outside of the traditional classroom context are vital for both their education and their wellbeing. As such, teachers provide for and plan opportunities for children to learn using the school grounds as well as the wider community. In Foundation Stage, children have continual access to the outdoor environment where, through their own learning and adult interactions, they use and develop their English skills in real-life contexts.

Teachers look for LOtC opportunities wherever possible, often through giving children the choice of learning indoors or outdoors, but also by taking them off the school premises and into other learning contexts. When planning school visits and follow up work, opportunities to use English skills are maximised; for example, older children regularly contribute to our school newsletter by reporting on trips and events.

Mantle of the Expert:

Children need to see a purpose for their learning if the learning is to be meaningful to them. We use Mantle of the Expert to provide children with meaningful contexts for learning. While children learn the rules and conventions of reading and writing during discrete sessions, they are able and encouraged to apply those skills during Mantle of the Expert sessions. Children are more motivated to read and write when they see a purpose for it and so we aim to ensure that, as often as possible, pieces of writing we ask them to do are purposeful. For example, they might be writing a report for a king about castle defence, or a 'wanted' poster to find a thief.

Social, Moral, Spiritual, Cultural:

We aim to support children's SMSC development throughout everything we do at Whaddon School. Through the English Curriculum specifically, this includes:

- Exposure to our literary heritage, particularly through traditional tales and poetry
- Exposure to texts from a range of cultures
- Discussions of stories, specifically characters' actions and motivations
- Opportunities to work collaboratively
- Development of a love for reading and writing
- Developing spirituality through stories from the Bible and other religious texts

Assessment:

Ongoing assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process. Teachers assess children in a number of ways to ensure that future teaching is closely matched to each child's needs. In Foundation Stage, teachers continually play with, observe and assess the children in order to move their learning on. In KS1 and KS2, teachers and teaching assistants continually assess children throughout a lesson, and developmental marking and feedback with the children ensures that misconceptions are addressed instantly, and that children's learning is continually moving forward. Assessment at the end of each lesson informs the next lesson's planning and teaching.

Children begin to self-assess in KS1, using a traffic light system (which is adapted to each class). They also begin to peer assess in Year 2, giving children more ownership of their learning. The children are prepared for this in Foundation Stage through making judgements and about their work orally, and choosing how they wish to develop their work, identifying next steps.

Equality of Opportunity and SEND

The school is committed to a policy of equal opportunities for all pupils. All children should be allowed access to and given confidence in the different activities offered, regardless of their ability, gender, religion, or cultural/ethnic background. The content of lessons and the resources available should ensure that all pupils are valued equally, are able to participate with enjoyment and are able to achieve qualities and standards appropriate to their age, experience and abilities.

Where a particular learning need is identified, teachers draw up a Special Education Needs provision map for a child. Through targeted teaching and extra 1:1 or small group support, gaps in English skills and knowledge are narrowed.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

In September of each academic year, the subject leader produces an action plan for the development of English throughout the year. Actions are carried out throughout the year and further areas for improvement are identified as needed. Actions include, but are not restricted to:

- Learning walks
- Team teaching
- Professional development opportunities
- Analysis of data
- Interviews with children
- Book scrutinies

In July, the subject leader writes a report summarising the year's actions and achievements, which is presented to the governors.

Linked documents:

Whole School Writing Overview

Phonics and SPaG Overview

Handwriting Guide for Parents