



## St. Thomas More Catholic Primary School

South Road, Saffron Walden, Essex. CB11 3DW

Email: admin@stmsw.co.uk

HEADTEACHER: Mrs. M.J. Hall M.Phil

Telephone: 01799 523248

# ENGLISH POLICY

This policy describes our aims and our practice in the teaching of English: reading, writing, spelling, grammar and speaking and listening. It is defined by current national guidance on best practice, in-service training, staff discussion and professional judgement.

### Aims for our policy:

- ❖ To provide a language rich environment that promotes a culture of reading and writing;
- ❖ To develop in pupils a love of books and high-quality literature that will not only support their learning across the curriculum, but also extend beyond the classroom environment and enrich their lives;
- ❖ To explicitly teach reading skills throughout the school that continually develop children's understanding and enjoyment of texts;
- ❖ To teach children the craft of writing in order to develop the confidence and skills to write well for a range of purposes and audiences;
- ❖ To teach the basics - spelling, grammar, handwriting and punctuation - well so children have all the necessary tools;
- ❖ To foster in pupils the confidence, desire and ability to express their views and opinions both orally and in writing;
- ❖ To value and celebrate diversity in culture and language.

### Planning - Learning and Teaching Strategies

Knowledge, understanding and skills are taught daily within the English lesson. Lesson planning is guided St Thomas More Strategy (Jonathon Bond), which is modelled on the work of the 2014 National Curriculum. Teachers plan in modules and as much as possible, writing is linked to the termly class topic and therefore the wider curriculum. There is a balance between fiction, non-fiction and poetry, on whole texts as well as extracts.

Teachers use a variety of interactive teaching methods to deliver the curriculum and achieve set learning objectives.

Teaching and learning takes place within a whole class setting and differentiation is sometimes by outcome and through setting different expectations. However the teacher will sometimes lead smaller ability led guided reading and writing groups during the lesson. Within guided groups, teachers move children forward by focusing specifically on reading and writing issues which are particular to that group of children.

Teachers are also expected to plan time within certain writing lessons for children to reflect on their marked work, and independently respond to teacher prompts to improve their writing.

## **Speaking and Listening**

At St Thomas More School, we believe that speaking and listening is crucial to progress in English. In formal and informal situations, we create and facilitate opportunities for conversation, discussion and talk around learning. Questioning forms the basis of our teaching and we strongly encourage children to be inquisitive and to share their thoughts confidently in a supportive environment.

### **What does this look like?**

- ❖ Questioning and taking risks with language;
- ❖ Presenting in-front of an audience;
- ❖ Reciting and reading aloud;
- ❖ Re-telling, role-play and drama productions ;
- ❖ Listening to and participating in stories, poems, rhymes and songs;
- ❖ Drama activities to enliven and enrich children's understanding of character;
- ❖ Talking the text - opportunities for children to talk about and discuss their reading and writing;
- ❖ Debate;
- ❖ Collaborative work and reporting back following group work;
- ❖ Presentations.

## **Reading**

Our priority is both the teaching of reading skills and the enjoyment of literature, enabling children to become lifelong, confident readers. As children begin to read, we focus on decoding, primarily through phonics (Letters and Sounds) in addition to other strategies e.g. whole word recognition, rhyme and context. As children build fluency, comprehension skills become our main area of focus and questioning looks at skills such as re-telling, inference and prediction. We believe that high-quality literature is key to motivating children to read and instilling in children a love of literature and children throughout the school are read to at the end of each and every day.

### **The teaching of reading**

- We have a structured early learning programme. A wide selection of early reading books are available such as Oxford Reading Tree, Cambridge Reading and children progress through these and are hopefully free readers by the end of Year 2.
- Children are taught during shared and guided group sessions using structured and repetitive 'big books' and guided reading texts in ability groups;
- Teachers and teaching assistants also read on an individual basis with children: how often is based on assessment of progress;
- Teachers and teaching assistants assess children's progression in reading regularly.

- Phonics is taught systematically from Reception following Letters and Sounds 'phased' programme. Children have regular short whole class sessions until the end of Year 2, learning sounds, actions and letters, games and activities to support sounding out, segmenting and blending for reading and writing;
- Those children who are not making progress are withdrawn for one to one support;
- We are flexible with our use of scheme books. If a child is 'stuck' at a level and losing motivation, we will always look for alternatives, for example read aloud plays, to re-ignite enthusiasm.

### **Developing a love of reading**

- ❖ We do much reading across the curriculum: topic books, news articles, class magazines etc.;
- ❖ We do story-telling and re-enacting stories
- ❖ We have a dedicated library area in each classroom;
- ❖ All children visit and borrow books from the school library
- ❖ KS2 children are invited to join library club and take part in library challenges
- ❖ We set up visits from authors and illustrators;
- ❖ All class teachers are expected to read a class novel. Much thought goes into the selection of texts;
- ❖ Lots of talk and discussion about reading in a variety of contexts, both formal and informal;
- ❖ Children are expected to complete reading challenges.

Children are expected to read every night at home, writing in their reading diaries to share ideas about books and to keep a record of what they are reading. This is monitored very systematically by teachers and support staff who liaise directly with parents if it is not happening.

### **Writing**

We strive to create an environment that will promote both reading and writing. Teachers carefully plan writing to link to the termly topic, ensuring that there is a purposeful outcome to each piece of writing. In order to ensure that all pupils learn to be confident writers we encourage children to write creatively whilst teaching key writing skills explicitly and systematically. Writing takes place daily within English lessons and in other lessons linked to the wider curriculum. Extended writing is encouraged and developed at all times.

### **What does this look like?**

- ❖ A purpose and audience for each piece of writing is decided from the outset;
- ❖ Writing is displayed all over the school;
- ❖ We provide stimulating first hand experiences e.g. trips;
- ❖ Writing is taught as a sequenced activity;
- ❖ Teachers provide regular helpful feedback through marking
- ❖ Time is planned into lessons for children to respond to literacy marking and feedback;
- ❖ Writing is, in the main, linked to class topics to promote engagement;
- ❖ We ensure progression in complexity of tasks and reading material year on year;
- ❖ We build stamina for writing by providing opportunities to write for extended periods;
- ❖ Some pieces will be 'published' i.e. re-drafted in neat and displayed on classroom walls;
- ❖ Peer marking is encouraged as an additional way for children to respond to writing.

### **Spelling**

Understanding how to spell correctly is important in supporting children to organise their thinking around language. Knowing how to apply spelling rules and recognising key words is empowering for children. Spelling plays a significant part of standardised assessment and is taught throughout the school. Throughout the school Read Write Inc Spelling Programme is used.

## **Handwriting**

We place value on children taking pride and care over their work and handwriting is a key part of this. In the early years there is a big emphasis upon fine motor skills and we use a range of resources to practise these basic skills. This moves into correct letter formation with a focus on both upper and lower case letters. We use the Nelson Handwriting Scheme.

## **Grammar**

An understanding of how to use grammar correctly, use relevant meta-language and identifying word classes and sentence types is taught both in the context of a piece of writing and explicitly in whole class work. Linked to the National Curriculum end of year expectations for year groups, grammar is taught and planned to fit in with relevant genres of writing.

## **Inclusion**

We aim for all children to participate in mainstream lessons. Work is differentiated and extra support is in place for children with S.E.N. Where it is felt necessary, a pupil is withdrawn from class to receive specialist help from school devised intervention programmes. We aim to provide a range of resources that reflect the diversity of culture and language within our school community and the wider local community.

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