

# WRITING POLICY



Vision Statement 'I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full'. St  
John's Gospel 10:10

"You can make anything by writing." C.S. Lewis

### Our aims

Our first aim here at St. Alban's is to give our children the tools and inspiration to use language to express ideas, share, debate, create and improve. Through our curriculum, we hope that our children will enjoy developing the art of writing, and take pleasure in producing something that is exclusively theirs. We want them to take pride in their skills as writers and manipulators of language, and through rich and varied texts, appreciate the skills and techniques of authors.

Our curriculum has been developed to ensure that our children are equipped to produce texts for a range of purposes, both formal and narrative, so that going forward, they are ready to use these tools in real life situations.

We work to:

- build on successful language acquisition in the home and widen the vocabulary of the children
- take into consideration additional challenges faced by children with English as an additional language
- Give children an understanding of grammar and syntax to fully engage with language manipulation and development of language skills
- Enable children to reflect on their own use of language and make improvements to writing independently

In order to do all of this, we need to first ensure that we give them the technical knowledge to commit words to a page.

### Phonics

Phonics are the building blocks of writing. Before children can independently commit ideas to the page, they need a sound understanding of what a letter is, corresponding sounds and how to form letters.

We use the Read Write Inc phonics scheme to teach early reading and writing. Children are exposed to phonic sounds and initially make words using magnetic letters, alongside writing simple words. The direction and shape of letters are also taught using the scheme. Sounds (phonemes) are introduced in sets. In set 1, sounds are made using a single letter at first, eg. m, a, t before progressing to sounds made with two letters (digraphs) eg. ou, ee, or three (trigraphs) eg. igh

Sounds are taught phonetically, not using letter names. This enables children to sound out words and begin to blend.

The scheme moves through a series of books, increasing in difficulty and using a greater range of sounds as they go on. Children are later introduced to short writing tasks, single sentence dictations and proofreading activities.

Children progress through the scheme until their phonic knowledge is at a point where they can read and spell phonetically independently. They have daily Read Write Inc sessions lasting 40

minutes and these happen without exception. The scheme also teaches the spelling and reading of 'red' words, words that cannot be sounded out.

Assessments take place half termly and these inform grouping. However, we do not always wait until an assessment to move children into a more appropriate group if required. Children are grouped across the key stage, regardless of year group, as sessions are tailored to where each child is at. Children remain at a level until understanding is completely embedded.

### **Monitoring of Read Write Inc**

Assessment takes place half termly. Outcomes are then used to inform groupings which also change half termly. Once children reach a certain level of reading fluency, the progress to guided reading sessions.

### **Early Years**

In Early Years, the curriculum consists of seven areas of learning that are all interlinked. The most pertinent to writing, are communication and language and literacy, although all of the children's experiences in early years contribute to a richness of language and ideas.

Before we can write, we need to be able to formulate ideas and share ideas verbally. In Early Years, we ensure that children are given the opportunity to have conversations with adults, who facilitate play with their peers, and provide a language rich learning environment. Teachers use the children's interests as a basis for activities and teaching, and in doing so, are able to build on their existing understanding and language in this context.

Language is embedded through a range of stories and other texts, sharing patterned language structures, and using these as a basis for roleplay and storytelling in play.

Only when children have the support and tools to articulate ideas through talking, can they record them in writing.

Writing is developed in several ways.

Children develop fine motor skills for the physical act of writing, through play. Tools contribute to the development of hand strength, and the use of scissors, paint brushes and cutlery all refine grip. Eventually, children learn to hold a pencil in an effective grip for writing.

Through the Read Write Inc scheme, as mentioned previously, children learn the correct orientation of letters and starting and end points for writing these. They begin to sound out words and represent these sounds with letters. The classroom is set up to provide a rich variety of writing opportunities, always with a purpose, for example, a shopping list.

Children are then able to see writing as a means of communication. with the next step being the writing of simple phrases and sentences that can be read by others.

In the Expressive Arts and Design strand of the Early Learning Goals, children are encouraged to create stories and adapt well known narratives. Using existing well known narratives, they can begin to construct their own stories with a clear structure. They are given and language through the singing of well-known rhymes and songs. Good modelling through talk is at the root of all of these skills.

All of these skills developed in our Early Years mean children are well prepared for Year 1.

### Writing throughout school

#### Our Approach

Our starting point for any unit of work is to ensure that we use high quality texts that inspire both the pupils and the teachers. Our first stage is always to hook the audience and help them to develop an engagement with the text through the use of language, characterisation, presentation and plot.

It is essential to have writing outcomes in mind so that there is a clear route towards this through the teaching of the text. All grammar and writing techniques are taught through the texts, not in isolation, ensuring the immersion in the work.

Teachers also draw from other examples to widen children's exposure to different techniques.

Our approach is to slowly build up skills by identifying a feature, teaching a skill, grammar point or vocabulary, practising taught content with short bursts of writing, before building up to a larger piece at the end of several weeks. Sometimes, one text will produce two outcomes, each one slowly built up to through a course of well-planned lessons. All writing is subject to editing and publishing, so that children learn to improve work and take pride in its presentation.

It is important to note that the same skills are repeated and built on several times across the year to embed learning.

Our teaching is 'spiral' not linear.

#### Writing Lessons

In each term, classes cover two texts in depth, with a poetry unit. Texts have been carefully selected by the English Coordinators with the support of the Local Authority Advisor to cover a range of skills and genres and to ensure continuity of skills and understanding across the two key stages. We have produced a separate document showing our core texts that are used as a stimulus for writing. We have also worked to identify threads through the scheme of work.

Teaching sequences are detailed in our medium term plans, and while all units follow a similar path through teaching and practicing skills, these are adapted by teachers to suit relevant genres and individual cohorts according to needs.

Teachers are given steps that are to be covered for each text and they then take this outline to develop daily plans. Planning is responsive allowing teachers to gauge where they need to prioritise more time.

Planning needs to provide opportunities for speaking and listening so that children can learn from one another, and develop ideas and language before completing a writing activity.

Non negotiable skills are taken from the National Curriculum and these are supplemented by the Gateshead GAP assessment framework, which further breaks down larger objectives into smaller 'chunks'. All objectives are revisited and built on across the year and a record is kept showing in which unit skills are taught. Teacher judgement also informs areas of weakness that may not be covered by their year group's curriculum that need to be addressed.

Children are, throughout their time at this school, exposed to a wide range of texts from different countries, genres and eras. Each term also includes a poetry topic. We ensure texts expose children to a range of cultures and diversity.

We understand the importance of exposing children to a wide vocabulary and range of writing styles, to give them the knowledge to produce their own individual work, tailored for the reader.

Alongside grammar and composition, the writing process is also taught. Children are taught how to plan, draft, revise and edit their own work.

Shared writing takes place during whole class teaching where writing is modelled and ideas are shared and discussed. This is also an opportunity to make improvements to a teacher's draft and correct intentional errors.

Ideas are recorded and refined by a teacher who discusses the process throughout. Children have the opportunity to practise and extend their own writing.

Grammar is taught through the class text based on National Curriculum outcomes and Gateshead Assessment Profiles.

### **Cross Curricular Opportunities**

Every learning experience involves language skills. The better enabled our children are to access the curriculum and life through listening, reading, speaking and formulating questions, the greater the life enrichment and engagement.

We ensure that children are exposed to lots of subject specific language. Research, planning, group discussion, debating and questioning are all skills that can be applied and developed across the curriculum. While opportunities to develop writing skills by drawing on other lessons are taken, care is always taken so that it is not to the detriment of either subject.

### **Assessment and Monitoring**

Assessment is a collaborative process between teachers, pupils and their peers. It provides information on where a child has come from, where they are at and where they are headed to on their learning journey.

### **Summative Assessment**

Teachers use the Gateshead Assessment Profile (GAP) to assess writing on a termly basis. NFER tests are used termly to assess spelling and grammar. Results are then used to identify class strengths and weaknesses. Pupil progress meetings take place with the assessment coordinator to discuss results, identify children who need additional input and look at writing foci moving forwards.

In Year 6, children sit a SPAG test (Spelling, Grammar and Punctuation). These are sent away and marked externally.

Year 2 children are also assessed as this is the end of the Key Stage. This assessment is based on teacher knowledge, with evidence drawn from examples of the child's work across the year.

## **Formative Assessment**

### **Teacher Assessment**

Where possible, teachers give verbal feedback at the time of writing, as this means that issues can be addressed straight away. Throughout the lesson, the teacher works with children to help them to identify changes and improvements they can make.

When marking, teachers highlight successful areas and those needing further development. Time is given to children to read and respond to feedback.

### **Self assessment**

Children are encouraged to look for ways to improve writing independently. In Key Stage 2, this is done using pit stops, where children take a moment to check through work and make adjustments. These are done in green pen to show where children have used the opportunity to improve work.

Younger children are taught marking codes which allow them to identify their own errors in work.

Children also use marking as a guide to addressing any issues.

### **Peer assessment**

In Key Stage 2, children work together, looking at their writing to identify areas of strength and where improvements can be made. This is a supportive process, where children reach conclusions together and learn from one another. Children are given guidance as to what they should be looking for.

It is important that children understand that assessment is a supportive, not disheartening process. It gives children the skills to reflect on their own learning and application of skills. It should empower children, building their confidence and self-esteem through constructive comments and encouragement, providing the tools to allow them to become critics, not self-critical. Feedback should have a clear focus so that children know the steps required to make work more successful.

## **Observations**

The English Coordinators and the Head Teacher carry out lesson observations in all Year Groups, followed by pupil interviews about their learning and book scrutinies. Feedback is then shared with teachers.

## **Moderation**

Moderation is a valuable process that takes place both internally within school and externally within the authority.

### **School Moderation**

Within school, it provides an ideal opportunity to share good practice and gain experience in monitoring and evaluating work from across the age range, thus giving teachers more insight into what is taking place in other year groups and the expectations.

Moderation is a supportive process, used to check assessments and affirm teacher judgements.

Moderation is carried out termly, with teachers presenting work from a range of abilities in each class. Pieces of work are then looked at against GAP objectives. Teachers work in small groups to carry out the process.

### **Cluster Moderation**

Teachers also take to opportunity to attend cluster moderation sessions with other schools in Gateshead Local Authority. These take place for each year group, but more frequently for Years 2 and 6, as these mark the end of a Key Stage.

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